

Checklist of Birds of the Great Meadows, Lexington

by John W. Andrews

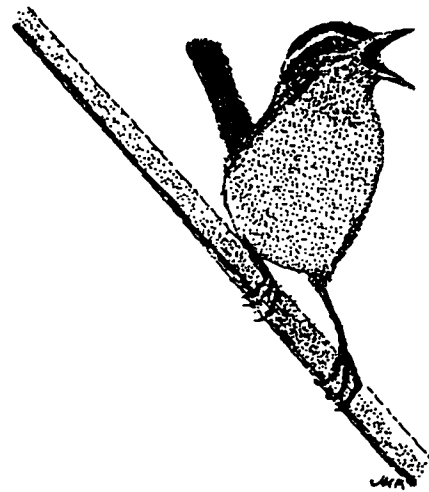
Introduction

The Great Meadows in Lexington is an area of approximately 180 acres of open space, including rolling uplands, dry hillsides, swamps, and extensive marshes. It is located in the Town of Lexington but owned by the Town of Arlington. The Great Meadows provides extensive and varied wildlife habitat, and this is reflected in the diversity of its birdlife. Recent studies (see below) have found almost 100 species of birds in the Great Meadows. The most striking aspect of the birdlife is the number of breeding species: more than 49 species are thought to breed in the Great Meadows. During the height of the breeding season (in June and July) as many as 40 species of birds can be seen in a single visit.

Birding Hot Spots

One of the best areas for migrant landbirds (such as warblers and vireos) is the hillside in the northeast part of the Great Meadows (see "a" on the map). In the early spring (mid-March to May), Common Snipe and American Woodcock may be heard at dusk in the northeast part of the marsh (b). During the breeding season, the open marsh (c) harbors Marsh Wren, Willow Flycatcher, and Swamp Sparrow. Field Sparrows and Prairie Warblers nest on the open brushy slope on the northeast side (d). The uplands on the west (e) have nesting Brown Thrasher, Blue-winged Warbler, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Northern Orioles. The pond near the Waldorf School (f) is often visited by dabbling ducks: Wood Duck and American Wigeon are possible there. In the fall, accipiters (Sharp-shinned Hawk and Cooper's Hawk) often perch in the trees on the edge of the marsh (g). And other hawks, such as Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, and Northern Harrier are seen hunting over the marsh (c). The fall sparrow migration is most evident around the western edges of the marsh (the areas marked h are the most reliable spots). Mill Brook at Fottler Avenue (i) is worth checking for sparrows, warblers, and thrushes feeding along the brook.

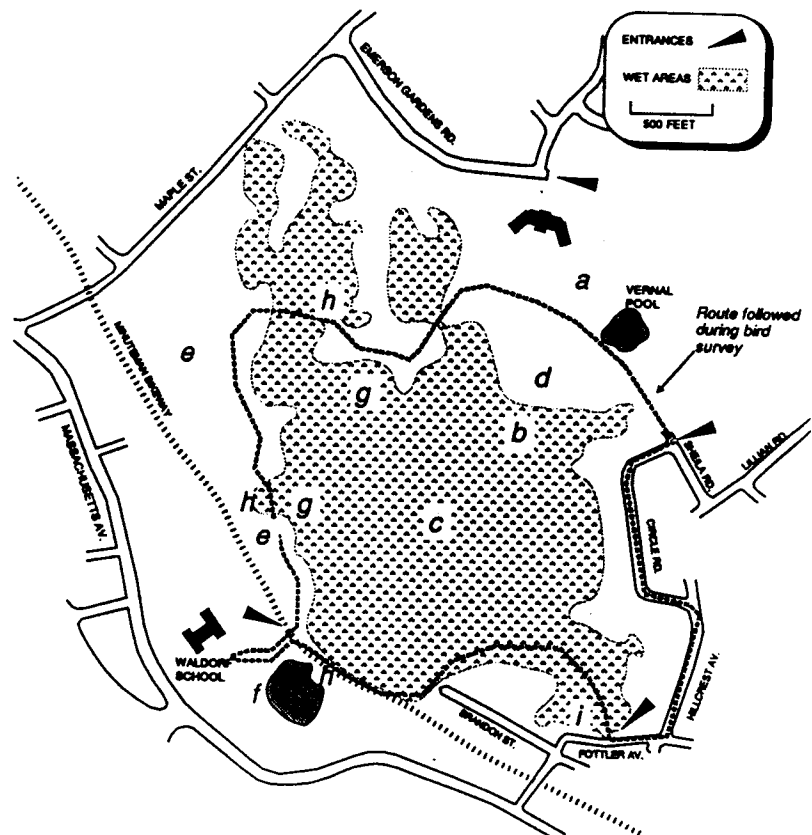
The trails around the Great Meadows are distinct and passable, although some of the trails through the marsh in the northwest sector are wet during part of the year. A complete circuit of the Great Meadows can be made using connections through residential streets (see map). It should be noted that walking into the interior of the marsh is not recommended due to the deep muck and drainage ditches.



Marsh Wren

Species Checklist

A field study of the birds of the Great Meadows was conducted during 1990-91 by the Mystic River Watershed Association. The following checklist summarizes the results of the 52 site visits included in that study. It should be kept in mind that this table is based on actual sightings, and has not been "smoothed" to hide the inherent randomness of the data. Hence, the reader is advised to examine the overall pattern of occurrence, and not make too much of minor month-to-month fluctuations. For a more complete report on the study, see *Birds of the Great Meadows in Lexington, Massachusetts: A Field Survey* by John W. Andrews, Mystic River Watershed Association, October 1991.



- - - Checklist of Birds of the Great Meadows - - -

	JFM	AMJ	JAS	OND
Great Blue Heron.....			ru	
Green-backed Heron.....		uu		
Blk-crnd. Night Heron....		u	cu	
Canada Goose.....	c	cu	cC	A r
Wood Duck.....		r	u	
Green-winged Teal.....			u	
Black Duck.....			cr	
Mallard.....	ccA	CCC	ccc	CCr
American Wigeon.....			u	CA
Northern Harrier.....		uu	u	u c
Broad-winged Hawk.....		r		
Sharp-shinned Hawk.....			u	u
Cooper's Hawk.....			u	u
Red-tailed Hawk.....	ccc	u	u	urr
American Kestrel.....			u	u
Ring-necked Pheasant....	rcc	CCC	ccc	Ccc
Virginia Rail.....		r		
Killdeer.....		ccr	c	u
Common Snipe.....		r		
American Woodcock.....		r	rr	
Herring Gull.....	cc		ccu	cc
Rock Dove.....	ACu	cc	cAc	c
Mourning Dove.....	cCu	CC	CCC	cCC
Black-billed Cuckoo.....			u	
Yellow-billed Cuckoo....		r		
Screech Owl.....		r		
Common Nighthawk.....			r	
Chimney Swift.....		cC	CC	
Ruby-thr. Hummingbird....			u	
Belted Kingfisher.....		u	cuu	
Downy Woodpecker.....	cCc	ccc	CCc	ccC
Hairy Woodpecker.....				u
Northern Flicker.....		CcC	CCC	ccr
Willow Flycatcher.....		c	c	u
Least Flycatcher.....		u		
Eastern Phoebe.....		uuu	c	c
Gt. Crested Flycatcher...		uu		u
Eastern Kingbird.....		cc	CC	
Tree Swallow.....		cc	u	
Barn Swallow.....		CC	AC	
Blue Jay.....	ccc	uCC	CCA	CCr
American Crow.....	AAA	ACC	ACA	AAA
Black-capped Chickadee...	CAC	CCC	CCC	AAA
Tufted Titmouse.....	cc	ccc	ccc	crC
White-breasted Nuthatch..	cr	u	c	ccu
House Wren.....		ucc	uuu	u
Marsh Wren.....			uc	
Ruby-crowned Kinglet.....				uc
Veery.....		r		
Swainson's Thrush.....				u
Hermit Thrush.....				u
Wood Thrush.....		r		
American Robin.....	r	ACC	CAC	AC
Gray Catbird.....		CC	CCC	u
Mockingbird.....	Cr	cc	CAC	ccc
Brown Thrasher.....		ccc	ccc	
Cedar Waxwing.....		c	CCC	
Starling.....	ACu	CCC	ACC	CAA
Solitary Vireo.....				u
Warbling Vireo.....		cu	c	
Red-eyed Vireo.....		uu	cuu	
Blue-winged Warbler.....		uc	u	
Nashville Warbler.....		r	u	

	JFM	AMJ	JAS	OND
Northern Parula.....		u		
Yellow Warbler.....		CC	cc	
Magnolia Warbler.....		u		
Yellow-rumped Warbler....		uu	C	Cr
Black-thr. Green Warbler.			u	u
Prairie Warbler.....		u		u
Palm Warbler.....		u		c
Blackpoll Warbler.....		u	u	
Black-and-White Warbler..		u		
American Redstart.....		c	c	
Common Yellowthroat.....		AC	Cuc	ur
Wilson's Warbler.....		u		
Yellow-breasted Chat.....		u		
Scarlet Tanager.....		ur		
Northern Cardinal.....	ccc	ccc	ccc	ccr
Rose-breasted Grosbeak...		uu	u	
Rufous-sided Towhee.....		uc	ccc	
Tree Sparrow.....	Cr	uc		Cc
Chipping Sparrow.....		c	r	c
Field Sparrow.....		u	ccC	CCc
Savannah Sparrow.....		uu		uc
Song Sparrow.....	rrC	CAC	ACC	CCc
Lincoln's Sparrow.....				u
Swamp Sparrow.....		cuc	Ccc	C
White-throated Sparrow...	c	ccu		cc
White-crowned Sparrow....				u
Dark-eyed Junco.....	c	u		cC
Red-winged Blackbird.....	c	A	AAA	Acc
Common Grackle.....	rC	CCA	Ccu	u
Brown-headed Cowbird.....		CCC	cu	r
Orchard Oriole.....		uu	r	
Northern Oriole.....		CC	Cc	
Purple Finch.....		u	u	
House Finch.....	AAC	c	CCu	cCA
American Goldfinch.....	CCu	CCC	CCC	CCA
House Sparrow.....	r		c	cuu

Birds per hour (BPH) ratings are determined by taking the total number of individuals of a given species recorded for each month and dividing by the number of observer-hours in that month. In the table, the BPH values are coded according to the highest level they attain in the following table :

A	Abundant	4 BPH
C	Very Common	1 BPH,
c	Common	1/4 BPH
u	Uncommon	1/16 BPH
r	Rare	(see below)

The "r" symbol indicates less than 1/16 BPH or a low count that did not allow a BPH to be confidently computed (This occurred when only one bird was recorded in a month with a low number of hours afield).