



Wild Birds in Canada - A Guide to the Basics

- Four hundred and fifty species of birds live in Canada. From a three-gram hummingbird to a 12-kilo Trumpeter Swan, bird species occur in all sizes and colours. Canada is a huge country, and each region has its characteristic species. To learn about three special “Canada birds” visit <http://naturecanada.ca/news/blog/celebrate-canada-birds/>
- Eighty percent of these species migrate out of Canada each fall to spend their winters elsewhere. Most go south, a large number spending winter in the USA or Mexico, but some species go as far as the southern tip of South America, a 30,000 km round trip!
- In 1916, Canada and the US signed an agreement to protect their shared species of birds and in 1917, Canada passed a law to protect most birds making it illegal to harm, collect or harass most adult bird species, their nests and eggs. This law is called: **The Migratory Bird Convention Act** (MBCA).
- The species not protected by the MBCA, such as birds of prey (hawks and owls), are protected by provincial laws.
- Despite these laws, many bird populations are declining because of human actions – mainly habitat loss as we convert natural habitat to cities, roads and agricultural fields. Allowing our pet cats to roam unsupervised outside can also hurt birds.
- Fewer birds is bad for nature as birds are essential to keep harmful insect populations in check, keep forests healthy, spread the seeds of plants, fertilize and pollinate flowers, and eat rodents such as mice and rats that otherwise damage crops and spread diseases.
- The federal government (Environment and Climate Change Canada) is responsible for upholding and enforcing Canada’s bird laws. Many provinces share in administering hunting regulations and licencing. While most species cannot be hunted, hunting waterfowl (ducks and geese) and upland game birds (grouse, wild turkeys, etc.) is allowed with conditions that identify the season and “bag limit” with valid government-issued permits. Hunting is a traditional activity for many Canadian families, especially in rural areas and the north. Use of firearms in Canada is prohibited without a federal permit.
- Nature Canada needs you to help make Canada a safer place for birds. Visit our website to find out how you can help <http://naturecanada.ca/initiatives/save-bird-lives/>

