

Comparison of 1897 First St. Paul Bird Sightings to the Median Minnesota Arrival Date, with Additional Information¹

Bird Name as Listed (and Spelled) by Students in 1897	Current Bird Name (Based on Scientific Name, if Different)	1897 Arrival Date	Current Status in Ramsey County? ²	Median Minnesota Arrival Date in 2021	Scientific Name as Listed (and Spelled) by Students in 1897	Scientific Name Today (if Different)	Comments
American Robin		3/18	Common	Year-round	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>		
Cedar Waxwing		3/27	Common	Year-round	<i>Ampelis cedrorum</i>	<i>Bombycilla cedrorum</i>	
Blue-bird	Eastern Bluebird	3/28	Common	Year-round	<i>Sialia S[s]ialis</i>		
Meadow Lark	Eastern Meadowlark	3/28	Uncommon	3/15	<i>Sturnella magna</i>		
Purple Grackle	Common Grackle	3/28	Common	Year-round	<i>Quiscalus purpureus</i>	<i>Quiscalus quiscula</i>	Although here year-round, population is low in the winter. Eight were reported in Ramsey County in winter 2021-2022.
Killdeer Plover	Killdeer	3/28	Common	3/1	No name given by student	<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>	
Bohemian Waxwing		3/28	Very Rare		<i>Ampelis G[g]arrulus</i>	<i>Bombycilla garrulus</i>	Only three records noted in Ramsey County in the last ten years.
Chipping Sparrow		3/28	Common	3/23	<i>Spizella domestica</i>	<i>Spizella passerina</i>	
Red-winged Black bird	Red-winged Blackbird	3/30	Common	3/12	<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>	<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i> (slight spelling difference)	
Kingfisher	Belted Kingfisher	3/30	Common	3/24	<i>Ceryle alcyon</i>	<i>Megaceryle alcyon</i>	
Flicker	Northern Flicker	3/30	Common	3/26	<i>Colaptes auratus</i>	<i>Colaptes auratus</i> (slight spelling difference)	
Downey Woodpecker	Downy Woodpecker	3/30	Common	Year-round	<i>Picus pubesceus</i>	<i>Dryobates pubescens</i>	
Hairy Woodpecker		3/30	Common	Year-round	<i>Picus villosus</i>	<i>Leuconotopicus villosus</i> (See endnote 1.)	
Song Sparrow		3/30	Common	3/23	<i>Melospiza fasciata</i>	<i>Melospiza melodia</i>	

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Fox Sparrow		3/31	Common	3/13	<i>Passerela iliaca</i>	<i>Passerella iliaca</i> (slight spelling difference)	
Northern Shrike		3/31	Common	No spring arrival date	<i>Lanius borealis</i>		This bird arrives in Minnesota from the north in the fall, spends the winter here, and departs in early spring.
Hermit Thrush		4/1	Common	3/28	<i>Turdus unalascae</i>	<i>Catharus guttatus</i>	
Phoebe	Eastern Phoebe	4/3	Common	3/21	<i>Syiornis fusca</i>	<i>Sayornis phoebe</i>	
Field Sparrow		4/3	Uncommon	4/2	<i>Spizella agrestis</i>	<i>Spizella pusilla</i>	
Swamp Sparrow		4/3	Common	4/14	<i>Melospiza palustris</i>	<i>Melospiza georgiana</i>	
White-rumped Shrike	Loggerhead Shrike	4/3	Very Rare	3/25	<i>Lanius ludivicianus</i>		
Golden-crowned Kinglet		4/6	Common	3/27	<i>Regulus satrapa</i>		
Mourning Dove		4/7	Common	Year-round	<i>Zenaidura macroura</i>	<i>Zenaida macroura</i> (slight spelling difference)	Although here year-round, population is low in the winter.
Rusty Blackbird		4/10	Uncommon	3/22	<i>Scolecophagus ferrugineus</i>	<i>Euphagus carolinus</i>	
Purple Finch		4/10	Uncommon	No spring arrival date	<i>Carpodacus cassini</i>	<i>Haemorhous purpureus</i>	This bird arrives in Southern Minnesota in late fall, spends the winter here, and departs the southern two-thirds of the state in early spring. Student noted purple finch but gave the scientific name <i>Carpodacus cassini</i> (today, <i>Haemorhous cassinii</i>). This identifies Cassin's finch, whose presence was not noted in Minnesota until 1987.

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Water Thrush	Listed scientific name suggests Louisiana Waterthrush	4/11	Rare	4/16	<i>Siurus noticilla</i>	<i>Parkesia motacilla</i>	The student doesn't indicate the specific waterthrush, although the listed scientific name is close to today's scientific name <i>Parkesia motacilla</i> , which identifies Louisiana waterthrush. It's likely the student noted a northern waterthrush <i>Parkesia noveboracensis</i> , as Louisiana waterthrush were not seen in the metro area before 1903.
Yellow-billed Sap-sucker	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	4/14	Common	3/26	<i>Sphyrapicus varius</i>	<i>Sphyrapicus varius</i> (slight spelling difference)	
Ruby-crowned Kinglet		4/17	Common	3/27	<i>Regulus calendula</i>	<i>Corthylio calendula</i>	
Chimney Swift		4/17	Common	4/21	<i>Chaetura pelagica</i>	<i>Chaetura pelagica</i> (slight spelling difference)	
White-crowned Sparrow		4/21	Uncommon	4/21	<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>		
American Goldfish [Goldfinch]		4/23	Common	Year-round	<i>Astragalinus tristis</i>	<i>Spinus tristis</i>	
Bank Swallow		4/25	Common	4/16	<i>Cotile riparia</i>	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	
White-thw'rt'd sparrow [White-throated sparrow]		4/28	Common	Year-round	<i>Zonotrichia albicollis</i>		A small number overwinter in Ramsey County.
Wood Thrush		4/30	Uncommon	5/1	<i>Turdus mustelinus</i>	<i>Hylocichla mustelina</i>	Uncommon in Ramsey County, but they are known to breed at Crosby Farm Regional Park, Reservoir Woods Park, Hidden Falls Regional Park, Fort Snelling State Park, and a few other locations.

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Golden-crowned Thrush	Ovenbird	4/30	Common	4/27	<i>Siurus auricapillus</i>	<i>Seiurus aurocapilla</i> (slight spelling difference)	
Myrtle Warbler	Yellow-rumped Warbler	4/30	Common	4/1	<i>Dendrocca coronata</i>	<i>Setophaga coronata</i>	Myrtle warbler is now the name of the subspecies of yellow-rumped warbler, which occurs here. In 1897, it was a full species.
Creeping Warbler	Black-and-white Warbler	5/1	Common	4/22	<i>Mniotilta varia</i>	<i>Mniotilta varia</i> (slight spelling difference)	
Red-eyed Vireo		5/1	Common	5/6	<i>Vireo olivaceus</i>	<i>Vireo olivaceus</i> (slight spelling difference)	
American Coot		5/1	Common	3/1	<i>Fulica americana</i>		
Yellowheaded Blackbird	Yellow-headed Blackbird	5/1	Rare	3/27	<i>Xanthocephalus icterocephalus</i>	<i>Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus</i>	
Bittern	American Bittern	5/1	Uncommon	4/13	<i>Botaurus mugitatus</i>	<i>Botaurus lentiginosus</i>	
Cow Blackbird	Brown-headed Cowbird	5/2	Common	3/12	<i>Molothrus ater</i>		
Indago [Indigo] Bunting		5/2	Common	5/3	<i>Passerina cyanea</i>		
Brown Thrush	Brown Thrasher	5/2	Common	4/9	<i>Harporhynchus rufus</i>	<i>Toxostoma rufum</i>	
Towhee	Eastern Towhee	5/2	Uncommon	4/13	<i>Pipilo erythrophthalmus</i>		Uncommon, but there are breeding sites at Fish Creek Natural Area, parts of Arden Hills, Tamarack Nature Center, and other locations.
Red-headed Woodpecker		5/3	Uncommon	Year-round	<i>Melanerpes erythrocephalus</i>	<i>Melanerpes erythrocephalus</i> (slight spelling difference)	

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Wilson's Snipe		5/4	Uncommon	3/23	<i>Gallinago wilsoni</i>	<i>Gallinago delicata</i>	
Least Flycatcher		5/4	Common	5/1	<i>Empidonax minimus</i>		
Baltimore Oriole		5/6	Common	4/28	<i>Icterus galbula</i>		
Rose-breasted Grosbeak		5/6	Common	4/28	<i>Zamelodia ludoviciana</i>	<i>Pheucticus ludovicianus</i>	
Black-throat Blue War'r	Black-throated Blue Warbler	5/6	Rare	5/11	<i>Dendroeca coerulesceus</i>	<i>Setophaga caerulescens</i>	
Black-throat Green War'r	Black-throated Green Warbler	5/6	Common	4/30	<i>Dendroeca vireus</i>	<i>Setophaga virens</i>	
White-eyed Vireo		5/7	Very Rare		<i>Vireo noveboracensis</i>	<i>Vireo griseus</i>	The student report is likely incorrect. She probably saw a different species of vireo. White-eyed vireo were not recorded in Minnesota until 1941 and not in Ramsey County until 1983. They are rarely seen.
Wood Pewee	Eastern Wood-Pewee	5/7	Common	5/6	<i>Contopus vireus</i>	<i>Contopus virens</i> (slight spelling difference)	
Yellow-throated Vireo		5/7	Common	5/2	<i>Vireo flavifrons</i>	<i>Vireo flavifrons</i> (slight spelling difference)	
Maryland Yellowthroat	Common Yellowthroat	5/8	Common	5/1	<i>Geothlypis trichas</i>		
Catbird	Gray Catbird	5/8	Common	4/25	<i>Mimus carelineusis</i>	<i>Dumetella carolinensis</i>	
Warbling Vireo		5/8	Common	5/1	<i>Vireo gilvus</i>		
Yellow Warbler		5/8	Common	4/25	<i>Dendroeca aestiva</i>	<i>Setophaga petechia</i>	
White-breasted Swallow	Tree Swallow	5/8	Common	3/19	<i>Iridoprocene bicolor</i>	<i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>	

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Kingbird	Eastern Kingbird	5/8	Common	4/26	<i>Tyrannus curiolinensis</i>	<i>Tyrannus tyrannus</i>	
Scarlet Tanager		5/9	Uncommon	5/5	<i>Pyranga rubra</i>	<i>Piranga olivacea</i>	<i>Pyranga rubra</i> was one of the scientific names for scarlet tanager in the mid-1800s, but <i>Piranga rubra</i> (revised spelling) is now the name for summer tanager.
Black-billed Cuckoo		5/9	Uncommon	5/9	<i>Coccygus erythrophthalmus</i>	<i>Coccyzus erythrophthalmus</i> (slight spelling difference)	
Blackburnian Warbler		5/9	Common	5/3	<i>Dendroeca blackburnae</i>	<i>Setophaga fusca</i>	
House Wren		5/11	Common	4/17	<i>Troglodytes domesticus</i>	<i>Troglodytes aedon</i>	
Orchard Oriole		5/11	Common	5/5	<i>Icterus spurius</i>	<i>Icterus spurius</i> (slight spelling difference)	
Redstart	American Redstart	5/12	Common	5/3	<i>Setophaga ruticilla</i>	<i>Setophaga fusca</i>	
Wilson's Thrush	Veery	5/12	Uncommon	5/2	<i>Turdus fuscescens</i>	<i>Catharus fuscescens</i>	
Bobolink		5/13	Uncommon	5/3	<i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i>		
Least Bittern		5/16	Uncommon	5/10	<i>Ardetta exilis</i>	<i>Ixobrychus exilis</i>	

NOTES

1. "Arrival of the Birds as Observed by the Saint Paul High School Ornithological Society," *High School World* (St. Paul: Central High School, 1897), 15. Note: many of the scientific names listed in the 1897 observation are different today. Ornithology is a relatively new science. In the nineteenth century, universally accepted naming procedures did not exist. Birds were named by different people in different places. To compound this problem, the science of subspecies was not well understood, so if a bird looked different, even if just a little, it was sometimes declared to be a new species. This, of course, led to confusion and inconsistencies. When Dietrich Lange was teaching, some sanity was starting to creep into the discipline, but things were far from settled. Changes to common names can be the result of other influences, as well. If a species is discovered to have had a different name prior to the name it now carries,

the general response is to restore the species' earlier name. Sometimes, a North American name is identical to an entirely unrelated European species. In those cases, the United States often changes the name, as Europe's usually came first. Even the reputation of a person for whom a species was named can be an issue. McCown's longspur had its name changed to thick-billed longspur, and the offensive oldsquaw is now long-tailed duck. Changes and confusion can occur with scientific names, as well. For example, the hairy woodpecker was given the scientific name of *Dryobates villosus* in 1886. By 1957, it had been renamed *Dendrocopos villosus*. In 1983, research said it had been misclassified and should be *Picooides villosus*, but then last year, DNA insisted it was, in fact, *Leuconotopicus villosus*. When this article went to print in February 2023, an online check found different nature organizations were using various

scientific names for this bird on their websites. Looking at the old list from the yearbook, the names the students used in 1897 were, for the most part, contemporaneously correct. Interestingly, student Roy Greenleaf lists the scientific name for hairy woodpecker as *Picus villosus*; "All About Birds," The Cornell Lab, <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/>; Median Spring Arrival Dates for Minnesota (not Ramsey County) from Minnesota Ornithologists' Union Daily Birding Planner, 2021; Special thanks to Minnesota Ornithologists' Union and Saint Paul Audubon Society for assistance with this chart.

2. Note: Some birds are listed as rare or uncommon in Ramsey County, however, this does not mean they are necessarily at risk. In fact, few birds on the 1897 list are on a "special concern" or "endangered" list in Minnesota. In this case, uncommon sightings may be the result of lost habitat (among other possible rea-

sons), given that much of Ramsey County is now city and surrounding suburbs. For example: field sparrows are uncommon because their habitat is difficult to find here today. Where their habitat exists, they are quite common. The good news is they can be seen at Battle Creek, Tamarack Nature Center, and Rice Creek; "Minnesota's List of Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern Species," Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, effective August 19, 2013, accessed January 25, 2023, https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/natural_resources/ets/endlist.pdf.

In reviewing the most recent (2013) DNR report found online, it is important to note that the erroneously noted Louisiana waterthrush is labeled of "special concern" in Minnesota, and the loggerhead shrike is listed as "endangered."