

Bird and Wildlife Viewing in Voyageur Country of Northeastern Minnesota



Blackburnian Warbler
– by Dave Cahlander

This guide will help you find locations to view the wildlife and birds of Voyageurs National Park and its surrounding areas.

A feature of the northern St. Louis and eastern Koochiching County region is the numerous waterways of lakes and rivers. Traveling to some of the locations listed in this guide will require the use of a watercraft as these areas are remote and wild. Other routes can be accessed by car and their hiking trails are noted as such in this guide.

Vermilion Gorge and Herriman Lake Trails

Crane Lake, Minnesota

The Voyageurs National Park area offers a unique water and land interface which enables you to bird from a variety of watercraft and on foot. The ecosystem in Voyageurs contains 13 recognized ecological systems with 49 plant community types (associations). This is a high diversity of habitats in a topography that encompasses a mosaic of large and small interconnected lakes, thousands of beaver ponds, small and large rivers and streams, bogs, swamps, wet meadows, fens, marshes and associated upland forests on rocky outcrops and lowland forest communities. This mosaic is representative of a transitional southern boreal forest in a recently glaciated environment, between the more northern boreal forest and the southern deciduous forest of North America.



BLACK-THROATED GREEN
WARBLER – Dave Cahlander

The area is part of a landscape with the highest breeding bird species richness of any region in North America north of Mexico (Robbins et al. 1986 and Green 1995). Over 240 species of birds have been observed here either as permanent residents, breeders, migrants or winter visitors. Wood warbler species contribute significantly to this richness. Curson et al. 1994, listed 29 species of warblers that breed in Minnesota. Twenty four species of warblers are residents in our area and are likely breeders. Two other warbler species migrate through the area in spring and fall. Just think of the delight you can have enjoying the species richness of the land and water birds in this transitional zone in the Voyageurs National Park Area. **Leland H. Grim, Resources Biologist 1972-2008, Voyageurs National Park**

Vermilion Gorge Hiking Trail – Just past the Crane Lake Ranger Station, the trailhead starts to your left. The trail is 1.5 miles one way to the Vermilion River. You will hike through pine forests with scenic outcrops of Lac LaCroix granite. You will view a variety of warblers and many breeding birds of the boreal forest.

Herriman Lake Trails – Several interconnected trails that total 15 miles take you through mature forest to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW). You will see and hear many boreal specialties. Permits can be obtained at the trailhead located in Crane Lake on the Nelson Road. **A day use permit is required for this trail.**



MOURNING WARBLER –
Dave Cahlander

Echo, Norway and Big Moose and Astrid Lakes Trails

Crane Lake to Ely, Minnesota

Echo Trail – This 52 mile well-maintained gravel road (County Road (CR) 116) begins on CR 23/24 and courses through the Superior National Forest. Several excellent hiking trails are located along its route. Follow the road to the end and you will arrive in the town of Ely.

Please note: There are no trail signs in the wilderness of BWCA – use a topographic map and compass to guide you.

Norway Trail – This two to eight mile trail is located 15 miles from the intersection of CR 116 and CR 24, and its final destination is the north arm of Trout Lake. Norway Trail is excellent for spruce grouse and red cross-bills in the mature nor-way pines. Portions of this trail are suitable for mountain biking. A portion of this trail is in the BWCAW and a day use permit is required. The permit can be obtained and filled out at the trailhead.

Big Moose Trail – A 2.5 mile hike into Big Moose Lake that begins off of the Moose Loop road. As the trail name indicates, this is a great area to look for moose especially in the early morning and evening. Many of the boreal

birds can be viewed along this trail. Portions of this trail are in the BWCAW; a day use permit is required.



BULL MOOSE – Ben Sosniecki

TWINFLOWERS – Penny Backman



Astrid Lakes Trail – This seven mile trail network is located off the Echo Trail (CR 116). Portions of the trail have been raised above the sphagnum moss to keep your feet dry as some of the trail winds through a black spruce bog. Yellow-bellied flycatchers and cape may warblers nest here. Pitcher plants are plentiful. You will hike along huge boulders that were deposited by the glaciers 10,000 years ago. Watch for the rock cairns that mark the trail. No permit is needed for this trail.

Orr, Cusson, Gheen Hill and Vince Shute

Orr, Minnesota

Orr Bog Walk – A short loop in the bog located at the Orr Tourist Information Center on Hwy. 53 just south of Orr. A boardwalk takes you down to the Pelican River. Red-necked grebes can be seen at the river and many warblers can be seen and heard in this unique setting. Interpretive signs mark unusual plants that thrive in the acidic waters of the bog, including the pitcher plant.



RED-NECKED GREBE

Cusson Loop – Located north of Orr in the town of Cusson, the loop begins at CR 180 to the northeast. Take a break at the Patricia Zakovich Wildlife Production Area (WPA) to look for waterfowl. Continue on FR 203 and watch for signs on the south side of the road. You can explore almost two miles of hiking trails

here. Along the road you will find several areas where black-backed woodpeckers have been busy chiseling the trees for insects. Throughout this varied forest are tracts of mature forest as well as younger forest that have been harvested.

This variety makes for some excellent birding habitat.



CAPE MAY WARBLER – Dave Cahlander

Gheen Hill Trail – This network of trails off Hwy. 53 traverses Gheen Hill just south of Orr. The DNR has maintained these trails and abundant wildlife can be found in this forest. Nashville warblers, least flycatchers and mourning warblers make their home along these trails.

Vince Shute Wildlife Sanctuary – The sanctuary offers an opportunity to view wild black bears in their natural habitat. From the observation deck you will be able to view bears as they play, climb, vocalize and eat. Trained representatives of the sanctuary will interpret behavior as it happens in front of you and will present facts about black bear behavior, ecology and their habitat needs. A great opportunity to photograph bears in their natural setting.

Turnoff located one mile south of Orr. Turn west onto CR 23 and follow the road for about 14 miles. Watch for signs on the right.

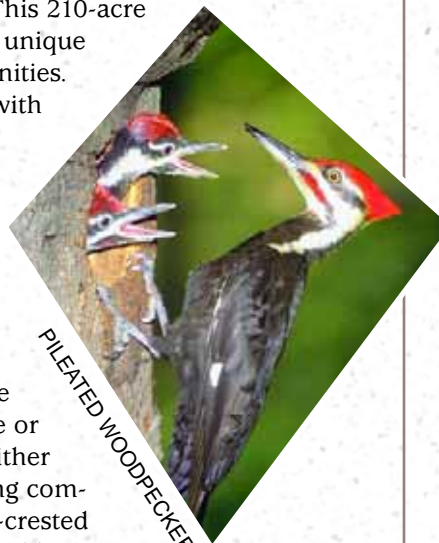


BLACK BEAR – Stacey Cann

Big Island, Kab Ash and Ash River

Pelican Lake, Kabetogama & Ash River, Minnesota

Big Island Scientific and Natural Area – This 210-acre SNA is located in Pelican Lake and features a unique collection of old-growth native plant communities. Mixed old-growth hardwood-conifer forests with basswood, bur oak, white spruce, white pine, and aspen occur in the uplands, while black spruce, black ash and northern white cedar dominate the lowlands. Bald eagles and osprey nest on the island and over 40 other species, including pileated woodpeckers and at least 12 species of warblers have been documented as summer residents. Bring your own boat and launch at one of the three public accesses on this 11,000 acre lake or visit one of the resorts to rent a watercraft. Either way, enjoy seeing various waterbirds including common loons, American white pelicans, double-crested cormorants, gulls, terns, shorebirds and herons along the way!



PILEATED WOODPECKER



NORTHERN GOSHAWK WITH CHICKS

Kab-Ash Trail – A twenty-mile trail through Voyageurs National Park that connects the Ash River Trail (CR 129) to the nearby community of Kabetogama. You will hike through beautiful forests and over rock ridges marked with artistic rock cairns. Birds abound in this undisturbed habitat. Look for pine warblers and magnolia warblers in the pine and balsam. Ovenbirds lurk in the understory as merlin falcons and goshawks fly overhead.

Ash River Visitor Center – Voyageurs National Park — Open seasonally (mid-May–Sept.), visitors can obtain information about the park and its facilities. Interpretive exhibits tell the story of this historic visitor center.

Blind Ash Bay Trail – Located near the Ash River Visitor Center, this scenic 2.5 mile trail follows a narrow, winding and rocky path through the boreal forest overlooking Kabetogama Lake.

Echo Bay, Arrowhead and Kabetogama

Kabetogama, Minnesota

Echo Bay Trail – Voyageurs National Park – This 2.3 mile trail is located near the Kabetogama Lake Visitor Center and is totally within the park. The trail traverses by a large beaver flowage through big pines with a mix of upland and lowland vegetation. You will have the opportunity to view an active great blue heron rookery and many different warblers and flycatchers.



GREAT BLUE HERON

Arrowhead Trail – Accessed off of CR 122 or CR 129–

This trail is for snowmobilers in the winter, but in the summer it can be hiked or biked. The mixed forest provides many different habitats and supports many species of birds. Different wildflowers are seen here in abundance.

Kabetogama Peninsula – Voyageurs

National Park – Several remote hiking trails lie within the National Park and are accessible only by boat. Bring a canoe or rent a boat at a nearby resort to check out these unbirded trails. These well-maintained trails are tended by the National Park service staff and provide excellent wildlife viewing opportunities. If you really want to get away from it all, this is the place for you.

Cruiser Lake Trail System – Voyageurs National Park – Access this almost ten mile trail system by boat from either the Kabetogama or Ash River communities. This system offers a several day backpacking trip to its ultimate destination of Anderson Bay on Rainy Lake, or hike portions of it for an invigorating day hike. The trail meanders between the many small lakes in the Kabetogama Peninsula Wilderness. Watch for waterfowl and the shy birds that make this their home.

Locator Lake Trail – A short jaunt across the lake from the Kabetogama community will bring you to this remarkable two-mile trail. While on your boat ride to the trail, watch for American white pelicans and bald eagles. A very successful recovery program for bald eagles was undertaken in the 70's and 80's and many nesting bald eagle pairs remain in Voyageurs National Park. A beaver pond entices all kinds of wildlife to its edges.

Rainy Lake Area

International Falls, Minnesota

Rainy Lake Visitor Center – Stroll along one of the nine hiking trails within Voyageurs National Park and explore the wonderful diversity the park has to offer.

Oberholtzer Trail – Voyageurs National Park – This 2 mile trail skirts the Black Bay marshland, loops through a mixed deciduous and coniferous forest and elevates to a mature pine forest where brown creepers, northern parula, golden-winged and magnolia warblers, pileated woodpeckers and American bitterns have been observed. The trail is handicap accessible the first 1/4 mile.

Tilson Creek – Minnesota DNR – This 16k trail winds through an upland habitat of rocky outcrops and down to lowland environments. At the overlooks of Tilson Bay and the bogs to the south you can spot black-backed woodpeckers and more than 15 species of warblers.

Anderson Bay Trail – Voyageurs National Park – This 2.0 mile looped trail is accessed only by boat and is a very scenic ride down Rainy Lake. The cliffs on Anderson Bay are spectacular. The trail connects to the Cruiser Lake Trail System. The many small lakes on the Kabetogama Peninsula offer a varied habitat making for a large diversity of birds.

Black Bay Beaver Pond Trail – Voyageurs National Park – This trailhead is accessible only by boat and is located across Black Bay, north from the Rainy Lake Visitor Center. The 2/3 mile trail takes you through northern pine country to a scenic and active beaver pond.



AMERICAN BITTERN



NORTHERN PARULA – Dave Cahlander

www.visitcranelake.com • www.ashriver.com
www.kabetogama.com • www.rainylake.org
www.ormn.com • www.pelicanlakeresorts.com
www.americanbear.org • www.nps.gov/voya
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www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/superior
www.birdvnp.com (to download this brochure and checklist)

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Spruce Grouse

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