



APRIL: AMERICAN BITTERN (*BOTAURUS LENTIGINOSUS*)

These cryptic, heron-like waterbirds once nested across Wisconsin. However, due to extensive loss of wetlands in southern parts of the state they are mainly found breeding in northern and central Wisconsin today. Protection and management of wetlands to prevent degradation and maintain large blocks of habitat in different stages of ecological succession benefit these wading birds. Wetlands on publically managed lands as well as private lands enrolled in programs such as the Wetland Reserve Program attract American bitterns.

- These bitterns are remarkably camouflaged and, when their necks are extended, can closely mimic grasses or reeds swaying in the wind.
- American bitterns are most readily found by their pump-like call that carries for miles in April and May, which has earned them nicknames such as thunderpumper!
- Because they are so difficult to detect, WDNR and its partners initiated an annual statewide survey in 2008 that targets this and other secretive marsh bird species such as rails, grebes, and snipe.
- Though they breed as far north as Newfoundland, Canada, by October most American bitterns reach wintering areas in the southern United States, Caribbean, and Central America.