

# Water-loving Birds of Eagle Marsh



In this part of Eagle Marsh, you will see mostly birds that love to be around water. Many live here year-round, others stay during the summer breeding season, and some stop by only on their way further north or south. Each kind of bird uses the wetlands in a different way to survive.



## WOOD DUCKS *Aix sponsa*

Smaller than mallards, males have multi-colored iridescent plumage and red eyes. The brown females have a white eye-ring and a whitish throat. Both have crested heads. Wood ducks nest in natural cavities in trees near water and in nesting boxes such as the ones at Eagle Marsh, where they spend the breeding season.

**Marsh ducks** spend in the water to eat aquatic plants, small marine animals, and insects.

## MALLARDS *Anas platyrhynchos*

Males are brightly colored with a green head, black rear end and yellowish orange bill tipped with black. Females are dappled brown. You may startle a female mallard from her nest full of eggs, but when the ducklings hatch they soon follow their mother into the water, where she protects them and shows them where to find food.



## TREE SWALLOWS

### *Tachycineta bicolor*

Small birds about five inches long with iridescent blue-green upperparts, white underparts, and a very slightly forked tail. In the summer they can often be seen catching insects gracefully in midair, especially over water. You may notice them nesting in boxes around the marsh.

**Other birds** seen near water at Eagle Marsh during the breeding season hunt from the air.

## BELTED KINGFISHER *Megaceryle alcyon*

Roughly a foot long with a shaggy crest, a slate blue head and back, large white collar, large blue band on the breast, and white underparts. Females have a rufous band across the upper belly. Belted kingfishers often sit on a post or small tree before diving to catch fish or other prey.



## KILLDEER *Charadrius vociferus*

Roughly the size of a robin, with brown back and wings, a white belly, and a white breast with two black bands. In summer at Eagle Marsh, killdeer nest on bare ground, where their speckled eggs blend in with their surroundings. To lure predators away from the nest, an adult may pretend to have a broken wing.



**Shorebirds** eat insects and small marine life. They usually forage by moving about close to shore, in or near the water.

## LESSER YELLOWLEGS *Tringa flavipes*

May be seen at Eagle Marsh during spring or fall. They have long, bright yellow legs and a long, thin, dark bill. The body is grey brown on top and white underneath, the neck and breast streaked. These medium-sized birds migrate between areas as far apart as Alaska and South America. They desperately need wetlands to rest and feed during their long trip.



**Herons** usually stand or wade in the water, watching closely to catch fish, other aquatic creatures, or small mammals with their long bills.

## GREAT BLUE HERON

### *Ardea herodias*

Can be almost five feet tall, with a wing span of almost seven feet, yet they weigh only four to eight pounds. Their feathers are mostly blue-grey, the neck and head whitish, with a black cap and plumes.

These herons nest in colonies in trees near the water. They can be found at Eagle Marsh year-round.



## GREAT EGRET

### *Ardea alba*

Graceful white herons about three to four feet tall, weighing about two pounds. They often spend summers in Eagle Marsh, where small groups may be seen foraging near each other. They nest in colonies in trees, and may be seen roosting together in trees also.

