Aves Overview

► 450 species in Maryland

► Extirpated species include:
  - Bewick's Wren
  - Greater Prairie Chicken
  - Red-cockaded Woodpecker

Note: This guide is an overview of select species found in Maryland. The taxonomy and descriptions are based off Peterson Field Guide to Birds of Eastern and Central North America, 6th Ed.

Order: Anseriformes

• Web-footed waterfowl
• Family Anatidae
  • Ducks, geese & swans

Order: Anseriformes, Family Anatidae
### Cygnus - Swans

#### Mute Swan
*(Cygnus olor)*
- **Winter resident.** Adult black knobbed orange bill tilts down; immature is dingy with pinkish bill; makes hissing sounds.

#### Tundra Swan
*(Cygnus columbianus)*
- **Winter resident.** Adult bill black, usually with small yellow basal spot; immature is dingy in color with pinkish bill; makes mellow-high pitched *woo-woo* noise.

#### Trumpeter Swan
*(Cygnus buccinator)*
- **Winter resident.** Adult all black bill with straight ridge; more nasal calls than tundra swan.

### Dabbling Ducks - feed by dabbling & upending

#### American Black Duck
*(Anas rubripes)*
- **Year-round resident.** Dusky black duck with white wing linings; can hybridize with mottled American Black Duck and Mallard; resembles female mallard but has black borders on secondary wing feathers.

#### Mallard
*(Anas platyrhynchos)*
- **Year-round resident.** Adult males have green head w/ white neck ring & females are mottled in color; resembles an American Black Duck but has white borders on secondary wing feathers.

### Diving Ducks - feed by diving; legs close to tail

#### Canvasback
*(Aythya valisneria)*
- **Winter resident.** Male is whitish with black chest & reddish brown head with sloping bill; female has grayish bill with black tip; male voice *cooing* & female a raspy *krrrr*.

#### Redhead
*(Aythya americana)*
- **Winter resident.** Male is gray with black chest & reddish head; has grayish bill with black tip; male voice *moose* & female a soft *krrrr*.
Mergansers – slender-bodied diving ducks w/ spikelike bill

**Common Merganser** (*Mergus merganser*)
- Winter resident.
- Male has whitish body w/ green/black head & white chest; female & immature have reddish head, white chin & white chest

**Red-breasted Merganser** (*Mergus serrator*)
- Winter resident.
- Male has greenish head w/ crest, white band on neck & mottled chest; female & immature are gray w/ crest and have rusty head that blends into chest

Order: Galliformes

• “Chicken-like” birds
• Includes many upland game birds
• Family Odontophoridae
  - Northern Bobwhite
• Family Phasianidae
  - Grouse, turkeys & the like

Gallinaceous Birds

**Ruffed Grouse** (*Bonasa umbellus*)
- Year-round resident in western MD.
- Rusty or gray in color w/ broad, black band near tip of tail; male display includes drumming that sounds like a distant motor; omnivore

**Northern Bobwhite** (*Colinus virginianus*)
- Year-round resident.
- Small and small; males have white eyebrow stripe and chin while females have buff marks; whistles bob-white; omnivore

Wild Turkeys (Meleagris gallopavo) by Kerry Wixted
Order: Ciconiiformes

- Large, long-legged wading birds with large bills
- Family Ardeidae
  - Bitterns, herons & allies
  - Family Cathartidae
  - New world vultures

Cattle Egrets (Bubulcus ibis) are adventive (naturally expanded their range). They are medium-sized wading birds with buff orange crowns & beaks during breeding season.

Order: Ciconiiformes

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Herons- long-legged & long-necked wading birds

Great Blue Heron (Ardea herodias)

Little Blue Heron (Egretta caerulea)
Summer resident on eastern shore. Small, slender heron w/ maroon-brown neck and bluish-gray back; grayish bill. Voice: loud, nasal scaaahh

Egrets- typically whitish herons

Great Egret (Ardea alba)
Summer resident w/ lower shore having year-round residents. Large, white heron w/ yellow bill & black legs and feet; found in marshes, ponds & shores

Snowy Egret (Egretta thula)
Summer resident w/ lower shore having year-round residents. Medium-sized w/ black bill & legs and yellow feet; lops yellow; found in marshes, swamps & tidal flats

Order: Ciconiiformes, Family Ardeidae

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Order: Ciconiiformes, Family Ardeidae

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New World Vultures

- **Turkey Vulture** (*Cathartes aura*)
  - Year-round resident
  - Nearly 6 ft wingspan; adult has naked red head and two-toned wings; primarily a scavenger

- **Black Vulture** (*Coragyps atratus*)
  - Year-round resident
  - Less than 5 ft wingspan w/ whitish patch toward wingtips; grayish/lightly feathered head

Order: Ciconiiformes; Family Cathartidae

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Order: Falconiformes

- Day-flying (diurnal) raptors with hooked bill and pointed claws
- Family Accipitridae
  - Hawks, kites, eagles & allies
  - Family Falconidae
  - Caracaras & falcons

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Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)

- National bird of US
- Adult: white head & white tail w/ yellow bill
- 1st yr: mostly dark w/ whitish wing linings
- 2nd & 3rd yr: mottled w/ white on belly & back

Order: Falconiformes; Family Accipitridae
Accipiters - hawks w/ short, rounded wings

Sharp-shinned Hawk (Accipiter striatus)
Year-round resident. Slim hawk w/ square-tipped tail; adult w/ dark back & rusty-brown breast while immature has dark brown above; voice: kik, kik, kik

Cooper’s Hawk (Accipiter cooperii)
Year-round resident. Like Sharp-shinned hawk but larger; has rounded tail; voice: kik, kik, kik

Order: Falconiformes; Family Accipitridae

Buteos - stocky hawks w/ broad wings

Red-tailed Hawk (Buteo jamaicensis)
Year-round resident. Common along roadsides. Notable red tail from top-side, light breast w/ dark belly-band; voice: key-yah

Red-shouldered Hawk (Buteo lineatus)
Year-round resident. Adult has black and white bands on wings and tail w/ reddish shoulders, chest, & underparts; voice: key-yer

Order: Falconiformes; Family Accipitridae

Order: Charadriiformes

• Large group! Select families include:
  • Family Charadriidae
    • Plovers
  • Family Scolopacidae
    • Sandpipers, phalaropes & allies
  • Family Laridae
    • Gulls, terns & skimmers

The Black Skimmer (Rynchops niger) is a state endangered breeding bird that has an uneven bill that allows it to skim water for fish and other food.
American Woodcock (*Scolopax minor*)

- Year-round/summer resident
- Woodland shorebird
- Long bill w/large eyes
- Leaflike coloration
- Voice: nasally peent

Order: Charadriiformes; Family: Scolopacidae

![American Woodcock chick](https://example.com/woodcock-chick.jpg) 
By Kerry Wixted CC by ND 2.0

Order: Cuculiformes

- Cuckoos, roadrunners & anis
- Family: Cuculidae
  - Slender, long-tailed birds w/ curved bills

Black-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus erythropthalmus*) has a black lower mandible & red orbital ring. This one is eating eastern tent caterpillars. By Bill Hubick, Maryland Biodiversity Project.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*) has a yellow lower mandible. By Nancy Magnuson CC by NC 2.0.

![Black-billed Cuckoo](https://example.com/black-billed-cuckoo.jpg)

![Yellow-billed Cuckoo](https://example.com/yellow-billed-cuckoo.jpg)

Order: Strigiformes

- Mostly nocturnal birds of prey
- Large heads w/flat faces & hooked bills
- Family Tytonidae
  - Barn Owl
- Family Strigidae
  - "Typical" owls

Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*)

![Barn Owl](https://example.com/barn-owl.jpg)
**Medium-Large Owls**

*Great Horned Owl* (*Bubo virginianus*)
- Year-round resident; Common
- Large owl w/ ear tufts; white throat bib; voice: hoo hoo hoo

*Barred Owl* (*Strix varia*)
- Year-round resident; Common
- Large owl w/ ear tufts; barred chest; voice: whoo cooked for you

*Snowy Owl* (*Bubo scandiacus*)
- Irruptive (Occasional winter visitor)
- Large, white owl with black flecks; yellow eyes

*Eastern Screech Owl* (*Megascops asio*)
- Year-round resident; small owl
- Common/ generalist w/ varied diet
- Red or gray morph
- Voice= Whinny or trill
- Nesting= April

**Order: Caprimulgiformes**

*Family Caprimulgidae*
- Nightjars
- Nocturnal birds w/ large tails
- Rest on limbs by ground
- Camouflaged by pattern

*Common Nighthawks* (*Chordeiles minor*) are best identified in flight by their white wing bars or by call which is a nasally *peer-eeer*. Photo by Bill Hubick, Maryland Biodiversity Project.
Order: Piciformes

- Birds w/ chisel-like bills
- Have long tongues
- Zygodactyl feet (two toes in front & rear)
- Family Picidae
  - Woodpeckers & allies

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Order: Piciformes, Family Picidae

**The Red-headed Woodpecker** (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) is a year-round resident in Maryland.

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**Downy vs Hairy Woodpecker**

**Downy Woodpecker** (*Picoides pubescens*)

- Year-round resident. Common. White back w/ small bill; outer tail feathers spotted; males have red patch on heads; voice: flat "pick!"

**Hairy Woodpecker** (*Picoides villosus*)

- Year-round resident. Common. White back w/ large bill and white outer tail feathers; male has red patch on head; voice: sharp "peep!"

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**Other Woodpeckers**

**Red-bellied Woodpecker** (*Melanerpes carolinus*)

- Year-round resident. Adult stripe-backed w/ red crown & neck on male and red neck on female

**Northern Flicker** (*Colaptes auratus*)

- Year-round resident. Barred brown back w/ gray cap & black ring on chest; males have a black "mustache"

**Pileated Woodpecker** (*Dryocopus pileatus*)

- Year-round resident. Largest local woodpecker w/ flaming red crest; males have red "mustache"
Order: Passeriformes

• Very large group! Select families include:
  • Family Mimidae
    • Mimic thrushes
  • Family Parulidae
    • Wood warblers
  • Family Emberizidae
    • Sparrows, Old World Buntings & allies
  • Family Cardinalidae
    • Cardinals & allies
  • Family Icteridae
    • Blackbirds

Mimidae

Brown Thrasher
(Toxostoma rufum)
Mostly year-round resident. Chestnut brown above w/ heavily streaked breast; has curved bill & long tail. Voice: similar to Gray Catbird but in pairs.

Gray Catbird
(Dumetella carolinensis)

Northern Mockingbird
(Mimus polyglottos)
Year-round resident. Gray robin-size bird w/ large white patches on wings and tail. Voice: Varied mimes often repeated a half a dozen times.

Warblers

Northern Parula
(Parula americana)
Summer resident. Pale bluish above w/ yellow throat & breast; adult male has dark breast-band; voice: zeeeep up!

Yellow Warbler
(Dendroica petechia)
Summer resident. Mostly yellow, male has rusty breast streaks; voice: tsee-tsee-tsee-tsee-titi-wee.

Prothonotary Warbler
(Protonotaria citrea)
Summer resident. Golden color; male breast & head- yellow w/ blue-gray wings; voice: zweet zweet zweet zweet.

Photos By: Bill Hubick Maryland Biodiversity Project
**Winter Sparrows**

- **White-throated Sparrow** (*Zonotrichia albicollis*)
  - Winter resident: Adult has gray breast w/ white throat & yellow above lores.
  - Bill gray.

- **White-Crowned Sparrow** (*Zonotrichia leucophrýnus*)
  - Winter resident: Adult has clear, grayish wing w/ black & white striped crown.

- **Dark-eyed Junco** (*Junco hyemalis*)

**Cardinals & Allies**

- **Northern Cardinal** (*Cardinalis cardinalis*)
  - Year-round resident: Male all red w/ crest & black patch around conical bill; voice: cheer-cheer-cheer.

- **Blue Grosbeak** (*Passerina caerulea*)
  - Summer resident: Adult male blue w/ rusty wing bars; female brown w/ rusty wing bars; voice: warbling song w/ phrases rising & falling.

- **Ring-necked Pheasant** (*Pheasantinae cygnus*)
  - Summer resident: Breeding male blue & small, female & immature medium brown; voice: song fable, usually piping sweet-sweet.

**Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918**

- International treaty w/ Canada, Japan, Mexico & Russia
- Protects all native species of birds, their nests, eggs, parts, etc
- Prohibits the take (including killing, capturing, selling, trading, and transport) of protected migratory bird species
- Excludes non-native & invasive species
  - Example: European Starlings, House Sparrows, etc

*Birds like herons were once exploited due to their feathers. The Act prohibits taking feathers from protected bird species.*
For Additional Information

For more information on Maryland's birds, please visit our webpage at: [dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife]. Additional information can be found in the following resources.

**Book Resources:**
- Peterson Field Guide to Birds of Eastern and Central North America, 6th Ed

**Online Resources:**
- Maryland Envirothon (Wildlife and Heritage Service)
- Birds of Maryland (MD DNR)
- Maryland Birders' Project (Birds)
- The Cornell Lab of Ornithology: All About Birds