

Birds of Fort McCoy



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Fort McCoy is a 60,000 acre military installation located in Monroe County, about seven miles west of the city of Tomah, six miles east of the city of Sparta, and approximately 35 miles east of the city of La Crosse, Wisconsin. The installation lies within the west central region of Wisconsin, the most rugged portion of the state. The area is unglaciated and characterized by steep narrow ridges and broad valleys, and is extensively stream-dissected.

Fort McCoy's acreage is considered to have excellent value to wildlife. Dense forests and semi-open woodlands cover approximately 47,000 acres. There are 11 lakes, 20 major or tributary streams, and over 4,000 acres of wetlands. There are several thousand acres of open fields, oak savannas, and upland and lowland brush areas. The installation has diverse vegetation supporting over 800 plant species. Three State Natural Areas have been designated within Fort McCoy's boundaries: the 300-acre oak savanna known as the Fort McCoy Barrens, and two riparian areas, Silver Creek and Clear Creek.

There are numerous programs geared for avian management. Wetlands management enhances the nesting habitat for waterfowl and wading birds. Artificial nesting structures include wood duck boxes, osprey platforms, kestrel boxes and eastern bluebird boxes. Several species of upland game birds have extensive habitat improvement programs. Monitoring is conducted by Fort McCoy staff members or graduate researchers in an effort to help staff biologists design management plans. Threatened and endangered species have specific management procedures that are closely maintained.

The following list contains over 260 species which represent sightings and observations by Fort McCoy Natural Resource personnel, and surveys by ornithologists and avian biologists.

Checklist nomenclature and organization follow the A.O.U. Checklist of North American Birds, 7th Edition, 1998 and current supplements.

Legend

S – March-May F – September-November
s – June-August W – December-February
A – Average spring arrival date

a – abundant	A species which is very numerous.
c – common	Certain to be seen in suitable habitat.
u – uncommon	Present, but not certain to be seen.
o – occasional	Seen only a few times a year.
r – rare	Seen at intervals of 2-5 years.
x – accidental	Has been seen only once or twice.

**Breeds *Probably breeds

Species denoted by **boldface type** have not been observed on Fort McCoy, but within a 10-mile radius of the installation's boundaries.

Fort McCoy is an excellent example of how wildlife and daily military training can co-exist.

	S	s	F	W	A					
Gaviidae (Loons)										
___ Common Loon**	u	u	o		5-Apr	___ Semipalmated Plover	o	o		5-May
Podicipedidae (Grebes)						___ Black-bellied Plover	c	c	c	20-Mar
___ Horned Grebe	o		o		10-Apr	___ American Golden-Plover	r	r		25-Apr
___ Red-necked Grebe	x		x			___ Killdeer**	c	c	c	20-Mar
___ Pied-billed Grebe**	u	u	u		20-Mar	Scolopacidae (Sandpipers, Phalaropes, Allies)				
Pelecanidae (Pelicans)						___ Greater Yellowlegs	u	u		15-Apr
___ American White Pelican	x					___ Lesser Yellowlegs	u	u		20-Apr
Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants)						___ Solitary Sandpiper	u	u		25-Apr
___ Double-crested Cormorant	o		o		15-Apr	___ Willet	x			
Ardeidae (Bitterns, Herons, and Egrets)						___ Spotted Sandpiper**	u	o	o	25-Apr
___ American Bittern*	r	r				___ Upland Sandpiper**	u	c	o	20-Apr
___ Least Bittern*						___ Hudsonian Godwit	o			
___ Great Blue Heron**	c	c	c	r	25-Mar	___ Marbled Godwit	r			
___ Great Egret			r	r		___ Ruddy Turnstone	r			
___ Little Blue Heron	x					___ Sanderling	o	o		25-Apr
___ Cattle Egret	x					___ Semipalmated Sandpiper	u	u		10-May
___ Green Heron**	c	c	u		25-Apr	___ Western Sandpiper		o	r	
___ Black-crowned Night-Heron**	u	u			20-Apr	___ Least Sandpiper	u	u		5-May
Gruidae (Cranes)						___ White-rumped Sandpiper	o	r		10-May
___ Sandhill Crane**	u	u	u		20-Mar	___ Baird's Sandpiper	o	r		15-May
Anatidae (Swans, Geese, Ducks)						___ Pectoral Sandpiper	u	o		20-Apr
___ Greater White-fronted Goose	x		x			___ Dunlin	o	o		25-Apr
___ Snow Goose	u		u		20-Mar	___ Stilt Sandpiper			r	
___ Canada Goose**	c	r	u	r	15-Mar	___ Short-billed Dowitcher	o			
___ Mute Swan	o					___ Long-billed Dowitcher	x			
___ Trumpeter Swan	x					___ Common Snipe**	c	c	c	o
___ Tundra Swan	r		r	o	20-Mar	___ American Woodcock**	c	c	c	30-Mar
___ Wood Duck**	c	c	c		20-Mar	___ Wilson's Phalarope	o			
___ Gadwall	u		u		20-Mar	Laridae (Gulls, Terns)				
___ American Wigeon	c		u		20-Mar	___ Franklin's Gull			x	
___ American Black Duck	o		o		20-Mar	___ Bonaparte's Gull	o	r		1-May
___ Mallard**	c	c	c	o	20-Mar	___ Ring-billed Gull	u	u	u	25-Mar
___ Blue-winged Teal**	u	u	o		10-Apr	___ Herring Gull	u	o	o	20-Mar
___ Northern Shoveler	u		u		20-Mar	___ Glaucous Gull				x
___ Northern Pintail	u		u		25-Mar	___ Caspian Tern	o	o		15-Apr
___ Green-winged Teal	o		o		20-Mar	___ Common Tern	o	r		25-Apr
___ Canvasback	u		u		25-Mar	___ Forster's Tern	o	r		15-Apr
___ Redhead	u		u		10-Mar	___ Black Tern	o	o		5-May
___ Ring-necked Duck*	u	r	u		20-Mar	Cathartidae (New World Vultures)				
___ Greater Scaup	x					___ Turkey Vulture**	u	u	u	10-Apr
___ Lesser Scaup	c		c		20-Mar	Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, Allies)				
___ Bufflehead	u		u		15-Mar	___ Bald Eagle**	o	o	o	o
___ Common Goldeneye	u		u		15-Mar	___ Northern Harrier**	u	u	u	25-Mar
___ Hooded Merganser**	c	u	u		20-Mar	___ Sharp-shinned Hawk	u	u	u	r
___ Common Merganser	o		o		20-Mar	___ Cooper's Hawk**	u	u	u	o
___ Red-breasted Merganser	r				25-Mar	___ Northern Goshawk	r	r	o	
___ Ruddy Duck	u		u		10-Apr	___ Red-shouldered Hawk**	u	u	u	25-Mar
Rallidae (Rails, Coots, Gallinules)						___ Broad-winged Hawk**	c	u	c	25-Apr
___ King Rail					20-Apr	___ Red-tailed Hawk**	c	c	c	c
___ Virginia Rail					20-Apr	___ Rough-legged Hawk	o	o	c	
___ Sora**	u	u	u		15-Apr	___ Golden Eagle	o	o	u	
___ Common Moorhen						___ Osprey**	c	c	u	10-Apr
___ American Coot	u		u		25-Mar	Falconidae (Falcons)				
Recurvirostridae (Stilts)						___ American Kestrel**	c	c	c	o
___ Avocet	x					___ Merlin	r	r		10-Apr
						___ Peregrine Falcon	r	r		10-Apr

___ Red-eyed Vireo**	a	a	c	10-May	___ White-crowned Sparrow	u	u		30-Apr
___ Blue-headed Vireo	u		u	5-May	___ Dark-eyed Junco	a	a	c	
Parulidae (Wood-Warblers)					___ Lapland Longspur	o	o	r	
___ Blue-winged Warbler**	c	c	o	5-May	___ Snow Bunting	o	o	u	
___ Golden-winged Warbler**	u	u	o	5-May	Cardinalidae (Cardinals, Allies)				
___ Tennessee Warbler	a	u	c	5-May	___ Northern Cardinal**	u	u	u	u
___ Orange-crowned Warbler	u		u	10-May	___ Rose-breasted Grosbeak**	c	c	c	5-May
___ Nashville Warbler**	c	u	c	5-May	___ Blue Grosbeak		x		
___ Northern Parula	o		r	10-May	___ Indigo Bunting**	c	c	c	5-May
___ Yellow Warbler**	c	c		5-May	___ Dickcissel**	u	c		20-May
___ Chestnut-sided Warbler**	u	c	u	10-May	Icteridae (Blackbirds)				
___ Magnolia Warbler	c		u	10-May	___ Bobolink**	u	o		10-May
___ Cape May Warbler	u		o	10-May	___ Red-winged Blackbird*	c	c	c	20-Mar
___ Yellow-rumped Warbler**	c	o	u	15-Apr	___ Eastern Meadowlark**	u	c	u	30-Mar
___ Black-throated Green Warbler	u	o	u	15-May	___ Western Meadowlark**	o	o	u	30-Mar
___ Blackburnian Warbler	o	o	o	15-May	___ Yellow-headed Blackbird	o			5-May
___ Pine Warbler**	u	u	u	25-Apr	___ Rusty Blackbird	u		u	20-Mar
___ Kirtland's Warbler	x				___ Brewer's Blackbird**	r	r	r	20-Apr
Parulidae (Wood-Warblers) (continued)					___ Common Grackle**	u	u	u	20-Mar
___ Palm Warbler	c		c	10-May	___ Brown-headed Cowbird**	a	c	c	10-Apr
___ Bay-breasted Warbler	u		u	15-May	___ Orchard Oriole	o	u	r	10-May
___ Blackpoll Warbler	u		u	10-May	___ Baltimore Oriole**	a	c	c	1-May
___ Cerulean Warbler*	u	o		10-May	Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)				
___ Black-and-white Warbler**	u	u	u	5-May	___ House Sparrow**	c	c	c	c
___ American Redstart**	c	u	u	5-May	Fringillidae (Finches)				
___ Prothonotary Warbler	o	o	o		___ Pine Grosbeak			r	r
___ Ovenbird**	a	a	c	5-May	___ Purple Finch	o	o	u	o
___ Northern Waterthrush	u		u	5-May	___ House Finch**	u	u	u	u
___ Louisiana Waterthrush		r			___ Red Crossbill	r		r	r
___ Kentucky Warbler	x				___ White-winged Crossbill	r		r	r
___ Connecticut Warbler	o		o	15-May	___ Common Redpoll	u		u	u
___ Mourning Warbler**	u	u	u	15-May	___ Hoary Redpoll				x
___ Common Yellowthroat**	c	c	c	5-May	___ Pine Siskin	u		u	o
___ Wilson's Warbler	c		c	10-May	___ American Goldfinch**	c	c	c	c
___ Hooded Warbler**	o	o			___ Evening Grosbeak	u		u	u
___ Canada Warbler	u	o	u	15-May					
___ Yellow-breasted Chat	x								
Thraupidae (Tanagers)									
___ Scarlet Tanager**	c	c	u	5-May					
Emberizidae (Sparrows, Allies)									
___ Eastern Towhee**	c	c	c	20-Apr					
___ American Tree Sparrow	c		c	c					
___ Chipping Sparrow**	c	c	c	20-Apr					
___ Clay-colored Sparrow**	u	u	u	5-May					
___ Field Sparrow**	a	a	c	5-Apr					
___ Vesper Sparrow**	a	a	c	5-Apr					
___ Lark Sparrow**	u	u		20-May					
___ Savanna Sparrow**	u	u	u	20-Apr					
___ Grasshopper Sparrow**	c	c	u	1-May					
___ Henslow's Sparrow	r	r		5-May					
___ Le Conte's Sparrow	r	r		10-May					
___ Fox Sparrow	u		u	5-Apr					
___ Song Sparrow**	a	a	a	25-Mar					
___ Lincoln's Sparrow	u		u	5-May					
___ Swamp Sparrow**	u	o	u	10-Apr					
___ White-throated Sparrow	c		c	25-Apr					
___ Harris' Sparrow	r		r						

The first edition of this checklist was compiled and designed in 1993 by Major Dennis R. Kuecherer (Ret). Major Kuecherer was stationed at Fort McCoy for a period of three years as the installation Provost Marshall.

An avid birder, he conducted numerous surveys and maintained careful observations and field notes. After retirement in 1992, Major Kuecherer conducted extensive migratory and breeding bird surveys in accordance with federal training area land management programs.

This list was greatly enhanced by records and field notes that were compiled over the years by Fort McCoy's fish and wildlife personnel from the Natural Resources Branch and the Range and Training Lands Assessment Program.

The original checklist was reviewed and edited by Mr. Eric Epstein from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Fort McCoy biologists and Mr. Eric Wood, a graduate researcher, reviewed the current checklist.

Illustration of grasshopper sparrow was drawn by Susan Vos, Range and Training Lands Assessment Coordinator at Fort McCoy.

Access to the Fort McCoy Training Areas is restricted due to military training requirements and resulting safety concerns. Groups wishing to inquire about birdwatching opportunities on Fort McCoy must contact the Public Affairs Office at (608) 388-2407. Birdwatching is allowed in the two Fort McCoy Outdoor Recreation Areas: Pine View Recreation Area and Whitetail Ridge Recreation Area.

Please send any comments, corrections, and new observations (especially nesting notes) to the Natural Resources Branch to ensure accuracy in future revisions.

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The Natural Resources Branch under the Directorate of Public Works provides all land management for soils, forests, plant species, fish, and wildlife.

