

Welcome to Necedah National Wildlife Refuge's self-guided auto tour. The 20 mile drive will take you through a portion of the refuge that is rich in natural history. Please plan for at least 3 hours on the tour route.

The numbered sign posts or "stations" along the road refer to descriptions in this brochure. Please see the tour map on reverse side.

Birds and mammals are plentiful, but their presence can only be detected by a keen ear or eye. Stop often and pause to look and listen. Animals are most active during early morning or evening hours.

Binoculars and bird books are available for loan at the Visitor Center. We ask that you return these items by 3:30pm.

Station 1: Visitor Center

Necedah National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is just one of more than 550 National Wildlife Refuges under the Department of the Interior in the United States. Necedah NWR is 44,000-acres. It was established in 1939 as a resting and feeding area for birds and other wildlife. The National Wildlife Refuge System is made up of more than 93 million acres. There is a refuge in every state. Eight right here in Wisconsin. National Wildlife Refuges are managed for wildlife first and where appropriate visitors can enjoy wildlife viewing, photography, hiking, hunting, fishing and educational or interpretive programs.

Take some time to explore the visitor center exhibits. Lifelike displays and interactive exhibits give visitors a sampling of life on the refuge. We also offer a short introductory refuge video and two trails to immerse yourself into the refuge.

Station 2: Observation Deck and Trail

This stop offers great bird watching and a spectacular view of Rynearson Pool #1. The tower is roughly 100 yards from the parking lot and offers a ground platform as well as steps leading up to the two platforms of the tower. Keep your eyes peeled along the shoreline for larger mammals such as deer or bears. The Tower Trail offers ¾ of a mile of hiking that takes visitors east to back water bay and back again to the parking lot. This trail offers birders a chance to find some of the canopy species the refuge hosts such as scarlet tanagers, red-headed woodpeckers and cedar waxwings.

Station 3: Timber Management

You may have noticed large patches of forest that have been selectively cut or thinned. Choosing which trees to cut creates openings in the woods where native wildlife foods can grow. This method also encourages the growth of the trees that remain. Oak and pine were cut from this area on your right, leaving behind a savanna habitat producing foods for many animals such as wild turkey, ruffed grouse, squirrels, deer, and woodpeckers.

Station 4: Watch This Spot

Necedah National Wildlife Refuge is located in an area known to early settlers as the Great Central Wisconsin Swamp, formerly covered by Glacial Lake Wisconsin. Original land surveyors in 1853 recorded the land as "level, wet, and mostly swampy" with open stands of "small scattered jack pine and tamarack." Notable exceptions to this were the sand ridges in the area. These were described as "rolling with low ridges." Glacial meltwaters left ridges of well-drained sand rising gently out of the surrounding wetlands, forming a patchwork of open vistas, forest and savanna.

Station 5: Sedge Meadow

On both sides of the road is a wetland meadow typical of the Necedah area. Because the sedge plants are so thick and the water so acid, these wetland meadows are not very attractive to waterfowl. However, birds such as great blue herons, alder flycatchers and sandhill cranes might be seen in the openings. Sedge Meadows are the only old growth habitat in the Refuge and have remained virtually undisturbed for 11,000 years. Sedge meadow soils consists mostly of peat soil, which holds in moisture, and are generally open spaces with different species of grasses. Sedge meadows on Necedah National Wildlife Refuge house six different species of birds: Sedge Wrens, Blue Winged Warblers, Golden Winged Warblers, Henslow's Sparrows, LaConte's Sparrows and Bobolinks. These six species are listed on the National Audubon Society's Watch List and the US Fish and Wildlife Service Region 3 Conservation Priority List.

Station 6: Land of Yellow Water

The name "Necedah" (pronounced Nah-see-dah) comes from the Ho Chunk people meaning "land of the yellow waters". The yellow tint comes from high mineral content in the water. This stop illustrates many ditches that were once used to drain water from the land. Today the ditches and water control structures are used to create water impoundments to restore hydrology to the landscape. This also allows biologists the ability to mimic natural, seasonal changes. Beaver are active in many of these streams; mink and otter might also be seen from the bridges.

Station 7: Pine Plantation

White and red pines were planted by the Civilian Conservation Corps around 1938. They were planted for timber production and to prevent soil erosion. Wild turkeys and woodland hawks like Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks are sometimes seen among the pines.

Station 8: Managing Water for Wildlife

The control structure you see before you across Sprague-Mather Road is used to control the water level in Sprague Pool. Refuge pools are lowered in late spring to encourage the growth of waterfowl loving plants such as millet, smartweed, beggar tick and spikerush. In early fall these pools are reflooded to provide feeding areas for geese, ducks, swans, whooping and sandhill cranes.

Station 9: Goose and Sprague Pools

Open water areas are favorite places for diving ducks. These ducks are usually seen during fall migration. Shallow water provides food for dabbling ducks. Other waterfowl include cormorants, trumpeter swans, coots, grebes, and Canada geese. Along the edges you may see whooping cranes, bald eagles, and shorebirds.

Check out the Lupine Loop Trail ahead!

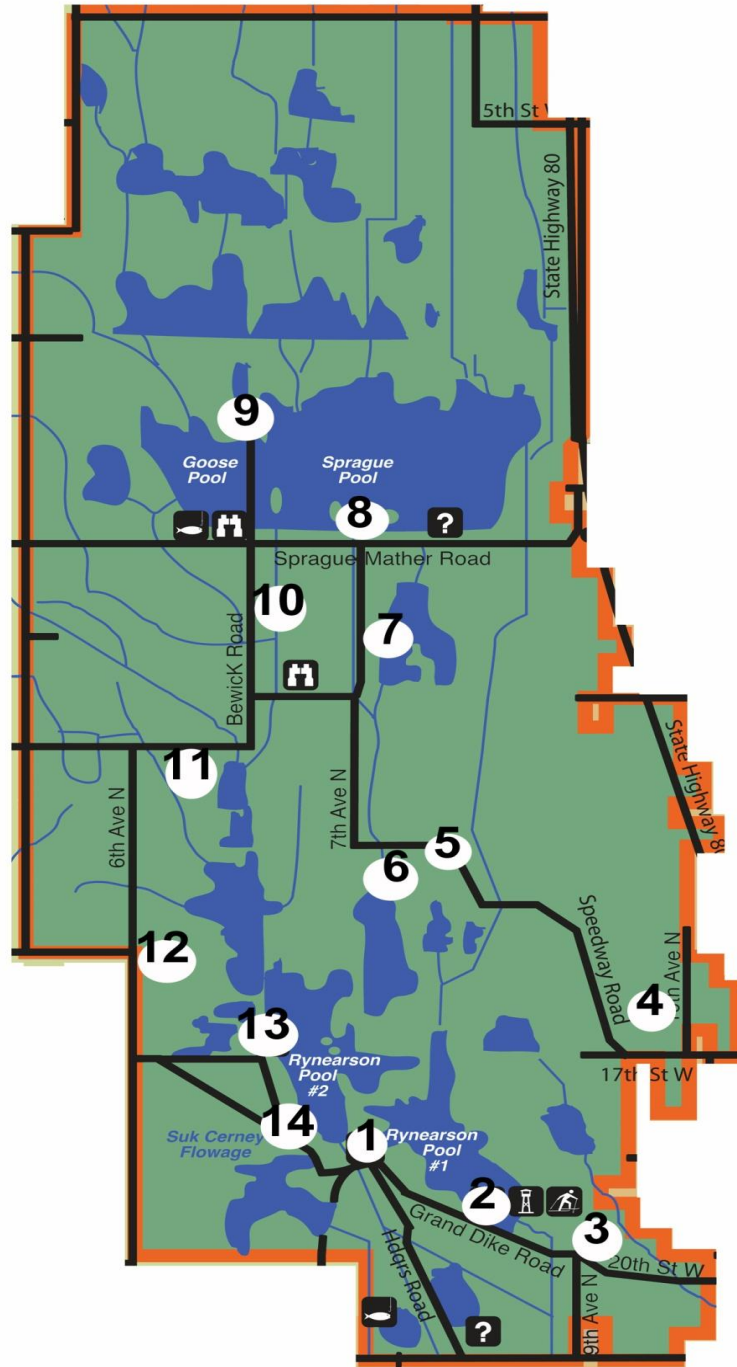
Station 10: Clear-Cutting for Wildlife

The area to your left once looked like the area to your right four years ago. Trees were removed to create an opening where native grasses, berries and other ground cover plants to grow. Carefully planned clear-cutting creates good feeding areas for many kinds of animals. Encroaching oak sprouts are controlled with prescribed fire or by mechanical means such as mowing.

Station 11: Break for Wildlife

The shallow ponds and wetlands on both sides of the road are very important for the survival of many kinds of birds. If you could scoop up a cupful of this water, you would discover some of the thousands of small aquatic insects that live here. These insects provide large quantities of protein, which is essential for nesting ducks, birds, turtles, frogs, dragonflies and others. Watch the road as wildlife of any size, may be crossing ahead.

Auto Tour Map



Station 12: Diversity of Grasses

The scene to your left may have looked like this 200 years ago. There were only a few trees and no roads. As far as you could see there was open prairie, miles and miles of swaying grass interrupted only by lowland sedge meadows and islands of red and white pine along the Little Yellow River. The vast expanses of prairie are gone, but the grasses still exist such as big bluestem, Indian grass, and switch grass. These grasses can grow to heights of six feet and found growing near the road. Other grasses, which tend to grow shorter and in drier soils, include June grass and little bluestem.

Station 13: Boghaunter Trails

The trail system through the gate on your left consists of two loops: the Meadow Beauty Loop (0.6 miles) and the Tamarack Loop (3.6 miles). Both mowed trails offers opportunities to see shorebirds, whooping cranes, savanna and chipping sparrows, eastern kingbirds, turkey, and the endangered ringed boghaunter dragonfly. An observation photo blind was recently built and installed by an Eagle Scout on this trail and is located on the Northeast side of the trail near the Wildlife Viewing Area.

Station 14: Wildlife Comes First

Just like people, wildlife have needs that must be met if they are to survive and reproduce. Food, water, shelter and living space are the most important requirements for any species. The mission of the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge is that "Wildlife Comes First." We manage the land to provide quality habitat for wildlife and an quality outdoor experience for visitors.

This completes our wildlife drive. Thank you for being our guest – we hope you have enjoyed it. Please stop by the Visitor Center (open 7:30am to 4:00pm daily) to sign our guest book or to comment on your experience or visit us on Facebook.

U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Necedah

National Wildlife Refuge

www.fws.gov/midwest/Necedah



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