

List of birds of Kentucky

This **list of birds of Kentucky** includes species documented in the U.S. state of Kentucky by the Kentucky Bird Records Committee (KBRC) of the Kentucky Ornithological Society.^[1] Of the 387 species on the list, 97 are classed as accidental and six were introduced to North America. Four are extinct and three have been extirpated. An additional nine species are hypothetical as defined below. Birds that are considered probable escapees, although they may have been sighted flying free, are not included.

This list is presented in the taxonomic sequence of the *Check-list of North American Birds*, 7th edition through the 59th Supplement, published by the American Ornithological Society (AOS).^{[2][3]} Common and scientific names are also those of the *Check-list*.

The following tags are used to designate some species:

- (A) **Accidental** - A species on the Kentucky review list, for which the KOS requires documentation
- (E) **Extirpated** - a species which no longer occurs in Kentucky but exists elsewhere
- (X) **Extinct** - a recent species that no longer exists
- (I) **Introduced** - a species established solely as result of direct or indirect human intervention
- (H) **Hypothetical** - species with only sight records or questionable reports, which also require documentation

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Ducks, geese and swans

Order: Anseriformes **Family:** Anatidae

The family Anatidae includes the ducks and most duck-like waterfowl, such as geese and swans. These birds are adapted to an aquatic existence with webbed feet, bills which are flattened to a greater or lesser extent, and feathers that are excellent at shedding water due to special oils. Forty-three species have been recorded in Kentucky



The northern cardinal is the state bird of Kentucky.

- Black-bellied whistling-duck, *Dendrocygna autumnalis*(A)
- ulvous whistling-duck, *Dendrocygna bicolor*(A)
- Snow goose, *Anser caerulescens*
- Ross's goose, *Anser rossii*
- Greater white-fronted goose, *Anser albifrons*
- Brant, *Branta bernicla* (A)
- Barnacle goose, *Branta leucopsis* (H)
- Cackling goose, *Branta hutchinsii*
- Canada goose, *Branta canadensis*
- Mute swan, *Cygnus olor* (I)
- Trumpeter swan, *Cygnus buccinator*(A)
- Tundra swan, *Cygnus columbianus*
- Wood duck, *Aix sponsa*
- Cinnamon teal, *Spatula cyanoptera*(A)
- Northern shoveler, *Spatula clypeata*
- Gadwall, *Mareca strepera*
- Eurasian wigeon, *Mareca penelope* (A)
- American wigeon, *Mareca americana*
- Mallard, *Anas platyrhynchos*
- American black duck, *Anas rubripes*
- Mottled Duck, *Anas fulvigula* (A)
- Northern pintail, *Anas acuta*
- Blue-winged teal, *Anas discors*
- Green-winged teal, *Anas crecca carolinensis*
- Canvasback, *Aythya valisineria*
- Redhead, *Aythya americana*
- Ring-necked duck, *Aythya collaris*
- Tufted duck, *Aythya fuligula* (A)
- Greater scaup, *Aythya marila*
- Lesser scaup, *Aythya affinis*
- King eider, *Somateria spectabilis*(A)
- Harlequin duck, *Histrionicus histrionicus*(A)
- Surf scoter, *Melanitta perspicillata*
- White-winged scoter, *Melanitta fusca*
- Black scoter, *Melanitta americana*
- Long-tailed duck, *Clangula hyemalis*
- Bufflehead, *Bucephala albeola*
- Common goldeneye, *Bucephala clangula*
- Barrow's goldeneye, *Bucephala islandica*(H)
- Hooded merganser, *Lophodytes cucullatus*
- Common merganser, *Mergus merganser*
- Red-breasted merganser, *Mergus serrator*
- Ruddy duck, *Oxyura jamaicensis*



Canada goose



Wood duck

New World quail

Order: Galliformes **Family:** Odontophoridae

The New World quails are small, plump terrestrial birds only distantly related to the quails of the Old World, but named for their similar appearance and habits. One species has been recorded in Kentucky

- Northern bobwhite, *Colinus virginianus*

Pheasants, grouse, and allies

Order: Galliformes **Family:** Phasianidae

Phasianidae consists of the pheasants and their allies. These are terrestrial species, variable in size but generally plump with broad relatively short wings. Many species are gamebirds or have been domesticated as a food source for humans. Three species have been recorded in Kentucky

- Ruffed grouse, *Bonasa umbellus*
- Greater prairie-chicken, *Tympanuchus cupido*(A) (E)
- Wild turkey, *Meleagris gallopavo*

Grebes

Order: Podicipediformes **Family:** Podicipedidae

Grebes are small to medium-large freshwater diving birds. They have lobed toes and are excellent swimmers and divers. However, they have their feet placed far back on the body, making them quite ungainly on land. Five species have been recorded in Kentucky.

- Pied-billed grebe, *Podilymbus podiceps*
- Horned grebe, *Podiceps auritus*
- Red-necked grebe, *Podiceps grisegena*
- Eared grebe, *Podiceps nigricollis*
- Western grebe, *Aechmophorus occidentalis*(A)

Pigeons and doves

Order: Columbiformes **Family:** Columbidae

Pigeons and doves are stout-bodied birds with short necks and short slender bills with a fleshy cere. Eight species have been recorded in Kentucky

- Rock pigeon, *Columba livia* (I)
- Band-tailed pigeon, *Patagioenas fasciata*(A)
- Eurasian collared-dove, *Streptopelia decaocto*(I)
- Passenger pigeon, *Ectopistes migratorius*(X)
- Inca dove, *Columbina inca*(A)
- Common ground-dove, *Columbina passerina*(A)
- White-winged dove, *Zenaida asiatica*(A)
- Mourning dove, *Zenaida macroura*



Wild turkey



Mourning dove

Cuckoos, and anis

Order: Cuculiformes **Family:** Cuculidae

The family Cuculidae includes cuckoos, roadrunners, and anis. These birds are of variable size with slender bodies, long tails, and strong legs. The Old World cuckoos are brood parasites. Three species have been recorded in Kentucky

- Yellow-billed cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus*
- Black-billed cuckoo *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*
- Groove-billed ani *Crotophaga sulcirostris*(A)



Yellow-billed cuckoo

Nightjars and allies

Order: Caprimulgiformes **Family:** Caprimulgidae

Nightjars are medium-sized nocturnal birds that usually nest on the ground. They have long wings, short legs, and very short bills. Most have small feet, of little use for walking, and long pointed wings. Their soft plumage is cryptically colored to resemble bark or leaves. Three species have been recorded in Kentucky

- Common nighthawk *Chordeiles minor*
- Chuck-will's-widow *Antrostomus carolinensis*
- Eastern whip-poor-will *Antrostomus vociferus*



Chuck-will's-widow

Swifts

Order: Apodiformes **Family:** Apodidae

The swifts are small birds which spend the majority of their lives flying. These birds have very short legs and never settle voluntarily on the ground, perching instead only on vertical surfaces. Many swifts have very long, swept-back wings which resemble a crescent or boomerang. One species has been recorded in Kentucky

- Chimney swift *Chaetura pelagica*

Hummingbirds

Order: Apodiformes **Family:** Trochilidae

Hummingbirds are small birds capable of hovering in mid-air due to the rapid flapping of their wings. They are the only birds that can fly backwards. Four species have been recorded in Kentucky

- Mexican violetear *Colibri thalassinus*(A)
- Ruby-throated hummingbird *Archilochus colubris*
- Black-chinned hummingbird *Archilochus alexandri*(A)
- Rufous hummingbird *Selasphorus rufus*



Ruby-throated hummingbird

Rails, gallinules, and coots

Order: Gruiformes **Family:** Rallidae

Rallidae is a large family of small to medium-sized birds which includes the rails, crakes, coots, and gallinules. The most typical family members occupy dense vegetation in damp environments near lakes, swamps, or rivers. In general they are shy and secretive birds, making them difficult to observe. Most species have strong legs and long toes which are well adapted to soft uneven surfaces. They tend to have short, rounded wings and tend to be weak fliers. Eight species have been recorded in Kentucky.



Virginia rail



Common gallinule

- Yellow rail, *Coturnicops noveboracensis*(A)
- Black rail, *Laterallus jamaicensis*(H)
- King rail, *Rallus elegans* (A)
- Virginia rail, *Rallus limicola*
- Sora, *Porzana carolina*
- Purple gallinule, *Porphyrio martinicus*(A)
- Common gallinule, *Gallinula galeata*
- American coot, *Fulica americana*

Cranes

Order: Gruiformes **Family:** Gruidae

Cranes are large, long-legged and long-necked birds. Unlike the similar-looking but unrelated herons, cranes fly with necks outstretched, not pulled back. Most have elaborate and noisy courting displays or "dances". Two species have been recorded in Kentucky.

- Sandhill crane, *Antigone canadensis*
- Whooping crane, *Grus americana* ("natural" (non-introduced) birds are considered (E))

Stilts and avocets

Order: Charadriiformes **Family:** Recurvirostridae

Recurvirostridae is a family of large wading birds which includes the avocets and stilts. The avocets have long legs and long up-curved bills. The stilts have extremely long legs and long, thin, straight bills. Two species have been recorded in Kentucky

- Black-necked stilt, *Himantopus mexicanus*
- American avocet, *Recurvirostra americana*

Lapwings and plovers

Order: Charadriiformes **Family:** Charadriidae

The family Charadriidae includes the plovers, dotterels, and lapwings. They are small to medium-sized birds with compact bodies, short thick necks, and long, usually pointed, wings. They are found in open country worldwide, mostly in habitats near water. Five species have been recorded in Kentucky.



Killdeer

- Black-bellied plover, *Pluvialis squatarola*
- American golden-plover, *Pluvialis dominica*
- Semipalmated plover, *Charadrius semipalmatus*
- Piping plover, *Charadrius melodus*
- Killdeer, *Charadrius vociferus*

Sandpipers and allies

Order: Charadriiformes **Family:** Scolopacidae

Scolopacidae is a large diverse family of small to medium-sized shorebirds including the sandpipers, curlews, godwits, shanks, tattlers, woodcocks, snipes, dowitchers, and phalaropes. The majority of these species eat small invertebrates picked out of the mud or soil. Different lengths of legs and bills enable multiple species to feed in the same habitat, particularly on the coast, without direct competition for food. Thirty-five species have been recorded in Kentucky



Wilson's snipe

- Upland sandpiper, *Bartramia longicauda*
- Whimbrel, *Numenius phaeopus*(A)
- Long-billed curlew, *Numenius americanus*(H)
- Hudsonian godwit, *Limosa haemastica*(A)
- Marbled godwit, *Limosa fedoa*
- Ruddy turnstone, *Arenaria interpres*
- Red knot, *Calidris canutus*(A)
- Ruff, *Calidris pugnax*(A)
- Stilt sandpiper, *Calidris himantopus*
- Curlew sandpiper, *Calidris ferruginea*(A)
- Red-necked stint, *Calidris ruficollis*(A)
- Sanderling, *Calidris alba*
- Dunlin, *Calidris alpina*
- Purple sandpiper, *Calidris maritima*(H)
- Baird's sandpiper, *Calidris bairdii*
- Little stint, *Calidris minuta*(A)
- Least sandpiper, *Calidris minutilla*
- White-rumped sandpiper, *Calidris fuscicollis*
- Buff-breasted sandpiper, *Calidris subruficollis*
- Pectoral sandpiper, *Calidris melanotos*
- Semipalmated sandpiper, *Calidris pusilla*
- Western sandpiper, *Calidris mauri*
- Short-billed dowitcher, *Limnodromus griseus*
- Long-billed dowitcher, *Limnodromus scolopaceus*
- American woodcock, *Scolopax minor*
- Wilson's snipe, *Gallinago delicata*
- Spotted sandpiper, *Actitis macularius*
- Solitary sandpiper, *Tringa solitaria*
- Lesser yellowlegs, *Tringa flavipes*
- Willet, *Tringa semipalmata*
- Greater yellowlegs, *Tringa melanoleuca*
- Wilson's phalarope, *Phalaropus tricolor*
- Red-necked phalarope, *Phalaropus lobatus*
- Red phalarope, *Phalaropus fulicarius*(A)

Jaegers

Order: Charadriiformes **Family:** Stercorariidae

They are in general medium to large birds, typically with gray or brown plumage, often with white markings on the wings. They have longish bills with hooked tips and webbed feet with sharp claws. They look like large dark gulls, but have a fleshy cere above the upper mandible. They are strong, acrobatic fliers. Three species have been recorded in Kentucky

- Pomarine jaeger, *Stercorarius pomarinus*(A)
- Parasitic jaeger, *Stercorarius parasiticus*(A)
- Long-tailed jaeger, *Stercorarius longicaudus*(A)

Auks, murre, and puffins

Order: Charadriiformes **Family:** Alcidae

The family Alcidae includes auks, murre, and puffins. These are short winged birds that live on the open sea and normally only come ashore for breeding. One species has been recorded in Kentucky

- Long-billed murrelet, *Brachyramphus perdix*(A)

Gulls, terns, and skimmers

Order: Charadriiformes **Family:** Laridae

Laridae is a family of medium to large seabirds and includes gulls, terns, kittiwakes, and skimmers. They are typically gray or white, often with black markings on the head or wings. They have stout, longish bills and webbed feet. Twenty-four species have been recorded in Kentucky

- Black-legged kittiwake, *Rissa tridactyla*(A)
- Sabine's gull, *Xema sabini*(A)
- Bonaparte's gull, *Chroicocephalus philadelphia*
- Black-headed gull, *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*(A)
- Little gull, *Hydrocoleus minutus*(A)
- Laughing gull, *Leucophaeus atricilla*
- Franklin's gull, *Leucophaeus pipixcan*
- Mew gull, *Larus canus*(A)
- Ring-billed gull, *Larus delawarensis*
- California gull, *Larus californicus*(A)
- Herring gull, *Larus argentatus*
- Iceland gull, *Larus glaucoides*
- Lesser black-backed gull, *Larus fuscus*
- Glaucous gull, *Larus hyperboreus*
- Great black-backed gull, *Larus marinus*
- Sooty tern, *Onychoprion fuscatus*(A)
- Least tern, *Sternula antillarum*
- Gull-billed tern, *Gelochelidon nilotica*(A)
- Caspian tern, *Hydroprogne caspia*
- Black tern, *Chlidonias niger*
- Common tern, *Sterna hirundo*
- Forster's tern, *Sterna forsteri*
- Sandwich tern, *Thalasseus sandvicensis*(A)
- Black skimmer, *Rhyncops niger*(A)



Ring-billed gull



Caspian tern

Loons

Order: Gaviiformes **Family:** Gaviidae

Loons are aquatic birds the size of a large duck, to which they are unrelated. Their plumage is largely gray or black, and they have spear-shaped bills. Loons swim well and fly adequately, but are almost hopeless on land, because their legs are placed towards the rear of the body. Four species have been recorded in Kentucky

- Red-throated loon, *Gavia stellata*
- Pacific loon, *Gavia pacifica* (A)
- Common loon, *Gavia immer*
- Yellow-billed loon, *Gavia adamsii* (A)

Northern storm-petrels

Order: Procellariiformes **Family:** Hydrobatidae

The storm-petrels are the smallest seabirds, relatives of the petrels, feeding on planktonic crustaceans and small fish picked from the surface, typically while hovering. The flight is fluttering and sometimes bat-like. One species has been recorded in Kentucky

- Band-rumped storm-petrel, *Oceanodroma castro* (A)

Shearwaters and petrels

Order: Procellariiformes **Family:** Procellariidae

The procellariids are the main group of medium-sized "true petrels", characterized by united nostrils with medium septum and a long outer functional primary. Two species have been recorded in Kentucky

- Black-capped petrel, *Pterodroma hasitata* (A)
- Audubon's shearwater, *Puffinus lherminieri* (A)

Storks

Order: Ciconiiformes **Family:** Ciconiidae

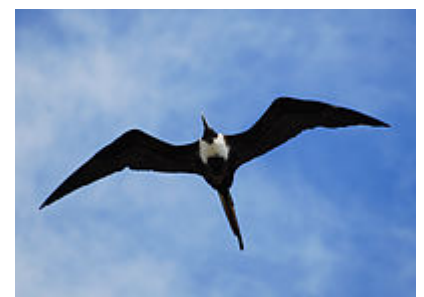
Storks are large, heavy, long-legged, long-necked wading birds with long stout bills and wide wingspans. They lack the powder down that other wading birds such as herons, spoonbills and ibises use to clean off fish slime. Storks lack a pharynx and are mute. One species has been recorded in Kentucky

- Wood stork, *Mycteria americana* (A)

Frigatebirds

Order: Suliformes **Family:** Fregatidae

Frigatebirds are large seabirds usually found over tropical oceans. They are large, black, or black-and-white, with long wings and deeply forked tails. The males have colored inflatable throat pouches. They do not swim or walk and cannot take off from a flat surface. Having the largest wingspan-to-body-weight ratio of any bird, they are essentially aerial, able to stay aloft for more than a week. One species has been recorded in Kentucky



Magnificent frigatebird

- Magnificent frigatebird, *Fregata magnificens* (A)

Boobies and gannets

Order: Suliformes **Family:** Sulidae

The sulids comprise the gannets and boobies. Both groups are medium-large coastal seabirds that plunge-dive for fish. One species has been recorded in Kentucky

- Northern gannet, *Morus bassanus*

Cormorants

Order: Suliformes **Family:** Phalacrocoracidae

Cormorants are medium-to-large aquatic birds, usually with mainly dark plumage and areas of colored skin on the face. The bill is long, thin, and sharply hooked. Their feet are fourtoed and webbed. Two species have been recorded in Kentucky

- Neotropic cormorant *Phalacrocorax brasilianus*(A)
- Double-crested cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus*

Anhingas

Order: Suliformes **Family:** Anhingidae

Anhingas are cormorant-like water birds with very long necks and long, straight beaks. They are fish eaters which often swim with only their neck above the water One species has been recorded in Kentucky

- Anhinga, *Anhinga anhinga* (A)

Pelicans

Order: Pelecaniformes **Family:** Pelecanidae

Pelicans are very large water birds with a distinctive pouch under their beak. Like other birds in the order Pelecaniformes, they have four webbed toes. Two species have been recorded in Kentucky

- American white pelican *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*
- Brown pelican, *Pelecanus occidentalis*(A)



American white pelican

Bitterns, herons, and egrets

Order: Pelecaniformes **Family:** Ardeidae

The family Ardeidae contains the herons, egrets, and bitterns. Herons and egrets are medium to large wading birds with long necks and legs. Bitterns tend to be shorter-necked and more secretive. Members of Ardeidae fly with their necks retracted, unlike other long-necked birds such as storks, ibises, and spoonbills. Twelve species have been recorded in Kentucky

- American bittern, *Botaurus lentiginosus*
- Least bittern, *Ixobrychus exilis*
- Great blue heron, *Ardea herodias*
- Great egret, *Ardea alba*
- Snowy egret, *Egretta thula*
- Little blue heron, *Egretta caerulea*
- Tricolored heron, *Egretta tricolor* (A)
- Reddish egret, *Egretta rufescens*(A)
- Cattle egret, *Bubulcus ibis*
- Green heron, *Butorides virescens*
- Black-crowned night-heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*
- ellow-crowned night-heron, *Nyctanassa violacea*



Green heron

Ibises and spoonbills

Order: Pelecaniformes **Family:** Threskiornithidae

The family Threskiornithidae includes the ibises and spoonbills. They have long, broad wings. Their bodies tend to be elongated, the neck more so, with rather long legs. The bill is also long, decurved in the case of the ibises, straight and distinctively flattened in the spoonbills. Four species have been recorded in Kentucky

- White ibis, *Eudocimus albus*
- Glossy ibis, *Plegadis falcinellus* (A)
- White-faced ibis, *Plegadis chihi* (A)
- Roseate spoonbill, *Platalea ajaja* (A)

New World vultures

Order: Cathartiformes **Family:** Cathartidae

The New World vultures are not closely related to Old World vultures, but superficially resemble them because of convergent evolution. Like the Old World vultures, they are scavengers, however, unlike Old World vultures, which find carcasses by sight, New World vultures have a good sense of smell with which they locate carcasses. Two species have been recorded in Kentucky

- Black vulture, *Coragyps atratus*
- Turkey vulture, *Cathartes aura*

Osprey

Order: Accipitriformes **Family:** Pandionidae

Pandionidae is a family of fish-eating birds of prey, possessing a very large, powerful hooked beak for tearing flesh from their prey, strong legs, powerful talons, and keen eyesight. The family is monotypic.

- Osprey, *Pandion haliaetus*

Hawks, kites and eagles

Order: Accipitriformes **Family:** Accipitridae

Accipitridae is a family of birds of prey which includes hawks, eagles, kites, harriers, and Old World vultures. These birds have very large powerful hooked beaks for tearing flesh from their prey, strong legs, powerful talons, and keen eyesight. Fifteen species have been recorded in Kentucky

- White-tailed kite, *Elanus leucurus* (A)
- Swallow-tailed kite, *Elanoides forficatus* (A)
- Golden eagle, *Aquila chrysaetos*
- Northern harrier, *Circus hudsonius*
- Sharp-shinned hawk, *Accipiter striatus*
- Cooper's hawk, *Accipiter cooperii*
- Northern goshawk, *Accipiter gentilis* (A)
- Bald eagle, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*
- Mississippi kite, *Ictinia mississippiensis*
- Red-shouldered hawk, *Buteo lineatus*
- Broad-winged hawk, *Buteo platypterus*
- Swainson's hawk, *Buteo swainsoni* (A)
- Red-tailed hawk, *Buteo jamaicensis*
- Rough-legged hawk, *Buteo lagopus*
- Ferruginous hawk, *Buteo regalis* (A)



Red-shouldered hawk

Barn-owls

Order: Strigiformes **Family:** Tytonidae

Barn-owls are medium to large owls with large heads and characteristic heart-shaped faces. They have long strong legs with powerful talons. One species has been recorded in Kentucky

- Barn owl, *Tyto alba*

Typical owls

Order: Strigiformes **Family:** Strigidae

Typical owls are small to large solitary nocturnal birds of prey. They have large forward-facing eyes and ears, a hawk-like beak, and a conspicuous circle of feathers around each eye called a facial disk. Seven species have been recorded in Kentucky

- Eastern screech-owl, *Megascops asio*
- Great horned owl, *Bubo virginianus*
- Snowy owl, *Bubo scandiacus*(A)
- Barred owl, *Strix varia*
- Long-eared owl, *Asio otus*
- Short-eared owl, *Asio flammeus*
- Northern saw-whet owl, *Aegolius acadicus*



Barred owl

Kingfishers

Order: Coraciiformes **Family:** Alcedinidae

Kingfishers are medium-sized birds with large heads, long, pointed bills, short legs, and stubby tails. One species has been recorded in Kentucky.

- Belted kingfisher, *Megaceryle alcyon*

Woodpeckers

Order: Piciformes **Family:** Picidae

Woodpeckers are small to medium-sized birds with chisel-like beaks, short legs, stiff tails, and long tongues used for capturing insects. Some species have feet with two toes pointing forward and two backward, while several species have only three toes. Many woodpeckers have the habit of tapping noisily on tree trunks with their beaks. Nine species have been recorded in Kentucky

- Red-headed woodpecker, *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*
- Red-bellied woodpecker, *Melanerpes carolinus*
- Yellow-bellied sapsucker, *Sphyrapicus varius*
- Downy woodpecker, *Dryobates pubescens*
- Red-cockaded woodpecker, *Dryobates borealis*(E)
- Hairy woodpecker, *Dryobates villosus*
- Northern flicker, *Colaptes auratus*
- Pileated woodpecker, *Dryocopus pileatus*
- Ivory-billed woodpecker, *Campephilus principalis*(X)



Pileated woodpecker

Caracaras and falcons

Order: Falconiformes **Family:** Falconidae

Falconidae is a family of diurnal birds of prey, notably the falcons and caracaras. They differ from hawks, eagles, and kites in that they kill with their beaks instead of their talons. Four species have been recorded in Kentucky

- American kestrel, *Falco sparverius*
- Merlin, *Falco columbarius*
- Peregrine falcon, *Falco peregrinus*
- Prairie falcon, *Falco mexicanus* (A)

New World and African parrots

Order: Psittaciformes **Family:** Psittacidae

Parrots are small to large birds with a characteristic curved beak. Their upper mandibles have slight mobility in the joint with the skull and they have a generally erect stance. All parrots are zygodactyl, having the four toes on each foot placed two at the front and two to the back. Most of the more than 150 species in this family are found in the New World. One species has been recorded in Kentucky.

- Carolina parakeet, *Conuropsis carolinensis* (X)

Tyrant flycatchers

Order: Passeriformes **Family:** Tyrannidae

Tyrant flycatchers are Passerine birds which occur throughout North and South America. They superficially resemble the Old World flycatchers, but are more robust and have stronger bills. They do not have the sophisticated vocal capabilities of the songbirds. Most, but not all, are rather plain. As the name implies, most are insectivorous. Seventeen species have been recorded in Kentucky

- Ash-throated flycatcher, *Myiarchus cinerascens* (A)
- Great crested flycatcher, *Myiarchus crinitus*
- Western kingbird, *Tyrannus verticalis* (A)
- Eastern kingbird, *Tyrannus tyrannus*
- Gray kingbird, *Tyrannus dominicensis* (A)
- Scissor-tailed flycatcher, *Tyrannus forficatus*
- Fork-tailed flycatcher, *Tyrannus savana* (H)
- Olive-sided flycatcher, *Contopus cooperi*
- Eastern wood-pewee, *Contopus virens*
- Yellow-bellied flycatcher, *Empidonax flaviventris*
- Acadian flycatcher, *Empidonax virescens*
- Alder flycatcher, *Empidonax alnorum*
- Willow flycatcher, *Empidonax traillii*
- Least flycatcher, *Empidonax minimus*
- Eastern phoebe, *Sayornis phoebe*
- Say's phoebe, *Sayornis saya* (A)
- Vermilion flycatcher, *Pyrocephalus rubinus* (A)



Great crested flycatcher

Shrikes

Order: Passeriformes **Family:** Laniidae

Shrikes are passerine birds known for their habit of catching other birds and small animals and impaling the uneaten portions of their bodies on thorns. A shrike's beak is hooked, like that of a typical bird of prey. Two species have been recorded in Kentucky

- Loggerhead shrike, *Lanius ludovicianus*
- Northern shrike, *Lanius borealis* (A)

Vireos

Order: Passeriformes **Family:** Vireonidae

The vireos are a group of small to medium-sized passerine birds restricted to the New World. They are typically greenish in color and resemble wood-warblers apart from their heavier bills. Seven species have been recorded in Kentucky

- White-eyed vireo, *Vireo griseus*
- Bell's vireo, *Vireo bellii*
- Yellow-throated vireo, *Vireo flavifrons*
- Blue-headed vireo, *Vireo solitarius*
- Philadelphia vireo, *Vireo philadelphicus*
- Warbling vireo, *Vireo gilvus*
- Red-eyed vireo, *Vireo olivaceus*



White-eyed vireo

Jays, crows, magpies, and ravens

Order: Passeriformes **Family:** Corvidae

The family Corvidae includes crows, ravens, jays, crows, magpies, treepies, nutcrackers, and ground jays. Corvids are above average in size among the Passeriformes, and some of the larger species show high levels of intelligence. Four species have been recorded in Kentucky

- Blue jay, *Cyanocitta cristata*
- American crow, *Corvus brachyrhynchos*
- Fish crow, *Corvus ossifragus*
- Common raven, *Corvus corax*



Blue jay

Larks

Order: Passeriformes **Family:** Alaudidae

Larks are small terrestrial birds with often extravagant songs and display flights. Most larks are fairly dull in appearance. Their food is insects and seeds. One species has been recorded in Kentucky

- Horned lark, *Eremophila alpestris*

Swallows and martins

Order: Passeriformes **Family:** Hirundinidae

The family Hirundinidae is adapted to aerial feeding. They have a slender streamlined body, long pointed wings, and a short bill with a wide gape. The feet are adapted to perching rather than walking, and the front toes are partially joined at the base. Six species have been recorded in Kentucky

- Purple martin, *Progne subis*
- Tree swallow, *Tachycineta bicolor*

- Northern rough-winged swallow *Stelgidopteryx serripennis*
- Bank swallow, *Riparia riparia*
- Cliff swallow, *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*
- Barn swallow, *Hirundo rustica*

Chickadees and titmice

Order: Passeriformes **Family:** Paridae

The Paridae are mainly small stocky woodland species with short stout bills. Some have crests. They are adaptable birds, with a mixed diet including seeds and insects. Three species have been recorded in Kentucky

- Carolina chickadee, *Poecile carolinensis*
- Black-capped chickadee, *Poecile atricapilla* (A)
- Tufted titmouse, *Baeolophus bicolor*

Nuthatches

Order: Passeriformes **Family:** Sittidae

Nuthatches are small woodland birds. They have the unusual ability to climb down trees head first, unlike other birds which can only go upwards. Nuthatches have big heads, short tails, and powerful bills and feet. Three species have been recorded in Kentucky.

- Red-breasted nuthatch, *Sitta canadensis*
- White-breasted nuthatch, *Sitta carolinensis*
- Brown-headed nuthatch, *Sitta pusilla* (A) (Unless near Kentucky Dam Village)

Treecreepers

Order: Passeriformes **Family:** Certhiidae

Treecreepers are small woodland birds, brown above and white below. They have thin pointed down-curved bills, which they use to extricate insects from bark. They have stiff tail feathers, like woodpeckers, which they use to support themselves on vertical trees. One species has been recorded in Kentucky

- Brown creeper, *Certhia americana*

Wrens

Order: Passeriformes **Family:** Troglodytidae

Wrens are small and inconspicuous birds, except for their loud songs. They have short wings and thin down-turned bills. Several species often hold their tails upright. All are insectivorous. Seven species have been recorded in Kentucky

- Rock wren, *Salpinctes obsoletus* (A)
- House wren, *Troglodytes aedon*
- Winter wren, *Troglodytes hiemalis*
- Sedge wren, *Cistothorus platensis*
- Marsh wren, *Cistothorus palustris*
- Carolina wren, *Thryothorus ludovicianus*
- Bewick's wren, *Thryomanes bewickii* (A)



Barn swallow



Tufted titmouse

Gnatcatchers

Order: Passeriformes **Family:** Poliopitidae

These dainty birds resemble Old World warblers in their structure and habits, moving restlessly through the foliage seeking insects. The gnatcatchers are mainly soft bluish gray in color and have the typical insectivore's long sharp bill. Many species have distinctive black head patterns (especially males) and long, regularly cocked, black-and-white tails. One species has been recorded in Kentucky

- Blue-gray gnatcatcher, *Poliopitila caerulea*

Kinglets

Order: Passeriformes **Family:** Regulidae

The kinglets are a small family of birds which resemble the titmice. They are very small insectivorous birds in the genus *Regulus*. The adults have colored crowns, giving rise to their names. Two species have been recorded in Kentucky

- Golden-crowned kinglet, *Regulus satrapa*
- Ruby-crowned kinglet, *Regulus calendula*

Thrushes

Order: Passeriformes **Family:** Turdidae

The thrushes are a group of passerine birds that occur mainly but not exclusively in the Old World. They are plump, soft plumaged, small to medium-sized insectivores or sometimes omnivores, often feeding on the ground. Nine species have been recorded in Kentucky

- Eastern bluebird, *Sialia sialis*
- Mountain bluebird, *Sialia currucoides*(A)
- Veery, *Catharus fuscescens*
- Gray-cheeked thrush, *Catharus minimus*
- Swainson's thrush, *Catharus ustulatus*
- Hermit thrush, *Catharus guttatus*
- Wood thrush, *Hylocichla mustelina*
- American robin, *Turdus migratorius*
- Varied thrush, *Ixoreus naevius*(A)

Mockingbirds and thrashers

Order: Passeriformes **Family:** Mimidae

The mimids are a family of passerine birds which includes thrashers, mockingbirds, tremblers and the New World catbirds. These birds are notable for their vocalization, especially their remarkable ability to mimic a wide variety of birds and other sounds heard outdoors. The species tend towards dull grays and browns in their appearance. Three species have been recorded in Kentucky

- Gray catbird, *Dumetella carolinensis*
- Brown thrasher, *Toxostoma rufum*
- Northern mockingbird, *Mimus polyglottos*



Carolina wren



Veery

Starlings

Order: Passeriformes **Family:** Sturnidae

Starlings are small to medium-sized passerine birds. They are medium-sized passerines with strong feet. Their flight is strong and direct and they are very gregarious. Their preferred habitat is fairly open country, and they eat insects and fruit. Plumage is typically dark with a metallic sheen. One species has been recorded in Kentucky

- European starling, *Sturnus vulgaris* (I)

Waxwings

Order: Passeriformes **Family:** Bombycillidae

The waxwings are a group of passerine birds with soft silky plumage and unique red tips to some of the wing feathers. In the Bohemian and cedar waxwings, these tips look like sealing wax and give the group its name. These are arboreal birds of northern forests. They live on insects in summer and berries in winter. One species has been recorded in Kentucky

- Cedar waxwing, *Bombycilla cedrorum*

Old World sparrows

Order: Passeriformes **Family:** Passeridae

Old World sparrows are small passerine birds. In general, sparrows tend to be small plump brownish or grayish birds with short tails and short powerful beaks. Sparrows are seed eaters, but they also consume small insects. Two species have been recorded in Kentucky

- House sparrow, *Passer domesticus* (I)
- Eurasian tree sparrow, *Passer montanus* (I)(A)



House sparrow

Wagtails and pipits

Order: Passeriformes **Family:** Motacillidae

Motacillidae is a family of small passerine birds with medium to long tails. They include the wagtails, longclaws, and pipits. They are slender ground-feeding insectivores of open country. Two species have been recorded in Kentucky

- American pipit, *Anthus rubescens*
- Sprague's pipit, *Anthus spragueii* (H)

Finches

Order: Passeriformes **Family:** Fringillidae

Finches are seed-eating passerine birds, that are small to moderately large and have a strong beak, usually conical and in some species very large. All have twelve tail feathers and nine primaries. These birds have a bouncing flight with alternating bouts of flapping and gliding on closed wings, and most sing well. Three species have been recorded in Kentucky.

- Evening grosbeak, *Coccothraustes vespertinus* (A)
- Pine grosbeak, *Pinicola enucleator* (H)
- House finch, *Haemorrhous mexicanus* (Native to the southwestern U.S.; introduced in the east)
- Purple finch, *Haemorrhous purpureus*
- Common redpoll, *Acanthis flammea* (A)

- Red crossbill, *Loxia curvirostra* (A)
- White-winged crossbill, *Loxia leucoptera* (A)
- Pine siskin, *Spinus pinus*
- Lesser goldfinch, *Spinus psaltria* (A)
- American goldfinch, *Spinus tristis*

Longspurs and snow buntings

Order: Passeriformes **Family:** Calcariidae

The Calcariidae are a group of passerine birds that have been traditionally grouped with the New World sparrows but differ in a number of respects and are usually found in open grassy areas. Three species have been recorded in Kentucky

- Lapland longspur, *Calcarius lapponicus*
- Smith's longspur, *Calcarius pictus* (A)
- Snow bunting, *Plectrophenax nivalis*

New World sparrows

Order: Passeriformes **Family:** Passerellidae

Until 2017, these species were considered part of the family Emberizidae. Most of the species are known as sparrows, but these birds are not closely related to the Old World sparrows which are in the family Passeridae. Many of these have distinctive head patterns. Twenty-five species have been recorded in Kentucky

- Green-tailed towhee, *Pipilo chlorurus* (A)
- Spotted towhee, *Pipilo maculatus* (A)
- Eastern towhee, *Pipilo erythrophthalmus*
- Bachman's sparrow, *Peucaea aestivalis* (A) (Unless at Fort Campbell)
- American tree sparrow, *Spizelloides arborea*
- Chipping sparrow, *Spizella passerina*
- Clay-colored sparrow, *Spizella pallida*
- Field sparrow, *Spizella pusilla*
- Vesper sparrow, *Pooecetes gramineus*
- Lark sparrow, *Chondestes grammacus*
- Sagebrush sparrow, *Artemisiospiza nevadensis* (A)
- Lark bunting, *Calamospiza melanocorys* (A)
- Savannah sparrow, *Passerculus sandwichensis*
- Grasshopper sparrow, *Ammodramus savannarum*
- Henslow's sparrow, *Centronyx henslowii*
- LeConte's sparrow, *Ammospiza leconteii*
- Nelson's sparrow, *Ammospiza nelsoni*
- Fox sparrow, *Passerella iliaca*
- Song sparrow, *Melospiza melodia*
- Lincoln's sparrow, *Melospiza lincolnii*
- Swamp sparrow, *Melospiza georgiana*
- White-throated sparrow, *Zonotrichia albicollis*
- Harris's sparrow, *Zonotrichia querula*
- White-crowned sparrow, *Zonotrichia leucophrys*
- Dark-eyed junco, *Junco hyemalis*



American goldfinch



Field sparrow



Swamp sparrow

Yellow-breasted chat

Order: Passeriformes **Family:** Icteriidae

This species was historically placed in the wood-warblers (Parulidae) but nonetheless most authorities were unsure if it belonged there. It was placed in its own family in 2017.

- Yellow-breasted chat, *Icteria virens*

Icterids

Order: Passeriformes **Family:** Icteridae

The icterids are a group of small to medium-sized, often colorful passerine birds restricted to the New World and include the grackles, New World blackbirds, and New World orioles. Most species have black as a predominant plumage color, often enlivened by yellow, orange, or red. Fourteen species have been recorded in Kentucky.

- Yellow-headed blackbird, *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*(A)
- Bobolink, *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*
- Eastern meadowlark, *Sturnella magna*
- Western meadowlark, *Sturnella neglecta*
- Orchard oriole, *Icterus spurius*
- Hooded oriole, *Icterus cucullatus*(A)
- Bullock's oriole, *Icterus bullockii*(A)
- Baltimore oriole, *Icterus galbula*
- Scott's oriole, *Icterus parisorum*(A)
- Red-winged blackbird, *Agelaius phoeniceus*
- Brown-headed cowbird, *Molothrus ater*
- Rusty blackbird, *Euphagus carolinus*
- Brewer's blackbird, *Euphagus cyanocephalus*
- Common grackle, *Quiscalus quiscula*



Orchard oriole

Wood warblers

Order: Passeriformes **Family:** Parulidae

The wood warblers are a group of small and often colorful passerine birds restricted to the New World. Most are arboreal, but some, like the ovenbird and the two waterthrushes, are more terrestrial. Most members of this family are insectivores. Thirty-nine species have been recorded in Kentucky

- Ovenbird, *Seiurus aurocapilla*
- Worm-eating warbler, *Helmitheros vermivorus*
- Louisiana waterthrush, *Parkesia motacilla*
- Northern waterthrush, *Parkesia noveboracensis*
- Bachman's warbler, *Vermivora bachmanii*(X)
- Golden-winged warbler, *Vermivora chrysoptera*
- Blue-winged warbler, *Vermivora cyanoptera*
- Black-and-white warbler, *Mniotilta varia*
- Prothonotary warbler, *Protonotaria citrea*
- Swainson's warbler, *Limnothlypis swainsonii*
- Tennessee warbler, *Oreothlypis peregrina*
- Orange-crowned warbler, *Oreothlypis celata*
- Nashville warbler, *Oreothlypis ruficapilla*
- Connecticut warbler, *Oporornis agilis*



Swainson's warbler

- Mourning warbler, *Geothlypis philadelphia*
- Kentucky warbler, *Geothlypis formosa*
- Common yellowthroat, *Geothlypis trichas*
- Hooded warbler, *Setophaga citrina*
- American redstart, *Setophaga ruticilla*
- Kirtland's warbler, *Setophaga kirtlandii*(H)
- Cape May warbler, *Setophaga tigrina*
- Cerulean warbler, *Setophaga cerulea*
- Northern parula, *Setophaga americana*
- Magnolia warbler, *Setophaga magnolia*
- Bay-breasted warbler, *Setophaga castanea*
- Blackburnian warbler, *Setophaga fusca*
- Yellow warbler, *Setophaga petechia*
- Chestnut-sided warbler, *Setophaga pensylvanica*
- Blackpoll warbler, *Setophaga striata*
- Black-throated blue warbler, *Setophaga caerulescens*
- Palm warbler, *Setophaga palmarum*
- Pine warbler, *Setophaga pinus*
- Yellow-rumped warbler, *Setophaga coronata*
- Yellow-throated warbler, *Setophaga dominica*
- Prairie warbler, *Setophaga discolor*
- Black-throated gray warbler, *Setophaga nigrescens*(A)
- Black-throated green warbler, *Setophaga virens*
- Canada warbler, *Cardellina canadensis*
- Wilson's warbler, *Cardellina pusilla*



American redstart

Cardinals and allies

Order: Passeriformes **Family:** Cardinalidae

The cardinals are a family of robust, seed-eating birds with strong bills. They are typically associated with open woodland. The sexes usually have distinct plumages. Ten species have been recorded in Kentucky

- Summer tanager, *Piranga rubra*
- Scarlet tanager, *Piranga olivacea*
- Western tanager, *Piranga ludoviciana*(A)
- Northern cardinal, *Cardinalis cardinalis*
- Rose-breasted grosbeak, *Pheucticus ludovicianus*
- Black-headed grosbeak, *Pheucticus melanocephalus*(A)
- Blue grosbeak, *Passerina caerulea*
- Indigo bunting, *Passerina cyanea*
- Painted bunting, *Passerina ciris*(A)
- Dickcissel, *Spiza americana*



Blue grosbeak

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