

Looking for more?

If you would like to learn more about the birds of the Lesser Slave Lake area or are interested in visiting the Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory contact the Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation.

Phone: (780) 849 8240

Toll Free: 1-866-718-BIRD

Email: info@lslbo.org

<http://www.borealbirdcentre.ca>

This checklist was created as a resource for visiting birders to predict the best times and habitats to locate any of the bird species that have been sighted in the region. It includes as many bird sightings from the area as possible, but some accidental observations may have been omitted due to lack of substantial information. Many of these bird species do frequent the area regularly but some birds on this list have fewer than 5 sightings and should not be considered findable. This checklist was compiled using a variety of sources including: Alberta's watchable wildlife (Government of Alberta SRD), Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory monitoring data, The Atlas of Breeding Birds of Alberta, Naturecounts (Bird Studies Canada), as well as personal knowledge of LSLBO staff.

All photo credit: Nicole Linfoot



The “When and Where” Bird Checklist for the Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory and Surrounding Area.

Last Updated: 2015



Dedicated to promoting bird conservation
through research and education.

The Lesser Slave Lake region is home to multitudes of birds making it an ideal location for bird-watching. The exceptional diversity of species is due in-part to the wide variety of habitats including: deciduous to coniferous forest, old-growth forest, marshes, bogs, lakeshore, rivers, riparian areas and even lower foothills type habitat . Around 250 species of bird have been recorded at the Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory and many more have been encountered in the surrounding Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park, neighbouring areas and the Town of Slave Lake.

Using this Checklist

Column 1- Bird species (listed in accepted taxonomic order); divided by broad group headings.

Column 2- The bird species' status in the area

- R- Resident, year-round species
- B- Regular breeder
- Bo- Occasional breeder
- M- Spring and/or fall migrant
- Vs- Non-breeding summer visitor
- Vw- Winter visitor
- S- Stray or accidental, not expected in the area

Column 3- Habitat where the bird species is most likely to be found. Includes the two habitat types of greatest importance for the species.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Lak- Lake, anywhere | Gra- Grassy area |
| Lae- Edge of lake | Shr- Shrubland |
| Pon- Ponds and sloughs | Dec- Deciduous forests |
| Fwa- Pond or other water body bordered by forest | Con- Coniferous forests |
| Riv- Rivers or streams | Mix- Mixed wood forests |
| Mar- Marshy area | For- Any forest type |
| Wet- Any wet area | Bnk- Bank or slump |
| | Urb- Urban areas |

Column 4- Findability. The likelihood of an observer being able to find the given bird species in the habitat and time frame indicated.

- (1) Common: a 'gimme' species
- (2) Uncommon: not seen daily, some work will be needed to locate
- (3) Rare: recorded annually but in low numbers, unlikely to find
- (4) Stray: usually absent, seen in low numbers in only some years
- (5) Accidental: not expected, fewer than 5 records.

Finches, weaver finches	Stat	Habitat	Find	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	v
Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch	S	Gra,Urb	5													
Pine Grosbeak	R	For,Urb	1													
House Finch	S	For,Urb	5													
Purple Finch	B	For,Urb	1													
Red Crossbill	R	Con,Mix	3													
White-winged Crossbill	R	Con,Mix	3													
Common Redpoll	Vw	For,Urb	1													
Hoary Redpoll	Vw	For,Urb	2													
Pine Siskin	B	Con,Urb	1													
American Goldfinch	M	Dec,Urb	2													
Evening Grosbeak	R	For,Urb	1													
House Sparrow	R	Urb	1													

Finches tend to be irruptive species, sometimes they are present in huge numbers and other times they are nowhere to be found. It can make them either a real easy find, or an impossible one.

Found someone that isn't on the list?

Feel free to let us know about any interesting birds you have encountered on your birding adventure in the Lesser Slave Area.

Please include:

- Your name, address, phone number and experience level.
- The date, location and habitat that you saw the bird in, and any interesting behaviour.
- A photograph if possible!



Sparrows	Stat	Habitat	Find	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	v
American Tree Sparrow	M	Shr,Dec	1													
Chipping Sparrow	B	For,Shr	1													
Clay-colored Sparrow	B	Shr,Mar	1													
Vesper Sparrow	M	Gra	3													
Lark Sparrow	S	Gra	5													
Lark Bunting	S	Gra	5													
Savannah Sparrow	B	Gra,Shr	1													
Le Conte's Sparrow	B	Gra,Mar	2													
Nelson's Sparrow	S	Mar,Gra	5													
Fox Sparrow	M	For,Shr	3													
Song Sparrow	B	For,Shr	1													
Lincoln's Sparrow	B	Shr,Wet	1													
Swamp Sparrow	B	Mar,Shr	1													
White-throated Sparrow	B	For	1													
Harris's Sparrow	M	Dec,Shr	4													
White-crowned Sparrow	M	Dec,Shr	1													
Dark-eyed Junco	M,Bo	Con,Mix	1													

Many species of sparrow can be quite specific in their habitat requirements. Even extremely common species can be impossible to find if you aren't looking in the right places.

Grosbeaks	Stat	Habitat	Find	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	v
Western Tanager	B	Con,Mix	1													
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	B	Dec,Mix	1													
Lazuli Bunting	S	Dec,Shr	5													

We (commonly) only have one species of grosbeak. The pine and evening grosbeaks are actually members of the finch family. The rose-breasted grosbeak is more closely related to cardinals than it is to our other 'grosbeaks'



Blackbirds, Orioles	Stat	Habitat	Find	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	v
Red-winged Blackbird	B	Mar,Wet	1													
Western Meadowlark	S	Gra	5													
Yellow-headed Blackbird	M,Bo	Mar	2													
Rusty Blackbird	B	Shr,Wet	2													
Brewer's Blackbird	B	Dec,Shr	1													
Common Grackle	B	Dec,Shr	1													
Brown-headed Cowbird	B	For,Shr	1													
Baltimore Oriole	M	Riv,Dec	4													

Blackbirds typically migrate in huge mixed flocks, so it is often very hard to know which blackbirds you have encountered and which you haven't. To make matters even trickier, the rusty and Brewer's not only look very similar but their calls are almost identical.

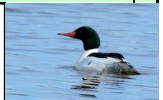
Column 5-16- Monthly frequency charts. Taller columns mean higher abundances and shorter columns mean lower. Columns within months show weekly abundances. Created using various count data from www.naturecounts.ca.

Column 17- Check 'em off!

The When and Where Checklist

Waterfowl	Stat	Habitat	Find	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	?
Greater white-fronted goose	M	Lak,Gra	1													
Snow Goose	M	Lak,Gra	2													
Canada Goose	B	Wet,Gra	1													
Brant	S	Lak,Gra	5													
Trumpeter Swan	M	Lak,Gra	4													
Tundra Swan	M	Lak,Gra	2													
Wood Duck	S	Wet	5													
Gadwall	B	Mar,Pon	3													
Eurasian Wigeon	S	?	5													
American Wigeon	B	Mar,Pon	1													
Mallard	B	Wet	1													
Blue-winged Teal	B	Pon,Mar	1													
Northern Shoveler	B	Mar,Pon	1													
Northern Pintail	B	Mar,Pon	2													
Green-winged Teal	B	Mar,Pon	1													
Canvasback	B	Mar,Pon	1													
Redhead	B	Mar,Pon	2													
Ring-necked Duck	B	Fwa	2													
Greater Scaup	M	Lak	1													
Lesser Scaup	B	Mar,Pon	1													
Harlequin Duck	S	Riv	5													
Surf Scoter	Bo	Lak	2													
White-winged Scoter	B	Lak	2													
Long-tailed Duck	M	Lak	1													
Bufflehead	B	Fwa,Riv	1													
Common Goldeneye	B	Fwa,Riv	1													
Barrow's Goldeneye	S	Fwa,Riv	5													
Hooded Merganser	S	Lae,Riv	4													
Common Merganser	B	Fwa,Lae	1													
Red-breasted Merganser	B	Fwa,Lae	2													
Ruddy Duck	B	Mar,Pon	1													

The best time to see high concentrations of waterfowl is early May before the ice has totally receded. Ducks gather in huge numbers in the patches of open water.



Grouse, allies	Stat	Habitat	Find	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	v
Gray Partridge	S	Gra,Shr	5													
Ring-necked Pheasant	S	Gra,Shr	5													
Ruffed Grouse	R	Dec,Mix	2													
Spruce Grouse	R	Con,Mix	3													
Sharp-tailed Grouse	Vs	Gra,Shr	4													

Although ruffed grouse are common and widespread, they can be hard to find because of their cryptic camouflage.

Loons and Grebes	Stat	Habitat	Find	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	?
Common Loon	B	Lae	1													
Red-throated Loon	S	Lak	5													
Yellow-billed Loon	S	Lak	5													
Pacific Loon	S	Lak	4													
Pied-billed Grebe	B	Mar,Pon	2													
Horned Grebe	B	Pon	2													
Red-necked Grebe	B	Lae,Mar	1													
Eared Grebe	B	Lae,Mar	2													
Western Grebe	B	Lak,Mar	2													

Lesser Slave Lake is home to lots of loons and grebes, but because of the lake's vast size it can be hard to spot some of them. If you are familiar with their calls though, they are easily detected.

Pelicans, herons, allies	Stat	Habitat	Find	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	v
Double-crested cormorant	B	Lae	2													
American White Pelican	B	Lak	1													
American Bittern	B	Mar	3													
Great Blue Heron	B	Wet	2													



A good place to look for great blue herons is in the reedy banks near the town of Faust where there is a large heronry (breeding colony). Pelicans are more common on the west side of the lake than the east.

Hawks and eagles	Stat	Habitat	Find	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	v
Osprey	B	Fwa,Lak	1													
Bald Eagle	B	Fwa,Lak	1													
Northern Harrier	B	Mar,Shr	2													
Sharp-shinned Hawk	B	For	2													
Cooper's Hawk	S	For	4													
Northern Goshawk	R	For	3													
Broad-winged Hawk	B	For	2													
Swainson's Hawk	S	Gra	5													
Red-tailed Hawk	B	Dec,Mix	1													
Rough-legged Hawk	M	Gra,Shr	3													
Golden Eagle	S	?	5													

The Lesser Slave Lake boasts a very healthy population of bald eagles.

Mimids to waxwings	Stat	Habitat	Find	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	v
Gray Catbird	S	For,Shr	5													
Northern Mockingbird	S	For,Urb	5													
European Starling	M	Urb	2													
American Pipit	M	Gra,Lae	1													
Sprague's Pipit	S	Gra	5													
Bohemian Waxwing	Vw	Urb,Mix	1													
Cedar Waxwing	B	For	1													



The Town of Slave Lake is always home to abundance of waxwings, whether it's the bohemians in the winter or the cedars in the summer, their shrill calls can always be heard from the tree tops.

Longspurs and Buntings	Stat	Habitat	Find	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	v
Lapland Longspur	M	Lae,Gra	1													
Smith's Longspur	S	Gra,Lae	5													
Snow Bunting	Vw	Lae,Gra	2													

The best place to find longspurs is to watch for them migrating along the shoreline of Lesser Slave Lake.

Warblers	Stat	Habitat	Find	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	v
Ovenbird	B	Dec,Mix	1													
Northern Waterthrush	B	Riv,Mix	2													
Black-and-white Warbler	B	Mix,Shr	1													
Tennessee Warbler	B	Mix,Shr	1													
Orange-crowned Warbler	B	Riv,Shr	1													
Nashville Warbler	S	Dec,Mix	5													
Connecticut Warbler	S	Mix,Dec	4													
MacGillivray's Warbler	S	Shr,Wet	5													
Mourning Warbler	B	Dec,Shr	1													
Common Yellowthroat	B	Shr,Wet	1													
American Redstart	B	For,Shr	1													
Cape May Warbler	B	Con	3													
Magnolia Warbler	B	Con,Mix	2													
Bay-breasted Warbler	B	Con,Mix	2													
Blackburnian Warbler	S,M	Con,Mix	3													
Yellow Warbler	B	Dec,Shr	1													
Chestnut-sided Warbler	B	Dec	3													
Blackpoll Warbler	B	Con,Wet	2													
Palm Warbler	B	Wet,Con	2													
Pine Warbler	S	Con	5													
Myrtle Warbler	B	For	1													
Black-throated Green Warbler	B	Con,Mix	2													
Canada Warbler	B	Dec,Shr	1													
Wilson's Warbler	M,Bo	Shr,Dec	2													

This area is renowned for its abundances of wood-warblers. Some species use the area only for migration but many species also breed here. Their beautiful songs and bright colours make them highly sought out by bird watchers. For species that prefer older-growth habitat, be sure to check out Marten Mountain.



Larks, Swallows	Stat	Habitat	Find	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	v
Horned Lark	M	Lae,Gra	3													
Purple Martin	S	Urb	5						.							
Tree Swallow	B	For,Urb	1													
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	S	Bnk	5					.		.						
Violet-green Swallow	S	Wet,Gra	5					.								
Bank Swallow	M	Bnk	2													
Cliff Swallow	B	Urb,Bnk	1													
Barn Swallow	B	Urb	1													

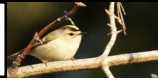
A sure-fire place for cliff swallows is under the bridge over Lesser Slave Lake River on Hwy 88 right outside Slave Lake.

Chickadees to creepers	Stat	Habitat	Find	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	v
Black-capped Chickadee	R	For,Urb	1													
Mountain Chickadee	S	Con,Mix	5					.								
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	S	Con,Mix	5	.												
Boreal Chickadee	R	Con,Wet	2													
Red-breasted Nuthatch	R	Con,Mix	2													
White-breasted Nuthatch	Vw	Mix,Dec	2													
Brown Creeper	R	Mix,Con	2													

Chickadees and nuthatches are common easy-to-find residents.

Wrens, kinglets	Stat	Habitat	Find	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	v
Rock Wren	S	?	5					.								
House Wren	M,Bo	Mix,Shr	2													
Winter Wren	B	Con	1													
Sedge Wren	S	Mar,Gra	5													
Marsh Wren	B	Mar	3				.									
Golden-crowned Kinglet	Vw	Con,Mix	3													
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	B	Con,Mix	1													

Learning the songs and calls of wrens and kinglets is often crucial to being able to locate these tiny, energetic birds.



Thrushes	Stat	Habitat	Find	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	v
Mountain Bluebird	S	For	5					.								
Townsend's Solitaire	S	Con	5										.	.	.	
Veery	S	Dec,Mix	5									.				
Gray-cheeked Thrush	M	Dec	2													
Swainson's Thrush	B	For	1													
Hermit Thrush	B	Con,Mix	1													
Varied Thrush	S,M	Con	4								.	.				
American Robin	B	For,Urb	1													

Thrushes may not be much to look at with their plain brown plumage, but this family of birds has some of the most amazing vocalists.

Rails, cranes	Stat	Habitat	Find	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	?
Sora	B	Mar	2													
American Coot	B	Mar	1													
Sandhill Crane	M,Bo	Mar,Gra	2													

Cranes are rarely seen stopping-over in our area since there are not many large open fields, but they are often seen and heard migrating overhead.

Shorebirds	Stat	Habitat	Find	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	v
American Avocet	S	Pon,Mar	4						.							
Black-bellied Plover	M	Lae	4					.	.			.				
American Golden-Plover	M	Lae,Gra	4									.				
Semipalmated Plover	M,B	Lae	2													
Killdeer	B	Lae,Pon	1													
Spotted Sandpiper	B	Lae,Fwa	1													
Solitary Sandpiper	B	Lae,Fwa	2					.								
Wandering Tattler	S	Lae	5					.								
Greater Yellowlegs	B	Lae,Pon	1													
Lesser Yellowlegs	B	Wet,Fwa	1													
Upland Sandpiper	S	Gra	5					.				.				
Whimbrel	S	?	5					.								
Marbled Godwit	B	Pon,Mar	2					.								
Ruddy Turnstone	M	Lae	5					.								
Sanderling	M	Lae,Riv	4					.								
Baird's Sandpiper	M	Lae,Riv	3													
Least Sandpiper	M	Lae,Riv	3													
Pectoral Sandpiper	M	Mar,Lae	3													
Semipalmated Sandpiper	M	Lae,Riv	3													
Short-billed Dowitcher	B	Lae,Pon	4													
Long-billed Dowitcher	M	Lae,Pon	3													
Wilson's Snipe	B	Wet	1													
Wilson's Phalarope	B	Mar,Pon	5					.	.			.				

The Lesser Slave Lake is poor for shorebird watching, it has a very rocky shore in most areas and many shorebirds prefer mudflats.



Gulls, terns, allies	Stat	Habitat	Find	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	v
Parasitic Jaeger	S	Lae	5					.				.				
Ivory Gull	S	Lae	5					.								
Bonaparte's Gull	B	Wet,Fwa	3													
Franklin's Gull	B	Lae,Urb	1													
Mew Gull	M	Lae	2									.				
Ring-billed Gull	B	Lae,Urb	1													
Herring Gull	B	Lae	1													
Glaucous Gull	S	Lae	5									.				
Caspian Tern	M	Lae	4													
Black Tern	Bo	Mar	3													
Common Tern	B	Lae	1													
Forster's Tern	Bo	Lae	1													

Although it doesn't feel like real bird watching, the parking lots of Slave Lake are a great place to spot some gulls.

Doves	Stat	Habitat	Find	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	?
Rock Pigeon	R	Urb	3	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
Mourning Dove	M	Dec,Gra	3					■	■							

The Town of Slave Lake is home to a small number of pigeons.

Owls	Stat	Habitat	Find	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	v
Great Horned Owl	R	For	3													
Snowy Owl	Vw	Gra	4													
Northern Hawk Owl	R	Wet,Con	3													
Northern Pygmy-Owl	Vw	Con,Mix	4													
Barred Owl	R	Con,Mix	3													
Great Gray Owl	R	For,Wet	3													
Long-eared Owl	B	For	3													
Short-eared Owl	Vs	Mar,Shr	4													
Boreal Owl	R	Con	3													
Northern Saw-whet Owl	B	Dec,Mix	3													



Owls, although common, are very hard to find since they are often active only at night. Listen for their breeding calls in early spring.

Nighthawks to kingfishers	Stat	Habitat	Find	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	v
Common Nighthawk	B	For,Wet	3													
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	B	Mix,Urb	2													
Rufous Hummingbird	S	For,Urb	4													
Belted Kingfisher	B	Riv,Bnk	1													

Hummingbirds can be found out in the forest but the best way to see one is to find a hummingbird feeder to relax beside!

Woodpeckers	Stat	Habitat	Find	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	v
Red-headed Woodpecker	S	?	5													
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	B	Dec,Mix	1													
Downy Woodpecker	R	Dec,Mix	1													
Hairy Woodpecker	R	For	1													
American Three-toed Woodpecker	R	Con,Mix	3													
Black-backed woodpecker	R	Con,Mix	3													
Northern Flicker	B	For	1													
Pileated Woodpecker	R	For	2													

Many woodpeckers live in the area year-round. They tend to live in low densities though, so you may have to search hard.



Falcons	Stat	Habitat	Find	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	v
American Kestrel	B	For	2													
Merlin	B	For,Urb	1													
Gyrfalcon	M	?	5													
Peregrine Falcon	M	Wet,For	3													
Prairie Falcon	S	Gra	5													

Peregrine falcons can be seen cruising the shoreline of Lesser Slave Lake in early spring.



Flycatchers	Stat	Habitat	Find	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	v
Olive-sided Flycatcher	B	Wet,Con	3													
Western Wood-Pewee	B	For,Wet	2													
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	B	Wet,Con	3													
Alder Flycatcher	B	Shr,Wet	1													
Least Flycatcher	B	Mix,Shr	1													
Eastern Phoebe	B	For,Urb	1													
Say's Phoebe	M	Riv,For	2													
Great Crested Flycatcher	S	Dec,Mix	5													
Eastern Kingbird	M	Dec,Shr	2													

Many flycatcher species look nearly identical. Luckily they are very vocal and have distinct songs that can be used to differentiate them.

Shrikes, Vireos	Stat	Habitat	Find	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	v
Northern Shrike	Vw	For,Wet	4													
Cassin's Vireo	S	Con,Mix	5													
Blue-headed Vireo	B	Con,Mix	2													
Warbling Vireo	B	Dec,Mix	2													
Philadelphia Vireo	B	Dec,Mix	1													
Red-eyed Vireo	B	Dec,Mix	1													

Vireos tend to be hard-to-see but easy-to-hear species due to their habit of singing from very high in the canopy. Vireo species can look quite similar to each other and their songs can be tricky too.



Crows, jays, allies	Stat	Habitat	Find	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	v
Gray Jay	R	Con,Mix	3													
Blue Jay	R	For,Urb	2													
Black-billed Magpie	R	For,Urb	1													
American Crow	B	For,Urb	1													
Common Raven	R	Con,Urb	1													

All our corvids are residents except for the crow. Gray jays can be either easy to find in campgrounds or very hard to find in their natural habitat of bogs and other remote areas.