

Safe dates and habitats – taxonomic order

The table below provides “safe dates” and the most frequently used breeding habitats for each species. Safe dates give the period when most migrants will have left, and those birds that remain are likely nesters. Breeding codes, especially those in the Possible and Probable categories, generally should not be used outside the safe dates for a given species. Confirmed breeding codes, are less likely to cause errors, but even confirmed breeding should be well documented (e.g., a detailed description of the bird species and the behaviors that confirm breeding) if it happens outside the safe dates for a species because these records are likely to be of particular interest.

If you find a species and you feel that there is strong evidence of nesting, even though you are outside the safe dates or in an inappropriate habitat, please provide additional documentation. Species marked with an asterisk (*), below, or any species not on this list, always require additional written documentation because they are rare breeders in the state that we want to fully document for the historical record. Information on reporting rare sightings is provided on the web site (www.ctbirdatlas.org).

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
American 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
Green-winged Teal*	5/15-8/5	Fresh/brackish pond or marsh
Common Eider*	5/15-8/1	Coastal islands
Hooded Merganser	5/15-8/5	Wooded swamps, freshwater marshes, streams
Red-breasted Merganser*	6/1-8/5	Coastal marsh
Common Merganser	6/1-8/5	Forested lakes and rivers
Ring-necked Pheasant	5/1-8/15	Open scrub, pastures, fields
Ruffed Grouse	4/1-6/30	Mixed upland woods
Wild Turkey	4/1-7/15	Mature deciduous woods, edge
Northern Bobwhite*	4/30-8/15	Open scrub, pastures, fields
Pied-billed Grebe*	5/10-8/1	Fresh/brackish reedy pond or marsh
Double-crested Cormorant	5/10-8/5	Islands on coast or lake
American Bittern*	5/15-8/1	Fresh/brackish reedy pond or marsh
Least Bittern*	5/25-8/1	Fresh/brackish reedy pond or marsh
Great Blue Heron	5/1-7/15	Wooded swamps, beaver ponds, islands
Great Egret	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
Tricolored Heron*	5/15-7/15	Coastal islands
Cattle Egret*	5/10-7/15	Coastal islands
Green Heron	5/10-8/1	Woody growth near marshes or open water
Black-crowned Night-Heron	5/5-7/15	Coastal islands
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron*	5/5-7/15	Coastal islands
Glossy Ibis	5/1-7/15	Coastal islands
Turkey Vulture	5/10-8/15	Woods, cliffs, caves, buildings
Black Vulture	5/10-8/15	Woods, cliffs, caves, buildings
Osprey	5/10-8/15	Coastal marshes; rarely large wetlands inland
Bald Eagle	4/15-8/15	Margins of large lakes, rivers
Mississippi Kite*	5/1-8/15	Various wooded habitats ranging from wooded suburbs to hardwood forest
Northern Harrier*	5/10-8/20	Coastal dunes, beaches, marshes, heathlands
Sharp-shinned Hawk*	5/10-8/1	Conifers in mature woodlands

Species	Safe Dates	Habitat
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
American Kestrel	5/10-7/20	Open country, scattered trees, edge
Peregrine Falcon	5/15-8/1	Cliffs, tall buildings, towers
Black Rail*	5/15-8/1	Fresh/brackish marshes, especially along coast
King Rail*	5/15-8/1	Fresh/brackish reedy pond or marsh
Clapper Rail	5/15-8/1	Salt and brackish 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
Common Gallinule*	5/25-8/15	Fresh/brackish reedy pond or marsh
Piping Plover	5/15-8/15	Coastal, sandy beach
Killdeer	4/20-7/1	Open, sparsely vegetated areas; flat rooftops
American 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
Upland Sandpiper*	5/20-7/15	Extensive grasslands, especially airports
American Woodcock	4/15-7/15	Forest edges
Herring Gull	5/1-8/1	Coastal shores/islands, flat rooftops
Great Black-backed Gull	5/1-8/1	Coastal islands
Roseate Tern*	6/1-8/5	Coastal islands
Common Tern	6/1-8/5	Coastal islands, saltmarsh
Least Tern	5/25-8/15	Coastal sandy beach, especially dredge spoils
Black Skimmer*	6/1-8/1	Coastal, sandy beach
Rock Pigeon	1/1-12/31	Buildings, bridges, towers in urban areas, farms
Mourning Dove	4/1-8/15	Suburbs, woodlots, farmlands
Monk Parakeet	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
Barn Owl*	4/1-8/1	Open habitats
Eastern Screech-Owl	4/1-8/1	Open deciduous forests, woodlots, orchards, residential areas
Great Horned Owl	12/1-6/15	Wide variety of habitats from forest to farmland
Barred Owl	4/1-7/15	Moist woods, wooded swamps, bottomlands
Long-eared Owl*	4/1-8/1	Conifers
Northern Saw-whet Owl*	4/15-8/15	Mixed moist woods with conifers
Common Nighthawk*	6/5-8/1	Barren habitats including river bars and flat rooftops
Eastern Whip-poor-will	5/25-7/15	Secondary forest, copses, pine barrens, Scrub Oak, edge
Chimney Swift	5/25-8/15	Urban chimneys
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	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
Northern Flicker	5/25-7/25	Forests, parks
Pileated Woodpecker	4/1-6/30	Matured forest, especially bottomland

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Eastern Wood-Pewee	6/5-8/1	Mature forest
Acadian Flycatcher	6/5-8/1	Red Maple swamp and hemlock
Willow Flycatcher	6/5-8/1	Shrubby areas near water, thickets
Alder Flycatcher	6/5-8/1	Shrubby areas near water, thickets
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
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
Common Raven	3/20-7/20	Remote forested areas
Horned Lark*	4/25-8/1	Coastal dunes and beaches, abandoned agricultural fields, airports
Purple Martin	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 R-winged Swallow	5/20-7/1	Often near water, in cavity, pipe, or excavated burrow
Bank Swallow	5/25-7/1	Earthen embankments
Cliff Swallow	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,
Black-capped Chickadee	4/1-8/15	Woodlands, orchards, shade trees, yards, and city parks
Tufted Titmouse	4/5-8/1	Deciduous forest, riparian woodlands, and residential areas
Red-breasted Nuthatch	5/15-8/10	Coniferous forest
White-breasted Nuthatch	4/25-8/10	Deciduous forest
Brown Creeper	5/20-8/1	Mature, mixed, and swampy forest
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
Sedge Wren*	5/15-8/15	Overgrown wet fields, edges of freshwater marshes, bogs and wet meadows
Marsh Wren	5/15-8/15	Cattail and other tall marshes, including saltmarsh edges
Golden-crowned Kinglet	5/10-8/1	Coniferous woods
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	5/15-8/1	Wooded edges along ponds, rivers, streams, swamps, beaver ponds
Eastern Bluebird	5/1-8/15	Fields with scattered trees; farmland, orchards, pastures, etc.
Veery	5/25-8/10	Moist mixed forest
Hermit Thrush	5/10-9/10	Damp mixed forest with dense undergrowth including pine barrens
Wood Thrush	5/25-8/10	Mature forest
American 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
Northern Mockingbird	5/5-8/15	Suburban or semi-rural habitats with thickets, forest edges, hedgerows
Brown Thrasher	5/15-8/10	Dry second-growth; powerlines, overgrown pastures, coastal thickets
European Starling	4/10-6/15	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
Golden-winged Warbler*	5/20-8/1	Damp brushy fields, powerline cuts
Nashville Warbler	5/25-8/15	Open Scrub Oak woodlands, overgrown pastures, bogs
Northern Parula*	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

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Magnolia Warbler	6/5-8/10	Coniferous forest
Black-throated Blue Warbler	5/25-8/10	Mixed woods with dense understory, esp. Mountain Laurel
Yellow-rumped Warbler	5/25-8/10	Mature White Pines, coniferous forest
Black-throated Green Warbler	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
Cerulean Warbler	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
Prothonotary Warbler*	6/1-8/1	Deciduous/mixed forest, saplings at forest edge, 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
Northern Waterthrush	5/20-7/25	Wooded swamps, bogs, backwaters
Louisiana Waterthrush	5/10-7/20	Rocky streams in deciduous or mixed forest
Common Yellowthroat	6/1-8/10	Brushy areas, thickets, powerline cuts, preferably wet
Hooded Warbler	6/1-8/1	Moist thickets in woodlands
Canada Warbler	6/5-8/1	Thick undergrowth in moist deciduous/mixed forest; cedar swamp, Red Maple
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, coastal thickets, powerline cuts
Chipping Sparrow	5/1-8/15	Open mixed forest, suburbs, parks, and cemeteries with conifers
Field Sparrow	5/1-8/5	Brushy areas, weedy fields, powerline cuts
Vesper Sparrow*	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
Grasshopper Sparrow*	5/25-8/10	Grasslands, including airports, hayfields
Saltmarsh 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
Swamp Sparrow	5/1-8/5	Freshwater wetlands including swamps, river meadows, and pond edges
White-throated Sparrow	5/20-8/20	Scrubby habitats esp with conifers; Red Maple, Atlantic White Cedar
Dark-eyed Junco	5/1-9/5	Edges in coniferous/mixed woodlands; brushy thickets at higher elevations
Northern 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
Bobolink	6/1-8/1	Grasslands, including airports, hayfields
Red-winged Blackbird	5/1-7/15	Wide variety of densely vegetated marsh habitats
Eastern Meadowlark*	5/5-7/25	Extensive grasslands, including airports, margins of saltmarsh
Common Grackle	5/15-7/10	Variety of urban and rural habitats from open forest to marshes, parks, etc.
Boat-tailed Grackle*	5/1-7/10	Various habitats close to coastal marshes
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
American Goldfinch	6/1-8/1	Forest edge, copses, brushy areas, marsh edges, residential
Evening Grosbeak*	5/25-8/15	Mixed forest
House Sparrow	3/10-8/15	Residential, farms