

NECEDAH NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE – AUTO TOUR

- 1 EAGLES NEST:** Enter the NNWR from Hwy 21 by turning onto Headquarters Road (4 miles from intersection of Hwy 21 & 80). At the first body of water on the right, pull off and park. Look for the pole standing up out of the water with a platform on top. Each year in early spring (February/March) a pair of Bald Eagles takes up residence in the nest on this platform. Use the telescope provided to get a closer look!
- 2 WHITE-TAIL LOOP HIKE:** Continue further down Headquarters Road to the stop sign and turn right. Travel about ¼ mile down 20th Street until you see the split rail fences. If you are looking for a leisurely stroll through the woods, White-Tail Loop is definitely your style! Explore one of Necedah's forests and the wildlife that inhabits it by walking this 1.7 mile trail. This trail is famous for wildlife viewing and a quiet peek into the upland forested areas of our 44,000 acre landscape. This dynamic trail offers opportunities for both serenity and exciting wildlife photography!
- 3 VISITOR CENTER & TRAILS:** The NNWR Visitor Center is a MUST SEE when coming to the refuge, especially if it's your first time! Open Monday-Saturday from 9am-4pm (Closed Holidays), it is fully equipped with everything you need for an enjoyable and educational visit, such as hands-on minds-on exhibits, naturalist-led programs, and great viewing areas. Staff can alert you to current wildlife sightings or trail conditions. Binoculars, books, snow shoes, and even explorer backpacks can be checked out for the day at no charge. The **Muskrat Hiking Trail** is a short loop that takes about 10 minutes to stroll around, and is handicap accessible. Stop at the viewing scopes to scan the wetland for Whooping Cranes and Trumpeter Swans. Looking for more? Hike the **Karner Loop** which winds through forest and savanna along with Rynearson Pool #2. The Visitor Center is equipped with outdoor bathrooms on the West side of the building that are open from dawn to dusk.
- 4 SUK CERNEY FLOWAGE:** As you exit the Visitors Center Lot turn right then look for the body of water on your left, Suk Cerney Flowage. Just like people, wildlife species have needs that must be met if they are to survive and reproduce. Water, food, shelter, and living space are the most important requirements for any species. The mission of the NNWR is "Wildlife Comes First". We manage the land to provide quality habitat for wildlife and a quality outdoor experience for visitors.
- 5 BOGHAUNTER TRAILS:** Leaving Suk Cerney turn left, then at the fork stay right and you'll come to the Boghaunter Trail System which offers the longest trails on the refuge with a combined total of over 6 miles to explore! The trail loops wind through various habitats and demonstrate Necedah's amazing species diversity. The trail system is named for the endangered Ringed-boghaunter dragonfly occasionally found here. Combined, **Meadow Beauty Loop** and **Boardwalk Loop** are about 2.5 miles long. The **Tamarack Loop** stretches over 3.5 miles and offers a slightly more challenging hike with some hills and forest in addition to wetland and prairie vistas. You're sure to find something of interest! Watch for aerial wildlife such as dragonflies and damselflies, shorebirds such as whooping cranes, eastern kingbirds, and turkeys, or larger mammals such as deer, bear, wolves, and bobcat. An observation photo blind is located on the Northwest side of the trail near the Wildlife Viewing Area. Great place to use your binoculars or the spotting scope!
- 6 DIVERSITY OF GRASSES:** Leaving Boghaunter, turn right and continue on. At the T-intersection turn right onto 6th Avenue. The scene to your left may have looked like this 200 years ago. There were only a few trees, no roads, and as far as you could see there was open prairie, miles and miles of swaying grasses interrupted only by lowland sedge meadows and islands of red and white pine along the Little Yellow River. While the vast expanses of prairie are gone, the grasses still exist here including Bluestem Indian Grass and

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Switch Grass, which can grow to heights of 6 feet. Other grasses here which grow shorter and survive even better in drier soils include June Grass and Little Bluestem Grass.

- 7 BREAK FOR WILDLIFE:** As you come to the next T-intersection (12th Street) notice the shallow ponds and wetlands on both sides of the road. They are very important for the survival of many kinds of birds. If you could scoop up a cup of this water you would discover some of the thousands of small aquatic insects that live there. These insects provide large quantities of protein, which are essential to nesting ducks, birds, turtles, frogs, dragonflies, and others. This is another great spot for birdwatching, so pull out your binoculars. Then watch the road as you turn right onto 12th Street and continue on, because wildlife critters of any size may be crossing!
- 8 CLEAR-CUTTING FOR WILDLIFE:** After the road turns left (becoming Bewick Road) look off to your right side. Years ago it looked just like the landscape on your left side. Trees were removed to create an opening for native grasses, berries, and other ground cover plants to grow. Carefully planned clear-cutting creates good feeding areas for many kinds of animals. Encroaching oak sprouts are controlled with prescribed fire or by mechanical means such as mowing.
- 9 LUPINE LOOP TRAIL:** Continue driving up Bewick Road, cross 9th Street/ Sprague Mather Road, to the end. Goose Pool is on your left, and Sprague Pool is on your right. These open water areas are home to dabbling ducks all summer and are favorites among diving ducks during their migration. Other waterfowl commonly seen are cormorants, trumpeter swans, coots, grebes, and Canada Geese. Around the waters edges you're likely to spot Whooping Cranes, Bald Eagles, and other shore birds. The 0.8 mile Lupine Loop Trail is a lovely hike. Be sure to check out the photo blind nestled along the shoreline. While the endangered Karner Blue Butterfly lives on the refuge all year, they can be seen in their adult butterfly form from the end of May through July.
- 10 MANAGING WATER FOR WILDLIFE:** Drive back down Bewick Road and turn left onto Sprague Mather Road. Just after 7th Avenue turns off to the right, you'll see the structure used to control the water level in Sprague Pool, a "Low-Headed Dam". Refuge pools are lowered in late spring to encourage the growth of waterfowl-loving plants such as Millet, Smartweed, Beggar Ticket, and Spikebrush. In early fall these pools are reflooded to provide feeding areas for geese, ducks, swans, Whooping and Sandhill Cranes.
- 11 SEDGE MEADOW:** Travel down 7th Avenue. After the road turns left (becoming Speedway Road), notice the wetland meadows on both sides of you... very typical for the Necedah area. Because the sedge plants are so thick and the water so acidic, these wetland meadows are not very attractive to waterfowl. However, birds such as Great Blue Herons, Alder Flycatchers, and Sandhill Cranes might be seen in the openings. Another great spot to pull out those binoculars for a closer look!
- 12 OBSERVATION DECK & TRAIL:** Continue to follow Speedway Road as it curves along, merges into 17th Street, and out to Hwy 80. Turn right onto Hwy 80, pass 18th Street, and then turn right onto 19th Street. Take your second left onto 11th Avenue, then right onto 20th Street/ Grand Dike Road. After passing the 9th Avenue turn off watch for a right turn by the sign pointing to the Observation Deck. Turn in and park here. The tower is down the left (western) trail beyond the kiosk. This 0.8 mile winding hike goes through forested habitats and has a two-story observation tower with a viewing scope (tower is about 100 yards from parking lot), and a small viewing blind at the far-east end. Sunrise at the tower offers amazing and unique sights and sounds. Spend some time here and watch as the wading birds emerge from grasses and sedges. Ducks and

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other waterfowl love dabbling in the shallow waters of the pool and loafing on the white sand bars during the summer months. Along the trail be on the lookout for distinct black bear tracks, eye-catching scarlet tanagers, and badger burrows! The viewing blind offers cover for watching and photographing wildlife in the backwater areas of the pool.

13 HARVEY'S POND TRAIL: Leaving the Observation Tower's parking lot, go back down 20th Street/ Grand Dike Road to 9th Avenue and turn right onto 9th Avenue. Then turn right onto Hwy 21. Just past Headquarters Road but before 7th Avenue, pull off to the right for Harvey's Pond trail-head. This is a 0.7 mile mowed hiking trail that winds between marshy lowlands and forested upland habitats. Whether it's from the bank of the pond or the pier, fishing at Harvey's Pond is another great way to enjoy the refuge. Species you may encounter include Northern Pike, Largemouth Bass, Pumpkinseed, Bluegill, Yellow Perch, Crappie, and Brown Bullhead. This spot is the most popular fishing area on the refuge! Although Harvey's pond is small in size, it's huge when it comes to its abundance of wildlife. Look for beavers, river otters, and aquatic insects. It's a wonderful opportunity to discover the diversity that makes NNWR so special... every season of the year!