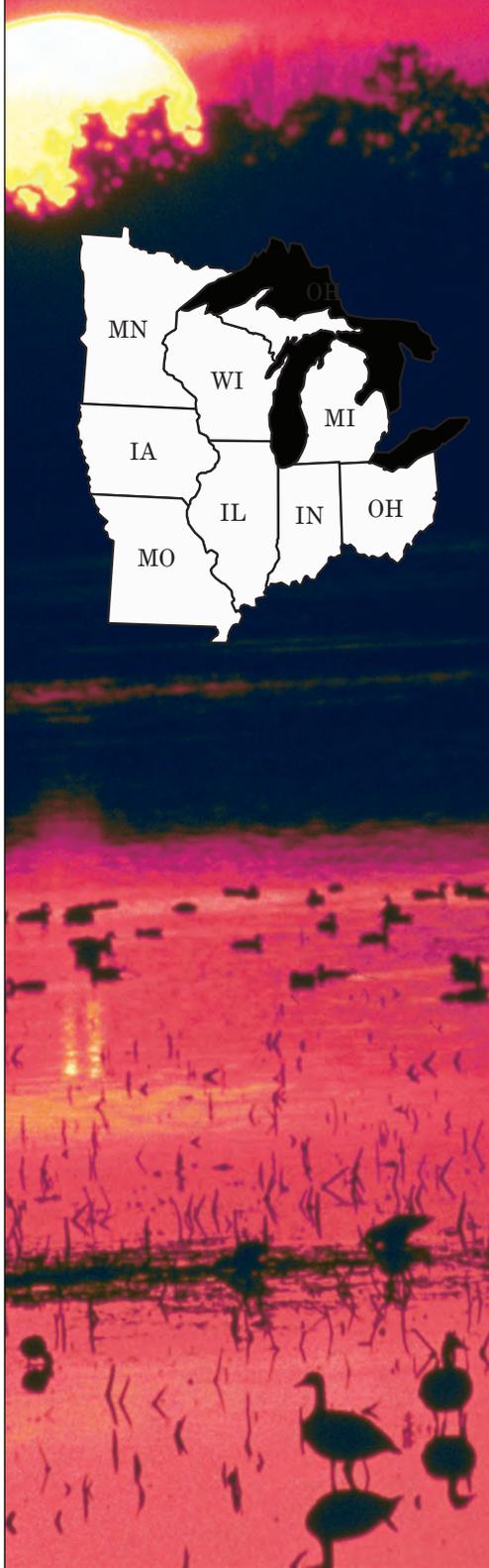




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Birding Midwest Refuges



Sunset, USFWS

Minnesota

Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge
www.fws.gov/midwest/bigstone

Big Stone NWR, near Odessa, MN provides a nice introduction to prairie birds. Nesting species include clay-colored sparrow, western kingbird, least and American bitterns, and western meadowlark. Common nighthawks nest amid the large boulders on the refuge. Look for Franklin's gulls during migration.

Pine to Prairie Birding Trail

Minnesota's first birding trail stretches across northwestern Minnesota and into Canada. It traverses prairie wetlands, restored tallgrass prairies, eastern deciduous forest and northern coniferous forest. Forty-five sites along the trail allow birders plenty of opportunities to add species to their life list.



Western Meadowlark, J & K Hollingsworth

Of the 45 sites along the birding trail, ten are lands of the national wildlife refuge system. Enjoy spectacular views of shorebirds at Agassiz NWR, Nelsons and LeConte's sparrows at Glacial Ridge NWR, trumpeter swans at Rydell NWR, prairie chickens at Hamden Slough NWR, and breeding woodland warblers at Tamarac NWR. The trail also features the lands of the Detroit Lakes and Fergus Falls wetland management districts.

<http://www.mnbirdtrail.com/>

Iowa

Union Slough National Wildlife Refuge
www.fws.gov/refuges/profiles/index.cfm?id=33580

A relatively small refuge with good birding potential, Union Slough is located in north central Iowa, just south of the Minnesota border. When water is low, shorebird migrations are outstanding and you can see more than 25 species. Look for pectoral sandpiper and semipalmated plover.



Trumpeter Swans, USFWS

Wisconsin

Horicon National Wildlife Refuge
www.fws.gov/midwest/horicon/

Horicon is well known as the largest inland cattail marsh and for its spectacular displays of fall waterfowl. It is also noted for breeding least and American bitterns, migrating shorebirds (four species nest on the refuge), and marsh wrens. Short-eared owls migrate through and Horicon is a staging area for sandhill cranes.



Bald Eagle, USFWS

Minnesota/Wisconsin/Iowa
Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife & Fish Refuge
www.fws.gov/midwest/UpperMississippiRiver/

Some of the greatest inland waterfowl concentrations in the eastern U.S. can be observed and enjoyed along the 261-mile refuge. Thousands of tundra swans pass through during November, along with concentrations of canvasbacks and lesser scaup. Bald eagles are common from October through March. Nesting peregrines can be observed on adjacent river bluffs. White pelicans pass through during August and September.

Portions of the refuge are located along several different birding trails, including the Great River Birding Trail.
<http://www.greatriverbirding.org/index2.php>

Missouri
Mingo National Wildlife Refuge
<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/mingo/>

While most people don't associate cypress swamps with the Midwest, Mingo offers opportunities to see species more often associated with the south. Warblers abound and nest at Mingo, including prothonotary, yellow-throated, cerulean, worm-eating, Kentucky, and hooded warblers. Look for blue-gray gnatcatcher and common moorhen.

Illinois
Emiquon National Wildlife Refuge
www.fws.gov/midwest/IllinoisRiver/emq.html

Located along the Illinois River Emiquon is a small gem of a refuge about 1½ hours west of Bloomington (and four hours from Chicago). Look for phenomenal wading birds and shorebirds in newly restored units.

Michigan
Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge
www.fws.gov/Midwest/shiawassee

Shiawassee NWR is located near Saginaw, MI and is one of the premier shorebird migration sites in eastern Michigan. Look for hundreds of dunlin, semipalmated sandpipers and some stilt sandpipers. There are also a variety of marsh and waterbirds and thousands of waterfowl. Prothonotary warblers nest here, on the northern edge of their range, and short-eared owls appear in winter.

Indiana
Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge
www.fws.gov/midwest/muscatatuck

Muscatatuck is a well-known birding site in south-central Indiana and is located in easy proximity to Indianapolis, IN; Louisville, KY; and Cincinnati, OH. The refuge features large waterfowl concentrations during fall. In other seasons, look for sedge wrens, Henslow's sparrows, sora and Virginia rails, least bitterns and red-shouldered hawks.

Ohio
Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge
<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/ottawa/>

Ottawa is renowned for the spring warbler migration, when more than 30 species can be observed. It's also the premiere Lake Erie shorebird area and boasts more than 30 species during migration. In spring and fall, birders can easily list more than 100 species on a good morning.



Prothonotary Warbler, J & K Hollingsworth