

# An Introduction to Wildlife Inventorying and Monitoring



**B**efore you begin to inventory or monitor wildlife, you should familiarize yourself with identification features of those species of interest. For example, if you plan to conduct a frog calling survey, you must first learn the dozen calls of those frogs (and one toad) before listening at a marsh. You will be surprised at how much you already know, especially if you have extensive outdoors experience. Even young children quickly learn some species such as skunks and rabbits, or species groups such as ducks or bats. As you scan the animals listed for a given habitat or ecoregion, make a list (either mental or written) of those species you feel knowledgeable about, and those you may have never seen or heard. For the groups of animals that require a higher degree of skill, or with

which you are unfamiliar, it may be necessary to review field guides and audio tapes or compact disks to gain needed experience before conducting a conclusive survey.

We have tried to keep the complexity of species groups at a manageable level. Instead of recommending a complete inventory of all your land's birdlife, we suggest learning and looking for a subset of those birds in which you are particularly interested. By surveying any species or group of species on a regular basis (e.g. annually) in the same area and using the same technique(s), you will be able to monitor that species' or species group's population(s). This is especially important when assessing the effectiveness of land management on wildlife; by surveying the area prior to and following the land management activity, you can assess its impact on selected wildlife species.

Animals can be identified directly by sight or sound, or indirectly by their tracks, scat or other sign (e.g., tooth marks of beavers on trees). There are many field guides to animals by sight, as well as audio tapes and CD's to bird and frog calls. Fewer guides exist that identify animals by their tracks, scats or other signs. We have provided a list of some of these resources in a later section of this guide. If you still cannot identify an animal or its sign, you should call upon friends, family members or "experts" for assistance. It is important for you to be able to positively identify what you are seeing or hearing as you conduct your inventory or continually monitor one or more species. Rare species, especially endangered and threatened species, may require some documentation before they are reported to a formal program. This may require a photograph, detailed notes, a tape recording, or other evidence of the animal's presence.

Learning how to identify an animal or read its sign is half the fun of the inventorying and monitoring process!



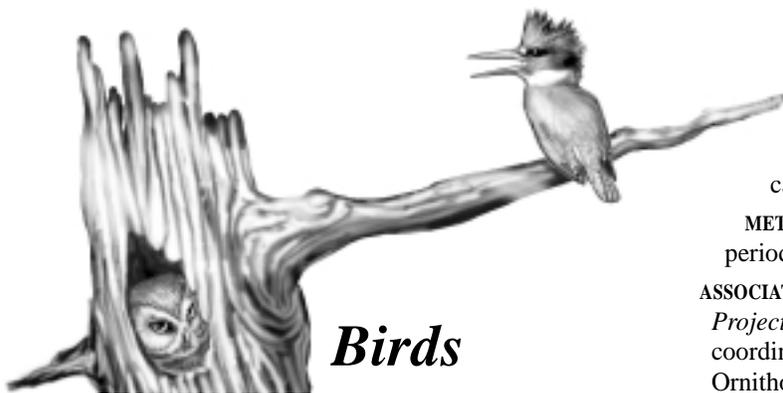


## Wildlife Inventorying and Monitoring Techniques



The following taxa (groups of animals) were identified as being of most interest to landowners, governmental agencies and conservation organizations in Wisconsin. Techniques are separated by vertebrate class, beginning with birds, followed by mammals and herptiles (amphibians and reptiles). Each technique is listed followed by the species groups that it addresses, objectives, a description, skill level, methods, associated programs, season in which to conduct the technique, time of day, duration, and the list of equipment needed.

Please note that under several of the techniques (e.g. woodcock surveys), a large parcel is generally being surveyed. Your parcel may not be large enough to encompass a complete survey. The important thing to remember is that you do not want to count the same bird twice; thus, the necessity of placing sample points such a far distance (1/2 mile) apart. If you are interested in conducting a full survey (sometimes requiring up to 10 miles of paved road or path), you can simply enlarge the area you survey to include some of the roads surrounding your property.



### Birds

**Species Groups:** Upland game birds, exotic or pest bird species, waterfowl or marsh birds, avian nest predators or parasites (birds that lay in their eggs in other birds' nests, such as the brown-headed cowbird), songbirds, non-game birds, colonial-nesting birds (birds that nest in colonies consisting of hundreds or thousands of individuals, such as great blue herons), night birds, raptors, cavity-nesting birds, threatened and endangered birds.

#### BIRD CHECKLIST

**SPECIES GROUPS:** All birds.

**OBJECTIVES:** Provides information on presence/absence (inventory) of bird species.

**DESCRIPTION:** This checklist is simply a list of birds that are seen or heard during a particular time. *The Wisconsin Checklist Project* asks each participant to maintain a weekly checklist. Separate checklists are maintained for each county visited. Our recommendations here differ only in one respect. We suggest a weekly recording period of Monday–Sunday (rather than Sunday–Saturday). This means that only one data sheet would be needed during a weekend visit to your property.

**SKILL LEVEL:** Medium. There may be 100 species breeding on your property, but you do not have to be able to identify the birds by sight and sound beforehand. You can learn as you encounter them.

**METHODS:** Record all birds observed on a periodic basis (e.g., daily, weekly or monthly).

**ASSOCIATED PROGRAMS:** *The Wisconsin Checklist Project* is a statewide bird monitoring project coordinated by the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology. If you are interested in participating in this project, the appropriate contact is listed on p. 37.

**SEASON:** Year-round.

**TIME OF DAY:** Anytime.

**DURATION:** Self-determined.

**EQUIPMENT NEEDED:** Binoculars, bird book, checklist data sheets, pencil.

#### NEST BOX SURVEY

**SPECIES GROUPS:** Cavity-nesting birds.

**OBJECTIVES:** The objectives of a nest box survey can be twofold. One objective may be to determine the appropriateness of a nest box to the target species. For example, testing the effectiveness of two bluebird house styles or two similar bluebird houses placed in different habitats. Another objective may be to monitor the overall health of a population over time.

**DESCRIPTION:** Open each nest box, being careful not to let eggs or chicks tumble from the opened box. Note the date, nesting material if present, and number of eggs if present. Once eggs are present, you want to identify to whom they belong, and the number by observing the adults or by using a field guide to eggs and nests. By checking the



nest box once a week, you can estimate the date on which eggs were laid. Once young are present, you can track the number of eggs that successfully hatched, and the number of young that survive to fledging. *Note: Songbirds have a very poor sense of smell and contrary to popular belief, will not abandon the nest due to your handling the nest, eggs, or chicks.*

**SKILL LEVEL:** Easy. You only need to be familiar with a handful of nest box users.

**METHODS:** Routine checking of nest boxes to determine occupancy rates, parasitism rates and reproductive parameters (i.e., number of eggs, chicks, fledglings)

**ASSOCIATED PROGRAMS:** The Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin coordinates an annual bluebird nest box survey to track recruitment success and birdhouse preferences for eastern bluebirds. To learn more about this project or to contribute data, the appropriate contact is listed on page 37.

**SEASON:** March–July. Bluebirds typically begin scouting for suitable nest boxes in March, although cavity nesters such as barred owls begin nesting as early as February.

**TIME OF DAY:** You may check nest boxes at any time of day. Nest monitoring should only be done during calm, mild and dry weather so as to avoid chilling any eggs or chicks present should adults flush from the box.

**DURATION:** Nest boxes should be monitored once a week during the season in which they are in use. Including data entry, the procedure should take under 5 minutes per box.

**EQUIPMENT NEEDED:** Data form, pencil, clipboard, gloves.

### GROUSE DRUMMING COUNTS

**SPECIES:** Ruffed grouse

**OBJECTIVES:** 1) Spot mapping along trails allows for close monitoring of habitat use by drumming grouse. The objective is to locate all the drumming sites on your property. Drummers and relative numbers of grouse using your land can be determined from this procedure.

2) Roadside surveys of drumming grouse provide an index to the grouse population. Since this method is commonly used by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the grouse population index in your area may be compared to others throughout the state.



**DESCRIPTION:** 1) Spot mapping. Spot mapping of ruffed grouse is a most rewarding experience.

Drumming sites can be located by searching the wooded areas of your property at any time of year when there is no snow cover to obscure a site, or by walking in on a drumming male. The best time to spot map is from mid-April till late May, during the peak of drumming activity and before “leaf out” in the woods. Look for clues to grouse activity, including bare spots adjacent to logs created by the waving action of the grouse’s wings, worn areas on logs, and accumulations of ruffed grouse droppings. Drumming logs within 100 m of each other are likely used by the same bird, and constitute an activity center. You can map these sites by pacing (or measuring) from trails. By placing brightly colored flagging around a twig of a nearby shrub, you can check these same logs for use in future years. Drumming logs may be added or may go unused depending on the status of the ruffed grouse population, and their numbers provide a good way to monitor the population.

2) Roadside surveys are easy to conduct. Set out a route to either be driven using a 4-wheeler or dirt bike, traveled on by horseback, or walked along your interior roads and paths. Each stop on a route should be at least a half-mile apart to avoid counting the same bird twice. You can extend your survey to include the boundaries of your land and roads within a mile or two of your property if necessary. If you would like to contribute or compare data with WDNR, each stop should be one mile apart. Stop the car, wait one minute, and then tally the number of drums you hear during the next 4 minutes. Do not perform a drumming count survey if the air temperature is below 25° F, or if it is cloudy and misty, raining or storming. All of these conditions tend to stop or sharply curb drumming activity. Nearby human activity can also disturb birds; if possible on your route, begin your survey at the place where there is most likely to be human activity later in the morning and thereby avoid human interference.

**SKILL LEVEL:** Easy. Requires ability to identify the low “drumming” sound of ruffed grouse.

**METHODS:** 1) Spot mapping of drumming grouse from points on trails.

2) Numbers of drumming grouse tallied for stops along roadside.

**ASSOCIATED PROGRAMS:** The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources conducts annual Ruffed Grouse Drumming Surveys to monitor ruffed grouse

populations. To contribute data to this project, the appropriate contact is listed on page 37.

**SEASON:** Spot mapping may be done at any time of year but is best in spring. Drumming counts should be done in spring (mid April till late May).

**TIME OF DAY:** Spot mapping can be done anytime during the day, but is easiest in the morning if you are using drumming activity to locate sites. Drumming counts are conducted in the early morning (1/2 hour before sunrise until about 1 hour after sunrise).

**DURATION:** Time spent spot mapping ruffed grouse along trails on your property is self-determined and dependent on the size of your property and amount of suitable habitat available. For drumming counts, listen at each stop for 4 minutes. For a 10-mile survey, time spent will be approximately 1.5 hours.

**EQUIPMENT NEEDED:** Data sheet (see Appendix B, page 42), pencil, map, compass.

### WOODCOCK PEENTING SURVEYS

**SPECIES:** Woodcock.

**OBJECTIVES:** By observing woodcock displaying on your property, you gain presence/absence information (inventory). Over time, you can compare relative abundance of woodcock using your land.

**DESCRIPTION:** Listen and look for woodcock as you traverse a pre-determined route on your property. Male woodcock seek mates by producing a nasal "peenting" sound from the ground, followed by an aerial display called a "sky dance" by Aldo Leopold. Woodcock are most likely to display in large open areas. Each stop on your route should be at least a half-mile apart. Listen for 3 minutes at each stop. Record date, weather, numbers of bird seen and/or heard displaying on data form (see Appendix B, page 43).

**SKILL LEVEL:** Easy. You need only be able to identify one bird, the American woodcock, by sight and sound.

**METHODS:** Watch and listen for woodcock displaying.

**ASSOCIATED PROGRAMS:** The United States Fish and Wildlife Service conducts annual Peenting Woodcock Surveys to track population trends. To contribute to this project, the appropriate contact is listed on page 37.

**SEASON:** March 15–May 15

**TIME OF DAY:** One-half hour before sunset to shortly after dusk.

**DURATION:** A route with 10 stops should take about one hour to complete.

**EQUIPMENT NEEDED:** Clipboard, data form (see page 43), pencil, binoculars.

### GAME BIRD BROOD SURVEYS

**SPECIES GROUP:** Upland game birds.

**OBJECTIVES:** Game bird brood surveys provide information on reproductive success and an index to trends in summer populations of selected game birds.

**DESCRIPTION:** Broods are counted and reported for ruffed grouse, turkey, pheasant and gray (Hungarian) partridge, in the course of time spent in the field during daylight hours. (You may also keep track of sharp-tailed grouse or greater prairie chickens, though these birds have very limited distributions in Wisconsin and so most people will not have any of these birds to record.)

You need use only one data sheet for each season that you keep track of game bird broods on your property. For each observation, indicate date, and record number of adults + number of young under the appropriate bird species. If you decide to share your information with the Wisconsin Department of Natural

Resources, please indicate how many hours or the percentage (based on 400 hours) of time during the 10-week survey period that you spent out in the field.

**SKILL LEVEL:** Easy. You need only identify four of Wisconsin's game birds; ring-necked pheasant, gray (Hungarian) partridge, ruffed grouse, and wild turkey.

**METHODS:** Make incidental observations of birds while on your property attending to land management activities or simply walking about.

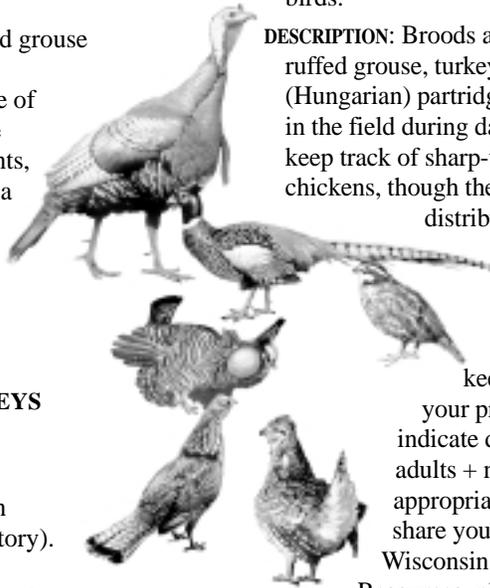
**ASSOCIATED PROGRAMS:** Personnel from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources conduct 10-week brood surveys to track trends in Wisconsin game bird populations. To participate in this program, the appropriate contact is listed on page 37.

**SEASON:** June 15–August 15

**TIME OF DAY:** Anytime from dawn to dusk.

**DURATION:** The amount of time spent observing game bird broods is self-determined. Observations are made incidentally, while performing chores, hiking, or attending to land management practices.

**EQUIPMENT NEEDED:** Data form (see page 44), clipboard, pencil.



### PROJECT FEEDERWATCH

**SPECIES GROUPS:** Exotic or pest bird species, songbirds and non-game birds.

**OBJECTIVES:** Your bird feeder data can be used for many purposes, including:

- a) documenting the presence or absence of feeder species at a specific locale.
- b) tracking an increase or decline in winter bird populations over time.
- c) tracking the expansion or contraction in winter ranges of species over time.
- d) documenting the kinds of habitats and foods that attract birds.
- e) documenting rare or unusual birds.
- f) determining seed preferences of various bird species
- g) documenting how fast and how far an infectious disease can spread through a wild bird population.

**DESCRIPTION:** Observe birds at your feeder. Count the highest number of individuals of each species in view at one time and record this on your Tally Sheet. Repeat this as often as you wish while observing birds. Record the predominant weather over the 2-day count period including the daylight temperature extremes, type of precipitation (if any), and snow cover depth and patchiness.

**SKILL LEVEL:** Medium. You may have up to 50 species of birds that come to your feeders, but you need not be able to identify all beforehand. You may learn as you encounter them.

**METHODS:** Observe and count birds at your feeders.

**ASSOCIATED PROGRAMS:** Project FeederWatch was started in 1987, and is a joint research and education project of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, the National Audubon Society, Bird Studies Canada, and the Canadian Nature Federation. Project FeederWatch monitors birds that visit feeders in winter. Data collected in this project are used to document and explain population changes of bird species that visit feeders. To learn more make the appropriate contact listed on page 37.

**SEASON:** November through April.

**TIME OF DAY:** You may count at any time of day that you wish, but it pays to be consistent with your timing for comparison purposes.

**DURATION:** Observe birds on two consecutive days within each two-week period. You may count for as little or as long as you like. Record the amount of time you spent watching birds on your data sheet (see Appendix B, page 45).

**EQUIPMENT NEEDED:** Data sheet (see Appendix B, page 45), pencil, outdoor thermometer, and binoculars.

### TURKEY POULT SURVEYS

**SPECIES:** Wild turkey.

**OBJECTIVES:** This technique will provide you with presence/absence (inventory), and has the potential for providing an index to turkey recruitment (addition of youngsters to the adult population) on your land. You may also be able to track brood survival if you see the same brood a number of times during the course of the summer.

**DESCRIPTION:** Observe turkeys while out on your property. Use a separate data sheet for each month (June, July and August) in which you observe turkeys. Record date, weather, number of adults and their sex, and number of juveniles. For each brood, indicate whether poults were  $\frac{1}{4}$  grown (e.g., size of grouse),  $\frac{1}{2}$  grown (e.g., size of barnyard fowl) or full grown. If you decide to contribute information to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, please provide them with your name, address, and county in which observations were made.

**SKILL LEVEL:** Easy. You need only identify one type of game bird, the wild turkey.

**METHODS:** Observe wild turkeys on your land.

**ASSOCIATED PROGRAMS:** The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources gathers this information on an annual basis from 21 counties in the state to track wild turkey recruitment. To contribute to this program, the appropriate contact is listed on page 37.

**SEASON:** June 1–September 1

**TIME OF DAY:** You can observe turkeys anytime during the day.

**DURATION:** You can spend as little or as much time as you wish observing turkeys.

**EQUIPMENT NEEDED:** Data form (see Appendix B, page 46) and pencil.





### NIGHT BIRD SURVEY

**SPECIES GROUP:** Night birds including owls, rails, woodcock, and others.

**OBJECTIVES:** Provides information on presence/absence (inventory).

**DESCRIPTION:** Observers should choose one survey station from which to play the tape of calling birds. The tape includes 30 seconds of a bird species' call followed by 30 seconds of silence. Actual numbers of each bird species responding should be recorded on the data sheet. The tape should be played twice. A total of 30 minutes should be spent at your site.

**SKILL LEVEL:** Easy. There are only about a dozen species that may be heard (and sometimes seen) on a night birds survey.

**METHODS:** Record all birds detected from a chosen point while playing a callback tape.

**ASSOCIATED PROGRAMS:** The Marsh Monitoring Program is coordinated by the Long Point Bird Observatory. To contribute data to this project, the appropriate contact is listed on page 37.

**SEASON:** June is the best month for conducting a night bird survey. However, you may get some response at any time of year.

**TIME OF DAY:** Beginning at dusk.

**DURATION:** 30 minutes per site.

**EQUIPMENT NEEDED:** Binoculars, bird book, data sheets (see page 47), pencil, callback tape, and tape player.

### BREEDING BIRD SURVEY

**SPECIES GROUPS:** Upland game birds, exotic or pest birds, major avian nest predators or parasites, songbirds, non-game birds, colonial-nesting birds, night birds, raptors, cavity-nesting birds, and threatened and endangered birds.

**OBJECTIVES:** Provides an index to the abundance of breeding birds on your site and presence/absence (inventory).

**DESCRIPTION:** Data sheets allow for the use of five survey stations. Surveys should begin no earlier than a half-hour before dawn and run no later than 9:30 a.m. These are "point counts," whereby the observer records all birds heard or seen from a point in 3 minutes. Each survey station should be located at 1/2 mile intervals. The total number of each species detected should be entered on the data sheet for each survey point. The number of each species of bird seen and heard at each site are then added together to get an index to abundance.

**SKILL LEVEL:** High. There may be 100 species breeding on your site. Identifying them by sight and song is not an easy process.

**METHODS:** Record all birds heard or seen from a chosen point during a 3 minute period.

**ASSOCIATED PROGRAMS:** North American Breeding Bird Survey was initiated in 1966 to monitor breeding bird populations across North America. To learn more or to contribute data to this project, please make the appropriate contact listed on page 37.

**SEASON:** June.

**TIME OF DAY:** Dawn to 9:30 a.m.

**DURATION:** Five minutes per survey point.

**EQUIPMENT NEEDED:** Binoculars, bird book, data sheets (see Appendix B, page 48-51), pencil.



## BREEDING BIRD ATLAS

**SPECIES GROUPS:** Upland game birds, exotic or pest bird species, waterfowl, marsh birds, major avian nest predators and parasites, songbirds, non-game birds, colonial-nesting birds, night birds, raptors, cavity-nesting birds, and threatened and endangered birds.

**OBJECTIVES:** 1) Record breeding bird diversity and abundance.

2) Document breeding bird habitat use, thereby identifying areas important to nesting birds.

3) Learn about bird breeding phenology.

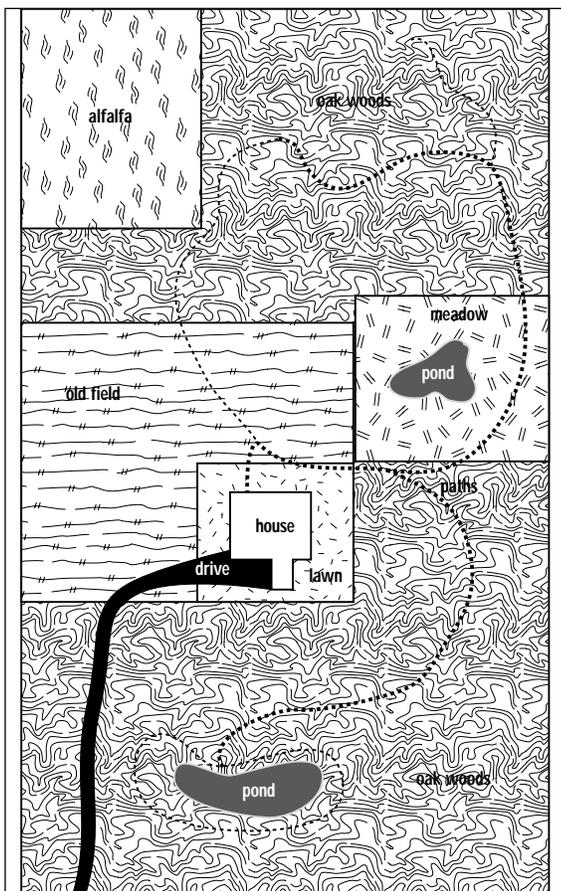


Figure 2. Landowner's map

**DESCRIPTION:** A breeding bird atlas is an inventory of nesting birds. As the name "Atlas" implies, these nesting birds are usually mapped on a certain scale. At the finest scale, for example, you may put an "X" on your property map where a red-tailed hawk nest was found. At a coarser level, the Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas would determine which 10-square-mile block the nest was found in, and document that red-tailed hawk breeding was confirmed there. It's up to you to use the scale that

best suits your objectives. As a compromise between the above examples, you may want to divide your property into easily recognized sections, recording the breeding birds identified in each area (Figure 2). Creating separate sections is only necessary if you want to discern breeding bird differences among areas of your property. Compartmentalizing is especially helpful on large properties (>200 acres) or where you have distinct habitat types (e.g., an aspen clearcut, an old-growth hemlock stand and a bog).

Two field cards are needed for each section: one that stays at home as a permanent record of your observations, and one that goes in the field with you (Fig. 3). The field card contains information about the bird species seen on your property:

- Habitat (HA).
- Abundance (AB).
- Date of highest evidence of breeding
- Breeding evidence category (O = observed, PO = possible, PR = probable, and CO = confirmed).

You may choose not to include all the data on your card. The level of detail is up to you, but keep in mind what your objective is. If you only want a breeding bird species list, then perhaps habitat, abundance and type of breeding behavior within a category are not important to record. On the other hand, to make management decisions, certainly you would want to record habitat and probably have separate sections (field cards) for major habitat types.

**HABITAT:** For a given species, a habitat code can be recorded that refers to the habitat in which the highest evidence of breeding was observed. We have adopted the Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas habitat classification scheme, which allows you to determine the level of precision (Figure 4).

**ABUNDANCE:** An estimate of the total number of breeding pairs for a section can be made. Following the protocols of the WBBA, estimate these to the nearest power of ten (Table 1).

To do this, estimate the nesting density of a particular species and multiply by the amount of suitable habitat available. For example, if you estimate 10 pairs of downy woodpeckers in a sampled habitat, and you searched through 50% of the habitat on your property, then multiply  $10 \times 2 = 20$  pairs of downy woodpeckers, which would be abundance code 3.

**Breeding Bird Atlas Field Card**  
Page 1 of 4

Hab	Abu	SPECIES	Date of Highest Evidence	O	PO	PR	CO	Hab	Abu	SPECIES	Date of Highest Evidence	O	PO	PR	CO
7NAm	2	Common Loon	6/30				74			Common merganser					
7LMc	3	Pied Billed Grebe	7/14	0			7B			Red-breasted merganser					
7LMc	5	Red-necked Grebe	7/21	0			7E			Ruddy duck					
		Double-crested Cormorant								Turkey vulture					
		American bittern								Osprey					
		Least Bittern								Bald eagle					
		Great Blue Heron								Nest - Heron					

Figure 3. Examples of breeding bird atlas field card.

Figure 4 : Habitat Classification

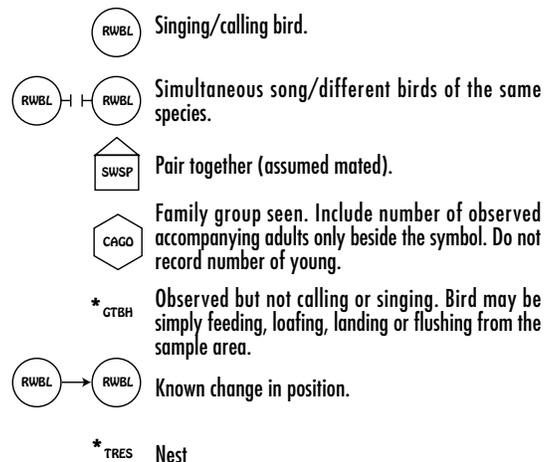
A "nested" scheme works well to classify habitat at the level of precision that you feel most comfortable with. Three of the four precision levels are shown here. See Appendix B for the complete listing.

Level	Code	Habitat
1	F	FOREST (>50% tree cover)
2	FU	Upland vs. Lowland (FL)
3	FUH	Hardwood vs. Conifer (e.g., FUC) vs. Mixed (e.g., FUM)
1	S	SHRUB/SAVANNA (<50% tree cover, but with >25% total cover of woody vegetation—shrubs, saplings, trees)
2	SU	Upland vs. Lowland (SL)
3	SUH	Hardwood vs. Conifer (e.g., SUC) vs. Mixed (e.g., SUM)
1	O	OPEN (<25% cover of woody vegetation)
2	OU	Upland vs. Lowland (OL)
3	OUA	Agriculture vs. Native (e.g., OUN) vs. Uncropped (e.g., OUU) vs. Water/wetland (e.g., OLW)
1	U	URBAN/RURAL (Cities, villages, farmsteads and rural homes)
2	UU	Urban vs. Small town (US) vs. Rural (UR)
3	UUC	Commercial vs. Residential (e.g., UUR) vs. Open space (e.g., UUU) vs. Miscellaneous (e.g., UUX)

Table 1. Codes and associated estimates of breeding pairs in survey section.

Abundance Codes	
Code	Breeding Pairs of Species in a Survey Section
1	1
2	2-10
3	11-100
4	101-1000
5	>1000

Figure 5. Mapping symbols for Wetland Bird Survey data form (Page 57).





**DATE OF HIGHEST EVIDENCE:** This column on your field card is reserved for the date on which you observed a bird species and recorded its behavior under one of the four breeding evidence categories (O, PO, PR or CO; see descriptions below). If you observe a breeding behavior that provides higher evidence that the bird is breeding on your property, then erase and replace the new date and new code on your field card. For example, you see a downy woodpecker feeding on June 3rd, so you record an “O” under the Observed (O) column. Later, on June 7th, you see a downy woodpecker carrying food into a tree cavity, so you erase your previous observation and replace it with 6/7, and write “FY” (Feeding Young) under the Confirmed (CO) category. You should also upgrade your Habitat (HA) category.

**EVIDENCE OF BREEDING:** There are 4 main levels of breeding evidence:

- Observed (O)
- Possible (PO)
- Probable (PR)
- Confirmed (CO)

The goal is to obtain confirmed evidence of breeding. Under the “Probable” and “Confirmed” levels, there are codes used to identify what was observed that indicated breeding. There are 8 codes under the “Probable” level and 11 codes under the “Confirmed” level. Examples of “Probable” evidence are as follows:

- **M** = Multiple (7 or more) singing or territorial birds in a block on one day.
- **S** = Singing male present at same location on at least two occasions 7 or more days apart.
- **P** = Pair observed in suitable nesting habitat during the breeding season.

Examples of confirmed evidence are as follows:

- **CN** = seeing a bird Carrying Nesting material.
- **NB** = Nest Building seen at the actual nest site.
- **NE** = Nest with Eggs or eggshells on ground.

**SKILL LEVEL:** Medium. There may be 100 species breeding on your property, but you don’t have to be able to identify the birds by sight and sound beforehand. You can learn as you encounter them.

**METHODS:** Observations of breeding bird behaviors

**ASSOCIATED PROGRAMS:** The Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas is a formal process that terminated in the fall of 2000, with a book planned for publication in 2002. When the book becomes available, this will be an excellent reference for your site. You can still use this method to inventory and monitor breeding birds on your site, and the Atlas will accept any data that you

collect during 2000. Please see p. 37 to make the appropriate contact. The North American Breeding Bird Survey has been conducted on a nationwide basis for over 30 years. To learn more about this project please make the appropriate contact listed on p. 37. The Marsh Monitoring Program is coordinated through the Long Point Bird Observatory. To learn more or to contribute data to this project, please make the appropriate contact listed on p. 37. The Wisconsin Bird Checklist Project is administered through the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology. To learn more or to contribute data to this project, please make the appropriate contact listed on p. 37.

**SEASON:** Primarily June–July, but also January–September.

**TIME OF DAY:** Mainly 5–10 a.m.

**DURATION:** Variable; each visit self-determined. Good coverage for a Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas block of 10 square miles (6400 acres) can be attained at 25 hours spread over 4–5 visits.

**EQUIPMENT NEEDED:** Data sheets (2 field cards) see page 52–55, pencil, binoculars, Atlasing Handbook.

**EQUIPMENT RECOMMENDED:** Field guide, map of property, field notebook.

### WETLAND BIRDS SURVEY

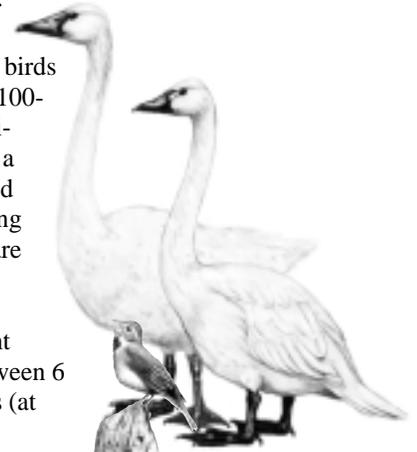
*(For more details, see the Marsh Monitoring Program Training Kit and Instructions. Note that the Marsh Monitoring Program includes amphibian monitoring in addition to the wetland birds. We recommend that protocols from the Wisconsin Frog and Toad Survey be used for amphibian monitoring—see p. 34)*

**SPECIES GROUPS:** Waterfowl, marsh birds, songbirds, non-game birds, and night birds.

**SKILL LEVEL:** Medium. About 40 bird species to learn by sight and sound.

**OBJECTIVES:** A wetland birds survey will provide you with presence/absence information, and an index to abundance. Performed on a regular basis (e.g. annually), it will provide you with a measure of relative abundance over time.

**DESCRIPTION:** The wetland birds survey is a point count of the birds detected in a marsh within a 100-meter-radius (110-yard) semi-circle. Birds heard or seen in a 10-minute period are recorded on a map. Those birds foraging or flying through the marsh are simply listed, rather than mapped (See data sheet in Appendix B, p. 56). The point counts should take place between 6 p.m. and sunset. Two surveys (at





least 10 days apart) should be conducted at each chosen marsh point each year between May 20 and July 5. Surveys should not be done during inclement weather (i.e., <math>60^{\circ}\text{F}</math> or <math>16^{\circ}\text{C}</math>, fog, rain, wind). It will help you to judge the 100 meter distance if you place a marker at this observation limit.

Start the 10-minute observation period by playing the 5-minute broadcast tape of 6 marsh birds (Virginia Rail, Sora, Least Bittern, Pied-billed Grebe, and a combination of Common Moorhen/American Coot). The recorder should be played so that it can be heard even at the outermost limit of your 100-meter, semi-circle observation area. You will record birds detected during the tape and in the 5 minutes after it is done.

There are three categories of birds that may be recorded (listed in order of most to least important): mapped observations, aerial foragers, and outside/flythrus. Only record an individual bird in *one* of the three categories—always choosing the highest priority level. The definitions of these categories are as follows:

*Priority 1. Mapped Observations* are all birds seen or heard actually residing within the boundaries of the 100-meter (110-yard) sample area. These birds make actual, physical contact with the sample area. Birds *in flight* are to be *excluded*.

*Priority 2. Aerial Foragers* are birds seen *actively foraging* in the air within the sample area, no higher than 100 meters (110 yards), and not otherwise using the sample area.

*Priority 3. Outside/Flythrus* are additional species of marsh birds which are seen *during* the 10-minute point count *outside* of the sample area or *flying through* the sample area without landing.

Use a separate data sheet for each visit. If there are species heard or seen that you could not identify, make notes in the Remarks section (Don't map or tally these). Also, record in the Remarks section any birds observed between stations (not during the official, 10-minute point count).

**PRIORITY 1. MAPPED OBSERVATIONS:** All birds observed or heard within the sample area, other than those which are simply flying through or foraging in the air, are mapped using four-letter species codes and symbols in the appropriate location on the Data Form. *Young of the year are not to be counted*, even if independent. We are interested in adults only!

The only two species for which you will not record birds of both sexes are Red-winged Blackbird and Yellow-headed Blackbird. Record male blackbirds

of both species only! The mapping symbols to be used on the Data Form are illustrated in Figure 5.

**PRIORITY 2. AERIAL FORAGERS:** Aerial foragers are only those birds that are actively foraging in the airspace above the 100-meter radius sample area, at an altitude of less than 100 meters. Record aerial foragers using the appropriate species codes in the box labeled Aerial Foragers on the Data Form. Because there are often many aerial foragers (swallows in particular), it helps if you tally them separately, and then produce a summary count at the end of the survey. Examples of aerial foragers include swallows, terns, kingfishers, ospreys, bald eagles and northern harriers.

**PRIORITY 3. OUTSIDE/FLYTHRUS:** Although emphasis should be on Mapped Observations and Aerial Foragers, there will be additional species of marsh birds which do not belong in either of the above two categories. These birds will be seen merely flying through the sample area (without foraging or landing) or be detected outside of the 100-meter sample area. Record these observations using the appropriate species code in the box labeled Outside/Flythrus on the Data Form. These are only birds detected during the 10-minute point count.

**METHODS:** Semi-circular point count of birds seen and heard.

**ASSOCIATED PROGRAMS:** The Marsh Monitoring Program is a cooperative effort of Long Point Bird Observatory, Environment Canada and U. S. Great Lakes Protection Fund. This program's focus is on marsh conservation in the Great Lakes region. To learn more or to contribute data to this project, please make the appropriate contact listed on page 37. Other associated programs include the North American Breeding Bird Survey and the Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas. To learn more about these efforts or to contribute data to these projects, please make the appropriate contact listed on page 37.

**SEASON:** May–July.

**TIME OF DAY:** Evenings.

**LENGTH OF SURVEY:** 10 minutes.

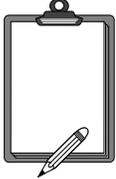
**EQUIPMENT NEEDED:** Pencil, watch/timer (preferably with an alarm), clip board, data sheets, binoculars, portable tape recorder, broadcast tape, mosquito repellent.

**Optional Equipment:** Compass, thermometer, spare batteries, spare pencil, Marsh Monitoring Program Training Kit and Instructions.

## Mammals



**Species groups:** Game mammals, predators, furbearers, bats, threatened and endangered mammals.



### MAMMAL CHECKLIST

**SPECIES GROUPS:** All mammals.

**OBJECTIVES:** This technique provides you with a snapshot in time of the mammals using your property (presence/absence). Conducted over the course of a calendar year, it will provide you with a more complete inventory of the mammals that use your property.

**DESCRIPTION:** This checklist is simply a list of mammals and mammal sign that are seen or heard during a particular time. The usual time period is weekly, but you may also keep a daily, monthly, or yearly list. Separate checklists should be maintained for each county in which you are collecting data. In addition, you may be interested in making note of any rare mammal observations that you make on your property. A separate data sheet (see Appendix B, page 57) is included for this. You need use only one data sheet for each year that you keep track of rare mammal observations on your property. For each observation, indicate date, number of animals observed, and habitat type in which they were observed. There is a separate column for comments, in case you are lucky enough to observe an interesting behavior such as a predator making a kill.

**SKILL LEVEL:** Medium. There are over 60 species of mammals living in Wisconsin, but you don't need to be able to identify them by sign, sight or sound beforehand. You can learn as you encounter them.

**METHODS:** Record all mammals and mammal sign (scats, clawmarks, rubs, tracks, etc.) observed on a periodic basis (weekly, monthly, yearly).

**ASSOCIATED PROGRAMS:** Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources wildlife managers and technicians keep track of rare mammals throughout the course of the year while performing routine work. This informal survey provides the only population index for badgers, white-tailed jackrabbits and other non-hunted mammals for the state and is an important supplement to other surveys for bobcat, fisher, pine marten, otter, red fox, gray fox, coyote and black bear. To contribute information to this project, the appropriate contact is listed on page 37. (If you would like to share your information with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, please also indicate the number of road kills observed for each selected species under the "comments" column.)

**SEASON:** Mammals and mammal sign can be observed on your property any time during the year. You will achieve a more complete inventory if you repeat your checklist usage at least once each month throughout a calendar year.

**TIME OF DAY:** A checklist of mammals can be made at any time of day.

**DURATION:** You can spend as much or as little time as you like looking for mammals and mammal sign. However, you will get the most complete picture of the mammal community living on your property if you visit all parts of the property.

**EQUIPMENT NEEDED:** Data form (see page 57), pencil, clipboard, mammal field guide, binoculars, plastic bags (to collect fur, scat, etc.), ruler (for measuring tracks), measuring tape (to measure distance between tracks).

### PREDATOR SCENT POST SURVEY

**SPECIES GROUP:** Predators and furbearers including raccoon, striped skunk, coyote, timber wolf, bobcat, fisher, pine marten, mink, red fox, gray fox and black bear.

**OBJECTIVES:** This technique will yield presence/absence (inventory) results for various predators. Because of the great mobility of most of these animals, it is unlikely that most private properties are large enough to enable you to track the abundance of predators in the area. However, by conducting a predator scent post survey on a regular basis (e.g.





annually), you will be able to track relative abundance of these animals using your property.

**DESCRIPTION:** A scent-post survey consists of 10 scent post stations established along an unpaved road or trail. Scent post stations are set up on day 1, and checked on day 2. Predators that are attracted to the scented disc in the center of the station leave behind tracks that can be identified using a mammal track field guide. Scent post surveys should not be conducted on rainy or snowy evenings, when there is a high probability that tracks will be obliterated by the weather.

**SKILL LEVEL:** Medium. There are about a dozen predators (listed above) in Wisconsin that may be attracted to a scent post. You will need to be able to identify tracks that are left by these animals.

**METHODS:** Establish a scent post line consisting of 10 stations (at least 300 m apart) along the sides of an unpaved road or trail on your property. It is most effective if you alternate the side of the road or trail on which you establish each station to account for different wind directions. Each station is 1 meter in diameter (a hula hoop works nicely as a guide). All rocks and vegetation should be removed from the station, and sifted soil should be distributed evenly over the station. A plaster scented disc available through USDA Pocatello Supply Depot (238 E. Dillon, Pocatello, Idaho 8320, (208) 236-6920) is placed at the center of each station. The disc may be elevated on a pebble to maximize scent dispersal. It is advisable to wear rubber gloves when handling the disc to minimize any human scent. You may use other forms of bait to attract predators to your station, such as rotten eggs or meat if you do not wish to purchase the discs from Pocatello. The following day, check each scent post station for the tracks of predators. One data sheet (see page 58) should be used for each scent post line that you establish.

**ASSOCIATED PROGRAMS:** Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources wildlife managers and technicians keep track of rare mammals throughout the course of the year while performing routine work. This informal survey provides the only population index for badgers, white-tailed jackrabbits and other non-hunted mammals for the state and is an important supplement to other surveys for bobcat, fisher, pine marten, otter, red fox, gray fox, coyote and black bear. To contribute information to this project, the appropriate contact is listed on page 37. (If you would like to share your information with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, please also indicate the number of road

kills observed for each selected species under the "comments" column.)

**SEASON:** You are most likely to have visitation when juvenile predators are dispersing from their natal areas. In Wisconsin, September is a good time to conduct scent post surveys. However, many of the tracks at this time will belong to animals that are dispersing and just passing through your property.

**TIME OF DAY:** You can set up the scent station line anytime during daylight hours, and check the line the following day.

**DURATION:** It takes about 2 hours to set up the scent post line, and will take about 2 hours to check it the following day.

**EQUIPMENT NEEDED:** Rake, shovel, sifter (wood frame with 1/8–1/4 inch mesh hardware cloth), hula hoop or 1 meter-diameter hoop of rubber hose or stiff wire, old broom, scent discs or other bait, rubber or canvas gloves, data sheet (see page 58), pencil, clipboard, field guide to mammal tracks.



### SNOW TRACK SURVEY

**SPECIES GROUPS:** Game mammals, predators, furbearers, rabbits, squirrels, and threatened and endangered mammals.

**OBJECTIVES:** This survey will provide you with presence/absence (inventory) information for various mammals that remain active during Wisconsin's winters. By recording the numbers of sets of tracks that you find during your survey and conducting the survey on a regular basis (e.g. annually), you will be able to monitor the relative abundance of selected species over time.

**DESCRIPTION:** To count mammal tracks on your land, you will need to drive, snowshoe, or cross-country ski down all of your unpaved roads and well-traveled foot paths. Because some animals such as predators have large home ranges, it may take several surveys to feel confident that you have inventoried all the winter-active mammals found on your property. If you drive your route, use two observers and keep your speed under 10 miles per hour or you will probably miss many tracks. Get out of your vehicle to identify tracks. It's best to measure tracks as they sometimes appear much larger or smaller than they are. Surveys should be run 1–3 days after a fresh snowfall. This will allow time for new tracks to accumulate, and will

prevent traffic from obliterating tracks. *Do not conduct surveys when snow depth is >12 inches or when night temperatures fall much below 0° F.* To record as many species as possible, it is recommended that you conduct at least 3 surveys in a season spanning from November until March.

**SKILL LEVEL:** Medium–High. There are about 2 dozen mammals that may leave tracks in newly fallen snow in Wisconsin. It may be difficult to differentiate between a coyote and a dog, or a bobcat and a domestic cat, but some excellent tracking guides are available and are listed under Resources.

**METHODS:** Establish a track survey using existing roads or trails on your property. Observe tracks left by mammals within 48 hours after a snowfall of 0.5–2.0 inches.

**ASSOCIATED PROGRAMS:** Wisconsin's Volunteer Carnivore Tracking Program was established in 1995 to: 1) determine the number, distribution, breeding status, and territories of wolves in Wisconsin, 2) develop a sense of the abundance and distribution of other medium-sized and large carnivores in the state, and 3) determine the existence of rare carnivores such as Canada lynx, cougar and possibly wolverine. To participate in this program, make the appropriate contact listed on page 37.

**SEASON:** November–March. Note: Predator activity will be greatly reduced up to two weeks after the close of the gun deer season. It is best to avoid conducting track count survey during this period.

**TIME OF DAY:** Surveys should be run during daylight hours when headlights are not necessary for driving.

**DURATION:** It may take about a half-day to conduct a track survey along 10 miles of road or trail.

**EQUIPMENT NEEDED:** Tracking guide (see Halfpenny and Murie under Resources), detailed map of survey area, data sheet (see page 59), clipboard, pencil, 6-inch ruler, tape measure, and 35 mm camera (to aid in track identification and for the purposes of sending to expert for input).



## SUMMER DEER SURVEY

**SPECIES:** White-tailed deer.

**OBJECTIVES:** The objectives of a summer deer survey are two-fold. This survey will tell you whether or not white-tailed deer are present (inventory), and will provide an estimate of annual recruitment.

**DESCRIPTION:** This is an informal survey, similar to one that state natural resources agency personnel use to track deer recruitment annually. Simply record the number of deer observed while out doing other work during the months of July, August and September. It is important that every deer seen is recorded. Use a separate data sheet for each month (July, August and September) in which you observe deer (see Appendix B, page 60). For each observation, indicate date, number of deer of unknown sex/age, number of bucks, number of lone does, number of lone fawns, number of doe + 1 fawn groups, number of doe + 2 fawns groups, and number of doe + 3 fawns groups. (If you decide to contribute information to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, please provide them with your name, and the deer management unit(s) in which your observations were made.)

**SKILL LEVEL:** Easy. You need only be able to identify white-tailed deer, and separate fawns and adults.

**METHODS:** Record the number of deer observed while out on your land.

**ASSOCIATED PROGRAMS:** Team Deer monitoring is a program of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Bureau of Wildlife Management. Each year, wildlife managers and technicians make summer observations of deer which are used in tracking deer abundance and recruitment throughout the state. To submit information to this program, the appropriate contact is listed on page 37.

**SEASON:** July–September

**TIME OF DAY:** Record only those deer observed during the period of the day when headlights are not used in driving.

**DURATION:** There is no set time limit. Simply record the number of deer observed while out on your land.

**EQUIPMENT NEEDED:** Data form (Appendix B, page 60), pencil.



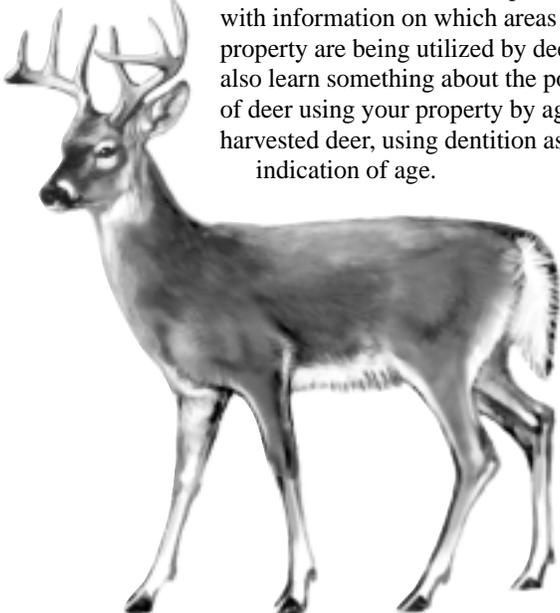
## DEER HARVEST MONITORING

**SPECIES GROUP:** White-tailed deer.

**OBJECTIVES:** This method will provide you with an estimate or a complete count of the deer harvested on your property. Over time, it can track the abundance of deer on your property. This is very useful information to include in a land management plan, especially if you have noted impacts to the native plant community (tree seedlings and wildflowers) on your property, or are suffering deer damage to tree plantings or crops.

**DESCRIPTION:** Every deer shot during the gun or bow season is registered. Complete a data form (see Appendix B, page 61) with the hunter present. Type of deer killed should include (1) forked buck, (2) spike buck, and (3) antlerless deer (adult doe, sub-legal buck, buck fawn and doe fawn). You need also find out from the hunter how many hours she/he spent hunting to harvest the deer. To monitor the population trend of deer on your property, you will want to compare the number of hours hunted per deer harvested between years, and the number of deer seen while hunting. This is a better measure of abundance than the actual number of deer harvested because it takes into account the amount of hunting pressure on your land in any given year.

**OPTIONAL:** You can find out more specific information about the deer using your property and improve long-term hunting success by collecting additional information from hunters. For long-term records, note type of season and regulations on data forms to be archived (i. e. were permits numerous or scarce, t-zone, etc.). Ask them to place a dot on a map of your property to mark where they harvested their deer. This will provide you with information on which areas of your property are being utilized by deer. You can also learn something about the population of deer using your property by aging harvested deer, using dentition as an indication of age.



**SKILL LEVEL:** Easy. White-tailed deer identification is the only necessary skill.

**METHODS:** Record information on every deer shot on your property during the gun or bow season.

**ASSOCIATED PROGRAMS:** None.

**SEASON:** September–December

**TIME OF DAY:** Sunrise to sundown.

**DURATION:** Registering each deer should take no more than 10 minutes.

**EQUIPMENT NEEDED:** Data form (see Appendix B, page 61), clipboard, and pencil.

Optional Equipment: Adhesive backed dots, pins, a map of your property, rubber gloves, and knife for cutting mouth of deer open to view teeth.

## BAT HOUSE MONITORING

**SPECIES:** Bats.

**OBJECTIVES:** This survey will yield presence/absence (inventory) information.



**DESCRIPTION:** You can observe roosting bats by shining a bright light into the open bottom of the bat house. You may need to have someone shine a bright light up into the house while you look with binoculars if your house is mounted quite high up. Once a bat colony is established, individuals are quite tolerant of people looking at them as long as you do not touch the mounting poles or houses, and do not shine bright lights for longer than 10 seconds. If there are a large number of bats inhabiting the house, you will get your best count by observing the animals emerging from the house at dusk. To find out if your house is being used by a nursery colony, briefly look in the house after the adults emerge. Young are left behind over a roughly 3-week period until they have learned to fly, normally in July in Wisconsin.

**SKILL LEVEL:** Easy. There are eight species of bats living in Wisconsin, but only three species are likely to inhabit bat houses.

**METHODS:** Observe bats using houses that you have erected for them to provide critical habitat. For bat house designs or sources, see “The Bathouse Builder’s Handbook” under Resources on page 36, or contact the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Bureau of Endangered Resources at (608) 266-7012.

**ASSOCIATED PROGRAMS:** The North American Bat House Research Project is run by Bat Conservation International. This program was started to encourage experimentation in bat houses and to

contribute to our knowledge of bat roosting behavior. To join this effort, the appropriate contact is listed on page 37.

**SEASON:** April to October

**TIME OF DAY:** To monitor small numbers of bats occupying a house, you can check the house any time during the day. If large numbers of bats are occupying the house, the best way to count the bats is as they emerge from the house at dusk.

**DURATION:** It should take less than a minute to observe small numbers of bats residing in a house. It may take up to 15 minutes to count bats emerging from a house at dusk. It is suggested that you monitor your house on a monthly basis.

**EQUIPMENT NEEDED:** Data form (see Appendix B, page 62), pencil, clipboard, and flashlight.

**Optional Equipment:** Camera (in case you cannot identify bats occupying your house, and would like to obtain a positive identification from an expert) and binoculars (if your house is mounted high up).



### MEDIUM MAMMALS

**SPECIES GROUPS:** rabbits, predators, furbearers, porcupines

**OBJECTIVES:** Provides information on presence/absence (inventory) of medium-sized mammals.

**DESCRIPTION:** We have not included a formal protocol for inventorying or monitoring medium-sized mammals. The cost to purchase enough traps to construct a trapping grid is prohibitive. Instead, we encourage you to use any of the previous techniques which use sign as evidence for the presence of these animals, such as the predator scent post survey. You may also scout your land for scats (droppings) of these animals. There are several field guides to help you with such identification, including the Stokes field guide to *Animal Tracks and Behavior*, which is listed in the Resources section of this guide. Animal homes or structures can also be used to document the presence of many medium-sized mammals on your property. There are several field guides available that will help you in identifying such structures or burrows.

**SKILL LEVEL:** Medium. There are less than two dozen medium-sized mammal species residing in Wisconsin. With practice, you will be able to accurately identify their various scats, tracks, homes, and other sign.

**METHODS:** Scout your property for evidence of medium-

sized mammals including scats, tracks, and homes.

**ASSOCIATED PROGRAMS:** Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources wildlife managers and technicians keep track of rare mammals throughout the course of the year while performing routine work. This informal survey provides the only population information for badgers, white-tailed jackrabbits and other non-hunted mammals for the state and is an important supplement to other surveys for bobcat, fisher, pine marten, otter, red fox, gray fox, coyote and black bear. To contribute information to this project, the appropriate contact is listed on page 37. (If you would like to share your information with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, please also indicate the number of road kills observed for each selected species.)

**SEASON:** Year-round.

**TIME OF DAY:** Scouting for sign can be done at any time during the day.

**DURATION:** Self-determined. You may spend as little or as much time as you wish scouting for sign. To have the most complete inventory possible, it is advisable that you cover all of your property when scouting for sign.

**EQUIPMENT NEEDED:** Field guide to mammal sign, data sheet (see page 63), pencil, clipboard, ziplock bags.

### SMALL MAMMAL SURVEY

**SPECIES GROUPS:** Rodents, shrews, and moles.

**OBJECTIVES:** Provides information on presence/absence (inventory), and can provide an index to abundance over time. *This technique is lethal.* If you do not wish to kill any small mammals on your property, you may substitute sheet metal or wire live traps for snap traps. However, these traps are at least 10–20 times as costly as snap traps, and live mammals are very quick and may easily escape when a trap is opened. If you decide to use live traps, be sure to empty the contents into a bucket or bag for purposes of identification. Be very careful handling small mammals—they have sharp claws and teeth. because of the threat of hantavirus, we strongly advise wearing gloves when checking traps.





**DESCRIPTION:** Trappers should set up a grid of 25 traps as shown on the data sheets. This includes 16 small snap traps, 8 medium snap traps and 1 pitfall trap. Be sure to flag and number your sites. Snap traps are most effectively placed next to logs, stumps, rocks, or under brush, places that small mammals are likely to frequent. Traps should be set in the evening, using a peanut butter/oats mix. They should be checked at first light and shut for the day. Alternatively, they can be reset in the morning to be checked again in the evening. The pitfall trap should be two coffee cans deep. A drift fence, a 5-m or greater length of 24 inches sediment fencing or 24 inches aluminum flashing, can be set up on two sides of the trap to lead small mammals into the trap (see figure below). The trap should be opened only if no rain will occur during the trapping period. Record the species trapped on the data sheet beside the appropriate trap number.

**SKILL LEVEL:** Medium. There are about twenty species of small mammals that may occur on your property and could be caught in snap traps and pitfalls.

**METHODS:** Set up a grid of snap traps and pitfall traps. Set traps in the evening and check in the morning. You can either reset traps in the morning or keep them closed during the day.

Traps that are successful should be cleaned before subsequent use.

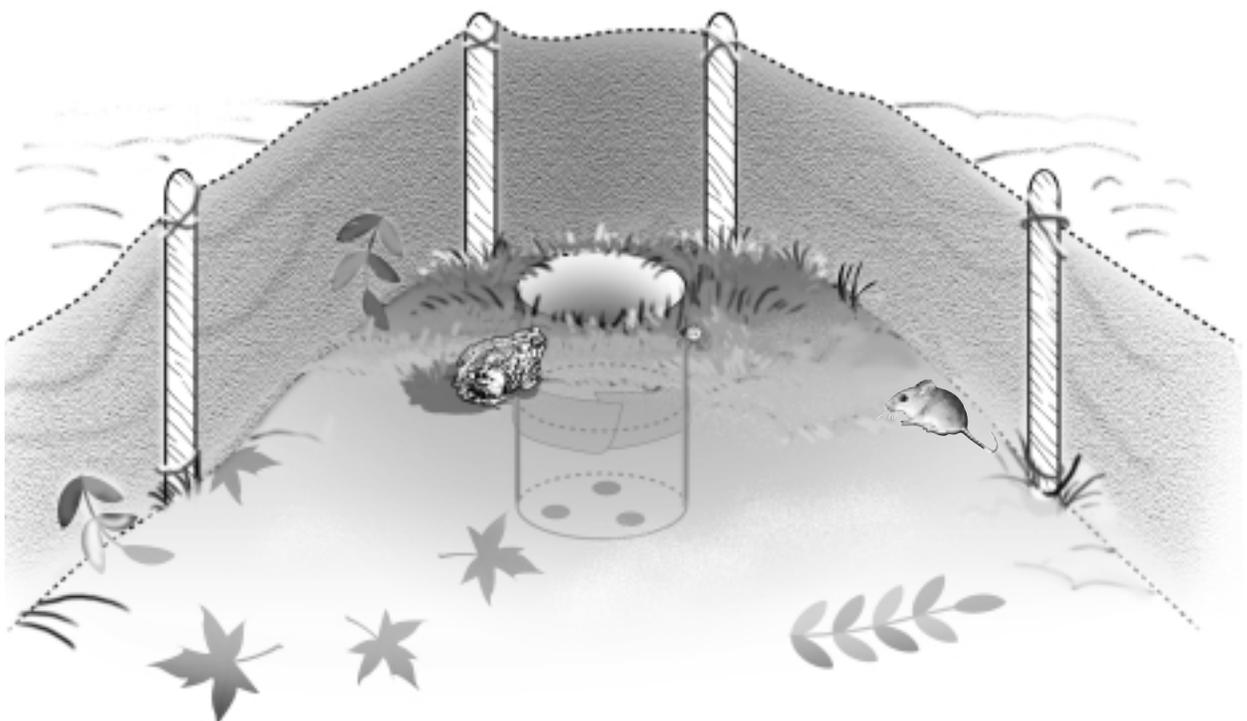
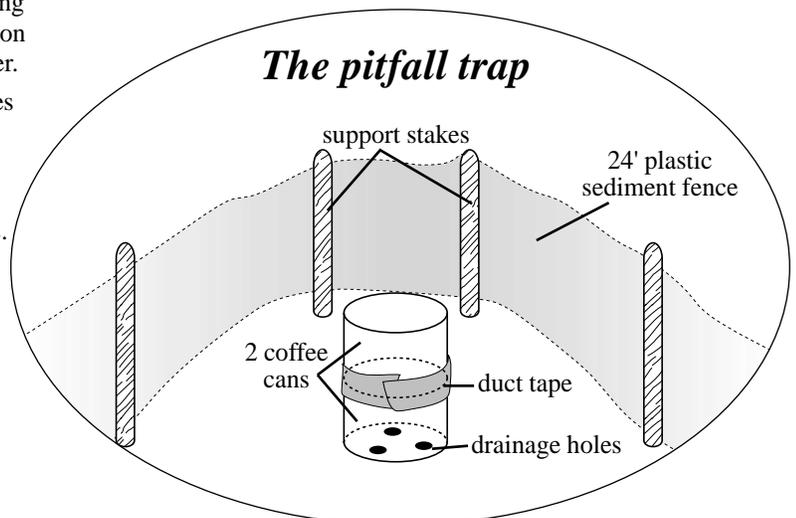
**ASSOCIATED PROGRAMS:** None.

**SEASON:** April–October.

**TIME OF DAY:** Most effective when conducted overnight.

**DURATION:** About 2 minutes per trap to set. Depending on difficulty in identification and processing, it can take anywhere from 2 to 10 minutes per successful trap. Trap success rates are quite variable, and may be as high as 75%. However, success is more commonly around 20%.

**EQUIPMENT NEEDED:** Mammal book, data sheets, pencil, gloves, large ziplock bags.

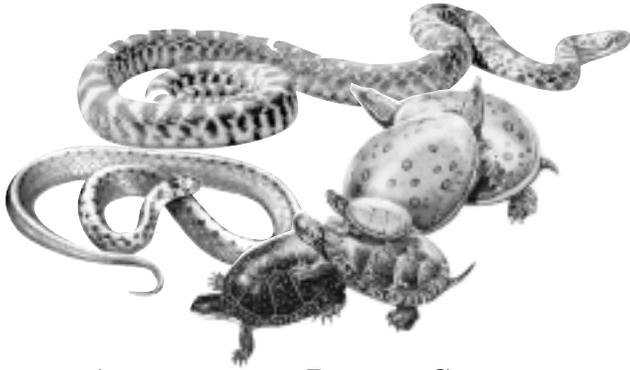




## Herptiles

Reptiles and Amphibians

**Species groups:** Frogs, toads, salamanders, snakes, lizards, and turtles.



### AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE CHECKLIST

**SPECIES GROUPS:** All amphibian and reptile groups.

**OBJECTIVES:** Produces a measure of presence/absence (inventory) of amphibians and reptiles.

**DESCRIPTION:** This checklist is simply a list of herptiles (amphibians and reptiles) that are seen or heard during a particular time. To fully inventory your property, it is suggested that you conduct an inventory on a monthly basis from April through October.

**SKILL LEVEL:** Medium. There are over 50 species of reptiles and amphibians living in Wisconsin, but you do not need to be able to identify them by sight and sound beforehand. You can learn as you encounter them.

**METHODS:** Observe reptiles and amphibians on a periodic basis (weekly, monthly, yearly).

**ASSOCIATED PROGRAMS:** The Herpetological Atlas Project was initiated by the Milwaukee Public Museum in 1986, with support of the Natural Heritage Inventory Program (of the WDNR, Bureau of Endangered Resources and The Nature Conservancy, Wisconsin Chapter). Data collected for this project help to map species distributions, document rare species occurrences, analyze population trends, examine habitat requirements and plan herptile conservation priorities. Volunteers submit data on an annual basis, and are provided each spring with a packet that includes information on "Most Wanted" species for each Wisconsin county. To participate in this program, which is scheduled to conclude in 2000, the appropriate contact is listed on page 37. However, the techniques and data will be useful beyond the conclusion date.

**SEASON:** March–October

**TIME OF DAY:** Anytime, but you will probably observe the greatest number of animals during the warmest part of the day in spring and fall, and during the coolest times of the day during the summer. You can listen for frogs calling in the evening.

**DURATION:** You can spend as much or as little time as you wish looking for herptiles on your property. However, you will obtain the most complete picture of the reptile and amphibian community on your land if you cover your entire property on your searches.

**EQUIPMENT NEEDED:** Herptile checklist (see page 65), pencil, clipboard, gloves, ruler, and herptile field guide.

Optional Equipment: Camera for documenting new county records.

### FROG AND TOAD SURVEY

**SPECIES GROUP:** Frogs and toads.

**OBJECTIVES:** The frog and toad survey provides information on presence/absence (inventory), and over time provides information on relative abundance (monitoring).

**DESCRIPTION:** Visit the various wetlands found on your property after dark three times during the frog calling season (once between April 8–30, once between May 20–June 5, and once between July 1–15). Wetlands that are less than 1/2 mile apart should be combined as one due to the difficulty in distinguishing where calls are originating from. Record air temperature at the start and end of your survey. Take water temperature (if possible) upon arrival at wetland. Wait for one minute, then listen and record frogs for three minutes. Repeat at each wetland or water course found on your property.

**SKILL LEVEL:** Easy. There are 12 species of frogs and toads living in Wisconsin, and usually a maximum of 4 or 5 are calling at any one time in a wetland.

**METHODS:** Listen for calling frogs and toads at wetlands.

**ASSOCIATED PROGRAMS:** The Wisconsin Frog and Toad Survey program was initiated in the early 1980's to track population trends for Wisconsin's frogs and toads. Volunteers make three trips to ten selected wetlands over the course of the breeding season to listen for frogs and toads. To contribute information to this project, or to learn more about it, the appropriate contact is listed on page 37.

**SEASON:** April–July





**TIME OF DAY:** Evening (after nightfall)

**DURATION:** Wait for one minute upon arrival at wetland, then listen for three minutes. Go out to listen for frogs three times over the course of the calling season to observe all species (once between April 8–30, once between May 20–June 5, and once between July 1–15).

**EQUIPMENT NEEDED:** Frog call tape (available through Madison Audubon Society (608) 255-BIRD), frog and toad survey data form (see page 66–67), pencil, clipboard, and air/water thermometer.

### SALAMANDER COVERBOARD SURVEY



**SPECIES GROUP:** Salamanders

**OBJECTIVES:** The objectives of the Salamander Coverboard Survey are two-fold. This survey method will provide you with presence/absence (inventory)

information, and over time, will provide you with relative abundance (monitoring) information.

**DESCRIPTION:** Many types of terrestrial salamanders hide under logs or other debris in their forested habitats. Transects or arrays of cover boards are installed in such habitats, and terrestrial salamanders crawl under them. This enables one to inventory and monitor their populations. The best material to use for cover boards is *untreated* wood. The chemicals that are used to treat wood can seep into the soil and be absorbed by salamanders.

The preferred size for cover boards is 12 X 12 inches. To set up a transect or array, choose a wooded area on your property for surveying. Cover boards should be placed at least 50 meters (~150 feet) from the edge of the wooded area, because salamanders avoid forest edges. Pairs of cover boards should be either laid out in a straight line (transect) or in an array (see Salamander Cover Board Survey data sheet, Appendix B, page 68–69). Each pair of cover boards should be placed at least 18 feet apart. Each cover board used in your survey should be assigned an individual number, and each cover board in a pair should be placed 0.5 m apart to minimize the potential effects of territoriality.

Remove the leaf litter, level the mineral soil, and place a cover board so that its entire surface is in contact with the earth when installing it for your survey. Newly placed cover boards have very low capture rates in relation to ones that have been there for a long period of time; therefore, do not use your first year of cover board data to look at trends in salamander populations on your property. Cover boards should be checked 3 times during the season, with one week between sampling periods.

Cover boards should not be checked if it is misty or rainy or within 24 hours of rain; these are times when salamanders may be out foraging in the litter. Only check cover boards when the temperature is above freezing. Upon finding an animal under a cover board, capture it, identify it, and then release it immediately next to the cover board so that it can crawl back under without being crushed. To hold an animal for identification, mist the inside of a sandwich bag with a plant sprayer and place the salamander in the sandwich bag, keeping the top of the bag open.

**SKILL LEVEL:** Easy. There are only four salamander species that may be found under cover boards in Wisconsin. Some frogs, snakes and small mammals may also use your cover boards.

**METHODS:** Set out a transect or array of cover boards and check periodically for the presence of salamanders.

**NOTE:** A sample search under logs and rocks can also provide useful information on salamanders using your property.

**ASSOCIATED PROGRAMS:** The North American Amphibian Monitoring Program (NAAMP) is a program of the United States Geological Survey. Their goal is “to develop a statistically defensible program to monitor the distribution and abundance of amphibians in North America, with applicability at the state, provincial, ecoregional, and continental scales.” The Terrestrial Salamander Monitoring Program of NAAMP was set up in 1997 to inventory and monitor populations of terrestrial salamanders throughout the United States. The appropriate contact is listed on page 37 if you would like to join or learn more about this program.

**SEASON:** The best times to run cover board surveys are early spring or late autumn when temperatures are above freezing and the ground is not frozen. It is possible to sample any time between early spring and late autumn, but capture success is much lower when daytime temperatures exceed 50° Fahrenheit.

**TIME OF DAY:** Cover boards can be checked during daylight hours.

**DURATION:** Expect to spend 1.5 hours to check 25 cover boards. Where densities of salamanders are low, we recommend laying out an array of at least 50 cover boards; this will take about 3 hours to check.

**EQUIPMENT NEEDED:** Field guide to amphibians, cover boards, pencil, clipboard, plastic sandwich bags, and data sheets (see Appendix B, page 68–69).

# Resources

## KEY

**A** = Amphibians

**B** = Birds

**M** = Mammals

**R** = Reptiles

**V** = Vegetation



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- Cronin, E. W. Jr. 1986. *Getting started in birdwatching*. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, MA. 216 pp. **B**
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- Johnsgard, P.A. 1990. *Hawks, eagles and falcons of North America*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C. **B**
- Kurta, A. 1995. *Mammals of the Great Lakes region*. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, MI. 376 pp. **M**
- Oldfield, B. and J. J. Moriarty. 1994. *Amphibians and reptiles native to Minnesota*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN. 237 pp. **A, R**
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- Stokes, D. and L. Stokes. 1986. *A guide to animal tracking and behavior*. Little, Brown and Company, Boston, MA. 418 pp. **M**
- Stokes, D. and L. Stokes. 1987. *The bird feeder book*. Little, Brown and Company, Boston, MA. 86 pp. **B**
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# Appendix A

## *Wildlife Monitoring Programs and Contacts*

### *Birds*

#### BLUEBIRD RESTORATION ASSOCIATION OF WISCONSIN

Route 1, Box 137 Akron Avenue  
Plainfield, Wisconsin 54966

#### BREEDING BIRD SURVEY

North American Breeding Bird Survey  
<http://www.mbr.nbs.gov/bbs/bbs.html>  
To contact the current Wisconsin coordinator go to:  
[http://www.mp2-pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/bbs/body\\_bbs\\_coordinators.htm](http://www.mp2-pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/bbs/body_bbs_coordinators.htm)

#### GAME BIRD BROOD SURVEY

Surveys and Databases  
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
Bureau of Integrated Science Services  
1350 Femrite Drive  
Monona, Wisconsin 53716

#### MARSH MONITORING PROGRAM

Long Point Bird Observatory  
P.O. Box 160  
Port Rowan  
Ontario, Canada N0E 1M0  
<http://www.bsc-eoc.org/mmpmain.html>

#### PROJECT FEEDERWATCH

Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology  
P.O. Box 11  
Ithaca, New York 14851-0011  
1-800-843-2473  
<http://birdsource.cornell.edu/pfw/>

#### WILD TURKEY BROOD CENSUS

Surveys and Databases  
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
Bureau of Integrated Science Services  
1350 Femrite Drive  
Madison, Wisconsin 53716

#### WISCONSIN BIRD CHECKLIST PROJECT

Wisconsin Society for Ornithology  
<http://wso.uwgb.edu/wso.htm>

#### WISCONSIN BREEDING BIRD ATLAS

Wisconsin Society for Ornithology  
Data Management Center  
University of Wisconsin-Green Bay  
Department of Natural and Applied Sciences  
Green Bay, Wisconsin 54311  
920-465-2545  
<http://wso.uwgb.edu/wso.htm>

#### WOODCOCK PEENTING SURVEYS

United States Fish and Wildlife Service  
Office of Migratory Birds  
1 Federal Drive  
Fort Snelling, MN 55111  
612-713-5473  
Minneapolis Regional Office  
612-713-5470

### *Mammals*

#### NORTH AMERICAN BAT HOUSE RESEARCH PROJECT

Bat Conservation International  
P.O. Box 162603  
Austin, Texas 78716-2603  
<http://www.batcon.org/bhra/bhratop.html>

#### RARE MAMMALS OBSERVATIONS

Surveys and Databases  
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
Bureau of Integrated Science Services  
1350 Femrite Drive  
Monona, Wisconsin 53716

#### TEAM DEER SUMMER DEER SURVEY

Surveys and Databases  
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
Bureau of Integrated Science Services  
1350 Femrite Drive  
Monona, Wisconsin 53716

#### WISCONSIN'S VOLUNTEER CARNIVORE TRACKING PROGRAM

Northern Wildlife Research Group  
Box 576  
Rhineland, Wisconsin 54501

### *Herptiles (Amphibians and Reptiles)*

#### NORTH AMERICAN AMPHIBIAN MONITORING PROGRAM (NAAMP)

Terrestrial Salamander Monitoring Program  
NAAMP Coordinator  
Biological Resources Division of the  
United States Geological Survey  
12100 Beech Forest Road  
Laurel, Maryland 20708-4038  
<http://www.im.nbs.gov/amphibs.html>

#### WISCONSIN FROG AND TOAD SURVEY

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
Bureau of Endangered Resources  
Box 7921  
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7921

#### WISCONSIN HERPETOLOGICAL ATLAS PROJECT

Milwaukee Public Museum  
Section of Vertebrate Zoology  
800 W. Wells Street  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53233  
[www.mpm.edu/collect/vertzo/herp/atlas/atlas.html](http://www.mpm.edu/collect/vertzo/herp/atlas/atlas.html)