



## Great Birding in the Mississippi Flyway Bird Watching in the Winona Area

Discover history, natural beauty  
and many activities . . . in any season

### Activity Guides

**The beautiful Mississippi River Valley provides year-round natural enjoyment, and Winona's historic rivertown flavor offers many interesting excursions. Write or call to request free guide-maps to these activities:**

**BIKING AND HIKING:** Hundreds of scenic miles of easy or challenging routes climb over bluffs and wind through valleys. This brochure includes maps and details about routes and highlights.

**CANOEING AND KAYAKING:** The Upper Mississippi and its tributaries offer diverse opportunities for paddling enthusiasts. The brochure recommends landing and paddling routes and includes information on water conditions.

**BIRD WATCHING:** The Mississippi Flyway is a major route for migrating birds, and the Winona fields, woods and waters are home to a wonderful variety of birds. This brochure shows the best birding spots in the area.

**STAINED GLASS:** Winona is well-known for its outstanding array of 19th-century stained glass windows. The tour guide has photos and details of noteworthy windows.

**ARCHITECTURE:** Winona's early prosperity is evident in its many grand buildings. The brochure has a self-guided tour of historic downtown structures.

**X-COUNTRY SKIING:** Varied terrain provides interesting trails for skiers of any proficiency. The guide has trail maps and directions to seven area trails.

**SNOWMOBILING:** An extensive trail system covers southeastern Minnesota's fascinating hills and valleys. The area map shows the trails and places to stop.

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## Birds and Bird Watchers Flock to Winona

Located in the heart of the Mississippi Valley Flyway, Winona is a natural destination for birds and bird watchers. Both the city and the region host a great variety of birds who nest here, are year-round residents or pass through the area during migration. Over 280 species of birds have been identified in the bluffs, valleys and backwaters of the Winona area.



Green heron Bill Drazkowski

## Birds of Streambanks & Valleys

### Farmers Park

Garvin Brook meanders through meadow, woods and marsh in this small, pastoral county park. Follow the narrow, unmarked trails used by anglers along the streambank. If you like, you can make your way up the valley using these trails. Watch for warblers, rose-breasted grosbeaks, redstarts and vireos. You can find orioles and bluebirds here, and hear the drumming of ruffed grouse in spring.

### Beaver Creek Valley State Park

The green wooded banks and sparkling waters of Beaver Creek attract some unusual birds. Beaver Creek Valley is the only place in Minnesota where Acadian flycatchers are known to consistently nest. Louisiana waterthrush are found here, as are cerulean and other warblers. Hike the trail that follows the creek, or ask at the park office for the best viewing locations.

### Whitewater State Park & Whitewater State Wildlife Management Area (WMA)

The park and the WMA are located in the scenic Whitewater River Valley. Combined, they comprise over 30,000 acres. To get to Whitewater, take U.S. Hwy. 61 north to the intersection with State Hwy. 74 at Weaver and go west. The route of Hwy. 74 (a well-maintained gravel road) cuts through the WMA and leads to the park. There are no established hiking trails in the WMA, but birds can easily be observed from the roadsides and shores. Stop at Dorer Pools and Randall Pools off Hwy. 74 to see geese, ducks and other water birds. Red-tailed and red-shouldered hawks both nest here; sharp-shinned hawks can be seen as well.

Other birds found here include eastern kingbird, yellow-shafted flicker, eastern phoebe, killdeer and common yellowthroat.

At Whitewater State Park visitor's center pick up a free copy of a detailed birding list and trail maps to plan a route along any of the 12 miles of trails. The park provides some of the best woodland birding in the area, including ruffed grouse, whip-poor-wills, pileated woodpeckers, wood thrushes and rare Louisiana waterthrushes. During migration many species of warblers pass through the park and several (including the blue-winged warbler) stay to nest. Bald eagles are found throughout the year; in winter look for golden eagles.



Scarlet tanager Bill Drazkowski

## City Birds

### Lake Winona

Lake Winona is a popular destination for both locals and visitors, with plenty of good bird habitat and interesting birds. A 5.5-mile walking and biking path encircles the lake and passes by several parking lots and many shady places to rest and enjoy the view.

Begin your birding walk on the west end of the lake. Take Vila St. from Hwy. 61 or Gilmore Ave., and park across from the Winona Mall near the creek (behind the K-Mart store). Follow the path toward Lake Winona. The blue-gray gnatcatcher and orchard oriole may be found here. Barn swallows nest under the pedestrian bridge where the creek meets the lake. Check the lake for loons, horned grebes, gulls and terns. During fall migration you'll find diving ducks, like scaup, goldeneye and bufflehead.

### Woodlawn Cemetery & Holzinger Lodge Trail

The beautiful and serene grounds of Woodlawn Cemetery are tucked into a wooded notch between two bluffs, and support a variety of songbirds. During migration, look for kinglets, warblers and sparrows. In spring and summer, wood thrushes, vireos, orioles, rose-breasted grosbeaks, indigo buntings and pine siskins may be nesting. Listen for great horned owls on the wooded hillsides. Look for red-tailed hawks above the bluffs.

To get to the cemetery, take Huff St. across U.S. Hwy. 61 (going towards the bluff) and turn right onto Lake Blvd. Go one-half mile to the cemetery entrance on the left. Woodlawn Cemetery is open dawn to dusk.

Enjoy more birds and more of a hike at Holzinger Lodge Trail. The trail is located just above the cemetery and curves around



Great egret Allen Blake Sheldon

through the woods of the bluff. To reach the trailhead, continue on Lake Blvd. about one-quarter mile past the cemetery to the parking area in front of the log building on the left.

### Prairie Island

The park at Prairie Island includes bottomland forest, pines, prairie, marsh and open water busy with a wide variety of birds. It is one of the most popular birding spots in the city.

To find the park, take Huff St. north to the river and follow the curve left onto Riverview Dr. Take Riverview Dr. about 1.5 miles and turn right onto Prairie Island Rd. Drive about one mile and watch for the park on the left.

To get a good look at the variety of habitats, walk the one-mile nature trail that begins at the south edge of the parking area near the deer park. The trail was developed by members of the local chapter of the Audubon Society. Pine and deciduous trees are home to great horned owls, barred owls, woodpeckers, nuthatches, blue-gray gnatcatchers, thrushes and several vireos. Check the power poles in the ponds on the south side of the trail for an active osprey nest. Green herons, wood ducks, sora rails, common snipes and black terns also nest here. The prairie section of the trail is a great place to look for numerous types of sparrows, bluebirds and warblers, especially during migration. Woodcocks may be heard here in spring. You may see tundra swans during migrations.

Visit McNally's and Verchota landings on Prairie Island to see a variety of ducks and rails.

### Garvin Heights

Head to this high bluff overlooking the city during the fall hawk migration. The panorama, fall colors and a sky of swirling hawks are a stirring sight. Find Garvin Heights by crossing Hwy. 61 at Huff St. heading towards the bluff (south). Turn left at the "T" onto Lake Blvd., then take a quick right onto Garvin Heights Rd. Drive the twisting road to the top and follow the signs to Garvin Heights Lookout.

## Birds From Blufftop to Riverbottom

### Great River Bluffs State Park

This park is home to one of the state's few pairs of peregrine falcons that returned to nesting in a rocky bluff outcropping after the species was nearly eliminated by DDT. Grassland sparrows can be found in the prairies here. Trees on the bluff edge host warblers, vireos and kinglets. The park has nine miles of trails that feature terrific blufftop views. Adjoining the park, the King and Queens' Bluff State Scientific and Natural Area is currently closed to public access to protect peregrine nesting sites.

To find the park, follow Hwy. 61 south of Winona about nine miles to Cty. Rd 3 and turn right. Climb the bluff and follow the signs to the park entrance.

For a chance to see the peregrine falcons, park on the service road on the southbound side of Hwy. 61, just below King's Bluff. Use your binoculars to scan the cliffs and watch the sky.

### Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge

The Trempealeau Refuge is one of the best birding spots in the Upper Midwest. In 1997, the American Bird Conservancy designated Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge as a "Globally Important Bird Area in the United States" for the extensive wetland, floodplain forest and prairie complex found here. Nearly 200 species of birds can be found at Trempealeau, including migratory waterfowl, songbirds, shorebirds, upland birds and resident species, such as raptors.

The refuge offers miles of hiking trails, a wildlife drive, bird viewing platforms and a staffed visitor's center. Ask for a birding checklist there.

Along the forest edges look for hawks, ruffed grouse, cuckoos, pileated woodpeckers, owls, bluebirds and yellow-breasted chats. In marshes, look for grebes, double-crested cormorants, geese, ducks, bitterns, egrets and sandhill cranes. All raise their young here. Watch for red-shouldered hawks and bald eagles. Grassland birds, such as bobolinks, dickcissels and several sparrow species, can be found on the prairies.

To visit the refuge, take Fourth St. to the bridge and cross to Wisconsin. At the intersection with Wisconsin Hwy. 35/54 turn right and go 5 miles to West Prairie Rd. Turn right and follow West Prairie Rd. about 0.75 mile to the entrance to the refuge.

### Whitman State Wildlife Area

During spring and fall migrations, Whitman is a great place to visit. The wildlife area is accessible by walking the dike to Lock and Dam 5, or by canoe from Merrick State Park or Indian Creek.

Watch for the bright yellow prothonotary warblers, found only in mature bottomland forests. American redstarts, pileated woodpeckers and red-shouldered hawks can be spotted. Tundra swans and many other waterfowl species stop here during migrations.

Across the river from Winona, take Wisconsin Hwy. 35 north (left). Go past Fountain City about two miles. Turn left on Prairie Moon Rd. and follow about two miles to Buffalo City. Turn left at Cty. OO, which runs right along the riverbank, and follow it to the parking lot at the dike.

### Perrot State Park

From the waters of Trempealeau Bay to the heights of Brady's Bluff, there

are plenty of interesting places to look for birds at Perrot State Park. Check the marshy areas of the bay for wading birds, such as sandhill cranes, great blue herons and bitterns. Migratory waterfowl viewing is best in spring and fall.

There are several miles of trails along the bluffs, including the climb to the spectacular top of Brady's Bluff, where turkey vultures and hawks ride the thermals. Woodland birds, such as thrushes, ovenbirds, rufous-sided towhees and scarlet tanagers, are found here, as well as upland birds, such as wild turkeys, pheasants and ruffed grouse.

### Rieck's Lake Park

This park is locally famous as a great spot to see the fall tundra swan migration. Sometimes more than a thousand swans rest and feed here. The park borders the marshy pond at the confluence of the Buffalo River and the Mississippi on the north side of Alma. Volunteers staff a viewing platform with spotting scopes in November. The pond also hosts a nice variety of dabbling ducks.



Red-shouldered hawk Allen Blake Sheldon

# Great Birding in the Heart of the Mississippi Flyway

## Birding Ethics

adapted from the American Birding Association Code of Ethics

- Birders should not disturb or endanger birds or other wildlife.
- Birders should not harm the natural environment:
  - Stay on trails, leave no trace
- Birders should respect the rights of others and show common courtesy:
  - Obey "No Trespassing" signs
  - Follow the rules on public lands
- Groups need to observe special precautions:
  - Keep group size small, do not stress the environment
  - Assume responsibility for group conduct

## Birding Resources

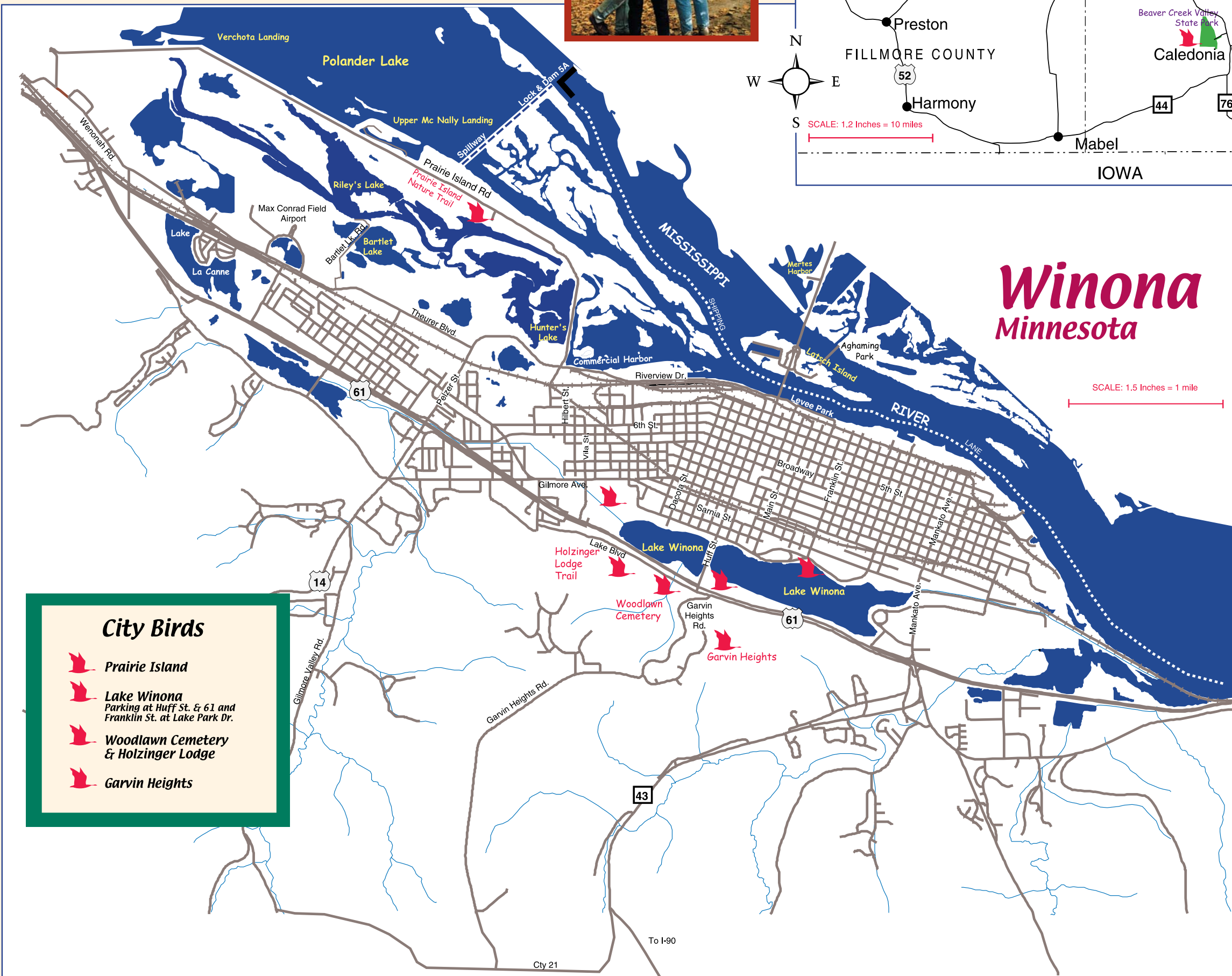
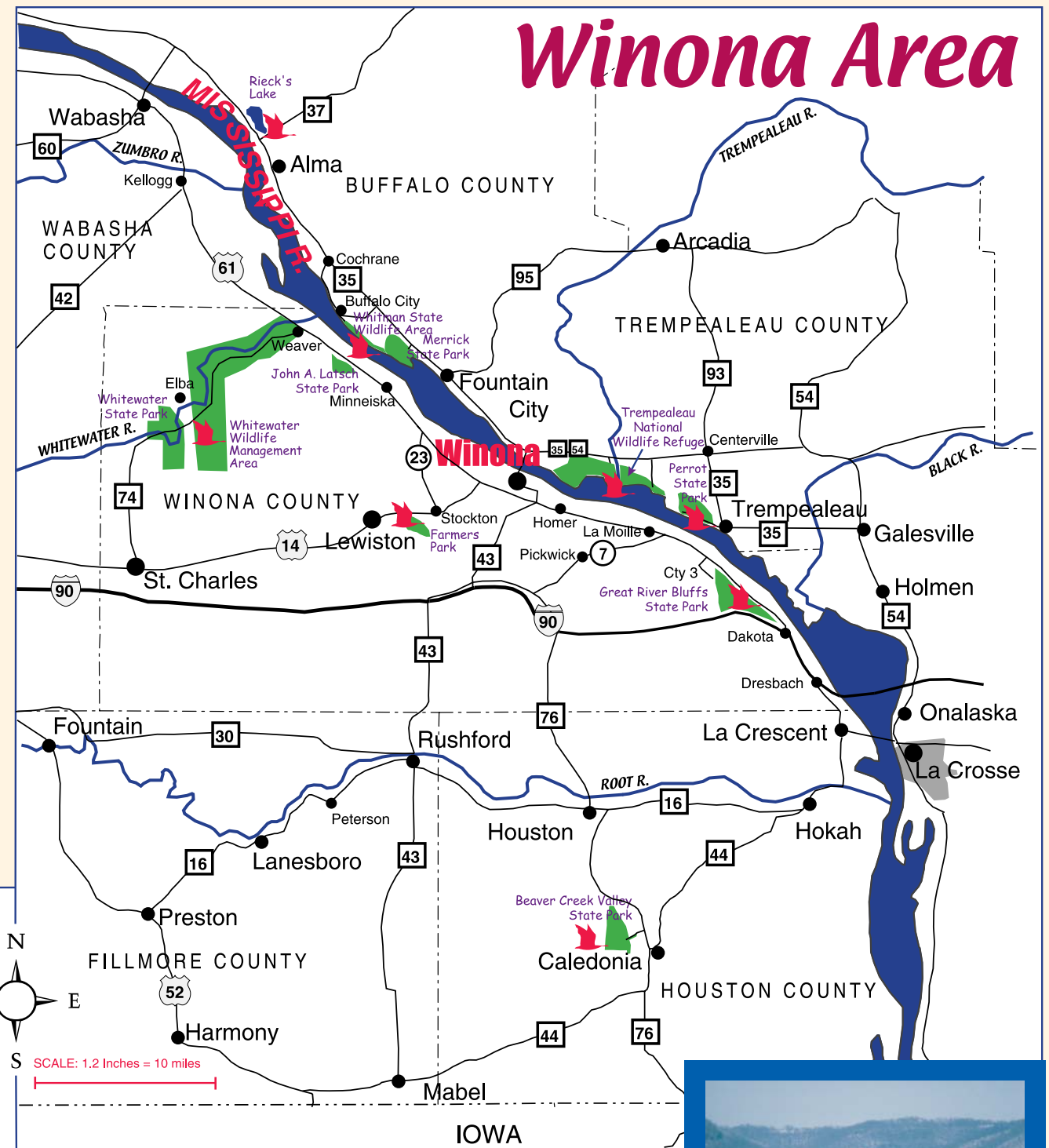
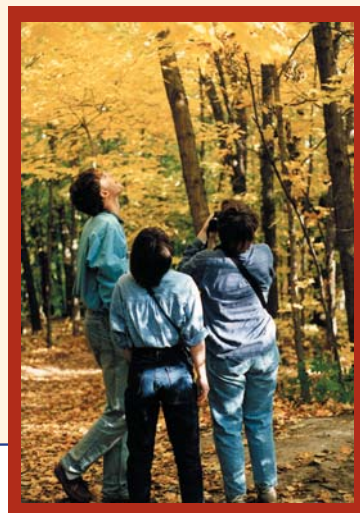
Audubon – Upper Mississippi River Campaign  
<http://www.audubon.org/campaign/umr/index.html>  
 Minnesota Ornithologists Union  
[www.cbs.umn.edu/~mou/](http://www.cbs.umn.edu/~mou/)

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Photo of bird watchers by Mary Farrell.  
 Photo of eagle soaring by Bill Drazkowski.

## Regional Birding Sites

- Rieck's Lake Park
- Whitman State Wildlife Area
- Whitewater State Park & Whitewater Wildlife Mngmt. Area
- Farmer's Park
- Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge
- Perrot State Park
- Great River Bluffs State Park
- Beaver Creek Valley State Park



### City Birds

- Prairie Island
- Lake Winona  
Parking at Huff St. & 61 and Franklin St. at Lake Park Dr.
- Woodlawn Cemetery & Holzinger Lodge
- Garvin Heights

## Not Far Away



Visit Winona  
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