

HUNTING: While some groundbirds and waterfowl may be hunted in season with proper licenses, permits, etc. none of the native birds in Other Water Birds, Birds of Prey, or Backyard Birds brochures (except crows) may be hunted.

WHATS IN A NAME? Bittern, egret, heron, stork, crane—whats the difference? Herons, storks, and cranes are three groups of big wading birds. We have no storks or cranes in our area - only herons, which include bitterns and egrets.



Great Egret (*Ardea alba*)

The great egret is a large wading bird (3-4 ft long, 2-4 lbs., 4-5 ft wingspan) is mostly white with a long neck and legs and orange beak. It is found in marshes, lakes, and rivers feeding on invertebrates, fish and frogs. It is a rare visitor to West Point. Its call is a series of echoing guttural croaks.

A BEAT ON EGRETS: Male egrets hold elaborate mating displays with complex bowing and stretching to show off striking plumes called “aigrettes”. At one time, egrets were heavily hunted for these plumes, used in women’s fashion.

THE KINGFISHER

Belted Kingfisher (*Ceryle alcyon*)

A mid-sized bird but the largest of accipiter hawks (~1 ft long, < ½ lbs., ~ 2 ft wingspan), is a striking blue-gray color with a namesake rusty orange belt across its chest. It is found along coasts, rivers, and fish where it feeds by diving for fish or other prey. The belted kingfisher has a loud, rattling call.



A BEAT ON KINGFISHERS: In most birds where males look different from the females, it is the males that are more brightly colored. However, with belted kingfishers this trend is reversed and females more colorful than males.

THE SWALLOWS

Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*)

The tree swallow is a small, agile bird (~ 6 in. long, 1 oz, and a 1 ft wingspan), it has an iridescent blue-green plumage and white underside. It lives in open areas near water such as fields, marshes and lakes where it catches insects during its acrobatic flight. It calls include melodious chirps and twittering.



Bank Swallow (*Riparia riparia*)

This swallow is a small, bird (~ 6 in. long, 1 oz, and a 1 ft wingspan), it has a brownish plumage, distinct white throat and underside with subtle banding. It lives along water in burrows built into sandy banks or cliffs. Like most swallows it is an insectivore that feeds on the wing. Its call is a cheerful twittering.



A BEAT ON SWALLOWS; West Point has several species of swallow - tree, bank, barn, and cliff swallows. A trait common to all of them is their remarkable acrobatic flight which includes impressive rolls, banks, turns and twists.

THE WRENS

Marsh wren (*Cistothorus palustris*)

The marsh wren is a small feisty bird (4-5 in. long, <1 oz, ~7 in. wingspan) with a streaked brown plumage and upturned tail. As its name suggests, it lives in marshes and wetlands building complex nests in reeds. It feeds mainly on insects. The call of a marsh wren is either a bubbly call or trill.



A BEAT ON WRENS: Wrens are prolific nest builders. Several species in different genera including marsh, house, and Carolina wren build multiple nests. Benefits to this are additional shelters, attracting mates, and fooling predators.

THE BLACKBIRDS

Red-winged blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*)

This small, common bird (~9 in long, < 3 oz, and 1 - 1½ ft wingspan) is dimorphic. Males are black with namesake red and yellow wings while females are a mottled brown. It lives in wetlands, marshes and fields often among reeds, eating insects, fruits and seeds. Its “conk-la-ree” call is often heard.



A BEAT ON RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS: These early migrants are some of the first bird species to return at the end of winter and the familiar refrain of “conk-la-ree” near water in late March or April is a sign that spring is near.

BASIC WILDLIFE SAFETY REVIEW

Do these things to keep people and animals safe:

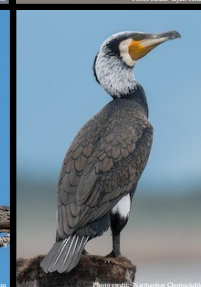
- **NEVER FEED WILDLIFE** - Nuisance animal issues often begin over food. Feeding wild animals is illegal.
- **KEEP YOUR DISTANCE** - Never approach, corner or handle wildlife. Risks incl. disease, bite, & scratch.
- **REPORT ANIMAL ISSUES** - Call a wildlife responder if human or animal well-being is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

REPORTING WILDLIFE ISSUES

Know when and what to report and who to contact

- **WHEN:** Call right away If you see wildlife 1) being handled by people 2) 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. Other issues: MP Desk: (845) 938-3333 (anytime) NRS: (646) 208-9431(M-F 0745-1630)

OTHER WATER BIRDS OF THE WEST POINT MILITARY RESERVATION



West Point Natural Resources Section (NRS)
Bldg 667A Ruger Road
USAG—West Point, NY 10996
www.westpoint.isportsman.net

OTHER WATER BIRDS OF WEST POINT

Ducks, geese, and swans are far from the only birds found in and around water at West Point. In addition to waterfowl, other avian groups like diving birds, shore birds, wading birds, and smaller perching birds make a living in and around coastlines, lakes, rivers, and wetland habitats. This diverse collection of birds differs in many ways - from their size, shape and coloration to their abundance here to the manner in which they forage, fly, swim, and nest. But one thing they share is they all are creatures of the water.

This brochure seeks to inform readers about nineteen different West Point water birds including brief summaries of their physical description, preferred habitat, diet and calls. We also discuss some interesting facts about each group of water birds and finally touch on some regulations meant to protect birds and safety rules to protect people and animals alike.. We hope this brochure informs readers, but it is by no means a comprehensive guide. For more, see NYSDEC's website: 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 and their parts.

THE CORMORANTS

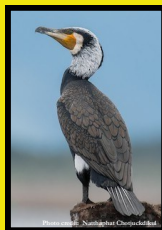
Double-crested cormorant (*Nannopterum auritum*)



This large diving waterbird is ~2½ - 3 ft long, 4-9 lbs. /w a 4-5 ft wingspan, long neck, slender body and namesake double breast. It has a bright orange-yellow face patch and mostly black feathers. It lives in coastal areas, rivers and lakes, eating fish. Its calls are a series of low, hoarse croaks.

Great cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

Even bigger is the great cormorant (~2-3 ft long, 5-18 lbs, 3½ -4 ft wingspan). With a long, thick neck and body, black plumage with a green sheen, it has a white thigh patch and orange yellow-face. It lives in coastal zones, rivers and lakes, eats mostly fish, and a deep, guttural croak.



A BEAT ON CORMORANTS: Cormorants are expert divers with unique feathers that easily waterlog helping them dive easily. Using their large webbed feet to propel and wings to steer underwater, they dive in pursuit of fish.

THE GULLS & TERNS

Ring-billed gull (*Larus delawarensis*)

This mid-sized gull (~1-1½ ft long, 1½ -4 lbs. with a 4 ft wingspan) is found near large waterbodies (ocean, lakes, rivers) and urban areas. White with a gray back, black tail and namesake beak ring, this scavenger with a loud, raucous call may be the most common year-round bird on the Hudson River here.



Greater black-backed gull (*Larus marinus*)

The world's largest gull (~2 ft long, up to 4 lbs., 5½ - 6½ ft wingspan), is white with large black wings and yellow bill with a red spot. Like other gulls, this rare gull lives near coastlines and large bodies of water where it eats fish, crustaceans, and other birds. Its call is a series of deep, harsh squawks.

A BEAT ON GULLS: Gulls are one of the few types of birds that can survive by drinking salt water, an adaptation possible due to special facial glands they use to flush salt out their nostrils and lets them travel far out to sea for food.

Forster's Tern (*Sterna forsteri*)

A mid-sized seabird (~1 ft long, up to 1½ lbs., 2½ -3 ft wingspan), Forster's tern has a sleek white body, long wings with a black cap and black-tipped bill. It lives in coastal areas, by lakes and marshes and feeds on small fish it dives for. The call of this strong, graceful bird is a series of high pitched calls.



A BEAT ON TERNS: While other diving birds like grebes, loons and cormorants usually dive for fish from a swimming start, terns typically dive from a height, swiftly plunging into the water at speeds over 30 miles at hour to target fish.

GREBES & LOONS

Pied-billed grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*)



This grebe is a small stocky waterbird (~2 ft long, ~1 lbs, with a 2 ft wingspan), with a short neck and stout round bill. It is mostly brown and mottled, living mainly in wetlands like marshes, lakes and ponds where it dives for fish and invertebrates. Rare at West Point, they have soft, whistling calls.

Common loon (*Gavia immer*)

This large, slender-bodied, sharp-beaked waterbird (~2½ ft long 4-10+ lbs, with a 2½ -3½ ft wingspan) has a black-and-white checkered pattern and distinct black head. Known for its long dives and eerie calls, this fish-eater usually lives in more northern lakes and coasts, but does visit on occasion.



A BEAT ON LOONS: To many, a loon's mournful call evokes danger or sadness. Its call is often used in movies and television to this affect but - as with red-tailed hawks or kookaburras - may be misattributed to a wrong bird or area.

THE RAILS & SANDPIPERS

Virginia Rail (*Rallus limicola*)

A midsized marshbird (<1 ft long, <½ lbs., ~1 ft wingspan), this rail is a rusty brown and gray small-bodied bird with long toes and downward curved beak - features that help it dig for invertebrates, aquatic plants and seeds in the marshes it lives in. Their calls are a sharp series of echoing grunts.



Solitary sandpiper (*Tringa solitaria*)

This is a small shorebird (<1 ft long, <½ lbs., ~1½ ft wingspan), greenish brown above and white, sometimes with brown spotting below. Found in wetlands, ponds or small streams probing mud for invertebrates. They are known for their namesake solitude, bobbing movements, and soft melodic calls.

Spotted sandpiper (*Actitis macularius*)

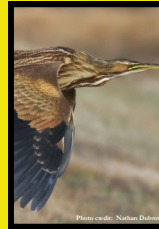
A small shorebird (<1 ft long, <½ lbs., ~1½ ft wingspan), this bird has a spotted brown and white plumage and like other sandpipers, is found foraging for invertebrates along lakes, rivers and wetlands. These sandpipers have more of a teetering motion as they walk and soft, melodic whistle calls.



A BEAT ON RAILS, PIPERS & PLOVERS: Rails, pipers and plovers have special features including long legs and long bills (sometimes curved) to aid them in wading in dense plants and probe the mud for invertebrate food.

BITTERNS. HERON, & EGRET

American bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*)



A mid-sized wading bird (2-3 ft long, 2-5 lbs., 3-4 ft wingspan), is a brown and beige bird that lives in marshy, wetland habitats. It eats fish, frogs and invertebrates, hunting them in true heron fashion as an ambush predator. Its very distinctive call is described as resembling a distant, booming foghorn.

A BEAT ON HERONS: Many herons, which include the bitterns and egrets, are noted for their camouflage due to a mix of their matching plumage and standing perfectly still for long periods of time which helps them hunt and hide.

Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*)



The great blue heron is an iconic, large wading bird (~4 - 5½ ft long, 4 - 8 bs., 6½ -7ft wingspan), with a blue-gray plumage, long legs and sharp pointed beak. It lives in many aquatic or wetland habitats including lakes, rivers, marshes and coastal shorelines. As a noted ambush predator it stands motionless for long stretches of time before it quickly

strikes at prey like fish, amphibians, and reptiles but it will eat small mammals and birds as well. They build large stick nests high in trees/shrubs and have distinct croaking calls.

Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*)

Far smaller than great blues are green herons (~2 ft long, 1½ - 2 ft long, 1½ -2½ bs., ~2½ ft wingspan), with dark green and rich brown color and stout body. Green herons live in ponds, rivers and marshes and hunts using bait like insects to lure in fish. Its call is a distinct, harsh "kow" or "skeow" sound.

