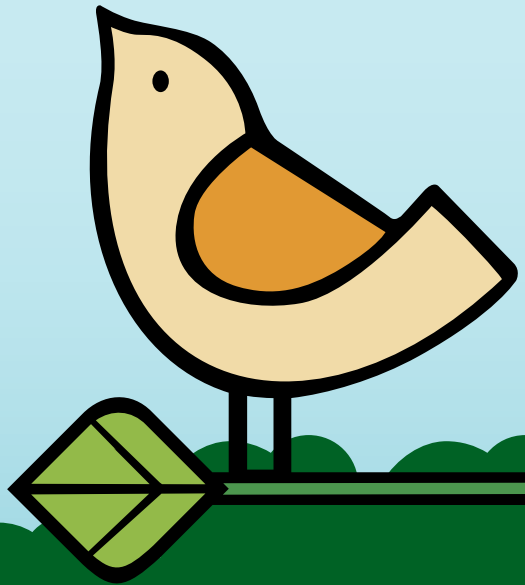


SPRING

# bird count

## COMMON BIRD SPECIES GUIDE FOR LEDUC



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CITY OF  
**Leduc**  
Leduc.ca

## Message from the Mayor



Leduc residents have joined together with the City of Leduc, the Leduc Environmental Advisory Board (LEAB) and other stakeholders to help make our community a great place to live, work and play.

Our enviable natural spaces play an important role in creating a community we are proud to call home.

Consider the natural amenities we enjoy through all four seasons. Telford Lake's beautiful extended boardwalk with its scenic viewpoints gives families a ready-made way to participate in events such as the spring and Christmas bird counts. Leduc's trail system offers walkers, bikers – everyone from families to seniors – an ever-changing view depending on the season.

New initiatives such as the pollinator garden offer fresh ways to enjoy our city while learning more about outdoor life and how we can all partner with nature so we can continue to enjoy our great outdoors for many years to come.

This handy, informative guide will make a useful companion as you enjoy our open spaces, parks and trails – and become better acquainted with the many species of birds that also call Leduc home.

We encourage you to visit [Leduc.ca](http://Leduc.ca) to learn more about participating in the Leduc spring and Christmas bird counts. The data gathered from these bird counts assists with identifying local bird trends and compiling national bird count data.

The City of Leduc would like to thank the Leduc Environmental Advisory Board (LEAB) and the Leduc Wildlife Conservation Society (LWCS) for their support and involvement with the bird count activities and for their collaboration with creating these local guides.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Young". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large "R" and "Y".

**Bob Young**  
Mayor



Photo credit: Douglas Hube

## American Robin

American robins are common sights on lawns across North America where you often see them tugging earthworms out of the ground. Robins are popular birds for their warm orange breast, cheery song and early appearance at the end of winter. Male and females look the same. Though they're familiar town and city birds, American robins are at home in wilder areas, too, including mountain forests and Alberta wilderness areas. They are commonly seen in Leduc during spring, summer and fall. A few are sighted over winter near open water.



## Blue Jay

This common, large songbird is familiar to many people with its perky crest, blue, white and black plumage and noisy calls. Males and females look the same. Blue jays are known for their intelligence and complex social systems with tight family bonds. Their fondness for acorns is credited with helping spread oak trees after the last glacial period. In the winter months you can attract jays to your feeders with peanuts.



## Common Bird Species Sighted in Leduc

### California Gull



California gulls are common in inland areas in the West. In the Leduc area, they are often a concern for airplanes when they get in the flight path on the way to the Leduc and District Regional Waste Management Facility (LDRWMF). These medium-sized gulls can be easily identified with their yellow legs and slender bill compared to other gull species. Look for black and red colouring on their bill, in particular a red spot on the lower bill. You'll spot them in pastures, scrublands and at the LDRWMF as they often forage miles from the colony, eating everything they can find from mayflies to garbage. In the winter they head to the coast where they cruise up and down the shoreline with other gulls.



Photo credit: Douglas Hube

### Canada Goose

The big, black-necked Canada goose with its signature white chinstrap mark is a familiar and widespread bird of fields and parks. In Leduc they are often sighted at Fred Johns Park and Telford Lake. Thousands of "honkers" migrate north and south each year, filling the sky with long V-formations. They typically arrive in Leduc in early spring and head for warmer climates in early winter although more and more of these grassland-adapted birds are staying put in urban and suburban areas year-round.





## Cedar Waxwing

A treat to find in your binocular viewfield, the cedar waxwing is a silky, shiny collection of brown, grey and lemon yellow, accented with a subdued crest, rakish black mask and brilliant red wax droplets on the wing feathers. In fall these birds gather by the hundreds to eat berries, filling the air with their high, thin whistles. In summer you're as likely to find them flitting about over rivers in pursuit of flying insects, where they show off dazzling aeronautics for a forest bird. Look for their yellow underparts when trying to sight cedar waxwings.

## Domestic Pigeon

Domestic pigeons crowd streets and public squares, living on discarded food and offerings of birdseed. In addition to the typical blue-grey bird with two dark wingbars, you'll often see flocks with plain, spotted, pale or rusty red birds in them. City pigeons nest on buildings and window ledges. In the countryside they also nest on barns and grain towers, under bridges and on natural cliffs.



## Common Bird Species Sighted in Leduc

### European Starling

European starlings were first introduced to North America in 1890 and have quickly spread across the continent. They are among the continent's most numerous songbirds. They are stocky, black birds with short tails, triangular wings and long, pointed bills. Covered in white spots during winter, they turn dark and glossy in summer. For much of the year, they wheel through the sky and mob lawns in big, noisy flocks.



### Franklin's Gull

A small, black-headed gull of the prairies, the Franklin's gull is a common sight in the interior of North America, following plows to eat exposed worms, insects and mice. They feature black wing tips, with white underparts and a red bill.



## Mallard

These familiar ducks can be seen throughout North America and Eurasia in ponds and parks, wilder wetlands and estuaries. The male's gleaming green head, grey flanks and black tail-curl arguably make it the most easily identified duck. Females are varying shades of brown. Females and juveniles have orange-and-brown bills. Mallards “dabble” for food and are often seen in Telford Lake and Fred Johns Lake in Leduc.



## Northern Flicker

Northern flickers are large, brown woodpeckers with a gentle expression and handsome black-scalloped plumage. Flickers eat mainly ants and beetles, digging for them with their unusual, slightly curved bill. To find northern flickers, try walking through open woods or forest edges, but scan the ground. Look for the obvious white rump patch in flight. Also, be sure to listen for their loud, ringing call and their piercing yelp.



## Common Bird Species Sighted in Leduc

### Pine Siskin

Spot pine siskins clinging to the ends of conifer branches, even upside down, to feed at cones – or look for an exceptionally streaky, small-billed finch at your feeder. Better suited to clinging to branch tips than to hopping along the ground, these brown-streaked acrobats flash yellow wing markings as they flutter while feeding or as they explode into flight. Flocks are gregarious, and you may hear their insistent wheezy twitters before you see them.



Photo credit: Douglas Hube

### Purple Martin

Purple martins are very large, broad-chested swallows. They have stout, slightly hooked bills, short, forked tails and long, tapered wings. Adult males are iridescent, dark blue-purple overall with brown-black wings and tail. Females and immatures are duller, with variable amounts of grey on the head and chest and a whitish lower belly. Purple martins feed in open areas, especially near water. In Leduc they are often sighted in the summer around Telford Lake and in the large bird houses surrounding the lake. Be careful, as parent birds may dive at you or your dog when their young martins are learning to fly or may be on the ground.







Photo credit:  
Douglas Hube

## Red-necked Grebe

The red-necked grebe breeds on small inland lakes in Canada and Alaska, and winters along both coasts of North America. It is a medium-sized waterbird with a large, straight and sharp bill. Boldly marked, vocal and aggressive during the breeding season, it is quiet and subtly attired in winter. Red-necked grebes are often sighted in Leduc by the boardwalk on Telford Lake. Adult grebes have an endearing habit of carrying very young chicks on their backs.

## Red-winged Blackbird

The red-winged blackbird is a familiar sight atop cattails, along soggy roadsides and on telephone wires. In Leduc, red-winged blackbirds are often sighted at Telford Lake amongst the cattails. They are often found in reeds and perch in trees close to the water. Glossy-black males have scarlet and yellow shoulder patches they can puff up or hide depending on how confident they feel. Females are a subdued, streaky brown, almost like a large, dark sparrow. Listen closely for their very distinctive call.



## Common Bird Species Sighted in Leduc



Photo credit: Douglas Hube

### Ring-billed Gull

Familiar acrobats of the air, ring-billed gulls nimbly pluck tossed tidbits from on high. Comfortable around humans, they frequent parking lots, landfills, beaches and fields, sometimes by the hundreds. Most ring-billed gulls nest in the interior of the continent near fresh water. A black band encircling the yellow bill helps distinguish adults from other gulls — but look closely as some other species have black or red spots on the bill.

### Ruddy Duck

Look for ruddy ducks from spring through fall on open water, such as Telford Lake or Fred Johns Lake. They are often seen diving for food, or dive when they are alarmed. Ruddy ducks are compact, thick-necked waterfowl with seemingly oversized tails that they habitually hold upright. Females look quite different than males. Breeding males are almost cartoonishly bold with a sky-blue bill, shining white cheek patch and gleaming chestnut body. They court females by beating their bill against their neck hard enough to create a swirl of bubbles in the water. Females and first-year males are varying shades of brown, and lack the blue bill.



Photo credit: Douglas Hube



## Tree Swallow

Handsome aerialists with deep-blue iridescent backs and clean white fronts, tree swallows are a familiar sight in summer fields and wetlands across northern North America. They chase after flying insects with acrobatic twists and turns, their steely blue-green feathers flashing in the sunlight. Tree swallows nest in tree cavities; they also readily take up residence in nest boxes.



*Photo credit: Douglas Hube*

## Western Grebe

A large, elegant, black and white grebe, the western grebe breeds in lakes and ponds across the American West and winters primarily off the Pacific coast. They have a long, white neck with a long, thin bill. The very similar Clark's grebe was long thought to be the same species. Both species have a dramatic, choreographed courtship display in which the birds rush across the water with their long necks extended. Western grebes are often sighted in Leduc by the boardwalk on Telford Lake. Adult Grebes have an endearing habit of carrying very young chicks on their backs.



## Common Bird Species Sighted in Leduc

### White Pelican



*Photo credit: Douglas Hube*

One of the largest North American birds, the white pelican is majestic in the air. The birds soar with incredible steadiness on broad, white and black wings. Their large heads and huge, heavy bills give them a prehistoric look. Look for them on inland lakes in summer, such as Telford Lake in Leduc.

On the water they dip their pouched bills to scoop up fish, or tip up like an oversized dabbling duck. Locally at Telford Lake, pelicans feast upon minnows, salamanders, tadpoles and various other small aquatic invertebrates.



*White Pelicans in breeding season*

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## My bird sightings

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# Tips for observing birds

- Observe birds from a safe distance. Do not disturb nesting sites or birds with their young.
- Avoid wearing bright clothing or clothing that rustles. Try not to shout or be too loud, as you could disturb or startle the birds.
- Binoculars are extremely helpful to observe birds at a distance. Bird watchers consider this an essential item in their bird watching toolkit.
- Installing a bird feeder is an excellent way to attract birds to your yard. See the backyard feeder tips for suggestions.
- Try to go bird watching in the early morning when birds are most active and tend to call more often.
- Avoid bird watching on windy days and hot days when birds are less active. If you must bird watch on a hot day, do it in the early morning or late in the afternoon when it is cooler and the birds are likely to be more active.

- Listen closely for birds calling. This can help lead you to their location and assist with identifying the bird.
- Observe the bird's size, shape, colour, patterns and any other identifying features such as the bill shape. It can be helpful to use a common bird you are familiar with as a reference for bird size. Your written observations can later assist you with identifying the bird.
- Birds are often sighted in parks or around bodies of water. There is a high probability of sighting birds in Leduc around Telford Lake, Fred Johns Park and Deer Valley Park. The multiway along Telford Lake features some excellent bird watching lookout points.
- Use this guide as a basic resource in identifying common birds of Leduc. For more detailed information, download free apps to your smartphone or smart device. Alternatively, websites such as [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org) or [www.allaboutbirds.org](http://www.allaboutbirds.org) are helpful and feature bird call sound clips.



*House Sparrows*

## Backyard feeder tips

If you use a mix, it is best to look for quality mixes that include sunflower seeds, peanuts, white millet and cracked corn, which provide birds with energy and protein. Please do not feed bread to birds, including waterfowl.

**Black-oil sunflower seed:** attracts a large variety of birds including chickadees, nuthatches, finches, sparrows and woodpeckers. You may wish to use sunflower chips (shelled seed), which are more expensive but do not sprout when they fall to the ground. Chickadees and nuthatches prefer them with shells.

**Striped sunflower seed:** attracts blue jays, chickadees and woodpeckers.

**Nyger (thistle) seed:** attracts common redpolls, house finches, pine siskins and American goldfinches. A nyger feeder or nyger sock is recommended. Nyger seed will not sprout on the ground but it can go rancid in wet weather so it is best to put out small quantities to try to keep it dry.

**Suet:** attracts woodpeckers, nuthatches, chickadees, blue jays and starlings. You can use a variety of feeders, including a suet cage, or tie to a branch or tree trunk. It is recommended to avoid putting suet out in the summer as it can go rancid in hot temperatures.

**Unsalted peanuts (or other nuts):** attracts blue jays, woodpeckers, flickers, nuthatches, chickadees and magpies. Large birds like blue jays prefer peanuts with shells, whereas small birds like chickadees and nuthatches prefer shelled. You may wish to purchase a squirrel-proof feeder.

**Fruit:** attracts Baltimore orioles, robins and cedar waxwings. Oranges (cut in half), grapes, raisins and dried pumpkin or apple seeds are popular options.



Red-breasted  
Nuthatch

# ANNUAL SPRING BIRD COUNT

The Spring Bird Count happens annually in early June.

Celebrate the beginning of summer with this fun, free family activity.

Watch for specific dates and details at [Leduc.ca](http://Leduc.ca).

## Useful resources on other birds and local wildlife

Cornell Lab for Ornithology  
[allaboutbirds.org](http://allaboutbirds.org)

National Audubon Society  
[audubon.org](http://audubon.org)

Alberta Institute for  
Wildlife Conservation  
[aiwc.ca](http://aiwc.ca)

Leduc Wildlife  
Conservation Society  
[leducwildlifeconservationsocie.canic.ws](http://leducwildlifeconservationsocie.canic.ws)

City of Leduc  
[Leduc.ca](http://Leduc.ca)

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Eco-smart Hotline: 780-980-7107

E-mail: [ecosmart@Leduc.ca](mailto:ecosmart@Leduc.ca)

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