



America's Bird Nursery

The Importance of the Boreal Forest to Breeding Birds

International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD), held annually on the second Saturday in May, is an invitation to celebrate and support migratory bird conservation.

The Boreal Forest Region of North America, which stretches across 3,500 miles from Alaska to the Atlantic Ocean, is the birthplace of billions of birds each year. It is critical to the survival of nearly half of all North American species, which return each year to the forest to breed. Most boreal-nesting birds spend at least some of the year in the United States, and at least 20 percent of birds at North American birdfeeders in winter have returned after a summer in the boreal.

Different Birds, Different Uses

Many birds visit the boreal region at some point during the year, but they use it in a variety of ways. Most birds nest and breed there, returning to the States or different countries throughout the

western hemisphere to spend the winter. A few species spend the entire winter in the Boreal. Some rely more on Boreal wetlands for feeding and resting during migration than for breeding. Overall, at least 47 families of birds regularly use the Boreal Forest, accounting for 67 percent of all bird families that regularly occur in the U.S. and Canada.

The Nursery

What the boreal primarily provides is a place for billions of birds to nest and breed. Of the 400 species that occur within the boreal, 303 are there to breed in its forests, thickets and wetlands. The numbers of birds breeding there can be broken down by bird group:

<i>Bird Group</i>	<i>Estimated Number of Breeding Birds</i>	<i>Percent of Total Birds in US and Canada</i>
Landbirds	1,600,000,000	30
Waterfowl	26,000,000	38
Waterbirds	14,000,000	totals unknown
Shorebirds	7,000,000	30



74% of Common Terns...



44% of Belted Kingfishers...



97% of Short-billed Dowitchers...

use the Boreal Forest to breed and raise their young.

IMBD Information
web - <http://birds.fws.gov/imbd>
phone - 703/358-2318

IMBD Materials
web - <http://www.BirdDay.org>
phone - 1-866/334-3330

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Species Specifics

Nearly 400 species are known to occur within some portion of the Boreal Forest, including loons, grebes, swans, ducks, hawks, sandpipers, gulls, owls, warblers, and sparrows. Perhaps the best known residents of the area are the tiny songbirds so popular with backyard birders. According to the National Wildlife Foundation, up to a billion sparrows and two billion warblers hatch in the trees of the Boreal Forest each year. Several birds

commonly associated with the Boreal include the Whooping Crane, perhaps the most carefully monitored of all boreal birds, the Rusty Blackbird, and the American Black Duck.

Well-known backyard birds that regularly occur in the Boreal are the American Goldfinch, Baltimore Oriole, Eastern Bluebird, Mourning Dove, and the Ruby-Throated Hummingbird.

Sentimental favorites that frequent the Boreal include the Mallard and the Bald Eagle. Even birds with such American sounding names as the Tennessee Warbler and the Philadelphia Vireo are born and bred in the Canadian Boreal Forest!

Different species have varying levels of reliance on the Boreal. Some species, such as the Palm Warbler and the Northern Shrike, have as much as 98 percent of their breeding adults using the Boreal Forest as a nursery.

<i>Number of Species</i>	<i>Percent of Population that Breeds in the Boreal</i>	<i>Sample Species</i>
55 species	25-49% breeding in Boreal	Northern Pintail Osprey Sabbhill Crane Belted Kingfisher Black-capped Chickadee American Robin American Redstart
96 species	50-79% breeding in Boreal	Trumpeter Swan American Black Duck Yellow-bellied Sapsucker Lesser Scaup Hooded Merganser Common Loon Magnolia Warbler
35 species	80% or more breeding in Boreal	Whooping Crane Solitary Sandpiper Great Grey Owl Blackpoll Warbler Dark-eyed Junco Philadelphia Vireo White-throated Sparrow Black-backed Woodpecker

At least 150 species have a quarter or more of their estimated breeding population within the Boreal Forest Region (data provided by Bird Studies Canada and the Boreal Songbird Initiative).



Breeding Grounds Under Siege

Billions of birds rely on the North American Boreal, the largest unspoiled forest remaining in the world. At this point, much of the boreal is untouched by development, but one-third of the region has already been set aside for industrial use. The decisions made in the next few years will largely determine the fate of this unspoiled wilderness. Many of the birds we see in our yards and enjoy in our parks and refuges use the boreal to hatch and raise their young, and they depend on our conservation efforts today to protect their nursery for tomorrow.

Learn More

Several reports detail the importance of the boreal to birds:

“The Importance of Canada’s Boreal Forest to Landbirds”, and
“The Boreal Forest Region: North America’s Bird Nursery”

These reports and other information about the boreal forest are available online at the Boreal Songbird Initiative web site at www.borealbirds.org, and at the Canadian Boreal Initiative web site at www.borealcanada.ca.