

## Safe Dates and Preferred Habitats

This table summarizes the most frequently used breeding habitats for a species, and lists the Safe Date period. The Safe Date is the period when most migrants will have left, and those birds that remain are likely nesters. Safe dates are also the only period when you can use our breeding behavior codes for Observed, Possible or Probable. Both the Courtship code of Probable, and the Confirmed code can be used before, during or after the Safe Date.

All species in **bold face type** are rare breeders, and require maps and further documentation. See the handbook on Reporting Rare Species.

Species	Safe Dates	Habitat
Canada Goose	4/15-8/1	Shore or islands in any wetland
Mute Swan	4/15-8/1	Large ponds and marshes
Wood Duck	5/1-8/5	Wooded swamps, freshwater marshes, streams, rivers
Gadwall	5/15-8/5	Fresh/brackish water or saltmarsh
<b>American Wigeon</b>	5/15-8/5	Fresh/brackish pond or marsh
Am. Black Duck	5/1-8/5	Most wetlands, from beaver ponds to saltmarsh
Mallard	5/1-8/5	All wetlands, occasionally suburban yards with swimming pools
Blue-winged Teal	5/10-8/5	Fresh/brackish pond or marsh
North. Shoveler	5/15-8/5	Fresh/brackish pond or marsh
North. Pintail	5/15-8/5	Fresh/brackish pond or marsh
Green-winged Teal	5/15-8/5	Fresh/brackish pond or marsh
<b>Ring-necked Duck</b>	5/25-8/5	Wooded swamps, beaver ponds, stump ponds
<b>Common Eider</b>	5/15-8/1	Coastal islands
Hooded Merganser	5/15-8/5	Wooded swamps, freshwater marshes, streams
Common Merganser	5/10-8/5	Lake or river
<b>Red-breasted Merganser</b>	6/1-8/5	Coastal marsh
<b>Ruddy Duck</b>	5/15-8/1	Fresh/brackish pond or marsh
Ring-necked Pheasant	5/1-8/15	Open scrub, pastures, fields
Ruffed Grouse	1/1-12/31	Mixed upland woods
Wild Turkey	1/1-12/31	Mature deciduous woods, edge
North. Bobwhite	4/30-8/15	Open scrub, pastures, fields
<b>Common Loon</b>	6/1-8/1	Lakes and ponds
<b>Pied-billed Grebe</b>	5/10-8/1	Fresh/brackish reedy pond or marsh
<b>Leach's Storm-Petrel</b>	6/1-8/15	Coastal Islands

<b>Double-cres. Cormorant</b>	5/10-8/5	Islands on coast or lake
<b>Great Cormorant</b>	5/1-8/5	Islands on coast
<b>American Bittern</b>	5/15-8/1	Fresh/brackish reedy pond or marsh
<b>Least Bittern</b>	5/25-8/1	Fresh/brackish reedy pond or marsh
Great Blue Heron	5/1-7/15	Wooded swamps, beaver ponds, islands
<b>Great Egret</b>	5/15-7/15	Islands on coast or lake
Snowy Egret	5/15-7/15	Coastal Islands
Little Blue Heron	5/15-7/15	Coastal Islands
<b>Tricolored Heron</b>	5/25-7/15	Coastal Islands
<b>Cattle Egret</b>	5/10-7/15	Coastal Islands
Green Heron	5/10-8/1	Woody growth near marshes or open water
Black-crown. Night-Heron	5/5-7/15	Coastal Islands
<b>Yellow-crown. Night-Heron</b>	5/5-7/15	Coastal Islands
Glossy Ibis	5/1-7/15	Coastal Islands
<b>Black Vulture</b>	5/10-8/15	Woods, cliffs, caves, buildings
Turkey Vulture	5/10-8/15	Woods, cliffs, caves, buildings
<b>Osprey</b>	5/10-8/15	Coastal marshes; rarely large wetlands inland
<b>Bald Eagle</b>	4/15-8/15	Margins of large lakes, rivers
<b>North. Harrier</b>	5/10-8/20	Coastal dunes, beaches, marshes, heathlands
<b>Sharp-shinned Hawk</b>	5/10-8/1	Conifers in mature woodlands
Cooper's Hawk	5/5-8/1	Mixed woodlands, groves, copses
Northern Goshawk	4/10-8/15	Mature, mixed woodlands
Red-shouldered Hawk	4/10-8/15	Wet mixed forests, swamps
Broad-winged Hawk	5/15-7/25	Mature, mixed woodlands
Red-tailed Hawk	4/15-8/1	Mature woodlands, often near edges
<b>American Kestrel</b>	5/10-7/20	Open country, scattered trees, edge
<b>Merlin</b>	5/10-7/20	Conifers
<b>Peregrine Falcon</b>	5/15-8/1	Cliffs, tall buildings, towers
Clapper Rail	5/15-8/1	salt and brackish marsh
<b>King Rail</b>	5/15-8/1	Fresh/brackish reedy pond or marsh
Virginia Rail	5/15-8/1	Salt, fresh, or brackish pond or marsh
Sora	5/15-7/25	Fresh/brackish reedy pond or marsh
<b>Com. Moorhen</b>	5/25-8/15	Fresh/brackish reedy pond or marsh
<b>American Coot</b>	6/1-8/15	Fresh/brackish reedy pond or marsh

<b>Sandhill Crane</b>	5/1-8/1	Extensive, freshwater marsh or bog
<b>Piping Plover</b>	5/15-8/15	Coastal, sandy beach
Killdeer	4/20-7/1	Open, sparsely vegetated areas; flat rooftops
Am. Oystercatcher	5/15-8/15	Upper portions of coastal beach, dunes
Willet	5/15-7/15	Coastal beach, dunes, saltmarsh
Spotted Sandpiper	5/25-7/5	Coastal shores, shores of freshwater lakes, ponds, rivers, streams
<b>Upland Sandpiper</b>	5/20-7/15	Extensive grasslands, especially airports
<b>Least Sandpiper</b>	5/25-6/15	Variety of coastal habitats
<b>Wilson's Snipe</b>	5/20-8/1	Bog, wet meadow
Am. Woodcock	4/15-7/15	Forest edges
<b>Wilson's Phalarope</b>	6/1-7/25	Saltmarsh
Laughing Gull	5/1-8/1	Coastal islands
<b>Ring-billed Gull</b>	5/1-8/1	Lakes, reservoirs
<b>Herring Gull</b>	5/1-8/1	Coastal shores/islands, flat rooftops
<b>Lesser Black-back. Gull</b>	5/1-8/1	Coastal shores/islands
<b>Greater Black-back. Gull</b>	5/1-8/1	Coastal islands
<b>Roseate Tern</b>	6/1-8/5	Coastal islands
<b>Common Tern</b>	6/1-8/5	Coastal islands, saltmarsh
<b>Arctic Tern</b>	6/1-8/5	Coastal sandy beaches, islands
<b>Forster's Tern</b>	6/1-8/5	Saltmarsh
<b>Least Tern</b>	5/25-8/15	Coastal sandy beach, esp dredge spoils
Black Skimmer	6/1-8/1	Coastal, sandy beach
<b>Black Guillemot</b>	6/1-8/1	Coastal rock ledge
Rock Pigeon	1/1-12/31	Buildings, bridges, towers in urban areas, farms
Mourning Dove	4/1-8/15	Suburbs, woodlots, farmlands
<b>Monk Parakeet</b>	6/1-8/1	Urban streets, large trees, telephone poles
Black-billed Cuckoo	6/5/8/15	Forested habitats, edge
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	6/5-8/15	Forested habitats, edge
<b>Barn Owl</b>	4/1-8/1	Open habitats
Eastern Screech-Owl	4/1-8/1	Open deciduous forests, woodlots, orchards, residential areas
Great Horned Owl	1/1-12/31	Wide variety of habitats from forest to farmland
Barred Owl	4/1-7/15	Moist woods, wooded swamps, bottomlands.
<b>Long-eared Owl</b>	4/1-8/1	Conifers
<b>Short-eared Owl</b>	5/1-8/1	Extensive coastal grassland/heathland

North. Saw-whet Owl	4/15-8/15	Mixed moist woods with conifers
Com. Nighthawk	6/5-8/1	Barren habitats including river bars and flat rooftops
<b>Chuck-will's-widow</b>	6/1-7/15	Scrub Oak
Whip-poor-will	5/25-7/15	Secondary forest, copses, pine barrens, scrub oak, edge
<b>Chimney Swift</b>	5/25-8/15	Urban chimneys
Ruby-throated Hum.	6/1-8/1	Open woodland, rural and suburban gardens, edge
Belted Kingfisher	5/1-8/10	Stream, river, lake, or bay shore with banks
Red-headed Woodpecker	5/20-8/25	Open country with scattered trees
Red-bellied Woodpecker	4/15-8/1	Older-growth forest and woodlots
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	5/20-8/1	higher-elevation hardwoods
Downy Woodpecker	5/1-7/25	Forests, copses, suburbs
Hairy Woodpecker	4/25-7/20	Forests
North. Flicker	5/25-7/25	Forests, parks,
Pileated Woodpecker	1/1-12/31	Matured forest, especially bottomland
<b>Olive-sided Flycatcher</b>	6/5-8/1	Spruce/Larch bog
Eastern Wood-Pewee	6/5-8/1	Mature forest
<b>Yellow-bellied Flycatcher</b>	6/5-8/1	Spruce/Sphagnum bog
Acadian Flycatcher	6/5-8/1	Red Maple swamp (SE) and Hemlock (elsewhere)
Alder Flycatcher	6/5-8/1	Shrub (esp. Alder) swamp
Willow Flycatcher	6/5-8/1	Shrub (esp. Willow) swamp
Least Flycatcher	5/25-8/5	Open deciduous forests, forest edge
Eastern Phoebe	5/1-8/15	Ledges, bridges, porch sills, etc., usually near water
Great Crested Flycatcher	5/25-8/1	Mature forest, edge
Eastern Kingbird	5/25-7/25	Open habitats, including edge, copses, often near water
<b>Loggerhead Shrike</b>	5/15-8/1	Farmland and other open habitats
White-eyed Vireo	5/15-8/1	Moist areas, thickets, tangle of vines or briars.
Yellow-throated Vireo	5/20-8/10	Open deciduous and mixed forest and riparian woodlands
Blue-headed Vireo	5/15-8/10	Mature coniferous or mixed woods
Warbling Vireo	5/15-8/10	Semi-open borders of river meadows, ponds, and streams
Red-eyed Vireo	6/1-8/10	Mixed and deciduous Woods
Blue Jay	5/1-8/15	Varied; most forest types, thickets, suburban yards, parks
American Crow	3/25-7/15	Conifers in forested areas, woodlots, suburban yards, parks
Fish Crow	5/1-7/15	Mixed woods, woodlots, suburban yards, parks
<b>Common Raven</b>	3/20-7/20	Remote forested areas

Horned Lark	4/25-8/1	Coastal dunes and beaches, abandoned agricultural fields, airports
<b>Purple Martin</b>	5/25-7/1	Open areas; edge of saltmarsh, coastal farmland, and golf courses
Tree Swallow	5/15-7/1	Open areas or woodland edge near wetlands; including saltmarsh
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	5/20-7/1	Often near water, in cavity, pipe, or excavated burrow
Bank Swallow	5/25-7/1	Earthen embankments
<b>Cliff Swallow</b>	5/25-7/1	Eaves and sides of old barns and other buildings, bridges
Barn Swallow	5/25-7/1	Structures offering access to interior; barns, garages, porches, sheds, etc.
Black-capped Chickadee	4/1-8/15	Woodlands, orchards, shade trees, yards, and city parks
Tufted Titmouse	4/5-8/1	Deciduous (especially oak) forest, riparian woodlands, and residential areas
Red-breast. Nuthatch	5/15-8/10	Coniferous forest
White-breast. Nuthatch	4/25-8/10	Deciduous forest
Brown Creeper	5/20-8/1	Mature, mixed, and swampy forest, including Atlantic White Cedar swamps
Carolina Wren	4/1-8/15	Wet woods, stream edges with dense thickets, tangles, brush piles, etc.
House Wren	5/20-8/15	Open forests, wood edges, farms, orchards, suburbs, parks, gardens
Winter Wren	5/1-8/5	Cool, moist, coniferous or mixed woods, swamps, bogs, streams, brooks
<b>Sedge Wren</b>	6/1-8/1	Wet meadows, freshwater marshes
Marsh Wren	5/15-8/15	Cattail and other tall marshes, including saltmarsh edges
Golden-crowned Kinglet	5/10-8/1	Coniferous woods
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	5/20-8/1	Coniferous woods
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	5/15-8/1	Wooded edges along ponds, rivers, streams, swamps, beaver ponds
<b>Eastern Bluebird</b>	5/1-8/15	Fields with scattered trees; farmland, orchards, pastures, etc.
Veery	5/25-8/10	Moist mixed forest
<b>Bicknell's Thrush</b>	6/1-8/10	High elevation spruce/fir forest
Swainson's Thrush	6/1-8/10	High elevation spruce/fir forest
Hermit Thrush	5/10-9/10	Damp mixed forest with dense undergrowth including pine barrens
Wood Thrush	5/25-8/10	Mature forest
Am. Robin	5/1-9/1	Almost anywhere except the most open habitats such as marsh, grasslands
Gray Catbird	5/20-8/15	Dense tangles and thickets
North. Mockingbird	5/5-8/15	Suburban or semi-rural habitats with thickets, brushy forest edges, hedgerows

Brown Thrasher	5/15-8/10	Dry second-growth; powerlines, overgrown pastures, coastal thickets
European Starling	1/1-12/31	Everywhere except remote rural areas
Cedar Waxwing	6/10-8/15	Second-growth forest, parks, orchards, gardens, and margins of waterways
Blue-winged Warbler	5/20-8/1	Old, brushy fields, copses, edge with low undergrowth, powerline cuts
<b>Golden-winged Warbler</b>	5/20-8/1	Damp brushy fields, powerline cuts
Brewster's Warbler	5/20-8/1	Old, brushy fields, copses, edge with low undergrowth, powerlines
Lawrence's Warbler	5/20-8/1	Old, brushy fields, copses, edge with low undergrowth, powerlines
<b>Tennessee Warbler</b>	6/1-8/1	Coniferous forest
Nashville Warbler	5/25-8/15	Open Scrub Oak woodlands (SE), overgrown pastures, bogs (C, W)
<b>Northern Parula</b>	6/1-8/10	Woodlands with <i>Usnea</i> lichen
Yellow Warbler	5/25-8/1	Margins of freshwater marsh, other wet brushy areas, farmland
Chestnut-sided Warbler	5/25-8/1	Brushy, open second-growth, edges
Magnolia Warbler	6/5-8/10	Coniferous forest
Black-throat. Blue Warbler	5/25-8/10	Mixed woods with dense understory, esp. Mountain Laurel
Yellow-rumped Warbler	5/25-8/10	Mature White Pines (SE), coniferous forest (C, W)
Black-throat. Green Warb.	5/25-8/5	Coniferous and mature mixed forest
Blackburnian Warbler	5/25-8/5	Coniferous forest
Pine Warbler	5/1-8/5	Variety of pine forest types
Prairie Warbler	5/25-8/1	Brushy fields, powerline cuts, edges
<b>Blackpoll Warbler</b>	6/10-8/10	High elevation spruce, Balsam Fir forest
<b>Cerulean Warbler</b>	6/1-8/1	Mature, moist deciduous forest
Black-and-white Warbler	5/25-8/1	Mainly deciduous forest
American Redstart	6/1-8/1	Secondary forest, copses
<b>Prothonotary Warbler</b>	6/1-8/1	Variety of deciduous or mixed forest types, saplings in field edge bordered by forest, wooded swamps
Worm-eating Warbler	5/20-8/1	Brushy undergrowth of rocky, wooded hillsides and ravines, usually near water
Ovenbird	5/20-8/5	Open forests with little or no understory vegetation and ample leaf litter
North. Waterthrush	5/20-7/25	Wooded swamps, bogs, backwaters
Louisiana Waterthrush	5/10-7/20	Rocky streams in deciduous or mixed forest
<b>Kentucky Warbler</b>	6/1-8/1	Wet thickets, dense understory in moist or wet deciduous forest, bottomland
<b>Mourning Warbler</b>	6/5-8/10	High elevation; dense, early second growth, tangles, esp. raspberry

		canes in clearcut
Common Yellowthroat	6/1-8/10	Brushy areas, thickets, powerline cuts, preferably wet
<b>Hooded Warbler</b>	6/1-8/1	Moist thickets in woodlands
Canada Warbler	6/5-8/1	Thick undergrowth in moist deciduous or mixed forest; cedar swamp, Red Maple (SE)
Yellow-breasted Chat	6/1-8/5	Thickets, esp. regenerating fields and pastures
Scarlet Tanager	5/25-8/10	Mature deciduous forest
Eastern Towhee	5/1-8/10	Dry, open forest, edge, brushy habitats, including coastal thickets, powerline cuts
Chipping Sparrow	5/1-8/15	Open mixed forest, suburbs, parks, and cemeteries with conifers
<b>Clay-colored Sparrow</b>	6/1-8/1	Shrubby grasslands
Field Sparrow	5/1-8/5	Brushy areas, weedy fields, powerline cuts
<b>Vesper Sparrow</b>	5/10-8/5	Short grass areas, agricultural fields, clearings in pine barrens, coastal moors
Savannah Sparrow	5/10-8/1	Grasslands, including airports, hayfields
<b>Grasshopper Sparrow</b>	5/25-8/10	Grasslands, including airports, hayfields
<b>Henslow's Sparrow</b>	6/1-8/1	Weedy fields, wet meadows
<b>Nelson's Sharp-tail. Sparrow</b>	6/1-8/1	Saltmarsh
Saltmarsh Sharp-tail. Sparrow	5/25-8/10	Saltmarsh
Seaside Sparrow	5/25-8/10	Saltmarsh
Song Sparrow	5/1-8/10	Forest edge, brushy areas, marsh edges, suburbs
<b>Lincoln's Sparrow</b>	6/1-8/1	High elevation boreal bog
Swamp Sparrow	5/1-8/5	Freshwater wetlands including cattail marsh, swamps, river meadow, and pond edges
White-throated Sparrow	5/20-8/20	Scrubby habitats esp with conifers (C, W); Red Maple, Atlantic White Cedar (SE)
Slate-colored Junco	5/1-9/5	Edges in coniferous or mixed woodlands; saplings and brushy thickets at higher elevations
North. Cardinal	4/15-8/20	Suburban or semi-rural areas; forest edge, woodlots, thickets, parks, gardens
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	5/25-8/5	Deciduous and mixed forest, woodlots, shade trees of parks and suburbs
Indigo Bunting	5/25-8/10	Brushy habitats including forest edge, overgrown fields, powerline cuts
Bobolink	6/1-8/1	Grasslands, including airports, hayfields
Red-winged Blackbird	5/1-7/15	Wide variety of densely vegetated freshwater habitats, higher saltmarsh
Eastern Meadowlark	5/5-7/25	Extensive grasslands, including airports, margins of saltmarsh

<b>Rusty Blackbird</b>	5/25-7/25	Boreal bog
Common Grackle	5/15-7/10	Wide variety of urban and rural habitats from open forest to fresh and salt marshes, parks, etc.
Brown-headed Cowbird	5/1-7/15	Virtually all habitats; anywhere host species are found
Orchard Oriole	5/25-7/15	Open, patchy forest, copses, often near river, stream, or pond
Baltimore Oriole	5/25-8/1	Open deciduous forest, shade trees in urban or rural areas
Purple Finch	5/25-8/10	Conifers in mixed woods, suburbs, parklands
House Finch	4/15-8/1	Scattered trees- especially conifers- mainly in residential areas
<b>Red Crossbill</b>	5/1-7/15	Coniferous forest
<b>White-winged Crossbill</b>	5/1-7/15	Coniferous forest
Pine Siskin	5/1-7/15	Conifers
American Goldfinch	6/1-8/1	Forest edge, copses, brushy areas, marsh edges, residential
Evening Grosbeak	5/25-8/15	Mixed forest
House Sparrow	1/1-12/31	Residential, farms