

# Birds of New York

❖ A SAMPLER ❖



NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT  
OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

## GALLINACEOUS (OR CHICKEN-LIKE) BIRDS



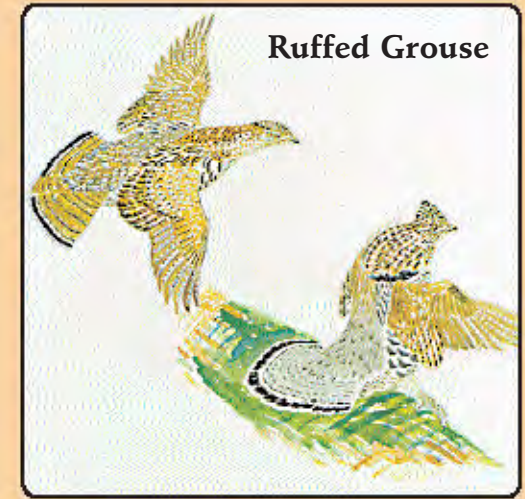
**Ring-necked Pheasant**

Introduced from China into New York State in the late 1800's, this bird is most plentiful in the Lake Plains areas of the state, but is generally declining in numbers due to habitat changes. Still popular among hunters, this large, brilliantly-colored bird of open farmland is also a pleasure to see. Feeds on grains, berries, insects, green herbaceous vegetation and weed seeds. Length 2-3 feet, weight 2½-4½ pounds, wingspan of 2½ feet. Flight speed of 35+ mph. Nests on the ground. One brood of 10-12 young per year.



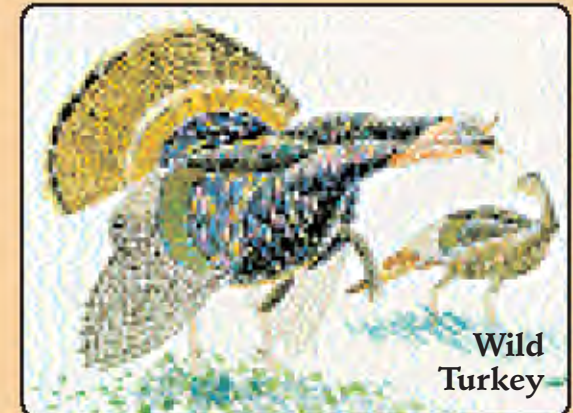
**Northern  
Bobwhite**

A small, short-tailed bird not much bigger than a robin, the bobwhite prefers brushy thickets and weedy fields. New York's only wild populations occur on Long Island. This bird's distinctive, whistled call is often thought to sound like "Bobwhite" or "Bob, bobwhite." Feeds on insects and weed seeds. Length 10 inches, weight 6 ounces, wingspan of 15 inches. Flight speed up to 35 mph. Nests on the ground in dense cover. One brood of 6-10 young per year.



**Ruffed Grouse**

A common game bird of woodlands, the ruffed grouse has a fast, explosive flight. It feeds on acorns, seeds, berries, green herbaceous vegetation, insects and tree buds (especially poplar and apple). During courtship display, adult male grouse make thumping or drumming sounds with their wings. Length 17-18 inches, weight 1-1½ pounds, wingspan of 2 feet. Flight speed 40 mph. Nests on the ground. One brood of 9-12 young per year.



**Wild  
Turkey**

Eliminated from the state in the 19th century, this bird is re-established and common in New York State. A large, woodland, game bird, it feeds mostly on tree seeds, acorns and nuts in the forest, and on insects, green vegetation, grain and weed seeds in open fields. Length 36 inches, weight 20 pounds or so (female is smaller), wingspan of 4 feet. Alert and wary, it nests on the ground in forests or along forest edge. During spring, a male turkey performs elaborate courtship displays (gobbling, strutting with puffed-up feathers, tail fanning, and dragging of wingtips) to attract females. Flight speed up to 55 mph. One brood of 10-12 young per year.



# WATERFOWL



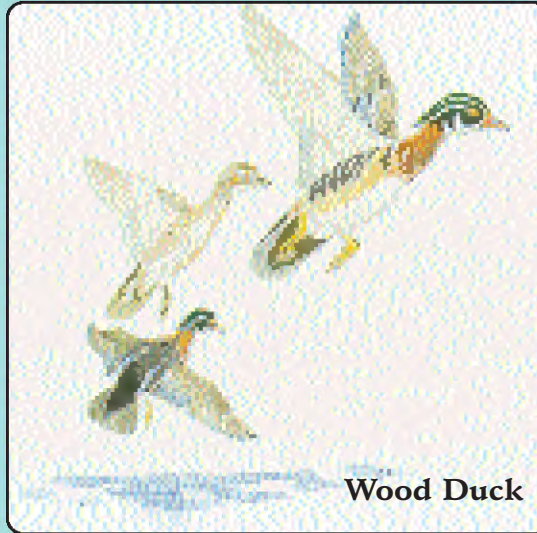
**Mallard**

Although normally very wary of people, New York's most common dabbler or "puddle duck" can adapt to urban areas and people, but people feeding mallards can cause these ducks to become a nuisance and a potential health hazard. In the wild, the mallard feeds on plant and animal matter in shallow water. Length 21-24 inches, weight 2-3 pounds, wingspan 3 feet. Flight speed of 40+mph. Nests on the ground, often in urban and suburban areas. One brood of 7-10 young per year.



**American Black Duck**

A close relative of the mallard, the black duck is distinguished by white underwings that "flash" during flight, contrasting with its uniform dark brown ("black") body plumage. It does not adapt as well to people as the mallard, tending to keep to wilder habitats. For reasons unknown, the black duck is declining in numbers while the mallard is thriving. Nests on the ground, often near beaver ponds in more remote areas. One brood of 7-10 young per year.



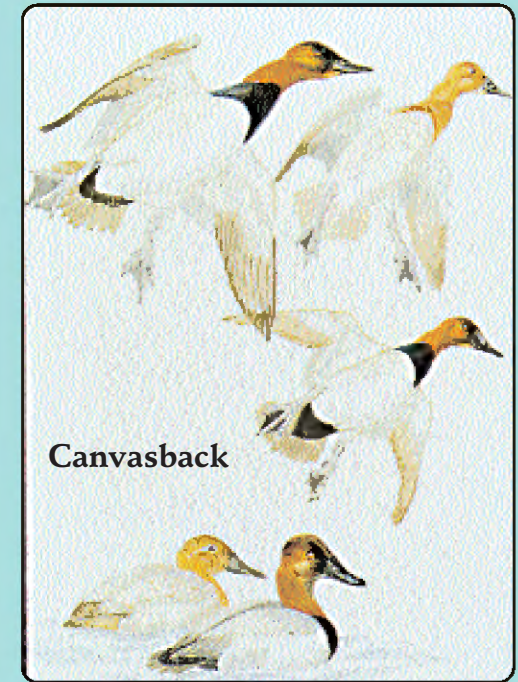
**Wood Duck**

Nearly extinct 75 years ago, the wood duck is now one of the most common puddle ducks. It forages in forests and marshes where it eats berries, seeds, nuts and acorns. Length 17-20 inches, weight 1½ pounds, wingspan of 2½ feet. Flight speed of 40+ mph. Will use nest boxes placed in ponds and marshes, but prefers hollow trees and will often perch and flutter about in trees looking for suitable cavities (even in suburban streets and parks). One brood of 10-15 young per year.



**Canada Goose**

The classical bird of migratory folklore, this large, familiar bird with the black neck and head and white cheek patch travels in flocks of a few to hundreds. New York's abundant year-round resident population of Canada geese provides a top-quality recreational hunting resource, but at times can be a serious nuisance. Length 3+ feet, weight 6-12 pounds, wingspan of 5½ feet. Flight speed up to 55 mph. Nests in a variety of habitats across the state. One brood of 4-7 young per year.



**Canvasback**

This diving duck has a distinctive sloping forehead profile. It commonly winters in New York's coastal bays and large rivers and lakes, and was once considered by hunters to be the "king of waterfowl" due to its extreme wariness and challenge to hunt. Feeds on plant and animal matter obtained by diving in deep waters. Length 15-20 inches, weight 1½-3 pounds, wingspan of 2½ feet. One brood of 9-12 young per year, but nesting in New York is very rare.



**Blue-winged Teal**

Often traveling 2,000-4,000 miles to South America, this pigeon-sized puddle duck winters the farthest south of any duck in North America. Length 16 inches, weight 1 pound, wingspan of 2½ feet. Flight speed up to 45 mph. Fairly common around the Great Lakes from spring through autumn. Feeds on a variety of plant materials and invertebrates (snails, aquatic insects). Nests on the ground in dense grasses close to water. One brood of about 12 young per year.



# BIRDS OF PREY



**Great Horned Owl**

Largest of New York's owls. Length 18-24 inches, wingspan about 4½ feet, weight 2½-4½ pounds. Powerful nighttime hunters with keen hearing, excellent night vision, swift, silent flight (up to 40 mph) and needle-sharp, inch-long talons to help them capture rodents, rabbits, skunks and other birds of prey. Nests from February through April. One brood of 2-3 young per year.



**American Kestrel or Sparrow Hawk**

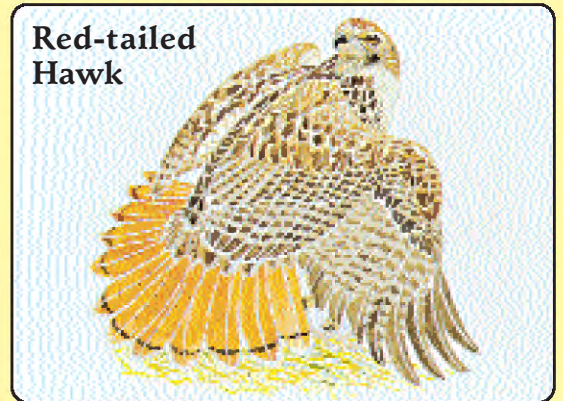
This tiny falcon feeds mostly on insects, small mammals and reptiles which it hunts from a perch or while hovering in flight. It is fast enough (40 mph) to catch small birds. Length 8-12 inches, weight 4 ounces, wingspan 21 inches. Nests in tree cavities, but nest boxes located along the edges of open fields can increase the number of potential nest sites. One brood of 4-5 young per year.



**Bald Eagle**

On the brink of extirpation from New York State, this bird was successfully reestablished in the state through DEC's Bald Eagle Restoration Program. Frequently associated with large lakes and rivers, it feeds primarily on fish, but is swift (45+ mph) and strong enough to catch and kill wild ducks and geese. A large raptor, it weighs 8-14 pounds, measures 30-37 inches in length, and has a wingspan of about 6 feet. Builds nests in very large trees. One brood of 1-3 eaglets per year. Winters in New York along open water and by large rivers.

All artwork by Jean Gawalt



**Red-tailed Hawk**

A large, soaring hawk of open farmlands and woods, the red-tailed hawk is probably New York's most common predatory bird. It is similar in size, strength and speed to the great horned owl. This daytime hunter relies on keen vision and the ability to wait seemingly endlessly either on the wing overhead in the sky or perched in a tree to capture its prey of rabbits, birds, snakes, mice and other small rodents. One brood of 2-3 young per year.



**Northern Harrier or Marsh Hawk**

An uncommon summer resident, the marsh hawk is most often seen as a white-rumped "sail plane" over large open fields during spring and fall migrations. Length 19-24 inches, weight 1 pound, wingspan 3½ feet. Feeds on a variety of small animals. Nests on the ground in marshes and unmowed fields. One brood of 4-9 young per year. Listed as "threatened" in New York State, its numbers are declining, perhaps due to decreasing nesting habitats.



# WATERBIRDS/ SHOREBIRDS



**Great  
Blue  
Heron**

Tallest of New York's birds, it is long-legged and long-beaked. Length 42-52 inches, weight 5-8 pounds, wingspan of 6 feet. Flight speed up to 35 mph. Frequents shallow waters and feeds mostly on fish and amphibians. Perhaps the most typical marsh bird in New York, the great blue heron requires undisturbed areas for its colonies of nests in wooded sites, often in or near a wetland. One brood of 3-5 young per year.



**Common  
Tern**

One of several species of colony-nesting water birds, the common tern is found in summer on Long Island's ocean beaches, islands in the St. Lawrence River, the Niagara River, eastern Lake Erie and on a few inland lakes. It is sensitive to human disturbance and concern about its nesting sites is a lesson in good stewardship. Length 14 inches, weight 4 ounces, wingspan of 2½ feet. Flight speed up to 30 mph. Feeds on small fishes captured by making shallow dives into the water. One brood of 3 young per year.

Nicknamed "killdeer" for the loud sound it makes, the killdeer is often heard before it is seen. A widely distributed shorebird, it usually occurs on upland grassy areas like pastures, lawns, golf courses and large vacant lots. Length 9-11 inches, weight about 3 ounces, wingspan 20 inches. Flight speed up to 45 mph. Nests may be located almost anywhere there's open, bare space— even on a rooftop, a railroad track or a baseball field. Eats mostly insects. One brood of 4 young per year. Adult killdeer perform an elaborate display known as the "broken wing act" in an attempt to distract predators from the nest.



**Killdeer**



**Herring Gull**

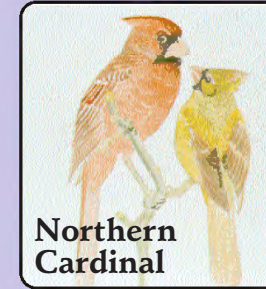
The herring gull is New York's most widely distributed gull, and for many, feeding these birds at the shore and the sight of them effortlessly soaring along coastal waters is a memorable part of vacation time. However, the herring gull's abundance in oftentimes large flocks, and its scavenger feeding habits, can result in nuisance problems. Length 22-26 inches, weight 2½ pounds, wingspan of 4½ feet. Flight speed up to about 40 mph. While its name comes from its habit of eating herring, this bird consumes virtually anything from insects to clams to landfill garbage. Prefers to nest on islands away from disturbances. One brood of 2-3 young per year.

# SONGBIRDS

A popular user of nest boxes, the Eastern bluebird is the official bird of New York State. Males are a beautiful shade of blue; females are much duller with blue only in the wings and tail. Length 7 inches, weight 1 ounce, wingspan of 12 inches. Feeds on fruits and berries, as well as insects and spiders which it captures on the ground by pouncing on them from a perch. Flight speed up to 17 mph. Two broods of 4-5 young each year.



**Eastern  
Bluebird**



**Northern  
Cardinal**

Also known as the redbird, the northern cardinal now thrives in the suburbia of New York. The bright scarlet color and "cheer, cheer" call of the male cardinal make this bird a favorite at back yard bird feeders. The females also sing and their less spectacular colors of olive green, pale pink and black help camouflage them. Length about 8 inches, weight 1½-2 ounces, wingspan 10-12 inches. Flight speed up to 25 mph. Nests in dense thickets or tangles of vines. Two or three broods of 3-4 young each per year.

A common year-round resident, the noisy, gregarious blue jay frequents backyard bird feeders and is often the only colorful, woodland sight on a gray winter's day. Length 12 inches, weight 3 ounces, wingspan of 16 inches. Feeds on a variety of small plant and animal matter. Flight speed up to 20 mph. Builds bulky nests in fairly low, large trees or bushes. One brood of 4-5 young per year.



**Blue Jay**

Regarded as the harbinger of spring, this familiar, red-breasted songbird is actually a year-round resident in much of the state. A common sight in backyards and woodlots, its length is 10 inches, weight 2-3 ounces, wingspan of 15 inches. Feeds extensively on earthworms and fruits. Flight speed up to 35 mph. Nests in trees and shrubs. Two broods of 4 young each year.



**American Robin**

A common resident of woodlands and a regular visitor of bird feeders, this small bird tames quite readily. Its lively, sprightly behavior, its cheerful sounding calls and song, and its tameness make it a favorite of many people. It feeds on insects, seeds, carrion meat and fat. Length 5 inches, weight ½ ounce, wingspan of 8 inches. Flight speed up to 15 mph. Nests in tree cavities or nest boxes. One brood of 6-8 young per year.



**Black-capped  
Chickadee**