



## *Scoping the perfect birding spot*

**IT'S NO SURPRISE** the woods and waters of Michigan are home to more than 400 species of birds. From the endangered Kirtland's warbler and Great Lakes piping plover to the majestic bald eagle, these winged creatures draw crowds hoping to get a glimpse of them in their natural habitat.

Birding is the second-fastest growing hobby in the United States, according to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and Michigan has more than 2 million resident birdwatchers. There are some three dozen active Audubon Society chapters in Michigan dedicated to preserving birding ecosystems and creating opportunities for public viewing.

### **BIRDING TRAILS**

Currently there are five defined birding trails in Michigan, with several others in various phases of development:

The **Superior Birding Trail** ([superiorbirdingtrail.org](http://superiorbirdingtrail.org)) covers 150 miles in the Upper Peninsula, from the Seney National Wildlife Refuge to Paradise — home of the

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Whitefish Point Bird Observatory. More than 300 species of birds have been recorded in this region.

Encompassing more than 145 miles along U.S. 23, the **Sunrise Coast Birding Trail** ([us23heritageroute.org](http://us23heritageroute.org)) stretches along the Lake Huron shoreline from Mackinaw City to the mouth of the AuSable River in Oscoda where common, threatened and endangered birds have been spotted.

Located entirely on Lake Michigan's largest island, the **Beaver Island Birding Trail** ([beaverislandbirdingtrail.org](http://beaverislandbirdingtrail.org)) spans 12,000 acres of natural habitat, where as many as 250 bird species can be found.

The **Sleeping Bear Birding Trail** ([sleepbearbirdingtrail.org](http://sleepbearbirdingtrail.org)) boasts 250-plus species along a 123-mile stretch, from Manistee to Traverse City, along the scenic M-22 highway and the Lake Michigan shoreline.

The **Saginaw Bay Birding Trail** ([saginawbaybirding.org](http://saginawbaybirding.org)), takes travelers along the Lake Huron shoreline, 142 miles from Tawas Point State Park south to Port Crescent State Park. Look out for 200 bird species that call this area home.

### **BIRD SANCTUARIES**

Michigan also is home to many bird sanctuaries that offer programming and viewing opportunities:

The **Bernard W. Baker Bird Sanctuary** ([bakersanctuary.org](http://bakersanctuary.org)) consists of some 900 acres including more than two miles of walking trails in Calhoun County.

The sanctuary is dominated by Big Marsh Lake, which provides a rich habitat for more than 200 bird species.

The 1,000-acre **Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary** ([haehnlesanctuary.org](http://haehnlesanctuary.org)) in



Jackson County attracts thousands of migrating Sandhill cranes each fall. More than two miles of trails take visitors through its natural habitats.

Michigan State University's **W.K. Kellogg Bird Sanctuary** ([kbs.msu.edu/visit/birdsanctuary](http://kbs.msu.edu/visit/birdsanctuary)) is one of North America's pioneer wildlife conservation centers, offering 180 acres of diverse habitat along the 40-acre Wintergreen Lake in Augusta. Nearly two miles of trails, some wheelchair accessible, allow visitors to see hundreds of waterfowl in their natural habitat, including trumpeter swans.

Originally landscaped as an arboretum, the 76-acre **Lake Bluff Bird Sanctuary** ([visit.manisteecounty.com](http://visit.manisteecounty.com)) in Manistee County includes 1,500 feet of Lake Michigan frontage. Hundreds of birds take up residence in the towering California redwoods, ginkgos, giant sequoias and sycamores that line 1.5 miles of trail.



Located on 128 acres in Barry County, the **Otis Farm Bird Sanctuary** ([ceruleanwarbler.wordpress.com](http://ceruleanwarbler.wordpress.com)) is made up of rolling fields, mature forests and expansive marshlands that are home to over 165 bird species.

For a list of other bird sanctuaries, festivals and events, visit the Michigan Audubon Society website at [michiganaudubon.org](http://michiganaudubon.org).

—Dianna Stampfler

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