

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Minidoka

*National Wildlife
Refuge*

Watchable Wildlife



Introduction

The Refuge

Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge, comprising 20,699 acres, is located on the Snake River in south-central Idaho, 12 miles northeast of Rupert. The refuge extends 25 miles east upstream from Minidoka Dam, and includes all of Lake Walcott.

Birding Highlights

Aquatic plants thrive in Lake Walcott, providing waterfowl food through most of the year. Stands of hardstem bulrush, cattail, willow, and sagebrush provide shelter for many different kinds of wildlife. Grasses on uplands support ground nesting birds. Waterfowl populations are highest during spring and fall migrations, but a significant nesting population resides here year-round.

Molting

An important function of the refuge is to provide a safe molting area for waterfowl in the summer. Unlike most birds waterfowl lose all their flight feathers at once and are flightless for about a month during the summer while their feathers grow back. They seek areas free of disturbance with lots of food and cover. The east end of Lake Walcott, which is closed to boats, attracts many molting waterfowl.

Concentrations of up to 100,000 waterfowl may be seen in the fall. After the reservoir freezes in mid-December, 50,000 to 60,000 waterfowl often may be observed concentrated in a single group.

Where to See Birds

Lake Walcott State Park, which surrounds the refuge headquarters, is a great place to bird. Most of the birds on the refuge bird list can be seen from the park. Birding in this area is best during migration as it attracts numerous songbirds.

The State Park is a fee area. It offers picnic and camping areas, and a boat ramp. The park has about 2.5 miles of paved trail suitable for wheelchair access. The paved trail connects the camping, picnicking, parking areas, and the boat ramp. It extends out onto a point equipped with a wheelchair accessible overlook and fishing pier. There is also an unimproved foot trail extending about one mile east from the boat landing along the edge of Lake Walcott.

The tail race below Minidoka Dam is accessible on both sides of the river and is a great place to view waterbirds. Rare gulls frequent the tail race nearly every fall and are viewable at close range.

It is difficult to get to some areas as roads are few and unimproved. Access below the south side of Minidoka Dam requires a high clearance vehicle. The road on the north side of the dam is accessible to any vehicle. To access this area, exit from Lake Walcott State Park, proceed west about a quarter mile, turn left just after crossing the canal, proceed another quarter mile and turn left onto a gravel road leading to a boat ramp below the dam.

There are also large colonies of nesting waterbirds along the south shore; this area is closed to vehicle access and watercraft to minimize disturbance to the birds. These colonies can be observed from the overlook at the end of the paved trail in Lake Walcott State Park.

Where to Hear Birds

Bird walks for visitors with visual impairments are held in spring. In these walks, birds are identified by sound only. If you are interested in participating, call the Refuge office in early May for more information.

Important Bird Areas

Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge has been designated as an Important Bird Area (IBA) by the National Audubon Society and Birdlife International.

The Important Bird Areas Program is a global effort coordinated by BirdLife International to identify areas that are most important to maintain bird populations. In the United States, the National Audubon Society administers the IBA program under the auspices of BirdLife International. Identification of a site as an IBA indicates its unique importance in providing essential habitat for one or more species of bird. The IBA Program aims to protect all bird species and their habitats. Minidoka NWR was identified as an IBA because of the large nesting colonies of cormorants, pelicans, gulls, herons, and egrets, and for the large numbers of molting waterfowl.

Minidoka NWR Bird List Key

Checklist Notes

This list includes 239 species of birds observed on the refuge since 1950. Common names are used in accordance with the American Ornithologists' Union's 8th Checklist 42nd Supplement (2000).

Season Abundance Codes

a = abundant - a common species which is very numerous
c = certain to be seen in suitable habitat
u = uncommon - present, but not certain to be seen
o = occasional - seen only a few times during a season
r = rare - seen at intervals of several years
* = birds known to nest on the refuge

Seasons

SP - Spring, March through May
S - Summer, June through August
F - Fall, September through November
W - Winter, December through February



Birds of Minidoka NWR

Common Name	Sp	S	F	W
Loons				
Pacific Loon			r	
Common Loon	u	r	u	
Grebes				
*Pied-billed Grebe	u	c	u	o
Horned Grebe	u	o	u	
*Eared Grebe	c	c	a	o
*Western Grebe	c	a	c	o
*Clark's Grebe	c	c	c	r
Pelicans				
*American White Pelican	c	c	u	r
Cormorants				
*Double-crested Cormorant	c	a	c	o
Bitterns, Herons and Egrets				
*American Bittern	o	o	o	
*Great Blue Heron	c	a	c	u
*Great Egret	o	o	o	
*Snowy Egret	c	c	u	
*Cattle Egret	u	u	o	
*Black-crowned Night-Heron	c	c	c	
Ibises				
White-Faced Ibis	u	u	u	
New World Vultures				
*Turkey Vulture	u	c	u	
Swans, Geese and Ducks				
Greater White-fronted Goose	o		o	
Snow Goose	u		u	o
*Canada Goose	c	c	a	c
Trumpeter Swan	u		u	
Tundra Swan	c		c	
Wood Duck	o		o	
*Gadwall	c	a	c	u
Eurasian Wigeon	r		r	
*American Wigeon	c	c	a	u
*Mallard	a	c	a	c
*Blue-winged Teal	o	o	o	
*Cinnamon Teal	o	u	u	

Common Name	Sp	S	F	W
*Northern Shoveler	u	u	c	o
Northern Pintail	c	u	c	r
*Green-winged Teal	c	u	c	u
*Canvasback	c	u	c	
*Redhead	c	c	c	
*Ring-necked Duck	c	u	c	
Greater Scaup	o		o	
*Lesser Scaup	c	c	c	
Harlequin Duck			r	
Long-tailed Duck			r	
Surf Scoter			o	
White-winged Scoter			r	r
Common Goldeneye	c	o	c	c
Barrow's Goldeneye	o		o	
Bufflehead	c	c	o	u
Hooded Merganser	u		u	o
*Common Merganser	c	c	u	c
Red-breasted Merganser	u	o	u	u
*Ruddy Duck	c	c	c	o
Osprey, Hawks and Eagles				
Osprey	u	r	u	
Bald Eagle	c	o	u	c
*Northern Harrier	c	c	c	u
Sharp-shinned Hawk	u		u	o
Cooper's Hawk	u	r	u	o
Northern Goshawk				r
*Swainson's Hawk	u	c	c	
*Red-tailed Hawk	u	c	c	u
*Ferruginous Hawk	u	u	o	
Rough-legged Hawk	u		u	c
*Golden Eagle	c	u	u	c
Falcons and Caracaras				
*American Kestrel	u	c	c	u
Merlin	r		r	
Peregrine Falcon	r	r	o	r
Prairie Falcon	o	o	o	
Gallinaceous Birds				
*Gray Partridge	u	c	c	u
*Ring-necked Pheasant	c	c	c	c
*Sharp-tailed Grouse	u	u	u	u
Greater Sage-Grouse	o	o	o	o

Common Name	Sp	S	F	W
Rails				
Virginia Rail	r	r	r	
*Sora	o	u	o	
*American Coot	c	c	a	o
Cranes				
*Sandhill Crane	r	r	r	
Plovers				
Black-bellied Plover	o	o	o	
Snowy Plover	r			
*Killdeer	c	c	c	o
Stilts and Avocets				
Black-necked Stilt	o	u	r	
*American Avocet	u	c	o	
Sandpipers and Phalaropes				
Greater Yellowlegs	o	u	r	
Lesser Yellowlegs	o	o		
*Willet	c	c	u	
*Spotted Sandpiper	u	c	u	
*Long-billed Curlew	u	c	o	
Marbled Godwit	u	o	o	
Red Knot	r			
Western Sandpiper	o	o	o	
Least Sandpiper	o	u	u	r
Baird's Sandpiper		r	o	
Pectoral Sandpiper	o	o	o	
Dunlin			r	
Long-billed Dowitcher	u	u	o	
Common Snipe	u	c	u	o
Wilson's Phalarope	u	c	u	
Red-necked Phalarope	o	o	o	
Skuas, Jaegers, Gulls and Terns				
Franklin's Gull	u	u	c	
Bonaparte's Gull	u		u	
Ring-billed Gull	c	u	c	u
*California Gull	c	a	c	o
Herring Gull	o		o	o
Thayer's Gull			r	r
Glaucous-winged Gull			r	
Sabine's Gull			r	

Common Name	Sp	S	F	W
*Caspian Tern	u	u	o	
Common Tern	o	o	c	
*Forster's Tern	c	c	u	
Black Tern	o	c	u	
Pigeons and Doves				
Rock Dove	o	o	o	
*Mourning Dove	c	c	c	
Cuckoos				
Yellow-billed cuckoo	r			
Barn Owls				
*Barn Owl	o	o	o	o
Typical Owls				
*Great Horned Owl	u	u	u	u
*Burrowing Owl	o	u	u	
*Long-eared Owl	o	u	o	o
*Short-eared Owl	u	u	u	
Northern Saw-whet Owl		r		
Nightjars				
*Common Nighthawk	c	c	o	
Hummingbirds				
Black-chinned Hummingbird	o		u	
Calliope Hummingbird	o			
Broad-tailed Hummingbird	o	o	u	
Rufous Hummingbird			u	
Kingfishers				
*Belted Kingfisher	u	u	u	o
Woodpeckers				
Lewis's Woodpecker	o		o	
Red-naped Sapsucker	u		o	
Downy Woodpecker	u		o	u
Hairy Woodpecker	r			
*Northern Flicker	c	c	c	c
Tyrant Flycatchers				
Olive-sided Flycatcher	r	r		
*Western Wood-Pewee	c	c	c	
Willow Flycatcher	o	u		

Common Name	Sp	S	F	W
Least Flycatcher		r		
Dusky Flycatcher	o			
Cordilleran Flycatcher	o	o		
Say's Phoebe	o			
*Ash-throated Flycatcher	o	o		
*Western Kingbird	c	c	u	
*Eastern Kingbird	c	c	u	
Shrikes				
*Loggerhead Shrike	u	o	u	r
Northern Shrike	o		o	u
Vireos				
Plumbeous Vireo	o	o		
*Cassin's Vireo	u	u	o	
*Warbling Vireo	u	u	o	
Red-eyed Vireo	o	r		
Crows, Jays and Magpies				
Steller's Jay	o			
*Black-billed Magpie	a	a	a	a
*American Crow	o	o	o	o
Common Raven	o	o	o	o
Larks				
*Horned Lark	a	a	e	e
Swallows				
Purple Martin	r			
*Northern Rough-winged Swallow	u	u	o	
*Tree Swallow	c	c	u	
*Violet-green Swallow	u	c	o	
*Bank Swallow	c	a	c	
*Cliff Swallow	c	a	u	
*Barn Swallow	c	a	c	
Titmice and Chickadees				
Black-capped Chickadee	r		r	
Mountain Chickadee	o		u	u
*Juniper Titmouse	u	u	u	u
Bushtits				
Bushtit			o	o
Nuthatches				
Red-breasted Nuthatch	o	r	o	o

Common Name	Sp	S	F	W
White-breasted Nuthatch	o	r		o
Creepers				
Brown Creeper	u		u	u
Wrens				
*Rock Wren	o	u	o	
*House Wren	u	u	o	
Canyon Wren	o	o		
*Marsh Wren	u	c	c	o
Kinglets				
Golden-crowned Kinglet	o			
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	u		u	o
Old World Warblers				
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	u		u	
Thrushes				
Western Bluebird	o		o	
Mountain Bluebird	o		o	
Townsend's Solitaire	r			o
Veery	o			
Swainson's Thrush	o		o	
Hermit Thrush	o			
Wood Thrush				r
*American Robin	c	c	c	u
Varied Thrush	o			o
Mimic Thrushes				
Gray Catbird		r		
Northern Mockingbird	r			
Sage Thrasher	o	u	u	r
Brown Thrasher	r			
Starlings				
*European Starling	c	c	a	u
Wagtails and Pipits				
American Pipit	o		o	
Waxwings				
Bohemian Waxwing	r			u
*Cedar Waxwing	u	u	u	u

Common Name	Sp	S	F	W
Wood Warblers				
Orange-crowned Warbler	o		o	
Virginia's Warbler	r			
Nashville Warbler	r		o	
*Yellow Warbler	c	c	u	
Yellow-rumped Warbler	c	o	c	r
Black-throated Gray Warbler	o			
Townsend's Warbler			o	
Bay-breasted Warbler	r		r	
Blackpoll Warbler	r		r	
Black-and-white Warbler	r		r	
American Redstart	r		r	
Northern Waterthrush			r	
MacGillivray's Warbler	o	r	o	
*Common Yellowthroat	u	u	u	
Wilson's Warbler	u	u	o	
*Yellow-breasted Chat	o	o		
Tanagers				
Western Tanager	c	u	o	
Sparrows and Towhees				
Green-tailed Towhee	o			
Spotted Towhee	o	o	o	r
American Tree Sparrow				o
Chipping Sparrow	u	o	u	
*Brewer's Sparrow	c	c	u	
*Vesper Sparrow	c	c	u	
*Lark Sparrow	u	u	u	
Sage Sparrow	o	o		
*Lark Bunting	r	r		
Savannah Sparrow	o	o	o	
*Grasshopper Sparrow	c	c	u	
Fox Sparrow			r	
*Song Sparrow	c	c	c	c
Lincoln's Sparrow			o	
White-throated Sparrow				r
Harris's Sparrow				r
White-crowned Sparrow	c			c
Dark-eyed Junco	c		u	c
Snow Bunting				o

Common Name	Sp	S	F	W
Cardinals, Grosbeaks and Allies				
Black-headed Grosbeak	u	o		
Lazuli Bunting	u	o	o	
Blackbirds and Orioles				
Bobolink	o			
*Red-winged Blackbird	c	c	c	o
*Western Meadowlark	c	c	c	u
*Yellow-headed Blackbird	c	c	u	
*Brewer's Blackbird	c	c	u	o
Great-tailed Grackle	u	u		
*Brown-headed Cowbird	c	c	u	
*Bullock's Oriole	c	c	u	
Finches				
Purple Finch	r			
Cassin's Finch	o			
*House Finch	u	o	u	o
Red Crossbill	r			
Common Redpoll				r
Pine Siskin	o		o	o
Lesser Goldfinch	r	r		
*American Goldfinch	c	u	u	u
Evening Grosbeak	o	o		o
Old World Sparrows				
*House Sparrow	c	c	u	u



Preliminary Butterfly List

This list is based on surveys conducted in the summer of 2001. Undoubtedly many more species will be found in the next few years. We welcome anyone to report species they have seen on the refuge that are not currently in this list. The refuge has started an annual 4th of July Butterfly Count. This is similar to the Christmas Bird Count, only for butterflies. It is held somewhere around the 4th of July. If you are interested in participating call the refuge office.

Common Name

Western Tiger Swallowtail
Two-tailed Swallowtail
Becker's White
Checkered White
Cabbage White
Clouded Sulphur
Orange Sulphur
Ruddy Copper
Sylvan Hairstreak
Dotted Blue
Mylitta Crescent
Satyr Comma
Painted Lady
Red Admiral
Viceroy
Common Wood-Nymph
Great Basin Wood-Nymph
Monarch
Common Checkered Skipper
Sandhill Skipper

Becker's White

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Notes

Date _____
Number of Species _____
Time Afield _____
Observers _____
Weather _____
Remarks _____

Please report any unusual sightings to the refuge manager.

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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
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Refuge Information
1 800/344 WILD

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