

# Bird Inventory

We are fortunate to have a nice diversity of birds at Driftless Prairies. This listing will be “under construction” for the rest of my life!!! Click on the bird’s name and you’ll see tidbits of information. Here’s the [references](#) for those tidbits!

The most vulnerable time in a bird’s life is the egg stage and the nestling stage. Predators range from other birds to mammals to snakes. Even insects such as black flies cause death.

Each bird has a “signature” nest building design and preferred building location ; some use preexisting cavities such as woodpecker holes or nest boxes that we humans create for them. If they were all the same, it would be like a red neon sign pointing the way for predators.

Birds insulate themselves by fluffing out; this traps their body heat in the air surrounding their feathers, keeping them warm. For additional warmth, some will tuck their heads and feet into their feathers. Birds use their wings as raincoats. A cold rain can be very hazardous; if their downy feathers get wet, they lose warmth. Birds found in our northern climates during winter have a higher metabolism. They eat during the day and burn those calories staying warm at night. They can lower their body temps to stretch calories. Without food, these birds would not survive.

Birds found in wooded areas and forests depend on snags or standing dead trees. Nearly 1/3 of our woodland birds nest or forage for beetle grubs inside snags.

Habitat loss is reducing the numbers of our birds. Habitat is being destroyed by urbanization, farming, and degradation. Farming practices are changing but there’s much to be done. Degraded habitat can be restored with time and resources.

Areas allowed to be overgrown with non-native bushes leave no food for the birds because insects aren't adapting quickly enough to use non-native plants. This is devastating for migrating birds in need of food. McCormac has a great sentence in his article; "conservation of songbirds starts with conservation of native plants."

Caterpillars are a preferred bird food source, even for chipping sparrows who are known to be vegetarians. Most warbler diets are 30% caterpillars and vireos are a caterpillar's greatest fear; maybe this is why caterpillars have such great camouflage and emerge at night.

I love learning bird song. Many birds can be shy but if they're singing, I know they're around. Birds sing for a variety of reasons, the two most common reasons are territory marking and attracting a mate. It's particularly interesting to hear the regional dialects of the same bird species or to hear the babies learning their song. Insects are crucial to the quality of song. Insects provide protein and other valuable nutrients to baby birds during their development and the quantity of insects available is important. I've often wondered how the birds can hear each other when it seems they are singing equally as loudly and simultaneously. This is overcome by singing louder, at a higher pitch, or more often and they alternate their singing time. Bird songs change for birds in open environments such as the country and closed environments such as urban neighborhoods and downtown areas.

Predation is a big concern for most birds. Generally, in a nesting season a songbird will lose a nest due to predation. Scientists are learning that merely having a predator nearby can change the reproduction of many songbirds; laying eggs and raising babies are high resource activities. It's amazing that any songbirds reproduce!

Cornell's [All About Birds](#) is an excellent website. Cornell's site has info on bird identification, photos, videos,

song/call recordings, habitat, life cycles, etc.