



Globally Important Bird Areas



Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge, MN/WI/IA/IL, and Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge, Wisconsin

Ornithological Highlight: The refuge provides one of the largest areas of wildlife habitat remaining in the central U.S. and is an important area for migrant waterfowl, raptors and passerines, breeding forest interior birds, and wintering waterfowl.

Location: The refuge consists of units along 260 miles of the Mississippi River from Wabasha, Minnesota, to Rock Island, Illinois.

- *Prairie Hardwood Transition* (NABCI Bird Conservation Region #23)
- *Boreal Hardwood Transition* (PIF Physiographic Area #20)

Size: 46,000 acres

Ownership: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Habitats: wetland-mesic floodplain forest, backwater lake, backwater pond, marsh, urban and developed land, agriculture

Land use: shipping, hunting, fishing, wildlife conservation, agriculture

Site description: The refuge holds lands along the Mississippi in four states: Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin and Illinois. The river is an important navigation corridor with an extensive system of locks and dams maintained by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The refuge contains among the largest hardwood forests in the Upper Midwest, with silver maple, green ash, elm, cottonwood, and swamp white oak, while sand prairie and hardwoods occur on the uplands. The Corps owns more than half the refuge land but under a cooperative agreement, the Fish and Wildlife Service manages it as part of the refuge. The Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge in Wisconsin is part of the refuge system.

Birds: Over half a million waterfowl use the refuge during migration, including as much as a fifth of the world's population of Canvasback (more than 135,000) and significant numbers of Lesser Scaup (nearly 100,000), and thousands of other ducks and geese. Thousands of shorebirds and herons use the refuge seasonally, and there are high densities of breeding songbirds in the floodplain forest and many thousands more during migration. Thousands of hawks also use the river as a corridor during fall migration and feed and rest on the refuge.

Conservation issues: Introduced zebra mussels threaten native mussels, clams and snails, while introduced purple loosestrife is responsible for the degradation of many prime wetland habitats; biological control has been instituted to combat it. Upland erosion, channel operation and maintenance, and tow traffic along the river continue to cause degradation and loss of habitat. Sediment deposition and both point and non-point pollution also threaten the biological integrity of habitats along the river. The refuge is heavily used by hunters, fishers and other recreationists.

Visitor information: There are many points of access to the refuge along its length. Refuge headquarters are in Winona, MN (507/454-7351) and there are district offices in each of the four states. Best time to visit is during migration in March to late May, and again in August through October. Contact: Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, 51 East 4th Street, Room 101, Winona, Minnesota 55987, tel. (507) 452-4232.