



# EAGLE LAKE SPORTING CAMPS BIRDING GUIDE

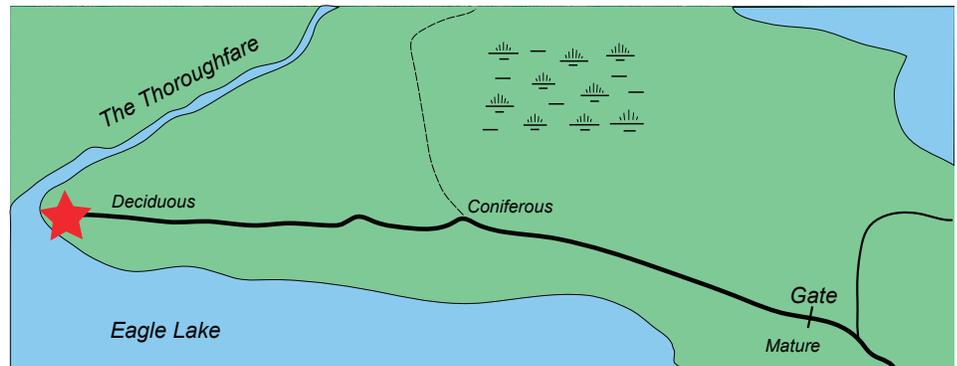
Excerpted and updated from  
The Maine Birding Trail:  
The Official Guide to More Than 260 Accessible Sites  
Bob Duchesne - published by Downeast Books, 2009



## Start from the porch.

**Birding at Historic Eagle Lake Sporting Camps** often begins and ends on the porch with a morning coffee or an afternoon beverage. Bald Eagles are a common sight along the lakefront – either flying by or perched on the near shore. The same Common Loons that call all night are usually visible on the lake during the day. Song Sparrows occupy the shrubs in front of the cabins and the fields behind. Stay alert. Merlins have nested right next to the cabins. Eagle Lake Sporting Camps are nestled into 23,000 acres of Maine Public Reserved Land, which you can wander as you please.

**1) Walk the camp access road.** There are habitat changes along its length that support an impressive variety of nesting songbirds. From the camps, the first mile is predominantly deciduous. Expected warblers



include Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Northern Parula, Magnolia, Yellow-rumped, Nashville, Ovenbird, Black-and-white, and Blackburnian. Common Yellowthroats should be easy to see and hear; Canada Warblers can be heard, but are usually more reluctant to show themselves from damp thickets. Red-eyed and Blue-headed Vireos are frequently heard along this section.

The middle portion of the access road is much more coniferous.

There is a large boggy area north of the road that has a significant influence on the nearby vegetation. Balsam fir, spruce, tamarack, and cedar make up much of the forest here. In sparser areas, Palm and Tennessee Warblers are possible, and there is a slim chance for a Cape May Warbler. The habitat appears promising for Black-backed and American Three-toed Woodpeckers. Check with your hosts for the latest information on access and sightings via the old logging roads.





The section of road nearest the entry gate is very mature. Although there has been some harvesting in the area, substantial old growth remains. Such a mature canopy is not common in Maine and this spot deserves attention. Expect Scarlet Tanagers and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks.

Flycatchers are numerous throughout the property. Eastern Wood-pewees inhabit the first half mile from the camp. Alder Flycatchers are present wherever the canopy opens sufficiently. Least Flycatchers tend to be in the deciduous understory, while Yellow-bellied Flycatchers are among the conifers wherever the boreal forest becomes dominant.

The Thoroughfare is a 3-1/2 mile river behind the camps that connects Eagle and Square Lakes. It's an excellent boat trip for eagles, ospreys, herons, and waterfowl. It is alive with warbler and thrush songs through the first half of summer. Any boat trip is bound to be productive.

While many guests arrive by boat, the overland routes are exceptionally birdy. These are travelled by heavy logging trucks and can often be rough, requiring a vehicle with good clearance. Check with your hosts for the latest information on road conditions.

ALWAYS follow the rules of the road in logging country. (See next page.)

**2) The Pennington Pond Road** provides access to the camps from Route 11 (between Portage Lake and Winterville). Excellent birding begins immediately as the road passes through mixed forest. After the first 1.5 miles, there is a four mile stretch that contains a lot of habitat for Mourning Warblers. The brambles and regenerating maples provide exceptional cover for this difficult species. Scarlet Tanagers are present among the mature hardwoods. Red-eyed and Blue-headed Vireos are common along the road. Philadelphia Vireos can be more difficult to find, but are also present, especially around Mile 6.

Between Mile 7 and Mile 8, the habitat changes swiftly from mixed deciduous forest to predominantly coniferous. This includes stands of replanted spruce on Irving

Woodlands. From here, there is a much greater chance of finding northern forest species such as Boreal Chickadees, Bay-breasted Warblers, and Blackpolls. Listen for Tennessee Warblers near the Mile 9 marker.

*Directions: After passing through the Town of Portage, travel north on Route 11 for about 14 miles. Immediately north of a state rest area, turn right onto Pennington Pond Road (gravel). Follow to the end (should be multiple mile markers) – about 11 miles. Turn left onto Square Lake Road and join mile 7.5. Follow Square Lake Road to mile 12.5. Turn left onto Eagle Lake Sporting Camps Road - 4 miles to the end; please open and close gate as instructed*

**3) Irving Woodlands** provide access to Eagle Lake Sporting Camps from Route 161 through miles of spruce forest. While this route lacks some of the variety that can be expected in a more diverse



## Rules of the Road:

The industrial forest is a network of dirt roads, including major arteries with heavy traffic. Other roads range in size from secondary routes to discontinued jeep paths. Logging trucks weigh 100,000 pounds. Drivers are paid by the load and it is important for them to make their runs quickly and unimpeded. Always obey the rules of the road:

- Give all trucks the right of way. Pull over and stop for trucks in both directions.
- Never stop in the middle of the road. Never stop on a corner or below a hill crest.
- Never block side roads, even those that look abandoned.
- Do not linger on bridges.
- Avoid active logging areas, where possible. Avoid roads that are too narrow for two vehicles.

### Other considerations:

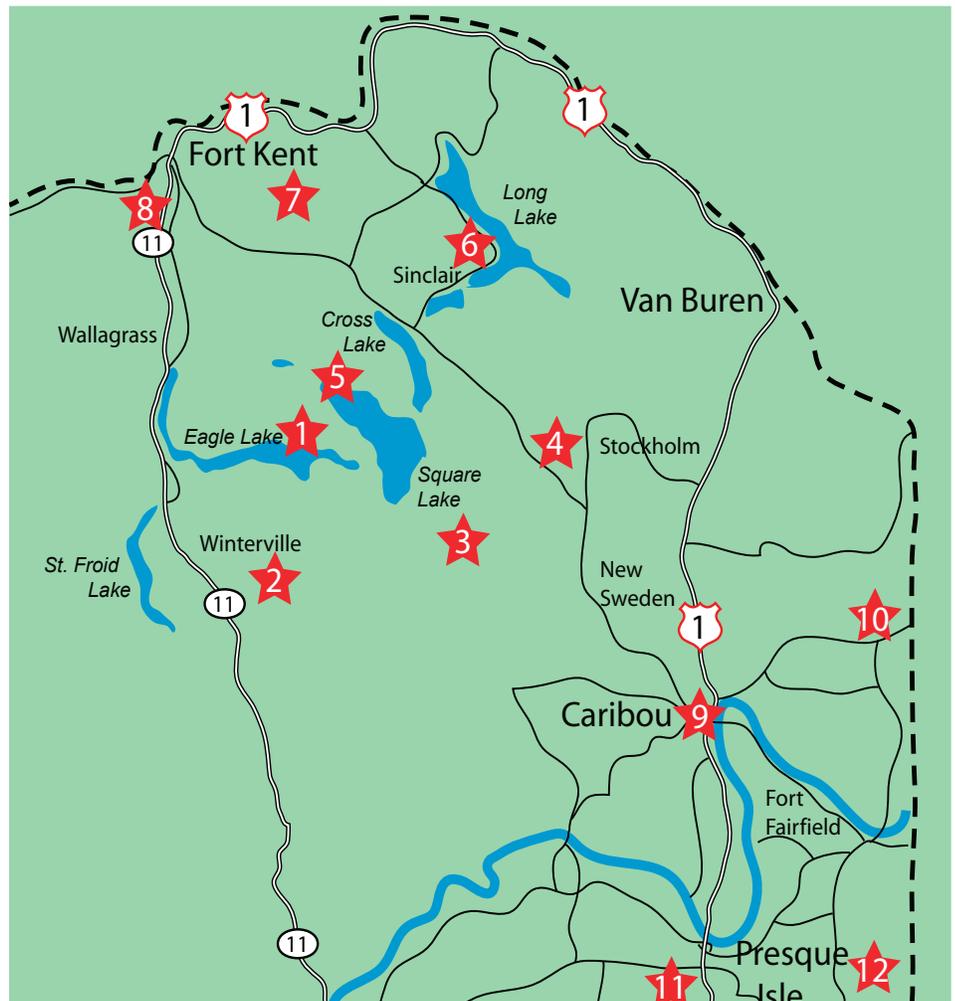
- Roads can be very, very dusty - obscuring driver's vision and choking hikers.
- All roads are gravel surfaced which can be tough on tires. Be prepared and have at least one spare.
- In wet periods, side roads can be muddy, rutted, and often impassible.
- Speeding vehicles can kick pebbles into windshields - another reason to stop for trucks.
- Many roads and intersections are unmarked. Always have a good map, usually an updated DeLorme's Maine Atlas.
- Gas up. There are few services. There is seldom cell phone service..

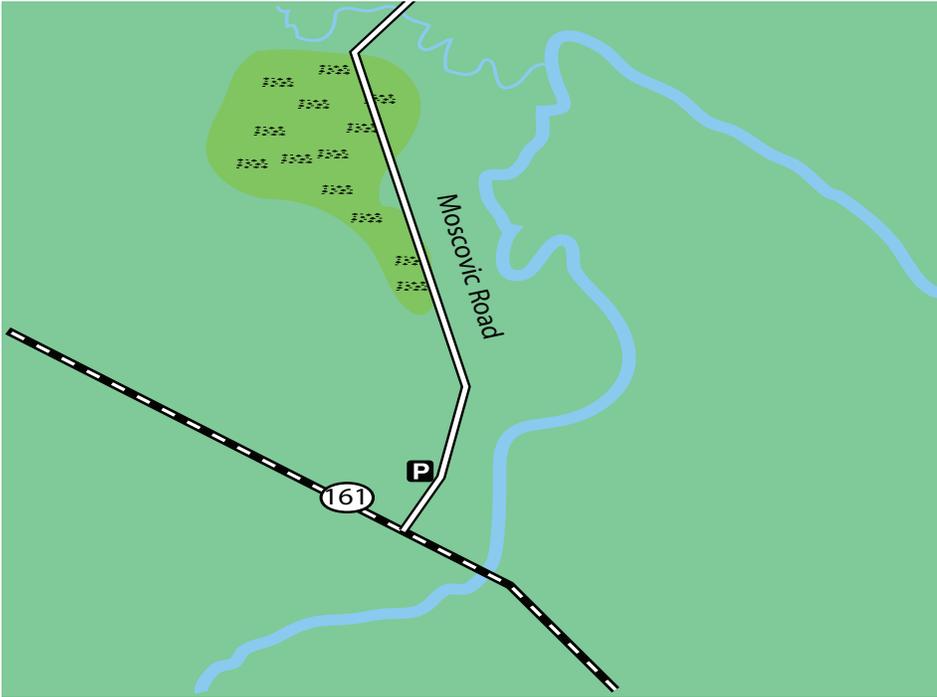
forest, this spruce plantation is terrific for northern species. Boreal Chickadees, Bay-breasted Warblers, and Blackpolls are readily findable. Cape May and Tennessee Warblers are present. Yellow-bellied Flycatchers are prevalent near wetlands and boggy areas. Lincoln's Sparrows are common where harvesting has cleared some of the black spruce. This area is a network of logging roads. Exploration is OK, but stay on the better roads, avoid harvesting operations, and be very careful around drainage ditches and wet areas. Obey the rules of the road and yield to trucks.

*Directions: Coming from Caribou, travel 8.0 miles on Route 161 toward New Sweden. Turn left at NorthStar Variety onto Westmanland Road. Travel 2.8 miles to where Westmanland Road*

*makes a 90 degree turn to the right. Go straight onto Blackstone Siding Road (gravel). Stay on Blackstone "Siding" Road until reaching a stop sign (about 7 miles). Turn right at the stop sign onto Blackstone Road – around mile 23. Travel on Blackstone Road until mile marker 26. Turn left onto the Square Lake Road. Travel on Square Lake Road to Mile 12.5. Turn left onto Eagle Lake Sporting Camps Road - 4 miles to the end. Please open and close gate as instructed.*

**4) The Moscovic Road** is a woods road on Route 161 in Stockholm. The beginning portion of this gravel road passes through excellent boreal habitat, with black spruce, tamarack, and wetlands dominating the roadside. There is a convenient area to park a short distance from the entrance.





From here, walk up to 1.3 miles, whereupon the road bears right and crosses a bridge. The area beyond the bridge has been heavily harvested and it is less boreal and less interesting.

Gray Jays and Boreal Chickadees tend to concentrate over the first few hundred yards of thick forest. After a short distance, the woodlands open up as the wet conditions stunt the tree growth. American Three-toed and Black-backed Woodpeckers are rare, but they have been found along this stretch in previous years. Tennessee Warblers are regularly heard along the left side of the road. Toward the end of

this stretch, Wilson's Warblers nest in the bushes along the wet edges, primarily on the right side of the road. Swamp and Lincoln's Sparrows are present on both sides. Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets breed throughout the area. Yellow-bellied, Alder, and Olive-sided Flycatchers are vocal through the first half of summer. Palm, Magnolia, and Canada Warblers nest along the road. Swainson's Thrushes favor the

thicker forest. White-winged and Red Crossbills are possible during years with a good cone crop.

*Directions: From the south, the road enters Route 161 from the right just after the Little Madawaska River Bridge. The intersection is 15 miles from Caribou and about 7.5 miles north of New Sweden (where Route 161 is accessed from Eagle Lake Sporting Camps).*

**5) Burnt Landing Road** leads to a boat launch on Square Lake. A morning spent on this road during the first half of summer can be one of the most productive birding periods of any visit to the area. The Burnt Landing Road is a private logging road maintained by Irving. Despite heavy use, it is usually in good condition because it provides boaters access to a ramp at the end of the road.

Along the road, pause wherever there is a thick stand of spruce and check for Boreal Chickadees and Bay-breasted Warblers. Tennessee and Cape May Warblers are less common but still possible. Gray Jays are widespread in the





area. Ruby and Golden-crowned Kinglets are vocal throughout. Yellow-bellied, Alder, and Olive-sided Flycatchers are usually seen. Palm, Magnolia, Nashville, and Canada Warblers are regular breeders.

Mourning Warblers occupy open clear cuts that are regenerating with brambles and maple shrubs. Swainson's Thrushes dominate the local thrush population, but Hermit Thrushes are also abundant. Also stay alert for Lincoln's Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos, Evening Grosbeaks, and White-winged Crossbills.

In wetland and boreal areas, Black-backed and Three-toed Woodpeckers have recurred regularly over the years. There are two spots in particular that have yielded recurring sightings.

a) The Burnt Landing Road makes a 180 degree right turn about 1.6 miles from Route 161. A smaller road goes straight ahead and downhill to a terrific wetland where Black-backed Woodpeckers have dwelled in some years. It's always worth a scan merely for the other woodpeckers that frequent the spot, for the abundance of warblers, and for the Osprey pair that normally greets visitors with raucous disapproval. Follow the road until it makes a left turn and leaves the wetlands behind - about 0.6 miles.

b) About five miles from Route 161, a very productive area is easily walked via a logging road on the left. It bisects wetlands and black spruce forest, and has been good for both species of rare woodpecker and occasional Spruce Grouse. Boreal Chickadees, Tennessee Warblers, and crossbills are

often encountered over the first mile. Park at the beginning of the logging road and walk at least as far as the far edge of the spruce and wetlands stand - about a mile.

*Directions: To access this area take the West Side Road south (left) off of Route 161 after the Dickey Brook Bridge in Cross Lake Township. Follow this dirt road south across the wooden bridge and then take the next right. This is the Burnt Landing Road. After a short distance, the road comes to a "T". Turn left and follow the most heavily travelled road from here.*

**6) Long Lake** is the featured water body along a good birding loop that follows Route 162 east of Route 161. Sea ducks visit this lake in migration, and Common Terns and Ring-billed Gulls have colonized here. It would be well worth the drive along Route 162 to St. Agatha (pronounced Saint a-GAT) for the scenery alone, but there are additional incentives. The first several miles of the route traverse good spruce-fir habitat. The best place to try for Boreal Chickadees and Black-backed Woodpeckers is along the access road to the Sinclair Sanitary Wastewater Treatment Facility. The road is locked. Park by the gate, out of the way of entering trucks, and enjoy the walk along the paved road. Spruce-loving warblers can be abundant from May through July.

Just beyond the wastewater facility, the vacation hamlet of Sinclair separates Mud Lake from Long Lake. It contains a boat ramp from which good views of Long Lake are possible. Barn, Cliff, and Tree Swallows are often swirling around this area through midsummer. Continuing northwest along the lakeshore, look for the town park shortly after passing



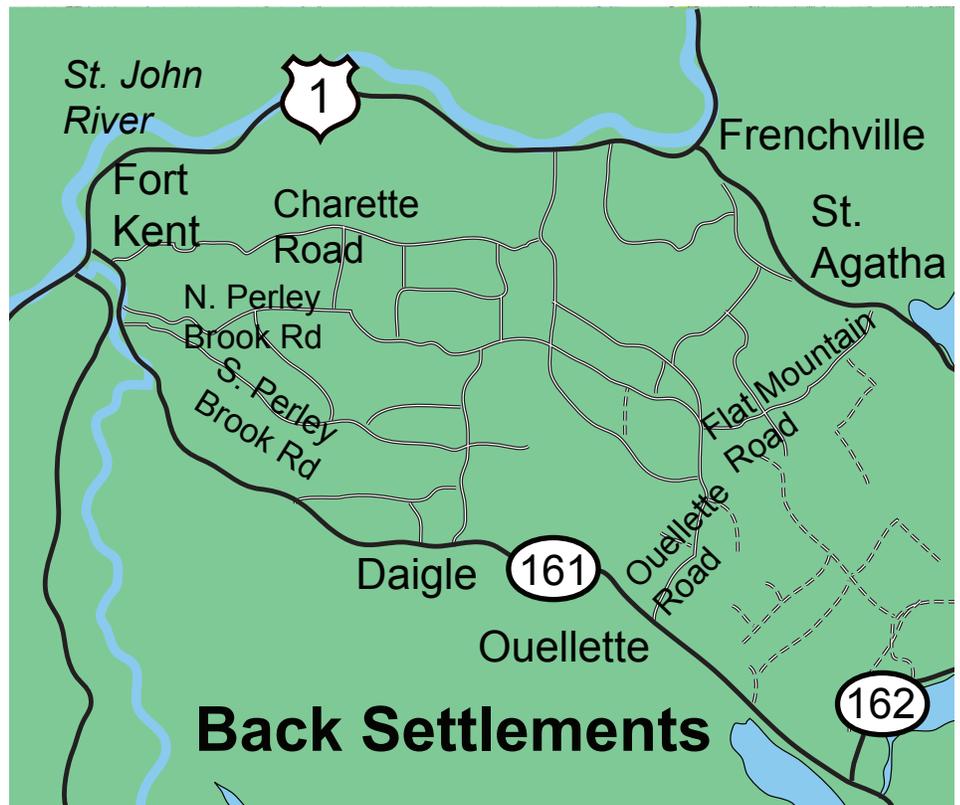
the town line of St. Agatha. It lies opposite an island that is nesting habitat for Common Terns. These terns, and small flocks from Maine's biggest inland colony of nesting Ring-billed Gulls, are often seen along the near shore, roosting on rocks and docks. From downtown St. Agatha, continue along Route 162 to Frenchville or loop back to Route 161 through the Back Settlements.

**7) The Back Settlements** refers to an area of the St. John River Valley that has a long agricultural history. The region is bounded by Routes 1, 161, and 162. It remains under widespread cultivation, even though there are fewer farmhouses remaining today. A drive around these dirt roads is an invitation to see raptors and grassland birds. Red-tailed Hawks, Northern Harriers, and American Kestrels are most likely, but Merlins and Red-shouldered Hawks are occasional. Great Horned Owls sweep these same fields at night. Rough-legged Hawks are no surprise in the colder months and some may drift across the border even in summer. Pockets of Horned Larks breed



here, joined by American Pipits, Snow Buntings, and a few Lapland Longspurs in mid-Autumn. After August harvest, tilled fields entice flocks of Black-bellied Plovers, with the possibility of American Golden Plovers interspersed. This is the first place in the state where Common Redpolls sneak in from the north in search of the seeds

abundant in grassy fields, mingling with their American Goldfinch and Pine Siskin cousins. It's also the first place where irruptions of Pine Grosbeaks and Bohemian Waxwings are likely to occur, drawn by the fruit of old orchards and roadside berries. Be sure to bring along the DeLorme's Maine Atlas or a good map, as many



identical dirt roads crisscross these fields, creating a maze for the unprepared. Road names may appear on maps, but seldom appear on the roads themselves.

*Directions: There are many entrances and exits, but some of the normal routes include Flat Mountain Road in St. Agatha, Caribou Road in Ouellette, and Cemetery Hill Road in Daigle. From the east side of Fort Kent, Charette Hill Road, North Perley Brook Road, and South Perley Brook Road offer access to the Back Settlements.*

**8) Fort Kent** and Key West, Florida, share something in common, though 2,209 miles

separate them. Each marks one end of Route 1. This historic roadway hugs America's east coast from its southernmost tip to its northernmost. Fort Kent is nestled on the banks of the St. John River, America's border with Canada. It is the educational and cultural hub of northern Aroostook County and is home to a branch of the University of Maine. It is also home to the 10th Mountain Ski Area – a world class Nordic facility that hosts international Biathlon competitions and cross-country ski events. Snow covers the trail loops through much of the year, but from late May through June, warblers breed here in good numbers, grateful for its hardwood forest in a land otherwise filled with conifers.

On most summer days, the trails are quiet, except for occasional athletes in training and a popular pet-walking trail.

*Directions: The entrance to 10th Mountain Ski Area is on Route 11 just south of Fort Kent. The sign marking the entrance is not easily visible from the south, but is obvious from the north. Bear right and uphill to the parking lot.*

**9) Collins Pond** in Caribou is particularly productive in late summer and autumn. For some reason, Canada Geese are reluctant to get shot and eaten, and they have clearly grasped that municipal ponds are off limits to firearms. There are several



secluded feeding areas near town, and the geese flock to the safety of the pond when not foraging. Geese tend to be most plentiful from late morning through early afternoon. Their presence encourages many other species of waterfowl and shorebirds, despite the popularity of the park's walking trail. Hooded Mergansers and Northern Shovelers join the more common waterfowl, while Solitary Sandpipers, and Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs number among the shorebirds. Collins Park has picnic tables, but the restrooms are usually locked except during public events.

*Directions: A few miles south of Caribou, traffic splits onto two parallel roadways along Routes 1 and 164. Take Route 164 to Collins Pond, turning left onto Roberts Street just before the center of town. Proceed to the Lions Club Park on the right.*

**10) Aroostook National Wildlife Refuge** was developed from some of the undisturbed portions of an old Strategic Air Force base in Limestone - 4,700 acres in all. There are several excellent and accessible birding spots on the refuge. Best are Chapman Pit and the Swamp Road sites. Target species include Cape May Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Boreal Chickadee, Ruffed Grouse and Vesper Sparrow. About 1.0 mile north is the access point to the Chapman Pit unit of the refuge. Watch for the sign and parking area on the right (east) side of the road. The Cape May Warblers are a bit further north along the West Gate Road. In recent years, they have been singing here in the area around the third and fourth telephone poles south of the entrance to the Loring Commerce Center (the name of the industrial park that used to be

the Loring AFB). This area gets quite a bit of traffic, so the earlier the better to bird this stretch.

Though not in the National Wildlife Refuge, the old Loring Air Force Base has good grassland and shrub habitats containing Upland Sandpipers, Bobolinks, and Mourning Warblers.

To find the Mourning Warblers, drive into the Commerce Center heading east on Northcutt Road. Turn left at the first intersection with a stop (Weimann Road). There are several singing males found along this immediate stretch of road. For Upland Sandpipers, the edge of the old runway can be accessed from the parking area near the old control tower. Do not drive out on the runway, which is still in use for occasional flights. Park and scan from the edge of the pavement. Uppies will often tee up on lights and utility poles.

*Directions: From Caribou, head east on Route 89 to the West Gate Road which is the boundary between Limestone and Caribou. (This intersection has a gas station and a large sign for the Loring*

*Commerce Center)*

**11) Aroostook State Park** was the first state park established in Maine, when citizens of Presque Isle donated 100 acres in 1938. Today, its expanded 800 acres offers a beach, two peaks, miles of nature trails, and idyllic camping. Campsites are roomy and well spaced. The forest is a strong mix of spruce, fir, birch, and beech, which provides a remarkable variety of warblers, vireos, thrushes, and other songbirds. Echo Lake is productive for diving ducks and gulls.

*Directions: From Route 1, just about three miles south of Presque Isle, turn left onto Spragueville Road. This road may not be marked, but it is adjacent to the Aroostook Union Grange building. There is also a road sign pointing toward the Transatlantic Balloon Flight site. In just a little over a mile, turn left onto State Park Road. From Presque Isle, the park may also be reached by following Chapman Road to Niles Road and continuing to a right turn onto State Park Road.*



**12) Lake Josephine and Christina Reservoir** are owned by McCain Foods, one of the chief potato processors in Maine and Canada. Both are extraordinary. Signs on McCain property warn against trespass, but birders are allowed to travel along the town-owned road around Lake Josephine. Stay on roads and avoid active farming and harvest operations.

**Lake Josephine** was once a sewage lagoon for the potato processing plant, but now it is used primarily to impound water for use by the plant. In species quality and quantity, it resembles some of America's national wildlife refuges. Look for Mallards, American Black Ducks, American Wigeons, Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal, Pied-billed Grebes, Wood Ducks, and Ring-necked Ducks throughout summer. Northern Shovelers and Gadwalls are rare nesters in Maine, but good numbers breed here. Records of breeding Redheads and Ruddy Ducks have been recently documented, the first in Maine to be confirmed. Great Blue Herons and American Bitterns lead the list of potential wading birds, while Merlins are among the raptors sighted most often. Look for shorebirds in migration, and Spotted Sandpipers throughout summer.

**Christina Reservoir** provides reliable water supply for the processing plant and a reliable water level for nesting birds. The reservoir is larger than Lake Josephine, and views of waterfowl are sometimes more distant. But the dike extends over a mile along the southern edge, giving plenty of observation points. A spotting scope is handy.

In mid summer, one can find large rafts of molting ducks - most

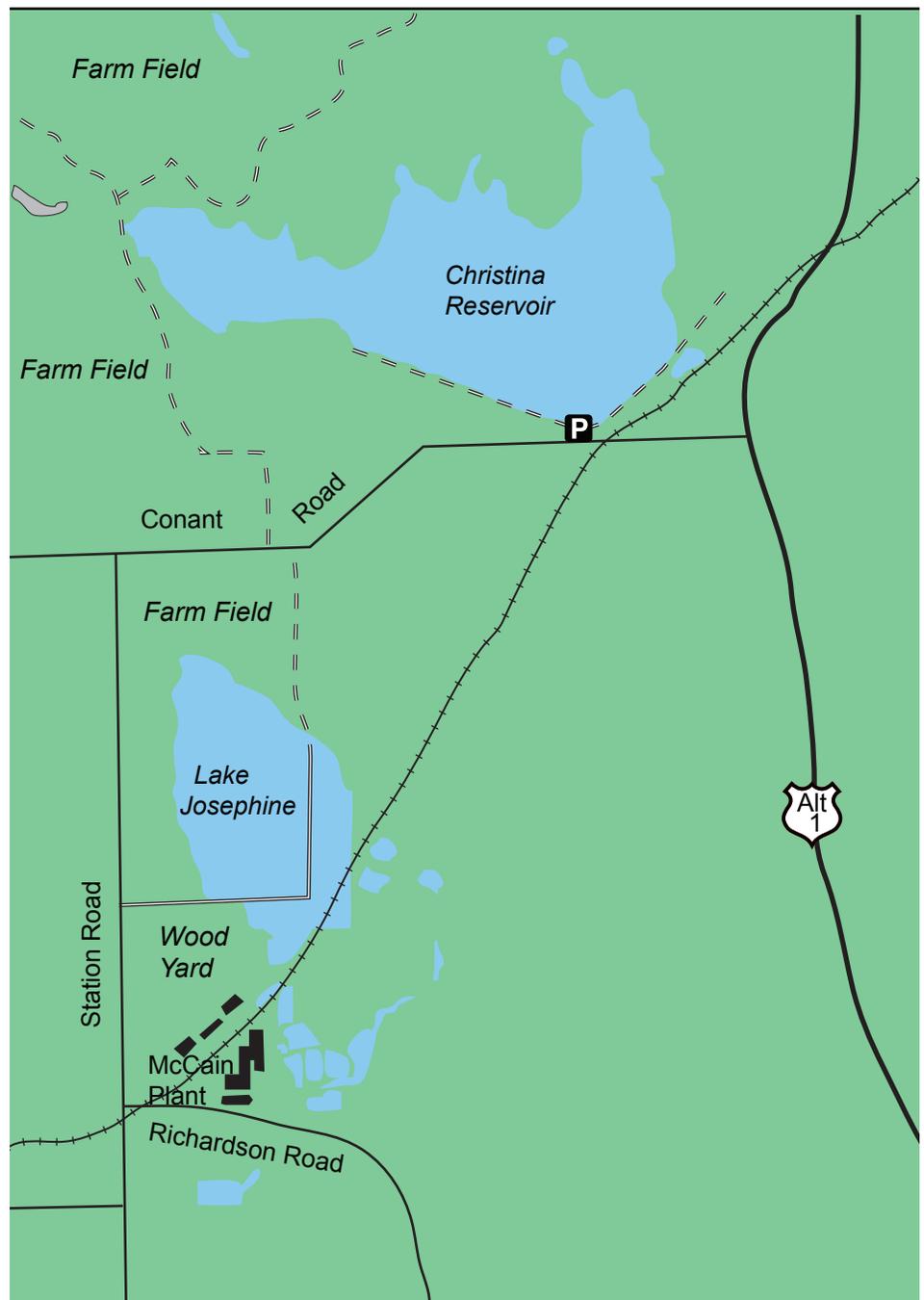
common are ring-necks, mallards, and wigeons. Totals can number in the low thousands in the sheltered coves.

The brush along the water's edge and the trees behind the dike are excellent for warblers and sparrows. There are Virginia Rails in the cattails below the dike.

*Directions: From Presque Isle, take Route 10 at Academy Street east toward Easton. At 1.4 miles,*

*bear left onto Conant Road. In about four miles, turn right onto Station Road, then left for access to Lake Josephine just before the wood yard. A perimeter road follows the dike around the south and east side and exits north through a farm field. (Avoid this area during active operations.)*

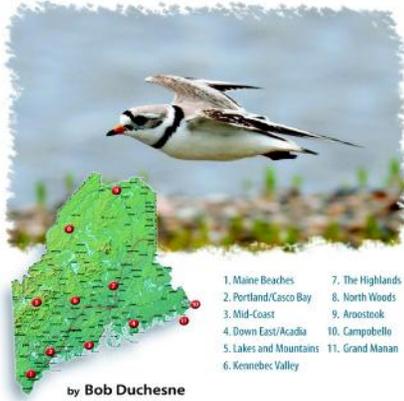
*Christina Reservoir is on Conant Road 2 miles beyond the Station Road turnoff. Park at the entrance road, and hike the levee on foot.*



*The road around Lake Josephine is public, but it is maintained by McCain. Stay on roadways, obey signs, and avoid private property.*

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