



## BIRDS OF THE MEDICINE LAKE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE



The Medicine Lake National Wildlife Refuge is located only 30 miles from the Canadian border in northeastern Montana and might be considered a "Port of Entry" for many migrant waterfowl traveling southward along the western edge of the great Central Flyway. It also serves as an important summer breeding ground for shorebirds, waterfowl, and upland species.

Prior to the establishment of the refuge in 1935, Medicine Lake was a shallow marsh with water areas that receded each fall to expose alkaline mud flats and muck beds. More than 20,000 of the present 31,457 acres in the refuge were acquired from drought-stricken owners who had waged a losing battle in their efforts to farm the soil that the hot, dry winds of the 1930's seemed determined to sweep from under their feet.

Water-control structures were installed to retain spring flood waters carried into Medicine Lake by Cottonwood, Sand, and Lake Creeks. Then a diversion canal was built to tap the Big Muddy Creek, 3 miles to the northwest. An intricate system of canals and controls carried the water into adjoining potholes and low areas. Farther down the Big Muddy Valley, the Homestead Lakes were enlarged to retain the flows from Lost and Sheep Creeks, while a control gate permitted filling from Big Muddy Creek.

The 31,457 acres of the refuge consist of 12,500 acres of water, 18,000 acres in pasture and meadowland, and nearly 1,000 acres of farming plots. On the rolling upland and sandhill pastures, around 700 cattle graze during summer months, and from 1,500 to 2,000 tons of hay can usually be cut on the lower meadows. Strip farming is practiced by share-crop permittees on the farming plots under a rotation plan that puts each acre into summer fallow or cultivated row crop one year out of three. The Government's share of the grain is either left standing for wildlife or harvested for wildlife feeding.

Birdlife on the Medicine Lake Refuge is abundant and varied. Nesting populations of ducks, geese, shore and water birds are the most numerous, but upland birds are also plentiful. Especially interesting are large nesting colonies of cormorants, great blue herons, western grebes, white pelicans, terns, and gulls on many of the islands. White-tailed deer and antelope are to be found on the refuge along with many smaller mammals. The months of June, July, and August provide the most favorable opportunities for observing the wildlife of this area. Refuge headquarters are located near the town of Medicine Lake on State Highway 16.

The following bird list contains 186 species and is the result of studies and observations made by refuge personnel and visiting ornithologists since 1936. Those marked with an \* are present occasionally in winter. Those denoted by a #, normally winter or transient visitors, may remain during the summer in limited numbers. This list, using species names, is in accordance with the Fifth (1957) A.O.U. Check-List. Status and abundance symbols are defined as follows:

StatusAbundance

PR - Permanent Resident	a - abundant
SR - Summer Resident	c - common
WV - Winter Visitor	u - uncommon
SV - Summer Visitor	o - occasional
TV - Transient Visitor	r - rare
AV - Accidental Visitor	

Common Loon	TV-o	Sharp-shinned Hawk	SR-u
Red-necked Grebe	TV-o	Cooper's Hawk	TV-o
Horned Grebe	SR-c	Red-tailed Hawk	TV-o
Eared Grebe	SR-c	Swainson's Hawk	SR-c
Western Grebe	SR-a	Rough-legged Hawk	WV-o
Pied-billed Grebe	SR-c	Ferruginous Hawk	SR-o
White Pelican	SR-a	Golden Eagle	WV-o
Double-crested Cormorant	SR-a	Bald Eagle	* TV-o
Great Blue Heron	SR-a	Marsh Hawk	* SR-a
Snowy Egret	SV-o	Gyr Falcon	WV-r
Black-crowned Night Heron	SR-o	Prairie Falcon	TV-o
American Bittern	SR-c	Peregrine Falcon	TV-u
Whistling Swan	TV-c	Pigeon Hawk	SR-o
Canada Goose	SR-c	Sparrow Hawk	TV-c
White-fronted Goose	TV-c	Greater Prairie Chicken	PR-r
Snow Goose	TV-a	Sharp-tailed Grouse	PR-c
Blue Goose	TV-r	Gray Partridge	PR-o
Mallard	SR-a	Ring-necked Pheasant	PR-c
Black Duck	TV-o	Whooping Crane	TV-r
Gadwall	SR-a	Sandhill Crane	TV-c
Pintail	SR-a	Virginia Rail	SR-r
Green-winged Teal	SR-c	Sora	SR-o
Blue-winged Teal	SR-c	Yellow Rail	SR-o
Cinnamon Teal	SR-r	American Coot	SR-a
American Widgeon	SR-a	Semipalmated Plover	TV-o
Shoveler	SR-a	Piping Plover	TV-u
Redhead	SR-a	Killdeer	SR-a
Ring-necked Duck	TV-o	American Golden Plover	TV-c
Canvasback	SR-a	Black-bellied Plover	TV-o
Lesser Scaup	SR-a	Ruddy Turnstone	TV-o
Common Goldeneye	TV-o	Common Snipe	SR-o
Barrow's Goldeneye	TV-o	Long-billed Curlew	TV-u
Bufflehead	TV-o	Upland Plover	TV-o
White-winged Scoter	TV-r	Spotted Sandpiper	# TV-o
Ruddy Duck	SR-a	Solitary Sandpiper	# TV-c
Hooded Merganser	TV-o	Willet	SR-a
Common Merganser	TV-o	Greater Yellowlegs	# TV-c
Red-breasted Merganser	TV-o	Lesser Yellowlegs	# TV-o
Turkey Vulture	AV-r	Knot	TV-o
Goshawk	TV-o	Pectoral Sandpiper	TV-u

Baird's Sandpiper	TV-c	Long-billed Marsh Wren	SR-u
Least Sandpiper	TV-c	Short-billed Marsh Wren	SR-o
Long-billed Dowitcher	TV-c	Catbird	SR-c
Stilt Sandpiper	TV-u	Brown Thrasher	SR-a
Semipalmated Sandpiper	TV-u	Sage Thrasher	SR-o
Marbled Godwit	SR-a	Robin	SR-c
Sanderling	TV-o	Swainson's Thrush	TV-o
American Avocet	SR-a	Eastern Bluebird	SR-o
Wilson's Phalarope	SR-c	Townsend's Solitaire	AV-r
Northern Phalarope	TV-c	Water Pipit	TV-o
Herring Gull	TV-o	Sprague's Pipit	TV-o
California Gull	SR-o	Bohemian Waxwing	WV-c
Ring-billed Gull	SR-a	Cedar Waxwing	TV-a
Franklin's Gull	SR-a	Northern Shrike	WV-u
Bonaparte's Gull	TV-r	Loggerhead Shrike	SR-u
Forster's Tern	TV-r	Starling	WV-o
Common Tern	SR-a	Orange-crowned Warbler	TV-o
Caspian Tern	TV-r	Yellow Warbler	SR-c
Black Tern	SR-c	Myrtle Warbler	TV-u
Mourning Dove	SR-c	Blackpoll Warbler	TV-o
Black-billed Cuckoo	SR-u	Ovenbird	TV-o
Barn Owl	AV-r	Yellowthroat	TV-o
Great Horned Owl	PR-c	Wilson's Warbler	TV-o
Snowy Owl	WV-c	House Sparrow	PR-c
Burrowing Owl	SR-c	Bobolink	TV-u
Long-eared Owl	TV-u	Western Meadowlark	SR-a
Short-eared Owl	PR-c	Yellow-headed Blackbird	SR-c
Common Nighthawk	SR-c	Redwinged Blackbird	SR-a
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	SR-o	Baltimore Oriole	SR-o
Belted Kingfisher	SR-o	Brewer's Blackbird	SR-c
Yellow-shafted Flicker	SR-o	Common Grackle	TV-r
Red-shafted Flicker	SR-o	Brown-headed Cowbird	SR-c
Eastern Kingbird	SR-a	Lazuli Bunting	TV-r
Western Kingbird (Arkansas)	SR-a	Dickcissel	TV-r
Say's Phoebe	SR-o	Evening Grosbeak	TV-r
Traill's Flycatcher	TV-c	House Finch	TV-r
Western Wood Pewee	TV-u	Common Redpoll	TV-c
Horned Lark	SR-a	American Goldfinch	SR-c
Tree Swallow	TV-u	Rufous-sided Towhee	TV-o
Bank Swallow	SR-a	Lark Bunting	SR-a
Rough-winged Swallow	SR-a	Savannah Sparrow	SR-o
Barn Swallow	SR-c	Grasshopper Sparrow	SR-c
Cliff Swallow	SR-c	Baird's Sparrow	SR-c
Purple Martin	TV-o	Le Conte's Sparrow	SR-c
Black-billed Magpie	PR-c	Sharp-tailed Sparrow	TV-o
Common Crow	SR-c	Vesper Sparrow	SR-r
Black-capped Chickadee	TV-o	Lark Sparrow	SR-o
House Wren	TV-o	Slate-colored Junco	TV-c

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Tree Sparrow	*	TV-c	White-crowned Sparrow	TV-o
Chipping Sparrow		SR-c	Song Sparrow	SR-c
Clay-colored Sparrow		SR-o	McCown's Longspur	TV-r
Field Sparrow		SR-o	Chestnut-colored Longspur	SR-a
Harris' Sparrow	*	TV-o	Snow Bunting	WV-c

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NOTES

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