



Birds of the Upper Mississippi River and Driftless Area

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There's more to birds than a checkmark in a guidebook or an entry in a life list. Birds have skills and weaknesses. Some species are in decline; others are on the rebound. Green herons make lures that they use for catching fish. Kingfishers dig long tunnels into streambanks. Blackbirds migrate in flocks that stretch for miles over the Mississippi River valley.

Some of the most interesting birds in the world live in the Upper Midwest, and *Birds of the Upper Mississippi River and Driftless Area* is packed with fascinating stories and beautiful photographs.

These stories cover a lot of ground, from how birds evolved from dinosaurs to what it's like to care for a vulture. Most of the stories cover birds' life cycles, as well as things that set them apart, such as sledding crows and macho kestrels. Stories also chronicle birds that have recovered from near elimination — bald eagles, pelicans, peregrines — and others on the decline — night-hawks, red-headed woodpeckers.

Most of the stories also give advice for spotting their subjects, and “Paddling for Birds on the Mississippi” and “Favorite Fall Birding Spots on the Upper Mississippi” offer general advice on birding in the Driftless Area.

All the stories are written from a regional perspective, focusing on bird behavior, and the changes and challenges they face in the Upper Midwest.

The 39 stories in this anthology appeared in *Big River Magazine* over a 22-year period. The 69 photographs by Alan Stankevitz have not appeared in the magazine, though his photos have been featured on many of the magazine's covers and with stories inside. A variety of authors contributed stories to *Birds of the Upper Mississippi River*, though the magazine's editor-at-large, Pamela Eyden, wrote the lion's share.

Big River Magazine has been covering the Mississippi River from the Twin Cities to the Quad Cities and the Driftless Area since 1993.