



## STUDY GUIDE: ENHANCE BIRDING BY EAR SKILLS TO IDENTIFY THE WETLAND NESTING BIRDS IN THE BCN DATABASE

Note: **Red-winged Blackbirds** are abundant wetland breeders, but their dataset and vocalizations are in the grassland study guide. Why? The wetlands database is the smallest part of the BCN database, a shortcoming BCN intends to correct, going forward. How? By a focus on monitoring in wetland habitats!

### THE STATISTICS UNDERLYING THE BCN POPULATION TRENDS DATA FROM 1999-2020

**Trend** : Average annual population change (up or down) over the 22 year study period

**% Error** : When this # is larger than the Trend average #, the latter is uncertain

**Points** : # of individual points where the species was recorded at least once

**Records** : Total # of birds of a specific species, seen across all survey points

**Frequency** : % of survey points where a species was seen at least once; assesses overall abundance - more common species show approx 30-50% frequency

**Credibility** : Informed method of assessing the accuracy of the population Trend #; Higher % error reduces Credibility of the Trend value

The links to species songs and calls are from [xeno-canto.org](http://xeno-canto.org)

In most cases, the recordings are from Illinois or nearby states, to avoid 'dialects' (many species songs vary with geography). Be sure to read the [terms of use](#) and the [FAQs](#). Click on [advanced search](#) and type in a species name should you want to explore the available recordings for a particular species

**Cautionary Note:** Just under 40 species contained in this study guide breed primarily in wetlands, yet likely will be observed in other habitats (especially as flyovers) while monitoring. This flyover/foraging behavior at wetland points will also true for species that nest in other habitat types – swallows being prime examples. Certain traditional wetland species have adapted to the losses in wetland habitat, becoming 'generalists', now breeding in other habitats, Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Yellowthroats are prime examples of this adaptation. Wetland species nesting in rookeries will widely forage for food for their nestlings during the breeding season.

The other factor influencing occupancy overlap: Fragmentation of habitat types – aka edge effects. BCN monitoring counts birds at points within 'natural areas' (approx 10% of the land area across the CW region) there is a significant edge effect – shrubland birds heard/seen from a woodland point, for example.

Regular (and rare) BCN wetland breeding birds - in alphabetical order



Species	Trend	% Error	Credibility	Points	Records	Frequency	Trend Status
<a href="#">American Bittern</a>			Poor	6	8	0%	Poorly Known
<a href="#">American Coot</a>			Poor	30	73	1%	Poorly Known
<a href="#">Bank Swallow</a>	-2.5%	5.8%	Mod	38	113	2%	Uncertain
<a href="#">Belted Kingfisher</a>	2.2%	4.3%	Good	64	99	3%	Uncertain
<a href="#">Black-crowned Night-Heron</a>	-10.5%	5.7%	Mod	34	70	1%	Moderate Decline
Blue-winged Teal	6.0%	5.6%	Mod	73	210	3%	Moderate Increase
Canada Goose	2.0%	2.8%	Good	288	3737	12%	Stable
<a href="#">Caspian Tern</a>	16.8%	9.0%	Mod	43	81	2%	Strong Increase
Cattle Egret			Poor	1	3	0%	Poorly Known
<a href="#">Cliff Swallow</a>			Poor	15	106	1%	Poorly Known
<a href="#">Common Gallinule</a>			Poor	4	6	0%	Poorly Known
<a href="#">Double-crested Cormorant</a>	5.1%	2.6%	Good	233	953	9%	Moderate Increase
Gadwall			Poor	10	51	0%	Poorly Known
<a href="#">Great Blue Heron</a>	2.9%	1.4%	Good	574	1522	23%	Moderate Increase
<a href="#">Great Egret</a>	3.3%	2.5%	Good	285	1134	12%	Moderate Increase
<a href="#">Green Heron</a>	1.2%	2.6%	Good	150	338	6%	Stable
Green-winged Teal			Poor	1	1	0%	Poorly Known
Herring Gull			Poor	17	34	1%	Poorly Known
Hooded Merganser			Poor	17	29	1%	Poorly Known
<a href="#">Least Bittern</a>			Poor	10	10	0%	Poorly Known
Mallard	2.6%	1.6%	Good	523	4520	21%	Moderate Increase
<a href="#">Marsh Wren</a>	6.7%	2.4%	Good	192	1077	8%	Moderate Increase
Mute Swan			Poor	14	125	1%	Poorly Known
<a href="#">Northern Rough-winged Swallow</a>	-0.1%	2.2%	Good	250	971	10%	Stable
Northern Shoveler			Poor	3	4	0%	Poorly Known
<a href="#">Pied-billed Grebe</a>	2.4%	5.3%	Mod	52	216	2%	Uncertain
<a href="#">Purple Martin</a>	2.9%	6.2%	Mod	41	130	2%	Uncertain
Ruddy Duck			Poor	4	5	0%	Poorly Known
<a href="#">Sora</a>	10.3%	5.9%	Mod	48	102	2%	Moderate Increase
<a href="#">Spotted Sandpiper</a>	2.7%	4.5%	Good	50	163	2%	Uncertain
<a href="#">Swamp Sparrow</a>	9.1%	2.4%	Good	181	748	7%	Strong Increase
<a href="#">Virginia Rail</a>			Poor	18	36	1%	Poorly Known
<a href="#">Wilson's Phalarope</a>			Poor	1	1	0%	Poorly Known
<a href="#">Wilson's Snipe</a>			Poor	12	18	0%	Poorly Known
Wood Duck	4.2%	3.3%	Good	195	1292	8%	Moderate Increase
<a href="#">Yellow-headed Blackbird</a>			Poor	19	36	1%	Poorly Known

## Regular (and rare) BCN wetland birds - ranked by abundance



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**Wetland Birds - the 'Regulars' - sounds and mnemonics  
notes, pitfalls, other species to consider or rule out**



**Canada Goose** do we really need a mnemonic for Canadas?

**Great Blue Heron** guttural 'squak

**Great Egret** resembles a low pitched pig grunt

**Marsh Wren** monotonous rattle

[Red-winged Blackbird you will hear them](#)

**the various swallows** with practice as you watch and listen to them, their flight calls are distinctive

**Belted Kingfisher** distinctive 'rattle call, especially when in flight

**Swamp Sparrow** slow paced, even trill

**the puddle ducks** this group is best confirmed by sight, not sound only!  
Females are difficult!!

[Yellow Warbler 'sweet sweet you're so sweet' and 'pleased to meet you' often found in shrubby wetland edges](#)

## Priority wetland species of conservation concern

### LEVEL 1 - HIGHEST CONCERN

**LEVEL 1:** Piping Plover, Black Rail, King Rail, American Bittern, Common Tern, Black Tern

**LEVEL 2:** Black-crowned Night-Heron, Least Bittern, Wilson's Snipe

**LEVEL 3:** Yellow-headed Blackbird, Common Gallinule, Virginia Rail, Pied-billed Grebe, Marsh Wren, Sora, Osprey, Caspian Tern, Great Egret, Bald Eagle, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (rare), Little Blue Heron (rare), Snowy Egret (rare), Forster's Tern (rare), Wilson's Phalarope (rare), Trumpeter Swan (rare)

For certain species on this list, BCN's monitoring area represents a core/important breeding area, significant for sustaining the individual species' population; other BOC species listed here are currently rare or casual breeders only

