



Birds of the Minneapolis Mississippi River Gorge

Dave Zumeta

Abundance, Season and Breeding Status Codes

Abundance:

- C = Common – usually present, relatively easy to find
- U = Uncommon – usually present, but may be difficult to find
- O = Occasional - observed four or more times, but not usually present
- R = Rare - observed one to three times

Seasons:

- p = permanent resident
- s = summer resident or visitor (June–July)
- w = winter resident or visitor (December–February)
- m = spring and/or fall migrant (March–May and/or August–November)

Breeding status:

- * = breeding confirmed (nest found, or adults seen feeding young, since 2000) (42 species)
- + = breeding likely (adult pair or one or more singing males present through June or later at least once since 2000) (17 species)

Note: Status refers to **the Mississippi River gorge area only**. This list includes 195 species of birds, of which 58 are confirmed or likely current regular or occasional breeding species. Several species listed as migrants and/or occurring in summer breed in nearby areas but are not known to breed in the gorge area. Several other species likely bred prior to 2000.



The geographic area covered by this list includes the surface waters of the Mississippi River and adjacent park land **on the west side of the river only** from the Army Corps of Engineers Lock and Dam #1 immediately south of the Ford Bridge north to the Washington Ave. bridge. The list area includes residential areas and the Becketwood Cooperative, Dowling School and Minnehaha Academy Lower and Upper School grounds west to 46th Avenue South from East 46th Street north to East 29th Street as well as residential areas between Seabury Avenue and Dorman Avenue North. The list area also includes park land from East 26th Street north to the Washington Ave. bridge. No residential areas north of East 26th Street are included. For an approximate Google map please visit: tinyurl.com/gorgebirdmaparea.

This list was compiled from observations made by Dave Zumeta between May 1988 and January 2026. Observations by Cole Bauer, Joe Beck, Gretchen Bratvold, Joan Galli, Jim Hovey, Craig Larson, Lee Pfannmuller, Karl Roe, Bonnie Sample, Julian Sellers, Gregg Severson, and the late Bud Tordoff are gratefully acknowledged.

Species

Ross's Goose
Canada Goose
Trumpeter Swan

Tundra Swan
Wood Duck
Blue-winged Teal
Northern Shoveler
Mallard
American Black Duck
Green-winged Teal

Redhead
Ring-necked Duck
Lesser Scaup
Bufflehead
Common Goldeneye
Hooded Merganser

Common Merganser
Red-breasted Merganser
Ruddy Duck

Ring-necked Pheasant
Wild Turkey
Pied-billed Grebe

Horned Grebe
Red-necked Grebe
Eared Grebe
Rock Pigeon
Mourning Dove
Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Black-billed Cuckoo

Common Nighthawk
Eastern Whip-poor-will
Chimney Swift
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Virginia Rail

American Coot
Sandhill Crane
Killdeer
Semipalmated Sandpiper
American Woodcock
Wilson's Snipe
Spotted Sandpiper
Solitary Sandpiper

Mississippi Gorge Bird List

Status

R m (March 8-9, 2016; photographs by Gregg Severson)
C p* (bred 2023)
O m, w (October 11, 1995, Joe Beck [JB]; female banded June 30, 1998 in Alston, Michigan found dead by Gretchen Bratvold on April 9, 2019; March 15, 2020 – 2)
U m, R w (December 4 and 7, 2016; December 17, 2022)
U m, s* (bred 2010)
U m (previously s+, but not seen in summer for 25+ years)
R m (April 3, 2008 - 20, Lee Pfannmuller [LP])
C p* (bred 2023)
R m (March 2, 5, 2008 - 2)
R m, s (April 21, 2018, Cole Bauer [CB]; April 23, 2018, LP; July 25, 1994, JB)
R m (April 21, 2018, CB)
O m
U m (April 23, 2018 – 16)
U m (April 23, 2018 – 25+)
U m, w
U m, R w (February 2, 1992 and December 3, 1994, JB; December 17, 2022 - 2)
C m, w, R s (female summered below Ford Dam, 2006)
R m (April 12, 2008 - 2; April 23 [6] and 25 [2], 2018)
R m, w (April 4 [LP - 2], 12, 2008 - 2; April 23, 2018 – 18; December 16, 2022)
R s
U p+ (courtship seen, April 2019; bred nearby, 2020, LP)
O m, R s, w (June 8, 10, 2008; December 17, 1994, Julian Sellers [JS])
R m (April 12, 2008; April 21 [10+, CB] and 23 [17], 2018)
O m (April 12, 2008; April 21 [5, CB]; 24 [LP]; 25, 2018)
R m (April 12, 2008 - 1)
C p+ (courtship observed, 2020)
C p+, U w
R m, s (May 17, 2017; early June 2015 - 2)
O m, s (May 15, 1991 and May 20, 1992, JB; June 16, 2007; June 16, 2008)
C m, s+ (less common than in 1990s)
R m (May 2004)
C m, s+ (less common than in 1990s)
C m, s* (bred 2002; more common than in 1990s)
R m (early October – November 2, 1964, Mrs. L. H. Dahl, Loon 37:54)
R m (March 21, 1994, JB; April 5 and 13 [2], 2008)
O m
C m, R s (no breeding evidence since early 1990s)
R m
U m (October 29, 2020)
R m (April 25, 1991, JB)
U m, s+ (likely bred, 1998; present–mid-July, 2006, 2015)
R m (April 28, 1990 and May 2, 1994, JB; May 9, 2015)

Dave Zumeta

Page 2 of 6

Bonaparte's Gull	R m (April 23 [2], 26 [83+], 28 [8], 2018)
Franklin's Gull	R m
Ring-billed Gull	C m, U s, O w (summer visitor—does not breed in gorge)
Herring Gull	C m, O s, w
Glaucous Gull	R m, w (April 14, 1992 and late fall/early winter 1993, JB)
Caspian Tern	U m
Black Tern	R m (May 11, 1994, JB; May 19, 1991; May 21, 2005 – 3, LP)
Common Tern	R m (May 6, 2017)
Forster's Tern	R m (no recent records; U m, R s in the 1990s)
Common Loon	U m, R w (April 23, 2018 – 25 LP; Dec. 18-19, 1993 – JS)
Double-crested Cormorant	C m, s (summer visitor—does not breed in gorge)
American White Pelican	O m
American Bittern	Rm (April 21, 2023; Jim Hovey photo)
Great Blue Heron	C m, s (summer visitor—does not breed in gorge)
Great Egret	C m, s (summer visitor—does not breed in gorge)
Green Heron	O m
Black-crowned Night-Heron	O m, s (much less common, 2007-2022, than previously; summer visitor—does not breed in gorge)
Turkey Vulture	C m, s (much more common than in 1990s; summer visitor -not known to breed in gorge)
Osprey	U m, R s (June 17 and 25, 2023-2 birds; July 2, 2022, Becketwood, BS, DZ; more common than in 1990s)
Sharp-shinned Hawk	U m, R w (December 29, 1994, JB; December 2015; February 25 [DZ] and 26 [LP], 2019)
Cooper's Hawk	C m, s*, O w (bred 2020; more common than in 1990s)
Bald Eagle	C p* (bred 2023; much more common than in 1990s)
Broad-winged Hawk	U m, s* (bred 2025)
Red-tailed Hawk	U m, w, O s (bred nearby, 1996, Joan Galli; not known to breed in gorge area)
Eastern Screech-Owl	U p+ (less common than in 1990s and early 2000s)
Great Horned Owl	U m, w, R s (no breeding evidence from gorge)
Barred Owl	U p* (bred 2022, Becketwood BS; more common than in 1990s)
Northern Saw-whet Owl	R w (January 27, 1994, JB)
Belted Kingfisher	U m, s+ (July 1, 2006; June 21, 2022)
Red-headed Woodpecker	O m, R s (June 1, 1995, JB)
Red-bellied Woodpecker	C p* (bred 2020, LP)
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	U m, R w (January 19, 2019)
Downy Woodpecker	C p* (bred 2023)
Hairy Woodpecker	C p* (bred 2020)
Northern Flicker	C m, O s, U w (less common summer, more common winter than in 1990s; no breeding evidence from gorge)
Pileated Woodpecker	U p* (bred 2025)
American Kestrel	U m, O s, R w (probably bred nearby in 1990s; not known to breed in gorge area; much less common than in 1990s)
Merlin	O m, w, s* (bred, 2017; not present most summers)
Peregrine Falcon	U p* (bred on Ford bridge, 2025; bred by Ford dam, 2018)
Prairie Falcon	R m (November 29, 1996, JS)
Great Crested Flycatcher	C m, s+
Eastern Kingbird	U m, R s (June 1-2, 2020; breeds nearby)
Olive-sided Flycatcher	U m, R s (June 1, 1993, JB; June 2, 2023)
Eastern Wood-Pewee	C m, s+

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	U m, R s (June 2, 2013; June 6, 2022 and 2023)
Alder Flycatcher	O m, R s (June 1, 1993, JB)
Willow Flycatcher	R m, s (June 9, 1996)
Least Flycatcher	C m, Rs (June 1, 2023; June 12, 2019)
Eastern Phoebe	C m, s* (bred 2022)
Northern Shrike	R w (February 2, 1997)
Yellow-throated Vireo	C m, U s+ (more common in summer than in 1990s)
Blue-headed Vireo	C m
Philadelphia Vireo	U m
Warbling Vireo	C m, U s+ (only breeds north of I-94 bridge)
Red-eyed Vireo	C m, s* (bred 2015)
Blue Jay	C p* (bred 2019)
American Crow	C p* (bred 2015)
Bank Swallow	C m, s* (bred 2022)
Tree Swallow	C m, R w, s* (February 29, 1994, JB; bred 2003, 2008)
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	C m, s* (bred 2023)
Purple Martin	O m (likely bred nearby in 1990s; more common in 1990s)
Barn Swallow	C m, U s (probably breeds nearby, no breeding evidence from gorge)
Cliff Swallow	C m, s* (bred 2025)
Black-capped Chickadee	C p* (bred 2023)
Tufted Titmouse	Rm, w (late fall 2024-April 2025, LP, DZ)
Red-breasted Nuthatch	U m, w, R s (June 27, 2022; sporadic, not present every year, no breeding evidence from gorge, not present most summers)
White-breasted Nuthatch	C p* (bred 2020, LP)
Brown Creeper	C m, U w
House Wren	C m, s* (bred 2022)
Winter Wren	U m, R w (December 15, 17, 2018, DZ, LP; built partial nest, April 28, 1993, JB)
Marsh Wren	R m (May 23, 1993, JB)
Carolina Wren	R m, s (August 7, 1992 and August 7-8, 1993, JB; July 18, 2015)
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	C m, s* (bred 2014; rare before 2000)
Golden-crowned Kinglet	C m
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	C m
Eastern Bluebird	U m, s*, R w (bred 2022, Becketwood, BS; Dec. 8, 2016 - 5)
Townsend's Solitaire	R m (May 4-18, 2016, Craig Larson photo)
Veery	U m
Gray-cheeked Thrush	U m (mid- to late May)
Swainson's Thrush	C m, R s (June 2, 2008; does not breed in gorge)
Hermit Thrush	C m
Wood Thrush	O m, R s (early June 2015; November 13, 2020 - latest fall migration date statewide: (Loon 92(4):193)
American Robin	C p* (numbers variable in winter, from O to C, bred 2023)
Varied Thrush	R m, w (October 31, 1994, JB; January 19, 2022, LP)
Gray Catbird	C m, s* (bred 2025; October 28, 1995, JB; October 26, 2020)
Brown Thrasher	U m, O s* (bred 2022; less common migrant than in 1990s)
European Starling	U p*
Cedar Waxwing	U p* (bred 2010; sporadic, R to C, absent most winters)
House Sparrow	C p* (bred 2022)
House Finch	C p* (bred 2020)

Purple Finch	U m, O w (not present most winters)
Common Redpoll	U m, w (sporadic, numbers vary, not present every year)
Red Crossbill	O m, w (sporadic, not present every year) (April 5, 2017 -2)
White-winged Crossbill	R m
Pine Siskin	U m, w, O s (sporadic, numbers vary, not present most summers)
American Goldfinch	C p*
Lapland Longspur	R m (November 7, 19, 1995, JB)
Snow Bunting	R m (November 14, 1994, JB)
Chipping Sparrow	C m, s* (bred 2022)
Clay-colored Sparrow	U m
Field Sparrow	O m
Fox Sparrow	U m
American Tree Sparrow	U m, O w
Dark-eyed Junco	C m, w
White-crowned Sparrow	O m
Harris' Sparrow	O m
White-throated Sparrow	C m, O w, Rs (June 3, 1995, JB; June 7, 2018)
Savannah Sparrow	R m (November 8, 2003, JB; April 22, 2020; October 24, 2020)
Song Sparrow	C m, s+, R w (December 17, 2022, DZ, LP)
Lincoln's Sparrow	U m
Swamp Sparrow	U m
Eastern Towhee	U m
Yellow-headed Blackbird	R m (May)
Bobolink	R m (May 12, 1992; May 18, 1997)
Meadowlark (species)	R m (April 19, 1995, JB – probably Eastern Meadowlark)
Orchard Oriole	R m (May 16, 1992; May 13, 2023)
Baltimore Oriole	C m, U s* (much less common in summer than in 1990s)
Red-winged Blackbird	C m, O s+
Brown-headed Cowbird	C m, U s* (bred 2022)
Common Grackle	C m, U s* (bred 2022)
Ovenbird	C m, R s (June 1, 2017; does not breed in gorge)
Northern Waterthrush	C m, R s (June 1, 1993, JB)
Golden-winged Warbler	U m
Blue-winged Warbler	R m (May 13, 2020)
Black-and-White Warbler	C m (October 31, 1993, JB)
Prothonotary Warbler	R m (May 8, 1994, JB)
Tennessee Warbler	C m, O s (June 5, 2013; July 31, 1992, JB)
Orange-crowned Warbler	U m (October 28, 1995, JB)
Nashville Warbler	C m, R s (July 29, 1992 and October 28, 1995, JB)
Connecticut Warbler	R m (O m in 1990s; May 23, 2023)
Mourning Warbler	O m, R s (June 1, 1993, JB; less common than in 1990s)
Common Yellowthroat	C m, O s+ (first summer record 2006-not always present)
Hooded Warbler	R m, s (May 5, 2002 and June 12, 2019, DZ and LP)
American Redstart	C m, s* (first summer record 2010; bred 2015, 2020)
Cape May Warbler	U m
Northern Parula	U m
Magnolia Warbler	C m (October 28, 1995, JB)
Bay-breasted Warbler	U m
Blackburnian Warbler	U m
Yellow Warbler	C m, U s+ (only breeds north of I-94 bridge)
Chestnut-sided Warbler	C m, R s (June 1, 1993, JB; June 1, 2017; October 11, 2020 - third

	latest fall migration date for southern half of Minnesota)
Blackpoll Warbler	C m, R s (June 2, 2013; June 1, 2018; June 1, 2020)
Black-throated Blue Warbler	R m (September 26, 2012, Karl Roe; October 28, 1995, JB)
Palm Warbler	C m
Yellow-rumped Warbler	C m
Black-throated Green Warbler	U m, R s (June 26, 2020, LP, DZ - latest spring migration date statewide (Loon: 92(2):85-86); October 20, 1991, JB)
Canada Warbler	U m
Wilson's Warbler	U m
Scarlet Tanager	U m, s (late June 2015, LP; no breeding evidence)
Summer Tanager	R m (October 16 - November 3, 2020, many observers)
Northern Cardinal	C p* (bred 2023)
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	C m, R s (July 28, 2020; s+ early 1990s, not since then)
Indigo Bunting	C m, s* (bred 2016; increasingly common in summer)

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Friends of the Mississippi River is the leading citizen organization working to protect, restore and enhance the Mississippi River in the Twin Cities area. Many birds on this list benefit from restoration work conducted by FMR ecologists and volunteers, the River Gorge Stewards. Learn more at FMR.org and FMR.org/river-gorge-stewards.