MINNESOTA IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS
Nomination Form

Partial funding for this nomination was provided through the Minnesota State Wildlife Grants program grant T-23-T-1 cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program.

SITE INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Swan Lake Important Bird Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>County (Primary): <strong>Nicollet</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximate Size: <strong>43,651 acres</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Coordinates:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elevation (max – min): <strong>311 - 297 ft.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCR Name/Number: <strong>Prairie Pothole #11</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECS Name (to subsection) B I O T I C S Fill in: <strong>Prairie Parkland Province (251), North Central Glaciated Plains (251B), Minnesota River Prairie (251Ba)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WBDB IBA ID: <strong>MNUS053</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SITE DESCRIPTION

Swan Lake Important Bird Area is located in Nicollet County Minnesota, approximately 90 miles southwest of Minneapolis. State Highway 111 bisects the area, US Highway 14 runs along a portion of the IBAs southern border and County Route 5 is on the northern boundary. Swan Lake IBA includes the 10,000 acre Swan Lake, as well as three smaller lakes, Mud Lake, Middle Lake and Little Lake. Swan Lake is the largest prairie pothole type wetland in the US, and is designated as a wildlife lake by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. This designation allows managers to temporarily lower water levels to enhance vegetation and control invasive fish species. Twenty-six subunits of the Swan Lake Wildlife Management Area are included within the boundaries of this IBA. Swan Lake IBA is one of the few locations in south central Minnesota where a large, intact wetland system complete with diverse native
wetland and upland plant communities, and the bird and wildlife populations they support, can be observed.

The Upper Minnesota River valley IBA is located just to the south of Swan Lake and is known for its function as a migratory corridor to a wide diversity of birds. Swan Lake is a stand out in the area, otherwise dominated by agriculture, for the number and diversity of waterbirds and waterfowl that use the area. This is an area in south central Minnesota where serious habitat degradation has not occurred so aquatic plants and shoreline sedges and grasses that are difficult to find in other areas still exist here.
Map Source: Audubon MN Shapefile Status: Draft
MAP

Map Source: Audubon MN, Shapefile Status: Draft
SITE JUSTIFICATION

Swan Lake is a great birding spot year-round. In the summer there is a large breeding colony of Red-necked, Eared and Western Grebes. The lake is also home to a large Black-crowned Night Heron rookery and hosts a breeding population of Least Bitterns as well as Forster’s and Black Terns. Swamp Sparrows and Marsh Wrens are also common here. In spring, just about all the waterfowl usually found in southwestern MN occurs here including a few rare occasional visitors.

Aside from the lakes, the area is interspersed with grasslands, marshes and swamps. Grassland species are well represented in this IBA including the Henslow’s Sparrow in publicly managed areas that have not been burned within the past 3-4 years. In winter, a variety of hawks and the occasional Snowy Owl can be seen in the area.

**MN1c - Significant concentrations of breeding, migrating or wintering waterbirds:**

The Minnesota DNR conducted a colonial waterbird survey on Swan Lake in 2000 and 2001 documenting numbers meeting or exceeding these criteria. Forster’s Tern breeding data exceeds the minimum numbers with 182 individuals observed in July of 2000 and 102 in 2001. Likewise with Black Terns with 362 adults and 205 juveniles observed in 2001. Four species of grebe; Red-necked, Western, Eared and Pied-billed, are documented as regularly breeding at the lake with numbers collectively exceeding 100 breeding pairs.

**MN1e – Species Diversity**

Approximately 191 species have been documented within the Swan Lake IBA (Appendix 1).

Including 24 species of shorebirds:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Black-bellied Plover</th>
<th>Willet</th>
<th>Baird’s Sandpiper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Golden-Plover</td>
<td>Lesser Yellowlegs</td>
<td>Pectoral Sandpiper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semipalmated Plover</td>
<td>Hudsonian Godwit</td>
<td>Dunlin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killdeer</td>
<td>Marbled Godwit</td>
<td>Stilt Sandpiper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Avocet</td>
<td>Ruddy Turnstone</td>
<td>Short-billed Dowitcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spotted Sandpiper</td>
<td>Semipalmated Sandpiper</td>
<td>Long-billed Dowitcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solitary Sandpiper</td>
<td>Least Sandpiper</td>
<td>Wilson’s Snipe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Yellowlegs</td>
<td>White-rumped Sandpiper</td>
<td>Wilson’s Phalarope</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**MN2a - Endangered, threatened or species of special concern**

Three State listed species have been documented within the Swan Lake IBA. Forster’s Terns (special concern) and Trumpeter Swans (threatened) have been documented nesting here and the American White Pelican (special concern) has been observed within the IBA in high numbers but no nesting has been documented. Henslow’s Sparrows (endangered) have also been observed within the surrounding grasslands of the Swan lake IBA (appendix 1), yet there is no quantitative information available.

**MN2b- Species of conservation concern**

Three species of conservation concern; the Black-crowned Night Heron, Black Tern and Least Bittern all nest in or around Swan Lake.

**MN-3. Rare, threatened, or unique habitat assemblages**

The site contains an assemblage of species representative of the Sedge Wetland habitat type, with 8 of the 9 criteria species observed:

- Northern Harrier
- Sandhill Crane
- Wilson's Phalarope
- Short-eared Owl
- Sedge Wren
- Le Conte's Sparrow
- Nelson's Sparrow
- Bobolink
IBA SITE CRITERIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BIOTICS Field Name: IBA/Criteria Fields</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MN-1. Significant concentrations of breeding, migrating or wintering:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) waterfowl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) shorebirds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) waterbirds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) migratory raptors or cranes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) species diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f) significant numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN-2a. Endangered, threatened or species of special concern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN-2b. Species of conservation concern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN-3. Rare, threatened, or unique habitat assemblages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN-4. Long-term research, monitoring or urban value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REFERENCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BIOTICS Field Name: Documentation/References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Give citation in following format: year, author, source, page number(s)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Swan Lake Birding Reports. Minnesota Ornithologists' Union (MOU) http://moumn.org
3. 2012 Trumpeter Swan Observation Map from the MN DNR. Unpublished data, S. Innvaer
4. 2006. MN Birding vol. 43(6). Swan Lake WMA, Nicollet County

6
7
8
9
10
## SPECIES OF IMPORTANCE

### BIOTICS Field Name: Element Site/Element Name and Presence Reference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>SPECIES</th>
<th>SEASON</th>
<th>MAX. NUMBERS (daily or seasonal)</th>
<th>YEAR(S)</th>
<th>ACCURACY</th>
<th>REFERENCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MN1c</td>
<td>Eared Grebe</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>75 juveniles, 98 adults</td>
<td>July 2001</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN1c</td>
<td>Eared Grebe</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>21 juveniles, 159 adults</td>
<td>July 2000</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN1c</td>
<td>Eared Grebe</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>140 Nests (Mud Lake only)</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN1c</td>
<td>Eared Grebe</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>325 Nests</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN1c</td>
<td>Western Grebe</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>72 ind.</td>
<td>July 2001</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>MN1c</td>
<td>Western Grebe</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>29 juveniles, 79 adults</td>
<td>July 2000</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN1c</td>
<td>Red-necked Grebe</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>15 juveniles, 31 adults</td>
<td>July 2001</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN1c</td>
<td>Red-necked Grebe</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>10 juveniles, 24 adults</td>
<td>July 2000</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN1c</td>
<td>Pied-billed Grebe</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>18 juveniles, 22 adults</td>
<td>July 2001</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN2a</td>
<td>Am. White Pelicans</td>
<td></td>
<td>500</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN2a</td>
<td>Am. White Pelicans</td>
<td></td>
<td>56</td>
<td>July 2001</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN2a</td>
<td>Am. White Pelicans</td>
<td></td>
<td>102</td>
<td>July 2000</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN2a</td>
<td>Trumpeter Swan</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>3 pr.</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN2a, MN 1c</td>
<td>Forster’s Tern</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>17 juveniles, 85 adults</td>
<td>July 2001</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>MN2a, MN 1c</td>
<td>Forster’s Tern</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>182 ind.</td>
<td>July 2000</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>MN2b, MN 1c</td>
<td>Black-crowned Night Herons</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>MN2b, MN 1c</td>
<td>Black-crowned Night Herons</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>9 juveniles, 5 adults</td>
<td>July 2001</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN2b, MN 1c</td>
<td>Black-crowned Night Herons</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>12 juveniles, 8 adults</td>
<td>July 2000</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>MN2b, MN 1c</td>
<td>Black Tern</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>362 juveniles, 205 adults</td>
<td>July 2001</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN2b, MN 1c</td>
<td>Black Tern</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>11 juveniles, 23 adults</td>
<td>July 2000</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN2b</td>
<td>Least Bittern</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>July 2005</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Season (on which quantitative data are based): B=Breeding, W=Winter, SM=Spring Migration, FM=Fall Migration.
2 Accuracy: R=Rough Estimate, G=Good Estimate, A= Accurate Count or Estimate
Cite references by number listed below.

# HABITAT AND LAND USE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Habitat Types:</th>
<th>Major Land Uses:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>NOT a BIOTICS field</strong></td>
<td><strong>BIOTICS Field Name: Management/Land Use</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comments</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Upland Deciduous Forest (e.g. Maple-basswood, oak, aspen, birch, northern hardwoods)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Lowland Deciduous Forest (includes floodplain forest, ash swamp)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upland Mixed Deciduous/Conifer Forest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lowland Mixed Deciduous/Conifer Forest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upland Coniferous Forest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lowland Coniferous Forest (includes tamarack, black spruce, and white cedar swamps)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open bog/poor fen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rich fen (narrow-leaved sedges)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Shrub Swamp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Lowland (wet) Native Prairie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Wet Meadows (broad-leaved sedges)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Marsh (cattail/mixed emergent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upland Native Prairie (includes dry, mesic, and brush prairie)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upland Savanna (includes jack pine savanna, oak savanna, and aspen openings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Grassland (non-native, planted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cliff/Talus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>River/Stream (includes river shore)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26%</td>
<td>Lake (includes lake shore)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sewage Pond</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RE
## CONSERVATION AND THREATS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THREAT</th>
<th>THREAT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X Abandonment/ reduction of land management</td>
<td>X Invasive or non-native plants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H Agricultural intensification/ expansion</td>
<td>Natural pests/disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H Aquaculture/ fisheries (overfishing)</td>
<td>Overgrazing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H Cellular/Wind Towers/Power Lines</td>
<td>Predators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Construction/ impact of dike/ dam</td>
<td>Pesticides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H Deforestation</td>
<td>Recreation/ tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H Disturbance to birds</td>
<td>Selective logging/ cutting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H Drainage</td>
<td>Succession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H Extraction industry</td>
<td>Unsustainable exploitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X Groundwater abstraction</td>
<td>Wetland loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H Industrialization/ urbanization</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H Introduced animals or feral pets</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Threats Comments**

*BIOTICS Field Name: Additional Topics/Additional Topics; enter keyword “THREAT COMMENTS”*

The expansion of agriculture is a continuing threat in this area. Tiling and ditching leads to inputs of water which can contribute to increased water erosion, agricultural runoff (nutrients, chemicals), and invasive species (plant & animal).

An additional threat is introduced carp that have significant impacts on water quality and native plant communities. In the past, DNR Wildlife has conducted fall/winter drawdowns and applied rotenone to the lake to address the carp problem and to help reestablish native plants. That poses a short-term impact to birds such as waterbirds, eagles, etc. but in the long-term should benefit them. They also have adjacent & nearby alternatives such as Middle Lake & Duck Lake.
OTHER RESOURCES

Nonavian Flora and Fauna

Not a BIOTICS Field

According to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Natural Heritage database identifies three native plant communities of ecological significance within the Swan lake IBA: Bulrush (prairie) marsh, Sugar Maple Forest (Big Woods) and Elm- Basswood- Black Ash (Hackberry).

Cultural Features

BIOTICS Field Name: Site Description/Cultural Features

According to an article on the Swan Lake Restoration Project (Mahmoodi, 2001) Swan Lake was historically used by various indigenous peoples including the Mississippian farming-oriented culture and the Dakota/Sisseton Indians, all attracted to the lake for its abundance of wildlife. In the late 1800’s settlers began farming the land more intensively. The practice of clearing the trees and diverting water in order to expand areas of agricultural land continued well into the mid 1950’s. In 1973 the MN DNR was granted authority to manage Swan Lake by designating it as a Wildlife Lake.

Citation: 2001. Mahmoodi. Restoration and Reclamation Review (vol. 7, No. 4, Fall 2001). Department of Horticultural Science, University of Minnesota. St. Paul MN.
http://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/60135/1/7.4.Mahmoodi.pdf
### NOMINATOR INFORMATION

**BIOTICS Field Name: Site Design/Designer**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME: Kristin Hall</th>
<th>ADDRESS: 2357 Ventura Drive, Suite 106</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CITY: St Paul</td>
<td>STATE, ZIP: MN 55125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMAIL: <a href="mailto:khall@audubon.org">khall@audubon.org</a></td>
<td>AFFILIATION: Audubon MN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHONE: 651-739-9332 ext 16</td>
<td>FAX: 651-731-1330</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PRIVATE LANDOWNER CONTACTS

**BIOTICS: Not a BIOTICS field**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/Group:</th>
<th>Name/Group:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address:</td>
<td>Address:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City/State/Zip:</td>
<td>City/State/Zip:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td>Phone:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email:</td>
<td>Email:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Have you discussed the nomination of this site with the landowner? **Y**  **N**

Does the landowner agree to the nomination of this site as an IBA? **Y**  **N**

### MANAGED AREA CONTACTS

**BIOTICS: Put names in site description**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Managed Area Name: Swan Lake WMA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managed Area Owner: MN DNR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managed Area Manager: Stein Innvaer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address: 501 9th St</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City/State/Zip: Nicollet, MN 56074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone: (507) 225-3572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:Stein.Innvaer@state.mn.us">Stein.Innvaer@state.mn.us</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Managed Area Name: Swan Lake WMA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managed Area Owner: MN DNR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managed Area Manager: Non-game Wildlife Specialist: Lisa Gelvin-Innvaer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address: 261 Hwy 15 South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City/State/Zip: New Ulm, MN 56073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone: (507) 359-6033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:lisa.gelvin-innvaer@state.mn.us">lisa.gelvin-innvaer@state.mn.us</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Have you discussed the nomination of this site with the land manager?  Y

Does the land manager agree to the nomination of this site as an IBA?  Y

LOCAL GROUPS WITH A CONSERVATION INTEREST IN THIS SITE

| Name/Group: Swan Lake Area Wildlife Assoc. | Name/Group: |
| Contact: Pell Johnson Board Member | Address: |
| City/State/Zip: | City/State/Zip: |
| Phone: | Phone: |
| Email: pelljo@mchsi.com | Email: |

Other remarks or comments:

Thank You For Your Help
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>sgcn</th>
<th>IBA SCC</th>
<th>common name (updated AOU52)</th>
<th>BBA</th>
<th>BBS (Courtland Route)</th>
<th>MN DNR Colony wb spp</th>
<th>MB DNR MBS (1997-98)</th>
<th>Dunlap* SL WMA bird list</th>
<th>MOU Nicollet Co. only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Greater White-fronted Goose</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Snow Goose</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Cackling Goose</td>
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<td>Canada Goose</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Trumpeter Swan</td>
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<td>X (2010)</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>Tundra Swan</td>
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<td>Wood Duck</td>
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<td>Gadwall</td>
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