

## Other Great Birding Spots in Winnebago County

**Anna Page Park** 2800 N Springfield Ave, Rockford, IL 61103  
rockfordparkdistrict.org  
**Atwood Park** 2885 New Milford School Road, Rockford, IL 61109  
rockfordparkdistrict.org  
**Nygren Wetland Preserve** 3190 West Rockton Road,  
Rockton, IL 61072 naturalland.org  
**Rock Cut State Park** 7318 Harlem Road Loves Park, IL 61111  
dnr.state.il.us

## Winnebago County Birding Organizations

**Bird Freak** birdfreak.com  
**Natural Land Institute** naturalland.org  
**North Central Illinois Ornithological Society** ncios.org  
**Illinois Department of Natural Resources** dnr.state.il.us  
**Sand Bluff Bird Observatory** sandbluff.org  
**Severson Dells Nature Center** seversondells.org

WCDFD is Committed to Enabling All to Enjoy Forest Preserves—  
The Winnebago County Forest Preserve District  
invites people of all abilities to discover the  
benefits of recreation at our sites, facilities,  
and programs. If you need special accom-  
modations in order to access a preserve  
or facility, please contact the ADA  
coordinator by calling the WCDFD  
administrative office, 815.877.6100.



5500 Northrock Drive  
Rockford, IL 61103  
815.877.6100

www.wcfdpd.org

Design: www.MiniFotoArt.com, Bird photos: David C. Olson

## Pecatonica River Forest Preserve

**Description/Habitat:** Pecatonica River is 466-acres of woodlands and oxbow swamps and is an Illinois Dedicated Nature Preserve. This site displays outstanding spring wildflowers, including bluebells. A self-guided interpretive trail and observation deck overlooking the pond provide easy access through this area.

**Common Species:** Wood Duck, Barred Owl, Blue-winged Warbler, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Indigo Bunting, Rose-breasted Grosbeak

**Uncommon Species:** Prothonotary Warbler

**Hiking Trails:** 9.8 miles

**Special Amenities:** 130 year-old limestone barn, picnic shelter, campground.

**Locations:** 7260 Judd Road, and 14260 Brick School Road, Pecatonica, IL 61063



## Pecatonica Wetlands Forest Preserve

**Description/Habitat:** Pecatonica Wetlands is made up of 1,048 acres of flood-plain forest, oxbow pond marshes and upland forest along the Pecatonica River. The site has outstanding spring flora and birdlife.

**Common Species:** Sandhill Crane, Great Blue Heron, Scarlet Tanager, American Redstart, Magnolia Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Northern Parula, Red-headed Woodpecker, Rusty Blackbird, Blue-winged Teal, Green-winged Teal, Black Duck, Mallard, Bufflehead

**Uncommon Species:** Bald Eagle, Cerulean Warbler, Virginia Rail, Least Sandpiper, Sora, American Bittern, Pileated Woodpecker

**Hiking Trails:** 8 miles

**Special Amenities:** Deluxe picnic shelter.

**Locations:** 5750 Best Road, and 4550 North Pecatonica Road, Pecatonica, IL 61063



### When there's more than one

A group of Great Blue Herons, has many collective nouns, including a "battery", "hedge", "pose", "rookery", and "scattering" of herons.

## Severson Dells Forest Preserve

**Description/Habitat:** Severson Dells is 369-acres of woodland, stream and dolomite cliffs. This preserve is home to the Severson Dells Nature Center which sponsors many educational programs and events for students and families.

**Common Species:** Great Crested Flycatcher, Blue-winged Warbler, Indigo Bunting, Gray Catbird, Eastern Towhee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Barred Owl, Baltimore Oriole, Purple Finch

**Uncommon Species:** Black-billed Cuckoo, Pileated Woodpecker, Veery, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher

**Hiking Trails:** 3 miles

**Special Amenities:** Nature Center with gift shop, paved 2/3 mile accessible loop trail, pond and observation deck, IL Nature Preserve.

**Location:** 8502 Montague Road, Winnebago, IL 61102



## Seward Bluffs Forest Preserve

**Description/Habitat:** 636-acre Seward Bluffs Forest Preserve is one of the District's most picturesque and most popular. It boasts woodland, stream and dolomite cliffs. It is home to many northern relict species as well as a good spring wildflower display. The 400 acres in the western portion is beautiful undulating restored prairie and oak-savannah.

**Common Species:** White-breasted Nuthatch, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Eastern Wood-pewee, Wood Thrush, Killdeer, Savannah Sparrow, Northern Parula, Black-capped Chickadee

**Uncommon Species:** Great Horned Owl, Henslow's Sparrow, Western Meadowlark

**Hiking Trails:** 8 miles

**Special Amenities:** Picnic shelters, campground, and equestrian trails with horse trailer parking and camping.

**Location:** 16999 Comly Road, Seward, IL 61077

### Frozen dinners, anyone?

In frigid areas, where larger prey cannot be eaten quickly, the Great Horned Owl may let uneaten food freeze and then thaw it out later using it's own body heat.



## Sugar River Alder Forest Preserve

**Description/Habitat:** Sugar River Alder, an Illinois Nature Preserve, is a 537-acre tract of sandy soil which harbors unique habitats not found in other regions of the county.

**Common Species:** Barred Owl, Lark Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Orchard Oriole, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Kentucky Warbler, Willow Flycatcher, Ovenbird, Eastern Wood-pewee, Red-headed Woodpecker, Indigo Bunting, Whip-poor-will, American Woodcock, Baltimore Oriole

**Uncommon Species:** Henslow's Sparrow, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Acadian Flycatcher, Northern Bobwhite

**Hiking Trails:** 5 miles

**Special Amenities:** IL Nature Preserve, remnant prairie.

**Location:** 10255 Haas Road, Shirland, IL 61079



## Sugar River Forest Preserve

**Description/Habitat:** 529-acre Sugar River Forest Preserve is nestled among a beautiful woods next to the Sugar River. In the winter, the pines are good places to look for Golden-crowned Kinglets, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Long-eared Owl, and Great Horned Owl.

**Common Species:** Yellow-throated Warbler, Great Blue Heron, American Goldfinch, Wood Duck, Acadian Flycatcher, Cooper's Hawk, Chestnut-sided Warbler

**Uncommon Species:** Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Cerulean Warbler, Red-shouldered Hawk, Yellow-crowned Night Heron

**Hiking Trails:** 6 miles

**Special Amenities:** Picnic shelters, campground.

**Location:** 10127 Forest Preserve Road, Durand, IL 61024

### Fight and flight

Among the bird world's most skillful fliers, the Cooper's Hawk can tear through cluttered tree canopies in high speed pursuit of other birds.

# A Guide to Bird-watching in Winnebago County Forest Preserves



## Birding\* is one of the fastest growing hobbies in the United States.

Birding is for all ages, for most any location, and for all times of the year. It can be as simple or as complex as you choose. Winnebago County's four rivers, prairies, wetlands, and woodlands are magnets for migrating and nesting birds. Over 350 species of birds have been documented here.

One of the great things about birding is you don't need piles of expensive equipment to get started. In fact, you've got some very important and useful equipment: your eyes and ears. Spring and fall migrations are best times to bird, but nearly any time of year can be rewarding. Some of the most spectacular sightings occur when the trees are bare in winter.

The 9,600 acres of woodlands, prairies, rivers, and marshes protected and managed by the Winnebago County Forest Preserve District provide convenient, safe and fascinating opportunities for year-round birding adventures. So get out and explore the Winnebago County Forest Preserve District, where stewardship is the foundation of recreation!

\*Formerly known as bird watching

350+

**That's a lot of birds!**  
Winnebago County Forest Preserve District has over 350 documented bird species. Can you add to the list?



**When is blue not blue?**  
Indigo Buntings are actually black; the diffraction of light through their feathers makes them look blue.

### Blackhawk Springs Forest Preserve

**Description/Habitat:** This 629.9-acre preserve is one of the largest in the District. This tract is heavily wooded and is bisected by the Kishwaukee River.

**Common Species:** Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Eastern Kingbird, Wood Duck, Scarlet Tanager, Indigo Bunting, Blue-headed Vireo, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Wood Thrush, Tennessee Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Northern Parula, Yellow-throated Warbler, Black-and-White Warbler, Ovenbird, Blackburnian Warbler, American Redstart, Wilson's Warbler

**Uncommon Species:** Pileated Woodpecker, American Kestrel, Osprey

**Hiking Trails:** 7.5 miles

**Special Amenities:** 2.5-mile paved path provides an easy walk and a good view of migrating birds. River attracts wading birds and waterfowl. Picnic shelter, natural spring.

**Locations:** 5360 Mulford Road, and 5800 Perryville Road, Cherry Valley, IL 61016

### Colored Sands Forest Preserve

**Description/Habitat:** 303.9-acre Colored Sands Forest Preserve is tucked away on the Sugar River in the northwest corner of Winnebago County. It is known for its birds - and the bird banding at Sand Bluff Bird Observatory, its unique geology, and wonderful wildflowers. It is a dedicated Illinois Nature Preserve and contains unique river, wetland and sand prairie habitats that harbor Illinois endangered and threatened plant and animal species.

**Common Species:** Yellow-throated Warbler, Barred Owl, Warbling Vireo, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Eastern Bluebird, Lark Sparrow, House Wren, Mourning Warbler, Savannah Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Prothonotary Warbler

**Uncommon Species:** Henslow's Sparrow, Dickcissel, Pileated Woodpecker, American Woodcock, Black-billed Cuckoo

**Hiking Trails:** 3 miles

**Special Amenities:** Sand Bluff Bird Observatory allows visitors and group tours on weekends in spring and fall. SBBO has banded over 265,000 birds of over 175 species. Banding takes place on weekends from March to the end of May and then again from late August to the end of November.

**Location:** 10602 Haas Road, Durand, IL 61024



### Deer Run Forest Preserve

**Description/Habitat:** Deer Run's 594 acres on the south branch of the Kishwaukee River contains hundreds of acres of restored prairie, floodplain wetlands and ponds, as well as woods. The rare and secretive Henslow's Sparrow breeds in the lush prairie. A total of thirteen sparrow species can be seen within Deer Run.

**Common Species:** Sedge Wren, Dickcissel, Orchard Oriole, Eastern Meadowlark, Tree Swallow, Red-winged Blackbird, Wood Duck, Great Blue Heron, Red-tailed Hawk, Sandhill Crane, Barred Owl, Eastern Bluebird, Fox Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow

**Uncommon Species:** Henslow's Sparrow, Sora

**Hiking Trails:** 9.5 miles

**Special Amenities:** Offers canoe launch, picnic tables, and over 9 miles of hiking and equestrian trails, which connect with Oak Ridge Forest Preserve to the south.

**Location:** 5691 River Road, Cherry Valley, IL 61016

### Old bird

A crane fossil approximately ten million years old was found in Nebraska and is structurally identical to this modern Sandhill Crane, making it the oldest known bird species still surviving.



### Kieselburg Forest Preserve

**Description/Habitat:** Kieselburg Forest Preserve is primarily a flat and open piece of land with some wooded areas. It is the site of one of the District's largest prairie restoration projects.

**Common Species:** Eastern Bluebird, Indigo Bunting, Eastern Kingbird, Cooper's Hawk, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Eastern Meadowlark, Orchard Oriole, Yellow Warbler, Song Sparrow

**Uncommon Species:** Long-eared Owl, Bell's Vireo

**Hiking Trails:** 2.9 miles

**Special Amenities:** Large picnic shelter, model airplane flying field.

**Location:** 5801 Swanson Road, Roscoe, IL 61073



### Klehm Arboretum Forest Preserve

**Description/Habitat:** Carl & Lois Klehm Forest Preserve is the site of a world class arboretum and botanic garden. The Klehm Arboretum & Botanic Garden operates many educational programs and events for the public throughout the year. Attractions include a botanical education center, a children's garden, fountains and a wide variety of native and exotic trees and plants. Klehm is the best place in the county for winter bird watching. ([www.klehm.org](http://www.klehm.org))

**Common Species:** Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Baltimore Oriole, Hermit Thrush, Red-breasted Nuthatch, American Goldfinch, Cedar Waxwing, American Redstart, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

**Uncommon Species:** White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat, Wood Thrush, Willow Flycatcher

**Hiking Trails:** 1.5 miles

**Special Amenities:** Children's Garden, Botanical Education Center & gift shop.

**Location:** 2715 S. Main Street, Rockford, IL 61102

### Oak Ridge Forest Preserve

**Description/Habitat:** 653.6-acre Oak Ridge Forest Preserve contains miles of birding trails along and near the south fork of the Kishwaukee River. It is connected to Deer Run Forest Preserve and Blackhawk Springs Forest Preserve. A great place to find migrating birds both in spring and fall.

**Common Species:** Red-headed Woodpecker, Orchard Oriole, Baltimore Oriole, Green Heron, Eastern Bluebird, Rough-winged Swallow, Eastern Kingbird

**Uncommon Species:** Black-crowned Night Heron, Red-shouldered Hawk

**Hiking Trails:** 7 miles

**Special Amenities:** Canoe launch, equestrian trailer parking and equestrian camping.

**Location:** 8322 Blomberg Road, Cherry Valley, IL 61016

### Using the bird brain

The Green Heron is one of the few tool-using birds. It commonly drops bait onto the surface of the water and grabs the small fish that are attracted.

