

A Bird's Eye View

What are the common bird species that reside in the Ipswich River Watershed?

THE IPSWICH RIVER is one of the largest freshwater ecosystems on the Massachusetts North Shore. Over the course of 45 meandering miles, the river travels through seven communities on its way from Wilmington to the outlet in the Atlantic. Additionally, the river's watershed area, which is comprised of 155 square miles of marshes, forests, and developments, is home to a wide variety of bird species. Some, like the Canadian goose and the wood duck, call the watershed home year round, while others, like the ruby-throated hummingbird and tree swallow, only spend the spring and summer here before heading off to more exotic destinations in South America. Others species like the piping plover and golden winged warbler, which are commonly found in the watershed, are on the federally designated list of endangered species. No matter what the season or number though, every bird species on the Ipswich is currently facing the strain of increased development within the watershed. New neighborhoods are cutting down the trees and draining the marshes that these bird species call home. Additionally, wide scale flooding, a direct result of increased paved surfaces, is destroying the mating and nesting habitats that the Ipswich's bird species rely on. We, as stewards of the river, need to work to counteract these devastating effects.



The Ipswich River, as well as its adjacent forests and wetlands, is a haven for many bird species.



DID YOU KNOW?

The hummingbird is the smallest bird in the Ipswich River area.



The Great Blue Heron is the largest bird in the Ipswich River area.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SHORT-, MIDDLE-, AND LONG-DISTANCE MIGRANTS

SHORT-DISTANCE MIGRANTS

Short-distance migrants do not travel very far. They tend to stay local and only travel as far as the next open, non-frozen body of water. They can tolerate much more variation in weather than other birds.

MIDDLE-DISTANCE MIGRANTS

Middle-distance migrants do not leave America, but travel to warmer states during the cold seasons. They can tolerate some weather changes, but are more adapted to living in warmer conditions.

LONG-DISTANCE MIGRANTS

Long-distance migrants travel out of North America. They cannot tolerate severe weather changes, and depart for other countries as soon as the temperature begins to drop.



YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER

Seasons: Spring; Summer; Fall

Migration: Last flock of warblers to leave northeast and head to warmer locations such as Washington. Known to fall between short- and medium-distance migrants.

Nesting: Males arrive on the breeding grounds a few days before the females. The female builds the nest; a small, flat cup of twigs, grass, moss, and rootlets, lined with plant down and feathers that curve over the rim of the nest, partially covering the eggs. The female incubates four to five eggs for twelve to thirteen days. The young leave the nest between ten to fourteen days.



CANADA GOOSE

Seasons: Spring; Summer; Fall; Winter

Migration: Past generations used to follow a rigid migration pattern to Washington and warmer states. Today, most Canada geese are year-round residents.

Nesting: The female creates the nest with sticks, grass, weeds, and down in a slightly elevated area away from the water. She lays and incubates four to seven eggs, while the male stands guard nearby. Incubation lasts about twenty-eight days. Once hatched, the young leave the nest within one to two days. Young are able to fly within seven to nine weeks after hatching and stay with their parents for their first year.



HAIRY WOODPECKER

Seasons: Spring; Summer; Fall; Winter

Migration: Hairy woodpeckers live in a river habitat year-round.

Nesting: These birds dig up a cavity in live wood. Both the male and female incubate three to six eggs. Males brood the eggs at night, and females brood them during the day-time. The eggs hatch in approximately two weeks. Young stay with their parents for the first two weeks or so before becoming independent.



TREE SWALLOW

Seasons: Spring; Summer

Migration: Tree swallows migrate to Central and South America. They huddle for warmth at night and fly individually during the daytime.

Nesting: These birds nest in cavities; their nests are usually located individually or in loose colonies. The male brings nesting material to the female, and she creates the nest: a cup of grass, weeds, and other plant material, lined with feathers. The female incubates four to seven eggs for fourteen to fifteen days. The young leave the nest at eighteen to twenty-two days.



WOOD DUCK

Seasons: Spring; Summer; Fall; Winter

Migration: Short-distance migrants. Wood ducks travel locally to the closest open body of water.

Nesting: Wood ducks nest in down-lined cavities near or above the water. The female lays nine to fourteen eggs and incubates them for up to thirty-five days. After, the pair breaks up. The young leap to the ground or water after one day in the nest, and the female tends to them for five to six weeks before leaving them to fly.



RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD

Seasons: Mid-spring; Summer

Migration: Ruby-throated hummingbirds migrate towards Central America, the Caribbean, and Mexico during the fall and winter seasons due to the drastic temperature drops and lack of resources.

Nesting: The female lays two white eggs, two to three days apart. She then incubates them from 60 to 80% of the day for twelve to sixteen days. Depending on food availability, eighteen to twenty-three days is a normal incubation period. When the chicks leave the nest, they are considerably larger than their mother.