



NORTHERN BOBWHITE

Colinus virginianus

BASIC ID: These small native quail get their name from a distinctive whistled "bob white" call. Plumish, these 8-11 inch long birds weigh only 6-7 ounces. They have short, stout beaks, strong feet & claws. Feathers are reddish brown, mottled with black & white spots. Tail is gray. Male bobwhites have a white throat & eye stripe. A black region below the white eye stripe expands down into a collar.

HABITS: In late April, males (cocks) set up whistling territories to attract hens. When hens appear, cocks display by tail fanning, head bowing & ceremonial feeding. Pairs remain bonded throughout breeding season, building shallow nest scrapes together. Hen lays one egg/day until 10-15 white eggs are in the nest. The pair take turns incubating for 23 days. Broods remain with parents through winter in coveys.

HABITAT: Bobwhite are restricted to the southern tier of Wisconsin counties where farm grasslands provide nesting cover. Brushy fencelines & tangled edges of woodlots provide year-round roosting & escape cover. Crop fields are important as feeding areas.

WILD! These well-camouflaged birds "freeze" when threatened by a person or predator.

For more info, visit WiDNR's Wildlife Notebook:
<http://dnr.wi.us/org/land/wildlife/pub/wlnotebook.htm>

Photo: Bob Blanchard
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WM-519 2009



GREAT BLUE HERON

Ardea herodias

BASIC ID: A 4-foot tall bird of wetlands. It has long wading legs, long neck & dagger-like bill. Its body is blue-gray & its head is white with a dark plume. In flight, its neck is doubled back, with head resting against shoulders & long legs trailing straight behind.

HABITS: Often found wading in shallow water where it waits patiently to snap up a small fish, frog, water snake, crayfish or even a mouse or large insect near shore. They have elaborate courtship displays with bill-snapping & side-to-side tapping of each other's bill tips. They nest in colonies. Males & females share duties of incubating eggs & feeding young. Often silent, they make a loud, harsh croak when startled. Herons migrate to the southern U.S. & Mexico.

HABITAT: Great Blue Herons depend on wetlands from cattail marshes & backwater swamps to ponds & lakes. They build large nests of sticks in tall trees near water.

WILD! These large herons have a wingspan of 7 feet & can fly 20-30 miles per hour. They live long lives, some living to be 17 years old!

For more info, visit WiDNR's Wildlife Notebook:
<http://dnr.wi.us/org/land/wildlife/pub/wlnotebook.htm>

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WM-524 2009



GREAT HORNED OWL

Bubo virginianus

BASIC ID: Twice the size of a crow, this very large, brown or gray owl has prominent ear tufts and yellow eyes. It is the only "eagle-owl" in the entire Western Hemisphere.

HABITS: A very powerful bird, this owl preys on all types of animals—from insects & mice to porcupines & skunks. It can take birds as large as turkeys & geese. By day, it hides in trees, especially large evergreen conifers. Courtship begins in early January. Listen for low, booming hoots. The nest is often an old, unoccupied hawk nest, or the broken top of a large dead tree. Look for owl pellets (castings) beneath large conifers. If they contain bones, you have discovered an owl's daytime roost!

HABITAT: This common & widely distributed owl has always been a familiar resident of Wisconsin. It lives in almost any habitat as long as a few trees or shrubs are present for cover. They are highly adaptable birds and reside even in cities along rivers or in parks.

WILD! Be cautious near nests—horned owls are good parents who may encourage you to retreat with determination!

For more info, visit WiDNR's Wildlife Notebook:
<http://dnr.wi.us/org/land/wildlife/pub/wlnotebook.htm>

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WM-516 2009



SANDHILL CRANE

Grus canadensis

BASIC ID: A tall (3-5 feet) bird with long neck, long beak, & stilt-like legs. Cousins to the rare white whooping crane, sandhills are reddish-brown in spring & summer, turning more gray in fall & winter. Adults have a white cheek patch; forehead & crown covered with bare, bright red skin.

HABITS: Cranes migrate & winter in southeast U.S., returning to Wisconsin in mid-March. Spring mating rituals include loud unison calls & dances of bowing, jumping, running, stick tossing & wing flapping. Nest platforms are sometimes "borrowed" from muskrats. Two eggs hatch in spring but usually only one chick survives. They eat plant tubers, grain, sprouts, acorns, frogs, mollusks & insects with their sensitive chopsticks-like bill.

HABITAT: Cranes breed in wet sedge meadows and shallow marshes. During spring and late fall, they feed in upland farm fields & oak forests.

WILD! Due to draining marshes between 1875 & 1920, and because cranes were shot for food & feathers, only 35 pairs existed in Wisconsin by 1935. Sandhill cranes now nest throughout our state and their populations are secure.

For more info, visit WiDNR's Wildlife Notebook:
<http://dnr.wi.us/org/land/wildlife/pub/wlnotebook.htm>

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WM-512 2009



REDHEAD

Aythya americana

BASIC ID: This large diving duck is 18-22 inches long & weighs 2-2.5 pounds. Drakes have brick-red head & neck, black chest, gray back & wings & white underparts. A drake's eyes are yellow. Hens are gray-brown with a tinge of red on their head. Redheads have shorter, rounder heads than Canvasbacks. Both drakes & hens have short, bluish-gray bills tipped with black & circled with a white ring near the tip.

HABITS: Most migrate through Wisconsin from ocean coast wintering grounds to prairie pothole breeding regions in Canada and northcentral U.S. Redheads dive underwater to pull up stems & leaves of bottom vegetation. They relish pondweed, duckweed & algae. Hens & ducklings prefer high-protein insects. On wintering grounds, they eat lots of mollusks & crustaceans which they find in brackish water.

HABITAT: Redheads feed on wide, open waters of the Mississippi River, Horicon Marsh & Green Bay.

WILD! Though most redheads migrate through our state, Wisconsin has one of the three sizable breeding populations east of the Mississippi River, mostly at Horicon Marsh. However, this is a very small population.

For more info, visit WiDNR's Wildlife Notebook:
<http://dnr.wi.us/org/land/wildlife/pub/wlnotebook.htm>

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WM-523 2009



COMMON LOON

Gavia immer

IDENTIFICATION The common loon measures nearly 3 feet and has a 5-foot wingspan. It is gray and white until four years of age, when it grows the elegant black and white breeding plumage for which it is famous.

VOCALIZATION Loons have four calls. The laugh-like tremolo is an alarm call, while the hoat reassures. The males' high-pitched yodel is territorial; the mournful wail is a call to other loons.

HABITS Loons are expert divers, feeding on fish and aquatic invertebrates. They nest along the water's edge and rear one or two chicks each summer.

CONSERVATION Protect natural shorelines, essential for suitable nesting habitat, and use lead-free fishing tackle like bismuth sinkers to reduce fatal lead poisoning.

For information about Loonwatch:

<http://www.northland.edu/soei/loonwatch.asp>

Photo: Ginger Gumm/Daniel Poleschok, Jr.
<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/fish/loons/parents/and/education/workshops/edu/edu.shtml>



ER-108e-2005

AMERICAN WOODCOCK

Scolopax minor

BASIC ID: Nicknamed "timberdoodle," this perfectly camouflaged bird is nearly invisible in dead leaves. Its 2-3 inch bill has a flexible tip for probing in mud. The 8-10 inch bird weighs only 6-7 ounces. Very large eyes are set far back on head to help detect predators. Legs are slender with long toes. Small, broad wings are suited for rapid takeoffs and flying in thick cover. Narrow, stiff outer wing feathers make a whistling sound in flight. Male's mating call is a nasal "peent."

HABITS: Birds begin courtship flights in late March: at twilight, males "peent," head-bob, strut, fan the short tail, fly high in the air with wings a twitter, then spiral back to earth, chirping. Female lays 4 eggs in shallow ground nest. If disturbed, her broken-wing act draws predator's attention away from nest. Eggs hatch in 3 weeks. In 2 weeks, the young fly & grow quickly on a diet of earthworms, their favorite food. Chicks are fully grown in 4 weeks.

HABITAT: Young aspen forests, alder thickets, forest openings & old farm fields provide breeding grounds.

WILD! Woodcock sense earthworm vibrations under the soil because the tip of the upper bill contains a mass of nerves.

For more info, visit WiDNR's Wildlife Notebook:
<http://dnr.wi.us/org/land/wildlife/pub/wlnotebook.htm>



Photo: Doug Rodda
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WM-509 2009

TRUMPETER SWAN

Cygnus buccinator

STATUS Endangered

BASIC ID This swan, largest of our native waterfowl, stands four feet tall with a wingspan of seven feet. Adults are pure white with black bills. Cygnets (young swans) are gray with pinkish bills. Listen for a deep and trumpet-like call.

BREEDING HABITAT & HABITS Trumpeter swans breed in large, shallow wetlands. They feed on arrowhead, bur-reed, bulrush, sedges, wild rice, pondweeds and other wetland plants. Cygnets hatch in late May or early June. Identification collars help biologists track swan movements and survival. If you see a collared swan, report the letter and number on the collar to your local DNR office.

CONSERVATION It is critical that we protect large wetland systems and remind waterfowl hunters of the differences between swans and geese.

WILD! Trumpeter swan nests may be six feet or more in diameter. Their eggs measure 4 1/2 inches by 3 inches!

www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/er



ER-108b-2005



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