**MINNESOTA'S PINE TO PRAIRIE BIRDING TRAIL**

Remarkable bird diversity abounds where northwestern Minnesota's great coniferous forests yield to a narrow band of deciduous woodlands and then the wide-open prairie farther west. This trail, the first established in the state, links 45 prime sites along the transition zone, offering the chance to see almost 300 bird species. If you are visiting from points south, you may be most intrigued by the diversity of birds in the region's evergreen forest: the powerful northern goshawk, the quiet, elusive spruce grouse, and the oddly tame gray jay. The deciduous woods provide a summer home for black-billed cuckoos, brilliant scarlet tanagers, and many other migratory birds, while the grasslands just to the west offer everything from busy, buzzy-classed grasshopper sparrows to greater Prairie-chickens. Some of the best birding is around marshes and lakes, where you may find American bitterns, red-headed woodpeckers, snowy egrets, and sandhill cranes nesting in the wilder and more remote bays. With luck, you might even spot the elusive yellow rail, or hear its odd ticking song. nesting in the wilder and more remote bays. With luck, you might even spot the elusive yellow rail, or hear its odd ticking song.

**For more information:** Visit www.mnbondbirdtrail.org or call the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources at 800-637-3600.

**MINNESOTA RIVER VALLEY BIRDING TRAIL**

Minnesota may be famous for its 10,000 lakes, but the state's rivers make the best routes for birding. This particular one, a project of Audubon Minnesota, follows its namesake river away from the South Dakota border through the state's southern part to the heart of the Twin Cities area. An expansive trail, it is thoughtfully divided into 11 distinct loops, each of them characterized by a particular habitat type: wetlands, rivers, reservoirs, and more. In summer many of the trail's highlights are in the more open habitats. Clay-colored sparrows sing their funny flat buzzes from atop low thickets in the prairie, while bobolinks and yellow-throated longspurs chirp their liquid song as they fly high above the tops of weed stalks, while Sprague's pipits pour out their liquid songs as they flitter high above the swaying grasslands. For more information: www.mnriverbirding.org/index2.html or call 701-385-8003.

**NEBRASKA BIRDING TRAILS**

The state license plate a few years ago featured flying sandhill cranes, and for good reason: Half a million of these regal birds stop over on the Platte River in southern Nebraska every spring, attracting thousands of birds and tourists from around the world. But if you explore this statewide series of 1.5 trails, encompassing more than 400 sites, you'll realize that Nebraska has a lot of birds besides cranes. With its broad stretch from west to east, the state takes in species typical of areas from the Great Plains in south to the prairie-pine region of north. A trip through Nebraska's pine ridge region has birds straight from the Rocky Mountains and also features excellent opportunities for waterfowl. At the state's southernmost corner, bottomland forests ring with the songs of typical southeastern birds, like American bitterns, and patterns Harris's sparrows. During spring and fall migration, gulls, hawks, and other migrants sweep along Lake Michigan's shoreline when the winds are right. But birders in the know may follow the guide to downtown Chicago, where, in the shadows of skyscrapers, parks, and along the lakefront, more than a hundred thousand of migrant travelers, including everything from blackburnian warblers to Virginia rails. For more information: Visit www.bcbirds.org/birdtrail or call the City of Chicago at 312-743-9283.

**CHICAGO REGION BIRDING TRAIL, ILLINOIS AND INDIANA**

Chicago was not founded by birds, but it could have been. Here, where the eastern forest meets the Great Lakes, is the farthest exciting territory for naturalists. This regional trail, sponsored by the City of Chicago, the Bird Conservation Network, and Chicago Wilderness, leads to 58 of the best birding sites in the seven Illinois counties surrounding the city and in two counties in northwest Indiana. On native prairies in summer, rare Hensel's sparrows sing their liquid song as white-breasted nuthatches and hairy woodpeckers deliver more melodious tunes. Forest preserves host flashy tanager birds like rose-breasted grosbeaks and scarlet tanagers in summer, while remnant woodlots in winter harbor winter wrens, fox sparrows, and eastern towhees. Visit www.bcbirds.org/birdtrail or call the City of Chicago at 312-743-9283.

**KANSAS BIRDING AND NATURAL HERITAGE TRAILS**

This series of four trails, designed by Audubon Society of Kansas, bring birders to some of the state's most unique and interesting habitats. Spring, in particular, offers many opportunities for birding in Kansas, with birds like black-headed Grosbeaks singing their liquid song as they fly high above the tops of weed stalks, while Sprague's pipits pour out their liquid songs as they flitter high above the swaying grasslands. For more information: www.birdingtrails.org/index.html or call 888-921-2473.

**HOCKING VALLEY BIRDING TRAIL, OHIO**

The first birders to follow this trail were Lewis and Clark, journeying up the Missouri River in 1804. They wouldn't have called it a "great" trail then—the name comes from three large reservoirs behind dams on today's river. Other aspects of the landscape have changed as well, but it is still rich with habitats. East meets west here, with eastern bluebirds and western meadowlarks nesting in the same fields, and eastern and western kingbirds nesting in the same cottonwood groves. Visitors from afar may be most fascinated in the nearness. Marvelled godwits, big cinnamon-tipped sandpipers, and snowy egrets are common in the area, with some species nesting nearby. Birders are more likely to check out the reservoirs' edges, especially during migration, when rare water birds may drop in. On the Missouri's undammed and stony shores, more familiar species can be seen, including pintails, gadwalls, teal, canvasbacks, northern pintails, and American wigeon nesting on the sandbars, while many other shorebirds stop over on migration. Search along this trail's byways and you'll agree that the area remains, even two centuries after the first explorers, a fabulous region for discovery. For more information: Visit www.travelml.com/downloads/brochures/guide/G2Birdingbooklet.pdf or call 800-732-5662.

**GREAT WISCONSIN BIRTHING AND NATURE TRAILS**

Read the words and you might not associate this state with anything but dairy farms and cheese. But by looking through its binoculars, birders will see that Wisconsin is the perfect habitat to see the birding highlights along this section of the big river. You can see some of the rarest birds on earth here. For example, during migration, when rare water birds may drop in. On the Missouri's undammed and stony shores, more familiar species can be seen, including pintails, gadwalls, teal, canvasbacks, northern pintails, and American wigeon nesting on the sandbars, while many other shorebirds stop over on migration. Search along this trail's byways and you'll agree that the area remains, even two centuries after the first explorers, a fabulous region for discovery. For more information: Visit www.travelml.com/downloads/brochures/guide/G2Birdingbooklet.pdf or call 800-732-5662.

**BIRDING DRIVES DAKOTA (NORTH DAKOTA)**

The phrase “birding Drives Dakota’s” is a clever play on words and an optimization of driving through the state. Plus, the birding-drives themselves make up an excellent trio of birding trails. Centered around several national wildlife refuges in southeastern North Dakota, they take in some of the most beautiful and bird-rich prairies and marshes anywhere. The abundance of birds here in summer may be a shock when you drive through the area. There are grey and red-headed woodpeckers, piñons, white-tailed ptarmigans, and others flitting about in the shadows of forested ravines. Birding is good all year here, with permanent residents like piñon woodpeckers and barred owls lurking in the densest forest stands and red-headed woodpeckers drumming in the open oak groves. Still, summer is the most exciting season, because the mix of habitats supports such a wide variety of nesting birds. In the cool shade of the conifers in narrow canyons, many bird species have one of their best nesting grounds: chestnut-collared longspurs, mountain chukars, Canada warblers, blue-headed vireos, and others. Just a few miles away, in swamps and sycamore groves along the larger rivers, you can see many birds of southern affinities: the yellow-throated vireo, yellow-billed cuckoos, chestnut-collared longspurs, and many more. For more information: Visit www.birdingtraces.org or call 740-385-8003.

**GREAT RIVER BIRDING TRAIL**

America’s greatest river is the centerpiece of this ambitious birding trail, designed by National Audubon to follow the mighty Mississippi all the way from its headwaters near the Canadian border to its delta on the Gulf of Mexico. When completed, the trail will include county-level maps of birding sites all along the river’s course, with the Midwest portion covering parts of Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Missouri. Apparently, many of your favorite birds don’t agree... On this 1,800-mile route, there are over 300 nesting species represented are among this state's birding trails. 368 sites. To explore the sparse and pine forests in the trail’s northern section is to evoke Minnesota’s prairies and wildflowers. Here, in summer, there are black-throated gray warblers, chestnut-collared longspurs, mountain chukars, Canada warblers, and others. For more information... on the birding highlights along this section of the big river. You can see some of the rarest birds on earth here. For example, during migration, when rare water birds may drop in. On the Missouri's undammed and stony shores, more familiar species can be seen, including pintails, gadwalls, teal, canvasbacks, northern pintails, and American wigeon nesting on the sandbars, while many other shorebirds stop over on migration. Search along this trail's byways and you'll agree that the area remains, even two centuries after the first explorers, a fabulous region for discovery. For more information: Visit www.travelml.com/downloads/brochures/guide/G2Birdingbooklet.pdf or call 800-732-5662.