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Special Issue: Watchable Wildlife

WISCONSIN NATURAL RESOURCES

\$3.00



Wisconsin's best show — take time to watch it

Steve Miller

Observing wildlife is a treat for all ages.

The evening sun was already quite low. I was concerned my family and I would not have enough daylight to canoe the marsh as we'd planned.

"Are we there yet, Daddy?" asked my seven-year-old daughter. As we turned off the road onto the gravel lane, I was happy to give her a definite "Yes, Debbie, we are here! Can you see the marsh at the end of the road?"

She answered at the same time I saw a sleek, brown, little long-tailed weasel bounding down the lane in front of the truck.

"A weasel!" I said. "Look at the weasel. It's carrying a ground squirrel!"

From all around me came excited shouts of "Where?" "A what?" "Where is it?" as my wife Shirley and five-year-old daughter Kami and Debbie searched the roadway in front of us with wide eyes.

"Look straight ahead," I directed, just as Debbie caught sight of it.

"Look at the weasel," she giggled.

"Look Kami," coached Shirley, but Kami still didn't see it.

I stopped the truck just as the weasel dropped its evening meal in the lane and darted into the tall grass at the edge. This was a real treat to see, even for me. You don't often see weasels, let alone one that's running for cover carrying a thirteen-lined ground squirrel.

Our excursion on the marsh to see some duck broods and watch the sun set over the cattails and lily pads would have to be slightly delayed. We waited to see if the weasel would return for its prey.

The ground squirrel lay in the middle of the lane. I surmised that the weasel had just caught it and was returning to its lair when we interrupted its trip. Knowing a little bit about weasels, I knew it wouldn't let us keep it from bringing that bit of dinner home.

We all waited impatiently in the truck about 20 feet from the squirrel. Sure enough, in just a few moments, I suddenly saw its pointed head with two tiny coal black eyes sizing us up.

I whispered, "Debbie, Kami, look — there's the weasel. He's looking at us."

"Where? Let me see!" they shouted as they scrambled onto my lap to look out the window.

With all the commotion, the little predator vanished again. I knew he



Weasel. Photo courtesy of the DNR Bureau of Wildlife Management.

wouldn't leave his squirrel, so I suggested we wait just a little longer.

Three more times we saw him poke his head out of the grass, stare at us and dart back into the grass only to reappear somewhere else. We watched quietly and waited. I whispered, "Where do you think he'll come out next?"

Kami asked, "Where is he? I wanna see the weasel."

"Look Kami!" said Shirley. "There he is; he's going to go back after the squirrel."

The weasel was preparing to race from the grass and recover its prey. Three times it feinted. Three times hesitating as if testing us to see if we were a threat or just harmless blundering intruders into his evening hunt.

Finally, his courage (or hunger) overcame fear and in one lightning-quick, rhythmic motion he dashed onto the lane, his jaws grabbed the squirrel by the neck and in three quick little leaps he disappeared into the tall grass. Quite a feat I thought, for it appeared the squirrel weighed as much as the weasel itself and was nearly as long.

So went one of our wildlife watching experiences that evening. We were together as a family enjoying a summer's evening and watching for whatever the marsh could show us. In all respects, it was a successful adventure.

Enjoy this guide

Welcome to this special issue of *Wis-*

consin Natural Resources magazine! We in the DNR's Bureau of Wildlife Management hope to introduce you to one of the most exciting and satisfying outdoor pursuits you'll ever undertake — watching wildlife.

In this special issue called *Watchable Wildlife*, we'll introduce you to some of the best sites in Wisconsin to observe and study our abundant wildlife. Nearly all are publicly owned, so access is easy. And they are located across the state, so they are close to everyone. We encourage you to visit one soon. You probably know of others and may have some favorite viewing spots of your own on private land.

We've also included helpful "how-to" articles that will get you right into wildlife watching with a minimum of time and effort. In case you're curious about methods we use to encourage wildlife, we have shared the management techniques we use to ensure plentiful populations of game and nongame species.

Watching wildlife adds immeasurably to any activity in the Wisconsin outdoors. We'd like to suggest that all Wisconsinites take time to get closer to nature and to enjoy the abundance and diversity we have in our great state. To this goal we dedicate this magazine and wish you success in your *Watchable Wildlife* pursuits.

Steve Miller is the DNR director of the Bureau of Wildlife Management based in Madison.



This special issue is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Terry E. Amundson, DNR wildlife disease specialist, friend and colleague, who devoted a career to encouraging healthy, abundant and watchable wildlife.

FRONT COVER: Northern goshawk.

Photo by Stephen J. Lang, Madison, WI.

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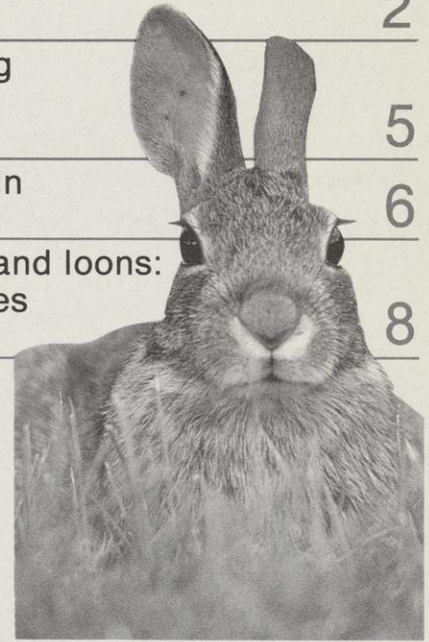
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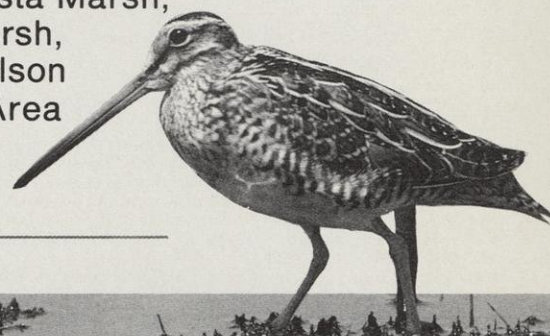
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Tips for beginning bird watchers

Allen W. Holzhueter

Birdwatching is a delightful outdoor activity that can be enjoyed anywhere, year-round.

In the spring of 1987, a ruff, a European shorebird, was spotted at the Goose Pond Sanctuary in Columbia County. In a matter of hours, birders from all over the state rushed here to view this rare bird.

Birdwatching, or "birding" as it is known among the ardent, is one of the most popular outdoor activities in the U.S. It's estimated that more than four million people in this country are active birders. Magazines, hotlines, clubs, newsletters and tours solely devoted to birding all indicate its ever-increasing popularity.

Birds, with their many sizes, shapes, colors, and especially their ability to fly, have always fascinated people. Birds are everywhere; it would be hard to imagine a place in Wisconsin without birds. Even downtown Milwaukee has sparrows, rock doves (pigeons), starlings and, thanks to private donations, peregrine falcons.

It's easy to become a bird watcher; just look out your window. Equipment is minimal; sharp vision is all you'll need, but a pair of binoculars and a bird guide are usually considered basics for the beginning birder.

Gearing up

A local sporting goods or camera store is a good place to find binoculars, but the many sizes and numbers may be confusing. The best binoculars for birding carry the numbers 7x35, 8x40 or 7x50. The first number refers to the magnification power of the lens; the second number is the lens' diameter (larger diameter lenses allow more light to enter, making viewing better in dim light). A rule of thumb for good birding is to use binoculars with diameter numbers about five times larger than the magnification number. Consider wide angle binoculars for a broad field of view and color coated lenses to cut glare. Finally, check the weight; you may be carrying them all day.

Practice with your new binoculars. It takes practice to spot birds, bring up your glasses and find the birds again.

You will also want a field guide. There are several bird guides on the market, but three are especially popular among Wisconsin birders: 1) Roger Tory Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Birds of Eastern Cen-*

tral North America has been a standard for years; 2) *Birds of North America* by C. Robbins, B. Bruun and H.S. Zim; and 3) *Field Guide to the Birds of North America* published by the National Geographic Society.

Do not try to memorize each bird in the guide, but get an eye for grouping bird families by their features, sizes and shapes. There are guides organized by color and size that may initially seem easier to use, but as you become adept at identifying birds — for example, sparrows or warblers — the guides that are organized by family will be most useful.

With binoculars and a guide, you're ready. Begin close to home. A backyard is often a good place to start. Bird feeders are ready-made lures for several species. Visit your local parks, woods, ponds, streams, lakes and rivers, and, of course, places identified in this magazine! Any of these places will have birds during most times of the year. Visit them on a regular basis to acquaint yourself with the birds that both live there and migrate through. Knowing when various species are in the vicinity will help you plan your "birding" year.

'Tis the season

In winter, watch bird feeders or visit local parks. No leaves and fewer species will make birding easier. In March, begin

visiting open water to view returning waterfowl. Watch for the first robins and blackbirds.

April showers bring more species; the swallows return. By late April and early May, warblers, vireos and flycatchers arrive. This is a good time to contact a local birding club or Audubon Society chapter to inquire about bird hikes and field trips.

During summer, get to know the nesting birds in your area. Go out at sunrise and visit a woods. You may be overwhelmed by many birdsongs, but try to learn them. Records and tapes are available, but an experienced birder can be the most help.

By August, some species begin heading south. In fall, bird migrations are not as concentrated as in spring.

By December, only winter visitors from the north and permanent residents remain.

As a new year begins, the excitement of the spring migration is only a few months away, and you can begin preparations for your next year as a birder. How many of the more than 375 species that have been spotted in Wisconsin will you see?

Allen W. Holzhueter arranges field trips for the Madison Audubon Society.



Watching wildlife at Crex Meadows, Burnett County. Photo by Dennis Yockers.

Birds of Wisconsin

Noel J. Cutright

Interest in Wisconsin birds is at an all-time high.

Why does a male cardinal keep flying against a picture window and a flicker drum on a rain gutter every spring?

Why aren't there as many meadowlarks and purple martins in the neighborhood as there were 20 years ago?

Wisconsinites are keen on nature, and they're especially curious about birds. Even the common birds have such interesting behaviors, colors, sizes and shapes that they contribute significantly to enjoying the outdoors.

Birds are also the most mobile creatures on earth. Their wings, tails, hollow bones and internal air sacs allow them a life of flight. They take to the sky to find favorable habitats at different times of year. As environments change, the kinds and numbers of birds using them also change.

Birds and Wisconsin's environments

Wisconsin has changed from the days of extensive forest, prairie and wetland to a landscape altered by forestry, agriculture and urbanization.

Today, more than 30 native plant communities and several additional artificial habitats occur in Wisconsin, each with characteristic bird species. For example, rails and bitterns breed in marshes; bobolinks and dickcissels in grasslands; and red-eyed vireos or ovenbirds in deciduous forests.

Certain species like the red-winged blackbird and American robin have wide

tolerance and can nest successfully in varied habitats; others like the lark sparrow, pine warbler and boreal chickadee are very restricted by habitat requirements.

Therefore, to see the largest number of bird species, visit a variety of habitats.

Bird populations change throughout the year and from year to year also. Evening grosbeaks may flood your sunflower feeder one year but be completely absent the next. Populations of bald eagle, osprey and wild turkey are now significantly greater than during the 1960s.

Species can either be helped (for example, those visiting feeders or using nest boxes) or harmed (for example, those adversely impacted by pesticides or draining of wetlands) by human activities.

Guides to where the birds are

Published observations of Wisconsin's birds date from the 1800s. The first book on Wisconsin birds by Kumlien and Hollister came out in 1903 and was reprinted with revisions in 1951.

The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology (WSO) book, *Wisconsin's Favorite Bird Haunts*, expanded from its 1961 edition by Rev. Samuel Robbins, Jr. that covered "30 of Wisconsin's most favorite locations for bird study," includes 102 sites in the revised 1976 edition and 1979 supplement by Daryl D. Tessen. This guidebook contains maps and descriptions of the best locations to find birds throughout the state.

Just off the University of Wisconsin Press in 1987, *Wisconsin Birds: A Seasonal and Geographic Guide* covers 265 species. UW-Madison ornithologists Stan Temple and John Cary compiled weekly data accumulated by several hundred dedicated Wisconsin birders during 1982 through 1986. No other state has attempted to gather and analyze such a volume of observations from amateurs. Graphs and maps present probabilities of seeing species, geographical range and abundance of species, and their seasonal variations in Wisconsin. Range maps divide the state into 43 regions, indicating if bird species are more common, for example, around Milwaukee, near Stevens Point or in the Superior region. Relative abundance graphs show how common or rare species are in the state, and seasonal

abundance graphs tell whether species are more common, for example, during spring or fall migrations.

A manuscript in progress, *Wisconsin Birdlife* by Rev. Robbins will provide detailed information on birds that live in or have visited Wisconsin since the first recorded observations.

For the record

The current list of birds that have been within the borders of Wisconsin stands at 392 species. New species are continually being added to the list. Some are chance visitors, such as the appearances in May 1987 of a curlew sandpiper and black-necked stilt in Columbia County or black-shouldered kite in Marathon County, and the species may not be seen again in the state for decades. Other species, such as the house finch that first appeared last year and now breeds at several locations in the state, become permanent residents.

To keep track of the ever-changing status of birds, DNR — as well as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Audubon Society, the Hawk Migration Association of North America, the International Crane Foundation and WSO — coordinate a wide variety of surveys. The bulk of survey work is done by amateur bird watchers.

Since 1939, WSO has encouraged study of Wisconsin birds. The society publishes a newsletter and quarterly journal, sells a scripted Wisconsin birds slide show and other ornithological and natural history materials, awards scholarships, conducts research, holds an annual convention and coordinates birding field trips. A recorded message on WSO's statewide rare bird alert telephone number, (414) 352-3857, tells about current and exciting bird sightings. For more information, contact the WSO Secretary, 6917 N. Hwy. 83, Hartland, WI 53029.

Whether you are a feeder watcher, an occasional bird watcher at local parks or nature centers, or a birder who searches for rarities — the birds of Wisconsin have a lot to offer. Enjoy!

Noel Cutright is an ecologist and a member of the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology.



Juvenile great horned owl.

Photo by Kurt R. Scholz.



(top left) Scarlet tanager.

Photo by Noel J. Cutright.

(middle left) Evening grosbeak.

Photo by Noel J. Cutright.

(bottom left) Indigo bunting.

Photo by Noel J. Cutright.

(top middle) Yellow-headed blackbird.

Photo by Todd Peterson.

(top right) Common yellowthroat.

Photo by Stephen J. Lang.

(bottom) Red-winged blackbird (female).

Photo by William K. Volkert.

Eagles, Ospreys and Loons: The Northern Lakes

Ron Eckstein

Calls of the wild.

There is something about eagles, ospreys and loons that draws widespread interest. Biologists who study frogs, clams and mice can't understand it. They say real nature study takes more commitment than just ogling when an eagle flies by. They say these birds get too much attention from people who have yet to discover all the less flashy creatures. Still, there is a certain mystique about these birds.

I don't think it's the birds alone.

It's also the northern setting; the lake, pine, birch, walleye and seclusion. It's a loon's call in the night. It's the feel and smell of cool, balsamy northern air. It's an osprey diving to catch a perch, it's the angler's hope of a nice musky. To many people the eagles, ospreys and loons are symbols of Wisconsin's north country.

The northern highland region of Vilas and Oneida counties has one of the densest concentrations of inland lakes in the world. These lakes and the surrounding forest support Wisconsin's largest population of nesting bald eagles, ospreys and common loons.

Many lakes in the region are developed, but many others are protected by

the public forest lands of the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest and the Nicolet National Forest. Spend time on almost any lake in Vilas and Oneida counties and you should see one or more of these water birds.

Eagles are sensitive nesters. They build most nests in large, old growth white pines. Pairs are highly territorial and defend an area the size of a large lake or a group of small lakes. The eggs are laid in late March or early April and hatch around the first of May. Young remain in the nest for about 12 weeks and fledge in mid-to late July. The young usually remain near the nest throughout August. Some adult eagles never leave Wisconsin's breeding grounds. Most immatures and other adults spend the winter south of Wisconsin in the Mississippi Valley.

Ospreys are only moderately territorial and, in some areas, pairs nest within sight of one another. Most nests are built right at the top of dead or dead topped trees. Ospreys prefer to nest over or directly adjacent to lakes and flowages. Many ospreys now nest on artificial platforms constructed by DNR.

Eggs are laid in early May and hatch in early June. Young ospreys spend about eight weeks in the nest. They leave the lake country in September to migrate to their winter quarters in the West Indies and South America.

Loons return to northern lakes just after ice-out in mid-April. Pairs of loons usually defend an entire lake, but large lakes without secluded bays may contain several pairs. Nests are built on the shoreline at the water's edge. Loons prefer to nest on islands or boggy shorelines. Eggs are laid in mid-May and hatch in mid-to late June. Young loons remain with the adults for about 11 weeks. Loons begin forming migrating groups in August and September. Most leave for the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts during October.

To manage property to attract eagles, ospreys and loons, land managers must protect and enhance nest sites while limiting human disturbance.

When observing these birds, take care not to inadvertently harass or disturb them. The most critical time is in April, May and June when eggs are incubating and when young are small. Stay away



from eagle nests at these times. Loon and osprey nests should be avoided during May, June and July.

Always stay clear of loons with small young. These birds can best be observed with binoculars from a distance. Trying to get too close could result in death for the young.

Best viewing

One of the best areas to observe eagles, ospreys and loons is on the Rainbow Flowage in Oneida County. This 4,500-acre flowage of the Wisconsin River is located about five miles east of the village of Lake Tomahawk. The flowage is managed for multiple use by the Wisconsin Valley Improvement Company. Development is limited. Access to the flowage is generally poor — the best way to observe birds is by boat or canoe. The east shoreline is a low, marshy area with large expanses of shallow water. Four pairs of eagles, 13 pairs of ospreys and two pairs of loons nest on the Rainbow.

Ron Eckstein is a DNR wildlife manager stationed in Rhinelander.



Osprey. Photo by Ron Eckstein. ▲

Fourteen-day-old eaglet.

Photo by Ron Eckstein. ►

◀ **Common loons.** Photo by Herbert Lange.



Backyard wildlife

Scott Craven

The best place to watch wildlife just might be your own backyard.

Comfort, convenience, privacy; an array of attractive flowers, trees and shrubs; songbirds, small mammals — sound homey?

If you answer yes, you aren't alone.

More than a third of all Americans, according to a recent U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service national survey, take special interest in wildlife near their homes. For some, this simply means watching what wildlife happens to show up. For others, it means active management including habitat development, feeding and the placement of nest boxes, birdhouses and sources of water.

The urban menagerie

Cities and towns harbor surprisingly large wildlife populations. Parks, green ways, bodies of water and other community properties can provide excellent habitat for songbirds, ducks, squirrels, raccoons, opossums and even deer. Many of these animals may visit your backyard from time to time.

Most “backyard” species are adaptable and tolerate minimal contact with humans. To encourage such encounters, you need to provide food, water, cover and space. When offered more than a manicured lawn, many animals respond quickly. Blue jays, cardinals, chickadees, robins and other songbirds; chipmunks, cottontail rabbits, gray squirrels, raccoons and more secretive small mammals; and a few toads, frogs and small harmless snakes can all be expected.

If food and water are not available year-round in the yard, they should at least be available on adjoining property. Security from excessive disturbance, such as pets and traffic, is also an important quality factor in attracting and maintaining “backyard” wildlife.

Wildlife home improvements

There are many ways to improve a yard for wildlife. Plant trees and shrubs that provide cover and/or food; leave patches of natural or “wild” vegetation; place nest boxes and feeding stations where birds and small mammals can get to them.

But, begin with a plan. Consider overall goals for the property. What can you realistically do? How? When?

Be sensitive to the neighbors' concerns. A neighborhood gardener may not share your enthusiasm for rabbits. The neighborhood as a whole may take a dim view of letting natural succession take over your yard.

Become knowledgeable about the requirements of various wild animals. If you don't know about their territorial needs, food habits, seasonal movements and so on, it is very difficult to provide for them.

Be patient! Some trees and shrubs grow painfully slowly.

With a few of these conditions in mind, attracting wildlife to your yard for watching, photographing, studying and enjoying should be easy and fun.

Life with the wild

Abundant backyard wildlife can certainly provide many benefits, but be aware of potential problems as well. The “harmless” woodpecker at your suet feeder might peck holes in your house. The cute rabbits in your hedge might make gardening next to impossible. The delightful chipmunks frequenting your rock garden might not be welcome in your neighbor's yard.

If you anticipate such potential difficulties and learn to cope with them, the delights of attracting and maintaining wildlife populations will outweigh the problems. There are several important precautions to take.

Be absolutely sure your home is “animal proof.” A crack less than half an inch wide will admit little brown bats, and a dime-sized hole will admit house mice. So, repair all cracks, holes, broken windows, loose vents, gaps where utility pipes or wires enter, and so on.

A sturdy, low mesh fence can prevent many wildlife problems in your vegetable or flower garden.

Generally, be prepared to handle problems with wildlife at the first hint of trouble. The longer you wait, the more difficult it is. In most cases, nonlethal remedies will make it possible for you and the animal in question to coexist, or the animal can be relocated.

Further information and help

Among many references available on “backyard” wildlife, DNR offers an extensive collection of fact sheets on individual animals. UW Extension has booklets on landscape design, plants for

The best way to a bird's heart...

Without a doubt, it's the most popular backyard wildlife activity. More than a third of all Americans feed wild birds — spending more than \$500 million each year for more than one and one-quarter billion pounds of birdseed.

Most bird feeding activity is concentrated during the winter months when people enjoy the color and activity that birds add to the frozen landscape. However, year-round feeding stations can attract nesting birds with their young and species, such as the ruby-throated hummingbird, that are not found in Wisconsin during the winter.

It's easy to get into bird feeding, if you aren't already. Select a feeder to suit your needs and budget. Place it where you have a good view of the action, where you can get to it easily for refilling and where the birds have some shelter from weather and predators.

The next step is seed selection. Many birds favor sunflower seeds (especially the small black oil type), white proso millet and cracked corn. Many bargain mixes, however, contain large quantities of less favored seeds such as canary, rape or flax. There are also species' preferences. Niger thistle attracts finches, while suet attracts woodpeckers and nuthatches.

Be patient with new feeders; it may take the birds a while to find them.

Many sources are available to help you get started, select and store seed, keep feeders clean and safe for the birds, solve problems with pests and get the most from your efforts. After a minimal expense and a little time, you can pick up your bird field guide, sit back and watch the show.—*Scott Craven*



Bullfrog on boardwalk.

Photo by Dennis Yockers.

wildlife, birdhouse/feeder construction and bird feeding, as well as an array of bulletins on specific pest problems associated with bats, deer, moles, rabbits, snakes, woodpeckers and others.

The National Wildlife Federation (NWF) has assembled diverse articles into a packet that provides a step-by-step program for backyard wildlife habitat development. NWF also sells a "Gardening with Wildlife" kit that contains everything from literature to seeds. You can contact NWF at 1414 16th St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Most nurseries can provide information about plantings for wildlife too.

A little research and development can always improve your backyard haven for wildlife and you.

Scott Craven is a University of Wisconsin Extension wildlife specialist from Madison.

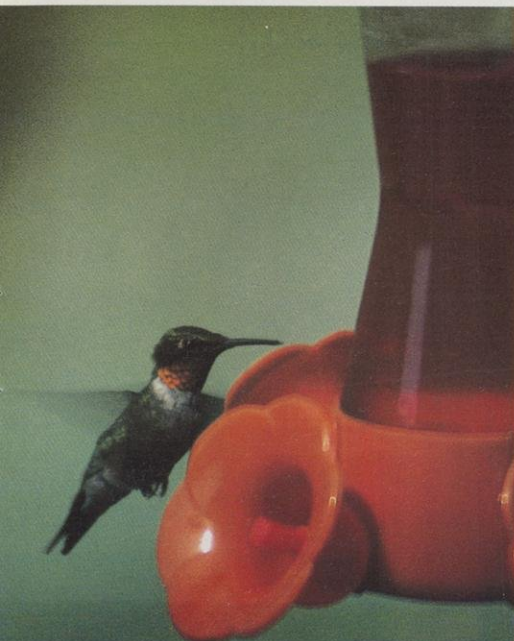
Cottontail rabbit.

Photo by Stephen J. Lang. ▶



Ruby-throated hummingbird feeding.

Photo by Don Blegen.



Gray squirrels munching a tomato.

Photo by Herbert Lange.



Watching amphibians and reptiles

Gary S. Casper

Amphibians and reptiles are some of Wisconsin's most interesting and least known wildlife. Next time you see one, get acquainted.

A turtle basking on a log, a snake flashing through the grass, a toad hopping about the garden — these are wild animals we only occasionally see because they are very secretive and usually inactive. To watch such wildlife, the key is knowing how to find them. Once they're found, amphibians and reptiles can be closely observed and usually handled. Many are beautifully patterned in bright colors that rival birds and butterflies.

The amphibians

There are 20 kinds of amphibians in Wisconsin — 11 frogs, one toad and eight salamanders.

Frogs and salamanders are best observed at their breeding ponds, which can be found by listening for croaking in spring. In summer, walking the edges of ponds and lakes usually scares up some of the larger frogs. Salamanders can be found by turning over logs and other debris in wooded areas or around wetlands. Be sure to replace the logs exactly as you found them.

Frequently after rains, amphibians can be found crossing roads adjacent to wetlands, especially at night. All species are harmless and can be carefully handled. Always wet your hands before touching amphibians, so you don't rub off the mucous membrane that keeps them from drying out.

The reptiles

There are 35 reptiles in Wisconsin — 11 turtles, four lizards and 20 snakes.

Turtles are commonly seen basking on logs or banks in bodies of water; use binoculars for a better view. Turtles encountered on land can be observed more closely, but remember that most will bite if handled and some have sharp claws. All except snapping and softshell turtles can be safely handled by the sides of the shell.

Lizards and snakes are usually found by turning logs, boards, stones and other debris in almost any habitat. Many will zip away when exposed unless restrained.



▲ **Eastern garter snake.**

Photo by Gary S. Casper.

◀ **Spotted salamander.**

Photo by Richard C. Vogt.

▼ **Wood turtle.** Photo by Gary S. Casper.

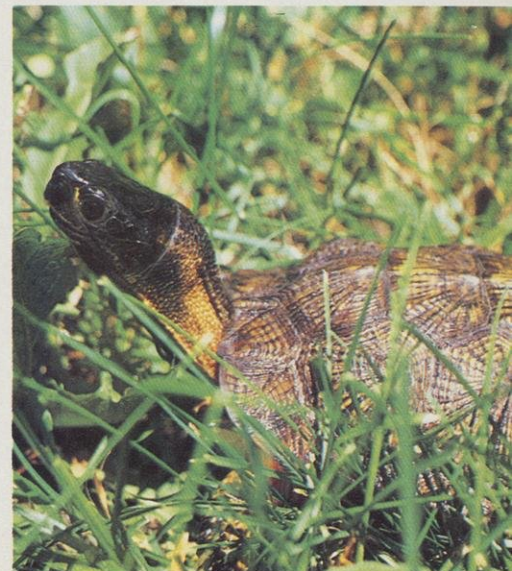


The best time to observe snakes is when they congregate at denning sites during spring and fall. They often bask in the sun on cool mornings and may be sluggish due to the cold. Sometimes you'll see snakes as they forage for frogs along a lakeshore or roam a barnyard in search of mice.

Most Wisconsin snakes are harmless, although some large species can inflict a painful bite. Occasionally, poisonous rattlesnakes are found, primarily in the western part of the state, but they are rare.

Like amphibians, reptiles are frequently active after rains.

Gary S. Casper is a vertebrate zoologist with the Milwaukee Public Museum.



Home, Sweet Home

Al Stenstrup

People construct a variety of different homes to live in. High rise apartments, single family units, condominiums, solar buildings and earth sheltered homes are some examples. The type of home we construct depends on the climate, the type of building materials available and the skills of the builder.

Homes in the animal kingdom are equally diverse. They are also constructed based on climate, available materials and the skills of the builder.

The variety of animal homes is amazing — bird nests, spider webs, plant galls, caddis fly cases, hollowed trees, caverns, burrows, dunes and fish nests are all among the diverse types of shelters in nature's architecture. Just like your home, wild homes provide protection from predators, shelter from harsh weather, food storage and a place to raise young.

An animal's home reflects its abilities, characteristics and life story. Our state animal — the badger — shifts from one hole in the ground to another. Bred, born and raised in a burrow, it spends a good part of its life digging in and burrowing out. Badgers are especially shaped for underground living. They are short and flat so they can flatten their bodies to wriggle and crawl through a maze of burrows. Their long, strong claws are designed for earth moving. The badger is indeed well adapted for its earth-sheltered home.

Many species only build a home to raise their young. The activity level around a home will give you clues to the stage in the animal's reproductive cycle. Just like the trash can you place on the curb, the debris found around wildlife homes will give you information on animal diets and types of available prey in the area.

To investigate a newly discovered animal home, take a look at the "floor plan" and the "neighborhood." Note the location of the home, its elevation, direction of any entrance or exit, size of opening and any runways leading to or from the home. Note the building materials of the home and its total size. These characteristics will help you determine what lives there.



Young gray squirrels denned. Photo by Herbert Lange.



Muskrat lodge. Photo by Dennis Yockers.

Observing wildlife appeals to the Sherlock Holmes in all of us. Often we only find clues to an animal's activity — tracks, droppings and homes — rather than the animal itself. Animal homes are fascinating places to observe and study wildlife. The ability to spot and interpret

clues around an animal home will help you piece together various bits of information to get a fuller picture and appreciation of an animal's behavior.

Al Stenstrup is the superintendent at DNR's Havenwoods Environmental Awareness Center in Milwaukee.

Northern orioles feeding. Photo by Herbert Lange.

Pheasant nest. Photo by Don Fendry.

Loon nest on Stockton Island lagoon.

Photo courtesy of the National Park Service.



Learn to “read” wildlife’s silent signals

Holly A. Kuusinen

Wildlife watching builds lifelong skills worth having.

Tap your fingernails rapidly on the desk top. Now, tap just one. Does that sound like anything you know?

If you’re out some spring morning looking for wildlife and you hear rapid tapping, chances are you’re hearing a downy or hairy woodpecker proclaiming his territory. If the tapping is louder and slower, like your single tap on the desk, your subject could be a pileated woodpecker. The best wildlife watching most often follows careful listening and a lot of learning.

There’s really no way around it. Learning about wildlife habits and habitats is the best way to begin this richly rewarding lifetime pursuit.

Signs of wildlife are all around you. Tracks in the mud or sand are easy enough to spot. Broken or nibbled branches, cracked acorns or hickory nutshells, rubs and scratches on tree trunks, chewed and stripped tree bark, broken cattails and scats are all silent signals that wildlife is nearby. Recognize the signs, and you’ll find that a variety of creatures share your environment.

To really see wildlife at its best, teach yourself to “read” the natural road maps and blend into the habitat. As retired DNR naturalist George Knudsen used to say, learn the lay of the land:

“Locate the places where the marshes and fields meet the woods’ border, where the creek and river bottoms and terraces are, where the less inhabited lakes and potholes may be found, where the old logging roads, woods and marsh trails are.”

Animals make trails throughout the woods and use them regularly, especially at night. Building a small blind near a trail will not only protect you from the elements, but will conceal you completely from sight.

Animals have a keen sense of hearing, too. You don’t want to announce to the wild kingdom that you’re ready for it, so leave your clinking jewelry and jangling chains at home. Wear soft-soled, water-proof shoes — not those noisy clogs that can sound like a team of Clydesdales parading down Constitution Avenue! Dress

to see, not to be seen; to hear, but not be heard.

Many animals have a highly developed sense of smell and will detect you long before they will hear or see you. People have a natural scent too, and it’s easily detected by creatures. If you’re going out at dawn to see wildlife, don’t announce your presence with perfume, after shave or a liberal dousing of mosquito dope. Even a whiff of that “line dried, fresh scent” from your fabric softener can be all that’s necessary to send your quarry deep into the woods.

Do a little homework. Read about the wildlife you hope to see. Learn what and where it prefers to eat, rest, hide and socialize. You won’t often find pheasants in the forest or ruffed grouse in the middle of a cornfield.

Learning a little about the weather and natural cycles will also increase your chances of seeing wildlife. A phenology calendar will help you identify nature’s timetable — the time of year, month and sometimes the day many species may be migrating, nesting or feeding in a particular area.

You can’t worm out of it: the early birds see the birds!

You’ve heard that wildlife watching is best in the early morning? Well, I have good news and bad news for you. The good news is wildlife watching is also good at dusk, the bad news is wildlife watching is often even better at 4 a.m. If you really want to watch wildlife at its best, then try an early morning trip. You can always take a nap in the afternoon.

Mentally and physically plan your nature walk

Now you’re up, dressed inconspicuously, and some good coffee is perking you up. You have your compass and flashlight in your pocket, binoculars are hanging around your neck, and you’ve wisely stuffed a couple of pocket maps and guides to identify birds, mammals, tracks and scats.

Now, take a walk.

Watching wildlife in the predawn



Beaver cuttings.

Photo by Dennis Yockers.

darkness of spring can be as exciting as seeing the animals in daylight. Don't be afraid to go off the beaten path, but make sure you have your compass and be careful. Try to become part of the habitat you're visiting.

When you find a spot to your liking, sit down, take a deep breath and relax. Let your eyes get used to the darkness — it will take some adjusting.

In the meantime, listen intently to the sounds around you. If you're near a grove of aspen trees, the wind in the leaves will sound like raindrops. You may hear the deep, booming hoot of a great horned owl, the happy (sometimes relentless) whip-poor-will call or coyotes howling in the distance.

Now, look around. Are there fireflies flashing? Check the ground — those little rows of tiny lights are probably glow-worms (unless you had too much coffee). If tiny, white specks of light move about on the soil, suspect spiders or insects. The eyes of many insects, including moths, reflect a yellow or orange light, as do the eyes of mammals such as raccoons and woodchucks. Even the eyes of a bullfrog glow green as they reflect dim light from the stars and moon.

Notice any old, rotting logs around you? Chemical changes in the wood may cause them to glow light blue, green and lavender as molds and fungi do their work: that's called fox fire.

As you watch quietly you will hear the dawn approaching.

One of the first forest birds of the morning, the wood thrush, calls a fluty "ee-o-lay" to announce the event. In a wetland, the American bittern sings like a squeaky bike pump; the red-winged blackbird shrilly proclaims "oh-ka-lee." In a grassland or prairie, horned larks will be one of the first birds you'll hear.

Birds and other species will emerge from the shadows throughout early morning. Scan the area slowly through your binoculars. Look for movement, but try not to move.

The best way to learn to identify feathered species by their songs is to venture out with an experienced birder a few times. You could also invest in recordings that are available from many outdoor stores and Audubon centers. Larger libraries may have records or tapes to loan.

To every thing, there is a season

In spring, the courtship displays or dances of many of Wisconsin's wildlife make unforgettable watching.

You can see many species caring for their young and going about nest build-

ing, den burrowing and food gathering from as early as February to as late as August.

If you're lucky enough to find an occupied nest or den, keep your distance. Don't jeopardize a future generation by getting too close and scaring an anxious parent. Enjoy watching from a distance through your binoculars. You may even see birds and mammals bringing food for another adult or the young.

As the early morning wanes, wildlife activity will diminish until early evening. The techniques for watching wildlife during the two to three hours before dark are basically the same.

Take part in organized wildlife watching trips

Many places and people in Wisconsin are fascinated by wildlife, and I've found that they enthusiastically share their knowledge with novices. Consider joining local nature clubs and environmental organizations. Schedule special wildlife trips. For instance, DNR sponsors two hawk watches each October along the Mississippi River and the Lake Michigan shore north of Milwaukee. Or how about a glimpse of our national bird? Some eagles overwinter in Wisconsin where open water remains. DNR Eagle Watching Days are held in January every year along the Wisconsin River near Prairie du Sac and Sauk City.

Watching wildlife is a lifelong treat

I can guarantee that watching wildlife will add a peaceful, enriching aspect to your life, whether you live in town or country. You won't be satisfied until you discover why nuthatches tuck seeds aside, why geese migrate in a V-formation, or how that squirrel gets on your squirrel-proof bird feeder.

Once you start learning about wildlife, you only want to learn more, watch more, experience more. And in the experience you may learn something about yourself. It's difficult to spend time with wildlife, wrapped in serenity away from the world, without doing considerable thinking. You may find your daydreaming more fanciful, problem solving more fruitful.

Noises in your mind may taunt you with flashes of deadlines, commitments, meetings and projects. Just take a deep breath, sit down, watch the chickadees and relax. Let the experience renew your spirit. We may belong to the human race, but when you make the time to watch wildlife, choose not to race.

Holly Kuusinen is a DNR public information officer based in Madison.

(top left) Train yourself to recognize animal signs. It's easy to see where deer browsed the lower branches of this cedar.

Photo by Bob Wallen.

(top right) Entrance to a groundhog burrow.

Photo by Dennis Yockers.

(bottom left) Call 'em deer scats, pellets or droppings. They all tell a tale of who was here.

Photo by Bob Wallen.

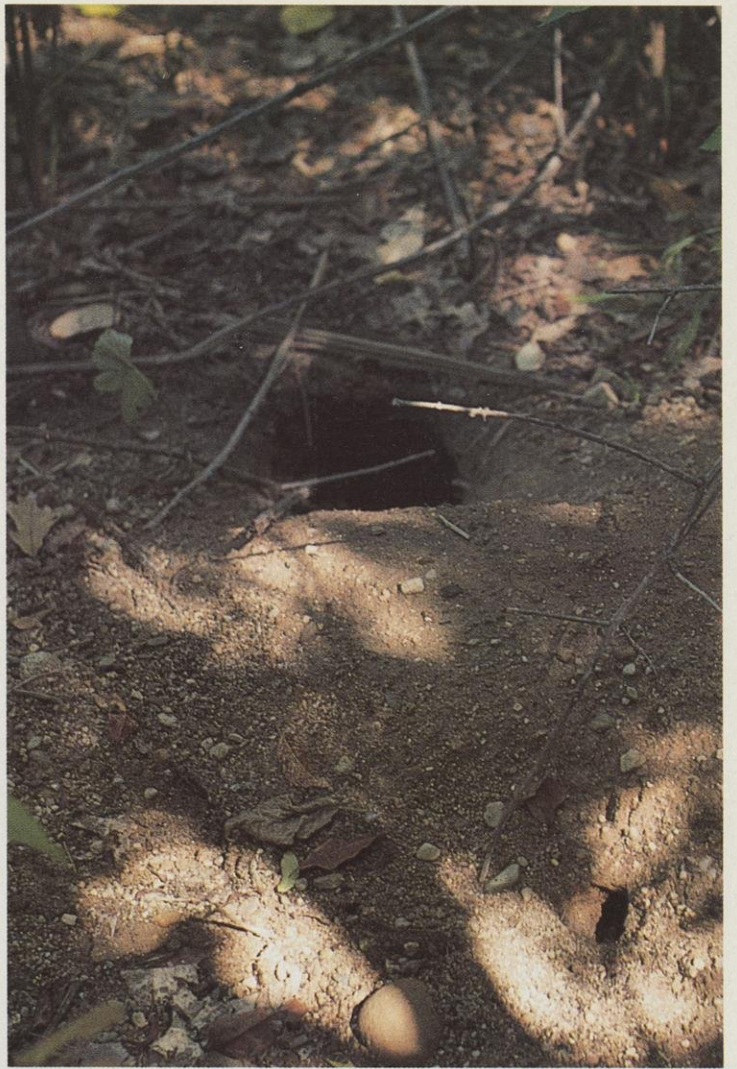
(bottom right) Sight and sound drew the photographer to this American robin's nest.

Photo by Dennis Yockers.

(below) Ruffed grouse.

Photo by David Crehore.





Wildlife leaves winter signs

Sam Robbins

Use all your senses when watching wildlife in winter.

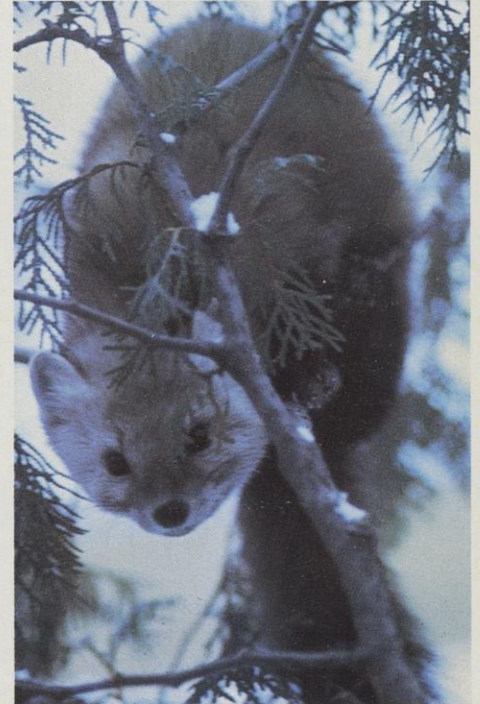
It was a nippy morning in February, with six inches of fresh snow glistening in the winter sun. Dad was fond of snowshoeing, and was already out for a fluffy hike when my brothers and I showed up for breakfast. We were dressed for our usual Sunday stint: an hour of Sunday

school (Mother was a teacher), followed by an hour-long church service (Dad was a deacon).

“Guess what!” enthused Dad as he returned from his hike just as we were about to leave for Sunday school. “I saw a long-eared owl this morning. He flew across an opening and landed on a low branch in a big pine tree. I imagine he’s gone to sleep there by now.”

All our protests that church activities should be expendable this once were to no avail. I had little confidence in Dad’s assurance that the owl would still be sleeping on the same limb that afternoon. But when my brothers and I followed Dad’s snowshoe tracks five hours later, there indeed was the long-eared owl, just where Dad said it would be.

I have been on hundreds of winter



(left) Pileated woodpecker.

Photo by Herbert Lange.

(middle) White-tailed deer.

Photo by Tom Bahti.

(right) Pine marten.

Photo courtesy of Minnesota DNR.

hikes in the 50+ years intervening between then and now. The prime time for winter hikes — afoot, on skis or on snowshoes — is when fresh snow has fallen. The snow sparkles. A little snow clump plops beside me when dislodged by a red squirrel frolicking overhead. A patch of otherwise untrodden snow may contain the footprints of a scurrying rabbit or a scampering gray squirrel. Tiny tracks across a path testify to the activity of mice and shrews.

I remember a January hike along city streets after a fresh four-inch snowfall, when I came upon a grove of ornamental spruces and noticed that the ground was sprinkled with scales from some of the cones. Hm-m-m. It looks as if some white-winged crossbills may have fed in the upper branches a short time back. Just then a falling cone missed my head by inches. I looked up in time to find a flock of eight crossbills feeding directly overhead — silently. I could have walked right by and never seen them. Had these been pines instead of spruces, the crossbills would be reds instead of white-winged — equally beautiful, equally unobtrusive in their feeding habits.

One does not have to wait for fresh snow to be ushered into the beauties and mysteries of a winter wonderland. At times, I have wished I were an artist, recreating on canvas an open meadow, with a lone naked tree in the middle; near the treetop might be a large lump — dark enough to be a rough-legged hawk, or light enough to be a snowy owl. Or the scene might be a barnyard with a couple of box elders whose branches have attracted 50 to 60 evening grosbeaks seemingly all chattering at once.

Some of the most mysterious times are the hikes that take place in silence. It might be in the afternoon when the only visible activity is the rattling branches; it might be in the morning when one would

expect animals and birds to be active, but there is no sound or visible sign of life. We are moved to ask: Do we speak of “the dead of winter,” or “the dead winter?” Birds, especially, gather in flocks. When I am not where the flocks are, the world may seem to be asleep, if not dead.

But sooner or later, the quiet spell is broken. It may be the flapping of a distant crow, the call note of a transient redpoll or a single chip of a chickadee. I stop, look, listen. Often I try a “sh-psh-psh” from an inconspicuous vantage point.

A year ago, on a gray January afternoon, I tried this in what looked like promising coniferous habitat. Even though I heard no sound at first, I found two chickadees responding from the west, two from the southeast and four from the northwest. Just what it is about this “squeaky” sound that attracts small birds I cannot say, but eventually I counted 22 chickadees, four blue jays, two red-breasted nuthatches, a downy and a hairy woodpecker.

Christmas Census

Thousands of chickadees will be listening to a lot of “sh-psh-psh” in late December this year. Each year since 1900, bird watchers have organized teams of observers to count birds in their home areas at a time of year when birds are more resident than migratory. In each of 1,500 areas in 1986 (mostly in North

America), observers concentrated on a 15-mile diameter circle and covered it as completely as they could on a single day of their choosing between December 15 and January 1.

This “Christmas Bird Count” is in one sense a scientific project: estimating the winter population of each species. In another sense, it is a game entered into by enthusiasts who try to: (1) better their totals of previous years, (2) be the top list producers for their region and (3) discover the presence of rarities.

In each of the past five years, Wisconsin outdoor enthusiasts have conducted 80 to 85 counts scattered around the state. Some birders count the feathered creatures that patronize their backyard feeders. Some counters go by car, stopping frequently where the habitat looks promising, and make roadside counts. Many participants count on foot — hiking around old fields, farm woodlots, dense forests, city parks, stream banks — covering every habitat found in their chosen areas.

You could be part of a Christmas Bird Count team. The project coordinator for Wisconsin is Professor William Hilsenhoff, 33 S. Eau Claire Ave., Madison, WI 53705. If you contact him by early December he can put you in touch with a team captain close to where you live.

Rev. Sam Robbins is an avid birder, lecturer and author of an upcoming book, Wisconsin Birdlife.



“Woodland Bandits,” black-capped chickadee painting by Daniel Smith.

Courtesy of the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum.

Listening to wildlife

John D. Curnow

Just as the artist and photographer develop an eye for seeing pictures, so naturalists should develop an ear to hear nature.

As a youngster, I always marveled at my father's fantastic eyesight, which allowed him to see everything far and near. No matter how hard I looked, I never saw all the things that he pointed out during weekend trips to the family cottage on the Mississippi River.

"There are Canada geese in the marsh," he'd observe.

"Where?" I couldn't see geese.

"A deer's in the meadow." He'd somehow know.

"Huh?" I couldn't see it.

"Can you see that bird up there in the cottonwood?"

"No, Dad, but I can hear it singing."

It slowly dawned on me that I could hear a lot more things outdoors than I could see. By concentrating on hearing as well as seeing, I had a better idea of what was going on around me.

Learning to listen

How can a person be more aware of nature's sounds?

First, learn to really listen. Sounds are there, but often they're ignored — as the sounds of refrigerators or furnaces are ignored.

Next, learn to identify the sounds you hear. Many nature sounds are easily identified. Most hunters and naturalists recognize the snort of deer, the thumping of ruffed grouse, the call of Canada geese or the haunting cry of loons. Other sounds are less recognized by casual observers, for example, a hawk's screech, a coyote's yip, a skunk's soft call or a woodcock's spooky fluttering during mating season.

Then, how does an inexperienced listener learn to identify nature's sounds? Records and tapes, available through libraries and recording catalogs, help with some sounds — especially those made by birds, frogs and toads — but some unrecognized sounds require a search for the source.

One night in a northern Wisconsin cottage, my wife and I were awakened by a strange clinking sound coming from the outside patio. Upon investigation, we found a skunk with its head in a glass jar.

It would lift its head and the jar, take a few steps, drop its head and let the jar hit the cement patio. This produced a "pat-pat-clink, pat-pat-clink" sound unlike anything we had ever heard before.

Consider unrecognized sounds a challenge. If you don't know what you're hearing, stalk it until you can make a positive identification.

Sound tracks

For some people, listening to nature can lead to a new hobby — tape

recording wildlife sounds. If you're interested in nature photography, the next step may be creating a library of nature sounds to accompany your slides, movies or video tapes. Recording equipment ranges from inexpensive cassette recorders with electric microphones to professional reel to reel systems with parabolic microphones and reflectors.

Record alone or with only one other person. The farther you are from the sound you want to record, the greater your chances of recording distracting background noises. Careful stalking techniques will bring you close to animals. You need to get close to minimize distracting background noises in your recordings. Also, you must sometimes remain motionless for 10 to 15 minutes to record timid songbirds or wild turkeys.

Although you can hear wildlife statewide, there are certain areas that seem to offer exceptional listening. Wyalusing State Park is an earful every spring as a large variety of birds migrate through the Mississippi River valley. Because Wyalusing is not as crowded as some of the other state parks, it offers the sounds of nature with few human distractions.

The Chequamegon National Forest around Drummond is another excellent area, with deep woods, isolated lakes and rivers. There, I've recorded the sounds of loons, hermit thrushes, deer, skunks, coyotes and even a timber wolf.

The coastal forests and rocky shores of Lake Superior at Bark Bay near Herbster in upper Bayfield County have long been a favorite of anglers, hunters and naturalists seeking the solitude of a wild area.

If you live in the southwestern part of the state, visit the sand prairies and bottomland forests of the Wisconsin River valley between Muscoda and Blue River. There you can find flocks of wild turkeys in the pine and oak barrens as well as many deep forest birds and warblers along the river.

The quiet of nature, you'll find, is full of buzzing, drumming, whispering and yelping voices singing the songs of the earth. Tune in.



A big parabolic ear tunes in wildlife.

Photo by Joe Koelsch.



Immature red-tailed hawk.

Photo by Kurt R. Scholz.

John D. Curnow teaches biology at Richland Center High School.

Leave wildlife alone

Nancy C.A. Frank

As the director of Wisconsin's largest wild animal rehabilitation center, Wildlife ARC (Animal Rehabilitation Center) in Milwaukee, I have too often seen the sad results of well intentioned, but inexpert wild animal care.

You don't have to travel far in Wisconsin to see wildlife. Even in Milwaukee, about 200 species of birds and a wide variety of mammals, reptiles and amphibians can be seen.

Animals living closer to human populations are more likely to have problems caused by the human environment. Windowpanes, automobiles, high tension power lines and pesticides must be overcome to survive. Often, animals are injured.

What should you do if you find an animal you think needs help? First, be certain that it does need help. Too often, particularly in spring, concerned people pick up young animals they feel are orphaned. Most wild animals are dedicated parents and will not abandon their young, but they do leave them alone for long periods of time. Unless one of these guidelines applies, **leave wildlife alone**. Nature works by her own rules, and we need to respect those rules.

You need to intervene when:

- you can approach an adult animal easily.
- a featherless or down-covered bird is out of its nest.
- you can see physical injury (broken bones, lacerations or bleeding).
- one bird runs when others fly away.
- a young mammal or bird feels cold to the touch. (Yes, you can touch a youngster without causing the parent to abandon it. Mammals will often wash off human scent if it is minimal, and birds have no sense of smell that will detect human scent.)
- a nocturnal animal is out in broad daylight.

When one of the above guidelines applies, then it's best to take safety precautions for yourself and carefully get the wild animal into a warm, dark, quiet place to rest. Remember, not only do animals have claws, teeth, talons and beaks to defend themselves, but they may have



▲ An injured great horned owl endures a physical exam.

Photo courtesy of the Animal Rehabilitation Center.

A screech owl is treated with an antibiotic eye ointment by a professional rehabilitator. Photo by Scott Boutillier. ▶



parasites and diseases that could be transmitted to you.

Next, get the wild animal to experts who know how to care for it. Wildlife require specific diets and must be cared for in ways that keep them wild. Anyway, it's unlawful for unlicensed individuals to possess wild animals more than 24 hours, even to care for and release them.

Getting sick or injured wildlife to rehabilitators as quickly as possible may improve their chances for recovery. For example, a broken bird wing may heal solidly in the wrong position within five days from the day it was injured.

There are several wildlife rehabilitation centers around the state as well as many individuals licensed to care for sick and injured wild animals. Local DNR conservation wardens can provide phone numbers and addresses of these professionals.

Finally, remember, if you are in doubt about a wild animal's need for your intervention — leave wildlife alone!

Nancy Frank directs the Animal Rehabilitation Center in Milwaukee.



This opossum will lick the calorie-rich goo off its front left paw when it grooms. The goo is a nutritional supplement which will stimulate the appetite of this recovering animal. Photo by Chris Swartz.

What to do if you hit an animal

Each year, tens of thousands of animals are hit by cars on Wisconsin roads. Most are killed instantly, but some are only injured. If you hit or come upon an injured animal, learn what to do so you can avoid injuring yourself and, maybe, save the animal.

Most of the time, animals hit by automobiles cannot be saved. The physical injury caused by a vehicle coupled with the stress of contact with humans often kills animals before they can be transported to help.

When an injured animal is in the roadway and it's large enough to be a traffic hazard, pull your car off to the side of the road (if you can do so safely). Put on your flashers.

Try to coax the animal towards the shoulder of the road or a ditch without getting too close. An injured furbearer will bite and deer will most assuredly kick. However, wild animals will naturally try to get away from you. If you make some noise and try to herd it toward the ditch, it will usually move.

If you can successfully coax the animal off the road, leave it and call for help. If you can't safely get the animal off the road, consider lighting a flare or setting up an emergency reflector to warn oncoming motorists.

Drive to the nearest telephone and report the accident to the county sheriff's department. Tell the police what happened and the exact location. You do not have to remain on the scene.

In most counties, law enforcement officials know licensed animal rehabilitators who may be able to help. The sheriff's department may also contact the Department of Natural Resources or a local humane society. Typically, DNR wardens investigate wild animal injuries and the local humane society investigates cases where domestic animals were injured.

Dealing with injured deer

Small wildlife seldom survive car accidents, but large animals — especially deer — may sustain only minor injuries. If you hit and injure a deer on a Wisconsin roadway, call the sheriff's department immediately. Describe the deer's injuries as accurately as you can. A deer that breaks a leg can escape the scene of an accident and the leg will heal rather rapidly. Often, deer with broken legs or a broken back will still try to crawl away.

Do not attempt to put the deer "out of its misery;" you could get kicked, bitten or hurt. Also, *do not* attempt to shoot an injured deer (or any injured animal); it is both illegal and unsafe. If the deer is severely injured, an officer will dispatch it. Then, if you want the meat, the officer will tag it and you can take it home. It is illegal to retrieve a vehicle-killed deer for venison without a tag.

If you don't want the deer, the officer may tag it for someone else at the scene. If no one wants it, it will be picked up by a county contractor for disposal.

It's always distressing to see an animal in pain. But think before you react. Protect yourself and other motorists first, then call for assistance that may protect the animal from further injury.

Holly Kuusinen, DNR public information officer

A state of abundance

David L. Gjestson

More good areas to see wildlife and enjoy the outdoors.

DNR lands

Department-administered lands contain more than a million acres for wildlife enthusiasts to enjoy. There are 150 wildlife areas, 152 fishery areas, 78 parks and recreation areas and five state forests. Two hundred natural areas preserve unique flora and fauna providing very special viewing opportunities.

State-owned fishery and wildlife areas were purchased primarily with fish and game license revenue for hunting, trapping and fishing recreation. You can explore some properties to land's end, but others provide boat access to explore from beyond the shore — a great chance to canoe and glide quietly by wildlife of all kinds. These areas are also open to hiking and nature observation.

State fish and wildlife managers develop and maintain different types of habitat on these properties to ensure that a wide mix of fish and wildlife species will be around a long time.

State parks provide a variety of outdoor opportunities including trail systems that are ideal for observing wildlife. The parks' interpretive programs transform the park visitor from spectator to participant. Some parks have naturalists available to answer questions, guide nature hikes and present nature education programs. Ask about Junior Ranger and Wisconsin Explorer programs at park offices.

Five state forests — Black River, Northern Highland-American Legion, Flambeau River, Brule River and Governor Knowles — provide a diversity of timber types intermixed with agriculture, grassland, marshes and lakes — ideal habitat for wildlife. An auto tour through these areas provides many roadside viewing surprises. Watch for deer!

More than 2.3 million acres of county parks and forests plus 1.7 million acres of federal refuge and national forest lands add to the picture. County forests are often cooperatively managed by DNR to encourage deer, ruffed grouse, sharp-tailed grouse and waterfowl.

The federal refuge system includes Horicon (Dodge and Fond du Lac coun-



Elizabeth Hughes, of Madison, and her grandchildren, Ch'ya and Kusi Hornberger, of Philadelphia, enjoy a birding trip at the University of Wisconsin Arboretum in Madison. Photo by Bob Queen.

ties), Fox River (Marquette Co.), Necedah (Juneau Co.), Trempealeau (Trempealeau Co.) and the Upper Mississippi along the state's western border: great areas to observe spring and fall migrations. Wildlife viewing at Wisconsin's two national forests, the Chequamegon and Nicolet, is described elsewhere in this magazine.

DNR's natural areas are designed to protect scattered remnants of plant and animal communities formed by melting glaciers 12,000 years ago. These small, precious areas are often the last refuges for endangered and threatened species. The properties are devoted to scientific research, conservation, teaching natural history and preserving natural values for future generations. Some sites provide excellent, uncommon viewing opportunities, but be careful not to disturb the plants or wildlife.

And there's more

While Wisconsin's public lands are great resources, wildlife is watchable on many private lands, too.

Tundra swans traditionally use a Town of Fitchburg pond south of Madison alongside Fish Hatchery Road.

The University of Wisconsin Arboretum has an outstanding trail system through native prairie and oak forests that provides excellent birding and photography sites.

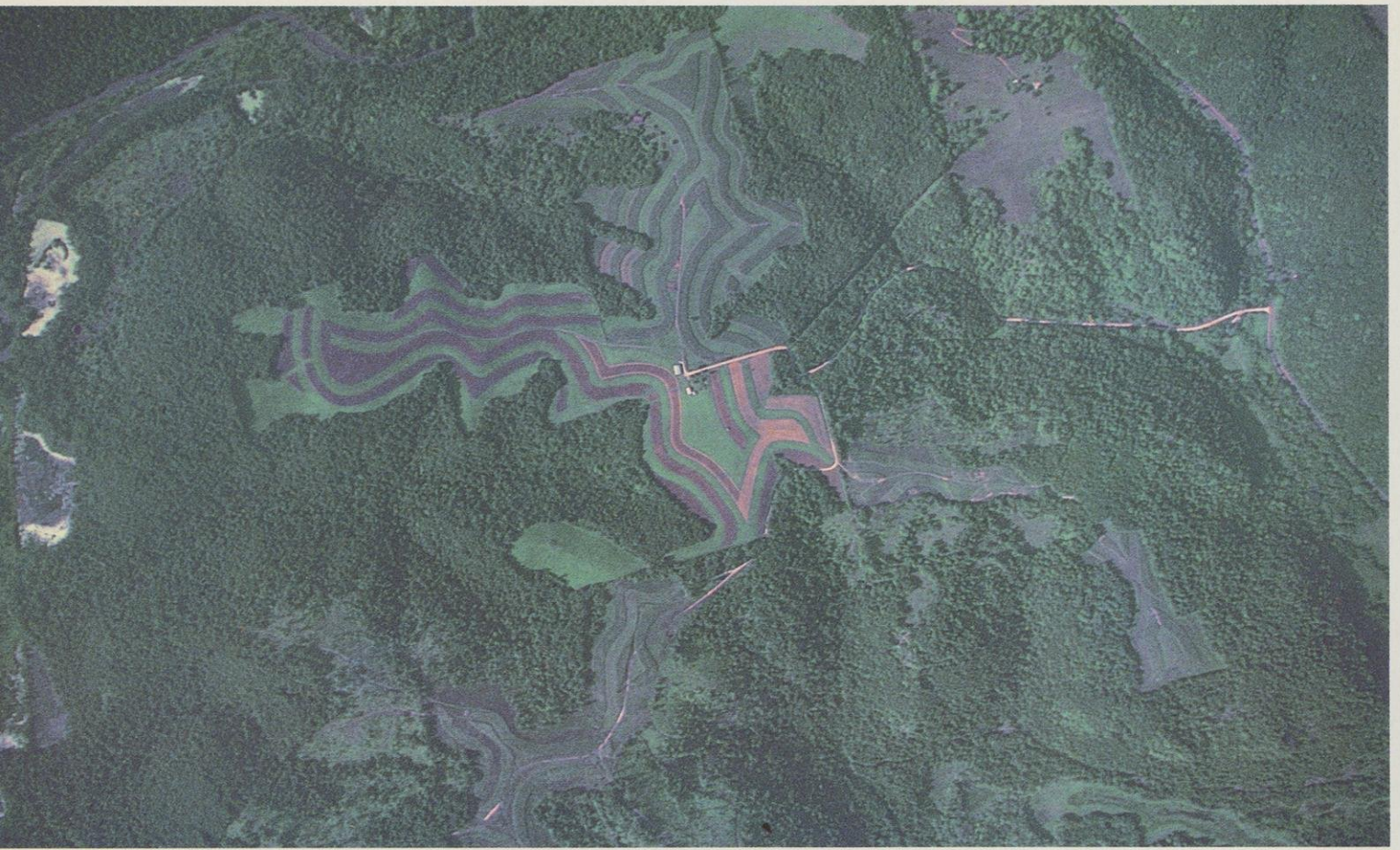
Wind Point in Racine County offers Lake Michigan shore viewing of laughing gulls, oldsquaw ducks, red-throated loons and water pipits.

Eagles provide viewing pleasure near Sauk City and on the Mississippi River in southwest Wisconsin.

Sportsman Lake north of Owen in Clark County provides a new wetland area for a variety of marsh birds.

I'll bet you know of more areas. State wildlife managers hope you'll share your special spots with someone on a regular basis. Make the time to go observe wildlife often. It's a lifelong hobby that will grow with you.

David L. Gjestson is a DNR wildlife staff specialist based in Madison.



▲ *From the air, the hills and valleys of western Wisconsin's Kickapoo region.*

Photo by Charles Burke.

Wood duck. Photo by Herbert Lange.



Coulee country wildlife

Dave Weitz

Kickapoo Wildlife Area

The Kickapoo River flows through this wildlife area, past small lakes and ponds where mallards and blue-winged teal feed. It meanders alongside an abandoned railroad bed where the sounds of rubber-soled boots have replaced ringing rails of yesteryear.

This 2,000-acre wildlife area adjoins 3,700 acres leased just for hunting and fishing one-half mile north of the Village of Wauzeka in southern Crawford County not far from the Wisconsin River.

The fields range from level to steep coulee hillsides. No motor vehicles, except farm equipment needed for farm cropping, are allowed on these quiet acres. An excellent, large wild turkey flock resides in the hardwood hills along with squirrels, rabbits, ruffed grouse and bobwhite quail. Timber rattlesnakes are in the area but are rarely seen.

Overhead, the valley wind currents help turkey vultures circle from nests high atop coulee hills.

Visitors may see red and gray fox and occasionally a coyote.

Beaver frequent the shores of ponds next to the hiking trail on the western edge of the area, and otter can be seen gliding down mud slides into the ponds.

The Kickapoo Wildlife Area is a place for all seasons. During winter months, cross-country skiers can spot red fox sunning themselves on south facing winter slopes. You may see deer walk silently along ski trails. Otter and beaver tracks are often visible near ponds. Overwinter food patches planted by wildlife managers are good places to see foraging wild turkeys, squirrels, deer and a variety of birds.

In spring, the hardwood forests bud, as overhead migrations of waterfowl and

raptors head north. Throughout April and May, mallards, teal and wood ducks display their brilliant colors and white-tails bound through the hills.

You can canoe quietly along the western edges of the wildlife area and expect to see sudden glimpses of deer, otter and beaver during summer months. Meadowlarks and red-winged blackbirds will announce your arrival. Great blue herons that feed along the shorelines may stand silently as you pass by.

The canoe landing is located off the south side of highway 60 just east of Wauzeka along the Kickapoo River.

Four parking lots are located along the west side of the wildlife area off highway 131 north of Wauzeka.

For more information on the Kickapoo Wildlife Area contact: Ray Kyro, wildlife manager, 3500 Mormon Coulee Road, La Crosse, WI 54601; (608) 785-9000.



Wild turkey. Photo by Herbert Lange.

Van Loon Wildlife Area

This is hip boot country — during the dry years! It's also a place where you can put in a canoe at either the highway 53 or highway 93 bridge over the Black River for a trip through the wildlife area.

It's home to waterfowl like mallards and teal and the furbearers — beaver and otter. The endangered massasauga (black rattlesnake) lives in the bottomland.

The bottomland hardwood forest is composed of silver maple, American elm, ash and swamp white oaks on the higher ground. In the bottomland, where mallards, teal and wood ducks thrive, are cattail, roundstem bulrush, bur reed, arrowhead and wild rice. White water lilies and spatterdock (yellow water lily) float in the backwater areas.

There are even some remnant prairies in the Van Loon Wildlife Area where bluestem grows.

You can find great blue herons and egrets fishing quietly in the backwaters of the Black River while noisy mallards, wood ducks and blue-winged teal feed in

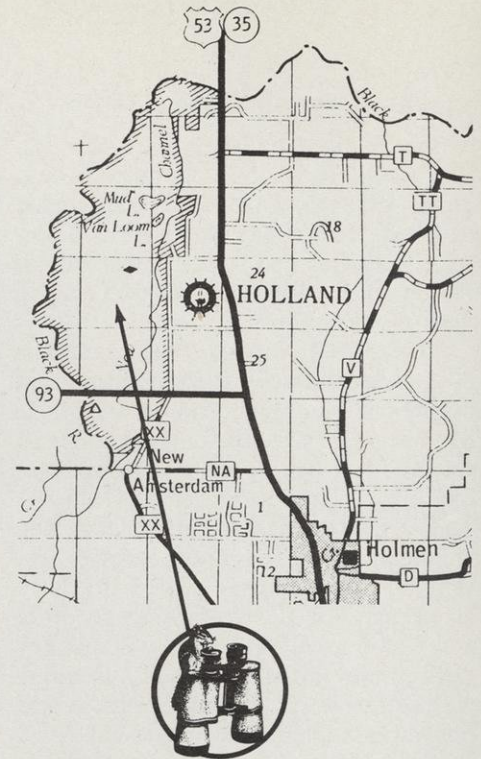
shallow areas. Secretive black-crowned night-herons, green-backed herons and osprey also live in this marshy habitat.

There is a special hiking trail near Hunter's Bridge which is about four miles southeast of the intersection of highways 35 and 53. The trail, about 1.5 miles long, is mostly level. It traverses an upland oak area where deer, ruffed grouse, squirrels, rabbits, raccoons and foxes can be seen. During winter months, the trail is ideal for cross-country skiing.

The biggest attractions at this 3,800-acre wildlife area are the beaver dams and houses and the playful otters.

You can obtain a map of the area at the La Crosse Area Office of the Department of Natural Resources, 3550 Mormon Coulee Road, La Crosse.

The Van Loon Wildlife Area nestles in the Black River bottoms between Holmen and the Village of Trempealeau about four miles south of the intersection of Highway 35 and Highway 53 near Galesville.



Dike 17

What you see when you get to Dike 17 is a bit of history — and a wealth of wildlife habitat.

Where tall pines once grew, where the sounds of sawmills rang, where the voices of farmers and farm families sounded out, we now revel in the sounds of geese, cranes and sharp-tailed grouse.

Dike 17 is a place for remembering yesterday and looking toward tomorrow. Canada geese, wood ducks, mallards and blue-winged teal congregate here prior to migrating. Birds from nearby cranberry marshes, beaver ponds and wetlands within a 15 to 20 mile area use the wildlife area as a loafing, feeding and staging area.

Peak goose populations have numbered as high as 7,000 and average about 2,500. Duck populations have ranged from 2,000 to 4,000. Much of the area is designated as a wildlife refuge, and it's closed to people from Oct. 1 through Nov. 30. The one exception — deer hunters can walk into the property to hunt during the gun deer season.

It's also home for the osprey, double-crested cormorant, egret and great blue heron. Loons fish in the shallow waters of its flowages and Cooper's hawks and red-shouldered hawks can be seen hunting overhead.

If you are a patient visitor, you may see an American bittern near a weedy bank or a green heron. Otter, beaver

muskrats and mink are common in the flowages.

But the area isn't dedicated just to waterfowl or furbearers. It's a place for sharp-tailed grouse and sandhill cranes.

Prescribed burning is used to slow down natural plant succession and maintain 1,500 acres vital for sharp-tailed grouse, cranes and waterfowl nesting areas.

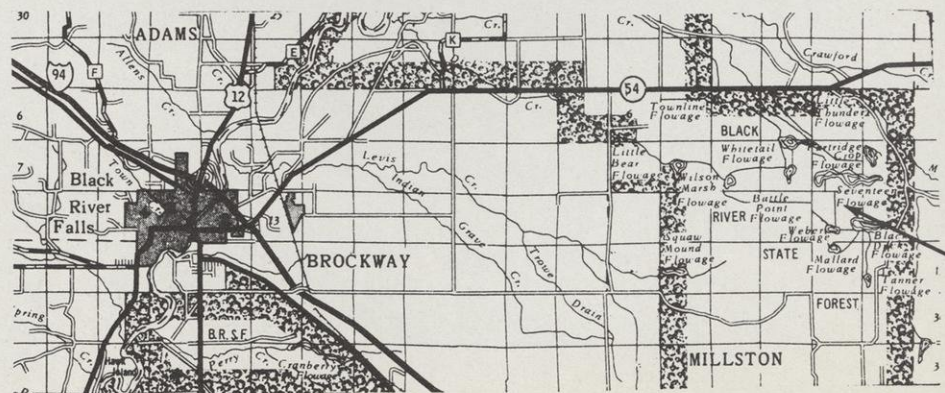
Each April, about income tax time, the sandhill cranes return to Dike 17 wildlife area to nest. They produce one to five broods in the grassy, lowland brush marshlands. There are about 60 cranes in the local flock but before migration as many as 350 have been counted.

At the same time of year, the sharp-tailed grouse take to the dancing grounds to play out their ancient mating courtship. From four to seven broods of

sharp-tailed grouse are raised yearly on the waterfowl area. The fall population numbers about 75.

From the observation tower, you'll see a large expanse of prairie and wetland next to a massive forest of jack pine, red pine and scrub oak. Once, tall white pine crowded the skyline. As European settlers came, the value of the clear white pine was obvious and in the mid-1800s the sound of the crosscut saw and sawmill filled the forest. Temporary villages, shacks clustered around sawmills, sprang up in the area as the forest was turned into lumber in the decades before the turn of the century.

After the cutting came clearing. Sawmill hands and settlers from Europe looking for farmland built farmsteads on the former timber country, raising cows and cabbages on thin, sandy soils.





Massasauga, also called the black rattler. Photo by George Knudsen.

Gray fox. Photo by Herbert Lange. ►

In the 1930s, with the country in the Great Depression and droughts that caused dustbowls, the sandy soil farms failed. The Resettlement Administration purchased many farms and relocated farmers and their families to new farms with richer, more fertile soil. The legacy of the Resettlement Administration was a 59,000-acre state forest turned over to the State of Wisconsin in 1957.

Dike 17 Wildlife Area, within the Black River State Forest, encompasses 3,700 acres astride 12 flowages named Whitetail, Partridge Crop, Battle Point, Upper Seventeen, Lower Seventeen, Seventeen, Wilson Marsh, Lower Wilson Marsh, Big Bear, Weber, Black Duck and Mallard. Together the flowages encompass 700 acres of water. **For more information on Dike 17 Wildlife Area, contact: Gene Kohlmeyer, Route 4, Box 18, Black River Falls, WI 54615; (715) 284-1431.**

Dike 17 is located 15 miles east of Black River Falls off North Settlement Road.

David Weitz is DNR's public information officer stationed in Eau Claire.





Barred owl. Photo by Ron Kurowski.

Kettle Moraine State Forest — Southern Unit

Ronald C. Kurowski

Approximately 18,000 acres for the birds — and their ilk.

The hilly topography of the Kettle Moraine — with its moraines, eskers, kettles and sand plains — contrasts sharply with the surrounding gently rolling landscape. This varied topography encourages varied plant life ranging from aquatic wetlands to dry prairies on gravelly and sandy knolls. Such diversity yields a variety of small mammals and birds.

More than 230 bird species have been observed in the Kettle Moraine region. Sightings include such unusual and uncommon specimens as the black tern, eastern bluebird, pileated woodpecker, sandhill crane, turkey vulture, upland sandpiper, wild turkey (reintroduced in 1986) and yellow-headed blackbird.

The best months for bird watching are probably April and May into June, when many migrant birds pass through and before vegetation becomes dense or insects become pesky. The best observation time is during early morning hours.

Trailing through woodland, wetland, meadow and marsh

The Scuppernong hiking trail rambles through hilly areas of oak and pine forests. Look here for woodland bird species, such as the indigo bunting, rose-breasted grosbeak, rufous-sided towhee and scarlet tanager. You may also see the black- and yellow-billed cuckoo, blue-gray gnatcatcher, ovenbird and wood thrush, as well as the American redstart, red-tailed hawk and tufted titmouse.

The Scuppernong Springs Nature Trail features a variety of habitats including sand prairie, oak forest, bottomland forest, marsh, creek and pond. This means many diverse birds, as many as 37 species of vireos and warblers, along with northern orioles, barred owls, belted kingfishers, Canada geese, gray catbirds, ruby-crowned kinglets, wood ducks, woodpeckers and many others.

The Scuppernong Marsh Wildlife Area is large and flat with a mixture of prairie, sedge meadow and marsh. A small section of the Ice Age Trail is the sole hiking path entering this area, but it provides enough access to see grassland bird species such as bluebirds, bobolinks, dickcissels, eastern and western meadowlarks, savannah and vesper sparrows, sedge wrens and short-eared owls. Sandhill cranes frequent the area too.

The Ottawa Lake Recreation Area — near a large, almost treeless tract of old fields and pasturage — is also a prime viewing area for grassland birds. Several service roads in this area are ideal for hiking and observation.

The Rice Lake Nature Trail crosses the hilly, oak forested terrain around the small bay of Rice Lake. Blue-winged teal, great blue heron, mallard, mute swan, ruddy duck, wood duck and many other waterfowl species are common in the area.

La Grange Lake is large, shallow and undeveloped — with forest and grassland areas surrounding it. A trail along the lake's western shore allows viewing of many bird species, among them: common mergansers, green-backed herons, pied-billed grebes, spotted sandpipers and American woodcock.

Access and facilities

The Kettle Moraine State Forest's Southern Unit Visitor Center is in Waukesha County on highway 59 three miles west of Eagle. Center staff will provide area and trail maps, as well as a bird checklist to help visitors identify species, habitats and approximate abundance. Picnic and camping areas are accessible to disabled people.

For more information, contact Ron Kurowski, Kettle Moraine State Forest's Southern Unit, Hwy 59, Eagle, WI 53119; (414) 594-2135.

Ron Kurowski is a DNR park naturalist based at the Southern Unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest.

Rufous-sided towhee.

Photo by Stephen J. Lang.





White-tailed deer. Photo by Stephen J. Lang.

Kettle Moraine State Forest — Northern Unit

Dale E. Katsma

Wildlife here will please your eye — and tease your ear.

Almost any wildlife species in southern Wisconsin can be found in the Kettle Moraine State Forest, especially in spring. The river systems and the long narrow band of wooded morainic habitat provide a natural corridor for migratory birds. Warblers are abundant in the forest and their spring plumage makes identification easier than during the fall migration.

Early summer is a good time to see resident breeding birds and young mammals. Autumn is a very colorful time among the hills and eskers of the Kettle Moraine and a time when hunters are in search of their quarry. Winter can be an interesting time to search for wildlife and to identify their signs by tracks in the snow.

In general, the best time of the day to see wildlife is early, within an hour or two of sunrise, or near dusk. The less traveled long trails or those that cross a variety of habitat types are usually more productive for sighting wildlife than the more popular loop trails. Another method is to sit quietly in a woodland or near the edge of an open field or wetland and wait.

A technique wildlife managers use to census game birds, such as ruffed grouse and wild turkeys, could also be used by anyone interested in locating wildlife. Simply choose a 10 to 15-mile route along the less traveled county or town roads in the Kettles. Choose a quiet, clear morning sometime between mid-April and mid-May and be at the starting point a half hour before sunrise.

At approximately one-mile intervals, preferably near cover, pull your car safely to the side of the road (put on your flashers), shut off the car and walk about 15 to 20 feet from the car. Now quietly listen and watch for about five minutes. You'll be surprised by the variety of wildlife you'll see and hear.

Before sunrise you may hear an American woodcock peenting. Near wooded areas you may hear a tom turkey trying to attract hens with his distinctive gobble. Along brushy areas you may hear ruffed grouse drumming on its drumming log and hear songbirds like a rufous-sided towhee singing "drink your tea" or the cardinal giving a "wolf" whistle.

On many of your stops, you'll hear mourning doves cooing. Near marshes, you might hear common snipe win-

nowing in their aerial display or a pheasant crowing on an upland edge. Near ponds, you'll probably hear a wood duck whistle and see mallards or blue-winged teal display their colors.

You'll probably see a few white-tailed deer crossing the road, slipping through the woods or standing in a grass field. At most stops, you'll see a variety of songbirds flitting through the bushes and trees, and perhaps a broad-winged hawk will flush from a nearby tree, or maybe you'll see a Cooper's hawk dart across the road. Or was it a sharp-shinned hawk? — an identification guide is always helpful.

If you see or hear any wild turkeys, let DNR know where and when. The department recently reintroduced wild turkeys into the Kettle Moraine area and depends upon reports from the public to help track their progress.

Wildlife Management at work

Other wildlife management efforts in the forest include working with local farmers to establish food plots for wildlife and maintaining open grass legume fields for ground-nesting birds. Native grass areas have been developed in several areas.

A large 200-acre project along highways G and SS includes native forbs (flowering plants). It's a good place to observe grassland birds and flowering prairie plants.

Artificial nesting structures have been erected by local bird and sportsmen's clubs and the department. Bluebirds and wood ducks seem to respond best.

Timber is managed with wildlife in mind. Large pine plantations are no longer developed because they quickly lose undergrowth and provide little habitat for wildlife species.

Hardwood timber sales are designed to promote more ground cover, retain older, larger food-producing trees like oaks and to retain cavity trees for squirrels and woodpeckers. Small clear-cuts are sometimes made in the forest to promote earlier successional trees such as aspen for ruffed grouse and deer. The department has restricted firewood sales to protect snags (dead and dying trees) that are so valuable for many species of wildlife.

Certain cautions should be heeded by wildlife enthusiasts in the forest. In the spring and early summer, stay on estab-

lished trails. Rambling through the woods may flush nesting birds, cause them to abandon nests or expose them to predators. Dogs must be kept on leashes from April 15 to July 31. In the fall, campgrounds, picnic areas and certain other areas are closed to hunting. A visitor center located near Dundee provides nature programs and trail maps.

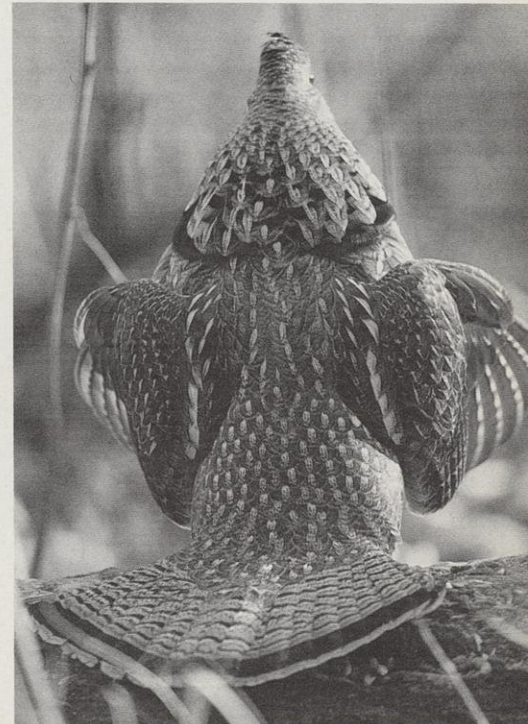
The 27,670-acre forest stretches in a long, narrow band from Glenbeulah on the north to Kewaskum on the south. The Kettle Moraine Scenic Drive runs through the entire length and highways 28, 23 and 67 traverse the forest.

Information on facilities like campgrounds and trails can be obtained from: Northern Unit Kettle Moraine State Forest, highway G, Box 410, Campbellport, WI 53010; (414) 626-2116.

Information on nature programs and bird watching can be obtained by contacting the naturalist at the Henry S. Reuss Ice Age Visitor Center located west of Dundee off of hwy. 67, call (414) 533-8322.

For information on hunting opportunities and general wildlife questions contact: Wildlife Manager, DNR, Rt. #4, Woodchuck Ln., P.O. Box 408, Plymouth, WI 53073; (414) 892-8756.

Dale E. Katsma is a DNR wildlife manager based in Plymouth.



Ruffed grouse. Photo by Herbert Lange.

Milwaukee County lakefront

Tom Smith and John Nelson

A window on the Great Lakes birds.

Are you a bird watcher who would like to view some unusual species? Are you looking for a different setting for photographing birds? Well, why not try birdwatching along the Milwaukee County lakefront?

The Lake Michigan shoreline attracts an array of bird species, many of them can only be found in Wisconsin along the Great Lakes coast. The Milwaukee County shoreline stretches for more than 20 miles and boasts numerous county and city parks and other public areas which provide free access to the shoreline. Most parks can be reached from highway 32 or North and South Lincoln Memorial Drive.

Shorebirds, gulls and waterfowl are the most prevalent species along the Milwaukee lakeshore. The greatest diversity of birds occurs during the spring and fall migration periods as birds use food supplies in and along the warmer coast.

Two excellent places to view puddle ducks closeup are Juneau Park Lagoon, about one-half mile north of the War Memorial Center on Lincoln Drive, and the South Shore Park boat launch.

Ducks reside at both places year-round, but the largest concentrations and greatest variety occur during winter. On a typical winter day, you will see several hundred to 1,500 mallards along with black ducks, mergansers, Canada geese, scaups and various gulls. Diving and sea ducks in large concentrations called "rafts" can be seen within the confines of the breakwater from later October through mid-April. There are several vantage points around the Milwaukee Harbor. Ducks are sometimes far from shore, so a spotting scope or binoculars will help you view and identify them.

Outer Juneau Park, the Municipal Passenger and Auto Pier at the end of East Michigan Street, the Summerfest grounds, and Piers 1 and 2 along South Lincoln Memorial Drive offer good views of the harbor. You may be able to view shorebirds, gulls and ducks from your vehicle. Scaups, goldeneyes and bufflehead, common and red-breasted mergansers, redhead, canvasback and ring-necked ducks are commonly seen.

Another common winter visitor is the oldsquaw, a sea duck seldom seen anywhere but the ocean or along the Great Lakes in winter. The male sports long tail

plumes much like a northern pintail. Both male and female oldsquaw are dark in front and white behind.

Small numbers of white-winged, black and surf scoter, common eiders, and ruddy ducks are sometimes observed. As long as the harbor stays open, all of these ducks will remain through the winter, feeding on aquatic plants and small fishes.

You will need to take a different approach to observing shorebirds. Shorebirds feed mainly by wading, probing in sand and mud and under rocks for insects and other invertebrates. Some species only inhabit the Milwaukee lakeshore during the spring and fall migrations.

Generally, the best feeding areas are in undeveloped areas of the lakefront such as parks. Try to visit any of the lakefront parks and walk along the beachfront on weekday evenings when crowds will be at a minimum. Binoculars and a bird field guide are a must if you are trying to identify shorebirds because many species look similar.

Identifying these unique species is a real challenge. You may want to simply enjoy them as they race up and down the shoreline or rest on one foot, a typical shorebird posture. You may see whimbrel, willet, dunlin, yellowlegs, ruddy turnstone, dowitchers, red knot or marbled godwit. Or how about some of the sandpiper clan — solitary, spotted, stilt, upland, western, purple, pectoral or white-rumped?

Several species of gulls and terns live and migrate along Milwaukee County's lakefront too. Gulls, primarily scavengers, prefer to alight on the water to seize food. Terns, however, dive from the air and snatch fish and insects lying close to the water's surface.

Juneau Park is probably the best location to view gulls and terns. You should be able to get up close, making identification easier. During the winter, scan the harbor on the east and south side of Juneau Park to view gulls on thick ice flows or check the lagoon where they often congregate.

Ring-billed and herring gulls are abundant year-round, but small numbers of other migrants or accidental visitors include Thayer's, Bonaparte's, Franklin's, glaucous, mew, great black-backed, little, laughing and black-headed gull and

black-legged kittiwake. These unusual "vacationers" arrive accidentally, getting blown off course during storms.

Caspian, black and common terns are nonbreeding summer residents of the Milwaukee County lakefront. Forster's, least and Arctic terns are spring and fall visitors.

Also scan the harbor or open lake for grebes, herons, loons, cormorants and tundra swans.

Many songbirds can be observed by strolling through the more inland portions of a lakeshore park. Look for warblers, flycatchers, orioles, indigo buntings, ruby-throated hummingbirds and chickadees. Winter visitors include northern shrikes, pine grosbeaks and siskins, red crossbills, goldfinches, redpolls and evening grosbeaks along with rough-legged hawks and short-eared and snowy owls.

Peregrine falcons can sometimes be seen during their migrations, and, if all goes well with the DNR's effort to reintroduce them, they too will be residents of the Milwaukee lakefront area.

About one-half of the length of the Milwaukee County lakeshore is in public ownership and somewhat protected from future development. Water pollution, however, knows no boundaries. Therefore, strict water pollution laws and their enforcement are essential to protecting and preserving the fine bird watching opportunities we have along the Milwaukee County lakefront.

For further information contact Thomas Smith, District Wildlife Manager, DNR Southeast District Headquarters, 2300 North Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, Milwaukee, WI 53212; (414) 562-9500.

Tom Smith is district wildlife manager and John Nelson is public information specialist at DNR's Southeast District in Milwaukee.



▲ *Mallards take in some sun.*

Photo by Stephen J. Lang.

◀ *Visitors flock to a Milwaukee County park pond.* Photo by Dennis Yockers.



Richard Bong State Recreation Area

Verne Wolf

Known to many as "Bong Base," the new Richard Bong State Recreation Area is a wildlife watcher's paradise.

In the mid-50s, the federal government acquired 5,500 acres of farmland in northwest Kenosha County for an air force base. It would be named after World War II flying ace Major Richard Bong of Poplar, WI. By the fall of 1959, with \$29 million invested in the project and a 12,500-foot runway nearly completed, a directive from Washington halted construction. Bong Air Force Base was obsolete; the land it was being built on was surplus.

After several years of controversy and litigation, Wisconsin acquired 4,500 acres of the federal holdings. They were dedicated in 1966 as Bong Memorial Recreation Area. Initially managed primarily for hunting, the property has developed to meet demands for more diverse recreational opportunities. It was rededicated in 1985 as Bong State Recreation Area, which is now managed jointly for recreation and wildlife.

The birds and the — beavers

There is diverse animal life at Richard Bong State Recreation Area, but the birds and the beavers seem to draw the most interest.

Bong's resident beavers are just a short walk from the beach parking lot. Fallen trees and a large "lodge" close to shore mark the beaver waters. If you arrive before sunset, wait quietly and are lucky — you'll catch the sights and sounds of beaver activity.

Bong is also a good place to watch grassland birds. Eastern meadowlarks sing at the first hint of spring; bobolinks arrive from South America in early May and upland sandpipers frequent Sunset Campground and the open grasslands west of the beach.

Yellow-headed blackbirds inhabit many of Bong's wetland areas during spring and summer. Watch for them from the boardwalk across the "Children's Fishing Pond" and at the Four Dollar Flowage. They have a distinctive call, which sounds like a rusty gate hinge.

From October to early spring, short-eared owls wing low and slowly over Bong's grasslands. The short-eared is a medium sized owl with a dark brown back and short, tufted ears. The raptor is especially common during snowless win-



ters when rodents are easily spotted. You are most likely to see short-eared owls during the very early morning, late afternoon and evening hours in areas including the beach road and parking lots E and F.

Bong State Recreation Area has ongoing wildlife management plans that enhance habitat and encourage species diversity. Prescribed burns keep grasslands open and discourage brush invasion. Control structures maintain water levels in ponds and wetlands. Food patches feature crops that appeal to many wildlife species. Artificial nest boxes and platforms abound throughout the property. And populations of many species are surveyed and monitored using modern census techniques.

Access and facilities

Bong State Recreation Area is eight miles east of Burlington on highway 142. It's also eight miles southwest of Union Grove and only three miles south of Kansasville.

Parking lots G and H provide easy access to the refuge. Predominately level terrain makes for easy walking, and an asphalt road accommodates disabled visitors. Binoculars or spotting scopes make the viewing more enjoyable.

For more information, contact: Bong State Recreation Area, 26313 Burlington Rd., Kansasville, WI 53139; (414) 878-4416 or 652-0377.

Verne Wolf is a naturalist at Bong State Recreation Area.

Vernon Wildlife Area

William Ishmael

It's an excellent area to view waterfowl and associated wetland species.

Several techniques maintain quality habitat at the Vernon Wildlife Area. Drawing down wetlands improves plant growth important to wetland wildlife, and reflooding stimulates invertebrate growth providing food for numerous species. Mowing and burning control brush and other unwanted vegetation; prairie grass and other grassy cover are also maintained through these means.

Management success shows in the wild response. Blue-winged teal, Canada geese, coots, mallards and wood ducks nest at Vernon Wildlife Area. Various ducks stopover in spring when much of the marsh is flooded. Migrants include bufflehead, canvasback, gadwall, goldeneyes, green-winged teal, redhead, ring-necked duck, ruddy duck, scaups, northern shoveler and wigeons.

Several more impoundments and ponds are planned to further increase the productivity of the marsh and enhance wildlife watching opportunities.

Wildlife rarities for species connoisseurs

Vernon Wildlife Area is first-rate when it comes to viewing sandhill cranes in southeastern Wisconsin during spring, summer and early fall. Sandhills feed on frogs, rodents, insects and plants in Vernon's marshes and upland fields. They nest in the area's marshes. The sandhill crane's voice has a loud, low musical rattle unlike the hoarse croak of the great blue heron with which it is sometimes confused. Sandhills generally arrive at Vernon in late March or early April and remain through October.

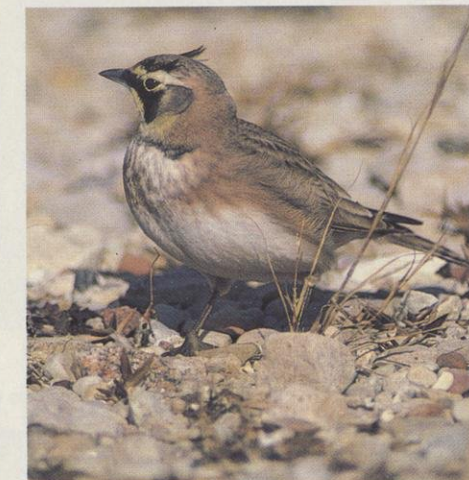
Yellow-headed blackbirds often perch on Vernon's cattails. Great egrets periodically visit to wade the impoundments, while northern harriers prefer to cruise low over the marsh. Black terns are easy to spot as they fly about proclaiming their territories.

Blanding's turtles, a Wisconsin threatened reptile, bask in the sun along the dikes. They can be identified by their high domed shells, profuse light spots and yellow throats.

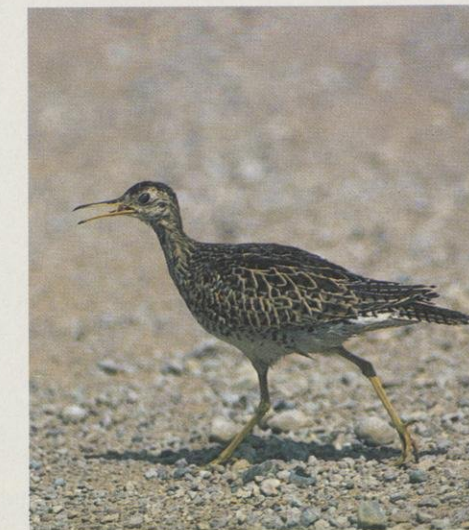
The Franklin ground squirrel is a secretive mammal occasionally appearing along Vernon's dikes. Distinguished from the thirteen-lined ground squirrel by its larger size, darker color and lack of



Killdeer.



Horned lark.



Upland sandpiper.

Time-out for these busy beavers.

Photo by Chuck Pils.

All photos to the right by Mark Wallner.

back spots or stripes, the Franklin is most active on sunny days and seldom ventures out of its burrow if it's cloudy.

Access and facilities

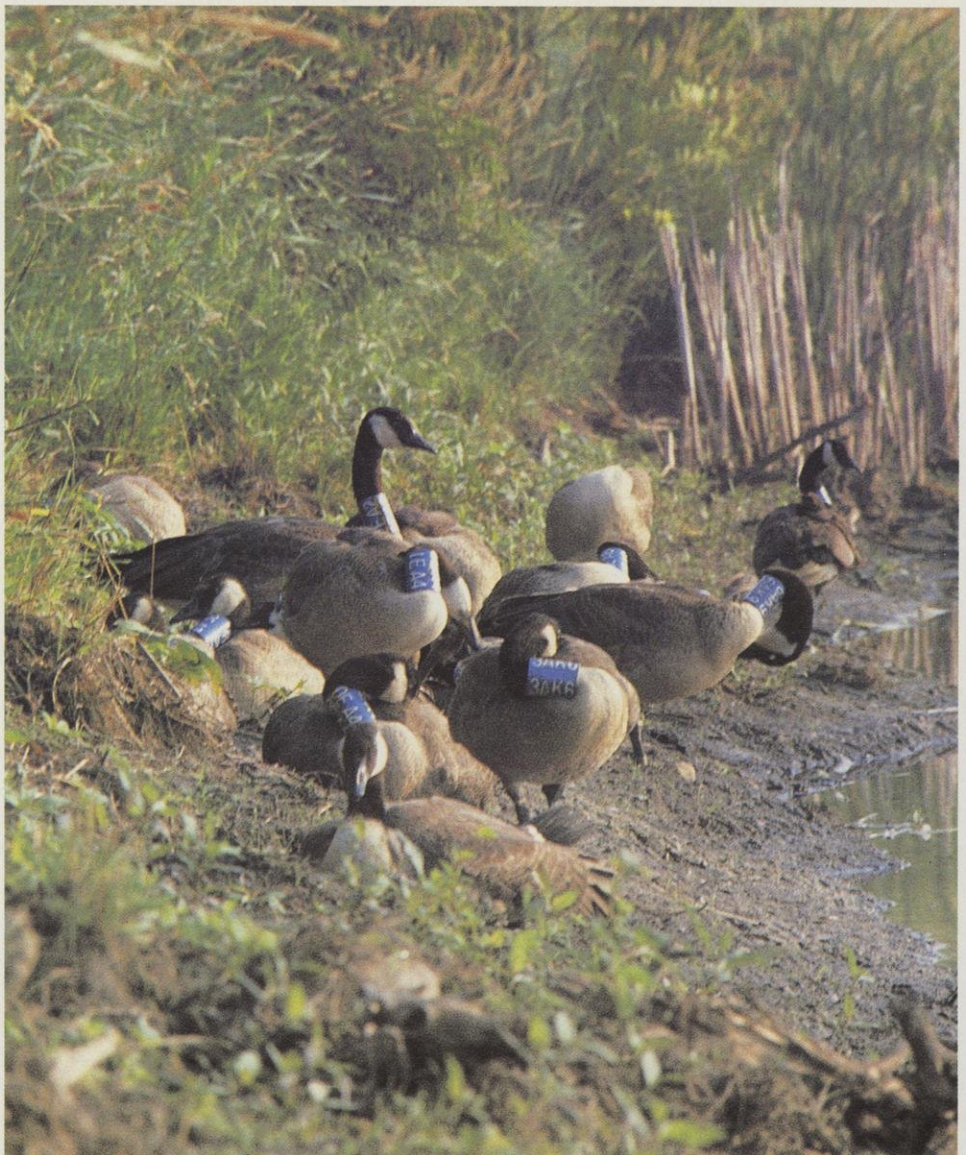
Vernon Wildlife Area is adjacent to the Village of Mukwonago in south central Waukesha County. It is only four miles southwest of Waukesha and 15 miles from Milwaukee. Parking lots off Frog Alley Road, Benson Avenue and highway NN provide easy walking access to Vernon's dikes. The Benson Avenue dike often hosts waterfowl and shorebirds.

While there are wildlife viewing opportunities year-round, the best time to view waterfowl at Vernon is in the spring. Walk slowly along the dikes and scan flooded areas. Binoculars or spotting scopes are usually helpful. You may see waterfowl in their breeding plumages performing their courtship displays, feeding or loafing during a stopover on their spring migration.

Another way to observe wildlife at Vernon is to paddle a canoe or skiff through any of the area's impoundments or down the Fox River. Travel slowly and be alert. You may want to call in advance to find out if any of the impoundments have been recently drawn down.

Mosquitoes and deer flies are also abundant at Vernon, so bring your bug dope! No restrooms or drinking water are available. **For more information about the Vernon Wildlife Area, contact Mark Andersen, Wildlife Manager, Kettle Moraine State Forest's Southern Unit Headquarters, S91 W39091 Hwy. 59, Eagle, WI 53119; (414) 594-2135.**

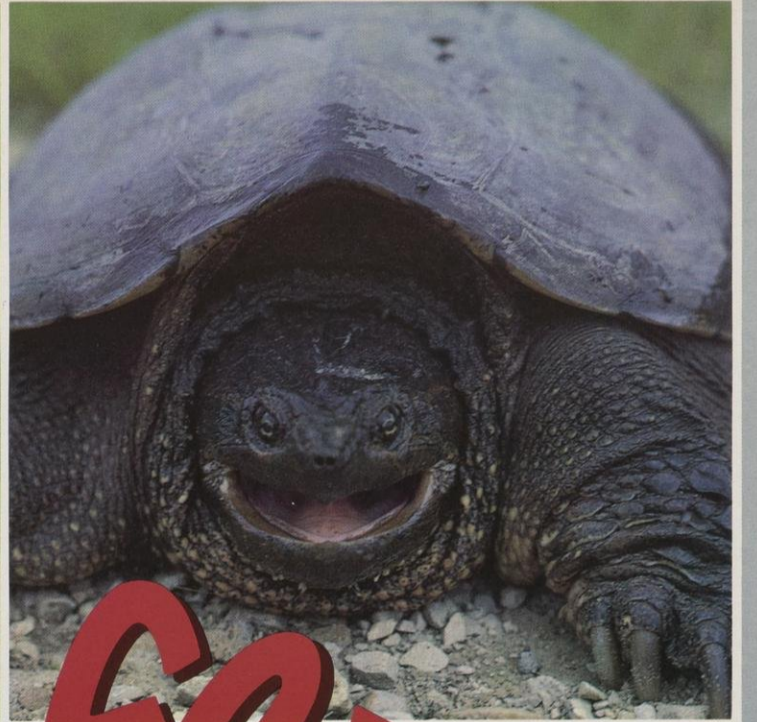
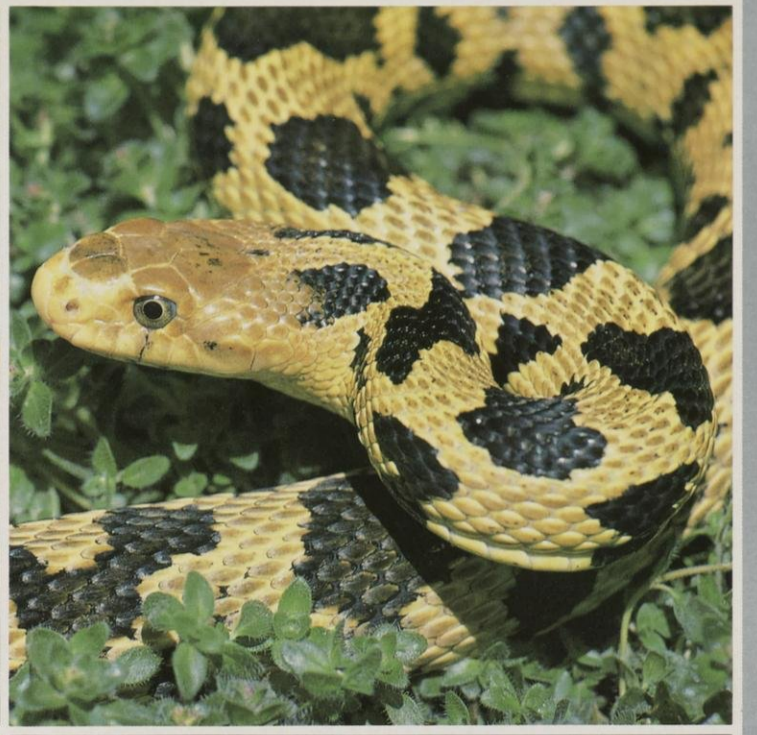
William Ishmael is an assistant wildlife manager stationed at Pike Lake Park.



▲ *Canada geese.* Photo by Mark Andersen.

▼ *Franklin's ground squirrel.* Photo by James Hoefler.





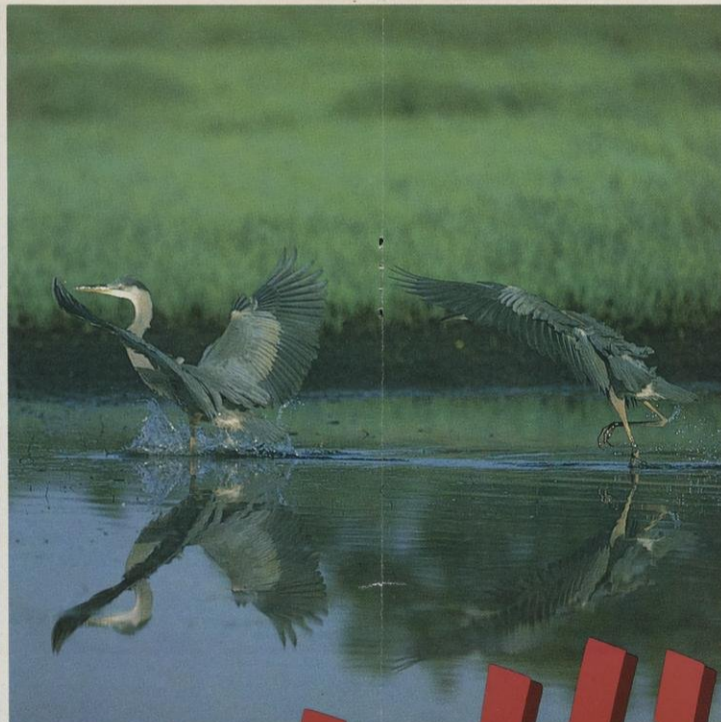
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Wildlife

Home

WATCHABLE AT AND ON THE GO.

Photo credits: Raccoons by Don Blegen; Gray squirrel by Stephen J. Lang; Fox snake by Gary S. Casper; Chipmunk by Herbert Lange; Northern cardinal, Woodchuck by Stephen J. Lang; Garden spider by Don Blegen; Butterflies on Joe Pye weed by Ned Norton; Snapping turtle by Don Blegen.



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Wildlife

WATCHABLE AT HOME AND

On The Go

Mud Lake Wildlife Area — Poynette

Patrick H. Kaiser

The 1,200-acre Mud Lake marsh has long attracted wildlife, especially migratory waterfowl.

Ducks, particularly blue-winged teal, mallards and wood ducks use this wetland during migration, and many stay to nest. The fertile wetland waters provide plenty of food for young ducklings. Canada geese also frequent the area during the spring and fall migrations. As many as 10,000 geese stop over here and on adjacent private lands. Tundra swans visit the marsh to feed and rest on their northward trek.

Sandhill cranes use the 10-mile shoreline area of Mud Lake marsh. Several pairs have established territories here. Great blue herons, soras, wrens, yellow-headed blackbirds, beaver, mink and muskrat inhabit this wetland area.

Throughout the diverse habitats of Mud Lake Wildlife Area are cottontail rabbits, fox, raccoons, fox squirrels, gray squirrels, otters, white-tailed deer, bluebirds, goldfinches, ruffed grouse, pheasants, sparrows, warblers, woodcock and woodpeckers.

More than mud and lake

Mud Lake Wildlife Area contains many habitats: wetlands, kettles, native grass fields, and upland hardwood timber. More than 2,000 acres of public lands feature upland hardwood trees and open fields. Terrain is hilly in the timber areas with gently sloped, upland fields. Dead trees, called "snags," provide nesting cavities for wood ducks.

Fields are planted with native grasses such as switchgrass, big bluestem, Indian grass or alfalfa and brome grass to provide nesting habitat for mallards, blue-winged teal and pheasants. These areas are maintained in attractive nesting cover through prescribed burns and mowing. Burning enhances regrowth of planted native grasses and retards invading brush.

Dikes divide the marsh into three separate flowages of 100, 200 and 800 acres. Stop-log water control structures in old drainage ditches control water levels.

Ash, aspen, cherry, hickory and white oak comprise most of the upland timber. Thus, mast crops of acorns and hickory nuts are common.

Access and facilities

The Mud Lake Wildlife Area is about four miles east of Poynette and two miles

southwest of Rio in Columbia County. Major access roads run off Highway 22.

If you want to watch from a car, use Tollefson Road which extends along the west side of the 200-acre flowage. There are seven parking lots located around the property.

Walking can provide special rewards! Any of several trails about five miles long traverse the property through upland fields leading to the water control structures. These provide excellent access for hiking, bird watching, photography and hunting. The best time for watching wildlife throughout most of the year is in early morning and late afternoon hours. Walk slowly on the trails. Stop often to look and listen for movement or sounds.

Two ramps provide boating access to the marsh for hunting, trapping, canoeing, fishing or observing wildlife. The boat ramp on the south side of the marsh is off King Road and on the north side at the end of Tollefson Road. Fishing is limited to bullheads and largemouth bass. Fishing quality depends on winter freeze-out conditions.

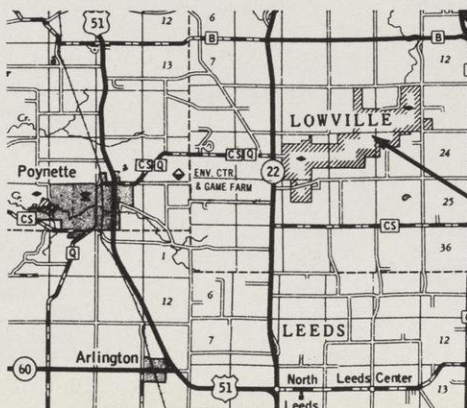
Additional information about the Mud Lake Wildlife Area can be obtained by contacting Pat Kaiser at the DNR Office, N3344 Stebbins Road, Poynette, WI 53955 or by calling (608) 635-4496.

Patrick H. Kaiser is a DNR wildlife manager based in Poynette.



Ring-necked pheasant.

Photo by Herbert Lange.





July, and the Mud Lake area wears a bright green jacket. Photo by Greg Matthews.

Goose Pond Sanctuary

Mark and Sue Foote Martin

"The shortest distance between any two points always passed through Goose Pond." — Sam Robbins, Wisconsin Birds

Goose Pond is an island of water in the Empire Prairie, a prairie pothole, which attracts a wide variety of birds throughout the year. Among them are 34 species of shorebirds and 28 species of waterfowl. Rare raptors also frequent the area.

Since the 1940s, bird watchers have made thousands of visits to Goose Pond and have identified about 250 species there. Due to the area's popularity with birds and bird watchers, Madison Audubon purchased 100 acres of it for a sanctuary, including some of the pond. In 1970, part of the sanctuary was designated a State Natural Area because of its value for wildlife.

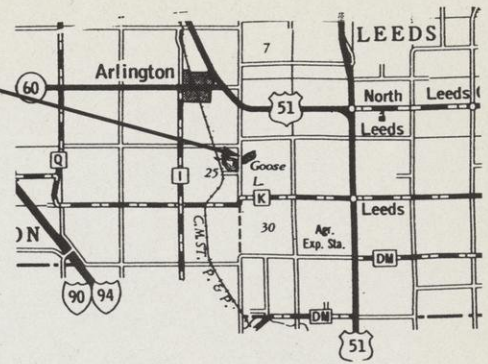
Audubon's Goose Pond Wildlife Sanctuary is enrolled in the federal Waterbank Program to preserve wetlands and provide upland nesting cover. Prescribed burns maintain 12 acres of reconstructed prairie. Corn is planted for gray partridge, ring-necked pheasant and waterfowl. Bird houses have been erected for American kestrels and tree swallows.

A pond for all seasons

Ducks, hundreds of tundra swans and thousands of Canada geese visit Goose Pond during the spring migration. Later in spring, there are many species of shorebirds — black-bellied plovers, dunlins, Hudsonian godwits and lesser golden-plovers. Shorebirds are especially abundant in years when mud flats are present.

Marsh birds come with the summer — American coots, herons, pied-billed grebes and yellow-headed blackbirds. On the average, 40 to 45 pairs of ducks nest at Goose Pond. Blue-winged teal, mallard and ruddy duck nests are the most common. Ruddy ducks can be seen in courtship display most of the summer.

In fall, thousands of ducks, mostly black ducks and mallards, find refuge at Goose Pond Sanctuary. Large flocks of ducks can be seen as they fly out to feed in the nearby corn field stubble. Tundra swans also stop in November during their southern migration.



Access and facilities

Goose Pond is in Columbia County one mile south of Arlington. Wildlife can easily be viewed with field glasses from roads adjacent to the pond. It's best to visit sometime between ice-out, usually in late March, and freeze-up, usually in late November.

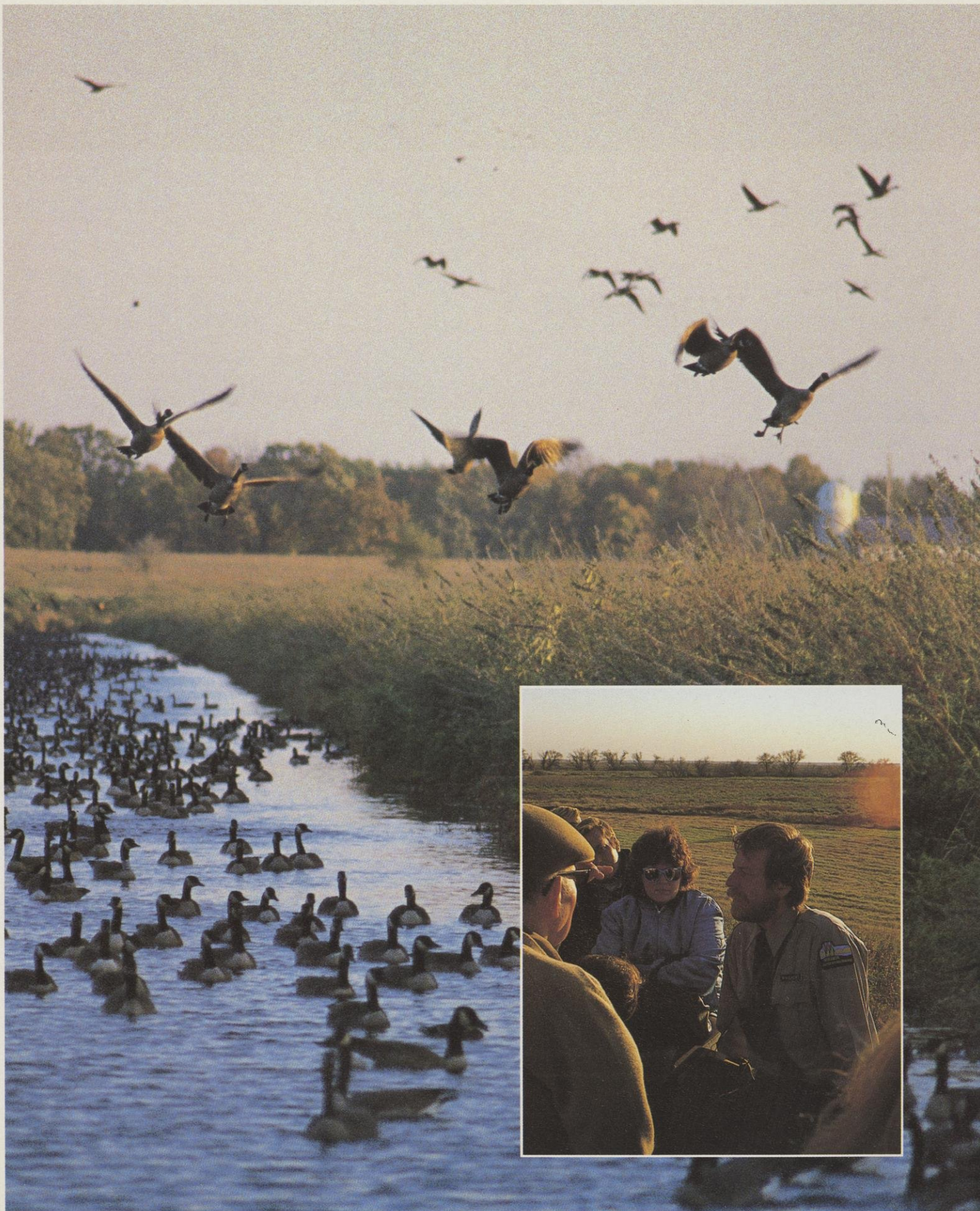
Checklists and brochures are available at an informational board on the south side of the pond. A self-guided trail through the prairie begins near there. Group tours led by the resident managers are also available, by reservation.

Visitors are not permitted off the roads or trail. Madison Audubon also maintains a house and classroom on the property.

Mark and Sue Foote Martin are resident managers based at Goose Pond Sanctuary.



Sunset brings a special peace to Goose Pond. Photo by Mark Martin.



Migrating geese take rest and refuge at Horicon Marsh. Photo by Bob Queen.

(inset) DNR naturalist William K. Volkert talks with Horicon visitors. Photo by Larry Sperling.

Horicon Marsh

William K. Volkert

Once covered by the great glaciers of the Ice Age, Horicon Marsh is a fine example of an extinct glacial lake. To most people, it's synonymous with Canada geese.

Extensive archeological records indicate that people have hunted around Horicon Marsh for the past 10,000 to 12,000 years and nearly every major prehistoric Indian culture known to the Midwest, at one time or another, made Horicon Marsh its home. More recently, the marsh supported Winnebago and Potawatomi tribes and lured white settlers with its rich hunting grounds.

Since settlement, the area has undergone dramatic changes. Beginning in the 1840s, the marsh was dammed and flooded to create a huge man-made lake. It was restored to marsh and over-hunted during the market hunting era. Then in the early 1900s, it was dredged and drained for farming.

Today's marsh is the result of 50 years of restoration efforts by state and federal agencies.

Restoration success is reflected in the tremendous variety and numbers of birds and mammals found at Horicon Marsh. Annually, approximately 75 percent of Horicon Marsh's wildlife watchers flock in during the fall goose migration, but there's a lot more to Horicon Marsh than that. Wildlife are there year-round.

The great restoration

Horicon Marsh is divided into two administrative units. The northern two-thirds is a National Wildlife Refuge; the southern one-third is a State Wildlife Area. Together, they comprise 32,000 acres of rich wildlife habitat. The federal refuge was established as a nesting area for redheads, and it still supports the largest breeding population of those birds in the eastern U.S. Both units are managed as waterfowl breeding and migratory resting areas.

Habitat for nesting and feeding is created and maintained by regulating water levels, encouraging desirable wetland vegetation, planting upland fields to dense grasses and controlling exotic species, such as carp and purple loosestrife. Hunting and trapping at Horicon Marsh not only provide recreational opportunities, but provide essential control over muskrat, other wildlife populations and their impacts.

Horicon Marsh also attracts several nongame species. More than 250 kinds of

nongame birds have been sighted; about half of them nest at the marsh. There are several rare, threatened and endangered species, which provide opportunities for special research and management projects. Besides the birds, amphibians, fish, invertebrates, mammals, reptiles and plants make up a valuable wetland ecosystem.

Among the special attractions at Horicon Marsh is the Fourmile Island heron rookery, home to black-crowned night-herons, double-crested cormorants, great blue herons and great egrets. Located in the state portion of the marsh, it is the largest heron nesting colony in the state. About 800 to 1,000 pairs of birds nest on the 15-acre island.

And each year, to the delight of many wildlife watchers, more than 100,000 Canada geese descend on Horicon Marsh, spring and fall. The geese are on the marsh from late February to mid-April and from mid-September until freeze-up with a peak in mid-October. Horicon Marsh is a major migration stopover for the Mississippi Valley Population of Canada geese during their travels between Hudson Bay and southern Illinois/western Kentucky.

Access and facilities

The federal refuge is usually closed to the public to protect wildlife. Seasonal access is available along the main dike and at designated locations.

The state portion is open for day use and offers opportunities for birdwatching, canoeing, fishing, hiking, hunting, nature study, trapping (by permit) and some winter sports. Contact state or federal headquarters to check current opportunities, regulations and restrictions.

Fourmile Island is closed to public access during the nesting season to avoid disturbing the birds. Visitors, however, can canoe to the island along the east branch of the Rock River and observe the colony from the water. Late April and early May offer the best viewing of these magnificent birds.

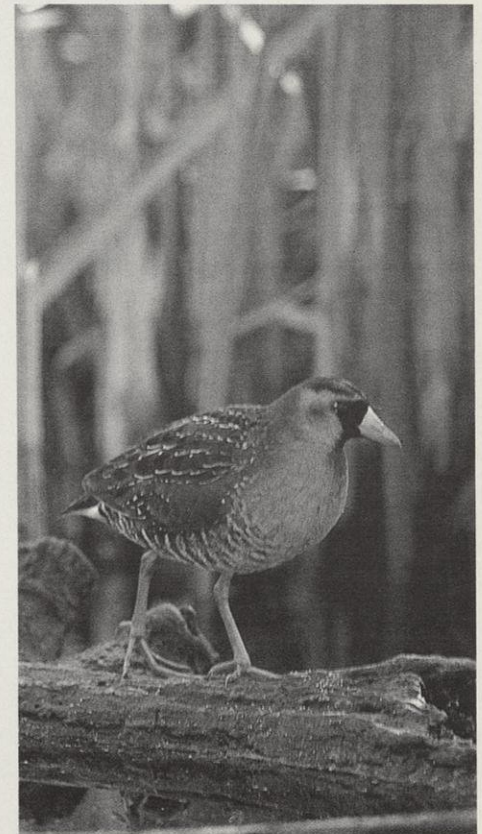
Key areas for viewing Horicon Marsh are: along the northern property border on highway 49, at the highway 49 informational wayside and at state headquarters in Horicon, which offers a spectacular overlook of the marsh. Early morning and late afternoon hours are the times of greatest wildlife activity; spring and fall migrations are the seasons of greatest wildlife abundance.

To provide information about Horicon Marsh and its wildlife, naturalist programs are scheduled on weekends during the spring and fall. Special group tours and arrangements can be made by calling DNR headquarters. All hikes and programs begin at the state headquarters in Horicon.

In recognition of its glacial past, Horicon Marsh has been designated as one of the units of the Ice Age National Scientific Reserve.

For more information on Horicon Marsh, its wildlife and naturalist programs, contact the Horicon Area DNR office at (414) 485-3000.

William K. Volkert is a DNR naturalist stationed at Horicon.



Sora at Horicon Marsh.

Photo by William K. Volkert.

Wyalusing State Park

Paul Kosir

Wild turkeys, a canoe trail and breathtaking vistas.

Since the DNR began reestablishing wild turkeys in southwestern Wisconsin, people have flocked to Wyalusing State Park to see North America's largest land bird.

In May, park visitors can hear toms gobbling for mates. Later in spring and throughout the summer, hens followed by their broods (as many as 20 young) are seen in park areas. During winter, flocks of several families, perhaps numbering 50 or more birds, can be seen around the park.

In winter, turkeys prefer the rough country — steep valleys and hillsides—they find in abundance around Wyalusing. Turkeys' taste for acorns draws them to the oak woods at the south end of the park, especially around the Homestead Picnic Area.

Wyalusing provides gobbler fodder by allowing sharecropped farming on part of Wyalusing's property. One fourth of

the corn crop is left standing for wildlife. The unharvested corn attracts turkeys and deer during winter, and they often return in summer.

Wild turkeys can be seen at any time, but are more likely to be spotted during the two hours after sunrise and before sunset. The park is open to day use visitors from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m., but registered campers may track down turkeys before dawn.

Turkeys can be spotted on several hiking trails (including Turkey Hollow Trail), in wooded areas near ridgetops and from your car while driving on park roads. Approach turkeys slowly, but don't get too close or they'll flush.

Songbirds too

Wyalusing State Park also attracts large songbird populations, especially during spring migration. The best spot for bird watching is the park's boat landing on the backwaters of the Mississippi River.

Leaving from the boat landing, you can canoe into the Upper Mississippi River Wildlife and Fish Refuge. Paddlers can often get close looks at great blue herons, great egrets and muskrats. You might also see wood ducks which use the nest boxes erected by park staff and other state employees.

Other places near the park offer opportunities for wildlife enthusiasts: 20 miles south of the park in Glen Haven, WI is the Eagle Valley Nature Preserve; Nelson Dewey Park is 25 miles south in Cassville; and for history buffs, Stonefield Village is just across the road.

Wyalusing State Park is eight miles north of Bagley at the confluence of the Wisconsin and Mississippi rivers. **For more information, contact the park office (608) 996-2261 or write to 13342 Hwy. C, Bagley, WI 53801.**

Paul Kosir is a naturalist at Wyalusing State Park.

Sugar River State Trail

Reynold W. Zeller

How sweet it is.

The 23-mile Sugar River Trail, between New Glarus and Brodhead, offers bicyclists, hikers, skiers and snowmobilers a chance to see wildlife. The trail crosses the meandering Sugar River and its tributaries 14 times, passing by rolling farmland, rock outcrops, marshes, woodlands and lowlands, yet it's virtually flat!

A former Milwaukee Road Railroad line, the Sugar River Trail is one of 12 recreational trails DNR developed to help people traverse the Wisconsin countryside.

Brown and white mileposts mark distances and points of interest along the trail. Orange, numbered wooden posts correspond to the numbered descriptions in a guidebook that's available from the Sugar River Trail headquarters.

Canada geese, mallards and wood ducks inhabit the potholes and private marshes along the trail. Sandhill cranes can also be seen wading the shores in search of food.

The Hammerly Creek bridge gives a panoramic view of farmlands and the creek. Muskrat can be seen here among 30 acres of sedge meadow and shrub swamp. You can fish for brown and brook trout here. You might see deer

drinking by the side of the stream at dawn and dusk.

The Little Sugar River and its backwaters are home to wading birds such as great blue and green-backed herons. Painted, softshell, spotted and snapping turtles enjoy a lazy afternoon on a wet log or rock along the riverside. Don't get too close, or they will slide off into the water.

The trail runs through the Albany Wildlife Area. Here you can find a variety of waterfowl and wildlife, fish for smallmouth bass and walleyes, and canoe through the marshes.

Cardinals, indigo buntings, scarlet tanagers, thrushes and warblers commonly provide trail side entertainment. Hawks and owls are more easily seen in the early spring and fall when the trees are leafless. Deer, red fox, woodchucks and even an occasional badger can be seen at dawn and dusk.

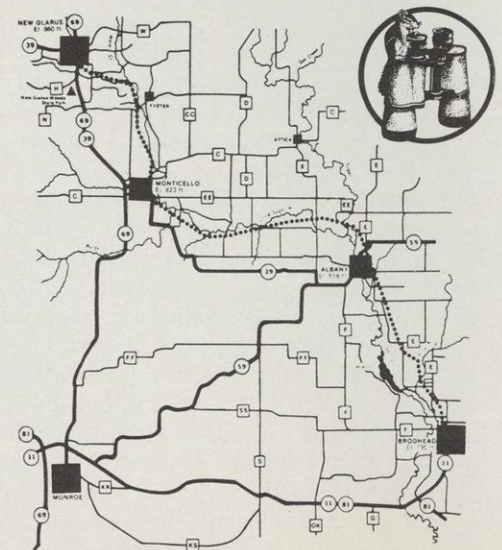
Access and facilities

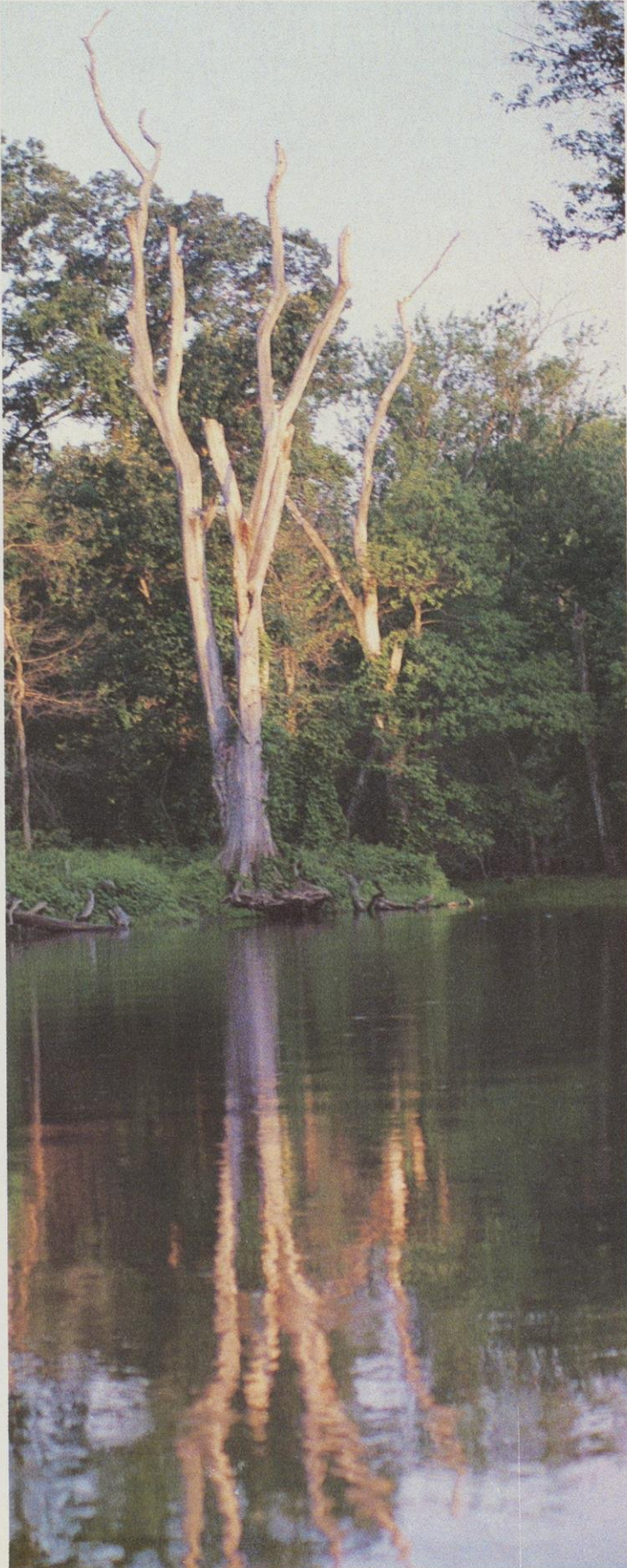
Visitors can access the Sugar River Trail from many locations. Call or write to the headquarters for a map of the area. All resident bikers must purchase either a daily (75¢) or season (\$2.50) permit to use the trail. Nonresident fees are \$1.00 or \$3.50 for the season.

The trail is hard surfaced and open for biking, hiking, snowmobiling and cross-country skiing. Parking lots and rest rooms are available at New Glarus, Monticello and Albany.

For additional information on the Sugar River Trail, contact: DNR Sugar River Trail Headquarters, 418 Railroad St., New Glarus, WI 53574; (608) 527-2334 in summer or (608) 325-4844 summer or winter.

Reynold W. Zeller is a parks and recreation specialist based in Monroe.





A woodchuck makes tracks and an American robin tends to business. Photos by Stephen J. Lang.

◀ *Wyalusing State Park, a favorite of canoeists.*
Photo by Paul Kosir.

Green Bay West Shores Wildlife Area



Black-crowned night-herons, new editions. Photo by Tom Bahti.

Tom Bahti

For intriguing shorebirds — head west!

Nearly 50 species of interesting animals and more than 350 species of beautiful birds can be seen along Green Bay's western shore.

The Green Bay West Shores Wildlife Area stretches along a 42-mile corridor from the edge of the City of Green Bay north to the mouth of the Peshtigo River. The state first began preserving this fragile shoreline, its marshes and deltas in 1948.

Thousands of acres are managed in 11 separate management units in Brown, Oconto and Marinette counties. The Sensiba Wildlife Unit lies about six miles north of the City of Green Bay, and is reached easily from highway 41/141.

You may be treated to views of the black-crowned night-heron, black tern, Canada goose, common tern, dabbling ducks, diving ducks, double-crested cormorant, Forster's tern, green heron, tundra swan and wood duck. Forster's terns nest in the emergent vegetation of the impoundments, and common terns can be seen loafing and feeding about the wildlife area. Double-crested cormorants nest on an island in the lower end of the bay.

Management on the Sensiba unit is designed to maximize the diversity of habitat on the property. Timber sales are used to manage the forest resource and improve conditions for wildlife. A variety of nesting structures have also been provided. And dikes protect valuable wetlands from wind and wave action. Pumps are used to drain or flood the impoundments to attract marsh wildlife.

The impoundments are closed to hunting during duck season to provide a resting and feeding area for waterfowl during fall migration.

Open water, vegetation, old fields, bottomland and swamp hardwoods, aspen and other habitats associated with the wildlife area have provided an ideal combination of habitat types.

Access and facilities

Spring migrations of tundra swans and diving ducks like scaups and red-heads can provide dramatic viewing on the adjacent Green Bay water soon after ice-out. Bring binoculars or a spotting scope to the end of Sunset Beach Road or the main dike along Green Bay.

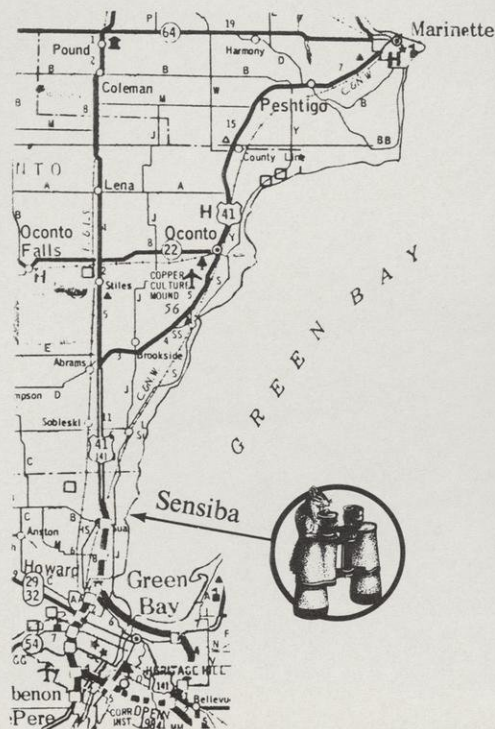
For a closer look, you can easily launch a canoe or skiff at the junction of the road and the dike.

For more hardy souls, there is walk-in access. A parking lot on the south end of the property provides foot access north into the bottomland and swamp hardwood, and into the west side of the flow-ages. Access to the south side of the wildlife unit is via Sunset Beach Road east from the highway, or from Resort Road, which provides access to the north end east of highway J.

A trail heading south from Resort Road provides access to the north side of the impoundments. A half-mile hike across flat terrain is usually wet in spring and fall. Low rubber boots or hip boots are recommended. The trail provides good opportunity for viewing wood ducks, black-crowned night-herons, green herons and black terns. Viewing is best during early morning and evening.

For more information contact Tom Bahti, 200 N. Jefferson, Suite 511, Green Bay, WI 54301; (414) 497-4365.

Tom Bahti is a DNR area wildlife manager based in Green Bay.



Black-crowned night-heron, mature.
Photo by Stephen J. Lang. ▶

Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary



Common tern and chick. Photo courtesy of Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary.

Maggie Hachmeister

From landfill to urban wildlife refuge.

At one time, most of the Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary was coastal marsh. Around the turn of the century, the marsh became a landfill site. During the past 20 years, the site was acquired by the Green Bay city park system, which is converting the landfill into lagoons, prairies and lowland hardwood forest.

Now, the area is a city park — intensively managed for both people and wildlife. Of the 700 acres in the Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary, approximately 500 are off limits to the public.

Habitat creation and maintenance are priorities throughout the site. Management activities include planting, cutting and burning vegetation, lagoon and dike control, marsh renovations and nest box placement for a variety of songbirds, hawks, owls and bats.

Not your stereotypic “city” wildlife

Wildlife attracted to the Bay Beach Sanctuary include some very common species — and several of Wisconsin’s endangered and threatened species.

Sanctuary staff are currently adding to a data base on Blanding’s turtles. This very shy, secretive turtle forages both on land and in water, feeding on insects, small crustaceans and assorted vegetation.

Common terns and Forster’s terns nest on nearby Renard Isle (formerly Kidney Island) and fish the Bay Beach lagoons during the warm months. Both species are endangered in Wisconsin.

A flock of 25 Merriam’s turkeys resides in the sanctuary. They are easily seen and photographed throughout the year. Many species of waterfowl are also year-round residents, including giant Canada geese, mallards and wood ducks.

During spring migration, which usually peaks about mid-May, large numbers of songbirds and warblers pass through Bay Beach. A variety of diving and puddle ducks show up for the winter months. Black ducks, buffleheads, canvasbacks, common goldeneyes, common mergansers, greater scaups, lesser scaups and redheads all make use of the open water created by two aerators that run during the winter.

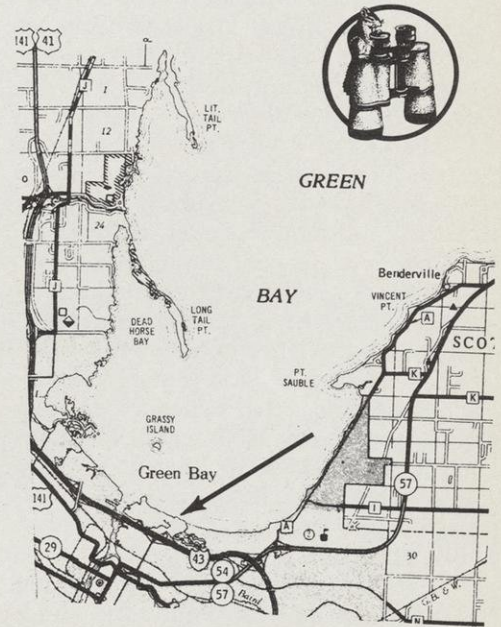
Access and facilities

The Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary is located just one mile from the heart of downtown Green Bay on East Shore Drive. About three and a half miles of trails and boardwalks provide access. Several trails are accessible to disabled hikers. In winter, hiking trails become groomed cross-country ski trails suitable for beginners.

The park is open every day of the year. Summer hours are 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.; winter hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. You may wander about on your own or join in any of the many interpretive programs offered by the staff. The nature center and the observation building are accessible to disabled visitors.

For more information, contact: Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary, Sanctuary Rd., Green Bay, WI 54302; (414) 497-6084.

Maggie Hachmeister is the head naturalist at the Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary.



Conservancy Pond, nature education center, Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary.

Photo by Janey Mitchell.

Brillion Wildlife Area

Kris Belling

Grassland songbirds and marsh birds await your visit here.

The Brillion Wildlife Area is a 5,700-acre wildlife project located in Calumet County. With 60 percent of the area in marsh or swamp, wetland wildlife abounds for the observer.

The City of Brillion adjoins the property at the northeast corner. The area is basically bounded by highway PP on the east from Brillion to Potter, Hilbert and Reimer roads on the south, Irish Road on the west, and Center and Conservation roads on the north. It is about seven miles east of High Cliff State Park.

Centered on Brillion Marsh, a 2,600-acre brush and cattail wetland, the marsh is surrounded by 800 acres of swamp hardwoods, which are ringed by 2,400 acres of upland fields and woodlots. More than 90 percent of the area is presently under DNR management.

Waterfowl of all types stop during their spring and fall migration. Blue-winged teal, Canada geese, mallards and wood ducks stay to nest. Other birds using the area are the American bittern, bobolink, goldfinches, great blue heron, green-backed heron, indigo bunting, meadowlarks, northern harrier, pheasant, sandhill crane, sedge wren, sora, sparrow (vesper, field, song and savannah), upland plover, Virginia rail and woodcock.

Management techniques

Many of the upland field areas have been planted to provide nesting cover and food for ducks and habitat for a number of other bird species. These fields are seeded to warm season (prairie) grasses, which are not beaten down by winter snows. They provide good cover for the early spring nesters before new growth has begun.

In some of these fields, prairie forbs have also been planted to provide more diverse food and cover. Other fields are planted to hay and mowed after eggs have been laid and hatched.

Plans include damming impoundments to keep the water two to three feet deep. The impoundments will provide the mixture of open water and emergent vegetation that serves as excellent habitat for migrating and breeding waterfowl.

Wildlife are most active mornings and evenings, but a variety of waterfowl should be present in the flooded areas at

any time of day. More adventurous visitors are welcome to don waders and brave a trek through the marsh any time.

What can you find, and where can you find them? Well, the mallards and teal prefer to nest in upland grass cover, while wood ducks will nest in natural cavities in the swamp hardwoods or in artificial nest boxes. Canada geese may be seen nesting on small islands or on old muskrat houses in the marsh. All need open water mixed with emergent vegetation to provide cover for their broods and food in the form of insects and vegetation.

Two commonly observed marsh birds are the great blue heron and sandhill crane. No rookeries or nesting colonies of herons have been found on the property, but herons commonly fish in ponds, along the river and creek channels or fly overhead.

Sandhill cranes are often seen flying and can be distinguished from the herons because they hold their necks out straight in flight. The herons draw their necks in.

Cranes nest in the marsh on mounds of vegetation. Small family groups or flocks of a few dozen can be seen in fields or on exposed mud flats. They'll be feeding on seeds, tubers or invertebrates.

Several other marsh birds such as bitterns, soras, Virginia rails and green-backed herons are present throughout summer. These birds are more likely to be heard than seen, but the more persistent observer may be successful.

Northern harriers will nest in the taller, denser grass stands and can often be seen flying low over fields in search of prey.

The most abundant and watchable birds are the grassland songbirds which utilize these areas. Among the birds that have been seen in recent years are meadowlarks, bobolinks, sedge wrens, vesper, field, song and savannah sparrows, indigo buntings, upland plovers and goldfinches.

Access and facilities

The Brillion Nature Center is a good starting point for wildlife observers. The center is located south of Brillion at the end of Deerview Road. It is located on the wildlife area but is run by local residents. Displays inside the center show specimens of several species common to the area. A marsh platform offers a great view of the marsh, and eight miles of maintained hiking trails pass by wood-

lots, nesting cover, restored prairie and a wildlife pond.

Most of the trails are accessible to disabled persons and are available for skiing or snowshoeing in winter. Picnic and restroom facilities are available, and guided tours can be arranged upon request.

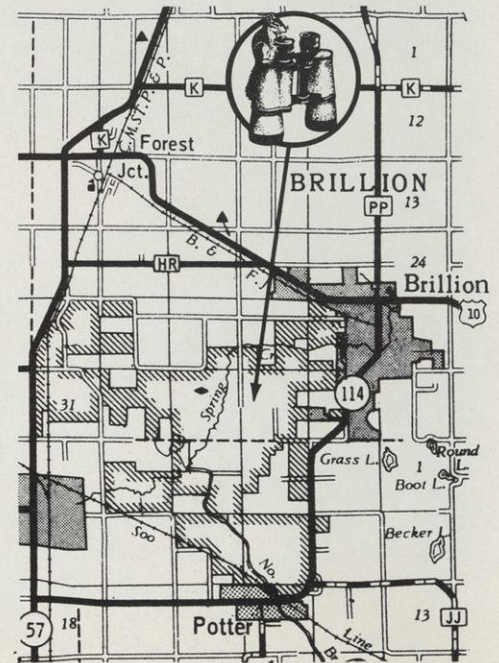
During most of the year, open water is restricted to small pockets, ponds, the river and creek channels. Water access is somewhat limited. Visitors can canoe part way up the Manitowoc River from the bridge at Potter, or walk into the marsh edge from Bastian Road on the north or Hilbert or Reimer roads on the south. Early spring morning visitors will have the best chance to spot a brood of ducks or geese.

Nearly every spring and often in fall, much of the marsh is accessible by canoe from the Manitowoc River or by walking in from the roads mentioned.

Because the project is not completely owned by DNR, visitors who are not familiar with the area should contact a local department representative to avoid trespassing on privately owned land.

For more information on the Brillion Wildlife Area, contact Kris Belling or Dick Nikolai, DNR, 101 W. College Ave., Appleton, WI 54914; (414) 832-2746 or (414) 734-5189.

Kris Belling is a DNR wildlife manager stationed in Appleton.



Sandhill cranes, Manitowoc River at the Hilbert tributary, Brillion Wildlife Area.
Photo by Kris Belling.



Crex Meadows



“Spring Dance at Crex,” by Louis Raymer. Copies of this sharp-tailed grouse print available from the Friends of Crex. All profits designated to construct a new wildlife interpretive center on the property.

James Hoefler

The colorful sharp-tailed grouse stamp out a courtship dance that hasn't changed much in a thousand springs.

In a crouched position, with wings extended and tails erect, male sharptails turn in tight circles and rapidly stamp their feet. Their movements are orchestrated by various guttural notes and a clicking sound made by rubbing the tail feathers together. Bright purple air sacs on the sides of the neck and yellow combs above the eyes add color to their display.

Each spring the male sharptails reassemble on traditional dancing grounds in the vast brush prairies of the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area to perform this elaborate breeding ritual. The performance is repeated every morning at sunrise from late March through early June.

Every year, hundreds of people travel to Crex Meadows, north of Grantsburg in Burnett County, to view the sharp-tailed grouse's unique display. Observation blinds are placed on the dancing grounds to give visitors a close-up view of the performance. A morning in a sharptail observation blind is an experience you won't soon forget.

Sharptails are but one of Crex's attractions. Within its boundaries are over 30,000 acres of brush prairie, wetlands and forests. The area provides habitats for myriad wildlife including more than 250 species of birds. Crex is popular with bird watchers, hunters and other wildlife enthusiasts. More than 100,000 people visit the area annually.

Restoring brush prairie and wetland habitat

Much work has gone into making Crex Meadows the wildlife showplace it is today. Since 1945, wildlife personnel at Crex have been restoring the native brush prairie vegetation — a mixture of prairie vegetation, brush and scattered trees — which provides excellent habitat for sharp-tailed grouse. At one time the brush prairie covered hundreds of square miles of northwest Wisconsin. It has since grown into forests or been planted in pines.

To date, more than 6,000 acres of brush prairie have been restored at Crex through a clearing and prescribed burning program. Large tracts of land are

burned annually to maintain and rejuvenate the brush prairie. Restoration efforts have brought back the native flora and fauna. More than 200 species of prairie plants are found on the area, and sharp-tailed grouse, upland sandpipers and other native wildlife are again thriving.

Crex hosts many species of wetland wildlife on more than 15,000 acres of wetlands. Vast areas of sedge marshes provide habitat for sandhill cranes, sedge wrens, rails and sparrows. Approximately 5,000 acres of wetlands have been flooded to create deep water marshes, which are used by herons, geese, ducks, loons and cormorants.

Lots of access to wildlife

More than 40 miles of roads provide excellent access to wildlife area. Nearly half of these roads are built on dikes that pass through the wetlands. The dike roads provide excellent close-range wildlife viewing. Goose broods frequently feed and roost along the dikes in May and June.

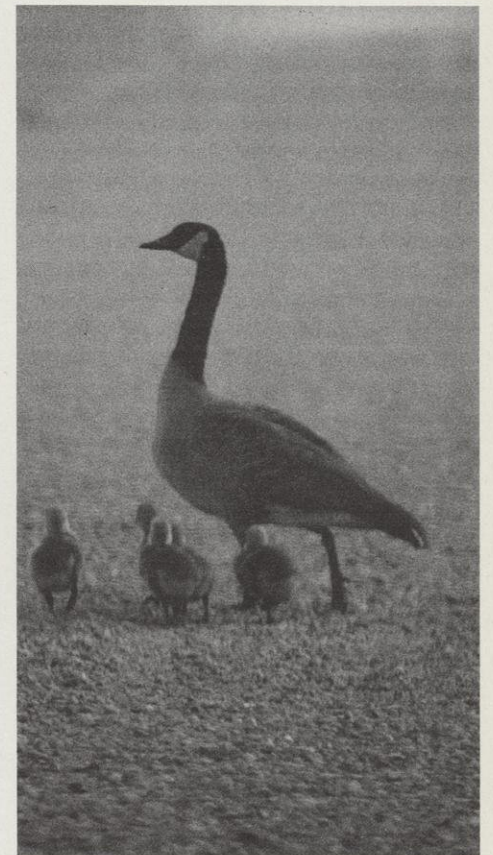
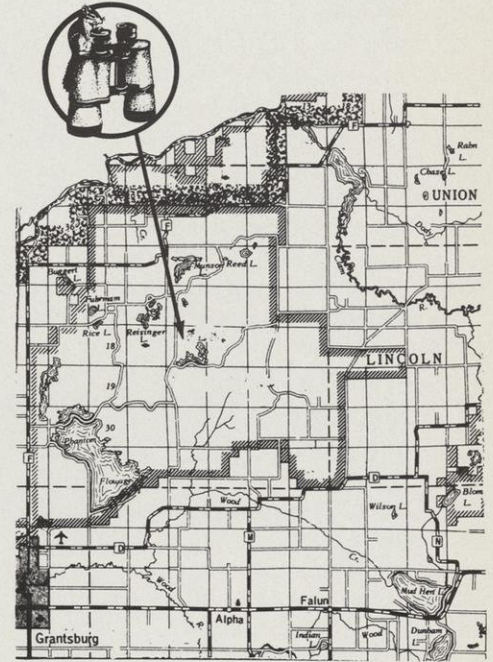
Observation areas place wildlife viewers front and center. Observation area A offers an excellent view of the heart of Crex Meadows. In spring, the sounds of prairie chickens, upland sandpipers and sharp-tailed grouse emanate from the vast brush prairie observation area. Sharptails occasionally use the observation area parking lot as a dancing ground. In fall, thousands of ducks, geese and sandhill cranes use farm fields to the south.

Crex Meadows Wildlife Area is just north of Grantsburg. Its headquarters is 100 yards east of the intersection of county roads D and F. Maps, self-guided auto tour booklets, bird lists and other pamphlets are available.

The headquarters also hosts a wildlife interpretive center. It features an herbarium, various displays and more than 40 mounted birds and mammals. The center is open weekdays year-round from 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and weekends in spring and fall from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

For more information contact James Hoefler, Box 367, Grantsburg, WI 54840; (715) 463-2896 or 463-2899.

Jim Hoefler is DNR's interpretive wildlife manager based at Crex Meadows.



Canada goose brood, Crex Meadows.
Photo by James Hoefler.

Fish Lake Wildlife Area

James Hoefler

Restoring the whipgrass and brush prairie for wildlife.

Fish Lake is one of four wildlife areas in western Burnett County which comprise the Glacial Lake Grantsburg Wildlife Management Complex. The other three areas are Crex Meadows, Amsterdam Sloughs and Danbury Wildlife areas. Together, they encompass nearly 50,000 acres which are intensively managed for wildlife.

Property history and management

Like the other Glacial Lake Grantsburg properties, Fish Lake lies in the Northwest Wisconsin Pine Barrens. The original vegetation was a mixture of trees, brush and prairie vegetation. The early writers referred to this plant community as a "brush prairie." The brush prairie was historically maintained by wildfires which frequently burned through the area.

With the advent of settlement and effective fire control techniques, the brush prairie grew into an oak-jack pine forest. At Fish Lake, several hundred acres of brush prairie have already been restored by wildlife managers and several thousand more acres will be restored in the next 10 years. However, even after the property is fully developed, 1,500 acres of forests will remain. The forested areas will be scattered throughout the area to create a greater diversity of habitats and to benefit forest wildlife.

The wildlife area was heavily farmed at one time and still contains numerous abandoned farm fields. Most of the farm fields are being naturally reclaimed by native prairie grasses and forbs. Some of the fields, especially those near water, have been planted to native prairie grasses to provide quality nesting habitat for waterfowl and sharp-tailed grouse.

Vast sedge marshes stretch across the interior of the wildlife area. In the early 1900s, these marshes were alive with the sights and sounds of men and horse drawn equipment which harvested huge amounts of wiregrass for the Crex Carpet Company. Hundreds of tons of wiregrass were shipped from these marshes to factories in St. Paul, Minnesota, to be woven into grass carpets. Today, only old tote roads and the remnants of one of the carpet camps remain.

Most of the sedge marshes remain un-

altered, but several thousand acres have been flooded to create deep water marshes. Seven large flowages have been constructed and several more are planned. A system of dikes, dams and ditches maintain optimum water levels in 14,000 acres of flowages.

Best spots for viewing wildlife

Grettum Flowage on the east side of the Fish Lake wildlife area is the most popular area for viewing wildlife. The flowage can be seen from an observation area on State Highway 87.

An active eagle nest is visible approximately one-third of a mile to the west. The nest is in an oak at the south end of a peninsula which juts out into the flowage. Eagles are frequently seen in this area from early spring until late fall. In fall, ducks and geese congregate at the east edge of the flowage near the observation area.

For a closer view, drive along the dike on the south edge of the flowage. This classic cattail stand is a favorite spot for seeing many beautiful marsh birds including bitterns, black terns, American coot, grebes, green-backed herons, marsh wrens, and a variety of waterfowl. A small colony of yellow-headed blackbirds lives in the cattails along the dike. Great egrets are common visitors in spring and late summer.

For many years, Grettum Flowage contained a large colony of cormorants. The artificial nest structures on the west side of the flowage were built just for them. Even the best laid plans of wildlife managers can go slightly awry. During the past three years, a pair of bald eagles have used the nest structures as roosting sites. The presence of the eagles caused the cormorants to abandon the colony. Although cormorants return to the colony every year and still feed on the flowage, they no longer nest there. Eagles can often be seen roosting on the nest structures.

The 1,600-acre Dueholm Flowage is another popular area for viewing wildlife. The dike on the south end of the flowage is open to hikers. Most people walk in from the parking lot on the east end of the dike. An eagle nest is located 300 yards north of the water control structure. The flowage is a favorite feeding area for cormorants, great blue herons and loons.

The north end of the Dueholm Flowage can be seen from an observation area on Stolte Road. A pair of sandhill cranes nest on the north end of the flowage every year and as many as 50 to 100 cranes use the flowage in fall. When mud flats are exposed, the flowage is heavily used by shorebirds.

Several miles of hiking trails have been developed on the wildlife area. The most popular is a 1.5 mile trail which begins at the parking lot on the west side of Grettum Flowage. The trail leads to a stand of virgin red and white pine along the east edge of the Dueholm Marsh. Some of the pines are three to four feet in diameter and may be over 100 years old. Woodland birds can be seen along the trail.

Facilities

Maps of the wildlife area are available at the Crex Meadows Headquarters Building on the north side of Grantsburg and at the Ranger Station on State Highway 70.

Fish Lake is the second largest Glacial Lake Grantsburg property. It is located four miles south of Grantsburg. The wildlife area is bounded on the east by state highway 87, on the south by county road O and on the north and west by blacktopped town roads.

James Hoefler is DNR's interpretive wildlife manager based in Grantsburg.



Wisconsin Point

Randy Hoffman

Crowded shorebirds belly up to the bar.

Wisconsin Point is part of the largest freshwater sandbar in the world. About 2.5 miles long and positioned at the west end of Lake Superior, it forms a barrier between the lake and Allouez Bay. Migratory birds, hesitant to fly directly across Lake Superior, fly the shoreline in spring and often concentrate at Wisconsin Point.

Spring days are ideal for watching migrating flycatchers, sparrows, thrushes, vireos and many other species. Twenty-six species of warblers in groups of several hundred have been recorded in one morning of birding!

Under stormy, foggy or windy conditions, the birds can pile up in incredible numbers, sometimes so densely and so close to people that binoculars are useless.

The beach is a magnet for migrating shorebirds such as dunlins, sanderlings and ruddy turnstones. Offshore waters are very attractive to waterfowl, cormorants, gulls and terns.

Wisconsin Point attracts so many rare species on such a regular basis that avid birders visit the site annually. Mid-April through about June 10 is the best time for watching spring migrations here. Fall migration generally occurs between August 15 and mid-November.

Binoculars and a spotting scope will add to your experience here. Recent sightings included: harlequin duck, Clark's grebe, eared grebe, western grebe, gyrfalcon, Pacific loon, red-throated loon, white pelican, piping plovers, whimbrel and white-winged, black and surf scoters.

Many unusual gulls such as the California, lesser black-backed, great black-backed, glaucous, and Thayer's have been sighted here. Boreal chickadees, Cassin's kingbirds, Arctic terns and many more annually make a day's birding a memorable event.

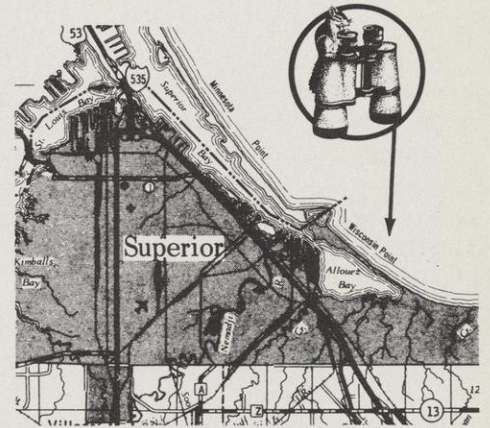
Access and facilities

Wisconsin Point is owned and operated for day use only by the City of Superior. Offroad vehicles and camping are prohibited.

To get to Wisconsin Point, take Lake Superior Drive off state highways 2 and 13 at the south edge of Lake Superior. Follow the road east and then north to the Point. Several parking lots are provided, but access to the best viewing spots is on foot.

For additional information on Wisconsin Point, contact the Visitors Bureau, City of Superior, 305 E. 2nd St., Superior, WI 54880 or call (715) 392-2773.

Randy Hoffman is a natural areas specialist for the Bureau of Endangered Resources based in Madison.

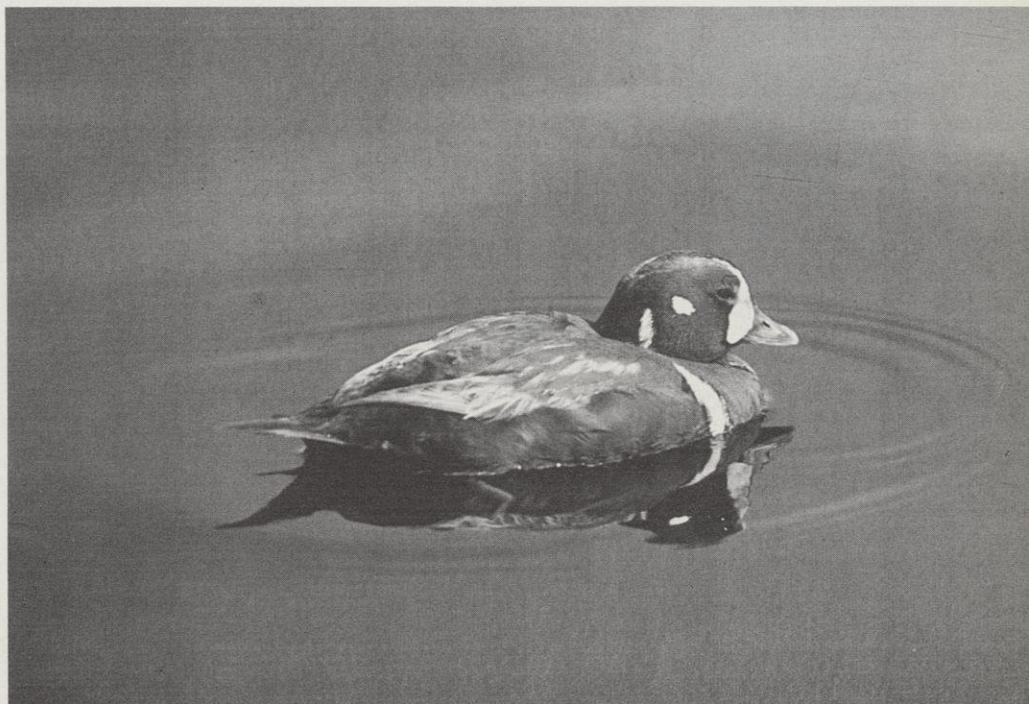
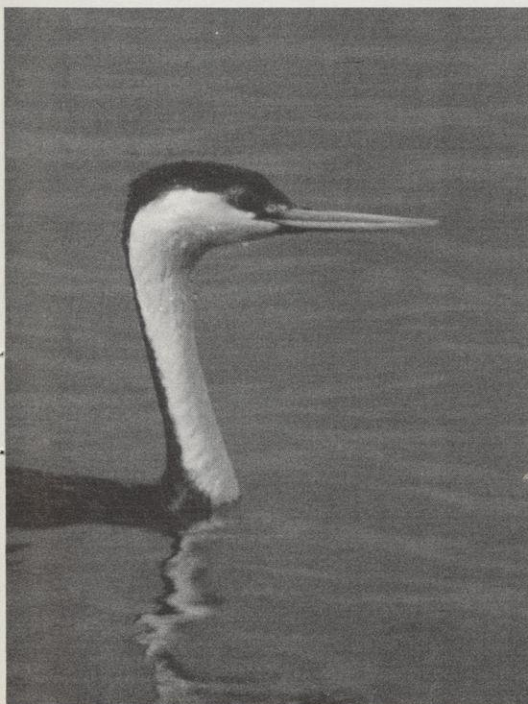


(left) Western grebe.

Photo by Bernie Lohmeier.

(right) Harlequin duck.

Photo by Stephen J. Lang.



Oakridge Lake Waterfowl Production Area

James O. Evrard

A spring to fall bird haunt in western Wisconsin

Exciting birding begins in early spring shortly after ice-out on Oakridge Lake. Tundra swans rest here on their long journey to arctic breeding grounds. Large, mixed flocks of diving ducks as well as common and red-breasted mergansers stop for several weeks on their northern migration.

For some birds, Oakridge is not a weigh station, but a destination. Giant Canada geese, pied-billed grebe, red-necked grebes and common loons nest on or near the lake.

In the summer, Oakridge Lake is home to feathered fishers including double-crested cormorants, great egrets, the great blue heron and the much smaller green-backed heron. Graceful black terns, along with occasional Forster's terns, sweep above the lake's surface hunting for insects and small fish.

Common grackles have learned to hover over the water and dive down to the surface to pick up small minnows. Broods of blue-winged teal, mallards and wood ducks feed on insects close to the lake's surface.

Occasionally, male ruddy ducks with their bright blue bills will paddle by, following their drab mates. Muskrats feed along the marshy shore, ever watchful for their mortal enemy, the mink. Painted turtles cling to shoreline rocks and logs, basking in the warmth of the sun.

Recently, a trumpeter swan has taken up residence on Oakridge Lake. The adult male, identified by a researcher by its plastic neck collar, is an immigrant from a Twin Cities flock. The lake could be a future release site in Wisconsin's efforts to reestablish trumpeter breeding colonies.

Dense cattails and shoreline willows in the extreme southwest corner of the lake can be a sea of yellow — yellow-headed blackbirds, common yellowthroats and yellow warblers flit about.

In adjacent grassy uplands, ring-necked pheasant regularly crow at sunrise. As the morning warms, the three-buzz call of the clay-colored sparrow fills the grasslands. Bobolinks, meadowlarks, and eastern kingbirds breed here.

The road by the grasslands is a dividing line for other species. Harriers swoop

low over the grass hunting for a meal of mice. Thirteen-lined ground squirrels run back and forth along an adjacent road. Diminutive meadow voles dart across the same paved space.

Power lines parallel to the road serve as hunting perches for American kestrels. A pair of red-tailed hawks nests on the ridge above the lake. Mourning doves also use the power lines as convenient perches, and sometimes chunky fox squirrels use the poles as temporary refuges when moving through the open land.

A number of wood birdhouses spaced along the boundary fence beneath the power lines are home to tree swallows and, at times, bluebirds. In the dead elms and shrubs, northern flickers, brown thrashers and red-headed woodpeckers are regularly seen.

In the fall, the variety of wildlife on Oakridge Lake drops, but populations of remaining species increase dramatically. Beginning in September, tens of thousands of red-winged blackbirds use the cattail stands as night roosts. At dawn, they fly out in huge swarms to feed in the surrounding areas. Thousands of waterfowl, mostly American coot, mallards and ring-necked ducks, feed and rest on the lake. At times, large flocks of mallards fly out at dawn and dusk to feed on waste grain in nearby farmland.

The lake is normally frozen and snow covered by December. Fewer creatures are seen during winter. Crows, bluejays and black-capped chickadees search the landscape for food. Occasionally, a northern shrike will hunt the shrubs for mice and songbirds. In late winter, great horned owls hoot from the ridge in the evening and early morning hours.

The casual visitor is unlikely to see some of Oakridge Lake's rarer natives — black bear, coyote, otter and prairie vole live here with the Bonaparte's gull, canvasback duck, Caspian tern, dickcissel, Nashville warbler, osprey, pileated woodpecker, whooper swan and yellow-crowned night-heron.

Access and facilities

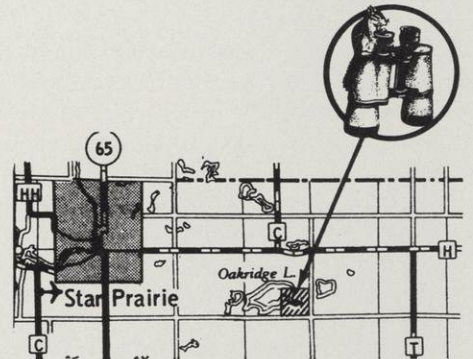
The Oakridge Lake Waterfowl Production Area is located in north central St. Croix County, 2.5 miles southeast of the Village of Star Prairie. The easiest approach is east on 220th Avenue from state highway 65. The south shore of the

lake comes within several yards of the road and most of the lake can be seen from the road itself. People are urged to stay on the road and to use binoculars and spotting scopes to observe wildlife.

The Oakridge Lake WPA is closed to waterfowl hunting in the fall.

For more information, write or call: Jim Evrard, wildlife biologist or Cindy Swanberg, wildlife manager, Department of Natural Resources, Box 61, Baldwin, WI 54002; (715) 684-2914.

James Evrard is a wildlife researcher stationed at Baldwin.



Thirteen-lined ground squirrel.

Photo by Stephen J. Lang.





Common snipe. Photo by Stephen J. Lang.



(top photo) Muskrat.
(right) Eastern bluebird. Photos by Kurt R. Scholz.



Brule River State Forest

Randy Hoffman

Woods, water — and look up in the sky!

Many have sung and written praises of the Brule River's bounty and scenic landscape. Explorers and missionaries, commoners and presidents, all have angled for trout in the Brule.

Along the river are alders, balsam fir, black spruce and white cedar; further up-slope, sandy terraces dominated by jackpine and aspen.

Bear, bobcat, deer and fisher can be found here, but they keep a low profile. Overhead is a lively display.

A birder's paradise

Northern nesting species such as warblers (the black-and-white and black-throated green, Blackburnian, northern parula, mourning and Nashville), kinglets (golden-crowned and ruby-crowned) and many others are found regularly in the Brule River State Forest. Elsewhere in Wisconsin, they are seen during migrations.

Other common species include flycatchers (alder, olive-sided and yellow-bellied), sparrows (Lincoln's and white-throated), solitary vireos and winter wrens. There is also a group of resident birds and nomadic finches such as evening grosbeaks, pine siskins, crossbills (red and white-winged) and black-backed woodpeckers.

An awesome daily winter event in the Brule forest is the staging of the ravens. Each day before roosting for the night, hundreds of ravens go through the staging ritual of aerial displays and calls. Although the roost site changes every year, you can find it by following the birds in the late afternoon.

Birding can be fun along the whole length of the Brule, but birds are more easily spotted near the river's upper reaches where currents are slow and lowland forests are more expansive.

Access and facilities

The best view of nesting forest birds starts just north of Solon Springs downstream to Stone's Bridge.

To view Cape May warblers at the headwaters of the Brule, take county highway A north from Solon Springs to highway P. Then go 1.5 miles through the forest. The Cape May warblers can be heard singing their little buzzy song at the tips of black spruce trees.



Black bear cubs. Photo by Herbert Lange.

Many of the northern nesting birds can be seen at an angler's access to the river nearby. Continue north on highway P to Stone Chimney Road (the road can be slippery or impassable in inclement weather). Turn east on Stone Chimney until it dead-ends at the parking lot. A short corduroy path will take you to the river's edge. Northern parula and Nashville warblers, flycatchers and kinglets may fly so close that you can't use your binoculars.

To visit Stone's Bridge, return to highway P, and proceed north to Hazel Prairie Road. Turn east on Hazel Prairie to highway S, and turn south to Stone's Bridge. Here, you can either drive through the area or take a canoe downstream. Golden- and ruby-crowned kinglets, magnolia warblers, mourning warblers and blackburnians frequent this stretch of stream. Black-backed woodpeckers have been consistently seen near the bridge.

Mid-May to August in the early morning and evening hours are the best times to visit the Brule on birding expeditions. In summer, visitors can hike the nature trails, picnic and camp in a variety of locations in the Brule State Forest.

Unique species from northern Canada can be seen in the area during the winter. These include three-toed woodpeckers and great gray and northern hawk-owls.

You can also enjoy snowmobiling and cross-country skiing many winter trails.

For additional information on the Brule State Forest, contact the DNR Ranger Station, Box 125, Brule, WI 54820; (715) 372-4866.

Randy Hoffman is a natural areas specialist with the Bureau of Endangered Resources based in Madison.



Yellow warbler. Photo by Stephen J. Lang.

Governor Knowles State Forest — your safari for viewing northern birds and other wildlife

Jim Bishop

Management practices stress beauty, habitat, forest production and recreation

Wildlife watchers and birders who enjoy tying on a backpack will find Governor Knowles State Forest to their liking.

Located on the western edge of Polk and Burnett counties, the forest acts as an extended buffer shielding the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. Its seven natural areas preserve unusual biotic communities such as cedar swamps, bottomland hardwoods, brush prairies and stands of climax pine.

Governor Knowles forest is 55 miles long, but only two miles wide at the widest point. Forty-four miles of hiking trails wind through a variety of forest habitat, which is home to hundreds of bird species and other wildlife.

Visitors have documented as many as 300 species of songbirds.

Bluebirds are found in the burned over areas in the old snag trees. They nest in woodpecker holes and other tree cavities and feed on ground insects in open areas. Northern flickers may be seen feeding on small insects at the forest floor near burned and logged over areas.

Winter visitors on snowshoes or cross-country skis might catch a glimpse of hawk-owls. The owls move out of Canada during very cold weather and feed on small birds and mice. They perch in the open on treetops.

The hermit thrush is a year-round resident throughout the forest. This bird can be located by listening for its beautiful song, which consists of a series of musical phrases, each with a distinct pitch. The thrush feeds on insects on the ground.

The pileated woodpecker, a large, noisy character, can be found in the dense woodlands along the river and bordering wetlands. This wary creature usually stays out of sight. Most often, you can see it during its low, dropping hops among pines and hardwoods.

The purple finch is most often seen at winter bird feeding stations near conifers. It builds a nest of twigs, grass and sometimes hair. The bird has a rich warble.

Saw-whet owls are found here, too — check the pine areas. These small, nocturnal feeders eat small rodents and nest in abandoned woodpecker holes or other tree cavities.

Swainson's thrush, once called the "olive-backed" thrush, inhabits pines and hardwoods close to the river. It feeds on insects on the ground.

Tennessee warblers can be found in the high treetops of aspen and spruce. However, their grassy nest is near the ground.

There are three-toed woodpeckers, too — northern birds that inhabit burned, logged and swampy areas of the forest. Like the pileated woodpecker, ol' three-toed nests in cavities, but its holes are usually lower on the tree. And like others of its kind, it is a noisy feeder, hammering on trees and snags in search of insects.

The white-throated sparrow can be found in the brush and thickets of the forest.

Winter wrens hop amid dense brush, brambles and thickets on the forest floor in search of food. The birds build a nest of twigs and moss.

Among other forest inhabitants are the bear, blue jay, chickadee, coyote, deer, eagle, hawk and red-headed woodpecker. On occasion, visitors might catch a glimpse of fishers, moose (from the Minnesota side), sandhill cranes (near the river) and wolves.

Management practices for the forest stress scenic beauty, wildlife habitat, timber production and recreation.

Something to remember — fall and spring are the best times to view the wildlife. Learn to identify birdcalls from recordings. Many of the birds are in dense timberlands and are more often heard than seen.

Access and facilities

Two developed hiking trails, each about 22 miles long, are located at the north and south ends of the forest. The terrain varies from rolling hills to tree studded flats. Wear good boots.

Day trips can be made up and back on the trails. Backpackers who want to camp must obtain a permit at the Grantsburg Ranger Station. Two cars are recommended — one for the beginning of the trail, one for the end.

For those who want to set up a base camp, the Sioux Portage Group Campgrounds is located at the northern end of the forest. This remote campground is designed to accommodate 36 people. Campground spots must be reserved ahead of time. Drinking water and restrooms are available. All campers should be aware that bears inhabit the area. So, food should not be left in the open or left inside tents overnight.

For more information on the forest, contact Mike Giles, Grantsburg Ranger Station, Grantsburg, WI 54840; (715) 463-2897. For information on the St. Croix Scenic Riverway, contact the National Park Service, P.O. Box 708, St. Croix Falls, WI 54024; (715) 483-3284.

Jim Bishop is DNR's district information officer stationed in Spooner.

Coyote. Photo by Herbert Lange.



The Turtle-Flambeau Flowage

John F. Olson

Walleyes, wildlife and nearly endless miles of natural shoreline with no houses, barking dogs or lawn mowers!

The Turtle-Flambeau Flowage of southern Iron County is often compared to the canoe country of Minnesota or Canada. Its 17,800 acres — with more than 180 miles of shoreline and hundreds of small islands — are impressive.

Moreover, 95 percent of the shoreline is owned by the Chippewa-Flambeau Improvement Company. They maintain it in a semiwild condition with no development, and they allow free camping (first come, first served) on numerous islands.

The Turtle-Flambeau sports an excellent walleye fishery, about ten thousand stumps and a few hundred rock bars. The stumps and rocks discourage big rig skiing and racing, resulting in an angler's paradise.

Talk about wildlife!

Common loons are found throughout the flowage in summer. More than 20 pairs nest on protected bays and stump strewn shorelines. Loons are very sensitive to human disturbances. All five public boat landings and most campgrounds are posted with "loon alert" signs, which remind anglers, wildlife enthusiasts and others to observe these birds from a distance. The music of several loons tremoloing during a spring evening rewards restraint.

It's hard to tell on the Turtle-Flambeau that osprey are endangered in Wisconsin. They appear to be everywhere! From aerial courtship displays in spring to mid-summer's never ending feeding of young, there are osprey around almost every point.

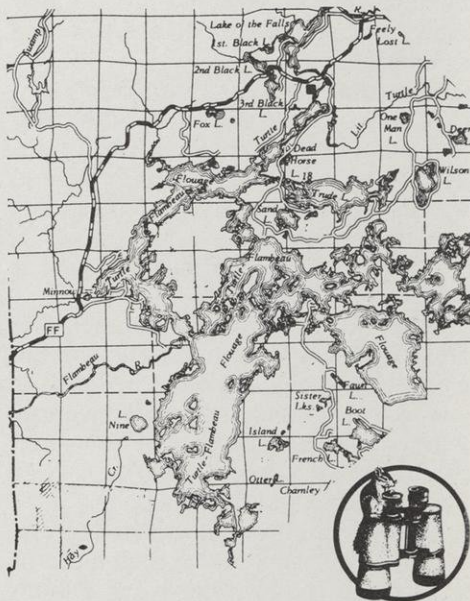
Osprey need treetop level nesting sites that provide security and space. To meet these needs, the power company and DNR jointly sponsor an osprey nesting platform program. Tall wooden structures provide secure bases for nests and attract breeding osprey to sites with clean, fishable waters. Osprey are sight feeders, living off an almost exclusively live fish diet. Before platforms were placed in the late 1970s, only three nesting pairs of osprey remained, with nests in terrible condition. Now, there are 16



▲ **Osprey in threat or defensive posture.**

Photo by John Olson.

◀ **Osprey nest.** Photo by Jim Bishop.



nesting pairs; most using the artificial structures.

Bald eagles are well known residents of the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage. There are at least ten nesting pairs. Impressive sized adults perched near immense nests, feeding sites or roosting trees are common sights.

Both bald eagle and osprey populations are monitored carefully year-round. Nest locations are mapped on forest management plans for protection during the winter. They are annually checked for production in spring and early summer. Young are banded whenever possible.

The Turtle-Flambeau Flowage is also home to black terns, giant Canada geese, great blue herons, yellow-headed blackbirds, numerous waterfowl (especially mergansers) and healthy populations of furbearers such as fisher, mink, muskrat, otter, raccoon and weasel. Here one can find countless painted turtles and no purple loosestrife!

Access and facilities

The Turtle-Flambeau Flowage is eight miles west of Mercer on county FF off of Highway 51. There's limited shoreline contact with public roads.

Access is almost exclusively by boat, canoe or pontoon. Five public boat landings provide flowage-wide accessibility.

A soon to be published guide will give visitors another way to enjoy the area and learn more about northern forest resource management. *Northwoods Auto Tour* will lead people on a 25-mile, self-guided auto tour. This windshield look at the flowage describes unique sites and resource management techniques along the way.

For more information about Turtle-Flambeau Flowage and facilities nearby, contact DNR, Mercer Field Station, Box 4, Mercer, WI 54547; (715) 476-2240.

John F. Olson is a DNR wildlife manager stationed in Mercer.



"Icy Creek — Mink," © 1986 by R.S. Parker. Courtesy of the artist and Mill Pond Press, Inc., Venice, Florida 34292.

"Big woods" species inhabit Chequamegon National Forest

Dave Wester
Howard Sheldon

Bears, bald eagles and blue-spotted salamanders are neighbors here.

The Chequamegon National Forest in north central Wisconsin gives visitors a chance to see a wide variety of wildlife adapted to forest vegetation.

More than 300 species of mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians have been identified in the Chequamegon; and more than half of those species prefer the kinds of dense forest found in the Round Lake, Black Lake and North Country Trails areas.

Keep your eyes open for the bald eagle, beaver, black bear, blue-spotted salamander, bobcat, broad-winged hawks, common loon, evening grosbeak, fisher, flying squirrel, gray jay, great horned

owl, northern goshawk, ovenbird, pileated woodpecker, porcupine, scarlet tanager and veery.

The Moquah Wildlife Area, west of Ashland, is a good place to look for wildlife that likes a more open habitat: coyotes, deer, grassland birds, mice, moles, voles and woodchucks. The Moquah area's sandy soil and jack pine barrens vegetation are unique within the Chequamegon.

A few of the species that DNR encourages at Moquah are badgers, bluebirds, plains pocket gophers, rose-breasted grosbeaks, sharp-tailed grouse and upland sandpipers. The area is managed for wildlife species that prefer a partly open habitat. The management techniques

used to create and maintain the partly open condition include timber harvesting and prescribed burning.

It could be misleading to single out a few spots within the 850,000-acre Chequamegon as best for watching typical "big woods" wildlife species. Other species, like the bald eagle and black bear, have such wide ranging home territories that it's impractical to pinpoint them.

Lucky visitors may glimpse a black bear nibbling on berry bushes near streams and rivers during early morning or evening.

The odds of spotting an eagle increase near the larger streams and lakes, like the Flambeau River, Round Lake and Chequamegon Waters Flowage.

The Round Lake and Black Lake areas, as well as the North Country Trail area, are great starting points for watching wildlife that prefers dense forest habitat — black bear, fisher, fox, pine marten and ruffed grouse.

Access and facilities

To get to the Moquah area, go 14 miles west of Ashland on highway 2, then six miles north on forest road 236.

To get to Black Lake, take highway GG 10 miles north from Loretta or 10 miles south from Clam Lake, then go three miles west on forest road 164 and 2.5 miles south on forest road 173. This brings you to forest road 166, and access to the campground and trail.

The North Country Trail is a national hiking trail stretching from New York to North Dakota. A 60-mile section of it traverses the Chequamegon between Mellen, Drummond and Iron River. Three campgrounds are located near the trail, and many forest roads reach it. The roads give the hiker and wildlife watcher a choice of a variety of trail segments. Terrain along the trail varies from hilly to about level.

The Round Lake area sits 17 miles east of Fifield on highway 70, then 2.5 miles north on forest road 144. A short hiking trail leads to Round Lake.

The Black Lake area includes a campground and a four-mile hiking trail that surrounds the lake. The terrain is nearly level with gentle sloping.

For more information about the Chequamegon, contact the USDA Forest Service at 1170 4th Ave. S., Park Falls, WI 64552; (715) 762-2461.

Dave Wester is a public information officer, and Howard Sheldon is a retired wildlife biologist for the USDA Forest Service.



Bobcat. Photo by Herbert Lange.



Round Lake area, Chequamegon National Forest. Photo by Dave Wester.

Mead Wildlife Area: Berkhahn Flowage Rookery

Thomas I. Meier

The jewel in this precious gift is a 60-acre rookery packed with cormorants and herons.

Mead Wildlife Area is a gift that keeps on giving. A 20,000-acre parcel, donated by Consolidated Papers, Incorporated of Wisconsin Rapids in 1959, has steadily grown in size and productivity. Although the entire property is a unique gem, one area in particular offers the wildlife watcher an unforgettable experience.

The Berkhahn Flowage is home to a double-crested cormorant and great blue heron rookery that encompasses less than 60 of the area's 28,000 acres. This small patch hosts more than 400 cormorant and 80 heron pairs. They nest in artificial platforms constructed to replace flooded dead timber, their preferred nesting habitat.

One of the charms of the rookery is you have to work a little to get near it. It's located three miles from the closest parking lot. The walk follows a wooded road and then cuts across marshland on a man-made dike. The road is graveled and the walking easy. Special arrangements are available for group tours and disabled visitors.

On the way to the rookery, you may also encounter beaver, sandhill cranes, ducks, foxes, geese, hawks, mink, otter, owls and prairie chickens.

Colorful neighbors, too

The rookery edge is home to three other colorful neighbors. Nestled in the cattails is a colony of yellow-headed blackbirds. You can hear the males vocalizing as they defend their territories. Within the rookery are small, almost inconspicuous nests of the black-crowned night herons. And there's not one, but four osprey nests ringing the outer rookery perimeter!

All five species are most visible during early morning or evening hours. Since these birds have rather open nesting requirements, their activities can be watched quite closely. From April through September 15, the rookery is closed. Still, viewing from nearby dikes with binoculars, or even the naked eye, is tremendous.

Gardening for the birds

Human activities to spruce up the rookery take place during the winter months long after the birds have left the area for warmer climates. Wildlife man-



At Mead: cormorant nest platforms.

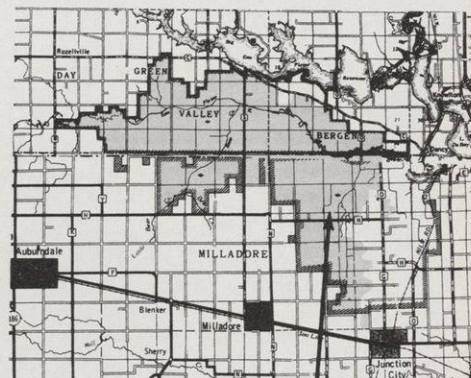
Photo by Tom Meier.

agers and technicians build new nesting platforms and repair those buffeted by birds and weather. Wildlife managers do a little "gardening" for the birds, too. Cattail stands are propagated by keeping proper water levels in the flowage.

Access

Mead Wildlife Area is located seven miles north of Milladore on highway S. **For further information, contact Thomas I. Meier, Mead Wildlife Area, SGV-129 County Highway S, Milladore, WI 54454; (715) 457-6771. Visitors are welcome at the project headquarters.**

Thomas I. Meier is a DNR wildlife manager based in Milladore.





Great blue herons on the nest.
Photo by Herbert Lange.



Brush prairie landscape must be periodically burned or mowed to discourage woody vegetation. Photo by Larry E. Gregg.

Pershing Wildlife Area

Frank Vanecek

Sharp-tailed grouse on center stage.

Dawn comes quickly this cool April morning. The stage is set for a dance ritual that has fascinated people for centuries. The stage? A grassy knoll, and the dancers are sharp-tailed grouse.

Male sharp-tailed grouse have been coming to this particular site for more than 20 years. They come to hoot, dance and squabble with other male sharptails for imaginary territories and to lure the females for breeding.

This dance and territorial display is part of their courtship. The males often return to the dancing ground by early March. The courtship display begins in earnest by early April when the females start showing up on the site. Often, the same dancing ground is used year after year.

This scene was once common across northern and central Wisconsin where brush prairies were kept "scrubby" by wildfires. Today, only pockets of remnant habitat remain, most of it on managed state areas like the 7,000-acre Pershing Wildlife Area, just north of Gilman, WI.

This large expanse of brush prairie and wetland offers wildlife viewers a glimpse of the sharp-tailed grouse and other watchable wildlife.

Sandhill cranes and Canada geese also found brush prairie management and flowages to their liking. Cranes moved in during the late sixties and are now a common sight at Pershing — seen standing in fields, in marshes or on the wing. On most spring mornings, their unique call can be heard throughout the area. A breeding population of giant Canada geese has recently established at Pershing and it appears the birds are thriving.

Migratory Canada geese always used Pershing as a stopover point on their fall flight, but geese didn't breed here. From 1978 through 1983, flightless young geese were transplanted to Pershing from Crex Meadows Wildlife Area in an effort to establish a breeding flock. The theory is that birds will return to breed where they learned to fly. Since Canada geese don't breed until age three, DNR had to wait a while to get results. The third year, right on schedule, goose broods began showing up, and they have been increasing in number every year.

Spring and fall are the best times to view geese. They spend a lot of time loafing on the grassy dikes. A careful stalk

down one of the dikes in May or June will usually get you a good view of a goose brood.

Other species of watchable wildlife abound at Pershing. Shallow water flowages are good places to view beaver, bitterns, ducks, herons, loons and otters.

A blue heron rookery is located on Shoulder Creek Flowage in the northeast corner of Pershing. At present, the rookery contains over one hundred nests and offers viewers an excellent view of the gangly birds in their crudely built stick nests perched above the water in dead trees.

The rolling, burned prairie offers wildlife watchers its own blend of interesting wildlife. Aside from sharp-tailed grouse, birds such as bobolinks, meadowlarks and clay-colored sparrows can be seen. Look up and you will likely see harriers gliding low over the landscape looking for their next meal.

Management techniques keep wildlife coming

Most wildlife at Pershing is there solely because the vegetation and wetlands are intensively managed.

Brush prairie requires constant attention. The landscape must be periodically burned or mowed to discourage woody vegetation. Burning is effective because large areas can be treated at low cost and fire is ecologically sound.

To date, 13 flowages have been constructed on Pershing. These, together with numerous small runoff ponds, potholes and beaver ponds, provide almost 1,000 acres of quality wetland habitat.

Access and facilities

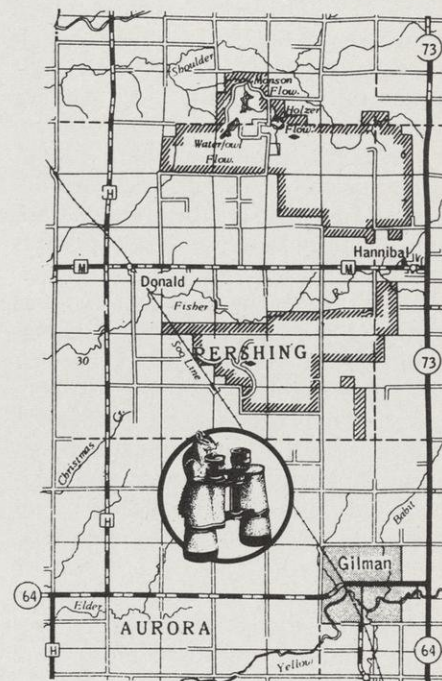
Most gravel roads are open to car travel and offer excellent viewing. Many miles of firebreaks are mowed and gated, but those who get out and walk will get close to much of the wetland wildlife. It's easy to walk Pershing's flat to gently rolling terrain, but the ground can get soupy. Rubber boots will come in handy.

In the spring, DNR erects canvas blinds on three sharp-tailed grouse dancing grounds. They can be used by the public on a first come, first served basis. It's a good idea to call before you come, especially during the busy April through mid-May season. Sitting in a blind on an April morning absorbing the sights and sounds is an experience most people will not soon forget.

If you're planning to visit Pershing, call 715-532-3737 or write to the Ladysmith DNR office to request a map and get some pointers on any special activities going on at the marsh.

Pershing wildlife area is located four miles north of Gilman, WI just off highway 73.

Frank Vanecek is a DNR wildlife manager working in Ladysmith.



Nicolet National Forest

Tony Rinaldi

There are countless opportunities for the wildlife watcher on this 657,000-acre tract.

The Nicolet National Forest is so large that no one wildlife species captures its essence. Some birds of the Nicolet are more commonly found in Canadian boreal forests including the boreal chickadee, gray jay, northern three-toed woodpecker and spruce grouse.

Other Nicolet species typical to the northwoods are the black-capped chickadee, pileated woodpecker and red-breasted nuthatch. Many long distance migrants breed at Nicolet; among them are the blackburnian warbler, black-throated green warbler, great-crested flycatcher and scarlet tanager. Also, Nicolet's abundance of lakes attracts bald eagles, common loons and ospreys.

Nicolet management activities focus on maintaining habitat for these northern birds. The Forest Service has for many years followed guidelines to protect nesting bald eagles, great blue herons and ospreys. Other rare raptor nests, including those of goshawks and red-shouldered hawks, are protected by incorporating their nesting sites into designated old growth stands. "Loon watch" signs are posted on all lakes that the species uses for nesting and feeding. To protect loon habitat, outboard motors are not allowed on small lakes.

A characteristic gem of diverse land, wetland and water habitats

Mostly contained in Nicolet and owned by the Forest Service, the Butternut-Franklin Lakes Area is in Forest County about 15 miles east of the town of Eagle River.

The area contains 19 lakes, ranging from deep and clear Butternut Lake (1,292 acres) to small bog lakes such as Indian Camp Lake (10 acres). Wetlands range from large bogs to small woodland ponds, sedge meadows and swamp conifer stands. Upland habitat includes old growth hardwood, hemlock and white pine, along with young aspen and sod openings.

Early in the morning, bald eagles and ospreys can be seen soaring over the lakes or perched on large shoreline white pines. Loons can be seen throughout the day but are most vocal in the evening. Great blue herons can be seen flying at dusk.

The east boat landing on Butternut Lake is one of the better viewing spots. Bring binoculars or a spotting scope.

An early morning walk along the Franklin Lake Interpretive Trail can result in many exciting finds. You can hear warblers singing and the tapping sounds of nuthatches and woodpeckers. Gray jays glide silently about the tree canopy.

The Butternut-Franklin Lakes Area is managed primarily for recreation. Development plans include additional interpretive trails and dispersed camping. Any new campsites or trails will incorporate the needs of the handicapped, but unfortunately no handicapped facilities now exist.

Timber sales in the area take forest aesthetics and wildlife habitats into account. Management guidelines retain selected key trees that are important to northern birds, such as white pine, hemlock, yellow birch and snags. Most oak, butternut and other nut bearing trees are also selectively reserved for wildlife. Specific silvicultural techniques regenerate these same tree species to assure their continued existence.

Several timber stands are designated as old growth and will be left uncut for many decades until other stands mature. The only known virgin stand of hardwood hemlock in the forest (near Bose Lake, northeast of Butternut Lake) is a natural landmark.

Other select spots in Nicolet National Forest

There are hundreds of other areas to view wildlife in the Nicolet.

Of 33,000 designated wilderness acres, the Headwaters Wilderness is the largest. It is home to some of the state's less common predators, including the pine marten and bobcat, together with the more abundant coyote and fisher. These animals, however, are secretive and seldom seen.

The Scott-Shelp Lakes Area features bog lakes and older growth hemlock, pine and birch. A 1,200-acre wildfire near Spring Lake (forest road 2178) in 1986 has resulted in species such as the bluebird, which is not typical of the northwoods, as well as abundant northern birds. There is also good birding along the Scott Lake Road (forest road 2183).

The Nicolet National Forest has several hiking trail systems that traverse varied wildlife habitats: Anvil (more than 20 miles), Dendro-Eco Trail (1 mile), Ed's Lake (8 miles), Jones Springs (8 miles) and Lauterman Lake (15 miles). There are also more than 200 miles of gated hunter/hiking trails.

Some of the more accessible canoe or small boat marshes include Haymeadow Flowage, Lower Nine Mile Lake, Scott Creek Impoundment, Wabikon Lake and Waupee Flowage.

For more information about Nicolet National Forest, contact: Supervisor's Office, Federal Building, 68 S. Stevens St., Rhinelander, WI 54501; (715) 362-3415.

Tony Rinaldi is a wildlife biologist at Nicolet National Forest.

Wolf. Photo by Herbert Lange.





Bald eagle. Photo by John Olson.



Anvil Trail hikers, Nicolet National Forest. Nicolet National Forest photo.

The Navarino Wildlife Area



After a burn, blazing star and goldenrod bloom on the prairie. Photo by Adrian Wydeven.



Chipmunk. Photo by Herbert Lange.

Adrian P. Wydeven

They specialize in wetland wildlife.

You'll find excellent opportunities for observing wildlife on the Navarino Wildlife Area in south central Shawano County. The area highlights wetland wildlife including beaver, black terns, blue-winged teal, great blue herons, grebes, mallards, marsh hawks, mink, muskrats, otter, ring-necked ducks, sandhill cranes, songbirds and wood ducks.

The relatively flat wildlife area covers about 14,500 acres — 60 percent wetland habitats like swamp forest, bottomland hardwoods, lowland brush, sedge meadows and open water with scattered emergent plants; 40 percent upland forests of oak, aspen, pine, and maples, as well as native grasslands, old fields and agricultural fields. The Wolf River meanders near Navarino's northwest border and portions of the Shioc River flow along the eastern side of the property.

Watching hints

To find good spots for observing wetland wildlife, take a drive along highway K and McDonald Road. Stop near the dikes and sandy ridges along these flowages, especially early in the morning or around dusk.

Forest wildlife are abundant, although somewhat less observable, on Navarino. Fifty miles of trails wind through the property. You might see a barred owl,

black-capped chickadee, blue jay, chipmunk, deer, gray and fox squirrel, great horned owl, ovenbird, rufous-sided towhee, ruffed grouse, white-breasted nuthatch, snowshoe hare, American woodcock, downy woodpecker, pileated woodpecker or a wood thrush.

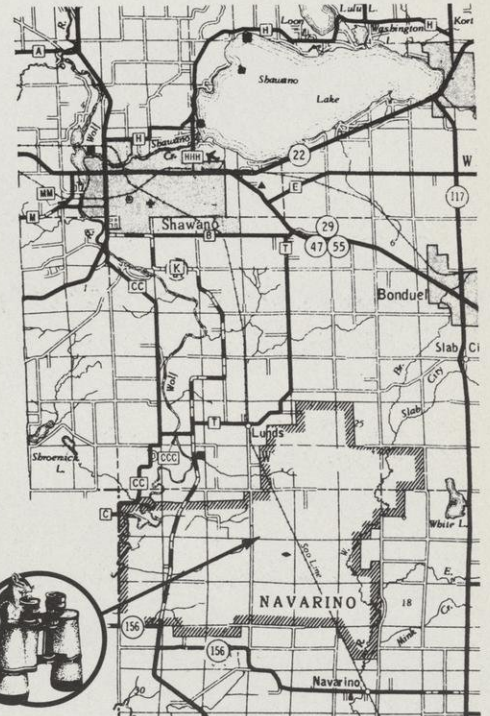
Linsten and East Townline roads are good places for observing openland wildlife. Wildlife watchers can drive through the area, walk the trails and dikes, canoe down the Wolf River, cross-country ski, or quietly sit on grassy ridge overlooking the marsh.

Navarino's 1,200 acres of native grasses, wildflowers, old fields and crop lands hold bluebirds, cottontail rabbits, garter snakes, ground squirrels, meadowlarks, mourning doves, sparrow hawks, and field, song and grasshopper sparrows.

Management techniques at Navarino

Commercial timber sales maintain a variety of forest habitats wildlife need. Clear-cuts regenerate pioneer tree species such as aspen. Tree thinnings encourage more mature forest stands. Several areas are left uncut for animals that need old growth forest.

Burning open lands maintains vigorous stands of native grass and wildflowers.



Access

The wildlife area is located nine miles south of Shawano on County Highway K, and 30 miles northwest of Green Bay on State Highway 156.

For further information, call the DNR wildlife manager at 715-524-2183 or write to the DNR, Courthouse, Shawano, WI 54166.

Sandhill Crane

With a harsh, raucous call, the sandhill announces the arrival of spring across the frozen marsh. The crane's voice contrasts with its spectacular grace during courtship dances. Bowing and leaping high into the air, the cranes dance in a remarkable display of ardor.

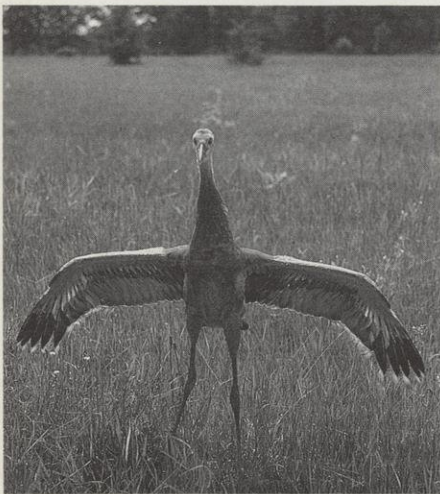
From a distance, sandhill cranes are probably the only bird observers are likely to confuse with a deer.

Not so long ago, it was nearly impossible to see a sandhill crane in Wisconsin. The birds were abundant in presettlement times when the marshes and prairies provided plentiful food and nesting cover. Indian fires maintained the grasslands, and the cranes flourished.

Settlements, hunting and habitat losses contributed to the steady decline of crane populations. The 1930s nearly saw the end of the sandhill crane in Wisconsin.

By the early 1960s, crane numbers increased significantly as large waterfowl project lands were bought and developed. Vast expanses of mud flats, marshes and grasslands provided plentiful food and cover for the cranes. Recent censuses estimate 6,000 cranes now migrate to Wisconsin wetlands and marshes every spring.

Adrian P. Wydeven is a DNR wildlife manager based in Shawano.



Threat posture, young sandhill crane.

DNR photo.

New London Area, Outagamie County



Tundra swans. Photo by Mark Martin.

Daryl Tessen

Tundra swans herald the spring.

The thousands of swans, geese and ducks that reside on flooded fields between Shiocton and Black Creek from late March through mid-April are often an unexpected treat for the wildlife watcher who spies waterfowl and shorebird migrations from a country road.

This is the best area in the state for viewing tundra swans. Two thousand to 9,000 birds can be spotted here. As many as 15,000 Canada geese, a few snow geese, an occasional great white-fronted goose and thousands of ducks leave an impressive picture in the mind of any wildlife enthusiast.

Pintails, green- and blue-winged teal, American wigeons and mallards plus geese usually start arriving about mid-March. The swans usually follow in about ten days. Bird numbers usually peak in late March to early April, depending upon the weather.

If swamps are flooded beyond mid-April, shorebirds including Hudsonian and marbled godwits, lesser golden and

black-bellied plovers and dowitchers will appear at these sites.

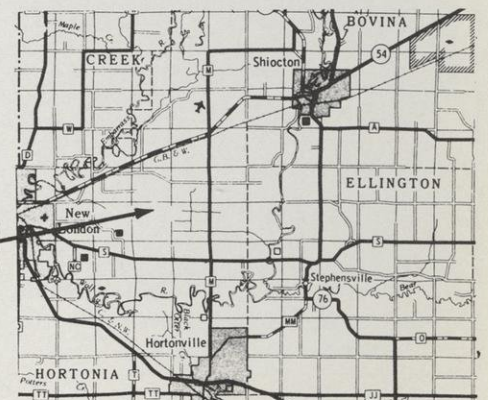
The Hortonville Swamp hosts such nesting species as prothonotary and cerulean warblers, yellow-throated vireos, blue-gray gnatcatchers, yellow-crowned night-herons, sandhill cranes, red-shouldered hawks, woodpeckers, owls and many more. The best viewing occurs in early morning and evening between late May and early June.

The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology Hotline, (414) 352-3852, provides tips for watching birds throughout the state.

Good viewing areas include Highway 54 between Black Creek and Shiocton, highway P and Bischoff Road (3.5 miles from the junction of 54 and 47), and the Wolf River and its tributaries when they're flooded.

The Hortonville Swamp area offers the hottest viewing on highway M between highway 45 and county road 51 in early morning and evening from late May to early July.

Daryl Tessen is a teacher and an associate editor for the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology.



Sandhill Wildlife Area

Ned Norton

A place where the "buffalo" roam and big deer and the sandhill cranes stay.

What has 2,400 legs, weighs 65,000 lbs. and lives in central Wisconsin? What has 3,000 legs, weighs 7,200 lbs. and migrates through central Wisconsin? Give up? It's the Sandhill Wildlife Area's white-tailed deer herd and sandhill crane flock.

White-tailed deer are common in Wisconsin, but a special management program has produced a herd with a higher proportion of older deer. These four- to six-year-old deer are really big, and the bucks have larger antlers that deer hunters savor.

Deer are most active at dawn and dusk. However, daytime visitors usually see deer feeding in the area's numerous wetlands. The October/November breeding season (rut) brings a flurry of deer activity and beautiful viewing. Bucks are at their peak, sporting polished antlers, swollen necks and heavy, muscular bodies.

Spring and summer visitors can see sandhill cranes feeding and defending their breeding territory. Crane chicks hatch in June and are so ugly, they would lose a beauty contest with the ugly duckling!

Each year, as fall approaches, cranes throughout central Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan instinctively congregate before migrating. As many as 1,300 to 1,500 birds flock to Sandhill Wildlife Area. A visit to the crane roost on the property's northern end is a sure thrill. Climb the Marsh Tower at daybreak and you won't believe your eyes and ears!

Management builds bigger deer and more cranes

Sandhill's forest and wetland habitats are managed to benefit a variety of wildlife species. Deer truly thrive in the mixed stands of aspen, oak and pine. The conspicuous sandhill cranes prefer the large, treeless expanses of sedge wetlands for breeding, feeding and congregating.

Wetland habitats are managed by burning and adjusting water levels.

Access and facilities

The 14-mile Trumpeter Trail meanders through the area providing excellent and convenient viewing. The trail is open



White-tailed deer, Sandhill Wildlife Area. Photo by Ned Norton.

from about April 20 until mid-November. Road conditions vary from year to year, so visitors should call ahead when planning an early spring or late fall visit.

Three observation towers are accessible from the Trumpeter Trail. The Buffalo Tower gives visitors a chance to see the small bison herd on Sandhill. The Marsh Tower gives an unobstructed view of the largest marsh on the property. Ducks and geese join the sandhill cranes to provide a spectacular show here. The North Bluff Tower, situated on top of a 200-foot rock outcropping, provides a 20- to 30-mile panoramic view.

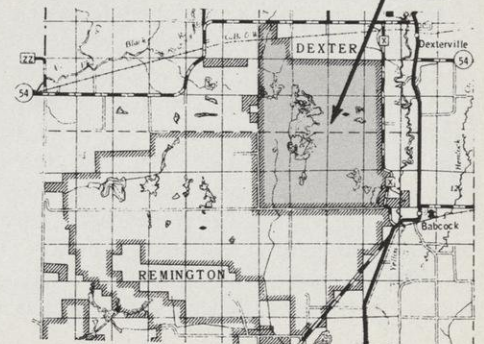
Logging roads, service roads, dikes and some unmarked trails provide other opportunities to explore and discover interesting places. From mid-December through February, about 17 miles of cross-country ski trails are maintained. A ski trail map is available at the trail head.

A 40-unit campground can be enjoyed on the adjacent Wood County Wildlife

Area. Free camping is permitted from September 1 through December 31.

The Sandhill Wildlife Area is approximately 25 miles south of Marshfield and 17 miles west of Wisconsin Rapids. The property headquarters and visitor's entrance is a mile west of Babcock on county highway X.

Ned Norton is DNR's wildlife manager for the Sandhill Wildlife Area, Wood County.



Necedah National Wildlife Refuge

Thomas S. Sanford

Marsh, woodland and restored prairie support a wide variety of wildlife.

Among the marsh species at Necedah National Refuge are bitterns, great blue heron, pied-billed grebe, beaver, muskrat and otter. Occasionally, a badger can be seen digging up turtle eggs along the dike trails. Nearby woodlands provide habitat for deer, ruffed grouse, squirrel and wild turkey.

In spring, warblers pass through the refuge, and as many as 200 tundra swans can be seen resting on impoundments during spring migration.

Sandhill cranes — slate-colored, crimson-crowned birds standing four feet tall with wingspans up to 80 inches — congregate in flocks of about 450 when they stopover at Necedah refuge during spring and fall migrations. Several pairs nest at the refuge.

As many as 20,000 geese and 25,000 ducks also use Necedah during migrations. These include American wigeons, black ducks, blue-winged teal, green-winged teal, mallards, pintails, ring-necked ducks, and wood ducks. In the fall, bald eagles appear during the peak of waterfowl flights.

A wetland by nature — and careful management

The Necedah National Wildlife Refuge is part of Great Central Wisconsin Swamp area, which at 7,800 square miles is the largest swamp in the state. The refuge includes 11,200 acres of wetland and 28,600 acres of terrestrial habitat of which 6,400 acres are grassland and 100 acres are cropland.

People attempted to change the swamp area through logging, draining and farming. Necedah, however, by nature of its geological history, was not meant to be anything other than a wetland.

Thousands of years ago, glacial Lake Wisconsin covered the region. When the lake receded, a vast peat bog remained. Sand ridges modified the flat topography of the lake bed. Gradually, islands of timber formed, completing a diverse landscape similar to what is seen at Necedah today — wetlands, open lands and woodlands.

Wetlands management at Necedah includes manipulating water levels to benefit waterfowl. During early spring migra-

tion, high water levels are maintained. Shortly thereafter, impoundments are drained. As fall migration begins, water levels are again raised. Every few years, an impoundment must be dry year-round. Alternating dry years among the refuge's 17 impoundments ensures that most wetlands have water during migration periods.

Managing the prairie requires prescribed burning. Fire, properly timed, kills undesirable grasses and woody plants and benefits the growth of warm season grasses and forbs. Controlled burns provide food and nesting cover for waterfowl.

Green browse (rye) and grain crops (buckwheat, millet) planted in Necedah's fields serve as a fall food source for Canada geese, ducks, sandhill cranes and white-tailed deer.

Access and facilities

Necedah Wildlife Refuge is near the village of Necedah. To get there from I-90/94 at Tomah, take highway 21 east; or from I-90/94 at Mauston, take county Q north to highway 80, continue north into the village of Necedah and turn left at highway 21.

Buena Vista Marsh, Leola Marsh, Paul J. Olson Wildlife Area

James Keir

Special places for special chickens.

Three unique areas in central Wisconsin are managed by DNR for a special grassland bird species: the greater prairie chicken. Buena Vista Marsh in southwestern Portage County is the core of the prairie chicken's habitat.

Starting in early April and throughout the spring, the "chickens" are at their best, and so is the watching! The males gather on many scattered "booming grounds" to strut their stuff in an effort to attract females. But the females do all the choosing.

Early rising wildlife watchers (early as in predawn) can reserve space in observation blinds located on the marsh. Contact the College of Natural Resources at UW-Stevens Point. Bring your camera and a tape recorder so you can document your experience. You can also get a glimpse of the spring booming from the road, but powerful binoculars will be a necessity.

After breeding, prairie chickens scatter for the summer. When fall and winter

come, they "pack up" in large flocks of 100 birds or more. To find them at these times, "walk them up" in the grasslands just like a grouse hunter would do — but without the gun, of course.

The once threatened prairie chickens are on the rise

Although still classified as a threatened wildlife species, the prairie chicken has responded well to grassland management programs during the past three decades. Prairie chicken turf is managed by periodically burning, grazing, farming or haying the grasslands to maintain vigorous growth.

Prairie chickens need grassland for nesting and brood rearing, though the birds readily make use of adjacent croplands and pasture for feeding and loafing. Thick brush or timber may be used for shelter during severe winter weather.

DNR managers estimate that about 2,000 prairie chickens inhabit the 12,000 acres of Buena Vista and the 3,000 acres

of two other grassland areas — Leola Marsh and Paul J. Olson wildlife areas. Chicken populations rise and fall cyclically, last reaching a high of about 4,000 in 1981. Wildlife managers think they're on the rise again.

Although not true prairies, these three areas still harbor a number of native prairie plant species and support a variety of species common to grassland habitat.

A whole host of other wildlife species can be found on the grasslands in prairie chicken habitat. Bobolinks, western and eastern meadowlarks, upland sandpipers, several species of sparrows, kestrels, harriers and the increasingly abundant sandhill cranes are just a few of the birds a wildlife watcher can expect to see here.

Typical mammals found in these grasslands include badgers, red foxes and white-tailed deer. You may even see a small population of Franklin's ground squirrels.

As with most wildlife, habitat is the key. Grasslands are even more scarce than wetlands, but on these three pro-

The refuge is open to the public from dawn to dusk. An 11-mile auto tour route starts at the observation tower on Grand Dike Road and ends at the Sprague-Mather Flowage. Early morning or early evening hours are best for viewing wildlife. Migratory birds are most numerous during April and October.

The Wood County Wildlife Area is north of the refuge. Its 35 square miles are managed for upland wildlife such as ruffed grouse, sharp-tailed grouse and white-tailed deer.

The Meadow Valley Wildlife Area is west of the refuge. Its 98 square miles are owned by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, but leased and managed by the state for wildlife. Camping is available here from Sept. 1 through Dec. 31.

The Petenwell Flowage Dam area is three miles east of the refuge on highway 21. It's a wintering ground for bald eagles. Fishing and hiking activities are offered here.

Thomas S. Sanford manages the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge.



Green-winged teal, a colorful swimmer. Photo by Herbert Lange.

jects, grasslands are abundant and remnants of original prairies are protected.

A walk in early fall through the bronze and brown grasses, big bluestem, little bluestem and Indian grass mixed in with the blue of the blazing star and the yellow of the prairie goldenrods is easy to enjoy — especially if you happen to see a chicken!

Access and facilities

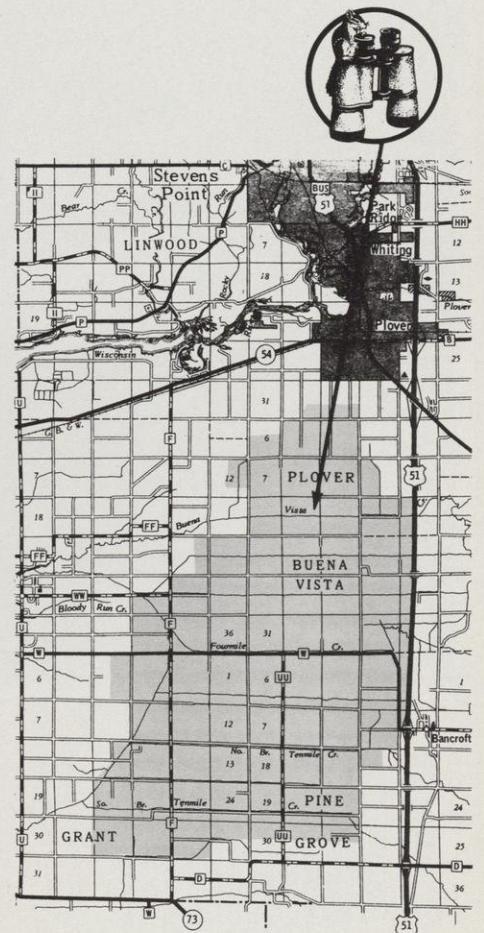
Buena Vista is located in southwestern Portage County along highways F and W just 10 miles east of Wisconsin Rapids. Immediately south is Leola Marsh located in northeastern Adams County along highways W and D. The Paul J. Olson Wildlife Area includes property on either side of the Wood/Portage county line about 10 miles north of Wisconsin Rapids near Rudolph.

For more information contact: Ranger Station, Box 100, Friendship, WI 53934; (608) 339-3385.

James Keir is a DNR wildlife manager stationed in Friendship.



Greater prairie-chickens. Photo by Larry Sperling.





Great egret in flight. Photo by William K. Volkert.

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