

## AMERICAN KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*)



The killdeer is a small (~1 ft long, 2½ -4½ oz, ~1 ft. wingspan) bird with a brown back and head, a white belly, and black and white bands on its neck and head.

It is found across the U.S., in open areas like grasslands, lawns, athletic fields, and parking lots. It eats worms, insects, and other invertebrates call is a shrill *kill-deer*.

Although much more terrestrial than other shorebirds, the kill-deer, like other shorebirds, is an adept swimmers. As a non-game MBTA bird, harvesting this species is prohibited.

**On with the show:** When a potential threat approaches its mate or nest, a killdeer will put on a broken wing display, pretending to be hurt to catch the attention of a potential predator or competitor and ultimately try to lead it away.

## COMMON NIGHTHAWK (*Chordeiles minor*)



A medium-sized (~1 ft long, 2½ - 4½ oz, and 1¼ ft. wingspan,) nightjar with a large head, long wings, and a mottled brown and white speckled coloration.

It is found across the U.S., in open areas like fields, shorelines and coastal areas and open urban areas. It eats flying insects like moths, flies, and wasps on the wing.

It makes low, buzzy *peent* call. This resident bird in a rare sight at West Point. As a non-game MBTA bird, harvesting this species is prohibited.

**Boom & Zoom:** Distinct from the buzzy *peent* sound that both sexes make, males make a booming noise as they perform acrobatic aerial display for both territorial shows of force and mating attraction displays.

## EASTERN WHIP-POOR-WILL (*Antrostomus vociferus*)



A mid-sized (~1 ft long, 1½ -2½ oz. 1½ ft. wingspan) nightjar with a large head, dark brown, black, and white speck coloring that enables camouflaging.

Found throughout the eastern U.S., it inhabits open forests and is active at dawn and dusk. It eats moths, beetles, flies and other flying insects.

Its call is its namesake chanted whip-poor-will which can last hours. feed chicks. As a non-game MBTA bird, harvesting this species is prohibited.

**By the light of the moon:** Females time egg-laying eggs timed with lunar cycle enabling eggs to hatch about ten days before the full moon and ultimately coinciding for an improved foraging experience.

## BOBOLINK (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*)



Photo Credit: Ryan Sanderson



Photo Credit: Nicole Demoreux

The bobolink is a small (~7 in. long, 1-2 oz, with a 10 in. wingspan) songbird. Breeding males have a black and white plumage with an orange nape. Females and nonbreeding males have yellow It breeds across the NE US and migrates to S America. It lives in open, grassy habitats feeding on insects. Its songs are burbling with random sharp notes. As a non-game MBTA bird, harvesting this species is prohibited.

## OVENBIRD (*Seiurus aurocapilla*)



Photo Credit: Ryan Schuler

The ovenbird is a small (~5 in long, up to 1 oz, with a 7.5-10 in. wingspan warbler with an olive-green back, white belly with black speckling and orange and black stripes on the top part of its head.

Its breeding range spans the NE U.S. and S Canada, and they are often found on mature deciduous or mixed forest floors in leaf litter, eating insects.

It has a loud TEACH-er call. As a non-game MBTA bird, harvesting this species is prohibited.

**Say my name:** Killdeer, whip-poor-will, and bobolink get their name from the sound of their calls. Ovenbirds are so called because of the domed nests of grass they build which resembles a Dutch oven.

## BASIC WILDLIFE SAFETY REVIEW

*Do these things to keep people and animals safe:*

- **NEVER FEED WILDLIFE** - Nuisance animal issues often begin over food. Feeding wild animals is illegal.
- **KEEP YOUR DISTANCE** - Never approach, corner or handle wildlife. Risks incl. disease, bite, & scratch.
- **REPORT ANIMAL ISSUES** - Call a wildlife responder if human or animal well-being is a concern.

## REPORTING WILDLIFE ISSUES

*Know when and what to report and who to contact*

- **WHEN: Call right away** If you see wildlife 1) near where people are 2) is being fed or baited. 3) hurt, sick or acting odd. 4) has been harvested illegally.
- **WHAT:** Be sure to say : 1) when and 2) where wildlife issue happened, 3) what the animal did 4) where animal (if known), 5) your name, phone number.
- **CALL:** For a bat indoors: Service Desk (315) 774-9240 or Balfort Beatty/ODIA. Otherwise: MP Sgt Desk:(845) 938-3333 (anytime) NRS:(646) 208-9431(M-F 0745-1630)

# GROUND BIRDS OF THE WEST POINT MILITARY RESERVATION



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USAG—West Point, NY 10996  
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## GROUND BIRDS OF WEST POINT

We typically think of birds as flying through the air or perching or nesting in a tree or building. But not all birds live this way. Enter the ground birds - avians that forage, nest or roost on the ground. Some are heavy-bodied birds incapable of sustained flight such as pheasant and turkey. Some are ground-nesting species, like shorebirds and nightjars. Eleven ground bird species are discussed in this brochure, though others may be found at West Point as resident or migrant visitors.

This brochure seeks to inform readers about these eleven ground bird species, including brief summaries of their physical description, life history, habitat, diet and interesting facts. We also discuss species that are able to be hunted on West Point property by properly permitted hunters. While we hope this brochure informs and prepares readers, it is by no means a comprehensive guide. For more on these and other ground bird species, be sure to see NYSDEC's website: [www.dec.ny.gov](http://www.dec.ny.gov)

**Migratory Bird Treaty Act - MBTA:** Passed in 1918 to protect migratory birds, this landmark federal law today prohibits the hunting, harming, catching and selling of almost 1100 bird species (incl. all 11 here) and their parts.

## WILD TURKEY (*Meleagris gallopavo*)



The turkey is a very large (up to 4+ ft long, 6-24+ lbs, up to 4.5 ft. wingspan,) game bird with bronze, brown-green plumage, barred wings, a bare red/blue head. Males have prominent tails, large snoods and beards for display.

They are found t/o the U.S., esp. E of the Rockies and in S. Canada and N. Mexico. They inhabit open woodlands, scrubland and field edges offering escape and nest cover. They eat grains, seeds, invertebrates and small animals.

Males produce an iconic gobbling call, equivalent to a rooster's crow for mating or territoriality. Both males and females also cackle and yelp. Young (poults) whistle.

**Conservation Success Story:** Turkey nearly went extinct in NY due to habitat loss and hunting in the 1800s but the decline of farming, migrating turkey from PA and mid 1900s reintroduction & monitoring efforts restored the species!

**Cultural Import:** Turkey are renown as a symbol of the feast and are a holiday tablefare staple, esp Thanksgiving. The turkey and the Muscovy duck are the only two birds native to the Americas to be domesticated by man.

## RING-NECKED PHEASANT (*Phasianus colchicus*)



This large (up to 3 ft long, 1-6+ lbs, 1.5-3 ft wingspan) game bird incl. smaller drab, speckled brown females and large ornamental males /w red faces, white-ringed green necks /w and speckled gray and copper feathers.

Pheasant are not native at West Point, but stocked. They are actually native to Eurasia and were first imported in the late 1800s. They prefer fields and brush with cover and feed on grains, seeds, insects, and berries.

Males produce a loud, sharp crow call, often at dawn, to establish territory or attract mates. Both sexes emit clucking/ackling sounds, especially when flushed.

**Stocking:** West Point has stocked pheasant since at least the early 1980s as part of an annual put-and-take stocking program, giving eligible hunters, particularly those with dogs, an extended upland bird hunting opportunity in fall.

**Flush in a flash:** Most of these chicken-like gamebirds only fly as a last-ditch escape effort, flushing in an often explosive jump from cover and a fast, but unsustainably short flight. Pheasant can flush 40 mph for only c. 600 ft.

## RUFFED GROUSE (*Bonasa umbellus*)



The ruffed grouse is a medium (~1.5 ft long, 1-1¼ lbs, and a 1-2 ft. wingspan) game bird with dark barring and reddish-brown coloration. Males ill display a 'ruff' of black feathers and fan their tail feathers during courtship.

They are found across the NU .S., Canada in deciduous or mixed forest with dense undergrowth for cover, nesting. They eat buds, leaves, fruits, seeds, and insects.

Males make a distinct drumming sound by beating their wings for territorial or mating purposes. Both sexes make soft clucks and chirps. Grouse may be brood-parasitized by turkeys. Brood parasitism is when a bird lays its eggs in another birds (host) nest so the host will raise its offspring.

**West Point Upland Bird Hunting:** Turkey (in spring and fall) pheasant, grouse, woodcock, snipe & partridge may be taken by hunters /w NYS licenses, WP permits but take of other birds listed in this brochure is prohibited.

**Mandatory Harvest Report:** All hunting harvests at West Point must be reported at the time of check out. All hunting and harvest reporting is coordinated through the iSportsman website at: [westpoint.isportsman.net](http://westpoint.isportsman.net)

## AMERICAN WOODCOCK (*Scolopax minor*)



This resident gamebird is small (~1 ft long, 4-10 oz, 1 ft wing-span) with a large head, long beak, and dappled black and brown coloration that lets it camouflage in leaf litter.

Found across the E US, it inhabits forest floors near streambanks, waterbodies, and wetlands and is active at dawn and dusk when it probes for worms, insects, millipedes centipedes and crustaceans. The woodcock has a distinctive *peent* call.

## WILSON'S SNIPE (*Gallinago delicata*)



This shorebird is mid-sized (~1 ft long, 3-5 oz, 1½ ft. wing-span) with a long bill, a mottled yellow, and white body, and a white belly, letting it blend into vegetation to forage.

This breeding visitor is seen across the US in wetlands, shores, and banks eating invertebrates. It has a raspy call. Once a common snipe subspecies, in 2003 it was made its own species named for a famous American ornithologist, Alexander Wilson.

## CHUKAR PARTRIDGE (*Alectoris chukar*)



This mid-sized, (~1 ft long, 1-1½ lb, 1¼ ft. wingspan) bird is gray-brown with distinctive black barring on white wings, and a distinctive black band across a white facemask.

The chukkar was only stocked at West Point in 2018 as a game bird and is unlikely to still be here. Originally from Eurasia. It prefers dry, sandy habitats, has a diet of seeds, fruits, and insects and has a raspy *chuck* call.

**WHATS IN A NAME?:** For most of these species, males are called roosters and females are called hens. However for turkey, mature males are called **toms (or gobblers)** whereas juvenile males are called **jakes**.

**ID'ING BIRDS:** Identifying birds in the field can be difficult. In addition to this brochure, utilize physical and digital field guides. For IDing birds by their calls, Cornell University's Merlin Bird ID App or similar applications are available.