

Reelfoot
National Wildlife Refuge
4343 Hwy 157
Union City, TN 38261
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www.fws.gov/refuge/reelfoot

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1 800/344 WILD

August 2018



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National Wildlife Refuge

Bird List



Reelfoot National Wildlife Refuge is located on and around the upper portion of historic Reelfoot Lake in the extreme northwest corner of Tennessee. The Refuge was established in 1941 on lands leased from the State of Tennessee. Subsequent land purchased extended the Refuge into Kentucky, and it now consists of 10,428 acres. The Reelfoot area is a major stopover point and wintering area for waterfowl of the Mississippi Flyway.

A smaller area, Lake Isom National Wildlife Refuge, comprising 1,850 acres and lying five miles south of Reelfoot was established by Presidential proclamation in 1938. The primary objective is to provide habitat for migratory birds. Reelfoot and Lake Isom National Wildlife Refuges are administered from Refuge headquarters, 4343 Highway 157, Union City, Tennessee 38261.

The 20,000 acre Reelfoot Lake was formed by a series of severe earthquakes during the winter of 1811-12. It is situated on the Mississippi River floodplain, midway between the river to the west and the towering Chickasaw Bluff to the east.

Most privately owned wetlands and woodlands, which formerly surrounded the lake, have been drained and cleared for conversion to valuable farmland. However, the wooded bluff remains, and stands of majestic bald cypress are still present in and around the lake. The swamp forest bordering the lake is almost impenetrable, giving way to thick mats of aquatic vegetation on the lake's surface and vast stretches of head-high grasses extending into much of the shallow water. This varied habitat provides home and sanctuary for large numbers of birds – as well as numerous other wildlife species.

The Refuge and adjacent areas are of year-round interest to birders, from the casual observer to the serious ornithologist. Spring, especially during April and May, is the best period for observing transient species, with special emphasis on shorebirds and warblers. Summer is a time for viewing marsh and wading birds, and serious birders will find it rewarding to work the lake by canoe or kayak in the early morning and late evening hours.

With the arrival of fall and winter also comes the multitude of waterfowl which use Reelfoot each year; mallards, gadwall, American wigeon, and snow geese predominate. However, large concentrations of ruddy ducks and coots are also present, and virtually all species common to the Mississippi Flyway may be seen at Reelfoot during the course of the winter.

Waterfowl concentrations of up to 150,000 ducks and 50,000 geese can be observed. While parts of the Refuges are closed to public entry during the peak waterfowl use period, excellent birding opportunities are still available.

In recent years, Reelfoot Lake has attained much prominence from its wintering bald eagles. The best period for seeing these stately birds is from mid-December through mid-March.

How to use your checklist

The bird checklist was designed to be informative and simple to use. The list is arranged in the order established by the American Ornithological Union. Symbols which appear in this checklist represent the following:

Seasonal Appearance

Sp – Spring, March-May

S – Summer, June-July

F – Fall, August-November

W – Winter, December-February

Many species of shorebirds and a few species of waterfowl begin their fall migration in mid to late July and August.

Seasonal abundance

a – abundant (a common species which is very numerous)

c – common (certain to be seen in suitable habitat)

u – uncommon (present but not certain to be seen)

o – occasional (seen only a few times during a season)

r – rare (normally seen less than annually)

*Nests or has nested on the refuge or surrounding area

This checklist includes 283 species of birds and is based on observations by Refuge personnel, area ornithologists, and visiting birders. If you should find an unlisted species or a species listed as rare or accidental, please let us know at the Refuge Headquarters. We appreciate your help in keeping our records up to date. Thank you.

Species	SP	S	F	W
Waterfowl				
Snow Goose	C		C	A
Ross's Goose	O		U	U
Greater White-fronted Goose	U		C	C
Cackling Goose	R		R	R
Canada Goose*	C	O	C	C
Tundra Swan			R	R
Wood Duck*	C	C	C	U
Blue-winged Teal*	C	O	C	R
Northern Shoveler	C	R	C	U
Gadwall	C		C	C
American Wigeon	C		C	U
Mallard*	A	C	A	A
American Black Duck	O		U	U
Northern Pintail	C		C	U
Green-winged Teal	C		C	C
Canvasback	U		U	U
Redhead	U		U	U
Ring-necked Duck	C		C	C
Greater Scaup	O		O	U
Lesser Scaup	C		C	C
Surf Scoter			R	R
White-winged Scoter			R	R
Black Scoter			R	R
Long-tailed Duck			R	R
Bufflehead	U		U	C
Common Goldeneye	U		U	U
Hooded Merganser*	C	U	C	C
Common Merganser	R		R	R
Red-breasted Merganser	O		O	O
Ruddy Duck	C	R	C	C
Galliformes (Quail, Turkey and Allies)				
Northern Bobwhite*	C	C	U	U
Wild Turkey*	C	U	U	U
Loons and Grebes				
Common Loon	O		O	O
Pied-billed Grebe*	C	U	C	C
Horned Grebe	U		U	U
Red-necked Grebe			R	R
Eared Grebe	R		R	R
Storks				
Wood Stork		R	R	

Species	SP	S	F	W
Pelicans and their Allies				
Neotropic Cormorant	R	R	R	
Double-crested Cormorant*	C	U	C	U
Anhinga*	O	O	R	
American White Pelican	U	O	C	U
Herons, Egrets and Bitterns				
American Bittern	O		O	R
Least Bittern*	O	O	O	
Great Blue Heron*	A	C	A	C
Great Egret*	C	C	C	R
Snowy Egret*	U	O	U	
Little Blue Heron*	U	O	U	
Tricolored Heron	R	R	R	
Cattle Egret*	U	U	O	
Green Heron*	C	C	C	
Black-crowned Night-Heron*	O	O	O	R
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron*	U	O	U	
Ibis, Spoonbill				
White Ibis	R	R	R	
Glossy Ibis	R	R	R	
White-faced bis	R	R	R	
Roseate Spoonbill	R	R	R	
Vultures, Hawks, Eagles				
Black Vulture*	C	C	C	U
Turkey Vulture	C	C	C	U
Osprey*	U	C	U	R
Golden Eagle	R		R	R
Mississippi Kite*	U	C	U	
Northern Harrier	C	R	C	C
Sharp-shinned Hawk	U		U	U
Cooper's Hawk*	U	O	U	U
Bald Eagle*	U	U	U	C
Red-shouldered Hawk*	U	U	U	U
Broad-winged Hawk*	U	O	U	
Red-tailed Hawk*	C	C	C	C
Rough-legged Hawk				R
Gruiformes (Rails, Gallinules, Coots, Cranes)				
King Rail*	R	R	R	
Virginia Rail	U	R	O	R
Sora	U		U	R
Purple Gallinule*	R	R		
Common Gallinule*	O	O		
American Coot*	C	R	C	C
Sandhill Crane				R

	<i>SP</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>W</i>
Shorebirds				
Black-necked Stilt*	U	O	U	
American Avocet	O		O	
Black-bellied Plover	O		O	
American Golden-Plover	U		R	
Semipalmated Plover	C		C	
Piping Plover			R	R
Killdeer*	C	C	C	C
Upland Sandpiper	R		O	
Hudsonian Godwit	R			
Marbled Godwit	R		R	
Ruddy Turnstone	R		R	
Stilt Sandpiper	U		U	
Sanderling	O		O	
Dunlin	U		U	R
Baird's Sandpiper	R		U	
Least Sandpiper	C	O	C	O
White-rumped Sandpiper	U	R	R	
Buff-breasted Sandpiper			O	
Pectoral Sandpiper	C		C	R
Semipalmated Sandpiper	C		C	
Western Sandpiper	O		O	
Short-billed Dowitcher	O		O	
Long-billed Dowitcher	O		O	R
American Woodcock*	O	O	O	O
Wilson's Snipe	C		U	U
Wilson's Phalarope	O		O	
Red-necked Phalarope			R	
Spotted Sandpiper	C	R	C	R
Solitary Sandpiper	C		C	
Greater Yellowlegs	C		C	R
Willet	O	R	R	
Lesser Yellowlegs	C		C	R
Gulls And Terns				
Bonaparte's Gull	U		U	C
Little Gull				R
Laughing Gull	R		R	R
Franklin's Gull	R		R	
Ring-billed Gull	C	O	C	A
Herring Gull	O		O	U
Lesser Black-backed Gull				R
Least Tern*	U	C	U	
Caspian Tern	O		O	
Black Tern	U	O	U	
Common Tern	O		O	
Forster's Tern	U		U	R

	<i>SP</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>W</i>
Pigeons, Doves				
Rock Pigeon*	C	C	C	C
Eurasian Collared-Dove*	U	U	U	U
Mourning Dove*	C	A	A	C
Cuckoos				
Yellow-billed Cuckoo*	C	C	U	
Black-billed Cuckoo	R	R	R	
Owls				
Barn Owl*	O	O	O	O
Eastern Screech-Owl*	U	U	U	U
Great Horned Owl*	U	U	U	U
Barred Owl*	C	C	C	C
Long-eared Owl				R
Short-eared Owl	O		O	O
Nightjars				
Common Nighthawk*	C	C	C	
Chuck-will's-widow*	U	U	R	
Whip-poor-will	R	R	R	
Swifts, Hummingbirds				
Chimney Swift*	C	C	C	
Ruby-throated Hummingbird*	C	C	C	
Kingfishers				
Belted Kingfisher*	U	U	U	U
Woodpeckers				
Red-headed Woodpecker*	C	C	C	C
Red-bellied Woodpecker*	C	C	C	C
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	C		C	C
Downy Woodpecker*	C	C	C	C
Hairy Woodpecker*	U	U	U	U
Northern Flicker*	C	U	C	C
Pileated Woodpecker*	C	C	C	C
Falcons				
American Kestrel*	C	U	C	C
Merlin	R		R	R
Peregrine Falcon	R		O	R
Flycatchers				
Olive-sided Flycatcher	R		R	
Eastern Wood-Pewee*	C	C	c	
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	R		R	
Acadian Flycatcher*	C	C	U	
Alder Flycatcher	R		R	
Willow Flycatcher	O	R	O	
Least Flycatcher	O		O	
Eastern Phoebe*	C	C	C	U

	<i>SP</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>W</i>
Great Crested Flycatcher*	C	C	U	
Western Kingbird	R		R	
Eastern Kingbird*	C	C	C	
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	R	R	R	
Shrikes				
Loggerhead Shrike*	U	O	U	U
Vireos				
White-eyed Vireo*	C	C	C	R
Bell's Vireo*	R	R	R	
Yellow-throated Vireo*	U	U	U	
Blue-headed Vireo	O		O	R
Philadelphia Vireo	O		O	
Warbling Vireo*	C	C	U	
Red-eyed Vireo*	C	C	U	
Jays and Crows				
Blue Jay*	C	C	C	C
American Crow*	C	C	C	C
Fish Crow*	U	U	U	O
Larks				
Horned Lark*	C	U	C	C
Swallows and Martins				
N. Rough-winged Swallow*	C	C	C	
Purple Martin*	C	C	U	
Tree Swallow*	C	O	A	R
Bank Swallow*	C	U	C	
Barn Swallow*	C	C	C	R
Cliff Swallow*	U	R	U	
Chickadees & Titmice				
Carolina Chickadee*	C	C	C	C
Tufted Titmouse*	C	C	C	C
Nuthatches				
Red-breasted Nuthatch	R		R	R
White-breasted Nuthatch*	U	U	U	U
Creepers				
Brown Creeper	U	R	U	U
Wrens				
House Wren	U	R	U	O
Winter Wren	U		U	U
Sedge Wren	O		O	R
Marsh Wren	O		O	R
Carolina Wren*	C	C	C	C

	<i>SP</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>W</i>
Gnatcatchers, Kinglets				
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher*	C	C	U	R
Golden-crowned Kinglet	C		C	C
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	C		C	C
Thrushes, Bluebird, and Robin				
Eastern Bluebird*	C	C	C	C
Veery	U		U	
Gray-cheeked Thrush	U		U	
Swainson's Thrush	C		C	
Hermit Thrush	U		U	U
Wood Thrush*	C	C	U	
American Robin*	C	C	C	C
Mockingbirds & Thrashers				
Gray Catbird*	C	C	U	R
Brown Thrasher*	C	C	C	U
Northern Mockingbird*	C	C	C	C
Starling				
European Starling*	C	C	C	A
Pipits				
American Pipit	U		U	U
Waxwings				
Cedar Waxwing	U	R	U	U
Longspurs				
Lapland Longspur	O		U	U
Smith's Longspur				R
Wood Warblers & Chat				
Ovenbird	U		U	
Worm-eating Warbler	O	R	O	
Louisiana Waterthrush*	U	U	U	
Northern Waterthrush	U		O	R
Golden-winged Warbler	U		U	
Blue-winged Warbler	U		U	
Black-and-white Warbler*	C	R	C	
Prothonotary Warbler*	C	C	U	
Swainson's Warbler*	U	U	R	
Tennessee Warbler	C		C	
Orange-crowned Warbler	O		O	O
Nashville Warbler	U		U	
Connecticut Warbler	R			
Mourning Warbler	R		R	
Kentucky Warbler*	C	U	C	
Common Yellowthroat*	C	C	C	R
Hooded Warbler*	U	O	U	
American Redstart*	C	U	C	
Cape May Warbler	O		R	

	SP	S	F	W
Cerulean Warbler*	U	R	U	
Northern Parula*	C	U	C	
Magnolia Warbler	C		C	
Bay-breasted Warbler	C		C	
Blackburnian Warbler	U		U	
Yellow Warbler	C	O	U	
Chestnut-sided Warbler	C		C	
Blackpoll Warbler	C		R	
Palm Warbler	C		C	R
Pine Warbler*	U	U	U	O
Yellow-rumped Warbler	C		C	C
Yellow-throated Warbler*	C	C	C	
Prairie Warbler	O	R	O	
Black-throated Green Warbler	C		C	
Canada Warbler	U		U	
Wilson's Warbler	O		O	
Sparrows, Towhees, and Chat				
Grasshopper Sparrow*	U	U	O	
LeConte's Sparrow	O		O	O
American Tree Sparrow	O		O	O
Chipping Sparrow*	U	U	U	R
Field Sparrow*	C	U	C	C
Lark Sparrow*	R	R	R	
Fox Sparrow	U		U	U
Dark-eyed Junco	C		C	C
White-crowned Sparrow	U		U	U
Harris's Sparrow				R
White-throated Sparrow	C		C	C
Vesper Sparrow	U		U	R
Savannah Sparrow	C	R	C	C
Song Sparrow	C	O	C	C
Lincoln's Sparrow	U		U	R
Swamp Sparrow	C		C	C
Spotted Towhee				R
Eastern Towhee*	U	U	U	U
Yellow-breasted Chat*	C	C	C	
Tanagers, Cardinals, Buntings and Grosbeaks				
Summer Tanager*	C	C	C	
Scarlet Tanager	U	R	U	
Northern Cardinal*	C	C	C	C
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	C		C	
Blue Grosbeak*	U	U	O	
Indigo Bunting*	C	C	C	R
Dickcissel*	C	C	O	

Blackbirds, Meadowlarks, Orioles, etc.

	SP	S	F	W
Bobolink	U		R	
Western Meadowlark	O		O	O
Eastern Meadowlark*	C	C	C	C
Orchard Oriole*	C	C	U	
Baltimore Oriole*	U	U	O	
Red-winged Blackbird*	A	C	A	A
Brown-headed Cowbird*	C	C	C	C
Rusty Blackbird	U		U	U
Brewer's Blackbird	R		O	O
Common Grackle*	C	C	A	A

Finches

Evening Grosbeak	R		R	R
House Finch*	C	U	C	C
Purple Finch	O		O	O
Pine Siskin	O		O	O
American Goldfinch*	C	C	C	C

Weaver-Finches

House Sparrow*	C	C	C	C
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These additional species are of such extremely rare or accidental occurrence that they have been recorded in the area 5 times or less:

Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Fulvous Whistling Duck, Trumpeter Swan, Eurasian Wigeon, Cinnamon Teal, Pacific Loon, Red-throated Loon, Western Grebe, Clark's Grebe, Brown Pelican, Northern Goshawk, Swainson's Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, White-tailed Kite, Yellow Rail, Black Rail, Snowy Plover, Whimbrel, Long-billed Curlew, Curlew Sandpiper, Red Knot, Ruff, Red Phalarope, Pomarine Jaeger, Parasitic Jaeger, Long-tailed Jaeger, Long-billed Murrelet, Sabine's Gull, California Gull, Iceland Gull, Glaucous Gull, Arctic Tern, Prairie Falcon, Inca Dove, Common Ground-Dove, Say's Phoebe, Vermilion Flycatcher, Variegated Flycatcher, Cave Swallow, Bewick's Wren, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Snow Bunting, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Nelson's Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow, Black-headed Grosbeak, Painted Bunting, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Great-tailed Grackle, Red Crossbill, and Lesser Goldfinch.

Sighting Notes

Date

Time

Weather

No. of species

Route or area

Observers

Remarks



photo: Tara Dowdy, USFWS