

Birding Year-Round in Niagara Falls

The following information has been prepared to inspire future visits to Niagara Falls and we look forward to welcoming visitors back safely in keeping with any health and safety restrictions. Due to fluctuating COVID-19 restrictions, we recommend visitors contact businesses directly to confirm availability.

With its proximity to the Niagara River corridor, one of the world's most biodiverse places, Niagara Falls is a four-season destination for bird lovers, adventure travelers and ecotourists alike. Over 27 species of gulls, many of them rare, have been found here making it the best gull watching location in the world and a top destination for birders from all over the world hoping to add them to their list.

In 1996, the entire Niagara River corridor, stretching 56 km from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario, became the first site in North America to receive international recognition as an [Important Bird and Biodiversity Area \(IBA\)](#) by major conservation groups in Canada and the United States. The IBA program aims to identify, monitor, and protect the world's most important sites for birds.

Numbers from [eBird](#) show that birdwatching, already considered the fastest growing recreational activity prior to the pandemic, has increased 30% from March 2020 to March 2021. According to [eBird](#) 170 species can be sighted at [Dufferin Islands](#) alone in Niagara Falls. Here are some of the species that can be seen throughout the year and where to find them:

Spring and Summer

Spring signals the return of songbirds who fly back to Canada from winter destinations in the United States, Central America or even South America. Between the end of April to the end of May, **swallows, sparrows, flycatchers, herons, Scarlet Tanagers, Rose-breasted Grosbeak** and everyone's favourite group of birds, the **warblers**, all arrive. **Over 30 species of warblers** can be seen during the month of May in Niagara including the vibrant coloured American Warblers. Look for migrating warblers in trees at the [Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens](#), [Niagara Glen](#), [Floral Showhouse](#) and [Dufferin Islands](#). At the [Chippewa Battlefield Park](#), fields are being managed to attract **Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, Barn Swallow**, and other grassland species. **Northern Harrier** is a regular here, and even the rare **Short Eared Owl** sighting. **Common Tern** and **Caspian Tern** are common during the summer all along the river, but **Foster's Tern** and **Black Tern** are seen only on migration. Check at the mouth of the several creeks that empty into the Niagara River for **Belted Kingfisher, Great Egrets** and three types of **heron**. **Pileated Woodpecker** is becoming more common in Niagara, and a good place to check for them, is in the woods around the grounds of [Old Fort Erie](#). This is also one of the last reliable locations for a stunning **Red-headed Woodpecker**, a species which has been steadily declining in numbers in Niagara and elsewhere in Canada.

Located in the Carolinian ecoregion, species rarely seen further north, are common in Niagara Falls, Ontario. In the summer, look for the **heronry** above the falls in the middle of the river where, with binoculars or a spotting scope, **Great Egrets** and **Black-crowned Night-herons** can be seen feeding their young. **Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Fish Crows** or **Red-bellied Woodpeckers** can be found year-round by listening for their distinctive calls. **Northern Mockingbirds**, which mimic numerous calls of



other birds, are grey Robin-sized birds with a white patch in its wings and on long tail edges. A good place to look for these species, is at the [Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens](#). Also look for **Cliff Swallows** nesting under the Niagara River Parkway bridge over the Chippewa Creek, and **Black Vultures** soaring near the Queenston bridge to the USA, the only reliable spot for this species in Canada. Look for **Peregrines Falcons** nesting on the cliff face below [Table Rock](#) or high up on skyscrapers above the falls. The two best places to look for **Bald Eagles** on the Niagara River are between Queenston and Niagara-On-The-Lake, or above the falls, between Navy Island and Old Fort Erie. Although there are several nesting pairs of Bald Eagle that can be seen year-round, more gather in the winter when other rivers and lakes are iced-covered.

Swallow	Northern Harrier	Red-headed Woodpecker
Sparrows	Short Eared Owl	Red-bellied Woodpecker
Flycatchers	Common Tern	Tufted Titmouse
Hérons	Caspian Tern	Carolina Wren
Scarlet tanagers	Foster's Tern	Fish Crows
Rose-breasted grosbeak	Black Tern	Northern Mockingbirds
Warblers (30 species)	Belted Kingfisher	Cliff Swallows
Boblink	Great Egrets	Black Vultures
Eastern Meadowlark	Heron (3 types)	Peregrine Falcons
Barn Swallow	Pileated Woodpecker	Bald Eagles

Best viewing locations:

- [Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens](#)
- [Niagara Glen](#)
- [Floral Showhouse](#)
- [Dufferin Islands](#)
- [Chippawa Battlefield Park](#)
- Fort Erie
- Niagara River Parkway bridge over the Chippewa Creek
- Queenston bridge to the USA
- [Table Rock](#)
- Niagara River

Fall and Winter

Each fall, visitors can see one of the world's greatest gatherings of gulls and other migrating birds in Niagara Falls. Starting mid-November, the river comes alive as the rich waters attract vast number of ducks and gulls which can be seen from the Niagara River Parkway. During the winter months, the Niagara River corridor and Niagara Region are transformed into an avian wonderland with more than 100,000 gulls and as many as 40 species of waterfowl. Vast numbers of northern birds including terns, gulls, ducks and geese migrate all the way south each year to the Niagara River corridor with its rich supply of fish for food. Up to 30,000 **Bonaparte's Gulls** can be seen in one day at the peak of their migration (almost 10% of the world's total population) and other gulls like the **Herring** and **Ring-billed**



Gull can also be found in large numbers. Waterfowl are also abundant on the river, and species like **Greater Scaup** and **Red-breasted Merganser** occasionally reach large numbers as well.

A highlight for novice birders and photographers is the sheer number and variety of ducks that can be seen in winter, as they transition into their spectacular breeding plumages and begin courtship rituals. Check just above the falls for **Common Goldeneye** along with **Bufflehead** and sometimes **Harlequin Duck** (a very decorative bird). Look for the charming **Long-tailed Duck** at the Queenston docks and for **Hooded Mergansers** in the hydro pool enclosure along the river near the Dufferin Islands Nature Area, where **Gadwall** and **American Wigeon** are also regulars. For **Canvasback**, **Redhead**, **Greater Scaup**, **Common** and **Red-Breast Merganser**, a good spot is Kingsbridge Park. November is the best month for all three species of **scoter**, (**Black**, **Surf** and **White-Wing**), which are sometimes present well into winter. **Tundra Swans** are common, and **Trumpeter Swans** are becoming more common throughout the winter in the upper Niagara River. A few **Mute Swans** are present year-round.

Bonaparte’s Gull
Herring Gull
Ring-billed Gull
Greater Scaup
Red-breast Merganser
Common Goldeneye
Bufflehead

Harlequin Duck
Long-tailed Duck
Hooded Mergansers
Gadwall
American Wigeon
Canvasback
Redhead

Greater Scaup
Common
Scoter
Tundra Swans
Trumpeter Swans
Mute Swans (all year round)

Best viewing locations:

- Niagara River Parkway
- Niagara River Corridor

Birds on the Niagara International Bird Festival and Celebration

Every February, bird lovers and conservationists celebrate the vast diversity of northern birds that call the mighty river corridor their home each winter at [Birds on the Niagara International Bird Festival and Celebration](#), the only international bird festival in North America.

Birding Etiquette

When birding, please be considerate of the birds’ need for space. Particularly for sensitive species (like owls or species at risk), limit your time observing and give other birders a chance to observe too. Respect the nature and wildlife where you are viewing birds as well, and park only where permitted.

Birding Conservation

A Niagara Birding Conservation and Tourism Collaborative is working on ways to sustain wild birds and improve the birding experience. Ongoing conservation project objectives include improving bird habitats for shorebirds, creating wetlands and sewage lagoons with viewing blinds managed for a diverse number of species. The latest science indicates that native trees and shrubs in North America are critical for sustaining wild birds, particularly during the breeding season when they are relying on species of caterpillars that only feed on native plants.



Birder extraordinaire Marcie Jacklin suggests “We should all try to do what we can to repay birds for the enjoyment they provide us. If you can, plant more native tree and shrub species in your yard. Be a citizen scientist by reporting your sightings on [eBird](#) so scientists have the data they need to do more for birds (and for birders!)”

For more information about birding in Niagara:

- [Birds on the Niagara International Bird Festival and Celebration](#)
- [Niagara Birding Conservation and Tourism Collaborative](#)
- [Niagara Falls Nature Club](#)
- [Bert Miller Nature Club](#)
- [Peninsula Field Naturalists](#)
- [Birds Canada](#)
- [Niagara Parks Chippawa Grasslands Bird Habitat Management Plan](#)

About Marcie Jacklin

Birding resource: Marcie Jacklin, mjacklin19@gmail.com

A resident of Fort Erie, Ontario and long-time member of the Niagara Falls Nature Club, Marcie is a birder extraordinaire who received Niagara Falls Nature Club’s Top Conservation Award in April 2020. Marcie has been an avid birder for 30 years and is devoted to sharing her passion for birding and bird conservation. She is with the Bert Miller Nature Club and Chair of the Niagara Birding Conservation and Tourism Collaborative. She was also Co-chair of the Birds on the Niagara International Winter Festival and Celebration.

About Niagara Falls

Home of the legendary Canadian Horseshoe, American and Bridal Veil waterfalls, Niagara Falls is a four-season destination renowned for its awe-inspiring natural wonders combined with world-class accommodation, thrilling entertainment and a burgeoning culinary scene. Visitors from Ontario, across North America and around the world who come to experience adventure, discover family fun, feel the romance and create unique and memorable experiences have made it Canada’s #1 leisure destination.

Plan Your Visit

For more information about unique and memorable experience in Niagara Falls, please visit www.niagarafallstourism.com and also these helpful resources:

Where to Stay

Book a Fallsview room to enjoy a [Room with a View](#), the majesty of the Falls from the comfort of your bed, any time of the day. Niagara Falls [campgrounds and cottages](#) afford visitors a special way of getting a little closer to nature.

Let’s Stay Connected

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