

## Wildlife in Croatan by Susanna H. Miller (Suditi)

### Birdwatching... With Your Ears!

There are moments that change the way you see the world. One of those times for me was when I took over a project for my Masters work in wildlife ecology at the University of Florida. The project required bird identification season by season in large area plots in pine forests. I spent months learning birds by call and song, as well as sight. Breeding birds, wintering birds, migrating birds, juvenile birds, courting birds, fighting birds... it was a jungle out there!

What I left that project with was the lifetime gift of being able to birdwatch without looking! There are so many beautiful, winged personalities out there and many are not that visible. Learning the song and calls of a bird can allow you a bigger picture of the avian world around you. If you are the active sort, you can add the thrill of the chase to identification by tracking the source through the trees or vegetation (don't trespass, though!).

I am going to suggest you check out a few of the commonly heard, but less often seen birds of Croatan... The Audubon Society has an awesome bird identification system that gives several recordings of calls and songs for each species. You may be surprised to recognize some of your feathered friends' songs once you hear them.

### [Great Crested Flycatcher](#)

The Great Crested Flycatcher is a raucously, noisy bird that tells me for sure every year that the migrants are here to breed. While not a small bird, it tends to be high in the treetops foraging for flying insects and advertising its territory. This cavity nesting bird is known for placing a shed snakeskin in its nesting material.



### [Pine Warbler](#)

The Pine Warbler has a flat trill (song) and bright cheep (call) often heard from the canopy of tall pine trees. It is a small bird with a bright yellow belly and olive back in breeding season and readily seen white wing bars. This warbler will occasionally visit bird feeders.

### [Belted Kingfisher](#)

The Belted Kingfisher is a handsome crested blue bird that feeds on small fish, snakes and frogs. In this species, the female is the brighter sex with a rusty red band added across her breast. This bird is also unusual for nesting in a burrow rather than a tree. The rattling call is most unique.



A few more Croatan bird songs worth checking out: Eastern Blue Bird, Gray Catbird, Pileated Woodpecker, Eastern Screech Owl.

Learning birds by call changed my perception of the natural world around me. I hope you have the chance to explore this side of the neighborhood if you have not before. Don't forget the night creatures as well... owls, frogs, flying squirrels, foxes... they all have most interesting conversations. Happy Birding!