

Winter Birding Locations at Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge

VISITOR CENTER AREA- *TEMPORARILY CLOSED FOR CONSTRUCTION*

(Some walking, optional trails)

North AL Birding Trail Site #16

Description: Due to safety considerations and complexity of the on-going renovations at the Visitor Center, Observation Building and trail, the visitor center backyard area, and Atkeson Cypress Boardwalk these areas are temporarily closed.

As construction progress continues, the refuge website will be updated with the most up-to-date information about construction completion and future facility re-opening dates. In the meantime, please do not enter closed areas. Instead, consider visiting one of the following winter birding locations on the refuge.

Directions: If approaching the refuge from the west, from the intersection of US Hwy 31 and AL Hwy 67 in southern Decatur, travel east 1.9 miles to the entrance of the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center on the right. If approaching the refuge from the east and I-65, from the intersection of Hwy 67 and I-65, take Hwy 67 and travel 2.8 miles west to the Visitor Center on the left. (34.5480, -86.9505) (3121 Visitor Center Rd, Decatur, AL 35603)

FLINT CREEK DAY USE AREA

(Some Walking, optional trail)



Description: The Flint Creek Fishing Pier and Flint Creek Trail are located across Hwy 67 from the Visitor Center and provide views of Flint Creek. White pelicans can sometimes be seen on the creek, woodpeckers in the forest, and occasionally Sandhill cranes in the adjacent field. Trail is boardwalk and crushed granite, 1.5 mile double loop.

Directions: From the Visitor Center, turn left (west) onto Highway 67. In 500 feet turn right at the Flint Creek Day Use Area parking lot. (34.5532, -86.9460)

OSPREY POINT

(Minimal walking)



Description: Osprey Point provides a launch point into Flint Creek for canoes and kayaks. Located off Highway 67, this small gravel pull-off is sometimes a place where you can find White pelicans during the day or Sandhill cranes roosting on nearby mudflats in the early morning or evening. During spring and summer, osprey nest on the power poles.

Directions: From the Visitor Center, turn right onto Hwy 67. Travel 1 mile, after you cross Flint Creek turn right into the gravel pull-out. (34.5456, -86.9316)

Crabtree Slough

(Minimal walking)



Description: This small parking area provides a launch point into Crabtree Slough for canoes and kayaks in summer, but the slough is closed to all boats from November 15 to February 28. In winter, the parking area can be a place to view ducks and even some Sandhill cranes from a distance. The area behind the gate is closed to all entry. The parking area can be difficult to see and dangerous to pull into, please follow the driving directions with caution.

Directions: The parking area is located almost directly across the highway from Refuge Headquarters, but there is no left turn lane when approaching from the east. From the Visitor Center, turn left onto Hwy 67. Travel 1.5 miles, pass Country Club Rd, then turn left into the Target shopping center at the next traffic light. Turn around in the parking lot and get back onto Hwy 67 (turning right). In a mile or so, you'll soon see the slough on your right, you'll turn right into the parking area for Crabtree Slough as soon as the guardrail ends. (34.5545, -86.9536)

Refuge maps and trail guides available at: www.fws.gov/wheeler

For other refuge information call (256) 350-6639.

WHITE SPRINGS DIKE

(Walking required)

North AL Birding Trail Site #20



Description: The dewatering units along this dike provide opportunities see various species of duck. After parking at the gate, it is a 0.5 mile walk down the levee before you reach the first impoundment, there are up to 8 miles of additional levee for the more adventurous birding enthusiasts.

Directions: From the Visitor Center, turn left (west) onto Hwy 67. In 2 miles turn right on US Hwy 31/6th Ave. One mile north of the Tennessee River bridge the road splits, Hwy 31 goes north, Hwy 20 goes east. Turn right toward Hwy 20. Immediately after the split there is a gate on the right, turn here and park. Do not block the gate. Traffic at this location is dangerous and parking is limited, if there is no room to park safely without blocking the gate please return at a later time. (34.6286, -86.9511)

BEAVERDAM PENINSULA OBSERVATION TOWER

(Minimal walking, tower has stairs)

North AL Birding Trail Site #24

Description: Snow geese and/or Sandhill cranes can sometimes be seen feeding in the surrounding fields from this observation platform.

Directions: From the Visitor Center, turn right (east) onto Hwy 67. In 2.5 miles turn left onto I-65 North. In 13.5 miles merge onto I-565 East toward Huntsville. Take Exit 3 (Greenbrier Rd) and drive south 1.8 miles on Swancott Rd/Greenbrier Rd. In 1.8 miles turn right onto Pryor Rd and continue for 0.6 mile. At this point the road curves sharply to the right, but you'll want to continue straight onto the gravel road and take an immediate left turn. You'll see the tower a few hundred yards further. (34.6101, -86.8537)



To find out what other birders have been seeing visit www.ebird.org/hotspots and search Wheeler NWR.

ARROWHEAD LANDING ROAD/LIMESTONE BAY

(Minimal walking, optional levee walking)

North AL Birding Trail Site #23



Description: Depending on rainfall, this gravel road can be muddy and filled with potholes, but White pelicans and Snow geese are often seen from the Arrowhead Landing Boat Ramp. Ducks can sometimes be found in the slough 200 feet south of the boat ramp. Continuing another 1000 feet south on the road brings you to a locked gate. Walking 0.25 mile past this gate you'll find [sometimes flooded] fields on your right behind the trees, ducks are sometimes seen here.

Directions: From the Visitor Center, turn right (east) onto Hwy 67. In 2.5 miles turn left onto I-65 North. In 13.5 miles merge onto I-565 East toward Huntsville. Take Exit 2 (Mooresville Rd) and travel south 0.1 mile to Old AL Highway 20. Turn right and go 0.7 miles. Turn left (south) on Arrowhead Landing Rd when you see the small brown boat launch sign. Take this gravel road for 2 miles, keep left at the Wheeler NWR entrance sign. The boat launch will be on the left. (34.6018, -86.8920)

BLACKWELL SWAMP

(Minimal walking)

North AL Birding Trail Site #26

Description: Ring-necked ducks, Gadwall, and other dabbling ducks can sometimes be found in this flooded woodland and marsh.

Directions: From the Visitor Center, turn right (east) onto Hwy 67. In 2.5 miles turn left onto I-65 North. In 13.5 miles merge onto I-565 East toward Huntsville. Take Exit 7 (County Line Rd). Drive south on County Line Rd for 5.5 miles. Look for the white picket fence on your left, then turn left on Jolly B Rd. Continue on this narrow, paved road for 0.5 mile before taking a slight left on the gravel refuge road. Continue for 1 mile to the clearing on the left overlooking Blackwell Swamp. (34.5640, -86.7785)

