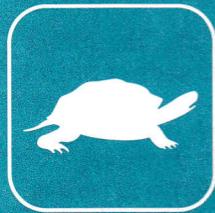


# Benton Lake

*National Wildlife  
Refuge*

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## *Wildlife List*



## A Refuge and Breeding Ground for Birds



*This goose, designed by J.N. "Ding" Darling, has become the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.*

Benton Lake National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) provides a glimpse into pre-settlement times, when the prairie sky was alive with ducks, geese, swans, and shorebirds each spring and fall, and the marshes teemed with downy young each summer. The Refuge is located at the western edge of the famed Prairie Pothole Region, an area characterized by millions of wetlands or "potholes" which serve as the breeding ground for most of the Nation's waterfowl. These wetlands also harbor scores of other wetland-dependent wildlife, including many endangered species.

Benton Lake NWR was established in 1929 as a refuge and breeding ground for birds. This 12,383-acre tract of wetland and prairie is just one pearl on a string of more than 520 refuges nationwide administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Enjoy and help protect this national gem!

## Seasonal Birding Highlights

As ice leaves Benton Lake, the spring spectacle begins. Thousands of tundra swans, and snow and Ross's geese, stop at the Refuge for a week or more on their journey from their wintering grounds in central California to nesting areas in arctic Alaska and Canada. These birds are joined by 20 species of ducks, including 12 species that stay to nest on the Refuge. As the weather warms, more and more bird species arrive, with shorebirds appearing last.

Bald eagles and peregrine falcons are often seen in the spring. Sharp-tailed grouse begin breeding at this time of year. Visitors may view the courtship antics of male grouse on a lek or dancing ground by reserving the free Watchable Wildlife viewing blind in April and May.

By June, all of the birds that will nest at Benton Lake NWR have arrived. Broods of ducklings become a common sight. Colonial nesting birds, such as eared grebes, white-faced ibis, and Franklin's gulls, and songbirds, like

chestnut-collared longspurs and western meadowlarks, are raising their young. Young burrowing owls emerge from their underground nests to perch on dirt mounds in the upland grasslands.

Shorebird numbers peak once again in September and waterfowl begin to "stage" on the marsh in preparation for migration further south. Through late October, bald eagles and peregrine falcons are frequently seen feeding on or chasing waterfowl and shorebirds. Several thousand tundra swans stay on the Refuge into November and up to 20,000 Canada geese may still be present as the year comes to a close.

The frozen winter landscape provides a harsh environment for most birds. Northern shrikes, horned larks, Lapland longspurs, and snow buntings are among the few winter songbirds present on the Refuge. Great horned owls often move into the protective cover created by shelterbelt trees. Hardy raptors such as northern goshawks, gyrfalcons, and snowy owls are seen occasionally, while rough-legged hawks are a common sight in most winters.

## Birding Tips

Viewing is best during the morning and evening hours when birds are most active. Birds quickly acclimate to vehicle traffic, so your vehicle is an outstanding observation blind in both the upland grasses and the marsh habitats. Most of the Refuge is open to birding, however, check with Refuge staff at the headquarters to learn where protected or sensitive areas are located. You are welcome to stop at the headquarters to share your bird observations and to learn about the latest bird sightings.

**About this  
Checklist**  
*About Birds*

This checklist includes 243 bird species that have been sighted on Benton Lake NWR since 1961, when the Refuge was first staffed. All species names are in accordance with the *American Ornithologists' Union, 1998. Check-list of North American Birds. 7th ed. Am. Ornithol. Union, Washington, D.C.*

*About Mammals*

Many of these species listed are seldom observed by visitors because of their secretive habits, the time of day when they are active, or the type of habitat they use.

*About Reptiles,  
Amphibians,  
and Fish*

Although some of the fish, amphibians, and reptiles are present in large numbers, none are easily seen by visitors.

*Bird Breeding  
Status Codes*

The "Br" column lists the bird's breeding status on the Refuge. The breeding codes are as follows:

- B Confirmed breeding record
- b Suspected breeding, but not confirmed

*Seasonal  
Occurrence*

- Sp March-May
- S June-July
- F August-November
- W December-February

You may see some species at other times of the year than those indicated on the checklist.

*Abundance*

The checklist is designed to indicate the general trend of migrations and seasonal abundance for each species and therefore does not account for unusual occurrence.

*c - common*  
Present in large numbers, are widespread, and should be seen if you look in the right habitat.

*u - uncommon*  
Present, but due to their low numbers, behavior, habitat, or distribution, they are not easily seen. However, an average wildlife observer should be able to find them by looking in the right place at the right time.

*o - occasional*  
Present in low numbers, but are not expected to be seen without a special effort to find them. At least a few are seen each year.

*r - rare*  
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.

*v - vagrant*  
Less than five sightings at Benton Lake. Vagrant birds are grouped at the end of the list of bird species.



Ground Squirrel  
© Ron Ukrainetz

Common Bird Name	Br	Sp	S	F	W
<b>Loons</b>					
Common Loon		o	r	o	
<b>Grebes</b>					
Pied-billed Grebe	B	u	u	u	
Horned Grebe		o	o		
Red-necked Grebe		r	r	r	
Eared Grebe	B	c	c	c	
Western Grebe	B	u	u	u	
Clark's Grebe		r	r	r	
<b>Pelicans</b>					
American White Pelican		u	u	u	
<b>Cormorants</b>					
Double-crested Cormorant	B	u	u	u	
<b>Bitterns, Herons, and Egrets</b>					
American Bittern	b	u	u	o	
Great Blue Heron		o	o	o	
Snowy Egret		r	r		
Black-crowned Night-heron	b	u	c	o	
<b>Ibises and Spoonbills</b>					
White-faced Ibis	B	u	c	u	
<b>Swans, Geese, and Ducks</b>					
Greater White-fronted Goose		o		o	
Snow Goose		c	r	c	o
Ross' Goose		c	r	c	o
Canada Goose	B	c	c	c	c
Tundra Swan		c	r	c	o
Wood Duck		o	o	o	
Gadwall	B	c	c	c	r
Eurasian Wigeon		o		r	
American Wigeon	B	c	c	c	o
American Black Duck			r	r	
Mallard	B	c	c	c	u
Blue-winged Teal	B	c	c	c	
Cinnamon Teal	B	c	c	c	
Northern Shoveler	B	c	c	c	r
Northern Pintail	B	c	c	c	
Green-winged Teal	B	c	c	c	
Canvasback	B	u	u	u	r
Redhead	B	u	u	u	r
Ring-necked Duck		u	r	o	
Greater Scaup		r	r	r	
Lesser Scaup	B	c	c	c	
White-winged Scoter			r	r	

Common Bird Name	Br	Sp	S	F	W
Long-tailed Duck		r		r	
Bufflehead		u	o	u	u
Common Goldeneye		c	o	o	u
Barrow's Goldeneye		o	o	o	u
Hooded Merganser		o	u	o	
Common Merganser		o	u	o	o
Red-breasted Merganser		o	u	o	
Ruddy Duck	B	u	u	u	
<b>Osprey, Kites, Hawks, and Eagle</b>					
Osprey		o	r	o	
Bald Eagle		u	r	u	u
Northern Harrier	B	c	c	c	o
Sharp-shinned Hawk		o		o	
Cooper's Hawk		o	r	o	o
Northern Goshawk		r		o	r
Swainson's Hawk	B	u	c	u	
Red-tailed Hawk		o	o	o	
Ferruginous Hawk	B	u	u	o	
Rough-legged Hawk		o	r	o	u
Golden Eagle		u	o	u	o
<b>Falcons and Caracaras</b>					
American Kestrel	B	o	o	o	o
Merlin		o		o	o
Gyrfalcon		o		o	o
Peregrine Falcon		u	u	u	r
Prairie Falcon		u	u	u	o



American Kestrel  
© Ron Ukrainetz

Common Bird Name	Br	Sp	S	F	W
<b>Tyrant Flycatchers</b>					
Least Flycatcher		r	o		
Say's Phoebe	B	u	u	u	
Western Kingbird	B	o	u	u	
Eastern Kingbird	B	o	u	u	
<b>Shrikes</b>					
Loggerhead Shrike	B	u	u	u	
Northern Shrike		r		o	o
<b>Vireos</b>					
Plumbeous Vireo			o		
Warbling Vireo			r		
Red-eyed Vireo			r		
<b>Crows, Jays, and Magpies</b>					
Black-billed Magpie	B	u	u	u	u
American Crow	B	u	u	o	o
Common Raven		r	r	r	
<b>Larks</b>					
Horned Lark	B	e	e	e	e
<b>Swallows</b>					
Tree Swallow	B	u	u	u	
Violet-green Swallow		r		r	
Northern Rough-winged Swallow		r	r	r	
Bank Swallow		o			
Cliff Swallow	B	u	u	u	
Barn Swallow	B	e	e	u	
<b>Titmice and Chickadees</b>					
Black-capped Chickadee				r	r
Mountain Chickadee				r	
<b>Nuthatches</b>					
Red-breasted Nuthatch		r	o	r	



Common Bird Name	Br	Sp	S	F	W
<b>Wrens</b>					
Rock Wren	B	o	o	r	
House Wren	B	r	r	r	
Marsh Wren	B	u	c	o	o
<b>Kinglets</b>					
Golden-crowned Kinglet		r		r	
Ruby-crowned Kinglet		u	r	u	
<b>Thrushes</b>					
Mountain Bluebird		o		o	
Townsend's Solitaire		o		o	o
Swainson's Thrush		u	r	r	
Hermit Thrush		r	o		
American Robin	B	u	u	u	o
Varied Thrush		o		o	
<b>Mimic Thrushes</b>					
Gray Catbird		o	o	r	
Northern Mockingbird		r	r		
Brown Thrasher		o	o		
<b>Starlings</b>					
European Starling	b	u	u	u	r
<b>Wagtails and Pipits</b>					
American Pipit		u	u	c	
Sprague's Pipit	b	u	u	r	
<b>Waxwings</b>					
Bohemian Waxwing		o		o	u
Cedar Waxwing		r	r		
<b>Wood Warblers</b>					
Orange-crowned Warbler		r		r	
Yellow Warbler		o	o	u	
Yellow-rumped Warbler		u	u	u	
Townsend's Warbler		r			
Blackpoll Warbler		o			
American Redstart		r		r	
Northern Waterthrush		r			
MacGillivray's Warbler				r	
Common Yellowthroat	B	u	u	u	
Wilson's Warbler				o	
<b>Tanagers</b>					
Western Tanager		r			

Common Bird Name Br Sp S F W

**Sparrows and Towhees**

Spotted Towhee		r			
American Tree Sparrow		o	o	o	o
Chipping Sparrow		u	o		
Clay-colored Sparrow	B	u	u	u	
Brewer's Sparrow			r	r	
Vesper Sparrow	b	c	c	u	
Lark Sparrow	b	o	o		
Lark Bunting	B	o	o		
Savannah Sparrow	B	c	c	u	
Grasshopper Sparrow	B	u	u	o	
Baird's Sparrow	b	u	u		
Song Sparrow		u	o	o	
Lincoln's Sparrow		o	o		
White-throated Sparrow		r	r	u	
Harris' Sparrow		r	r		
White-crowned Sparrow		u	r	o	r
Dark-eyed Junco		o	r	o	
McCown's Longspur	B	u	u	r	
Lapland Longspur		o	o	o	
Chestnut-collared Longspur	B	c	c	u	
Snow Bunting		o	o	u	

**Cardinals, Grosbeaks, and Allies**

Black-headed Grosbeak	r	r			
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**Blackbirds and Orioles**

Bobolink		o	r		
Red-winged Blackbird	B	c	c	c	
Western Meadowlark	B	c	c	c	
Yellow-headed Blackbird	B	c	c	c	r
Rusty Blackbird				r	
Brewer's Blackbird	B	u	u	o	
Common Grackle		r			
Brown-headed Cowbird	B	u	u	u	
Baltimore Oriole				r	
Bullock's Oriole			o		

**Finches**

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch				r	r
House Finch		u	u	u	
Common Redpoll		o		o	u
Pine Siskin		u		u	
American Goldfinch		o	o	o	r

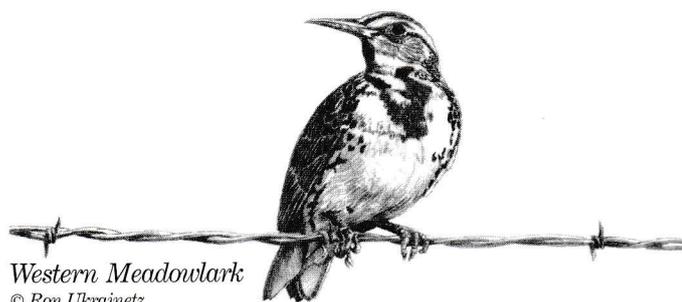
**Old World Sparrows**

House Sparrow	B	o	o	o	
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Common Bird Name Br Sp S F W

**Vagrants**

Great Egret			v	v	
Cattle Egret				v	
Green Heron		v			
Mute Swan		v	v		
Trumpeter Swan		v			
Ruddy Shelduck			v	v	
Garganey		v	v		
Surf Scoter					v
Black Scoter					v
Piping Plover		v			
Hudsonian Godwit		v			v
Curlew Sandpiper		v			
Red Phalarope					v
Pomarine Jaeger			v		
Parasitic Jaeger					v
Long-tailed Jaeger			v		
Sabine's Gull		v			v
Caspian Tern			v		
White-winged Dove			v		
Black-billed Cuckoo			v		
Northern Saw-whet Owl			v		
Calliope Hummingbird		v			
Red-naped Sapsucker					v
Olive-sided Flycatcher		v			
Western Wood-pewee		v			
Blue Jay		v			v
Purple Martin			v		
American Dipper			v		
Western Bluebird		v			
Veery		v			
Chestnut-sided Warbler		v			
Green-tailed Towhee		v			
Black-throated Sparrow				v	
Le Conte's Sparrow		v			
Smith's Longspur				v	
Lazuli Bunting				v	
Pine Grosbeak		v			
Red Crossbill				v	



**Mammals**

Masked Shrew ( <i>Sorex cinereus</i> )	u
Dusky Shrew ( <i>Sorex monticolus</i> )	u
Little Brown Myotis ( <i>Myotis lucifugus</i> )	o
Big Brown Bat ( <i>Eptesicus fuscus</i> )	o
Mountain Cottontail ( <i>Sylvilagus nuttallii</i> )	c
White-tailed Jackrabbit ( <i>Lepus townsendii</i> )	c
Yellow-bellied Marmot ( <i>Marmota flaviventris</i> )	u
Richardson's Ground Squirrel ( <i>Spermophilus richardsonii</i> )	c
Northern Pocket Gopher ( <i>Thomomys talpoides</i> )	u
Deer Mouse ( <i>Peromyscus maniculatus</i> )	c
House Mouse ( <i>Mus musculus</i> )	r
Meadow Vole ( <i>Microtus pennsylvanicus</i> )	c
Muskrat ( <i>Ondatra zibethicus</i> )	c
Porcupine ( <i>Erethizon dorsatum</i> )	o
Coyote ( <i>Canis latrans</i> )	c
Red Fox ( <i>Vulpes vulpes</i> )	o
Black Bear ( <i>Ursus americanus</i> )	v
Raccoon ( <i>Procyon lotor</i> )	u
Long-tailed Weasel ( <i>Mustela frenata</i> )	u
Least Weasel ( <i>Mustela nivalis</i> )	r
American Mink ( <i>Mustela vison</i> )	r
American Badger ( <i>Taxidea taxus</i> )	u
Striped Skunk ( <i>Mephitis mephitis</i> )	u
Bobcat ( <i>Lynx rufus</i> )	v
Elk ( <i>Cervus elaphus</i> )	v
Mule Deer ( <i>Odocoileus hemionus</i> )	u
White-tailed Deer ( <i>Odocoileus virginianus</i> )	c
Pronghorn ( <i>Antilocapra americana</i> )	o

**Reptiles and Amphibians**

Tiger Salamander ( <i>Ambystoma tigrinum</i> )	u
Western Chorus Frog ( <i>Pseudacris triseriata triseriata</i> )	c
Short-horned lizard ( <i>Phrynosoma douglassi</i> )	r
Painted Turtle ( <i>Chrysemys picta</i> )	o
Racer ( <i>Coluber constrictor</i> )	r
Gopher Snake ( <i>Pituophis catenifer</i> )	o
Western Rattlesnake ( <i>Crotalus viridis</i> )	o
Common Garter Snake ( <i>Thamnophis sirtalis</i> )	o
Western Terrestrial Garter Snake ( <i>Thamnophis elegans</i> )	o
Plains Garter Snake ( <i>Thamnophis radix</i> )	u

**Fish**

Fathead Minnow ( <i>Pimephales promelas</i> )	o
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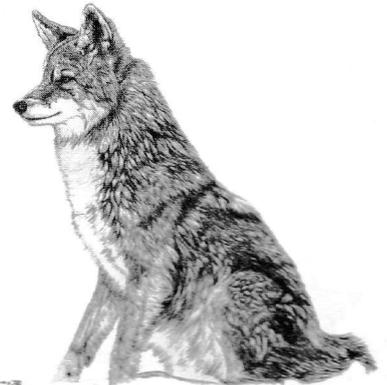
Date \_\_\_\_\_

Total \_\_\_\_\_

Observers \_\_\_\_\_

Weather \_\_\_\_\_

Time \_\_\_\_\_



Coyote © Ron Ukrainetz

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