

County Beaches

- 1 **Fort De Soto Park**
3500 Pinellas Bayway S., Tierra Verde, FL
- 2 **Fred Howard Park**
1700 Sunset Dr., Tarpon Springs, FL
- 3 **Sand Key Park**
1060 Gulf Blvd., Clearwater, FL

Beach Access Locations

- 4 **Indian Rocks Beach**
1700 Gulf Blvd., Indian Rocks Beach, FL
- 5 **Tiki Gardens/Indian Shores**
19601 Gulf Blvd., Indian Shores, FL
- 6 **Redington Shores**
18200 Gulf Blvd, Redington Shores, FL
- 7 **Madeira Beach**
14400 Gulf Blvd., Madeira Beach, FL
- 8 **Treasure Island**
10400 Gulf Blvd., Treasure Island, FL
- 9 **St. Pete Beach**
4700 Gulf Blvd., St. Pete Beach, FL



bird checklist



www.pinellascounty.org

Culture, Education & Leisure

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- Heritage Village – www.pinellascounty.org/heritage
- Florida Botanical Gardens – www.flbg.org
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Fort De Soto COUNTY PARK

bird checklist



purpose

This checklist was compiled to assist in locating birds and as an aid in understanding the abundance and status of birds in the vicinity of Fort De Soto county park. It alerts birders to the significance of their observations. A log of bird sightings is kept in the park's administration building. Observations of accidental, rare or species not listed on this checklist should be added to the log, supported with written and/or photographic documentation. The listing and documentation should be sent to:

Florida Ornithological Society
Records Secretary
Florida Museum of Natural History
Box 117800
University of Florida
Gainesville, FL 33862

overview

This checklist presents the overall status of bird species that have been reported in Pinellas County's Fort De Soto Park, the Pinellas Bayway and Shell Key, a county-owned preserve just south of the park. The more than 2,000 acres that make up these three locations offer an array of habitats. Because Fort De Soto Park is located along Florida's Gulf Coast, many migratory birds utilize the area during spring and fall migration. Fort De Soto Park has become internationally famous as one of the premier birdwatching locations in the eastern United States.

The checklist is based on documented bird sightings from the area over the past 60 years. Species status was determined by considering the average over the time frame given. A total of 328 bird species has been reported as of August 2008, and new bird species are being added practically every year. Just recently

Hammond's Flycatcher, Bananaquit, MacGillivray's Warbler, Kirtland's Warbler, Thick-billed Vireo, Groove-billed Ani, Purple Sandpiper, Heermann's Gull and House Finch have been recorded.

During spring migration, which takes place from March through mid-May, thousands of birds migrate north across the Gulf of Mexico enroute to their breeding grounds in the United States and Canada. Fort De Soto Park is an important stopover during this journey. The heaviest concentration of birds passing through the region occurs from about the second week in April to the first week in May.

Weather is the major factor that determines the number of birds that arrive in spring. A late cold front crossing the Gulf of Mexico from the northwest during this time frame may cause a fallout of birds, especially if the front is accompanied by strong winds and/or rain. A fallout is generally described as a large number of birds arriving in an isolated location during a short period of time. Migrant birds that may have flown past our area often get pushed towards the Florida coast during these late season cold fronts. Thus, as a result of weather conditions, a species may be recorded in high numbers one year and may be missed entirely in another.

Fall migration, which takes place from August through November, can be equally rewarding to the birder. Certain species are more prevalent in fall than in spring because of their migration route. Again, weather plays a major role with species abundance.

During both the spring and fall migrations, the family of wood warblers receives the most attention at Fort De Soto Park. However, a careful study of the checklist will reveal a large variety of bird families that can be seen during this time, including vireos, thrushes, flycatchers, tanagers, orioles and many more.

Many species of shorebirds winter at Fort De Soto Park. In fact, wintering birds start arriving as early as late July. North Beach and the end of East

Beach are good places to look for them. A small variety of hawks and ducks also utilize the area as a wintering site. The puddle ducks, however, are most often reported at the pond a half mile before reaching the park entrance. Occasionally in winter, sea ducks, gannets and jaegers can be seen from the Gulf side of the park.

The lowest diversity of species is seen during the summer season. Exciting-to-see species like Mangrove Cuckoo, Black-whiskered Vireo and Prairie Warbler no longer breed here. Habitat loss, coupled with the increase in the number of the parasitic Brown-headed Cowbirds, has contributed to the decline. However, wading species like Reddish Egret, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret and Snowy Egret can be found quite easily. Gulls and terns, here year 'round, are also easy to observe in summer. The work of local Audubon Society volunteers has helped in protecting breeding areas for species like Black Skimmer, Least Tern and Wilson's Plover. Fort De Soto Park is a very special place.

posted nesting/resting areas

The staff at Fort De Soto Park is very protective of the birds and the crucial function this area serves for nesting birds and migrant birds alike. A good percentage of North Beach is posted to protect those species that utilize the area for nesting/resting. The birds here are still easily observed, but it is imperative that birders, especially, lead by example and remain behind the barriers while observing and/or photographing.

acknowledgements

The Fort De Soto Park, Pinellas Bayway and Shell Key checklist was written and compiled by Ron Smith with the help of Lyn and Brooks Atherton, Margie Wilkinson, Paul Blair, Dave Goodwin and the late Larry Hopkins. The author encourages birders to utilize the bird log in the administration office and to photograph rarities when the opportunity arises.

Birding Areas

The following described areas are the most heavily birded areas and are indicated on the included map. Many local birders check all of these areas during the course of their birding day. Consult the bird-sighting log in the main park administration office for recent sightings.

1 BOAT RAMP

The wooded section just to the east of the boat ramp parking lot is good for spring and fall migrants. Check the upper canopy of the oaks for best results.

2 PRIMITIVE CAMPING AREA

This area, across from the boat ramp, can be good for spring migrants, but entry is restricted. Permission to enter this area must be obtained from a park ranger at the administration office.

3 LAGOON BEACH

This small beach, across from the boat ramp entrance, will sometimes host a few shorebirds in winter. Look for Black-bellied Plover, Whimbrel and American Oystercatcher.

4 CAMPGROUND

If you are camping here, you may not have to go birding anywhere else. Often times, migrants can be plentiful, but pedestrians and vehicular traffic can make birding awkward.

5 EAST BEACH TURNAROUND

A great place for close-up observations of shorebirds, waders, gulls and terns is at this easy-to-bird location. You don't even have to leave the comfort of your vehicle. Watch for White-rumped Sandpiper and Semipalmated Sandpiper in mid-May and various swallows overhead.

6 EAST BEACH WOODS

Just east of the Administration Building and east of the picnic grounds, is a wooded section with mature Australian pines and scattered mangroves and oaks. This area is typically very good for migrants during spring and fall migration. Expect warblers, thrushes and the unexpected.

7 BEHIND THE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

This is an area that is rarely birded, except by those "in the know." Check the open areas and along the dunes for buntings and grosbeaks.

8 MULBERRY TREES

Just east of the Bay Pier and the ranger's residence is the infamous grove of mulberry trees. The mulberries ripen in April and migrant passerines seem to gravitate to them. Almost every regularly occurring migrant species has been reported here at one time or another. Expect Orchard Orioles and Eastern Kingbirds, Summer and Scarlet Tanagers, Rose-breasted and Blue Grosbeaks and, well, you get the idea. This is a must stop!

OPEN FIELD

Across from the Bay Pier is an open field that sometimes floods a bit during spring and/or fall rain storms. Watch for American Golden Plover, Buff-breasted Sandpiper and others. Cinnamon Teal and Black-legged Kittiwake have been recorded here!

THE FORT

Trees around the fort and the picnic area often host migrant passerines. Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and Black-whiskered Vireo have been seen here.

THE GULF PIER

On a day when the winds are blowing hard from the west in late fall or winter, the Gulf Pier is always worth a stop. Look for Northern Gannets, jaegers, sea ducks and loons. A Purple Sandpiper showed up here one winter.

OPEN FIELD

North of the bend in the main park road is an open field along the east side of the road that may host sparrows, Bobolinks in the late spring, a rare Upland's Sandpiper or a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. Even a Long-billed Curlew has been spotted here.

GULF-SIDE POND

While this area has grown up a bit in the past decade, it still hosts Clapper Rail and wintering sparrows in the scrub around it and many Common Ground-Doves along the short trail out to it. This area is also good for Sedge Wren in winter.

14 RADIO TOWER

The field leading to the radio tower is a good location for buntings and grosbeaks. Warblers utilize the mangroves along the field's edge during migration, particularly in spring. The county's only sighting of a Bananaquit was found here.

15 ARROWHEAD FAMILY PICNIC AREA

This area contains the largest concentration of oak trees within Fort De Soto Park. Walk the parking lot and woodlands trail for warblers, thrushes and flycatchers. Check the upper branches of the tallest pines for Great Horned Owl. There's usually something to be seen.

16 NORTH BEACH GROVE

At the north end of the North Beach parking lot there is a small grove of mature oaks that can be good for warblers, vireos, cuckoos and the unexpected. Check along the ditch for Prothonotary, Hooded and Swainson's Warblers.

17 NORTH BEACH

This is the best place within the park for viewing the numerous shorebirds, gulls and terns that can be present during fall migration and winter. Bring your telescope as some areas are posted for the protection of nesting and resting birds, and you may not get close. Look for Piping and Snowy Plovers from July through the winter and thousands of terns from August through early October. Keep an eye to the sky for a passing Peregrine Falcon. The crowds start pouring in by midmorning, so you might want to get out there early. Or, in the fall when many terns and shorebirds are present, you may want to check in the very late afternoon as they come in to roost. The numbers can be quite impressive.

18 TIERRA VERDE DUCK POND

About a half mile before entering the park, there is a large pond on the west side of the road. By late October, the ducks begin to arrive and stay into spring. Hundreds of Redheads, Lesser Scaup and Ring-necked Ducks make up the majority of duck species seen. Check them all as you may find a Canvasback, Ruddy Duck, an American Wigeon or even a Surf Scoter.

SPR = Spring

March 1 – May 31

SUM = Summer

June 1 – July 31

FALL = Fall

August 1 – November 30

WIN = Winter

December 1 – February 28

C = Common

The species is usually to be found daily in season; well distributed or in moderate numbers.

U = Uncommon

The species is usually present in low density/numbers; probably, but not always, found in proper habitat for the season.

M = Migratory

The species is expected or a regular visitor and is most often present at some time during the migratory season. Occurs in medium to large numbers.

m = migratory

The species is not expected, occurs very sporadically and/or in very low numbers. In some years, the species may be absent and not reported at all.

O = Occasional

Few reports, or few recent reports, of the species.

X = Accidental

Represents an isolated record of the species. This includes out-of-season occurrences and hypothetical (not proven) reports. Also includes extirpated species.

- The migratory codes "M" and "m" are used in this checklist when the majority of any species winters south of North America.
- As indicated above there are a few times when "X" is used in this checklist and is based on a single sight report without any proof of the species occurrence.
- Birders are encouraged to photograph rarities and make notes of their sightings.

Checklist of the Birds of Fort De Soto Park, Pinellas Bayway and Shell Key

Species	Spr	Sum	Fall	Win
Fulvous Whistling-Duck	X			
Snow Goose			O	X
Brant			X	X
Canada Goose	O			
Tundra Swan			X	
Wood Duck			X	
Gadwall			O	O
American Wigeon	O		U	U
Mallard	O		O	O
Mottled Duck	U	U	U	U
Blue-winged Teal	U	X	U	U
Cinnamon Teal	X		X	
Northern Shoveler	O		U	U
Northern Pintail			O	O
Green-winged Teal			O	O
Canvasback			O	O
Redhead	U	O	C	C
Ring-necked Duck	U		U	C
Greater Scaup				O
Lesser Scaup	U		C	C
King Eider	X	X		
Surf Scoter	O	X	X	O
White-winged Scoter			X	O
Black Scoter			X	O
Bufflehead			O	O
Hooded Merganser	X		O	O
Red-breasted Merganser	U	X	U	U
Ruddy Duck	O		O	O
Northern Bobwhite	extirpated			
Common Loon	U	O	U	U
Pied-billed Grebe	U	U	C	C
Horned Grebe	U		U	U
Eared Grebe	X		X	O
Western Grebe			X	
Audubon's Shearwater			X	

Species	Spr	Sum	Fall	Win
Masked Booby		X		
Northern Gannet	U	O	U	U
American White Pelican	U	O	U	U
Brown Pelican	C	C	C	C
Double-crested Cormorant	C	C	C	C
Anhinga	U	U	U	U
Magnificent Frigatebird	U	C	U	O
American Bittern	X			
Least Bittern	U	U	O	X
Great Blue Heron	C	C	C	C
Great Egret	C	C	C	C
Snowy Egret	C	C	C	C
Little Blue Heron	C	C	C	C
Tricolored Heron	U	U	U	U
Reddish Egret	U	U	U	U
Cattle Egret	U	U	U	U
Green Heron	U	U	U	U
Black-crowned Night-Heron	U	U	U	U
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	U	U	U	U
White Ibis	C	C	C	C
Glossy Ibis			X	
Roseate Spoonbill	U	U	U	U
Wood Stork	U	O	U	U
Black Vulture	O	O	O	U
Turkey Vulture	O		U	U
Greater Flamingo			X	
Osprey	C	C	C	C
Swallow-tailed Kite	m		m	
Mississippi Kite	m			
Bald Eagle	U	O	U	U
Northern Harrier	O		O	U
Red-shouldered Hawk	U	O	U	U
Broad-winged Hawk	O		O	U
Swainson's Hawk			X	
Red-tailed Hawk			O	O
American Kestrel	U	X	U	U
Merlin	U		U	U

Species	Spr	Sum	Fall	Win
Peregrine Falcon	U		U	U
Clapper Rail	U	U	U	U
King Rail	U	U	U	U
Virginia Rail	O			O
Sora	U		U	U
Purple Gallinule	O			
Common Moorhen	C	C	C	C
American Coot	U	O	C	C
Limpkin			X	
Sandhill Crane				X
Black-bellied Plover	C	U	C	C
American Golden Plover	m	X	m	X
Snowy Plover	U	U	U	U
Wilson's Plover	U	U	U	U
Semipalmated Plover	C	U	C	C
Piping Plover	U	U	U	U
Killdeer	U	U	U	U
American Oystercatcher	U	U	U	U
Black-necked Stilt	O	O	O	X
American Avocet	O	O	O	
Spotted Sandpiper	U	U	U	U
Solitary Sandpiper	m		m	O
Greater Yellowlegs	U	O	U	O
Willet	C	C	C	C
Lesser Yellowlegs	U	O	U	O
Upland Sandpiper	m		m	
Whimbrel	U	O	U	U
Long-billed Curlew	O	O	O	O
Hudsonian Godwit	X			
Marbled Godwit	U	U	U	U
Ruddy Turnstone	C	U	C	C
Red Knot	C	U	C	C
Sanderling	C	C	C	C
Semipalmated Sandpiper	M	m	M	
Western Sandpiper	C	C	C	C
Least Sandpiper	C	C	C	C
White-rumped Sandpiper	m	m	m	

Species	Spr	Sum	Fall	Win
Baird's Sandpiper			X	
Pectoral Sandpiper	m	X	m	
Purple Sandpiper				X
Dunlin	C	X	C	C
Curlew Sandpiper		X	X	
Stilt Sandpiper	O	X	O	
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	m		m	
Ruff	X			
Short-billed Dowitcher	C	U	C	C
Long-billed Dowitcher	X			X
Wilson's Snipe	O		O	O
Wilson's Phalarope		X	O	
Red-necked Phalarope		X		
Laughing Gull	C	C	C	C
Franklin's Gull			O	O
Black-headed Gull	X			
Bonaparte's Gull	O		O	U
Heermann's Gull	X	X	X	X
Ring-billed Gull	C	O	C	C
Herring Gull	U	O	C	C
Thayer's Gull			X	X
Lesser Black-backed Gull			O	O
Great Black-backed Gull	O	O	O	O
Black-legged Kittiwake	X			
Brown Noddy	O			
Least Tern	C	C	C	
Gull-billed Tern	O	X	X	
Caspian Tern	U	U	U	U
Black Tern	m	m	M	
Roseate Tern	X			
Common Tern	U	U	C	O
Forster's Tern	C	U	C	C
Royal Tern	C	C	C	C
Sandwich Tern	C	C	C	C
Elegant Tern	X		X	X
Black Skimmer	C	C	C	C
Pomarine Jaeger	X			X

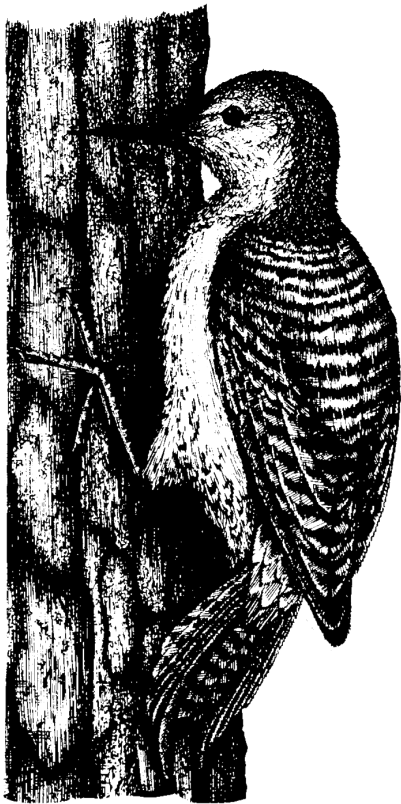
Species	Spr	Sum	Fall	Win
Parasitic Jaeger	X			O
Long-billed Murrelet				X
Rock Pigeon	C	C	C	C
White-winged Dove	O		O	O
Mourning Dove	C	C	C	C
Eurasian Collared-Dove	C	C	C	C
Common Ground-Dove	U	U	U	U
Budgerigar (extirpated)				
Monk Parakeet	U	U	U	U
Black-hooded Parakeet	U	U	U	U
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	m	X	m	
Mangrove Cuckoo	O	O	O	
Black-billed Cuckoo	m		m	
Smooth-billed Ani			X	X
Groove-billed Ani			X	
Barn Owl	X			
Eastern Screech-Owl				X
Great Horned Owl	U	U	U	U
Burrowing Owl	X	X	X	X
Barred Owl		X		
Short-eared Owl	X		X	O
Lesser Nighthawk			X	
Common Nighthawk	U	U	U	
Antillean Nighthawk	X			
Chuck-will's-widow	U	U	O	O
Whip-poor-will	O			O
Chimney Swift	U	U	U	
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	m		m	
Black-chinned Hummingbird	X			
Rufous Hummingbird	X			
Belted Kingfisher	U	O	U	U
Red-headed Woodpecker	O		O	X
Red-bellied Woodpecker	C	C	C	C
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	O		O	O
Downy Woodpecker	U	U	U	U
Northern Flicker	O	O	O	O
Pileated Woodpecker	U	U	U	U

Species	Spr	Sum	Fall	Win
Olive-sided Flycatcher			m	
Eastern Wood-Pewee	m		m	
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	X		m	
Acadian Flycatcher	m		m	
Hammond's Flycatcher			X	
Alder Flycatcher			O	
Least Flycatcher	m		m	O
Eastern Phoebe	U		U	U
Great-crested Flycatcher	U	U	U	
Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher			X	
Tropical Kingbird	X	O	O	
Western Kingbird	m		m	O
Eastern Kingbird	M	X	M	
Gray Kingbird	U	U	U	
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	m		m	O
Loggerhead Shrike	U	U	U	U
White-eyed Vireo	M		m	U
Thick-billed Vireo			X	
Yellow-throated Vireo	m		m	
Blue-headed Vireo	U		U	U
Warbling Vireo	O		O	
Philadelphia Vireo	m		m	
Red-eyed Vireo	M		M	
Yellow-green Vireo	X		X	
Black-whiskered Vireo	O	O	O	
Blue Jay	U	U	U	U
Fish Crow	C	C	C	C
Purple Martin	U	U	O	O
Tree Swallow	m		m	
N. Rough-winged Swallow	m		m	
Bank Swallow	m		m	
Cliff Swallow	m		m	X
Cave Swallow	m			
Barn Swallow	M		M	
Carolina Chickadee	X	X	X	
Red-breasted Nuthatch			X	
Brown Creeper	X		O	

Species	Spr	Sum	Fall	Win
Carolina Wren	O	O	O	O
House Wren	U		U	U
Sedge Wren	O		O	O
Marsh Wren	U		U	U
Golden-crowned Kinglet	O		O	X
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	U		U	U
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	m		m	U
Eastern Bluebird			X	O
Veery	m		m	
Gray-cheeked Thrush	m		m	
Swainson's Thrush	m		m	
Hermit Thrush	m		m	U
Wood Thrush	m		m	
American Robin	m		m	U
Gray Catbird	M		M	U
Brown Thrasher	O	O	O	O
European Starling	C	C	C	C
Common Mynah	X			
American Pipit	X		X	X
Cedar Waxwing	U	O	O	U
Blue-winged Warbler	m		m	
Golden-winged Warbler	m		m	
Tennessee Warbler	m		m	X
Orange-crowned Warbler	m		m	U
Nashville Warbler	m		m	X
Northern Parula	M		M	O
Yellow Warbler	m	O	m	X
Chestnut-sided Warbler	m		m	
Magnolia Warbler	m		m	
Cape May Warbler	m		m	
Black-throated Blue Warbler	m		m	
Yellow-rumped Warbler	M		M	C
"Audubon's Warbler"			X	
Black-throated Gray Warbler	X		O	X
Black-throated Green Warbler	m		m	X
Townsend's Warbler			O	

Species	Spr	Sum	Fall	Win
Blackburnian Warbler	m		m	
Yellow-throated Warbler	m	O	m	U
Pine Warbler	m		m	U
Kirtland's Warbler	X			
Prairie Warbler	C	O	C	U
Palm Warbler	M		M	C
Bay-breasted Warbler	m		m	
Blackpoll Warbler	M		m	
Cerulean Warbler	m		m	
Black-and-white Warbler	M	O	M	U
American Redstart	m		m	
Prothonotary Warbler	m		m	
Worm-eating Warbler	m		m	
Swainson's Warbler	m		m	
Ovenbird	M		m	O
Northern Waterthrush	m		m	
Louisiana Waterthrush	m		m	
Kentucky Warbler	m		m	
Connecticut Warbler	m			
Mourning Warbler	X		O	
MacGillivray's Warbler	X			
Common Yellowthroat	M		M	U
Hooded Warbler	M		M	
Wilson's Warbler	m		m	
Canada Warbler	m		m	
Yellow-breasted Chat	m		O	
Bananaquit			X	
Summer Tanager	M	X	m	
Scarlet Tanager	m		m	
Western Tanager	X		O	
Eastern Towhee	O	O	O	O
Chipping Sparrow			O	O
Clay-colored Sparrow			O	
Field Sparrow			X	
Vesper Sparrow	X			
Lark Sparrow	O		O	X
Savannah Sparrow	U		U	U

Species	Spr	Sum	Fall	Win
Grasshopper Sparrow	O		X	
LeConte's Sparrow	X			
Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow	U		U	U
Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow	X			X
Seaside Sparrow			X	X
Song Sparrow	O		O	O
Lincoln's Sparrow	O		O	
Swamp Sparrow	O		O	O
White-throated Sparrow	O		O	O
White-crowned Sparrow			O	
Dark-eyed Junco	X		O	O
Lapland Longspur			X	
Northern Cardinal	C	C	C	C
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	m		m	
Black-headed Grosbeak	O			
Blue Grosbeak	m		m	
Lazuli Bunting	X			
Indigo Bunting	M		m	X
Painted Bunting	m		m	
Dickcissel	m		m	
Bobolink	m		O	
Red-winged Blackbird	C	C	C	C
Eastern Meadowlark	X		X	X
Yellow-headed Blackbird	X		X	
Common Grackle	C	C	C	C
Boat-tailed Grackle	C	C	C	C
Shiny Cowbird	O	O	X	
Bronzed Cowbird			X	
Brown-headed Cowbird	C	U	U	U
Orchard Oriole	M		m	
Baltimore Oriole	m		m	
House Finch			O	
Pine Siskin	O			X
American Goldfinch	m		m	U
House Sparrow	U	U	U	U



RED-BELLIED
WOODPECKER



GREAT BLUE HERON



OSPREY

BIRDING AREAS

