

Wisconsin Birding Hotspots

Information adapted from *Birds of Minnesota and Wisconsin*, by Robert B. Janssen, Daryl D. Tessen and Gregory Kennedy © 2003 Lone Pine Publishing, Auburn, Washington. Reprinted with permission.

For details about the sites, consult *Wisconsin's Favorite Bird Haunts*, edited by Daryl D. Tessen (De Pere, Wisconsin: The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, Inc., 2000).

Wisconsin's Top 10 Birding Sites

Wisconsin Point – Superior: Migration

During migration, bad weather can ground hundreds, even thousands, of migrant birds on this two-mile-long peninsula that juts into Lake Superior. Loons, ducks, grebes, gulls, terns and shorebirds use the lake and Allouez Bay, while hawks, flycatchers, vireos, warblers, sparrows and finches are found in the wooded and grassy sections.

Crex Meadows Wildlife Area: Nesting

Located just north of Grantsburg in western Burnett County, Crex Meadows comprises over 30,000 acres. It is known not only for its nesting species and rarities, but also for its accessibility – two county highways and over 40 miles of town roads allow access to many of the dikes and flowages. Habitat includes wetlands and brush-prairie. Highly recommended stops include Phantom Lake Flowage for Trumpeter Swans, Ospreys, Common Loons, Soras, Virginia Rails, Red-necked Grebes and Black Terns; the refuge, located in the center of the area, for Sharp-tailed Grouse and Bald Eagles; and, from mid-May to early July, the pumphouse section of Reed's Lake sedge marsh for Yellow Rails, Le Conte's Sparrows, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows, American Bitterns and Sandhill Cranes. Nearby Fish Lake Wildlife Area, three miles south of Grantsburg, has similar habitats, birds and accessibility.

Nicolet National Forest – Three Lakes: Year Round

In addition to the forest itself, numerous lakes, swamps, bogs and marshes dot the landscape. Some of these wet areas are thickly overgrown with black spruce, cedar, tamarack, alder and willow. During summer, more than 20 warbler species are present. Other interesting resident birds include Black-backed Woodpeckers, Spruce Grouse, Boreal Chickadees, Gray Jays and varying numbers of winter finches. "Must-stops" in this extensive area include Thunder Lake Marsh; Three Lakes (Old A) Bog; Pine, Shelp and Scott lakes; and various forestry roads (2174, 2178, 2182, 2183, 2414) that bisect the forest to the north of Hiles and east of Three Lakes.

Green Bay Area: Year Round

The location of the city of Green Bay at the end of the bay makes it a migrant trap. The diversity of habitat – open water, marshes, swamps, woods and fields – ensures an excellent variety of birds. Depending on the season, expect to see Snowy Owls, Lapland Longspurs, Snow Buntings, Gray Partridges, Peregrine Falcons, American White Pelicans, egrets, shorebirds, gulls, terns and songbirds. Recommended stops include the Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary, the mouth of the Fox River, Ken Euers Natural Area, L. H. Barkhausen Waterfowl Preserve and the Sensiba Wildlife Area.

Horicon Marsh: Year Round

The largest cattail wetland in the country, Horicon Marsh comprises 32,000 acres. The southern third is managed by the state, while the remainder is a national wildlife refuge. The marsh is most famous for its fall concentration of Canada Geese, numbering over 200,000 birds, but it is also famous for its diversity of migrant and nesting bird species. Breeding species include bitterns, herons, waterfowl, rails, pelicans, cormorants, terns and various songbirds. When water levels are controlled for shorebirds, the number and variety can be outstanding. Accessibility is limited in the wildlife refuge, and some areas are closed or designated for restricted use only. Birding sites include the Auto Tour Route and hiking trails, Old Marsh Road (open only on summer weekends at this writing), Ledge Road, the main dike, the DNR Field Office and trails, and points along Highway 49, which cuts across the northern part of the marsh. The Auto Tour Route and main dike are scheduled to be closed from September 15 to April 15, but check for accessibility during those times. Visit also nearby Ledge Park.

Wyalusing State Park: Migration, Nesting

Overlooking the confluence of the Mississippi and Wisconsin rivers, Wyalusing encompasses nearly 2,700 acres of hardwood forests, pine plantations and wetlands. Nesting species include Kentucky, Cerulean, Hooded, Prothonotary, Yellow-throated and Worm-eating warblers, Louisiana Waterthrushes, Acadian Flycatchers, Red-shouldered Hawks, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Pileated Woodpeckers and Bell's Vireos. The songbird migration can be outstanding, especially during May, with lesser numbers in September, and the hawk migration is often quite good during September and October. All roads and trails are potentially good for birding, but the Homestead and Wisconsin Ridge campgrounds and Long Valley Road to the boat landing should be checked out. Drive the latter slowly or, even better, walk its length to truly enjoy the May chorus of migrants or the summer serenade of nesting species.

Baraboo Hills Area: Year Round

Nestled in the Baraboo Range, Devil's Lake State Park and the adjacent gorge contain a blend of southern and northern nesters. The park is mainly oak forest with a red maple understory, but because of the bluffs that abut Devil's Lake there are also sugar maple forest interspersed with birch, pine and cedar groves, areas of dry prairie on the bluff tops, and marshes and abandoned farmlands. Summer residents include Broad-winged Hawks, Turkey Vultures, Wood Thrushes, Yellow-throated Vireos, Winter Wrens and Scarlet Tanagers. Migrations can produce excellent songbird waves. During almost every winter it is possible to find Townsend's Solitaires along the eastern bluff.

Baxter's Hollow is a wooded, rocky gorge that follows Otter Creek, with a deciduous forest on its northern edge. A narrow paved road provides access to most of the area, although it is best to walk the entire length (the road is not maintained in winter). Summer residents include Acadian Flycatchers, Louisiana Waterthrushes, Pileated Woodpeckers, Yellow-throated Warblers, Worm-eating Warblers and Winter Wrens. The gorge is best birded between May and September.

Madison Area: Migration

Birding is excellent at the University of Wisconsin Arboretum, which borders Lake Mendota – in particular Picnic Point, which extends out into the lake. Visit also University Bay and Marshall Park, Lake Monona, the Yahara River flowing into Lower Mud Lake, Nine Springs sewage ponds and Cherokee Marsh. Migration is the optimum time for viewing waterfowl and songbirds, especially during spring.

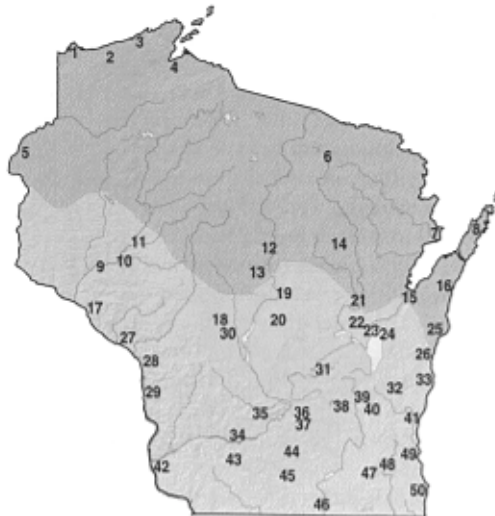
Eastern Ozaukee County: Migration, Winter

Bordering Lake Michigan, eastern Ozaukee County has excellent areas for watching migrants and wintering birds. Songbirds can be found in the wooded areas, while waterfowl, gulls and terns use the lake. During fall, the hawk flight along the bluffs that border the lake can be impressive. Important birding sites include Virmond Park for waterfowl and songbirds, Concordia University for hawks and waterfowl, Port Washington Harbor for waterfowl and gulls, and Harrington Beach State Park for waterfowl, shorebirds, gulls, terns and songbirds.

Milwaukee Area: Migration, Winter

Most of the best birding sites are along or near Lake Michigan. During migration, waterfowl, shorebirds, gulls, terns and songbirds often rest in the area during their treks. In winter the lake harbor and breakwalls hold varying numbers of waterfowl and gulls. Excellent sites include the 225-acre Schlitz Audubon Nature Center and adjacent Doctor's Park, Lake and South Shore parks, Bradford Beach, North Point, McKinley Marina, and Milwaukee Harbor and Coast Guard Impoundment.

Wisconsin's Top 50 Birding Sites



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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wisconsin Point – Superior 2. Brule River 3. Port Wing – Herbster – Cornucopia 4. Ashland – Fish Creek 5. Crex Meadows Wildlife Area and Fish Lake Wildlife Area 6. Nicolet National Forest – Hiles – Three Lakes 7. Seagull Bar – Red Arrow Park 8. Northern Door County 9. Meridean area 10. Eau Claire area 11. Lake Wissota State Park 12. Wausau area 13. Mead Wildlife Area 14. Stockbridge-Munsee and Menominee reservations 15. Green Bay area 16. Eastern Kewaunee County | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 17. Western Buffalo County 18. Bear Bluff area 19. Stevens Point area 20. Buena Vista Grasslands 21. Shiocton – Black Creek – New London 22. Rat River Wildlife Area 23. Fox Cities area 24. High Cliff State Park 25. Manitowoc and Two Rivers area 26. Cleveland – Fischer Creek County Park 27. Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge 28. La Crosse area 29. Upper Mississippi National Wildlife Refuge 30. Necedah National Wildlife Refuge 31. Green Lake County 32. Kettle Moraine State Forest, North Unit 33. Sheboygan area 34. Spring Green Reserve | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 35. Devil's Lake State Park and Baxter's Hollow 36. Mud Lake Wildlife Area and Grassy Lake Wildlife Area 37. Arlington ponds 38. Beaver Dam ponds 39. Horicon Marsh 40. Theresa Marsh 41. Eastern Ozaukee County 42. Wyalusing State Park 43. Governor Dodge State Park 44. Madison area 45. Brooklyn Wildlife Area 46. Sugar River – Beloit – Janesville 47. Kettle Moraine State Forest, South Unit 48. Vernon Marsh 49. Milwaukee area 50. Racine area |
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