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INTRODUCTION TO THE BIPOC BIRDING CLUB OF WISCONSIN

The BIPOC Birding Club of Wisconsin creates safe spaces for people of color in the outdoors through outdoor birding activities and events. Individuals and families of all ages and at any level of birding experience are invited and encouraged to join us, BIPOC and allies alike.

The BIPOC Birding Club of Wisconsin was established in 2021 as a community of people of color who love the outdoors and the birds and beauty of natural Wisconsin and wish to connect with others who share the same passion.



BIPOC Birding Club of Wisconsin leaders: Dr. Jeff Galligan, Rita Flores-Wiskowski, Sean Radcliffe, Dexter Patterson

HOW DID THIS PROJECT HAPPEN?

This project began with a desire on the part of the BIPOC Birding Club of Wisconsin to spread a love and appreciation of birds and birding to children and families in Madison and Milwaukee. We want to make sure these backpacks eliminate any cost barrier and have the necessary equipment for anyone who has never birded before to be able to do so.

THE GREAT WISCONSIN BIRDATHON

The BIPOC Birding Club of Wisconsin was able to raise \$3,090 during the 2023 Great Wisconsin Birdathon, with 50% supporting high-priority bird conservation projects in Wisconsin and 50% funding our birding backpack project and other initiatives. What we raised through the Birdathon, along with the generous support and donation of binoculars from our partners at Nocs Provisions, allowed us to make this project a reality.

Want to learn more about the Natural Resource Foundation's Great Wisconsin Birdathon? Check out WisConservation.org/great-wisconsin-birdathon/



The BIPOC Flock, representing the BIPOC Birding Club of Wisconsin in the 2023 Great Wisconsin Birdathon.

WHAT'S IN THE

In addition to this *Birding Backpack Guide*, each birding backpack include:

- 1 pair of Nocs binoculars for adults
- 1 pair of Nocs binoculars for kids
- 1 *Sibley's East Field Guide*
- 1 *Field Guide for Kids* courtesy of Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance in English
- 1 *Field Guide for Kids* from Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance en español

BACKPACK?

USING BINOCULARS FOR THE FIRST TIME

Binoculars are an incredible tool for seeing birds up close, but everyone's eyes are different. We suggest you make these small adjustments when you head into the field:



- Start by raising the binoculars to your eyes. If the eyepieces are too far apart, fold the binoculars until the image you see becomes a unified circle.
- If the image is blurry, use your finger to adjust the focus knob at the center of the binoculars. Expect to use the focus knob frequently, as you'll be viewing things that are varying distances away.
- Struggling to get a clear, stable view? Check the eyepiece by rotating the collapsible eye cups in or out. If you are wearing glasses, you want the eye cups lowered. Your glasses provide extra space between your eye and the lens. If you're not wearing glasses, rotate the eye cups to extend. This creates some distance between your eye and the lens for easier viewing.



FINDING BIRDS WITH BINOCULARS

Focusing your binoculars is one thing but getting them situated on a bird you want to see is another! Here are some tips to help you spot birds:

- If you see a bird or object you want to look at, keep your head in place and eyes on the prize and slowly raise your binoculars to your face. When you do this, the image in your binoculars will be the same area your eyes were trained on.
- Use visual markers in the field to guide you. You can follow the trunk of a tree upwards until you find the branch the bird is on, or you can identify a distant landmark (like a telephone pole, tower, or fence post) that is aligned with where you're trying to look.
- Sometimes putting your binoculars down is the most helpful thing! If a bird is moving around a lot, looking with just your eyes will help you follow that movement and more easily get a sense of where you want to look.



A young birder locates a bird through her binoculars

Want to learn more about Nocs binoculars? Check them out at NocsProvisions.com!



RESOURCES FOR THE JOURNEY

Merlin Bird ID

Download Merlin Bird ID to help you identify birds. It's not foolproof, but it can use your location and the time of year to narrow down what you might be seeing or hearing. Record a bird call, upload a photo, or answer quick questions about what you saw to get potential bird suggestions. Bonus: Merlin Bird ID also serves as a free field guide on your phone! Merlin.AllAboutBirds.org/



eBird

Explore the world of eBird. See what other birders in the area are finding, discover new birding *hotspots*, learn about what to expect in each season, and, if you're up for it, submit your sightings too. eBird is one of the world's largest community science platforms, so your birding can help support scientists studying our feathered friends! www.eBird.org



Entryway to Birding Blog

Check out Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance's Entryway to Birding blog for local Madison birding tips and guidance for getting started with this hobby. SWIBirds.org/entryway-to-birding



WHERE SHOULD I GO BIRDING?

After learning about how to start using binoculars and identify different bird *species*, let's get out there and see some birds! This guide, presented by the BIPOC Birding Club of Wisconsin, talks about some of the beautiful places to see birds throughout Madison. It is based on the guide created by the Feminist Bird Club's Madison Chapter and the Madison Public Library teams.

Madison is a great place because there are so many wonderful parks, natural areas, and green spaces, both within and outside the city. Within all these natural places, there is a lot of *diversity* of *habitat*, including *grasslands* and *prairies*, *mature forests*, *oak savannas*, *riparian* habitat, *marshes*, and more! Many parks in the city of Madison are accessible by bus, bike, car, and on foot, so great birding awaits you! Birding Backpacks can be found at the listed community centers, neighborhood centers, and schools, each of which have parks and green areas nearby. They all have great habitats to explore and many kinds of birds to discover.

Each section of this guide includes:

- *Birding hotspots* near each location listed in this guide
- Transportation information for getting from the center to the location by bus, bike, car, or on foot
- Accessibility information describing what to expect at each destination
- Birding guide: a summary of what birds you might find at each destination in all four different seasons

Bayview Foundation, Inc.

103 La Mariposa Lane, Madison

UW Madison Arboretum
1207 Seminole Hwy., Madison

Distance from Bayview Foundation: 3.4 miles

- Drive: 13 minutes via Arboretum Drive
- Bus: 54 minutes from University at N. Park St. and a 41-minute walk (Route D)
- Walk: 1 hour 2 minutes
- Bike: 18 minutes via Arboretum Dr.

Accessibility: The Arboretum Visitor Center is an accessible facility. There are five accessible parking spots in the main lots and lots at Curtis Prairie, Wingra Springs, and Martin Street. The bathroom is in the Visitor Center. An accessible path through the **Native** Plant Garden. Wheelchairs on trails at Visitors discretion. Trails are narrow in places and wider in others, with a large grassy area north of the visitor center. Icke **Boardwalk** and platform at Teal Pond allow for water views. Can be muddy or icy depending on the season.



An American Goldfinch eating crabapples

Birding Guide

In winter, there is a surprising amount of **diversity**. Big Springs provides unfrozen water all winter. This, along with crabapples and other tasty **forage**, sustains many birds. You may see Mallards, Great Blue Herons, other **waterfowl**, and even overwintering American Robins. White-breasted Nuthatches, Dark-eyed Juncos, Wild Turkeys, Barred Owls, and more make this a lively place.

In spring, male Wild Turkeys (**Toms**) put on a brilliant display of beautifully colored feathers as they try to impress females (**hens**). Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles, American Woodcocks, and Sandhill Cranes return in March. In late April and May, look for Northern Flickers, Red-headed Woodpeckers, one of over 20 **species** of brightly colored warblers, and so much more. Spring **migration** picks up in later April and reaches its peak in May.

Summer provides plenty of bird activity with **bugling** Sandhill Cranes, Great Blue Herons, **drumming** resident woodpeckers, and many other **species** all remaining active.

Fall is a great time to see **migrating** songbirds like warblers, vireos, and kinglets as they move south. **Waterfowl** can be seen along Arboretum Drive in Lake Wingra as they pause to rest and feed during their **migrations**.

eBird Hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L199451>



Olin Park/Turville Point
Conservation Park
1202 Olin-Turville Ct., Madison

Distance from Bayview Foundation:
2.1 miles

- Drive: 11 minutes via Park St. and W. Lakeside St.
- Bus: 24 minutes from S. Bassett at W. Washington Ave. and a 15-minute walk (Route 65)
- Walk: 47 minutes along the Capital City Trail that runs parallel with John Nolen Drive
- Bike: 14 minutes along the Capital City Trail



Trumpeter Swan spreading its wings

Accessibility: Large parking lot at *trailhead*, no stalls are marked as accessible. No bathrooms. The trail is a 2.3-mile loop. Entry area includes some uneven asphalt blocks and potholes for 1/3 mile. Trails around conservancy are packed dirt or mowed grass. Can be muddy depending on the weather. Wooded sections may be narrow with roots and rocks. The trail is generally not flat, with slope steeper than a 5% **gradient** from the *trailhead* into the conservancy but some flatter trails in the park. Curb surrounding parking lot near *trailhead*. Those using wheelchairs or other mobility devices could move to an unpaved curb cut or to the bike path off John Nolen Drive.

Birding Guide

In winter, this is a great place to look and listen for the deep, soft calls of courting Great Horned Owls at dawn and dusk. If the lake isn't frozen, check for large flocks of Tundra Swans and other **migratory waterfowl** like Common Goldeneye.

In early spring, **migratory** birds like the tail-bobbing Eastern Phoebe will arrive. In May, this location will be hopping with warblers, with over 35 different **species**, including Black-throated Green Warbler, Northern Parula, and Prothonotary Warbler, previously sighted here.

Summer provides lots of colorful forest birds to search for, such as Indigo Buntings, Baltimore Orioles, and Scarlet Tanagers. When fall returns, check these woods again for warblers, and Brown Creepers who crawl upwards (and never downwards!) along the bark of trees.

eBird Hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L275314>



Vilas Park
1602 Vilas Park Dr., Madison

Distance from Bayview Foundation:
1.4 miles

- Drive: 7 minutes via Drake St.
- Bus: 30 from W. Washington St. at Southwest (Route 75) or from S. Park St. at Meriter (Route B)
- Walk: 32 minutes via Drake St.
- Bike: 11 minutes via S. Mills St.

Accessibility: Vilas Park spans a large area and has several access points, all with medium-sized parking lots and accessible parking spaces and restrooms. Streetside parking along nearby N. Wingra Drive as well. Paved multi-use paths are found throughout the park and you can also walk along Vilas Drive, a low-traffic road along the water.



Common Loon

Birding Guide

Vilas Park's variety of *habitats* make it a great birding destination no matter the season. In winter, listen for the soft hooting of Great Horned Owls at dawn and dusk. If there's open water on Lake Wingra, scan the lake for *migratory waterfowl*, including ducks, grebes, mergansers, and American Coots.

Spring will bring Sandhill Cranes and Red-winged Blackbirds, and you might spot a Common Loon on the lake. Late April and May are great times to look for warblers, such as the Yellow Warbler, in the trees and bushes. In Wingra Creek near Arboretum Drive, you may spot Great Egrets or Green herons.

Summers focus is on resident nesting birds, like American Robins, Gray Catbirds, and Indigo Buntings. When fall arrives, more *migratory species* will pass through. Check Lake Wingra for *waterfowl* and the woods for *migratory* warblers feasting on bugs before their journey south.

eBird Hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L712207>



East Madison Community Center

8 Straubel Court, Madison

Carpenter-Ridgeway Park
1220 Carpenter St., Madison

Distance from East Madison Community Center: 0.7 mile

- Drive: 3 minutes via Wright St. and Carpenter St.
- Bus: 12 minutes from Wright St. and Straubel Ct. and a 10-minute walk (Route A).
- Walk: 14 minutes via Wright St. and Carpenter St.
- Bike: 3 minutes via Wright St. and Carpenter St.

Accessibility: Street parking along Carpenter Street. Sidewalk and paved path access at entrance. This path joins the Starkweather Creek Path which is also paved and goes north to Madison College and south to Washington Manor Park and beyond. There are no restrooms.



American White Pelican feeding on
Alewife, a type of herring

Birding Guide

This park is a small open area with Starkweather Creek Path running through it. From this location, you can bird the Starkweather Creek Path north to Madison College and south across Aberg Avenue to Washington Manor Park.

Winter brings House Sparrows, an **introduced species** to this location, as many houses bordering it have feeders. **Native** birds like House Finches, American Goldfinches, and Dark-eyed Juncos are here as well.

During spring **migration**, this area is a **hotspot** for warblers with the combination of low, thick brush, trees, and a water source having brought Prairie Warblers and Blue-winged Warblers. Both Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets abound in early spring. You may hear the loud rattle of a Belted Kingfisher as it takes off from a perch over the creek.

Summer quiets down a bit but look for the resident Red-tailed Hawks soaring in the summer sky. The woods hold plenty of Downy, Hairy, and Red-bellied Woodpeckers.

eBird Hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L1949377>



Washington Manor Park 801 N. Oak St., Madison

Distance from East Madison Community Center: 1.6 miles

- Drive: 5 minutes via E. Washington Ave.
- Bus: 11 minutes from Wright St. at Straubel Ct. and a 11-minute walk (Route A)
- Walk: 31 minutes via Starkweather Creek Path
- Bike: 8 minutes via Starkweather Creek Path

Accessibility: Parking along N. Oak Street. Paved path on southern edge of park that joins with the paved Starkweather Creek Path. Can take that North across Aberg Ave. pedestrian bridge to Madison College. There is an incline and decline getting on and off bridge. No bathroom access. The park is an open grassy area with a playground and basketball court. Some trees along Aberg Ave. fence.



A father and son at a birding event

Birding Guide

Washington Manor is a small green space with Starkweather Creek Trail running through. The bird list is small for the actual space, but much like Carpenter-Ridgeway Park, it is the Starkweather Creek Path with the great diversity of *species*. In Winter, there are no reported sightings in eBird, but in any season, you may see Mallards, Downy or Hairy Woodpeckers, and House Finches. Watch for a Ring-billed Gull or two, a Bald Eagle, or a Red-tailed Hawk soaring overhead. Check for Crows, Grackles, and European Starlings foraging in the grass!

eBird Hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L23832164>



Elver Park Neighborhood Center

1201 McKenna Blvd., Madison



Harris's Sparrow

Elver Park
1250 McKenna Blvd., Madison

Distance from Elver Park Neighborhood Center: 0.2 miles

- Drive: 1 minute via S. Gammon/McKenna Blvd.
- Bus: N/A- Walking is best
- Walk: 4 minutes via McKenna Blvd.
- Bike: 1 minute via McKenna Blvd.

Accessibility: Parking lot with accessible parking spaces. Mowed *terrain* can be slightly uneven. The park is partly on a hill, and trails have rolling *terrain*. Restrooms are available. For nearby paved, flat trails, there are loops around the baseball diamonds that run along a reedy creek and small *prairie*. You can also use the

crosswalk to visit Greentree - Chapel Hills Park, where you'll find a *prairie* restoration and paved path beside a flood mitigation canal and pond that supports wildlife.

Birding Guide

This is a great place to see a variety of birds because of its woods, open meadows, *prairies*, and ponds. If visiting in the winter, listen for the tapping sound of resident woodpeckers, and look for flashes of color from Northern Cardinals and White-breasted Nuthatches. Enthusiastic Blue Jays can be found clicking and singing in the pine forest year-round.

Spring brings returning *migratory* birds, like Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles, and resident Sandhill Cranes. Warming weather welcomes Great Blue Herons, Kildeer, Mallards, and Geese to the ponds. In May, watch for warbler *species* and colorful birds like Baltimore Orioles and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers in the woods.

As summer sets in, listen and look for birds that will nest at the park, like Gray Catbirds, Eastern Kingbirds, and House Wrens. The shelters may house nesting Barn Swallows under the eaves. When fall arrives, look for incoming sparrows like American Tree Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos, and keep your eyes on the sky for flyover raptors such as Red-tailed Hawks or Turkey Vultures.

eBird Hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L3058898>



Odana Hills Park (Marsh)
5201 Milward Dr., Madison

Distance from Elver Park Neighborhood Center: 2.7 miles

- Drive: 7 minutes via Schroeder Rd.
- Bus: 26 minutes from Schroeder Rd. at S. Gammon Rd. and a 20-minute walk
- Walk: 54 minutes via Schroeder Rd.
- Bike: 12 minutes via Schroeder Rd.

Accessibility: Parking is along Milward Dr., there is no lot or bathroom. This park consists of an open area at its northwest end, some woods with a path in the northeast corner, and a path that runs north and south to the east of the park at the western edge (with a few small clusters of trees) of the golf course. The park's southern border is a small pond.

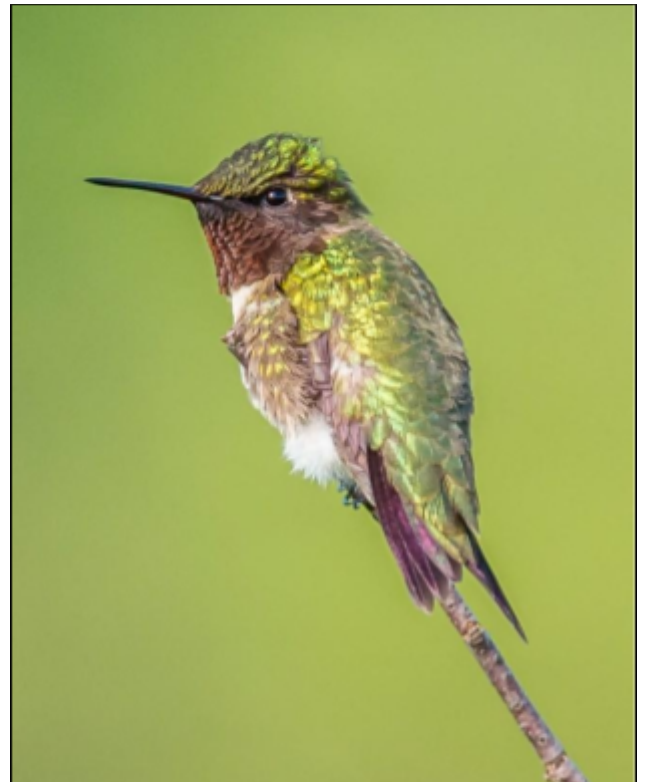
Birding Guide

In winter, listen for the *duets* of Great-horned Owls, as males and females call back and forth as they prepare to nest in February. Black-capped Chickadees flit about and if you are lucky, you may hear or see a Red-breasted Nuthatch. Loud and brash sounding Blue Jays move about the tree *canopies*.

Spring brings the chance to see some neat waterfowl like Redheads, Lesser Scaups, and Ring-necked Ducks. Look closely and be sure that "Mallard" is not a Northern Shoveler. *Migrating* Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers are a nice distraction from more common woodpeckers.

Summer may bring Great Egrets to fish the shoreline of the pond. Baltimore Orioles investigate the branches of fallen logs for spiders to snack on while Red-winged Blackbirds call in their reedy voices as they protect their territory. Fall brings such spectacular *passerines* as the Northern Parula, Olive-sided Flycatcher, and the superbly *camouflaged* Brown Creeper, who only climbs up trees (and never down) as it searches for insects.

eBird Hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L168531>



Ruby-throated Hummingbird



Forest Edge Elementary School

4848 Brassica Road, Fitchburg



Hooded Warbler

McGaw Park
5236 Lacy Rd., Fitchburg

Distance from Forest Edge Elementary School: 2.8 miles

- Drive: 7 minutes via Lacy Rd.
- Bus: 31 minutes from Lacy Rd. at Brassica Rd. and 27 minutes of walking (Route 65)
- Walk: 1 hour 1 minutes via Lacy Rd.
- Bike: 17 minutes via Lacy Rd.

Accessibility: McGaw Park has a lot of flat, open space with 25 athletic fields and courts. There are three parking areas. The **trailhead** is located at the east parking lot and a 1.5-mile trail cuts through a 30-acre woodland. The park also has a 2-acre **prairie** area located near the northern entrance and tall grass areas in various park areas. The **terrain** is flat.

Birding Guide

As a park with lots of athletic space and activities, it is not real birdy, but they can be found! The flat, open, grassy areas are good for finding Killdeer with their signature call of “kill-deer-kill-deer!” Magnolia and Yellow-rumped Warblers have been seen here in May, along with Eastern Wood-Pewees and Eastern Kingbirds.

eBird Hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L3963295>



William G. Lunney Lake Farm
County Park
3113 Lake Farm Rd., Madison

Distance from Forest Edge Elementary
School: 4.2 miles

- Drive: 9 minutes via Meadowview Rd.
- Bus: 56 minutes from Lacy Rd. at Brassica Rd. and 33 minutes of walking (Route 65, transfer to G)
- Walk: 1 hour 10 minutes via Capital City Trail
- Bike: 17 minutes via Capital City Trail



Wood Duck

Accessibility: Three parking lots near the main park entrance with trail beginning at the first lot but also accessible from the second or third. Each lot has at least one designated accessible parking space. Pit/vault toilets are at the nearby boat launch parking lot, accessible via a short trail from the first parking lot. There are flush toilets near the campground. Multiple trail surfaces from the first lot (near the observatory tower) that starts as grass before transitioning to packed dirt and at times, crushed limestone. Low-lying areas get mucky after rain. Trails are wide. The bike path running along the *prairie* and to the *boardwalk* is asphalt. The *boardwalk* is wooden planks and has *pullouts* present near the westernmost side of the trail. The trail through the woods is shaded.

Birding Guide

This is a popular birding destination for its lake views, *woodland* trails, *prairie* trails, and access to the Lower Yahara River Trail, which crosses over Lake Waubesa and provides a great way to see *waterfowl*. 263 *species* of birds have been seen here. In winter, the water near the western side of the *boardwalk* (closest to Lake Farm) doesn't fully freeze, so a diverse number of waterfowl *species* gather there for easy viewing.

Bird this area by walking the *woodland* trails along the lake, (accessed from the first, second, or third lot), visiting the westernmost side of the *boardwalk*, then looping back on a *woodland* trail closer to the *prairie*. Watch for warblers in the spring, Osprey and Bald Eagles hunting, and lots of *waterfowl* and Tundra Swans in the winter. Take the *boardwalk* across Lake Waubesa to McDaniel Park in McFarland as well to get continuous good looks at waterfowl all the way across.

eBird Hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L199454>



Nine Springs Natural Area (Lewis
Nine Springs E-Way)
Moorland Rd., Madison

Distance from Forest Edge Elementary
School: 4.0 miles

- Drive: 9 minutes via County Hwy MM and Moorland Rd.
- Bus: 44 minutes from Lacy Rd at Brassica Rd and 21 minutes of walking (Route 65, transfer to G)
- Walk: 1 hour 15 minutes via Capital City Trail
- Bike: 15 minutes via Capital City Trail

Accessibility: Parking for Nine Springs is at the 18-spot lot off Moorland Road where there is one accessible spot and a bike rack for cyclists. Bathrooms available. Cross Moorland to access a wooden *boardwalk* across the Capital City Trail or go left for the retention ponds. Trails are on the top of raised banks and are a mix of crushed gravel, dirt, and grass and are mostly easily traversable. Only one bench and little shade here.



Green Heron

Birding Guide

This is one of the most popular birding *hotspots* in the Madison area and is an awesome place during spring and fall *migration*. Look for *migratory waterfowl* of all kinds and when the water is low, expect an amazing variety of shorebirds. Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, an occasional Snowy Egret or Cattle Egret, a secretive Virginia Rail or Sora may be seen. Osprey commonly fish here. The woods and brushy areas along the edges of the site are great for warblers and sparrows.

Waterfowl gather here in good numbers during spring and fall *migration* with more than 20 *species* of duck and goose spotted at once sometimes. Sandhill Cranes *forage* in the deeper marsh at the east end of this location. In fall, the northern edge of the Nine Springs property along the creek, is a reliable place to spot Rusty Blackbirds as they *migrate* with large flocks of other blackbirds.

eBird Hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L201005>



Goodman Community Center

149 Waubesa Street, Madison

Olbrich Botanical Garden
3330 Atwood Ave., Madison

Distance from Goodman Comm.
Center: 1.1 miles

- Drive: 2 minutes via Waubesa St. and Atwood Ave.
- Bus: 13 minutes via Waubesa St. and Atwood Ave. (Route C)
- Walk: 13 minutes via Waubesa St. and Atwood Ave.
- Bike: 3 minutes via Capital City Trail

Accessibility: All spaces wheelchair and stroller accessible. Family, and gender-neutral restrooms available. Wide paths with benches throughout for resting. Tram provides free guided tours around the 16-acre outdoor gardens for visitors.



Red-headed Woodpecker

Birding Guide

In winter Red-bellied Woodpeckers drum into tree trunks in search of insect *larvae*. Jays may pass overhead, making a loud, enthusiastic ruckus, while American Tree Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos *forage* for seeds in the underbrush. Watch overhead for a Bald Eagle or two soaring towards Lake Monona, just West of Olbrich Gardens.

Spring brings much more *diversity* as migrants pass through and take advantage of all the *flora* within the gardens. Philadelphia Vireos or Baltimore Oriole may be seen. Look for Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds or Chimney Swifts circling overhead in a constant search for flying insects.

Summer brings other *species* like Brown Thrashers, Warbling Vireos, and Gray Catbirds. Belted Kingfishers may be seen diving for fish along Starkweather Creek. In fall, *migration* brings many *species* of warbler, vireo, sparrows, kinglets, and raptors as they move south.

eBird Hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L1040212>



Olbrich Park
3527 Atwood Ave., Madison

Distance from Goodman
Community Center: 0.6 mile

- Drive: 4 minutes via Atwood Ave.
- Bus: 11 minutes from Atwood Ave. at Waubesa St. and a 7-minute walk (Route C)
- Walk: 24 minutes via Atwood Ave.
- Bike: 6 minutes via Capital City Trail

Accessibility: This park covers a large area and has multiple entrances. Large lot with accessible parking spaces near the intersection of Atwood Ave. and Walter Street. Ample street parking along Lakeland Ave. to the north. The lawn is mowed with flat *terrain* except for sledding hill on the far north end. Restrooms are available.



Immature Bald Eagle carrying a Sheepshead

Birding Guide

This is a great place to see a variety of birds, from *waterfowl* to warblers. In the winter, before Lake Monona has frozen over, scan the water for *migratory* waterfowl like Tundra Swans, American Coots, Common Mergansers, Buffleheads, Lesser Scaup, and more. Bald Eagles can be found frequenting patches of open water to hunt.

Early spring brings Red-winged Blackbirds and Sandhill Cranes, and Common Loons back to the park. In late April and May find warblers and other *migratory* songbirds. The park's interior boat launch on Starkweather Creek is a great place for Yellow Warblers, Baltimore Orioles, and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers.

In summer, you might find nesting Gray Catbirds, American Robins, and Eastern Kingbirds. Fall arrives in August, start checking the lake for *migratory* waterbirds and the trees for fall warblers. They aren't as colorful as they were in the spring, but they'll be just as cute while feasting on bugs to fuel up for their *migratory* journey south.

eBird Hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L8013559>



Kennedy Heights Community Center

199 Kennedy Heights, Madison

Cherokee Marsh Conservation
Park--South Unit
5002 School Rd., Madison

Distance from Kennedy Heights Community
Center: 1.2 miles

- Drive: 4 minutes via School Rd.
- Bus: N/A Walking is best
- Walk: 22 minutes via Kennedy Rd. and Wheeler Rd.
- Bike: 6 minutes via School Rd.

Accessibility: Parking in gravel lot at Merganser *trailhead* and at boat launch (reached by driving down the gravel road) and street parking and some sidewalk access. No bathrooms. Merganser Trail (0.6-mile loop) is primarily mowed grass with *prairie* on either side (80% of trail) with some inclines and declines. May be muddy with possible protruding roots and rocks in wooded section near trail's end. Some areas of the path are wider than others. At least 25% of the path is quite narrow prior to circling the pond on the south side of the trail.



Immature Cooper's Hawk

Birding Guide

In spring, Sandhill Cranes, Green Herons, and Wood Ducks all return to nest. Late spring and summer, brings the entertainment of newly *fledged* young Green Herons learning how to perch and fish from fallen trees. Young Red-headed Woodpeckers hunt insects while Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows compete for nesting boxes in the *prairie*. Warblers, including Wilson's, Magnolia and Bay-breasted, are found in the thick brush near School Road.

Summer brings acrobatic Northern Rough-winged Swallows and Barn Swallows skimming the tops of the ponds, searching for flying insects and grabbing the occasional sip of water on the fly. Old, dead trees in the eastern part of the park provide *habitat* for Red-headed Woodpeckers. In the fall, you may hear the "pure tone" whistle sounds of *migrating*, White-crowned Sparrows in the thick *undergrowth*.

eBird Hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L2837539>



Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park--North
Unit
6098 N. Sherman Ave., Madison

Distance from Kennedy Heights Community
Center: 3.3 miles

- Drive: 11 minutes via Wheeler Rd. and N. Sherman Ave.
- Bus: Bus: 2 hours 4 minutes from Northport at Kennedy and a 54-minute walk (Route B, transfer to 60)
- Walk: 1 hour 12 minutes via Wheeler Rd. and N. Sherman Ave.
- Bike: 17 minutes via Wheeler Rd. and N. Sherman Ave.

Accessibility:

Access is along North Sherman Avenue to a gravel parking lot. Lots of room but no marked spaces and a bike rack. Accessible parking signs are present. 2.6-mile loop with shorter options. Bathrooms are present. Trails are crushed limestone, hard-packed dirt, or grass. The **boardwalks** are metal. There are wooden observation decks that require steps. Infrequent benches.

Birding Guide

With the **diversity** of **habitat**, there is much to see here, beginning with the **duetting** of mating Great-horned Owls. These majestic **apex** raptors are the first birds to mate and lay eggs in February. In March, the open grassy areas of the **prairie** are wonderful for watching American Woodcocks as males do their incredible **aerial displays**, followed by bouts of “peenting” as they move about on the ground in the tall grasses.

In spring, the small platform by the little pond near the Sherman Avenue entrance may have a Sora moving through the cattails.

The forests have many **migrating** warblers, vireos, kinglets, and so much more, while the path to the **boardwalk** may have Fox Sparrows and Lincoln Sparrows in the thick brush and grasses. In the **prairie**, the Common Yellowthroat may pop up to perch on a grass stem and give off a territorial call. In summer, many nesting birds are involved in feeding their young. In marshy areas, you may catch a glimpse of a not yet wary, **fledgling** Virginia Rail as it steps out into the open to explore.

In fall look for a pair of Trumpeter Swans, diving ducks like Buffleheads, or small groups of Tundra Swans. Tennessee Warblers and Red-eyed Vireos move about the trees searching out little snacks to fuel their journey to warmer climates south of Wisconsin.



Eastern Bluebird

eBird Hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L2846310>



Governor's Island

Governor's Island Pkwy, Madison

Distance from Kennedy Heights Community Center: 2.2 miles

- Drive: 8 minutes via Green Ave.
- Bus: 35 minutes from Troy Dr. at School Rd. with a 33-minute walk
- Walk: 44 minutes via Troy Dr.
- Bike: 12 minutes via Troy Dr.

Accessibility: Trail is 1.2-mile loop. Possible to walk, run, or bike to **trailhead**, last 0.2 miles of road are gravel and bumpy. Location is property of Mendota Mental Health Institute and no roadside directions. No bathroom access. Parking lot is unmarked gravel with no designated accessible spots in an uneven lot. Much of the trail is smooth and flat, but a few places, especially on the east side of loop, are rough. The trail gate is always closed but gaps around both sides, with right side wider at 35" with overlapping shrubs.



Northern Cardinal

Birding Guide

Governor's Island is a hidden gem of a birding spot on the North side. Surrounded by water that is often slow to freeze during the winter, this is a beautiful place to look for Tundra Swans and **migratory waterfowl** like Common Mergansers, Buffleheads, and Canvasbacks before the lake fully freezes and Bald Eagles that like to hunt the ducks. Its woods are a great place to search for birds climbing on tree bark, like White-breasted Nuthatches and well-**camouflaged** Brown Creepers.

Spring brings **migratory** warblers and songbirds galore - over 30+ warbler **species** have been reported here! Check the water as you work your way around the island, looking for Common Loons and **migratory** ducks.

The woods remain active in the summer with lots of flycatchers like Eastern Wood-Pewees, Eastern Phoebe, Great Crested Flycatchers, and Eastern Kingbirds, all found here. Look for nesting birds like Yellow Warblers and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers in the woods, while Bank Swallows (who build their nests along the island's cliffsides) can be found zooming over the water. More **species** will fill the woods in fall as **migratory** warblers and thrushes return, so look both high in the trees for warblers and low on the ground for skulky **species** like Swainson's Thrush, Hermit Thrush, or Ovenbirds.

eBird Hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L357270>



Warner Park
2930 N. Sherman Ave., Madison

Distance from Kennedy Heights
Community Center: 1.9 miles

- Drive: 6 minutes via Northport Dr.
- Bus: 18 minutes from Northport Dr. at Kennedy Rd. with a 13-minute walk (Route B)
- Walk: 32 minutes via Northport Dr.
- Bike: 9 minutes via Northport Dr.

Accessibility: Large parking lot with accessible parking spaces and curb cuts to access the wide, paved asphalt trails that circle the park. Multi-use paved trails at Warner are smooth and mostly flat with the occasional gentle incline. There are also mowed trails that go through **woodland** and **prairie** that may have more uneven **terrain**. Restroom access available.



Yellow-rumped Warbler

Birding Guide

Warner Park is a beautiful, birdy destination to explore. In winter, check the trees for Wisconsin's resident woodpeckers like Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, and Red-bellied Woodpeckers. As the weather warms and spring arrives, you'll see more bird activity with the open water. Look around the marshy habitat to find several swallow **species** like Barn Swallows, Tree Swallows, Northern Rough-winged Swallows, and Purple Martins. In the grass fields, look for the resident Sandhill Cranes slowly meandering across the lawns and small Killdeer calling their name, "kill-deer, kill-deer!"

As summer arrives, nesting season will be in full swing. Bald Eagles have nested at Warner Park before, so look for a very large stick nest at the top of the trees near the water. American Robins and Gray Catbirds will be numerous near the woods, but around the water, keep your eyes peeled for large Great Blue Herons, tiny Common Yellowthroats darting through reeds, and loud Red-winged Blackbirds. When fall sets in, **migratory** birds will pass through again, so be sure to check the pond and nearby Lake Mendota for **migratory waterfowl** like ducks, geese, and swans!

eBird Hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L865217>



Lussier Community Education Center

55 S. Gammon Road, Madison

Garner Park
333 S. Rosa Rd., Madison

Distance from Lussier Community Education Center: 1.5 miles

- Drive: 6 minutes via Mineral Point Rd.
- Bus: 16 minutes from Mineral Point Rd. at S. Gammon Rd. and an 11-minute walk
- Walk: 33 minutes via Driftwood Ave.
- Bike: 8 minutes via Driftwood Ave.

Accessibility: Entrance from S. Rosa Road to large parking lot with two accessible spaces near the entrance. Pedestrian entrances are at Driftwood

Avenue and S. Rosa Road, S. Hill Drive and S. Rosa Road, and from S. Hill Drive. Paved paths wind through the park. Bathrooms are in the park shelter. There is some incline into the park, but minimal.

Birding Guide

No winter eBird reports but Wild Turkeys are here year-round. Red-tailed Hawks soar above and perch on the tallest trees and streetlights. Spring reports show a wide variety of *passerines*, including Blue-headed Vireo, House Wrens Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. Cooper's Hawks are found here.

Fall has many of the same birds including 15 *species* of *migrating* warblers. As you walk the paths through Garner Park, you may see Swainson's Thrushes foraging for insects and worms in the open areas or the colorful Northern Flicker doing the same at the base of a tree.

eBird Hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L11469082>



Wild Turkey



Owen Conservancy Park
6021 Old Sauk Rd, Madison

Distance from Lussier Community
Education Center: 1.8 miles

- Drive: 4 minutes via Gammon Rd. and Old Sauk Rd.
- Bus: N/A, easier to walk.
- Walk: 32 minutes via Blue Ridge Pkwy.
- Bike: 8 minutes via Blue Ridge Pkwy.

Accessibility: This location has a parking lot with accessible spaces. The *terrain* on the paths is mowed and can be slightly uneven. This park is on a hill and the trails have rolling *terrain*. Restrooms are available.



Fledgling Great Blue Herons

Birding Guide

If you're visiting Owen Conservation Park in the winter, the leafless trees make it easier to spot Great Horned Owls and Barred Owls hiding in the woods, so investigate all the lumps and bumps you see on those branches! Woodpeckers like Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, and Red-bellied Woodpecker will be frequently seen flying between trees. If you look carefully, you might spot a Brown Creeper, a master of *camouflage* that looks like moving bark as it creeps up (never down) a tree!

Spring is an active time at Owen. Tiny, fast, and fluttery Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets will kick off the season, and by May there will be bright, colorful warblers flitting in the trees and bushes as they search for insects. These warblers only stay for a brief period as they travel through, but summer brings our resident nesting birds! Look for bright blue Indigo Buntings, orange and black Baltimore Orioles, and bright red Scarlet Tanagers that will stick around Owen through breeding season.

As fall approaches, our *migratory* warbler friends will return to Owen. If you're searching for them among the thick leaves, listen for the "chicka-dee-dee-dee" calls of Black-capped Chickadees to guide you, because, as the saying goes "Where chickadees call, look for warblers in the fall!"

eBird Hotspot: ebird.org/hotspot/L200672



Meadowood Neighborhood Center

5740 Raymond Rd., Madison

Dawley Conservancy
2656 S. Seminole Hwy, Fitchburg

Distance from Meadowood Neighborhood Center: 2.8 miles

- Drive: 8 minutes via Raymond Rd.
- Bus: 36 minutes from Raymond Rd. at Leland Dr. and a 27-minute walk (Route H)
- Walk: 47 minutes via Capital City Trail
- Bike: 13 minutes via Raymond Rd. and Southwest Commuter path **or**
- Bike: 13 minutes via S. Whitney Way and Capital City Trail



Marsh Wren

Accessibility: The paved Capitol City Trail runs through Par and parking lot has 14 spaces and 1 accessible space. Racks for bikes and BCycle rental bikes. Accessible bathrooms and viewing deck next to parking lot. This is an out and back walk. Trails are mostly flat.

Birding Guide

Dawley Conservancy has the Capital City Trail running through it. Woodlands are on both sides of Seminole Highway and **grassland** and **prairie** are adjacent to Dunn's Marsh.

Overwintering birds can be found here like American Robins, Black-capped Chickadees, and American Goldfinches as well as visitors from far northern Canada such as American Tree Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos are seen here as well.

In spring Eastern Kingbirds, Philadelphia Vireos, and Scarlet Tanagers are found. Cliff Swallows perch on phone wires and skim the surface of the grass searching for winged insects.

In late August or September, Greater Yellowlegs may hunt the shoreline for insects and other **invertebrates**. Gadwalls, Mallards, and Northern Shovelers may be spotted. Black-crowned Night Herons or a Barred Owl may be seen. Warblers including Chestnut-sided, Wilson's, Magnolia, and Blackburnian are found.

eBird Hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L2102423>

Dunn's Marsh Apache Pond Boardwalk, Fitchburg

Distance from Meadowood Neighborhood Center: 2.1 miles

- Drive: 8 minutes via Raymond Rd.
- Bus: 15 minutes from Raymond Rd. at Leland Dr. and a 7-minute walk (Route H)
- Walk: 42 minutes via Raymond Rd.
- Bike: 11 minutes via Raymond Rd.

Accessibility: A main attraction of this park is the wheelchair accessible Dunn's Marsh Trail, a 1.5-mile loop (via the Capital City Trail and the Cannonball Trail) that takes visitors through the **wetlands** and provides scenic views of the surrounding area. Parking is in the Dawley Conservancy lot off Seminole Highway that has one accessible spot. No bathroom access.



Northern Waterthrush

Birding Guide

Dunn's Marsh has an accessible paved trail around much of it that takes visitors through the *wetland*. Winter brings American Tree Sparrows down from far northern Canada and Alaska. Sharp-shinned Hawks skillfully hunt small birds in the woods. Northern Cardinals, House Finches, and American Goldfinches are common. Another visitor from the far north, the Rough-legged Hawk is always an awesome sight.

Spring sees the return of Sandhill Cranes, Canada Goose, Great Egrets and Great Blue Herons to fish and *forage* through the **marsh**. Tufted Titmouse and White-breasted Nuthatch are found. In summer, you will find Mallards and Wood Ducks. You may see the immense American White Pelicans fish in a tight group. Ospreys hover over the water as they search for a meal, only to suddenly swoop into the water to snatch a fish in its talons.

Pied-billed Grebes can be found diving in the Pond as they amass for **migration**. Chimney Swifts circle and maneuver high above in their quest for winged insects. Yellow-rumped and Tennessee Warblers are active as they feed. Many **species** of **waterfowl** like American Wigeons, Redheads, Mallards, and Northern Shovelers are found on the water.

eBird Hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L335839>



Elver Park 1250 McKenna Blvd, Madison

Distance from Meadowood
Neighborhood Center: 1.7 miles

- Drive: 4 minutes via Raymond Rd. and McKenna Blvd.
- Bus: 7 minutes via Raymond Rd. at Leland and a 3-minute walk (Route H)
- Walk: 34 minutes via Rae Ln. and Hammersley Rd.
- Bike: 8 minutes via Raymond Rd., Prairie Rd., and Hammersley Rd.

Accessibility: Parking lot with accessible parking spaces. Mowed *terrain* can be slightly uneven. The park is partly on a hill, and trails have rolling *terrain*.

Restrooms are available. For nearby paved, flat trails, there are loops around the baseball diamonds that run along a reedy creek and small *prairie*. You can also use the crosswalk to visit Greentree - Chapel Hills Park, where you'll find a *prairie* restoration and paved path beside a flood mitigation canal and pond that supports wildlife.

Birding Guide

This is a great place to see a variety of birds because of its woods, open meadows, *prairies*, and ponds. If visiting in the winter, listen for the tapping sound of resident woodpeckers, and look for flashes of color from Northern Cardinals and White-breasted Nuthatches. Enthusiastic Blue Jays can be found clicking and singing in the pine forest year-round.

Spring brings returning *migratory* birds, like Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles, and resident Sandhill Cranes. Warming weather welcomes Great Blue Herons, Kildeer, Mallards, and Geese to the ponds. In May, watch for warbler *species* and colorful birds like Baltimore Orioles and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers in the woods.

As summer sets in, listen and look for birds that will nest at the park, like Gray Catbirds, Eastern Kingbirds, and House Wrens. The shelters may house nesting Barn Swallows under the eaves. When fall arrives, look for incoming sparrows like American Tree Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos, and keep your eyes on the sky for flyover raptors such as Red-tailed Hawks or Turkey Vultures.

eBird Hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L3058898>



Red-tailed Hawk





Northern Saw-whet Owl

Odana Hills Park (Marsh) 5201 Milward Dr, Madison

Distance from Meadowood Neighborhood Center: 2.1 miles

- Drive: 6 minutes via S. Whitney Way
- Bus: 39 minutes from Raymond Rd. at Leland Dr. and a 12-minute walk
- Walk: 39 minutes via S. Whitney Way
- Bike: 11 minutes via Gilbert Rd.

Accessibility: Parking is along Milward Dr., there is no lot. There is no bathroom.

Odana Hills consists of an open area at its northwest end, some woods with a path in the northeast corner, and a path that runs

north and south to the east of the park at the western edge of the golf course. The park's southern border is a small pond. There are a few small clusters of woods with paths along the western edge of the course. All trails are grass and wide.

Birding Guide

In winter, listen for the **duets** of Great-horned Owls, as males and females call back and forth as they prepare to nest in February. Black-capped Chickadees flit about, busily chattering to one another and investigating anything interesting. If you are lucky, you may hear or see a Red-breasted Nuthatch. Male and female Northern Cardinals chase each other through low branches, while loud and brash sounding Blue Jays move about the tree **canopies**.

Spring brings the chance to see some neat **waterfowl** such as the stunning Redhead, Lesser Scaups, and Ring-necked Ducks. Look closely and be sure that "Mallard" is not a Northern visit Shoveler!

Migrating Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers are a nice distraction from the more common woodpeckers. You may see an Osprey to fish the pond or a Turkey Vulture soar overhead.

Summer may bring the regal Great Egret to wade the shoreline of the pond as it fishes. Baltimore Orioles investigate the branches of fallen logs for spiders to snack on while Red-winged Blackbirds call in their reedy voices as they protect their territory. Fall brings such spectacular **passerines** as the Northern Parula, Olive-sided Flycatcher, and the superbly **camouflaged** Brown Creeper, who only climbs up trees (and never down) as it searches for insects.

eBird Hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L168531>



Neighborhood House Community Center

29 S. Mills St., Madison

UW Madison Arboretum
1207 Seminole Hwy, Madison

Distance from Neighborhood House Community Center: 3.1 miles

- Drive: 12 minutes via Arboretum Drive
- Bus: 55 minutes from Regent St at N. Mills St and a 29-minute walk (E > H)
- Walk: 1 hour 7 minutes via Arboretum Dr
- Bike: 16 minutes via Arboretum Dr.

Accessibility: The Arboretum Visitor Center is an accessible facility. There are five accessible parking spots in the main lots and lots at Curtis Prairie, Wingra Springs, and Martin Street. The bathroom is in the Visitor Center. An accessible path through the **Native** Plant Garden. Wheelchairs on trails at Visitors discretion. Trails are narrow in places and wider in others, with a large grassy area north of the visitor center. Icke **Boardwalk** and platform at Teal Pond allow for water views. Can be muddy or icy depending on the season.



Sedge Wren

Birding Guide

In winter, there is a surprising amount of **diversity**. Big Springs provides unfrozen water all winter. This, along with crabapples and other tasty **forage**, sustains many birds. You may see Mallards, Great Blue Herons, other **waterfowl**, and even foraging overwintering American Robins. White-breasted Nuthatches, Dark-eyed Juncos, Wild Turkeys, Barred Owls, and more make this a lively place.

In spring, male Wild Turkeys (Toms) display as they try to impress females (Hens). Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles, American Woodcocks, and Sandhill Cranes return in March. In late April and May see Northern Flickers, Red-headed Woodpeckers and maybe some of the more than 20 **species** of brightly colored warblers, and so much more. Spring **migration** reaches its peak in May.

Summer provides plenty of bird activity with **bugling** Sandhill Cranes, Great Blue Herons, **drumming** resident woodpeckers, and many other **species** all remaining active.

Fall is a great time to see **migrating** songbirds like warblers, vireos, and kinglets as they move south. **Waterfowl** can be seen along Arboretum Drive in Lake Wingra as they pause to rest and feed during their **migrations**.

eBird Hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L199451>



Olin Park/Turville Point
Conservation Park
1202 Olin-Turville Ct, Madison

Distance from Neighborhood House
Community Center: 2.2 miles

- Drive: 7 minutes via S. Park St. and W. Olin Ave.
- Bus: 17 minutes from Drake St. at S. Mills St. and an 11-minute walk (O)
- Walk: 47 minutes via S. Park St. and W. Olin Ave.
- Bike: 12 minutes via Shore Dr.

Accessibility: Large parking lot at *trailhead*, none are marked as accessible. No bathrooms. The trail is a 2.3-mile loop. Entry area includes some uneven asphalt blocks and potholes for 1/3 mile. Trails around conservancy are packed dirt or mowed grass. Can be muddy depending on the weather. Wooded sections may be narrow with roots and rocks. The trail is generally not flat with slope steeper than a 5% **gradient** from the *trailhead* into the conservancy but some flatter trails in the park. Curb surrounding parking lot near *trailhead*. Those using wheelchairs or other mobility devices could move to an unpaved curb cut or to the bike path off John Nolen Drive.



Barred Owl

Birding Guide

In winter, this is a great place to look and listen for the deep, soft calls of courting Great Horned Owls at dawn and dusk. If the lake isn't frozen, check for large flocks of Tundra Swans and other **migratory waterfowl** like Common Goldeneye.

In early spring, **migratory** birds like the tail-bobbing Eastern Phoebe will arrive. In May, this location will be hopping with warblers, with over 35 different **species**, including Black-throated Green Warbler, Northern Parula, and Prothonotary Warbler, previously sighted here.

Summer provides lots of colorful forest birds to search for, such as Indigo Buntings, Baltimore Orioles, and Scarlet Tanagers. When fall returns, check these woods again for warblers, and Brown Creepers who crawl upwards (and never downwards!) along the bark of trees.

eBird Hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L275314>



Vilas Park
1602 Vilas Park Dr, Madison

Distance from Neighborhood
House Community Center: 1.3
miles

- Drive: 6 minutes via S. Mills St.
- Bus: N/A, walking is easier
- Walk: 26 minutes via S. Mills St.
- Bike: 9 minutes via S. Mills St.

Accessibility: Vilas Park spans a large area and has several access points, all with medium-sized parking lots and accessible parking spaces. Streetside parking is often available along nearby N. Wingra Drive as well. Paved multi-use paths are found throughout the park and you can also walk along Vilas Drive, a low-traffic road near the edge of the water. Restrooms are available.



Sandhill Crane, colt, and egg

Birding Guide

Vilas Park's variety of *habitats* make it a great birding destination no matter the season. In winter, listen for the soft hooting of Great Horned Owls at dawn and dusk. If there's open water on Lake Wingra, scan the lake for *migratory waterfowl*, including ducks, grebes, mergansers, and American Coots.

Spring will bring Sandhill Cranes and Red-winged Blackbirds, and you might spot a Common Loon on the lake. *Migration* picks up in late April and May, which makes it an exciting time to look for warblers in the trees and bushes, like the bright and sunny Yellow Warbler. Be sure to check Wingra Creek, near Arboretum Drive, for bright white Great Egrets that love to gather there.

Summer is a great time to focus on resident nesting birds, like American Robins, Gray Catbirds, Indigo Buntings, and Baltimore Orioles. When August approaches and fall sets in, more *migratory species* will pass through, so keep checking Lake Wingra for *waterfowl* and the woods for *migratory* warblers feasting on bugs before their journey south.

eBird Hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L712207>



Vera Court Neighborhood Center

614 Vera Ct, Madison



Blue Jay

Cherokee Marsh Conservation
Park--South Unit
5002 School Rd., Madison

Distance from Vera Court
Neighborhood Center: 1.3 miles

- Drive: 4 minutes via School Rd.
- Bus: N/A Walking is best
- Walk: 28 minutes via School Rd.
- Bike: 7 minutes via School Rd.

Accessibility: Parking in gravel lot at Merganser *trailhead* and at boat launch (reached by driving down the gravel road) and street parking and some sidewalk access. No bathrooms. Merganser Trail (0.6-mile loop) is primarily mowed grass with

prairie on either side (80% of trail) with some inclines and declines. May be muddy with possible protruding roots and rocks in wooded section near trail's end. Some areas of path are wider than others. At least 25% of the path is quite narrow prior to circling the pond on the south side of the trail.

Birding Guide

In spring, Sandhill Cranes, Green Herons, and Wood Ducks all return to nest. Late spring and summer, brings the entertainment of newly *fledged* young Green Herons learning how to perch and fish from fallen trees. Young Red-headed Woodpeckers hunt insects while Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows compete for nesting boxes in the *prairie*. Warblers, including Wilson's, Magnolia and Bay-breasted, are found in the thick brush near School Road.

Summer brings acrobatic Northern Rough-winged Swallows and Barn Swallows skimming the tops of the ponds, searching for flying insects and grabbing the occasional sip of water on the fly. Old, dead trees in the eastern part of the park provide *habitat* for Red-headed Woodpeckers. In the fall, you may hear the "pure tone" whistle sounds of *migrating*, White-crowned Sparrows in the thick *undergrowth*.

eBird Hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L2837539>



Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park--North Unit 6098 N. Sherman Ave., Madison

Distance from Vera Court Neighborhood Center: 3.6 miles

- Drive: 11 minutes via School Rd., Wheeler Rd., and N. Sherman Ave.
- Bus: 2 hours 4 minutes from Troy Dr. at School Rd. and a 55-minute walk (Route B, transfer to 60)
- Walk: 1 hour 17 minutes via N. Sherman Ave.
- Bike: 19 minutes via Wheeler Rd. and N. Sherman Ave.

Accessibility:

Access is along North Sherman Avenue to a gravel parking lot. Lots of room but no marked spaces and a bike rack. Accessible parking signs are present. 2.6-mile loop with shorter options. Bathrooms are present. Trails are crushed limestone, hard-packed dirt, or grass. The **boardwalks** are metal. There are wooden observation decks that require steps. Infrequent benches.

Birding Guide

With the **diversity** of **habitat**, there is much to see here, beginning with the **duetting** of mating Great-horned Owls. These majestic **apex** raptors are the first birds to mate and lay eggs in February. In March, the open grassy areas of the **prairie** are wonderful for watching American Woodcocks as males do their incredible **aerial displays**, followed by bouts of “peenting” as they move about on the ground in the tall grasses.

In spring, the small platform by the little pond near the Sherman Avenue entrance may have a Sora moving through the cattails.

The forests have many **migrating** warblers, vireos, kinglets, and so much more, while the path to the **boardwalk** may have Fox Sparrows and Lincoln Sparrows in the thick brush and grasses. In the **prairie**, the Common Yellowthroat may pop up to perch on a grass stem and give off a territorial call. In summer, many nesting birds are involved in feeding their young. In **marshy** areas, you may catch a glimpse of a not yet wary, **fledgling** Virginia Rail as it steps out into the open to explore.

In fall look for a pair of Trumpeter Swans, diving ducks like Buffleheads, or small groups of Tundra Swans. Tennessee Warblers and Red-eyed Vireos move about the trees searching out little snacks to fuel their journey to warmer climates south of Wisconsin.

eBird Hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L2846310>



Nelson's Sparrow



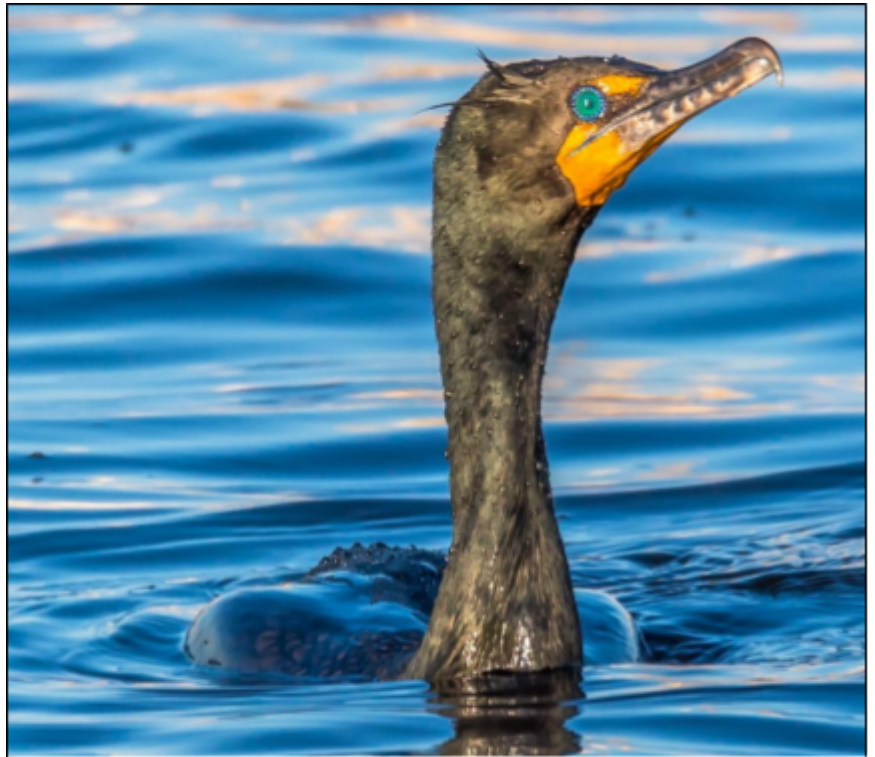
Governor's Island Governor's Island Pkwy, Madison

Distance from Vera Court
Neighborhood Center: 1.7 miles

- Drive: 7 minutes via Troy Dr.
- Bus: 27 minutes from Troy Dr. at School Rd. with a 25-minute walk
- Walk: 36 minutes via Troy Dr.
- Bike: 9 minutes via Troy Dr.

Accessibility: Trail is 1.2-mile loop. Possible to walk, run, or bike to **trailhead**, last 0.2 miles of road are gravel and bumpy. Location is property of Mendota Mental Health Institute and no roadside directions. No bathroom access. Parking lot is unmarked gravel with no designated accessible spots in an uneven lot. Much of the trail is

smooth and flat, but a few places, especially on the east side of loop, are rough. The trail gate always closed but gaps around both sides, with right side wider at 35" with overlapping shrubs.



Double-crested Cormorant

Birding Guide

Governor's Island is a hidden gem of a birding spot on the North side. Surrounded by water that is often slow to freeze during the winter, this is a beautiful place to look for Tundra Swans and **migratory waterfowl** like Common Mergansers, Buffleheads, and Canvasbacks before the lake fully freezes and Bald Eagles that like to hunt the ducks. Its woods are a great place to search for birds climbing on tree bark, like White-breasted Nuthatches and well-**camouflaged** Brown Creepers.

Spring brings **migratory** warblers and songbirds galore - over 30+ warbler **species** have been reported here! Check the water as you work your way around the island, looking for Common Loons and **migratory** ducks.

The woods remain active in the summer with lots of flycatchers like Eastern Wood-Pewees, Eastern Phoebe, Great Crested Flycatchers, and Eastern Kingbirds, all found here. Look for nesting birds like Yellow Warblers and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers in the woods, while Bank Swallows (who build their nests along the island's cliffsides) can be found zooming over the water. More **species** will fill the woods in fall as **migratory** warblers and thrushes return, so look both high in the trees for warblers and low on the ground for skulky **species** like Swainson's Thrush, Hermit Thrush, or Ovenbirds.

eBird Hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L357270>



Warner Park 2930 N. Sherman Ave., Madison

Distance from Vera Court Neighborhood Center:
1.6 miles

- Drive: 6 minutes via Troy Dr.
- Bus: 24 minutes from Troy Dr at School Rd. with a 13-minute walk (Route B)
- Walk: 28 minutes via Troy Dr.
- Bike: 7 minutes via Troy Dr.

Accessibility: Large parking lot with accessible parking spaces and curb cuts to access the wide, paved asphalt trails that circle the park. Multi-use paved trails at Warner are smooth and mostly flat with the occasional gentle incline. There are also mowed trails that go through woodlands and *prairie* that may have more uneven terrain. Restroom access available.

Birding Guide

Warner Park is a beautiful, birdy destination to explore. In winter, check the trees for Wisconsin's resident woodpeckers like Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, and Red-bellied Woodpeckers.

As the weather warms and spring arrives, you'll see more bird activity with the open water. Look around the *marshy* habitat to find several swallow *species* like Barn Swallows, Tree Swallows, Northern Rough-winged Swallows, and Purple Martins. In the grass fields, look for the resident Sandhill Cranes slowly meandering across the lawns and small Killdeer calling their name, "kill-deer, kill-deer!"

As summer arrives, nesting season will be in full swing. Bald Eagles have nested at Warner Park before, so look for a very large stick nest at the top of the trees near the water. American Robins and Gray Catbirds will be numerous near the woods, but around the water, keep your eyes peeled for large Great Blue Herons, tiny Common Yellowthroats darting through reeds, and loud Red-winged Blackbirds. When fall sets in, *migratory* birds will pass through again, so be sure to check the pond and nearby Lake Mendota for *migratory waterfowl* like ducks, geese, and swans!

eBird Hotspot: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L865217>



A father helping his child use binoculars



Glossary

Aerial displays (in relation to the male American Woodcock): *noun*; A notable spring mating display in which the male sings and performs a spiraling courtship dance around twilight.

Apex predator: *noun*; A predator at the top of a food chain without natural predators of its own.

Birding Hotspot: *noun*; An eBird term for public birding locations with reported sightings.

Boardwalk: *noun*; A wooden walkway across sand or marshy ground.

Bugling: *verb*; A name for animal vocalization. Often applied to cranes.

Camouflage: *noun*; An animal's natural coloring or form to blend in with its surroundings.

Canopy: *noun*; The area of the highest leaves and branches in a forest.

Diversity: *noun, as in biological diversity*; A measure of variation at the genetic, species, or ecosystem level (ex., number of species in an ecosystem).

Drumming: *verb*; The characteristic sound of, in this case, woodpeckers drilling into trees for food or during courtship displays.

Duet (-ting): *noun*; A name for animal vocalization, in this case, owls alternating calls between a bonded pair. The purpose may be territorial or pair bonding.

Fledgling: *noun*; A young bird which has just developed its flight feathers.

Flora: *noun*; Refers to all plant life present in a region.

Forage: 1. *verb*; To search for and gather food, 2. *noun*; Referring to foraged food.

Gradient: *noun*; A rate of inclination; a slope.

Grassland: *noun*; An ecosystem dominated by grasses, maintained by fire, grazing animals, and drought and/or freezing temperatures.

Introduced species: *noun*; A species living outside its native range which has arrived by human activity. Not necessarily the same as **invasive species**.

Invasive species: *noun*; An introduced species that becomes overpopulated, causing harm to an environment.

Invertebrate: *noun*; An animal without vertebrae (spine or backbone).

Larva (*plural larvae*): *noun*; An early life stage of an insect or animal after hatching, before developing wings or legs, and often wormlike.

Marsh: *noun*; An area of land where water covers ground for long periods of time.

Mature forest: *noun*; A stage of forest development that can be marked by an abundance of large trees, accumulation of dead plant material, and the species and ecosystem it supports.

Migration: *noun*; a behavior where animals travel from one habitat to another in search of food, better conditions, and/or for reproduction.

Native species: *noun*; A species that has evolved across enormous periods of time to adapt to its local ecosystem.

Oak savanna: *noun*; An endangered grassland ecosystem where oaks are the dominant trees.

Passerine: *adjective*; A category of perching birds generally defined as having three toes forward, one back.

Prairie: *noun*; Ecosystems of flat grassland with moderate temperature and rainfall, and few trees.

Pullout: *noun*; Like *pull-off*, an area to the side of a trail to pause or observe the space.

Riparian: *noun*; A transitional area of land between a river or stream to a land ecosystem.

Species: *noun*; A group of organisms that can reproduce naturally with one another and create fertile offspring.

Terrain: *noun*; The physical features of an area of land.

Trailhead: *noun*; The beginning of a trail, often marked with a sign or post.

Undergrowth: *noun*; Low growth on a forest floor such as shrubs or small trees.

Waterfowl: *noun*; A bird that is found in or near water.

Wetland: *noun*; An ecosystem where water covers the soil or is present either at or near the surface such as bogs, marshes, and swamps.



Sources: National Geographic Education, Merriam Webster, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Audubon Magazine, BirdNote, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Bureau of Land Management, US Forest Service, Environmental Protection Agency, University of Minnesota – Silvopasture Research Group

Birders watching a Red-tailed Hawk

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**NOCS
PROVISIONS**

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BIPOC Birding Club of Wisconsin

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Created, for birders like you, in 2024.



Common Grackle



Red-eyed Vireo



American Robin



Dark-eyed Junco



House Finch



Northern Cardinal