

**For immediate release:**

**Contact:** Susanne Thiede-Barnet, 608-242-8895

**Summer Birding Hotspots**

*Wisconsin offers several great opportunities to see birds during the summer*

**(April 27, 2010)**— Wisconsin is an outstanding state for birdwatching. With the Mississippi River Flyway on the west, the Great Lake on the east and a huge variety of habitats and protected wildlife areas in between, more than 300 species of birds spend some time in Wisconsin each year.

The largest movement of birds takes place in the spring and fall. But the summer provides a great chance to see species of birds who nest in Wisconsin. Here are some of the best and most unique birdwatching opportunities in Wisconsin.

**Urban Birding**

Just minutes from Wisconsin's State Capital, in the bustling community of [Middleton](#), you'll find one of the best places to birdwatch in Wisconsin. The Pheasant Branch Conservancy is an oasis for birds and wildlife. It's also a vital resource for the area's lakes. Each day, the springs here produce more than 2.6 million gallons of water that feed Lake Mendota and three other large lakes in the Yahara River Chain.

Visitors to this pristine parcel of prairies, wet meadows, deciduous forests and freshwater springs will find ample opportunities for birdwatching. The mix of different habitats makes the conservancy a great home for a number of bird species.

Scenic overlooks or observation areas can be found along the East, West and South trails that run through the conservancy. Sandhill cranes are a common sight, as are several kinds of heron and all manner of prairie-loving birds, including Dickcissel, Bobolink, Henslow's Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Harris's Sparrow, Sedge Wren and Eastern Meadowlark.

**Warbler Heaven**

Some of the best woodland birding spots in the Midwest are in the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest. Within the forest are a number of outstandingly preserved old-growth forest remnants that offer some of the best opportunities to see warblers.

One of the best warbler spots is the Trout Lake Conifer Swamp, located in [Vilas County](#). It's one of about a dozen unique State Natural Areas in the area protected by Wisconsin's Department of Natural Resources.

The cedar, spruce, tamarack and balsam firs of this wet forest attract many species of warblers, including Nashville, black and white, Blackburnian, black-throated green, yellow-rumped and northern parula. The dimly lit forest groves, mosses, orchids and rare plants give you the sense that you're in another world.

To get there from the Minocqua-Arbor Vitae-Woodruff area, go north on U.S. Hwy. 51 for 6 miles, then northeast on County M for 2 miles. The area is located just a quarter mile past the intersection with County N. The natural area lies northwest of the highway.

**Redheads Galore**

The Horicon Marsh in [Dodge County](#) is one of America's great birding destinations. The northern half of the marsh is protected as a National Wildlife Refuge and is maintained for optimal habitat maintenance. The result is that nearly 300 species of birds either visit or live on the marsh at some point during the year.

Birders should begin their explorations in the refuge. The refuge was originally established as a nesting area for the redhead duck, which has flourished in the optimal habitat afforded by the marsh. Visitors to the

refuge have a number of observation areas and trails to choose from, including the Horicon TernPike Auto Tour in the northwest quadrant of the marsh, just off Hwy 49.

A short drive or hike on the TernPike will take you to the floating boardwalk, where birdwatchers are afforded a water-level view of some of the best wetland birdwatching east of the Mississippi River. On a warm summer day, the sound of birds, frogs and insects is a roaring soundtrack. Mother Nature is thriving here.

Notable summer bird species include sora rails, bitterns, white pelicans, ruddy ducks and—of course—redhead ducks, to name only a few species. For good information on what types of birds are being spotted on the marsh when you arrive, stop by the Horicon Marsh International Education Center, located at the south end of the marsh between the communities of Mayville and Horicon.

### **Big Lake, Big Birds**

[Onalaska](#) on the Mississippi River is one BIG birding destination. The Mississippi River is America's most important bird migration corridor, providing a migration route for more than 40% of North America's waterfowl. The Upper Mississippi, in particular, has some of the most outstanding birding opportunities in the world, in large part because of the series of pools created by the Lock & Dam system that runs from Minneapolis to St. Louis.

One of the largest pools and best for birdwatching is Lake Onalaska. At 7,700 acres, it is enormous. Out of the hundreds of species that can be seen during the spring and summer, the most impressive is by far the American white pelican.

The number of these giant birds—who can weigh as much as 30 pounds, with wingspans that reach up to 10 feet—have been going up over the past several years. Flocks of these graceful giants can easily be seen over the lake, rising and falling on air currents with in a kite-like style that is unmistakable. On the water, pelicans use a group feeding technique that involves herding fish towards the shallows and plowing through the water with their lower beaks submerged. It's a sight you need to see to believe.

### **Dike 17**

[Black River Country](#) is best known for its forests. The more than 200,000 acres of protected lands abound with trails and wildlife. Its location right off I-94 makes it a favorite outdoor escape for Minnesotans and Wisconsinites alike.

But this picturesque region of rugged pine forests also offers outstanding birding. One of the best locations in Black River Country is an area known as Dike 17. Located on the easternmost border of the forest along Settlement Road, this refuge area features an observation tower that overlooks a large flowage and several other wetlands. Sandhill cranes, shorebirds and waterfowl use the area during the spring and into the summer.

Kingfishers, heron, egrets and raptors are also common sights, as are a variety of songbirds that utilize the excellent upland habitat that surrounds the wetlands. But aside from the great birding, the area offers wonderful views of the beautiful Black River Country landscape. One visit and Dike 17 will probably be close to #1 on your list of favorite birding locations.

For more information on Middleton and the Pheasant Branch Conservancy, visit [www.visitmiddleton.com](http://www.visitmiddleton.com).

Learn more about Vilas County and find additional natural areas by visiting [www.vilas.org](http://www.vilas.org).

Get complete information about Dodge County and the Horicon Marsh by going to [www.dodgecounty.com](http://www.dodgecounty.com).

Find complete information for birding along the Wisconsin Great River Road by visiting [www.wigreatriverroad.org](http://www.wigreatriverroad.org).

And for trip planning information for Black River Country, visit [www.blackrivercountry.net](http://www.blackrivercountry.net).

For information on these and other summer birdwatching destinations, contact Susanne Thiede-Barnet at 608-242-8895 or [Susanne@pilchbarnet.com](mailto:Susanne@pilchbarnet.com)