



Minneapolis & Saint Paul Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds

- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds (Urban Bird Treaty) program was created to involve public in conserving common and declining bird species in urban areas through citizen science; habitat creation, protection, and restoration; education and outreach; avian hazard reduction; and non-native, invasive, or nuisance animal and plant species management.
- Urban Bird Treaty partners promote bird watching, foster environmental education with a focus on birds, and increase awareness of the value of migratory birds and their habitats, especially for their intrinsic, ecological, recreational, and economic significance.
- Under the Urban Bird Treaty program, the cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul will conduct habitat restoration (focusing on native plants) and invasive species management, and develop educational materials to support the conservation of birds that spend a portion of their lifecycle in this metropolitan area.
- The Service will dedicate a \$70,000 Federal grant to the Urban Bird Treaty partnership, which will be used for on-the-ground, bird-friendly efforts by the partners over the next two years. Outdoor wildlife watching activities like bird watching generate more than \$4 billion in economic benefit in Minnesota per year. Birding is an outdoor activity that continues to grow in popularity and can be enjoyed by people of all ages in all geographic areas.
- For the vast majority of people, birds represent their most frequent contact with wildlife. Birds are a valuable resource, contributing aesthetically, culturally, scientifically, and economically to America's citizens.
- Important bird habitat is often found within urban/suburban areas. These areas can be especially valuable to migrating birds that need a place to rest and refuel on their northward and southward journeys. There are four Important Bird Areas (IBAs) within the city limits of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, including North Metro Mississippi River IBA, Twin Cities Mississippi River IBA, Lower Minnesota River Valley IBA, and Minneapolis Chain of Lakes IBA. Audubon Minnesota oversees the IBA program and coordinates citizen volunteers to monitor IBA bird populations.
- Since 1999, nine cities have been accepted in the Service's Urban Bird Treaty program, including New Orleans, Chicago, Philadelphia, Houston, Portland, St. Louis, Nashville, Anchorage and New York.

- Cities to join the program in 2011 include Phoenix, AZ; Kennedale, TX, Opelika, AL; Indianapolis, IN; Hartford, CT; Ogden, UT; Lewistown, MT; San Francisco, CA; and Washington DC.

Birding Hotspots in Minneapolis & Saint Paul

- Check the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge's "Bass Ponds" and the nearby Old Cedar Bridge at the end of Old Shakopee Road in Bloomington for rails, herons, egrets, and a wide variety of forest and other marsh birds.
- Following spring ice breakup, check the Minneapolis Chain-of-Lakes (Calhoun, Lake of the Isles, Lake Harriet) for flocks of waterfowl including Canvasback, Redheads, mergansers, and a variety of gulls.
- Black Dog Lake in Burnsville is an excellent place to see rare gulls at both freeze-up and spring breakup and wintering Bald Eagles. Rare summer birds include Bell's Vireo, Black-billed Cuckoo, and Willow Flycatcher.
- The Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) stretches from Fort Snelling to St. Peter. Wild Turkeys and Bald Eagles can be seen outside the headquarters building in Bloomington, while at various stretches in summer Prothonotary Warblers, Yellow-billed Cuckoos, and Great-crested Flycatchers may be found.
- Afton State Park and the nearby Carpenter Nature Center in Washington County offer good habitat along the banks of the St. Croix River for landbird stopovers during spring and fall migration.
- Northern suburbs birders flock to Sherburne NWR to see a variety of waterbirds like Least Bitterns and Virginia Rails, American Woodcock, and over 10 species of breeding warblers, including Blue-winged, Golden-winged and American Redstart.
- The Mississippi River Valley from downtown Minneapolis to downtown Saint Paul, including places such as Crosby Farm Nature Area, is part of an Important Bird Area (IBA) and a wonderful stopover for many species of vireos, warblers, sparrows, and thrushes in May, September, and October.
- The Pigs Eye Lake area east of South Saint Paul and visible from the Mississippi River levees has a large Great Blue Heron colony, breeding Great Egrets, and nesting Bald Eagles.
- The T. S. Roberts Sanctuary on the eastern shore of Lake Harriet in Minneapolis has one of the largest bird lists in the state due to its diverse habitat and many observers. Check this site in both spring and fall migration.
- Elm Creek Park Reserve in Maple Grove has breeding Acadian Flycatchers and supports numerous migrant songbirds.

- Wood Lake Nature Center in Richfield is a fine location for rails and Least Bitterns, and as many as 20+ warbler species in a single day during migration.
- The sprawling 23,000-acre Carlos Avery Wildlife Management Area near Anoka has breeding and staging Sandhill Cranes, Ruffed Grouse, breeding Golden-winged and Pine Warblers, and both Alder and Willow Flycatchers. Ravens and Northern Shrikes can be found in most winters.
- Downstream from the Twin Cities is Dam Number 2 at Hastings, where a nice walk brings you close to Bald Eagles (especially in winter), waterfowl such as Wood Ducks, and all the native swallows.
- Murphy-Hanrehan Regional Park in Dakota County is a well-known IBA that has breeding Hooded Warblers, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Wood Thrushes, Blue-winged Warblers and Red-shouldered Hawks.