

Visit the Flathead Important Bird Areas

Flathead Valley is home to diverse riparian habitats showcased in 3 unique Important Bird Areas (IBAs).

Glacier Park IBA, in the headwaters of the Flathead system, supports 14 nesting bird species of conservation concern, including Dusky Grouse and Peregrine Falcon. This IBA is one of the few known nesting sites for Northern Hawk Owls in the lower 48 states. It is one of the best places in the state to find nesting Harlequin Ducks and White-tailed Ptarmigan.



Photo taken at wheelchair-accessible view area

Owen Sowerwine IBA is an outstanding example of undisturbed riparian bottomland forest and shrubland situated just west of Kalispell in the braided section of the Flathead River. Almost entirely in the floodplain, its 442 acres include islands, backwaters, a mainland portion, and segments of the Flathead and Stillwater Rivers.

This IBA supports a variety of tree cavity nesters such as Pileated Woodpecker, Wood Duck and Hooded Merganser; tree canopy nesters such as Bullcock's Oriole; and a large and diverse community of riparian shrubland species, including Yellow Warbler and Black-chinned Hummingbird.

The North Shore IBA, situated at the mouth of the Flathead River, encompasses 3,600 acres of public and private lands, and includes 7 miles of shoreline, wetlands, and adjoining uplands. This IBA is a refueling stop for tens of thousands of Central and Pacific migratory birds. Its offshore waters are overwintering grounds for several thousand diving ducks each year, as well as for Tundra and Trumpeter Swans.

Hundreds of shorebirds feed here during spring migration, and it is a major staging and roosting area for gulls during both spring and fall migration (up to 5,000 a day).



Swans in flight

The Flathead is Bird Central!

The Flathead Watershed supports a high diversity of birds. Our rivers' braided channels, sloughs and wetlands, and network of riparian forests, connect a vast landscape from Glacier National Park to Flathead Lake and on to the Clark Fork River.

The diversity of habitats of our river systems makes this area a bird paradise, with more than 350 species coming here. Over 70% of them are dependent on water, ranging from the White-tailed Ptarmigan in the high cirque basins of the Continental Divide to Trumpeter Swans that winter along the lower Flathead River and nest in nearby lakes and ponds.

People, like birds, flock to the waters to see birds like the Harlequin Duck and Common Loon. Both of these species migrate hundreds of miles from the Pacific Coast where they live for most of the year, to breed on Montana's fresh-water mountain streams and lakes.

Many valued North American waterfowl of conservation concern, such as Northern Pintails and Redheads, refuel on our productive wetlands and shorelines during migration. Others, including the Hooded Merganser and Canvasback, depend on our streams and wetlands for breeding.

From the tiny Calliope Hummingbird to the mighty Osprey, these species need our interconnected clean waters, healthy waterfront vegetation, and our backyards for survival.



Local Contacts for More Information:

- **American Bird Conservancy**
www.abcbirds.org
- **Flathead Conservation District**
www.flatheadcd.org
- **Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks**
www.fwp.mt.gov/regions/r1
- **Flathead River to Lake Initiative.** *Working with landowners to conserve and restore our Flathead River and Lake natural heritage – abundant fish and wildlife, outstanding scenic and recreation values, excellent water quality, and prime soils.*
www.flatheadrivertolake.org