



Birding

Willow River State Park has varied habitats to explore. The prairies provide good looks at Grasshopper and Clay-colored Sparrows, eastern and Western Meadowlarks, Bobolinks and Sedge Wrens. Along the Edges of the prairies in the shrub layer, look for Gray Catbirds, House Wrens, and Indigo Buntings. Fields and woodlands hold Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, Scarlet tanagers and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks.

Directions: Exit I-94 at exit 4. Go north 3.2 miles on Hwy 12, Cty U and Cty A to the park entrance (on your left).

The Willow River State Wildlife Area and Three Lakes National Waterfowl Production Area is featured by prairie potholes, small, shallow lakes that are rare in Wisconsin. Surrounded by open grassland, they are irresistible to marshland songbirds and waterfowl of all types such as Ruddy Ducks, Blue-wing, and Northern Shoveler in good numbers. Herons, egrets and gulls use the area along with Pied-billed Grebes. The grasslands are often home to Sedge Wrens, Dickcissels, Bobolinks, Western Meadowlarks, and the Common Yellow throated Warblers, as well as Grasshopper Sparrows, Northern Harriers and Short-eared Owls.

Directions: Take Cty A north from Willow River State Park one mile to Bukhardt Rd. east to Cty E. Then follow E east for one mile. The lakes will be south of the road.

The **Hudson area** has also been home to several American Bald Eagles. Eagles can often be spotted hunting over the St. Croix River and Lake Mallalieu when the ice goes out in early spring.

300 Trumpeter swans have also been known to frequent the south end of Lake Mallalieu. The endangered birds have made a great comeback in Wisconsin which at last count was 100 nesting pairs. As long as the weather is mild the birds will spread out in the open waters off the St. Croix, Apple & Willow Rivers. The birds are generally harmonious but when a new group arrives they are greeted with a lot of trumpeter 'conversation.' When mating season arrives, the birds head north to their breeding grounds before the ice is completely gone. This usually happens in mid-March. Trumpeter Swans mate for life and may live 20-30 years. 40% of the birds visiting Hudson have received neck collars. For more information visit: www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/er/factsheets/birds/swan.htm. (Information courtesy the Hudson Star-Observer)