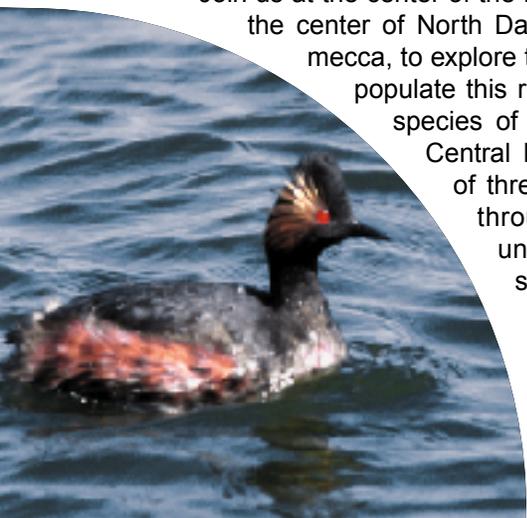


Join Us Birding Along The
CENTRAL DAKOTA
Birding Drive





Explore a Center of Birding Discovery



Join us at the center of the North American continent, near the center of North Dakota, in the heart of a birding mecca, to explore the ebbs and flows of birds that populate this rural landscape. More than 300 species of birds can be found along the Central Dakota Birding Drive, a series of three birding routes that lead you through fertile native prairies, uncountable wetlands, and the southern limit of aspen parkland; along the wooded borders of the Souris River, and the sandy edge of an ancient glacial lake – Lake Souris.

Exciting observations are yours to behold at a prairie jewel named Lonetree, and photography opportunities abound at such wetland gems as Lake Lemer, Sheyenne Lake, Cottonwood Lake, Bentley Lake, and Antelope Lakes.

Spring erupts across this wild region with throngs of geese and ducks thrusting north even while most lakes remain frozen in March, but as marshes and lakes thaw and abundant foods emerge, 15 species of ducks invade every wetland, colored for the revelry of spring mating. Bald Eagles and Northern Harriers lead the parade of birds of prey, with Red-tailed Hawks, American Kestrels, and Cooper's Hawks soon to

Lonetree Route



A near-famous birding hotspot in the northern Great Plains, Lonetree is a destination any visitor to North Dakota must experience, especially the remote areas east of Highway 14. Begin in the town of Drake at Highway 52 and drive S about 6 miles; then turn E (left) driving about 4 miles before turning S (right).

After about 1 1/2 miles, turn W (right) for 1 mile, and continue 1/2 mile S (left). Turn W (right) and continue 2 miles before making a U-turn at a safe location and return 2 miles to the "T" in the road. Turn S (right) and drive 4 miles, where you turn W (right) at the beginning of the Lonetree Wildlife Area. Drive about 1 1/2 miles before making a U-turn in a safe location and returning 1 1/2 miles. Turn S (right), and continue along this meandering road for about 4 miles, where you turn E (left) and drive 3 miles. Turn N (left) for about 1/2 mile, where you can stop at the North Country National Scenic Trail camping and picnic area.

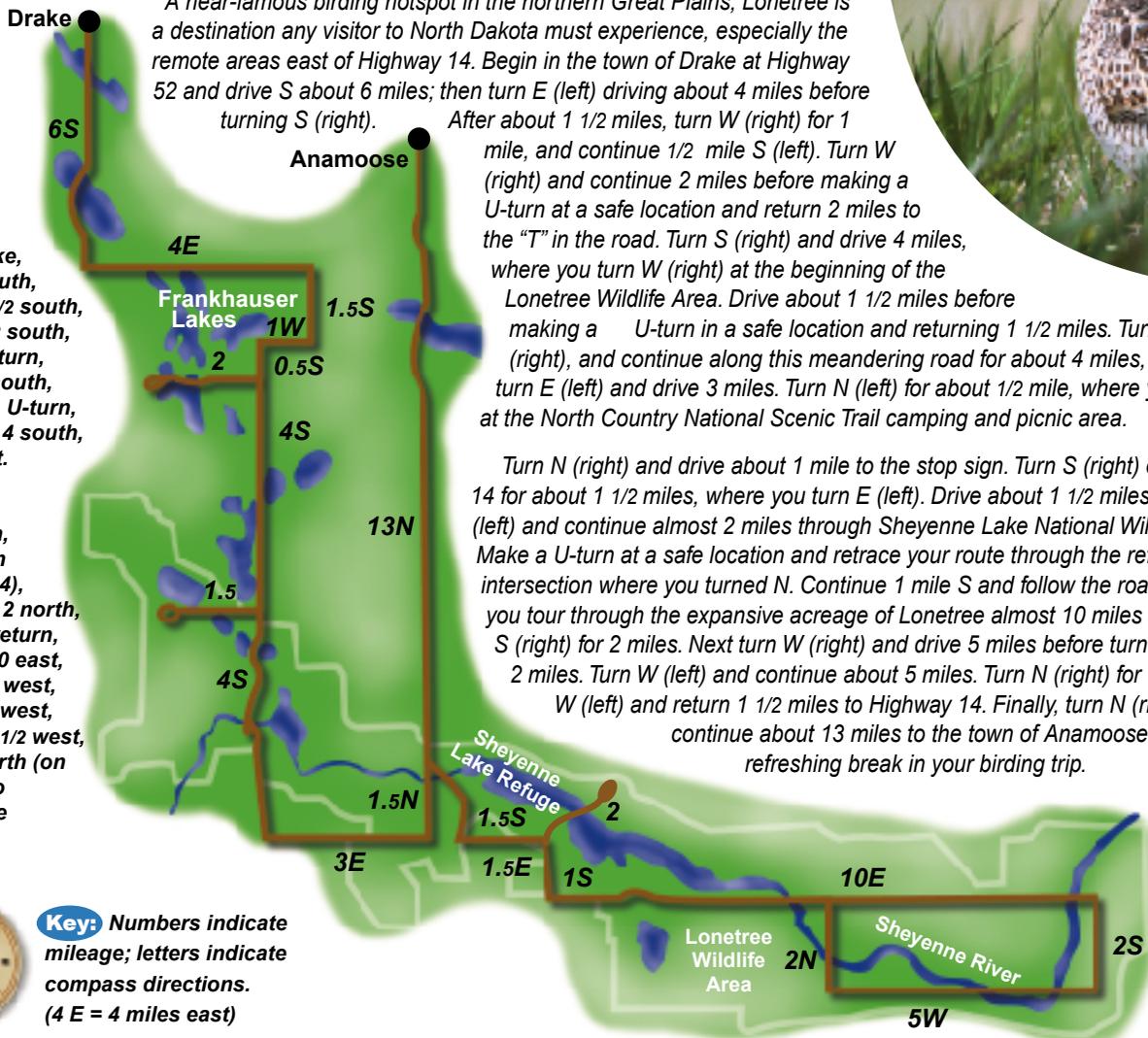
Turn N (right) and drive about 1 mile to the stop sign. Turn S (right) on Highway 14 for about 1 1/2 miles, where you turn E (left). Drive about 1 1/2 miles, then turn N (left) and continue almost 2 miles through Sheyenne Lake National Wildlife Refuge. Make a U-turn at a safe location and retrace your route through the refuge to the intersection where you turned N. Continue 1 mile S and follow the road's turn E as you tour through the expansive acreage of Lonetree almost 10 miles before turning S (right) for 2 miles. Next turn W (right) and drive 5 miles before turning N (right) 2 miles. Turn W (left) and continue about 5 miles. Turn N (right) for 1 mile, then W (left) and return 1 1/2 miles to Highway 14. Finally, turn N (right) and continue about 13 miles to the town of Anamoose for a refreshing break in your birding trip.

Quick, Simple Locator:

From Drake, drive 6 south, 4 east, 1 1/2 south, 1 west, 1/2 south, 2 west, U-turn, 2 east; 4 south, 1 1/2 west, U-turn, 1 1/2 east, 4 south, and 3 east.

Continue 1 1/2 north, 1 1/2 south (on Hwy 14), 1 1/2 east, 2 north, U-turn, 2 return, 1 south, 10 east, 2 south, 5 west, 2 north, 5 west, 1 north, 1 1/2 west, and 13 north (on Hwy 14) to Anamoose

Key: Numbers indicate mileage; letters indicate compass directions. (4 E = 4 miles east)



follow. Last on the scene are the Swainson's Hawks that migrate north from the Pampas of Argentina to nest in the center of North America.

Shorebirds are not far behind, and many rare species stop on their journey from wintering areas in South America to Arctic nesting ranges. As many as 25 species of sandpipers and plovers can be found feeding on open mudflats and shallow marshes. Wading birds and waterbirds bolster the species diversity with a variety of herons, egrets, and bitterns to be found, plus flocks of gulls, terns, cormorants, and American White Pelicans abound.

By May, waves of songbirds pass through the wooded valleys and parklands, with colorful warblers, orioles, vireos, thrushes, swallows, flycatchers, native sparrows, buntings, and other neotropical migrants passing through in search of insects and larvae on their way to nesting areas in the boreal forests.

Many birds remain in this vibrant landscape, to claim territories, attract mates, nest, and raise a new generation of Dakota birds. By Memorial Day, the fresh air is filled with diverse songs and calls, and the landscape is filled with a sense of urgency – of mating flights, territorial disputes, nesting activities, and feeding bouts as the days extend longer toward summer. By June, newly hatched broods of ducks emerge in shallow wetlands, downy hawks and cormorants can be seen in their nests, and shorebird hatchlings and broods of upland grouse, partridge, and pheasants can be sighted as they search for insects along roadways and amid the lush green vegetation.

Summer offers new identification challenges as juvenile birds emerge from their nests and ducks molt into drab

Prairie species such as Upland Sandpipers (left) and Short-eared Owls (below) inhabit pristine landscapes across the area.



eclipse plumage after the nesting season. By mid-July, shorebirds begin to return from the Arctic tundra. Hawks and falcons begin to migrate during August, sometimes in remarkable numbers, and fall migrations of warblers, vireos, flickers, jays, and swallows pass through in abundance during September.

While many birders are most active during spring, fall offers unforgettable spectacles for people who visit this birding center. During September, flocks of Sandhill Cranes congregate at ancient stopover areas, and by

October, Arctic-nesting geese – Snows, Ross', White-fronts, and Canadas by the tens of thousands – migrate into the region, feeding in harvested grain fields and filling the autumn breeze with goose music accented by trumpeting cranes. Tundra Swans add their mournful whooping calls while they stop in transit to the Atlantic Coast. The extraordinary numbers of ducks and geese are remarkable to anyone who has never witnessed the bounty of Central Dakota's migration. And even as the first Snow Buntings and Lapland Longspurs arrive from the Arctic, the chilly winds of November send Rough-legged Hawks south, and the first of winter's Snowy Owls appear.

The Central Dakota Birding Drive is composed of three inviting birding routes – the Antelope Lakes Route, the Lonetree Route, and the Wintering River Route. Each route leads you through a mosaic of prairies, wetlands, and woods and across expansive plains landscapes. Along the way, you will visit three national wildlife refuges – Wintering River, Cottonwood Lake, and Sheyenne Lake National Wildlife Refuge – plus the expansive Lonetree Wildlife Area. All of these prime public sites are exciting destinations to search for birds and enjoy memorable birding experiences. The three birding routes also lead you to little-known destinations that are rarely visited, such as the George Lake aspen woods, the nesting colonies at Lake Lemer, and the waterfowl oasis of Frankhauser Lakes.

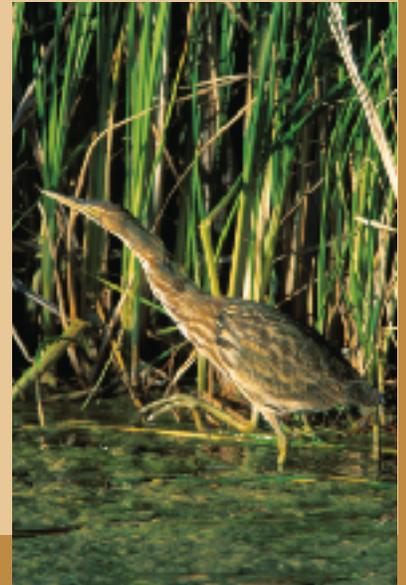
Such a diversity as Swainson's Hawks, American Bitterns, and migrating Tennessee Warblers (upper right) attracts birders from across the country.

Central Dakota Birds

What birds fuel the migration of birders to Central Dakota? Piping Plovers, Swainson's Hawks, Short-eared Owls, Gray Partridge, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Franklin's Gulls, Black Terns, White-fronted Geese, Ross' Geese, Canvasbacks, Redheads, Wilson's Phalaropes, Marbled Godwits, Willets, American Avocets, Upland Sandpipers, Sedge Wrens, LeConte's Sparrows, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows (plus Grasshopper, Vesper, Savannah, Song, Clay-colored, and maybe Baird's Sparrows), Bobolinks, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Black-billed Magpies, Eastern and Western Kingbirds, Least and Willow Flycatchers, Cedar Waxwings, Red Crossbills, Snow Buntings, Snowy Owls – and even Whooping Cranes if you are really lucky!

The potential of seeing a Ferruginous Hawk or Yellow Rail at the edge of their ranges, or finding White-faced Ibis, Snowy and Great Egrets, Clark's Grebes, and Say's Phoebe as they expand their ranges is always attractive. The chance of seeing a Prairie Falcon, Peregrine Falcon, or Golden Eagle during transit

also leads people to the center of the continent. Then too, the sheer numbers of birds that people see at one time – thousands of birds, and even tens of thousands of some species – the sights and sounds of such encounters are remarkable!



Wintering River Route

Quick, Simple

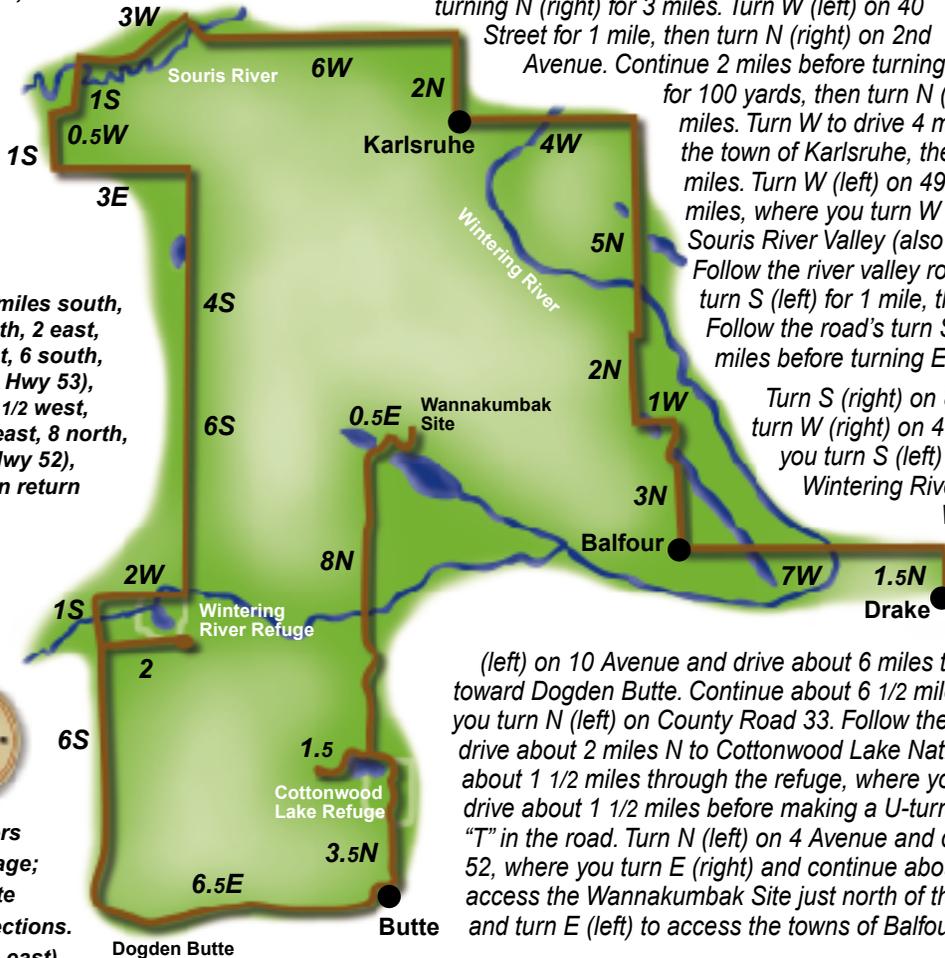
Locator:

From Drake, drive 1 1/2 miles north, 7 west, 3 north, 1 west, 2 north, 5 north, 4 west to Karlsruhe; 2 north, 6 west, 3 west, 1 south, 1/2 west, 1 south, and 3 east.

Continue 10 miles south, 2 west, 1 south, 2 east, U-turn, 2 west, 6 south, 6 1/2 east (on Hwy 53), 3 1/2 north, 1 1/2 west, U-turn, 1 1/2 east, 8 north, 1/2 east (on Hwy 52), 1/4 north, then return E on Hwy 52.



Key: Numbers indicate mileage; letters indicate compass directions. (4 E = 4 miles east)



This unique drive takes you through the historic land of Verendrye, along the edges of rarely visited wildlife refuges, to a scenic butte that offers an expansive look at the Wintering River Valley. From the town of Drake, drive about 1 1/2 miles N on Lake Street, which becomes 10 Avenue north of town. Turn W (left) on 37 Street and drive 7 miles before turning N (right) for 3 miles. Turn W (left) on 40 Street for 1 mile, then turn N (right) on 2nd Avenue. Continue 2 miles before turning E (right)

for 100 yards, then turn N (left) for 5 miles. Turn W to drive 4 miles, pass through the town of Karlsruhe, then turn N (right) and drive 2 miles. Turn W (left) on 49 Street and continue about 6 miles, where you turn W (left) after crossing the wooded Souris River Valley (also known as the Mouse River). Follow the river valley road for about 3 miles, where you turn S (left) for 1 mile, then turn W (right) for 1/2 mile. Follow the road's turn S (left) and drive about 1 1/4 miles before turning E (left) and continuing 3 miles.

Turn S (right) on 8 Avenue and drive 4 miles to turn W (right) on 42 Street for 100 yards, where you turn S (left) and continue 6 miles to Winterring River National Wildlife Refuge. Turn W (right) on 36 Street for 2 miles, then drive 1 mile S (left), and 2 miles E (left) on 35 Street. Make a U-turn and return 2 miles W, then turn S

(left) on 10 Avenue and drive about 6 miles to Highway 53, where you turn E toward Dogden Butte. Continue about 6 1/2 miles to the town of Butte, where you turn N (left) on County Road 33. Follow the paved street through town and drive about 2 miles N to Cottonwood Lake National Wildlife Refuge. Continue about 1 1/2 miles through the refuge, where you turn W (left) on 32 Street and drive about 1 1/2 miles before making a U-turn and returning 1 1/2 miles to the "T" in the road. Turn N (left) on 4 Avenue and drive almost 8 miles to Highway 52, where you turn E (right) and continue about 1/2 mile, then turn N (left) to access the Wannakumbak Site just north of the railway. Return to Highway 52 and turn E (left) to access the towns of Balfour, Drake, and Anamoose.





Take a step beyond the Lewis and Clark Trail to explore areas the famous expedition missed. Here, one of the first Europeans to visit the Northern Plains, a famous explorer named Verendrye, manned a French trading post and explored the Central Dakota region. Explore the area's natural realms by hiking, biking, kayaking, canoeing, and auto touring; for here, each mode of transportation will provide new birding experiences and lasting memories.

Each day, each season, each hour, brings new sightings and new birds to study and photograph during your visit to this birding center in the Northern Great Plains. Come now, come often, and stay as long as you like! You will enjoy the friendly people, the rural landscapes, the fresh air and big sky, the prairie flowers, and the clear starry nights. This is a location where few people reside, but it is a destination every birder should visit, for here is a unique wild land filled with exciting wildlife experiences, waiting just for you.

The Central Dakota Birding Drive is located near the center of the state of North Dakota where Highway 14 and Highway 52 intersect. Within the region, you will visit the towns of

Drake, Anamoose, Butte, Balfour, and Karlsruhe.

Just 40 minutes northeast of this region, the Minot Airport offers convenient airline connections and car rentals. For information about lodging, restaurants, and other services in the Central Dakota area, please contact the:



Quad County Economic Development Corporation

P. O. Box 175 • Drake, ND 58736

birding@centraldakotabirdingdrive.com

www.centraldakotabirdingdrive.com

For more information, also check with the
Central Dakota Birders: (701) 465-3825
Rare Bird Hotline at (701) 355-8554 and [http://mountainprairie.fws.gov/
thdakotafieldoffice/bhotline/north_dakota_birding_hotline.htm](http://mountainprairie.fws.gov/thdakotafieldoffice/bhotline/north_dakota_birding_hotline.htm)
Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center's web site: www.npwrc.usgs.gov

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Front Cover: Canvasback **Right:**

Snow Geese

