



As of 2016, the ABMI has found the American Bittern at 89 sites throughout the province.



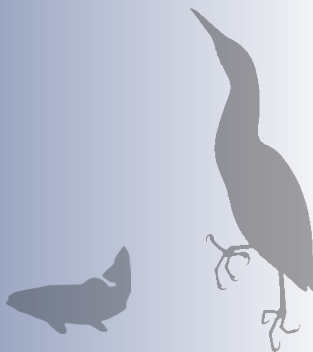
# American Bittern

## *Botaurus lentiginosus*

*The American Bittern makes its living in part by standing perfectly still. This is a great hunting strategy in the wetlands where it lives. Its prey—frogs and fish—will flee at the slightest movement, so standing stick-like is a great tactic.*

### DID YOU KNOW?

*The American Bittern is a skilled hunter, owing its success on its specially adapted eyes that can swivel in their sockets.*



### Description

These medium-sized herons have a rusty-brown body streaked with white. Males and females look alike, but the males are often larger. The American Bittern has a long, pointed bill and thick necks that they extend straight upwards while hunting. They have black-tipped wings, but you will have a tough time seeing this unless they are flying. In flight, they extend their green legs and feet, but hunch their neck and tuck their head into their back.

### Habitat

Wetlands are the place to be if you are looking to spot an American Bittern. These herons can be found in any type of wetland: lakes, sloughs, marshes, swamps, and more! They live and hunt amongst the tall vegetation at the edges of water bodies. They find dense

vegetation like cattails and sedges to build their nests on in the spring.

### Behaviour

The American Bittern has a strange hunting behaviour. It scans the water below it by staring at the sky. At least it look like that. They often hunt by standing completely still with their neck extended and their bill pointed skyward. They are waiting for their unsuspecting prey to swim by their legs. Although their head is pointed up, they can swivel their eye to look straight down.

This elegant bird only lives in Alberta during the spring and summer. They migrate when the temperature drops, spending the fall and winter months in the southern United States, Mexico, and Central America.

# American Bittern

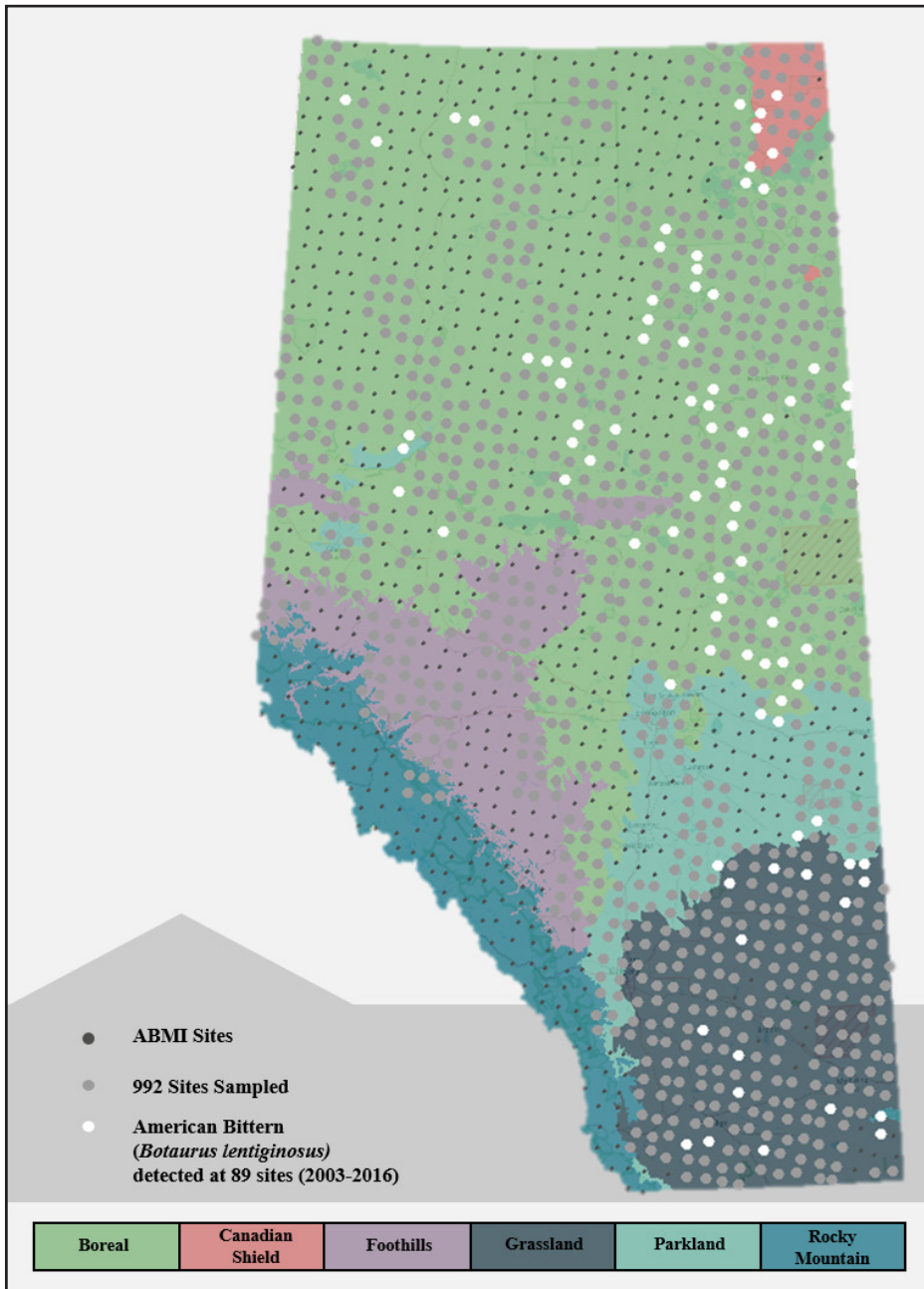
Detected at  
**89 of 992**  
sites  
sampled

## Diet

These long-legged birds will wade in shallow water hunting for frogs, fish, crabs, snakes, and even aquatic insects. With its excellent hunting skills, this bird can catch anything that moves around its legs.

## Human Effects

Using ABMI data, we are able to see what impacts humans have on species and their habitats. The American Bittern has not yet been assessed by the ABMI. Although a fairly common wading bird, there has been a 43% decline in the United States since 1966. It is unknown why these declines are occurring, but the most likely causes are habitat destruction and water pollution.



## References:

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