

Northeastern Minnesota Birding Locations v8.0

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1. Follow a given location's name / web link for more information.
2. Many of these birding areas are accessed by dirt roads. Any dirt road plowed free of snow in the winter may be an indication of active logging. Meeting up with a logging truck on a one lane dirt road is not my idea of fun. The truck never backs up, but you may have to drive backwards for a long distance. As a fyi, most logging operations do not work on Sunday mornings. Thus, Sundays are my favorite day to explore back roads in the winter.
3. Google Maps GPS Links are often to the actual spots from where I like to start my birding outings.
4. In addition to this PDF which has many of my favorite northern Minnesota birding locations, anyone serious about birding Minnesota should also purchase Kim Ecket's: [A Birder's Guide to Minnesota](#). Kim's book covers Minnesota habitat county by county and provides suggestions and maps on where you should focus your birding efforts
5. The PDF of this birding information is copyrighted by Richard Hoeg. While the PDF is provided without cost, you do NOT have permission to reprint any of my content without my express written permission. You also may NOT repost this PDF to other websites, and/or redistribute this PDF via any other electronic methods. [Obtain your free PDF](#). I have found reading the PDF works best in landscape mode on my phone.

Canosia Wildlife Preserve: Just north of Duluth and reached off Midway Road near the airport is a fantastic wetlands. You may bird this area by either car or some of its great trails.

- [Google Maps GPS Link: West Lismore Road Trails Parking](#)
- [More information about the Canosia Wildlife Preserve](#)

Crex Meadows Wildlife Area: Although in Wisconsin and a bit south of Duluth, this wetlands area has some of the premier birding in the country during Spring and Fall migrations. Ever dreamed of seeing 20,000+ Sandhill Cranes flying in from feeding at sunset? If the answer to that question is yes, then a visit to Crex Meadows should be in your future next October.

- [Google Maps GPS Link: Main Dike Road](#).
- [More information about Crex Meadows](#)

- [Friends of Crex Meadows Organization](#)
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Floodwood Bog (see Wawina / Floodwood Bog on this page)

Forest Hill Cemetery Ponds: Located off Woodland Avenue in Duluth, this cemetery has two ponds which attract waterfowl and other birds. The resident domestic geese tend to attract other waterfowl to the ponds, particularly during the Spring and Fall migrations.

- [Google Maps GPS Link: Duck Ponds.](#)
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French River Lutheran Public Bird Feeders: Only two miles from McQuade Harbor on the North Shore of Lake Superior. These feeders attract lots of winter birds given their location near both the French River and the big lake. The feeders go up a bit after Thanksgiving once the local black bears are asleep. It is 100% okay to hike the pine forest trails between the church parking lot and French River.

- [Google Maps GPS Link: Feeders in Back](#)
 - [More information on the bird feeders](#)
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Greenwood Creek Bog & Bird Feeders: 34 miles north of Two Harbors, via Lake County 2, in the middle of the Boreal forest I maintain some bird feeders. I try to keep the feeders filled year round which assumes no visits from black bears. There is a pullout off Lake County 2 which is plowed in the winter. When snow is on the ground do NOT drive past the parking area. It is a snowmobile trail (not very busy). Weather permitting year round it is a great hike to the Greenwood Bog which is 8/10 of a mile distant. In the summer months the trail (Forest Road #813) has a nice pullout parking spot next to a rock pile 6/10 of a mile from Lake County 2. I often park here and hike from this point.

- [Google Maps GPS Link: Dirt Parking Area](#)
 - [More Information on the feeders](#)
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Greenwood Forest Fire Area (includes the Stony River Forest Road): The Greenwood Forest Fire in the Fall of 2021 changed this region dramatically. Lake Cty. #2 near Sand River used to be “the place” to see Spruce Grouse. The **Sand Lake area** is now burned out and already attracting wildlife that loves a “post burn rebirth”. While the fire never reached **Stony River Forest Road**, it got mighty close and most of the route was used as a fire block. Given land was cleared for a fire block, it is now rare that the forest ever gets tight on the western side of the road. Normally there is 100 to 125 yards of open space / land on that side. Thus, think of a 20 mile long (the length of the road) essentially never ending meadow or Boreal bog. By having all this open space next to the forest’s edge, in the years ahead this road will become an even better wildlife magnet!

- [Google Maps GPS Link: Sand River](#)
 - [Google Maps GPS Link: Stony River Forest Road](#)
 - [More information about the Greenwood Forest Fire Area](#)
 - [More information about Stony River Forest Road](#)
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Hartley Nature Center: Located off Woodland Avenue in Duluth, this nature center / park has an extensive trail system for hiking. Although there is a small lake in the park, it does not tend to attract very many waterfowl. Instead the park is a good location for viewing songbirds once the leaves and wildflowers appear in the late Spring. In season the wildflower garden next to the nature center building is a great place to observe hummingbirds. Warblers like the thickets just downstream from the pond.

- [Google Maps GPS Link: Nature Center Parking](#)
 - [More information about Harley Nature Center](#)
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Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory: Raptors and songbirds do not like to migrate across large bodies of water, in this case Lake Superior. During the fall migration, the ridge located above Duluth and accessed via SkyLine Drive in east Duluth is a birders paradise. Winds out of the northwest which force migrating birds against Lake Superior will often mean lots of bird activity on the ridge. During September and October bird counters and naturalists will be present to answer questions for the general public.

- [Google Maps GPS Link: Main Overlook](#)
 - [More information about Hawk Ridge](#)
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Lakeview National Golf Course: This golf course is located 20 miles north of Duluth on the northeast side of Two Harbors. Birds love the golf course's ponds, deep forest which borders the course, and the proximity to Lake Superior. Birding is best in the spring and fall when golf is shut down for the year.

- [Google Maps GPS Link: Clubhouse Parking](#)
 - [More information about Lakewood National Golf Course](#)
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Lakewood Elementary: Great wetlands just north of Duluth. The trail gives great access to the birding area.

- [Google Maps GPS Link: Parking Lot](#)
 - [More information about Lakewood Elementary](#)
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Minnesota Point (Park Point / Wisconsin Point): Drive to Sky Harbor Airport at the end of Minnesota Point / Park Point. A hiking trail starts just to the left of the airport gate. This trail allows one to walk all the way to the Wisconsin harbor entry. During the spring and fall migrations it is quite often possible to see hundreds, if not thousands of ducks in the bay. Once leaves and wildflowers appear, other birds will also make their presence known. Don't forget to check out the lake side during your hike for ducks. If the smelt and herring are staging for their spring spawn, the ducks will know it!

- [Google Maps GPS Link: Park Point Recreation Center](#)
 - [More information about Minnesota / Park Point](#)
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Old Vermilion Trail: This dirt road is about 14 miles north of Duluth (see link for location).

- [Google Maps GPS Link: Start of Road](#)
 - [More information about Old Vermilion Trail](#)
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Pagami Creek Wildfire Region: Forest fires generate great birding areas. A wildfire actually brings a region back to life, and ultimately betters both the animal and birding habitat. Certain kinds of birds, often rare otherwise, preferred burned out regions. The Pagami Creek Wildfire Region may be accessed via Tomahawk Road o state highway #1 a bit west of Isabella, Minnesota. The road is not plowed in the winter.

- [Google Maps GPS Link: Bridge on Tomahawk Road](#)
 - [More information about the Pagami Creek Wildfire Region](#)
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Pine Island State Forest (Just west of Big Falls on US71 / Hwy 6 ... use the Toomey Williams Forest Road for access): This great birding spot will have more information added soon. Here is one of my favorite routes leaving from Big Falls ... Toomey-Williams Forest Road to Pine Island Forest Road to Fiero Truck Trail to Trapper Jim's Corner: [Learn more.](#)

- [Google Maps GPS Link: Toomey Williams Forest Road](#)
 - [Self-Driving Birding Tour: Big Falls to Waskish, Mn.](#)
 - [More information about Pine Island State Forest](#)
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Sax-Zim Bog: This region has the best boreal winter birding in the lower forty-eight. If your desire is to see Great Grey Owls, Northern Hawk Owls, Snowy Owls, Grey Jays and Pine Grosbeaks ... just to name a few birds, this region which is about 40 miles north of Duluth o US Hwy #53 near Cotton, Minnesota should be on your bucket list.

- [Birding Sax-Zim Bog](#) (a quick overview ... PDF download)
 - [My June / early summer Sax-Zim birding map](#) (at bottom of linked page)
 - [Wilderness Birding Route from Duluth to the Bog](#)
 - [Google Maps GPS Link: Welcome Center](#)
 - [Google Maps GPS Link: Parking Pad on McDavitt Road.](#)
 - [Friends of Sax-Zim Bog](#)
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Slag Point (Morgan Park Mudflats): The City of Duluth and the EPA have been working for years on restoring the EPA Hazardous Waste Site (old Duluth Steel Plant), and in June 2024 opened Slag Point. This restoration now includes a large point with a two mile trail which reaches out into Spirit Lake in the St. Louis River. Native water and land plants have been replanted along with the removal of hundreds of tons of slag. When this effort is combined with the cleaning up of the river over the past quarter century, the site is now a fantastic and beautiful spot. Visiting in late July will yield ones seeing thousands and thousands of Black-Eye Susans. From a birding vantage point, the birds are already back, and the location will get better year over year. While taking a walk is worthwhile at any time of year, from a birding vantage point it is during the spring and fall migrations when Slag Point shines, particularly for Arctic Shorebirds and waterfowl.

- [Google Maps GPS Link](#)
 - [Slag Point Drone View / Video](#)
 - [More information about Slag Point](#) (some of my blog posts)
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Stony River Forest Road (see Greenwood Forest Fire Region on this page)

Superior, Wisconsin (winter Snowy Owls): From early December through February, Snowy Owls winter in the Duluth / Superior region. Here is a downloadable PDF which I created as a guide for “[Finding Superior Snowies](#)“!

- [Google Maps GPS Link: Head of the Lakes Fairgrounds.](#)
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Toomey-Williams Forest Road near Big Falls, Minnesota (See Pine Island State Forest)

Wawina / Floodwood Boreal Forest Bog: The region is remote, and almost impossible to access, but one road provides extremely good access ... the Hedbom State Forest Road (just west of Floodwood). The biggest section of the Wawina Bog is actually on the southern side of US Hwy. 2. My impression of the habitat as seen from Hedbom State Forest Road is that it is truly magical ... with lots of Bog with open spaces interspaced into the forest yet also including a large number of deadheads for use as raptor hunting perches!

- [Google Maps GPS Link: Hedbom Forest Road](#)
 - [More information about the Wawina / Floodwood Bog](#)
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Western Waterfront Trail: This natural gravel / dirt hiking trail in west Duluth is a great place for viewing waterfowl, and songbirds. The trail routes next to the St. Louis River channel and wetlands which makes for great bird habitat.

- [Google Maps GPS Link: Parking Lot](#)
 - [More information about the Western Waterfront Trail](#)
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Willowsippi Wildlife Management Area: Before Sax-Zim Bog became extremely popular, the Willowsippi WMA was where folks searched for Great Gray Owls. This region is just south of Hill City, and has a combination for Boreal Forest Bogs, Wetlands, and Fields. The region is near the Mississippi River which means during migration in particular there can be some nice action. Read these two posts to learn more: [Post1](#) | [Post2](#)

- [Google Maps GPS Link: Dirt Parking Area](#)
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Wisconsin Wetlands: Lake Superior keeps northeastern Minnesota cold during the early Spring. Winds that blow from the south do not have to cross over the cold waters (38F in March / April) of Lake Superior; thus in northwestern Wisconsin within 20 miles of Duluth there are two wetlands areas that turn on “way before” the North Shore of Lake Superior. In addition to migrating waterfowl, these two areas hold grassland birds almost never seen in the boreal forests of Northeastern Minnesota.

- [Blog post with map](#)
- [Cloverland: Roy Johnson Wetlands blog posts](#)
 - [Google Maps GPS Link: Cloverland Town Hall](#)
- [MacQuarrie Wetlands](#) (somewhat near Wrenshall, Minnesota)

- [Google Maps GPS Link: Parking Area](#)
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