



Manitoba Important Bird Areas



What is an Important Bird Area?

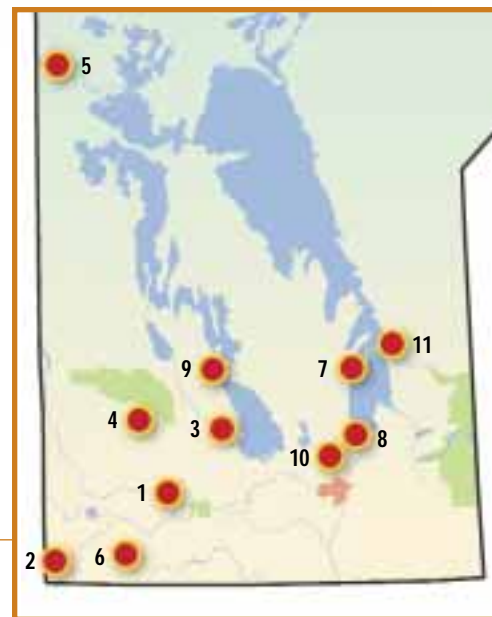
An Important Bird Area (IBA) is a site providing essential habitat for one or more species of breeding or nonbreeding birds. These sites contain significant numbers of vulnerable, threatened or endangered species, endemic species, species representative of a biome, or concentrations of seabirds, waterfowl, raptors, shorebirds, waders or migratory land birds. For example, the Southwestern Manitoba Mixed-grass Prairie IBA provides breeding habitat for endangered grassland birds. IBAs are recognized as either having global, continental or national importance. For example, Whitewater Lake is a globally significant IBA based upon concentrations of waterfowl, tundra swans, shorebirds and waterbirds during fall migration.

Why are IBAs Important?

An IBA designation can help generate the impetus needed to protect threatened bird habitats, or it can result in enhanced management for an already protected site. IBAs provide a focus for on-the-ground conservation activities led by members of Manitoba communities. The IBA program works by building partnerships in local communities to promote long-term bird conservation. IBA programs have been established in Africa, Canada, Mexico, Panama, Russia and the United States. The hope is that Manitoba IBAs will be conserved in perpetuity for their importance to the conservation of migratory and resident bird species as well as providing economic, ecological and educational benefits to the residents of Manitoba.

Community Conservation Planning

Community conservation planning engages local communities in the development and implementation of a conservation plan. As of 2001, community conservation plans have been prepared by 11 communities in Manitoba. These plans describe the significant bird species represented at each site, threats to the area, and conservation objectives. A snapshot of Manitoba IBAs with community conservation plans follows.



Manitoba IBAs with Community Conservation Plans

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|---|-----------------------------|
| 1 Douglas Marsh | 7 Riverton Sandy Bar |
| 2 Southwestern Manitoba Mixed-grass Prairie | 8 Netley/Libau Marsh |
| 3 Langruth/RM of Lakeview | 9 Kinosota-Leifur Shoreline |
| 4 Proven Lake | 10 Oak Hammock Marsh |
| 5 The Pas/Saskatchewan River Delta | 11 Pipestone Rocks |
| 6 Whitewater Lake | |



1 Douglas Marsh

Douglas Marsh is a globally significant IBA known internationally for its yellow rail populations. The yellow rail is one of the ten most sought-after species on birdwatchers' life lists in North America. One of the most seldom seen nesting birds in Canada and the United States, it is usually only heard 'bone-knocking' at night in a breeding location. Douglas Marsh is thought to have the largest concentrations of breeding yellow rails in southern Manitoba, and perhaps for all the Canadian prairies. Other bird species attracting birders to Douglas Marsh include Virginia and sora rails, sedge wrens, LeConte's and sharp-tailed sparrows. Waterfowl also use portions of the marsh. Conservation planning will be led by the Brandon Naturalist Society and will work towards protecting yellow rail habitat, developing ecotourist ethics and managing the impact of beaver on yellow rail habitat.

2 Southwestern Manitoba Mixed-grass Prairie

The southwest corner of Manitoba is known as the "The Grassland Bird Capital of Manitoba". Grassland birds and the mixed-grass prairie habitat in southwestern Manitoba are disappearing — several are at risk nationally or provincially and have distributions that parallel the extent of large grassland complexes in southwestern Manitoba. Species of concern include the ferruginous hawk, burrowing owl, loggerhead shrike, Baird's sparrow and Sprague's pipit. The



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IBA is comprised of three significant bird habitats known as the Poverty Plains, Souris River Lowlands and the Lyleton-Pierson Prairies. Conservation planning will work towards fostering community education through an IBA brochure, signage and a self-guided birding tour.



3 Langruth / RM of Lakeview

The Langruth area has a long history of birding and has proclaimed itself the "Birdwatching Capital of Manitoba". Significant bird habitats in the RM of Lakeview include Big Grass Marsh, Stoney Lake, Hollywood Beach and Big Point. Big Grass Marsh is an important moulting and staging area for waterfowl including mallards, snow geese and Canada geese. It is recognized as a globally significant IBA based upon the numbers of snow geese and waterfowl, nesting Franklin's gulls and migrating sandhill cranes. The forested ridge along Hollywood Beach provides habitat for a variety of neotropical songbirds as well as excellent opportunities for viewing various migrating shorebirds. Piping plovers have also been observed along the beach. Bird species common to Big Point include American white pelicans, double-crested cormorants, great blue herons, ring-billed gulls and American bitterns. Conservation efforts will work towards protecting Hollywood Beach habitat, developing signage and a site-specific IBA website.

4 Proven Lake

Proven Lake, in southwestern Manitoba is located north of the town of Erickson. Proven Lake is recognized nationally as a significant IBA, based upon numbers of breeding black-crowned night-herons. Proven Lake also attracts large numbers of migrating birds in the spring and fall and is thus recognized as an important staging marsh, especially for waterfowl. Eared grebes, Franklin's gulls, great blue herons, American bitterns, American coots and mallards can also be found at Proven Lake. Conservation efforts will focus on educational opportunities as Erickson High School students will use Proven Lake as a 'living classroom'.



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5 The Pas / Saskatchewan River Delta

The Saskatchewan River Delta is one of the world's largest freshwater deltas. No other area of Manitoba offers wildlife habitat equal to the Saskatchewan River Delta, either in its natural state or with development. Straddling the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border, it is considered to be one of the most important wetland areas in Manitoba. The Pas Saskatchewan River Delta is recognized as a Canadian IBA of global significance based upon numbers of canvasbacks and other waterfowl. Large numbers of eared grebes and sandhill cranes are also found. The Kelsey Conservation District will lead educational and awareness activities, including the development of an IBA birding trail around Grace Lake near The Pas.



6 Whitewater Lake

Once known as “White Lake” because of its white alkali flats, Whitewater Lake is one of Canada’s best known staging areas for waterfowl and shorebirds. The lake is a 9,000 ha. saline wetland situated in southwestern Manitoba between the towns of Boissevain and Deloraine. Whitewater Lake is recognized as a globally significant IBA as it provides habitat for over 110 species of birds. The IBA is globally significant based upon numbers of waterfowl, including mallards, snow geese, tundra swans, as well as Franklin’s gulls, white-rumped sandpipers and other shorebirds. Black-crowned night-herons also breed at Whitewater Lake in nationally significant numbers. When the lake levels are low and mudflats exposed, the largest shorebird concentrations in southern Manitoba occur, including white-rumped sandpipers. The IBA has historically been used by threatened and endangered species such as piping plovers, burrowing owls, Baird’s sparrows, loggerhead shrikes and ferruginous hawks. Conservation efforts will work towards promoting the area’s ecotourism potential.



Denis Faucher

7 Riverton Sandy Bar

Riverton Sandy Bar is located on the western shore of Lake Winnipeg near the community of Riverton. Comprised of a long sand peninsula and sand spits, the Riverton Sandy Bar is a globally significant Canadian Important Bird Area based upon population numbers of ring-billed gulls and common terns. The area is a major concentration site for migrating Canada geese and snow geese. Herring gulls nest on the sand islands and occasionally nesting piping plovers (nationally endangered and globally vulnerable) can be found. Hundreds of migrating sanderlings use the site along with lesser numbers of ruddy turnstones and other shorebirds. Conservation efforts hope to develop interpretative facilities and manage the encroachment of woody vegetation along the sand spit.

8 Netley-Libau Marsh

The Netley-Libau Marsh is located in the southern basin of Lake Winnipeg, approximately 65 km. north of Winnipeg. The marsh is a complex of lakes and streams whose water levels are influenced by the lake, and is home to over 114 bird species including gulls, terns, western grebes, American white pelicans and double-crested cormorants. Netley-Libau Marsh is a globally significant IBA based upon numbers of nesting Forster’s terns. Other species meeting IBA criteria include swallows, Franklin’s gulls, black-crowned night-herons, yellow-headed and red-winged blackbirds and waterfowl. The marsh has long been used for waterfowl hunting, however waterfowl use of the marsh has declined sharply over the years as the marsh habitat is being degraded. Conservation efforts will be led by the Netley Marsh Waterfowl Foundation and Selkirk Birdwatchers, and will focus on an annual bird survey, erecting artificial nesting structures for waterfowl and managing the exotic invasive plant purple loosestrife.



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9 Kinosota-Leifur Shoreline

This IBA encompasses the west side of Lake Manitoba from the towns of Leifur to Kinosota, all within the rural municipality of Alonsa. The IBA is an area used extensively by cavity nesting birds including red-headed and pileated woodpeckers. The red-headed woodpecker is a species that is generally uncommon or rare in Manitoba and listed as nationally vulnerable by COSEWIC. The Lake Manitoba shoreline is also used by numerous shorebirds such as piping and American Golden plovers, as well as ruddy turnstones during spring and fall migrations. Colonial nesting waterbirds also use the shoreline and coastal islands to nest. A number of neotropical migrants can be found at this IBA. Wetland species including waterfowl, bitterns, rails, hawks and blackbirds can be found along the shoreline and inland marshes. Conservation efforts will be led by the Alonsa Conservation District and will focus on cavity nesting birds and landowner education.



10 Oak Hammock Marsh

A grand total of 296 species have been recorded in this relatively small area including breeding Franklin's gulls and black-crowned night-herons. This site is one of Manitoba's top birding destinations and is recognized as a globally significant IBA. In the spring, large numbers of shorebirds stop at Oak Hammock, including globally significant numbers of white-rumped sandpipers, short-billed dowitchers, Hudsonian godwits and yellowlegs (both species). Numbers of black terns and Forster's terns also meet IBA criteria for national significance. During fall migration, in excess of 250,000 lesser snow geese and 200,000 Canada geese have been observed. Waterfowl (especially mallards) and American coots have been recorded in high numbers. Species of interest that are reported occasionally (and may breed) at Oak Hammock include the least bittern, the yellow rail and the red-headed woodpecker, all nationally vulnerable species. During



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the winter months numerous snowy owls hunt the fields surrounding the marsh. Conservation efforts will focus on creating shorebird habitat, land use demonstration projects, songbird banding and bird surveys.

11 Pipestone Rocks

Pipestone Rocks are small rock islands that dot Lake Winnipeg north of Deer Island and near the northeastern end of Hecla/Grindstone Natural Park. The rocks represent a significant nesting habitat for colonial nesting waterbirds. Pipestone Rocks are a nationally significant breeding habitat for the American white pelican. The islands also are home to a diversity of waterbirds including herring gulls, ring-billed gulls, double-crested cormorants and common terns. Conservation efforts hope to support the bid to establish Pipestone Rocks as a Manitoba Ecological Reserve.

The role of the Manitoba Naturalists Society

The Manitoba Naturalists Society (MNS) is responsible for delivering conservation planning for IBAs in Manitoba. These community conservation plans are community based and developed through consultation with local stakeholders, interest groups and First Nations. Local working groups provide input and direction and play a prominent role in the implementation for each IBA.



Funding Partners for the Manitoba IBA Program

- Natural Legacy 2000
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- Ducks Unlimited Canada
- Manitoba Rural Adaptation Council



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