



**MINNESOTA'S IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS**

**Site Selection Criteria**

Important Bird Areas have no legal land-use implications and should not be viewed as the only sites in Minnesota important to birds, or as the only sites in need of protection and/or management. They are a voluntary designation intended to help affect local conservation by building and nurturing networks of birds, local citizens, and conservation professionals. IBA sites should provide essential habitat for one or more species of birds in Minnesota. They may vary in size, but should be discrete and distinguishable in character, habitat, or ornithological importance from surrounding areas.

Any site meeting at least one of the criteria in the following categories may be nominated for considereation as an Important Bird Area. Many sites will meet several criteria. **These criteria should not be considered absolute, and other factors, such as relative importance to other sites, may be weighed in making final site selections.** The final category, Important Bird Research Areas (MN-4), has been developed to cover sites that are important to bird conservation for research accomplished there or urban accessibility, yet do not qualify in any of the other three categories.

**Category MN-1: Sites where birds concentrate in significant numbers when breeding, in winter, or during migration.**

**Criteria:**

**(1a)** The site regularly supports at least 50,000total waterfowl or 5,000 swans on migration (annually), or 5,000 waterfowl or 100 Trumpeter Swans during winter. The designation "waterfowl" follows the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and includes swans, geese, and ducks.

**(1b)** The site regularly (but not necessarily yearly) supports at least 4,000 shorebirds on migration. The designation "shorebirds" follows the North American Shorebird Conservation Plan and includes plovers, sandpipers, snipe, woodcock, and phalaropes.

**(1c)** The site regularly supports one of the following minimum numbers waterbirds:

Breeding (pairs)

Franklin’s Gulls – 1,000

Gulls – 500

Black Terns – 125

Terns-50

Great Blue Herons – 100

Mixed species – 100

Grebes – 25

Migration (individuals)

Loons – 2,000

Coots – 50,000

The designation "waterbirds" follows the North American Waterbird Conservation Plan and includes loons, coots, bitterns, herons, egrets, grebes, cormorants, gulls, terns, cranes, and pelicans.

**(1d)** The site is regularly an important stopover site, "bottleneck", or migratory corridor for at least 3,000raptors (seasonal total) or 500 cranes (seasonal total) during spring or fall migration, or 50 Bald Eagles (at one time) in a winter roost.

**(1e)** The site supports an exceptional diversity of bird species, including sites that do not necessarily harbor large numbers of birds but provide important habitat for more bird species than found at most sites. Sites should be clearly unique from other sites in the local area. No thresholds set except for sites with 12 or more species of shorebirds, or 12 or more species of breeding warblers annually.

**(1f)** The site supports a significant number of a particular species but supports a smaller total number of birds than any of the criteria above (1a-1e). Sites should support many more of the species in question than other sites where the species occurs. Ideally, the site should be known to hold or thought to hold more than 1% of the state population of a species (where known).

The numerical criteria (la-1e) are guidelines only, and other factors (quality and location of habitat, distribution and importance of species, etc.) may be considered. Criterion la should exclude sedentary Canada Geese and Mallards. Criterion le is meant to cover exceptional sites to which numerical criteria may not be easily applied, such as migrant traps for land birds.

**Category MN-2: Sites for species of conservation concern.**

Criteria: 2a) A site that regularly supports a breeding or non-breeding population of one or more of the following State or Federally listed *Endangered*, *Threatened* or *Of Special Concern* species. The site should be one of regular and/or recent occurrence. Thresholds will vary and may include sites with 1% of the state population (if known) or the 3-5 sites in the state with the highest regularly occurring numbers.

# Endangered

Piping Plover

Sprague's Pipit

Baird's Sparrow

Henslow's sparrow

Chestnut-collared Longspur

# Threatened

Horned Grebe

Trumpeter Swan

Peregrine Falcon

Wilson's Phalarope

Common Tern

Loggerhead Shrike

# Special Concern

American White Pelican

Red-shouldered Hawk

Bald Eagle

Greater Prairie-Chicken

Common Moorhen

Yellow Rail

Marbled Godwit

Franklin's Gull

Forster's Tern

Short-eared Owl

Acadian Flycatcher

Cerulean Warbler

Louisiana Waterthrush

Hooded Warbler

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow

2b). A site that regularly supports significant breeding or non-breeding densities of the following species that are recognized (by the Minnesota IBA Technical Committee) as being of conservation concern in Minnesota. Thresholds will vary, but may include sites with 25 or more breeding pairs, 5% or more of the state seasonal population (if known) or the 2-3 sites with the highest regularly occurring numbers.

American Bittern

Least Bittern

Black-crowned Night-

Heron

American Black Duck

Northern Pintail

Canvasback

Lesser Scaup

Swainson's Hawk

Northern Goshawk

Sharp-tailed Grouse

Spruce Grouse

Upland Sandpiper

Hudsonian Godwit

American Woodcock

Black Tern

Black-billed Cuckoo

Great Gray Owl

Boreal Owl

Whip-poor-will

Red-headed

Woodpecker

Olive-sided Flycatcher

Bell's Vireo

Wood Thrush

Bay-breasted Warbler

Cape May Warbler

Black-throated Blue

Warbler

Golden-winged Warbler

Prothonotary Warbler

Connecticut Warbler

Canada Warbler

Le Conte's Sparrow

Dickcissel

Bobolink

**Category MN-3: Sites containing assemblages of species characteristic of a representative, rare, threatened, or unique habitat.**

**Criteria:**

**(3a)** The site contains an assemblage of species characteristic of a habitat type that is unique to Minnesota within the lower 48 states (species that might be part of such an assemblage are listed, although not all these species need to be present and other species that occur may be considered as part of listing):

Patterned Peatlands (“Big Bog”) (sedge wetland, open bog, black spruce swamp)

American Bittern

Northern Harrier

Spruce Grouse

Yellow Rail

Sandhill Crane

Wilson's Phalarope

Black-billed Cuckoo

Great Gray Owl

Short-eared Owl

Olive-sided Flycatcher

Yellow-bellied

Flycatcher

Alder Flycatcher

Sedge Wren

Cape May Warbler

Palm Warbler

Bay-breasted Warbler

Connecticut Warbler

Clay-colored Sparrow

Le Conte's Sparrow

Nelson's Sharp-tailed

Sparrow

Lincoln's Sparrow

Dark-eyed Junco

Bobolink

Aspen Parkland (sedge wetland, brush prairie, oak savanna, aspen openings)

American Bittern

Northern Harrier

Sharp-tailed Grouse

Yellow Rail

Sandhill Crane

Upland Sandpiper

Marbled Godwit

Wilson's Phalarope

Franklin's Gull

Black Tern

Black-billed Cuckoo

Short-eared Owl

Whip-poor-will

Alder Flycatcher

Black-billed Magpie

Sedge Wren

Veery

Eastern Towhee

Clay-colored Sparrow

Savannah Sparrow

Grasshopper Sparrow

Le Conte's Sparrow

Nelson's Sharp-tailed

Sparrow

Harris's Sparrow (migration)

Bobolink

**(3b)** The site contains an assemblage of species characteristic of a habitat type that is an exceptional representative of a rare or threatened natural habitat within the state (species that might be part of such an assemblage are listed, although not all these species need to be present and other species that occur may be considered as part of listing):

Sedge Wetland (rich fen, poor fen, wet meadow)

Northern Harrier

Yellow Rail

Sandhill Crane

Wilson's Phalarope

Short-eared Owl

Sedge Wren

Le Conte's Sparrow

Nelson's Sharp-tailed

Sparrow

Bobolink

Native Prairie (dry, mesic, wet prairie)

Northern Harrier

Swainson's Hawk

Greater Prairie-chicken

Upland Sandpiper

Marbled Godwit

Wilson's Phalarope

Short-eared Owl

Burrowing Owl

Common Nighthawk

Loggerhead Shrike

Western Kingbird

Eastern Kingbird

Sprague's Pipit

Clay-colored Sparrow

Field Sparrow

Vesper Sparrow

Lark Sparrow

Savannah Sparrow

Grasshopper Sparrow

Henslow's Sparrow

Le Conte's Sparrow

Baird's Sparrow

Chestnut-collared

Longspur

Smith's Longspur (migration)

Bobolink

Eastern Meadowlark

Western Meadowlark

Brewer's Blackbird

Oak Savanna

Swainson’s Hawk

Whip-poor-will

Red-headed

Woodpecker

Loggerhead Shrike

Brown Thrasher

Eastern Towhee

Vesper Sparrow

Lark Sparrow

Indigo Bunting

Orchard Oriole

Conifer Swamps (black spruce, tamarack & white cedar swamps, spruce bog)

Spruce Grouse

Great Gray Owl

Boreal Owl

Three-toed Woodpecker

Black-backed

Woodpecker

Olive-sided Flycatcher

Yellow-bellied

Flycatcher

Blue-headed Vireo

Gray Jay

Boreal Chickadee

Red-breasted Nuthatch

Winter Wren

Golden-crowned Kinglet

Ruby-crowned Kinglet

Swainson's Thrush

Hermit Thrush

Tennessee Warbler

Northern Parula

Magnolia Warbler

Yellow-rumped Warbler

Blackburnian Warbler

Bay-breasted Warbler

Cape May Warbler

Palm Warbler

Black-and-white

Warbler

Northern Waterthush

Connecticut Warbler

Canada Warbler

Lincoln's Sparrow

White-throated Sparrow

Dark-eyed Junco

Purple Finch

White-winged Crossbill

Pine Siskin

Evening Grosbeak

Floodplain forest

Red-shouldered Hawk

Black-billed Cuckoo

Yellow-billed Cuckoo

Barred Owl

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

Pileated Woodpecker

Eastern Wood-Pewee

Acadian Flycatcher

Least Flycatcher

Great Crested Flycatcher

Yellow-throated Vireo

White-breasted

Nuthatch

Brown Creeper

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

Veery

Golden-winged Warbler

Blue-winged Warbler

Cerulean Warbler

American Redstart

Prothonotary Warbler

Louisiana Waterthrush

Scarlet Tanager

Upland Deciduous Forest (maple-basswood, oak forest, northern hardwoods)

Red-shouldered Hawk

Broad-winged Hawk

Ruffed Grouse

Black-billed Cuckoo

Yellow-billed Cuckoo

Barred Owl

Whip-poor-will

Yellow-bellied

Sapsucker

Pileated Woodpecker

Eastern Wood-Pewee

Acadian Flycatcher

Least Flycatcher

Great Crested Flycatcher

Yellow-throated Vireo

Tufted Titmouse

White-breasted Nuthatch

Brown Creeper

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

Veery

Wood Thrush

Golden-winged Warbler

Blue-winged Warbler

Chestnut-sided Warbler

Black-throated Blue

Warbler

Cerulean Warbler

American Redstart

Ovenbird

Louisiana Waterthrush

Mourning Warbler

Worm-eating Warbler

Kentucky Warbler

Hooded Warbler

Scarlet Tanager

Selection of sites should be based on avian assemblages within the habitat community type, not on the habitat community type alone. Therefore, whenever possible, characteristic species of birds indicative of the habitat type should be identified and quantified.

**Category MN-4: Sites for long-term avian research, monitoring, or of urban value that do not meet criteria MN 1 - 3.**

**Criterion:**

**(4a)** The site is a natural area where a long-term research and/or monitoring project is based that contributes substantially to ornithology and bird conservation in Minnesota.

An indicator of such a site will often be a long record of data collection resulting in publication in ornithological journals, such as The Auk, Condor, Wilson Bulletin, Journal of Field Ornithology, American Birds (Audubon Field Notes), or The Loon.

**(4b)** The site is a natural, or semi-natural area with a minimum size of 100 acres, or an annual bird list of over 100 species, that has significance to bird populations within the context of an urban setting. These sites, while not meeting the criteria outlined in **MN 1-3** above, do provide important bird habitat within an urban landscape.