

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Merritt Island

National Wildlife Refuge
Bird List



photo: James Lyon

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, located just east of Titusville, shares a common boundary with the John F. Kennedy Space Center. Its coastal location, tropic-like climate, and wide variety of habitat types contribute to Merritt Island's diverse bird population. The Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee lists 521 species of birds statewide. To date, 359 species have been identified on the refuge.

Of special interest are breeding populations of Bald Eagles, Brown Pelicans, Roseate Spoonbills, Reddish Egrets, and Mottled Ducks. Spectacular migrations of passerine birds, especially warblers, occur during spring and fall. In winter tens of thousands of waterfowl may be seen. Eight species of herons and egrets are commonly observed year-round.

Tips on Birding

A good field guide and binoculars provide the basic tools useful in the observation and identification of birds. While marshes and shallow impoundments are the most productive birding areas, in order to find the widest variety of bird species, you should also visit mangrove-rimmed shorelines, cabbage palm and hardwood hammocks, palmetto and pine uplands, oak scrub and the beach. The refuge has provided trails and roads into each of these habitat types in order to enhance bird watching opportunities. The cool weather months (October-April) are generally the best time of year for birding. The best times of the day are early morning and late afternoon.

Using This List

This checklist is arranged taxonomically by order (solid line) and family. Representatives from 18 orders and 60 families have been identified on the refuge. The word family is a classification term that places birds of similar appearance and habits into one group. Closely related families make up an order. All birds in the same order have some common characteristics. Learning to recognize families and orders can help in identifying new birds you may encounter at Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge.

This list is in accordance with the "Checklist of Florida Birds" as updated by the Florida Ornithological Society's Records Committee through December 31, 2015.

Seasonal Occurrences

SP - Spring - March, April, May
SU - Summer - June, July, August
FA - Fall - September, October, November
WN - Winter - December, January, February

You may see some species outside the seasons indicated on this checklist. This phenomenon is quite common for many birds. However, the checklist is designed to indicate the general trend of migration and seasonal abundance for each species and, therefore, does not account for unusual occurrences.

Abundance Designation

C – Common - These birds are present in large numbers, are widespread, and should be seen if you look in the correct habitat.

U – Uncommon - These birds are present, but because of their low numbers, behavior, habitat, or distribution, they are not usually seen. However, an experienced bird watcher should be able to find them by looking in the right places at the right times.

O – Occasional - These birds are present in low numbers and are not expected to be seen without a special effort to find them. At least a few are seen each year.

R – Rare - These birds are not expected to be seen every year. They occur in low numbers, may also be secretive or hard to identify, and may be unreported for several years.

DATE - A date indicates the most recent sighting of an accidental species, extremely Rare species, or a species that has not been seen on the Refuge recently due to changes in habitat conditions. Their occurrence here is considered so unusual as to not be expected.

***-- Breeds on the Refuge.**

Status

Listed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

(E) – Federal endangered species

(T) – Federal threatened species

Listed by the Florida Wildlife Commission

(FL-E) – FL endangered species

(FL-T) – FL threatened species

(FL-SSC) – FL species of special concern

(FL-NNS) – FL non-native species

	SP	SU	FA	WN	Status
Ducks, Geese, and Swans					
Black-bellied Whistling Duck	R	R	R	R	
Fulvous Whistling Duck	R		R	R	
Greater White-fronted Goose		2005			
Snow Goose			O	O	
Ross's Goose		2009			
Brant	R		R	R	
Canada Goose				R	
Mute Swan		2009			(FL-NNS)
Tundra Swan		2010			
Muscovy Duck		2007			(FL-NNS)
Wood Duck *	O		O	O	
Gadwall	U		U	U	
Eurasian Wigeon	R		R	R	
American Wigeon	O		C	C	
American Black Duck	R		R	R	
Mallard	O		O	O	
Mottled Duck *	C	C	C	C	
Blue-winged Teal	C	O	C	C	
Cinnamon Teal		2019			
Northern Shoveler	C	R	C	C	
White-cheeked Pintail		1996			(FL-NNS)
Northern Pintail	U		C	C	
Green-winged Teal	U		C	C	
Canvasback	O		O	U	
Redhead	U		U	U	
Ring-necked Duck	O		C	C	
Greater Scaup	U		U	U	
Lesser Scaup	C	U	C	C	
Common Eider		2018			
Harlequin Duck		1960			
Surf Scoter	O		O	O	
White-winged Scoter	O		O	O	
Black Scoter	U		U	U	
Long-tailed Duck			R	R	
Bufflehead	O		U	C	
Common Goldeneye			R	R	
Hooded Merganser	U		C	C	
Common Merganser		1995			
Red-breasted Merganser	U	R	U	U	
Ruddy Duck	O		O	C	
Upland Game Birds					
Northern Bobwhite*	U	U	U	U	
Wild Turkey*	C	C	C	C	
Loons					
Red-throated Loon			R	R	
Pacific Loon		2008			
Common Loon	U		O	O	

	SP	SU	FA	WN	Status
Grebes					
Pied-billed Grebe*	C	R	C	C	
Horned Grebe	U		U	U	
Red-necked Grebe		1994			
Eared Grebe		1978			
Western Grebe		1979			
Flamingos					
Greater Flamingo		1992			
Shearwaters and Petrels					
Northern Fulmar		2008			
Cory's Shearwater	U	O	U	R	
Great Shearwater	O	O	O		
Sooty Shearwater		2009			
Manx Shearwater		2004			
Audubon's Shearwater	O	O	O		
Storm-Petrels					
Wilson's Storm-Petrel	O	O	O		
Leach's Storm-Petrel	O	O	O		
Band-rumped Storm-Petrel	R	R			
Tropicbirds					
White-tailed Tropicbird		1981			
Storks					
Wood Stork	C	C	C	C	(E)(FL-E)
Frigatebirds					
Magnificent Frigatebird	O	O	O	R	
Boobies and Gannets					
Masked Booby	R	R	R		
Brown Booby	O	O	O		
Northern Gannet	C		C	C	
Cormorants					
Double-crested Cormorant*	C	C	C	C	
Great Cormorant		2001			
Darters					
Anhinga*	C	C	C	C	
Pelicans					
American White Pelican	C	R	U	C	
Brown Pelican*	C	C	C	C	(FL-SSC)
Hérons, Bitterns, and Allies					
American Bittern	O		O	U	
Least Bittern*	U	U	U	R	
Great Blue Heron*	C	C	C	C	

	SP	SU	FA	WN	Status
Great Egret*	C	C	C	C	(FL-SSC)
Snowy Egret*	C	C	C	C	
Little Blue Heron*	C	C	C	C	
Tricolored Heron*	C	C	C	C	
Reddish Egret*	C	C	C	C	
Cattle Egret*	C	C	C	C	
Green Heron*	C	C	C	C	(FL-SSC)
Black-crowned Night-Heron*	U	U	U	U	
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron*	O	O	O	O	
Ibises and Spoonbills					(FL-SSC)
White Ibis*	C	C	C	C	
Glossy Ibis*	C	C	C	C	
White-faced Ibis		2009			
Roseate Spoonbill*	C	C	C	C	(FL-SSC)
New World Vultures					
Black Vulture*	C	C	C	C	
Turkey Vulture	C	C	C	C	
Hawks, Kites, Eagles, and Allies					(E)(FL-E)
Osprey*	C	C	C	C	
Swallow-tailed Kite	O	O	O		
White-tailed Kite		1992			
Snail Kite		2004			
Mississippi Kite		2007			
Bald Eagle*	C	O	C	C	
Northern Harrier	U	R	C	C	
Sharp-shinned Hawk	O		U	U	
Cooper's Hawk*	U	U	U	U	
Red-shouldered Hawk*	C	C	C	C	
Broad-winged Hawk	R		O	R	
Short-tailed Hawk	O	O	O		
Swainson's Hawk			R	R	
Red-tailed Hawk*	U	U	U	U	
Caracaras and Falcons					(T)(FL-T)
Crested Caracara		2017			
American Kestrel	U		C	C	
Merlin	O		U	O	
Peregrine Falcon	U		U	O	
Rails, Gallinules, and Coots					
Yellow Rail		2010			
Black Rail*	R	R	R	R	
Clapper Rail*	U	U	U	U	
King Rail*	U	O	O	U	
Virginia Rail	R		R	R	
Sora	R		U	U	
Purple Gallinule		2007			

	SP	SU	FA	WN	Status
Common Gallinule*	C	C	C	C	
American Coot	C	O	C	C	
Limpkins					
Limpkin	R	R	R	R	(FL-SSC)
Cranes					
Sandhill Crane*	O	O	O	O	(FL-T)
Lapwings and Plovers					
Black-bellied Plover	C	O	C	C	
American Golden-Plover	R		R	R	
Wilson's Plover*	O	O	O	O	
Semipalmated Plover	C	R	O	C	
Piping Plover	R		R		(T)(FL-T)
Killdeer*	C	C	C		
Oystercatchers					
American Oystercatcher	R	R	R	R	(FL-SSC)
Stilts and Avocets					
Black-necked Stilt*	C	C	U	R	
American Avocet	C	R	C	C	
Sandpipers, Phalaropes, and Allies					
Spotted Sandpiper	U		U	U	
Solitary Sandpiper	U		O	R	
Greater Yellowlegs	C	U	C	C	
Willet*	C	C	C	C	
Lesser Yellowlegs	C	U	C	C	
Upland Sandpiper	R		R		
Whimbrel	O		O	O	
Long-billed Curlew		2005			
Black-tailed Godwit		1996			
Hudsonian Godwit		1999			
Bar-tailed Godwit		1995			
Marbled Godwit	U		U	U	
Ruddy Turnstone	C	C	C	C	
Red Knot	U		O	U	
Sanderling	C	C	C	C	
Semipalmated Sandpiper	C	R	C		
Western Sandpiper	C	O	C	C	
Least Sandpiper	C	U	C	C	
White-rumped Sandpiper	O		O		
Baird's Sandpiper	R		R		
Pectoral Sandpiper	U		U	R	
Purple Sandpiper		2003			
Dunlin	C	R	C	C	
Curlew Sandpiper		1991			
Stilt Sandpiper	U	R	U	O	
Buff-breasted Sandpiper			R		
Ruff	R		R		

	SP	SU	FA	WN	Status
Short-billed Dowitcher	C		C	C	
Long-billed Dowitcher	U		C	C	
Wilson’s Snipe	O		U	U	
American Woodcock			R	R	
Wilson’s Phalarope		R	R		
Red-necked Phalarope		R	R		
Red Phalarope			R		
Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers					
Black-legged Kittiwake			R	R	
Sabine’s Gull		2009			
Bonaparte’s Gull	O		U	U	
Black-headed Gull		2008			
Laughing Gull*	C	C	C	C	
Franklin’s Gull		2003			
Ring-billed Gull	C	R	C	C	
Herring Gull	U	R	U	U	
Lesser Black-backed Gull	U		U	U	
Glaucous Gull		1991			
Great Black-backed Gull	U	O	U	U	
Brown Noddy		R	R		
Sooty Tern	R	R	R		
Bridled Tern	R	R	R		
Least Tern*	C	C	O		(FL-T)
Gull-billed Tern	O	O	O	O	
Caspian Tern	C		C	C	
Black Tern	O	U	U		
Roseate Tern	R		R		(T)(FL-T)
Common Tern	O	U	U	R	
Forster’s Tern	C	O	C	C	
Royal Tern*	C	C	C	C	
Sandwich Tern	O	O	O	O	
Black Skimmer*	C	C	C	C	(FL-SSC)
Skuas and Jaegers					
South Polar Skua		2009			
Pomarine Jaeger	O		U	O	
Parasitic Jaeger	O		U	O	
Long-tailed Jaeger	R		R		
Auks, Murres, Puffins, and Allies					
Dovekie		2007			
Pigeons and Doves					
Rock Pigeon*	C	C	C	C	(FL-NNS)
Eurasian Collared-Dove*	O	O	O	O	(FL-NNS)
White-winged Dove	R	R	R	R	(FL-NNS)
Mourning Dove*	C	C	C	C	
Common Ground-Dove*	C	C	C	C	

	SP	SU	FA	WN	Status
Cuckoos and Anis					
Yellow-billed Cuckoo*	U	O	U		
Black-billed Cuckoo	R		R		
Smooth-billed Ani		1991			
Barn Owls					
Barn Owl	R	R	R	R	
Typical Owls					
Eastern Screech-Owl*	C	U	C	C	(FL-SSC)
Great Horned Owl*	U	U	U	C	
Burrowing Owl		1976			
Barred Owl*	U	U	U	U	
Short-eared Owl			R	R	
Nightjars (Goatsuckers)					
Common Nighthawk*	C	C	U		
Chuck-will’s-widow*	C	C	O		
Eastern Whip-poor-will	R		R		
Swifts					
Chimney Swift	U	U	U		
Hummingbirds					
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	U	U	U	R	
Kingfishers					
Belted Kingfisher	C	R	C	C	
Woodpeckers and Allies					
Red-headed Woodpecker	R		R		(E)(FL-SSC)
Red-bellied Woodpecker*	C	C	C	C	
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	U		U	U	
Downy Woodpecker*	C	C	C	C	
Hairy Woodpecker	R		R	R	
Red-cockaded Woodpecker		1976			
Northern Flicker*	C	C	C	C	
Pileated Woodpecker*	U	U	U	U	
Tyrant Flycatchers					
Olive-sided Flycatcher		2003			
Eastern Wood-Pewee	U			U	
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher		2004			
Acadian Flycatcher	O		O		
Alder Flycatcher			R		
Willow Flycatcher			R		
Least Flycatcher	R		R		
Eastern Phoebe	C		C	C	
Ash-throated Flycatcher	R		R		
Great Crested Flycatcher *	C	C	U	R	
Western Kingbird			O	R	
Eastern Kingbird*	U	U	U	R	

	SP U	SU U	FA O	WN	Status
Gray Kingbird*					
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher		2017			
Fork-tailed Flycatcher		1985			
Shrikes					
Loggerhead Shrike*	C	C	C	C	
Vireos					
White-eyed Vireo*	C	C	C	C	
Yellow-throated Vireo	O		O	R	
Blue-headed Vireo	U		U	U	
Warbling Vireo		2009			
Philadelphia Vireo			O		
Red-eyed Vireo*	U	O	C		
Black-whiskered Vireo*	R	R	R		
Jays and Crows					
Blue Jay*	C	C	C	C	
Florida Scrub-Jay*	C	C	C	C	(T)(FL-T)
American Crow		1989			
Fish Crow*	C	C	C	C	
Larks					
Horned Lark		1994			
Swallows and Martins					
Purple Martin*	U	U	R		
Tree Swallow	C	R	C	C	
Northern Rough-winged Swallow		U	R	U	
Bank Swallow	O		O		
Cliff Swallow	O		O		
Barn Swallow	C	O	C		
Chickadees and Titmice					
Carolina Chickadee		1976			
Tufted Titmouse*	U	U	U	U	
Creepers					
Brown Creeper				R	
Wrens					
Carolina Wren*	C	C	C	C	
House Wren	U		C	C	
Sedge Wren	U		U	U	
Marsh Wren*	U		U	U	
Old World Warblers and Gnatcatchers					
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher*	C	U	C	C	
Kinglets					
Golden-crowned Kinglet		2007			
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	U		U	U	

	SP	SU	FA	WN	Status
Thrushes					
Eastern Bluebird	O		O	O	
Veery	O		O		
Gray-cheeked Thrush	O		O		
Swainson's Thrush	O		O		
Hermit Thrush	O		U	U	
Wood Thrush	R		R		
American Robin	U		C	C	
Mimics (Mockingbirds, Thrashers, and Catbirds)					
Gray Catbird	C		C	C	
Brown Thrasher *	U	U	O	O	
Bahama Mockingbird		2017			
Northern Mockingbird*	C	C	C	C	
Starlings					
European Starling*	C	C	C	C	(FL-NNS)
Wagtails and Pipits					
American Pipit	R		R	R	
Waxwings					
Cedar Waxwing	U		O	U	
Wood-Warblers					
Ovenbird	U		U	R	
Worm-eating Warbler	U		O		
Louisiana Waterthrush	O		O		
Northern Waterthrush	U		U	U	
Golden-winged Warbler			O		
Blue-winged Warbler	O		O		
Black-and-white Warbler	U		U	U	
Prothonotary Warbler	O		O		
Swainson's Warbler	R		R		
Tennessee Warbler	U		U		
Orange-crowned Warbler	U		U	U	
Nashville Warbler	R		R		
Connecticut Warbler	R		R		
Kentucky Warbler	R		R		
Common Yellowthroat*	C	C	C	C	
Hooded Warbler	O		O		
American Redstart	U	R	C	R	
Cape May Warbler	U		O		
Cerulean Warbler	R		R		
Northern Parula*	C	U	C	R	
Magnolia Warbler	O		O		
Bay-breasted Warbler	R		O		
Blackburnian Warbler	O		O		
Yellow Warbler	U		U		
Chestnut-sided Warbler	O		O		
Blackpoll Warbler	U		O		

	SP	SU	FA	WN	Status
Black-throated Blue Warbler	U		U		
Palm Warbler	C		C	C	
Pine Warbler*	O	O	O	O	
Yellow-rumped Warbler	C		C	C	
Yellow-throated Warbler	U		U	U	
Prairie Warbler*	U	U	U	U	
Townsend's Warbler		2002			
Black-throated Green Warbler	O		O	O	
Canada Warbler	R		R		
Wilson's Warbler			R		
Yellow-breasted Chat	R		R		
Sparrows, Towhees, and Allies					
Eastern Towhee*	C	C	C	C	
Bachman's Sparrow	R	R	R	R	
Chipping Sparrow	O		O	O	
Clay-colored Sparrow			R	R	
Field Sparrow	R		R	R	
Vesper Sparrow	R		R	R	
Lark Sparrow		R	R		
Savannah Sparrow	C		C	C	
Grasshopper Sparrow	O		O	O	
Henslow's Sparrow			R	R	
Nelson's Sparrow	O		O	O	
Saltmarsh Sparrow	O		O	O	
Seaside Sparrow			R	R	
Fox Sparrow			R	R	
Song Sparrow	O		O	O	
Lincoln's Sparrow			R	R	
Swamp Sparrow	C		C	C	
White-throated Sparrow			R	R	
White-crowned Sparrow	R		O	R	
Dark-eyed Junco		1977			
Lapland Longspur		1988			
Snow Bunting		1999			
Cardinals, Grosbeaks, Buntings, and Allies					
Summer Tanager *	O	O	O		
Scarlet Tanager	O		O		
Northern Cardinal*	C	C	C	C	
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	O		O		
Blue Grosbeak	O	O	O		
Indigo Bunting	U		U	U	
Painted Bunting*	U	O	U	U	
Dickcissel	R		R	R	
Blackbirds, Orioles, Cowbirds, and Allies					
Bobolink	U		U		
Red-winged Blackbird*	C	C	C	C	
Eastern Meadowlark*	U	U	U	U	
Western Meadowlark		1972			
Rusty Blackbird	R		R	R	

	SP	SU	FA	WN	Status
Brewer's Blackbird				R	
Common Grackle*	C	C	C	C	
Boat-tailed Grackle*	C	C	C	C	
Brown-headed Cowbird	U	U	U	U	
Orchard Oriole	O	R	O		
Bullock's Oriole		1988			
Baltimore Oriole	O		O	R	
Finches and Allies					
House Finch	R	R	R	R	(FL-NNS)
Pine Siskin			R	R	
American Goldfinch	O		U	C	
Old World Sparrows					
House Sparrow*	U	U	U	U	(FL-NNS)

Sighting Notes

Date

Time

Weather

No. of species

Route or area

Observers

Remarks

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge
P.O. Box 2683
Titusville, FL 32781
http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Merritt_Island
321/861 0669 Visitor Center

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
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