

# Early spring breeders

Species usually incubating by mid-May in NYS



# Waterfowl

- 2 nest types:
  - Marshy mound
  - Cavity
- Courtship takes place away from breeding area so more definitive to look for:
  - Nest building
  - Incubating birds
  - Young birds
- Don't develop brood patches so pull breast feathers to line nest and create a brood patch



# Waterfowl

- Mound nest:
  - Mute Swan
  - Trumpeter Swan
  - Canada Goose
  - Mallard
  - Common Eider
- Cavity nest:
  - Hooded Merganser
  - Wood Duck



# Coastal marsh birds

- Long Island and lower Hudson
- Most are colonial
- Nest in trees or on/near ground
- Easiest behaviors
  - Courtship
  - Nests
  - Fledged young



American Oystercatcher © Alicia Ambers/Macaulay Library (ML355495091)

# Coastal marsh birds

- On/near ground nesters:
  - Clapper Rail
  - American Oystercatcher
- Tree nests:
  - Great Egret
  - Tricolored Heron
  - Snowy Egret
  - Glossy Ibis



Clapper Rail nest © Jonathan Layman/Macaulay Library (ML350653871)



Glossy Ibis nest © Susan Young/Macaulay Library (ML341202631)

# Inland marsh birds

- Freshwater marshes
- Various nest types and locations
  - Ground
  - Tree
  - Cup nests
- Easiest codes are:
  - Courtship
  - Nest building
  - Feeding young



# Inland marsh birds

- Ground nests:
  - Sandhill Crane
  - Wilson's Snipe
- Tree nest:
  - Great Blue Heron
- Cup nests:
  - Red-winged Blackbird
  - Common Grackle
  - Song Sparrow



# Raptors

- Forest, edge, or open habitats
- Large enough prey base
- Aerial courtship displays
- Adults responsive to playback
- Young are very loud in nest



Cooper's Hawk young in nest © Jay McGowan/Macaulay Library (ML244443731)



# Raptors

- Forest:
  - Red-shouldered Hawk
  - Cooper's Hawk
  - Long-eared Owl
  - Northern Saw-whet Owl
- Open habitat:
  - Osprey
  - Northern Harrier
  - Short-eared Owl
- Flexible:
  - Merlin



Northern Harrier young in nest © Nicole Richardson/Macaulay Library (ML247967961)

# Cavity nesters

- Artificial and natural nests
- Difficult to see in the nest so best to look for
  - Courtship
  - Nest building
  - Feeding young
- Stake out possible nests
- Later in the season listen for noises from young



Purple Martin © Mitchell Goldfarb/Macaulay Library (ML327317481)

# Cavity nesters

- Natural nests:
  - Belted Kingfisher
  - All woodpeckers
  - Tufted Titmouse
- Artificial nests:
  - Purple Martin
- Both natural and artificial:
  - Tree Swallow
  - Eastern Bluebird



# Open habitats

- Grassland birds are in steep decline
- Sometimes easier to hear singing at night when ambient noise is quieter, confirms presence
- Do not walk through fields to find nests but do find a safe place to observe adults carrying nesting material or food



# Open habitats

- Fields:
  - Eastern Meadowlark
- Trees and shrubs in pastures and hedgerows:
  - Loggerhead Shrike
- Rocky pebbles:
  - Killdeer



# Residential birds

- Easier to encounter because in our backyards and parks
- Best way to get familiar with common breeding behaviors is to watch residential birds
- Enter 0 for cowbird count if see an egg but no birds



Brown-headed Cowbird egg in Wood Thrush nest © Shawn Billerman/Macaulay Library (ML350662681)

# Residential birds

- Eurasian Collared-Dove
- Eastern Phoebe
- American Robin
- Brown-headed Cowbird



Eurasian Collared-Dove © Aitor Zabala/Macaulay Library (ML461388021)

# General Atlasing Tips

- Be on the lookout in early spring for:
  - Courtship, carrying nesting material, and nest building
- Be aware of each species' distribution in NY and preferred habitat
  - See the distribution on the [Atlas website](#)
  - Get habitat information from [All About Birds](#) or [Audubon](#)
- Learn their songs and calls, including juveniles
  - The [Merlin](#) and [Audubon](#) apps are free
  - Also reference [Macaulay Library](#) and [Xeno-canto](#)
- Be familiar with their courtship behaviors
  - See [All About Birds](#), [Birds by Bent](#), and [Birds of the World](#)
  - Stokes behavior guides and Peterson's nest guide