

Species Accounts

Feeder Birds

Downy Woodpecker and Hairy Woodpecker – The most common woodpeckers on the island, seemingly equally common and found in all habitats.

Black-capped Chickadee – Very common year round, often as pairs during the breeding season and in groups or mixed flocks with other songbirds in the non-breeding season.

American Goldfinch – Very common as pairs in bright breeding plumage April – August. Molting into drab olive plumage and forming larger nomadic flocks late summer – early winter. Easily identified by “po-ta-to-chip” flight call.

Purple Finch – Common breeder, especially in more coniferous areas of the island. Examine birds carefully to differentiate from House Finch, which is seemingly rare on Islesboro, despite being common on the mainland.

Red-breasted Nuthatch – Very common year-round, especially in coniferous forest areas. Mixes freely with chickadees and mixed songbird flocks.

White-breasted Nuthatch – Common year-round, but never in large numbers. Usually in deciduous forest habitats and around feeders.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird – Very common in gardens and around feeders from early May – late September. The only regularly-occurring hummingbird in the Northeast, but scrutinize/report any hummingbirds seen after October 1st, as vagrant western species are possible.

Blue Jay – Common year-round in a variety of habitats. Large flocks may be seen during migration in May and Sept/Oct.

Mourning Dove – Common year-round in a variety of habitats, especially around yards and feeders.

White-throated Sparrow – Common breeder and very common migrant, especially in October. The most common sparrow in forested areas. Outside of the breeding season, often forms the core of mixed-species sparrow flocks in forested and brushy habitats.

Chipping Sparrow – Common breeder (April-Oct) in open areas. Generally seen in pairs or small groups. Be alert in Sept/Oct for similar (but rare) Clay-colored Sparrow.

Northern Cardinal – Relatively common year-round resident, but more conspicuous in the winter. Usually around homes and feeders.

Red-bellied Woodpecker – Uncommon and variable in numbers year-to-year. A southern species expanding northward in residential areas. Usually found in deciduous forest and around feeders. Few records on the island since 2017.

Carolina Wren – Uncommon and variable in numbers year-to-year. A southern species expanding northward in residential areas. Individuals seen sporadically during migration, but has nested, most recently apparently nesting at Turtle Head in 2021.

Tufted Titmouse – Uncommon; one record of an apparent family group in summer 2021 in the Dark Harbor area. A southern species expanding northward in residential areas.

Irruptive Winter Species – Several irruptive species are often seen at feeders, including Pine Siskin, Common Redpoll, Evening Grosbeak, and Pine Grosbeak. See species accounts below.

Migrants – Several migrant species often show up at feeders, including Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Baltimore Oriole (attracted to oranges or jelly) in May and Aug/Sept. In fall and early winter, migrant sparrows including Song Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, American Tree Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow (uncommon), Eastern Towhee (rare), and Lincoln's Sparrow (uncommon) also join mixed flocks at feeders. See species accounts below.

“Blackbirds” – Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles, European Starlings, and Brown-headed Cowbirds often visit feeders, especially during early spring (March/April), when they sometimes form large flocks. Scrutinize blackbirds in October – Feb for Rusty Blackbird, which is uncommon and noteworthy.

Breeding Songbirds

Black-billed Cuckoo – Uncommon apparent breeder in deciduous parts of the island. More often heard than seen.

Pileated Woodpecker – Common year-round in small numbers. Our largest and most impressive woodpecker, excavating large holes in dead trees in search of insects. Seldom visits feeders.

Northern Flicker – Common migrant and breeder. Often perch and call from tall snags and may be seen on the ground, which is uncommon for woodpeckers. Seldom visits feeders.

Eastern Kingbird – Uncommon breeder in open areas.

Eastern Wood-Pewee – Common breeder. More often heard than seen.

Alder Flycatcher – The most common Empid flycatcher on the island, outside of peak migration. Localized breeder in Alder thickets. Seldom seen after singing slows in June.

Eastern Phoebe – Common breeder and very common migrant, arriving earlier (late March) and staying later (Mid-October) than most other flycatchers. Especially common in edge habitats and around yards.

Great Crested Flycatcher – Fairly common migrant and uncommon breeder in deciduous areas. More often heard than seen.

Red-eyed Vireo – Very Common breeder mid-May-Sept. Often stays high in the trees but sings incessantly all summer.

Blue-headed Vireo – Common breeder and very common migrant, more common than Red-eyed Vireo in coniferous areas; also arrives earlier (Mid-April) and leaves later (Mid-October).

American Crow – Common year-round resident. Unlike Common Raven, often seen in small flocks that are fairly tolerant of humans.

Common Raven – Common year-round resident, but never in large numbers. Usually seen as singles or pairs. Fairly shy of humans; usually seen flying past or heard croaking in the distance.

Tree Swallow – The most common swallow on the island, April-August. Pairs nest in tree holes and bluebird boxes in open areas and around fresh water. Larger groups are usually present at the Meadow Pond during migration.

Barn Swallow – Locally common breeder, April-Sept. Nests mostly in older buildings (barns, porches) in open areas.

Golden-crowned Kinglet – Common year-round, especially in more coniferous areas. Apparently most common in Oct – Dec, but it may just be that their thin calls and small size get overshadowed by more visible species in the summer. Often form single species flocks, rather than joining mixed flocks, but may associate with Brown Creeper and Red-breasted Nuthatch.

Brown Creeper – Common year-round, but never in large numbers and often inconspicuous. Frequently accompanies flocks of Golden-crowned Kinglets.

House Wren – Uncommon apparent breeder. There are surprisingly few records of this familiar yard bird on the island.

Winter Wren – By far the most common wren on Islesboro, but often inconspicuous. Most readily located during breeding season when males sing loudly from conifer treetops. Most Winter Wrens in Maine move south in October, but a few can often be found lingering in coniferous areas on Islesboro into December. Some may overwinter.

European Starling – Common year-round. Usually in pairs or small groups in summer, and larger flocks in early spring, and fall-early winter. Prefers lawns and other open areas.

Gray Catbird – Common breeder and very common migrant, especially in brushy and edge habitats. Generally present May-October, but occasionally linger later into the fall.

Brown Thrasher – Uncommon to rare in brushy and edge habitats; likely breeds on the island occasionally.

Eastern Bluebird – Uncommon and localized breeder in open areas. Most consistent location in recent years is the Blueberry Hill area. Bluebirds linger quite late into the fall and are most apparent in October.

Hermit Thrush – By far the most common woodland thrush on the island, and the only species likely to be seen outside of migration (May, Sept-early Oct). Very common in wooded areas from April-October, with occasional individuals lingering later into the fall. On summer evenings, their ethereal song is magical.

Wood Thrush – Rare and local in deciduous areas. Only a couple of records of singing males in June; unclear if they regularly breed on the island.

American Robin – Very common most of the year. Most leave for the depths of winter, but a few may remain around apple and crabapple trees that are holding fruit.

Cedar Waxwing – Common much of the year, as long as berries are available. Small groups frequent serviceberries in the summer; larger flocks form in the fall and particularly favor crabapples in the early winter. Check flocks carefully for Bohemian Waxwing in late fall and winter.

Dark-eyed Junco – Common migrant and uncommon breeder. In summer, pairs are local in coniferous areas. Very common early and late in migration (Mar/April and Oct/Nov) in small flocks in a variety of habitats and around feeders.

Song Sparrow – Common breeder and migrant. The most common sparrow in open and brushy habitats most of the year, but can be secretive. In summer, pairs skulk in brushy areas, yards, and along the coastline. In migration, join mixed sparrow flocks and sometimes visit the ground under feeders. Most depart in early winter, but a few may linger through the winter.

Swamp Sparrow – Common migrant and uncommon and localized breeder around fresh water. Marsh along the Meadow Pond is probably the most reliable location, but pairs are found in other marshy or boggy areas as well. Much more numerous in migration (late Sept-Oct; April-early May), joining mixed sparrow flocks in more varied habitats.

Eastern Towhee – Rare migrant and breeder. One record of a breeding pair in Dark Harbor in 2019. One migrant record in early May at an up-island feeder.

Baltimore Oriole – Uncommon migrant and apparent breeder in deciduous areas, with most island records in May-July. Will visit feeders with oranges/jelly. Individuals occasionally show up at feeders into the fall and even early winter.

Red-winged Blackbird and Common Grackle – Common breeders and migrants, especially around fresh water. Good numbers breed around the Meadow Pond, but generally depart by early August. May form flocks in non-breeding season, lingering into early winter.

Ovenbird – Common breeder and migrant, May-Sept. Obvious and widespread when singing in May and June, but inconspicuous thereafter.

Northern Waterthrush – Uncommon migrant and rare breeder, usually around swampy areas, May-Sept. Most regular breeding location is in skunk cabbage swamp near the entrance to Turtle Head Road.

Black-and-white Warbler – Common breeder and migrant, late April-early Oct. Creeps along tree trunks like a nuthatch.

Nashville Warbler – Fairly common migrant and uncommon breeder, May-Sept. Preferred breeding habitat is early successional deciduous forest, which is limited on the island. This species has disappeared from several reliable breeding locations in the past 15 years as trees have matured.

Common Yellowthroat – Common breeder and very common migrant, May-early Oct. Prefers marshy or brushy areas with open canopy, but may be found nearly anywhere in migration.

Northern Parula – Very common breeder and migrant, May-early Oct, in a variety of habitats.

Magnolia Warbler – Common breeder and migrant, May-Sept. Most common in mixed forest with young conifers present.

Blackburnian Warbler – Common breeder and migrant, May-Sept. May be overlooked due to tendency to stay high in the canopy and high-pitched song that can be drowned out by louder species.

Yellow Warbler – Common breeder and migrant, May-early Sept. Prefers open, brushy habitats during breeding season. Migrates earlier than most other warblers, with peak migration in August.

Chestnut-sided Warbler – Common migrant and rare breeder, May-Sept.

Pine Warbler – Uncommon breeder and migrant, April-Oct. Usually associated with stands of White Pine, which are limited on the island.

Yellow-rumped Warbler – Common breeder and very common migrant April-early Nov. Flocks of ‘butter-butts’ often dominate the songbird assemblage late in fall migration (late Sept-early Nov). In breeding season, pairs prefer mixed forests.

Black-throated Green Warbler – The most common breeding warbler on the island, May-Sept. During the early summer it is hard to find a spot on the island where their ‘zee-zee-zee-zo-zeeee’ song can’t be heard.

Scarlet Tanager – Uncommon migrant and probable breeder, May-Sept. Sporadic summer records suggest breeding, but has not been seen regularly at any particular location. This is the expected tanager species in summer, but scrutinize and report any tanagers seen after Oct 1, as vagrant Summer and Western Tanagers are found somewhat regularly in coastal Maine in the late fall.

Migrant and Wintering Songbirds

Yellow-billed Cuckoo – Rare migrant. A common species of southern deciduous woods, reaching the northern edge of its breeding range in our region. One record from Turtle Head in late May, another from the Dark Harbor area in mid-August.

Common Nighthawk – Uncommon and declining. Typically flying overhead at dusk in late July-Sept, sometimes in flocks.

Chimney Swift – Uncommon spring and fall migrant, often identified by twittering flight calls.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker – Fairly common spring and common fall migrant, especially in late Sept-early Oct. A couple of summer records suggest possible breeding. Virtually never visits feeders. Repeatedly visits particular trees, especially apples, to feed on sap.

Olive-sided Flycatcher – Rare migrant, usually late May/early June. One record from Turtle Head in May. Often perches conspicuously.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher – Rare migrant, somewhat more common in fall. One record from Turtle Head in September.

Least Flycatcher – Common migrant, usually the most common Empid flycatcher during migration in May and late August/early September. ID can often be confirmed by call and song. Breeding possible, but not confirmed on the island.

Philadelphia Vireo – Uncommon migrant, mostly in September.

Warbling Vireo – Uncommon migrant and possible breeder in deciduous areas.

Northern Shrike – Uncommon winter visitor; Nov-March. One record from Meadow Pond area in November. Prefers open and edge habitats, often perching on shrubs and treetops. A ‘mini-raptor’ that hunts rodents and songbirds, occasionally at feeders.

Horned Lark – Uncommon winter visitor; Oct- March. Prefers open areas with bare ground or beaches and can be quite inconspicuous on the ground. One record from Hutchins Island in November.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow – Uncommon Spring migrant. All Island records are from May in mixed swallow flocks over fresh water.

Cliff Swallow – Uncommon migrant. One record from Hutchins Island in August.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet – Very common migrant, usually migrating slightly earlier in the spring and later in the fall than the bulk of neotropical migrants. Easily identified by compact shape, incessant movement, and constant wing flicking.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher – A southern species that reaches its northern breeding limit in southern Maine; Islesboro seems to get this species more frequently than surrounding areas. At least 6 records from May and Aug-Sept.

Marsh Wren – Rare visitor; Islesboro is at the northern edge of this species’ breeding range and has little suitable habitat (salt marsh). One vagrant record from the Meadow Pond in December.

Swainson’s Thrush – Uncommon migrant and possible breeder. The second most common woodland thrush (after Hermit Thrush) during migration, especially in the second half of May and late September. Has conspicuous buffy eyering and lacks reddish tones of Hermit Thrush. A few reliable summer records warrant investigation, as this species is known to breed in similar habitats nearby (i.e., Acadia, Deer Isle).

Veery – Apparently an uncommon-to-rare migrant in Islesboro, despite being a common breeder on the mainland nearby. Just one island record; Turtle Head in May.

Gray-cheeked/Bicknell’s Thrush – Rare migrant. One record; Turtle Head in May.

Snow Bunting – Uncommon winter visitor; Nov-Mar. Generally prefers sand dunes and other open ground, which is limited on the island. One record from Grindle Point in November.

American Tree Sparrow – Our latest sparrow to arrive and often the most common sparrow in mid-winter. Numbers variable year-to-year. Usually in brushy or edge habitat or at feeders.

White-crowned Sparrow – Uncommon migrant in May and late Sept-Oct. Usually in open, brushy areas and occasionally at feeders. Often less secretive than other sparrows.

Lincoln’s Sparrow – Uncommon migrant in May and late Sept-Oct. Usually in mixed sparrow flocks in open, brushy areas and occasionally at feeders.

Savannah Sparrow – Uncommon to relatively common migrant (April/May and Sept/Oct) in open areas, especially roadsides and larger beaches.

Rusty Blackbird – Uncommon and declining migrant in Sept-Nov; one additional record at a feeder in Jan. Usually in pairs or small flocks, especially around fresh water; sometimes visits feeders.

Tennessee Warbler – Uncommon migrant in May and late Aug-Sept. A couple if breeding-season records from the Bluff Rd/Hutchins Island Ln area warrant investigation as possible breeders.

Orange-crowned Warbler – Rare migrant towards the end of songbird migration in fall. One record from Turtle Head in late September.

Cape May Warbler – Uncommon migrant in May and late Aug-Sept.

Bay-breasted Warbler – Uncommon migrant in May and late Aug-Sept.

Black-throated Blue Warbler – Common migrant in May and Aug-Sept.

Palm Warbler – Common migrant, generally signaling the beginning (Late April) and end (Late Sept-Oct) of warbler migration. Spends much of its time on the ground, constantly tail-wagging.

Canada Warbler – Fairly common migrant in May and late Aug-early Sept. A couple of summer records suggest possible breeding.

Wilson's Warbler – Common spring and uncommon fall migrant in May and Aug-Sept.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak – Uncommon migrant in May and Aug-Sept. May visit feeders.

'Irruptive' Species

White-winged Crossbill – Absent from the island most winters, but can be abundant when cone crop failures in Canada drive large flocks south. The most recent irruptions of this species on Islesboro were in the winters of 2008-2009 and 2012-2013. Feed on spruce cones and are most common in the more boreal sections of the island.

Red Crossbill – More regular year-to-year in Maine than the White-winged Crossbill, but usually in smaller numbers. Feed on spruce cones and are most common in the more boreal sections of the island. Small numbers were present in northern sections of Islesboro year-round from 2017-2019, suggesting localized breeding.

Pine Siskin – Usually an annual visitor to New England, but with variable numbers year-to-year. In some years small numbers remain in spruce/fir sections of the Island in the summer, suggesting occasional breeding. Often feed on birch catkins and frequent feeders, mixing freely with American Goldfinches. Can be very tame.

Common Redpoll – Usually an annual winter visitor to New England, but with variable numbers year-to-year. Feed on birch catkins and frequent feeders, often mixing with American Goldfinches and Pine Siskins.

Pine Grosbeak – Totally absent in some winters, but relatively common in others, usually pushed south by poor Mountain Ash berry crops in Canada. Generally travel in small flocks, feeding on fruits, especially crab apples, apples, mountain ash, and winterberry. Can be extremely tame and fairly inconspicuous while feeding.

Evening Grosbeak – Usually an uncommon-to-rare winter visitor, but have been common in several recent winters (2018, 2020). Resembling over-sized goldfinches, flocks feed voraciously at feeders.

Bohemian Waxwing – Usually an annual winter visitor to New England, but with variable numbers year-to-year. Generally travel in large flocks, feeding on fruits, especially crab apples.

Migratory Owls – Several species of owls show irruptive patterns of abundance in New England, presumably in response to prey availability and reproduction in Canada. Snowy Owls have only been reported from Islesboro during irruption years, especially during a spectacular year in 2013. Northern Saw-whet and Barred Owls are also variable in abundance year-to-year in Maine, but just how variable they are on the island remains unclear. See species accounts below.

Raptors

Bald Eagle – Common year-round resident – several breeding pairs are present on the island. Note that juvenile bald eagles do not get their white head and tail until their fourth year. Golden Eagle would be exceptionally rare and has not been observed on Islesboro or nearby.

Osprey – Common breeder (April – Oct), island-wide.

Turkey Vulture – Uncommon migrant (April/May and Sept/Oct) generally seen soaring overhead with wings slightly raised in a “V”. Rarely seen outside of migration or roosted on the island.

Black Vulture – Rare vagrant. One record (Lily Guest Memorial Trail – July).

Broad-winged Hawk – The only common hawk on the island during breeding season. Common in a variety of habitats. Can be seen migrating in large loose flocks in September.

Cooper’s Hawk and Sharp-shinned Hawk – Primarily bird-eating forest hawks, commonly seen during migration, rarely during summer and mid-winter. Both species are long-tailed with a “T”-shaped profile when seen overhead. Sharp-shinned is smaller overall and small-headed. Scrutinize large Cooper’s for Northern Goshawk, which probably visit the island rarely during non-breeding season, but have not been documented.

Northern Harrier – Uncommon migrant. Easily identified by long, narrow wings, low, tilting flight, and white rump patch.

Red-tailed Hawk – Relatively common migrant and winter resident. This large hawk migrates later than most others, peaking in Oct/Nov and March/April.

Rough-legged Hawk – Rare winter visitor, usually found in extensive open fields. Frequently hovers in wind, while hunting rodents.

American Kestrel – Uncommon migrant, never in large numbers. Prefers to perch on powerlines along open fields.

Merlin – Common migrant in May and Sept-Oct. Singles or pairs often perch at the top of shoreline trees and hunt songbirds over the water.

Peregrine Falcon – Uncommon migrant, especially in fall. Large and impressive, usually seen speeding south overhead or buzzing flocks of ducks or gulls.

Barred Owl – Our most common owl, present year-round, but most frequently seen in fall and winter. More secretive in summer, but distinctive “who-cooks-for-you” call can be heard from deep woods.

Northern Saw-whet Owl – Late fall and early spring migrant, with variable numbers year-to-year. Uncommonly detected, but probably relatively common in most years. More thorough surveys are needed to determine the status of this tiny, secretive owl on Islesboro.

Snowy Owl – Rare late fall/winter visitor; numbers variable year-to-year. Favors open habitats (large fields, beaches, offshore islands) and usually perches on the ground or on low, substantial perches (driftwood, boulders, fence posts).

Northern Hawk Owl – Winter vagrant; one record of an injured bird that was rehabbed from Islesboro. Hunts actively during the day from a perch (treetop, powerline) in open habitat.

Waterfowl

Canada Goose – Common breeder and resident when fresh water is ice-free. Apparently increasing in number and starting to become a nuisance. Usually on fresh water. Small flocks I’ve seen on Islesboro appear to be resident breeding groups; I have not seen evidence of migratory flocks that often bring rarer goose species.

Wood Duck – Common breeder and resident when fresh water is ice-free. Almost exclusively on fresh water – breeds at Meadow Pond.

Mallard – Common resident and breeder, somewhat less common in mid-winter. Usually the most common dabbling duck on fresh water, but is also found on salt water, especially in the shallower, more protected coves.

American Black Duck – Common resident. Usually the most common dabbling duck on salt water, especially in shallow marshy or muddy coves, but is also found on fresh water. Hybridizes regularly with Mallard.

Green-winged Teal – Uncommon migrant (Mar-April & Sept-Nov), usually on fresh water; records from Meadow Pond and Hutchins Island.

Northern Pintail – Rare Migrant. One record from Hutchins Island in Sept.

Gadwall – Rare Migrant. One record from Hutchins Island in July.

Ring-necked Duck – Uncommon migrant, predominantly on fresh water. Most records from Meadow Pond in May.

Greater Scaup – Uncommon migrant. May be found on fresh or salt water.

Lesser Scaup – Uncommon migrant. One record—Seal Harbor in March.

Ruddy Duck – Uncommon migrant. One record – Meadow Pond in Nov.

Bufflehead – Very common non-breeding resident (Oct-April). Equally likely in fresh or salt water, usually near shore.

Red-breasted Merganser – Very common non-breeding resident (Oct-April). Usually on salt water, in pairs or small groups near shore. Isolated records in Summer, but watch for Common Merganser which is an uncommon visitor in May and July-Sept.

Hooded Merganser – Uncommon migrant and potential breeder (will brood parasitize Wood Duck), usually on fresh water.

Common Goldeneye – Common non-breeding resident (Nov-April) on salt water, in small groups near shore. Check carefully for Barrows Goldeneye, which is seen regularly in Belfast and has been seen in Lincolnville and Sears Island, but to my knowledge has not been documented on Islesboro.

Common Eider – Common year-round resident on salt water and the most common ‘sea duck’ in summer. Breeds on Flat Island. Sometimes forms large rafts at favored feeding locations such as the ledges off Hutchins Island, around Flat Island, and in Gilkey Harbor. Check carefully for rare King Eider, which has been seen at Lincolnville and Sears Island, but has not been documented on Islesboro.

Scoters – Nonbreeding residents on salt water, usually in small groups fairly far offshore. Surf Scoter is most common and can usually be seen Sept-May with some careful scope-scanning at spots with ocean views; a few isolated records in the summer. White-winged Scoter is present in small numbers through winter. Black Scoter is least common and is mostly seen in migration (Sept-Nov & April-May).

Gulls and Terns

Herring Gull – Out most common gull in most circumstances. Very common year-round, sometimes in large groups at roosts (Hutchins Island, Flat Island, various ledges and floats).

Ring-billed Gull – Common year-round; becoming somewhat scarce during breeding season (May/June). Particularly common during post breeding, especially at Hutchins Island and other sites with exposed mudflats.

Great Black-backed Gull – Common year-round, but seldom in large numbers.

Laughing Gull – Common summer resident (May-Oct). Particularly common during post-breeding in July-mid-Sept.

Bonaparte’s Gull – Dainty gull, very common during post-breeding in July-Dec. Different behavior than other gulls, generally feeding on the wing over current rips in the open water, rather than on shore or following boats. Large loose feeding flocks often seen in late summer and fall far out in the bay. Can sometimes be found roosted in numbers at Hutchins Island. Flocks should be scrutinized for rare Black-headed Gull and Little Gulls, which have not been documented on Islesboro.

Glaucous Gull – Uncommon winter resident (Nov-April). Only 1 record (Seal Harbor – Dec), but careful scanning for ‘white-winged’ gulls in winter, should yield additional records of this species and Iceland Gull.

Lesser Black-backed Gull – Rare non-breeding visitor (Oct – April); 1 record (Pripet – April). Look for a gull with a darker mantle than Herring & Ring-billed Gulls and bright yellow legs.

Common Tern – The only tern regularly seen on Islesboro. Arrive in May and are most common during post-breeding season (July-Sept). Worth watching terns in the late summer for other species, especially following hurricanes.

Other 'Seabirds'

Common Loon – Very common year-round resident, but never in large numbers. Breeds on mainland lakes, but non-breeding individuals are present in all seasons.

Red-throated Loon – Uncommon migrant and winter resident. Usually single individuals, fairly far from shore. One July record of a possibly injured individual from Hutchins Island.

Double-crested Cormorant – Very common April-Oct. Check any cormorants seen Nov-March for Great Cormorant.

Great Cormorant – The expected cormorant in New England in winter (Nov-March), but seemingly uncommon on Islesboro. One record from Pendleton Point in Dec. Careful scoping of offshore ledges in late fall/winter would likely yield more records.

Red-necked Grebe – Common non-breeding resident from Oct-May; scattered records in June, Aug-Sept.

Horned Grebe – Common non-breeding resident from late Oct-April. Usually in groups of several individuals fairly far from shore.

Black Guillemot – Common year-round resident, with particularly high numbers from Aug-Nov. Usually in singles or pairs; most individuals seen around Islesboro are in non-breeding plumage.

Razorbill – Uncommon winter resident, late Nov-May, usually in small numbers far from shore. A recent pattern of increasing abundance of Razorbills in the East Bay off North Haven in July-Aug suggests post-breeding movement inshore. Recently, scattered individuals have been seen off Ram Island and Turtle Head during this time as well. Scrutinize Razorbills in winter for rare Thick-billed Murre and Common Murre, which have not been recorded from Islesboro.

Northern Gannet – Uncommon visitor from offshore in late July-Sept. Most likely to be seen over the East Bay during periods of strong southwest winds; all records to date are from Pendleton Point.

Wilson's Storm-petrel – Uncommon visitor from offshore, June-Aug. Commonly seen by boat between Islesboro and Owls Head/North Haven, but no records seen from shore to date.

Wading Birds, Shorebirds, Rails, and Kingfisher

Great Blue Heron – Common April-Oct, with small numbers lingering through ice-up.

Great Egret – Rare visitor during post breeding season (July-Sept). At least three records.

Snowy Egret – Rare visitor during post breeding season (July-Sept). At least two records

Green Heron – Rare migrant. One record (Sprague Beach – May).

American Bittern – Uncommon migrant in marshy areas. Two records, both at Sprague Beach Marsh in April & May.

Spotted Sandpiper – Common summer resident. Present as singles or small groups May-Sept. Particularly common during post-breeding (July-Sept) and found almost anywhere on coastline.

Semipalmated Sandpiper and Least Sandpiper – The most common 'peeps' on the island, visiting as migrants in May and especially Aug – early Sept. In the late summer, forms relatively large mixed feeding flocks on mudflats and pebble beaches.

White-rumped Sandpiper – Uncommon post-breeding migrant (late July-Sept). Usually in small numbers associated with other 'peeps'.

Western Sandpiper – Rare post-breeding migrant. One record (Hutchins Island – Aug).

Pectoral Sandpiper – Rare post-breeding migrant. One record (Hutchins Island – Aug).

Short-billed Dowitcher – Uncommon post-breeding migrant. Three records, all in July.

Sanderling – Rare post-breeding migrant. One record (Grindle Point – Sept).

Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs – Common migrants, especially in the late summer (Aug and early Sept). Greater Yellowlegs is generally more common and lingers later in the fall (to early Oct).

Solitary Sandpiper – Relatively uncommon migrant in May and late July-early Sept. Usually in marshy fresh or brackish water, especially pannes at the Narrows and Sprague Beach marsh and Hutchins Island beaver pond.

Semipalmated Plover – Common late summer migrant, especially in late July – early Sept. Usually in fairly large groups on mudflats and pebble beaches.

Black-bellied Plover – Uncommon migrant in late July-early Sept. One record in early June. All recent records from Hutchins Island.

Killdeer – Uncommon migrant in May and late July-early Sept, usually on mudflats or open beaches, or heard calling overhead. Possible breeding at Hutchins Island in some years.

Purple Sandpiper – Winter resident of exposed, rocky shorelines. A flock usually winters (Nov – March) on the Bare Ledges off Hutchins Island; unrecorded elsewhere. Likely present on ledges off S end of Islesboro, but would require boat to survey.

Ruddy Turnstone – Uncommon post-breeding migrant (late July-Aug). Most records from Hutchins Island.

Whimbrel – Rare post-breeding migrant. One record (Hutchins Island – Sept).

Red-necked Phalarope – Rare late summer (late July-Sept) visitor from offshore; usually found in flocks sitting on open water, far from shore. One flock recorded off Flat Island in early Sept; common further offshore.

American Woodcock – Uncommon migrant and breeder. Most evident during dusk display in March-May in wet fields and open areas.

Virginia Rail – Breeds in small numbers in cattail marsh at the Meadow Pond. More often heard than seen.

Belted Kingfisher – Common summer resident, April-Nov. Particularly common during post-breeding (July-Sept) when its loud rattling call can be heard almost anywhere on coastline.

Birds in Need of Information

Ruffed Grouse – Present historically up-island. My last sighting was in 2007.

Ring-necked Pheasant – Stocked in the past by the sporting club and bred for a number of years near the Meadow Pond. My last sighting was in 2010.

House Finch – Only a couple of island records, with no known breeding, despite being common on the mainland. Confusion with Purple Finch complicates our understanding of their prevalence on Islesboro.

Rock Pigeon – Very few, if any, verified records from Islesboro and some records may actually be from Lincolnville. Additional records to clarify the occurrence of pigeons on Islesboro are needed.

House Sparrow – Very few, if any, verified records from Islesboro and some records may actually be from Lincolnville or misidentified other sparrows. Additional records to clarify the occurrence of House Sparrows on Islesboro are needed.

Northern Saw-whet Owl – Additional fall and winter callback surveys are needed to understand the occurrence of these secretive owls on Islesboro.

Likely Birds that Have Not Been Documented (to my knowledge) on Islesboro

Blue-winged Teal
American Wigeon
Harlequin Duck
King Eider
Barrow's Goldeneye
Redhead
Pied-billed Grebe
Eastern Whip-poor-will
Sora
Dunlin
Wilson's Snipe
Baird's Sandpiper
Willet
Black-legged Kittiwake
Black-headed Gull
Iceland Gull
Thick-billed Murre
Atlantic Puffin
Great Horned Owl
Red-shouldered Hawk
Northern Goshawk
Willow Flycatcher
Northern Mockingbird
Bank Swallow
Bobolink
Mourning Warbler
Prairie Warbler
Field Sparrow
Nelson's Sparrow
Fox Sparrow
Clay-Colored Sparrow
Lark Sparrow
Indigo Bunting
Dickcissel