



Produced by Kenn Kaufman for the Black Swamp Bird Observatory.
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www.bsbo.org/birding

BIRDING MAP OF OHIO'S OTTAWA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

WEST, INCLUDING AUTO TOUR



END OF AUTO TOUR

Veler Rd.

Pool 9
Pool 9 East

MS 2 north
MS 2 south

MS 3
MS 4
MS 5

Crane Creek Estuary

Ottawa - Lucas Rd.

MS 6

Crane Creek

see map of Ottawa NWR East (Trails) for more detail on this area

Adam Grimm Prairie

MS 7

Butternut

North Woods

MS 8b

EAST PARKING FOR TRAILS

PARKING

Krause Rd.

PARKING

Stange Rd.

Stange Prairie
OBSERVATION TOWER

HU 93

MAIN PARKING AND START OF AUTO TOUR

South Woods

VISITORS' CENTER

OHIO STATE ROUTE 2

SCALE = 1/2 MILE

SR 590

ENTRANCE TO OTTAWA N.W.R.

Birding the Auto Tour of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, Ohio

Notes to accompany the birding map provided by Black Swamp Bird Observatory

Note: this is not an official refuge map. Staff of Ottawa NWR were very helpful in providing information, but this map was produced independently, and any errors are not the responsibility of Ottawa NWR or the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Trails, roads, and other areas shown on the map may be temporarily or permanently closed to the public, and visitors must always observe such closures.

Also note that management of wetland areas for wildlife habitat is a complicated challenge. Water levels need to be manipulated for different groups of species, for control of invasive plants, and for a variety of other aims. Ottawa NWR staff do a superb job of this, but the reasons for some decisions may not be obvious to a casual observer. At any given time, various impoundments shown on the map may have deep water, shallow water, or no water, so the areas of wetland shown on the map should not be taken as to represent permanent bodies of water.

The Auto Tour Route is not always the same every month – some variations are introduced to take advantage of temporary viewing opportunities or to avoid sensitive areas – but these notes describe some points along the usual route. At least in some months, the refuge staff prepares more recent updates for the day that the auto tour will be open, and such updates may be available either at the Visitors' Center or at the beginning point of the route. The Visitors' Center is always a good place to start, not only for information (and for the fine educational displays) but for the good birding along the boardwalk and trails immediately behind the center.

As of late April 2012, the auto tour route will begin at the Visitors' Center parking lot and will run a short distance north to the south edge of MS 8b, then straight west for a mile and a half. The route passes along the south edge of the North Woods before entering a stretch with brushy fields on both sides. This area often has open-country birds such as raptors in winter and Dickcissels in summer.

The route passes between the woods and brush of the Butternut unit and the shallow HU 93, then goes along the south edge of MS 7, which is good for various birds, depending on water levels. With Stange Prairie just to the south, this is an excellent area for sparrows and other birds in fall. At the southwest corner of MS 7, the route turns to the north. After a short distance, the road crosses a raised bridge over Crane Creek. This is usually an area with a lot of bird activity, although the species composition varies with water levels. With care, one can park north or south of the bridge and scan the water areas to both sides of the road. Just north of this area, MS 6 west of the road is often interesting.

Just beyond MS 6, the route turns to the east (right) along the south side of MS 3. (For birders keeping county lists, here Lucas County is to the north of the road, Ottawa County to the south.) From this junction, looking north across MS 3, one can see an extensive marsh that often has Yellow-headed Blackbirds in summer. The route runs east for more than half a mile, then usually turns north on the dike between MS 4 and MS 5. At the north end of this dike, where it meets the main east-west dike, the woods on the north side often have many warblers and other migrants in late spring and early fall.

The Auto Tour usually turns left (west) along the north side of MS 4 and runs a couple of miles west to the exit. At times the tour will loop around the north side of Pool 9 East, which can be good for American Bittern and other marsh birds. The north side of MS 3 is another area to watch for Yellow-headed Blackbird and Black Tern in spring and summer. Pool 9 on the north side of the road is also worth checking (watch for the pulloffs on the right).

The Auto Tour exits directly onto Veler Road half a mile from its junction with Ohio State Route 2. On the south side of the road near the exit gate is a relatively new wetland, MS 2, that can be very productive for shorebirds and ducks. If you didn't stop at the Visitors' Center before taking the Auto Tour, it's very worthwhile to go there next. Be sure to tell the staff about any unusual sightings along the tour route.

For more information on birding the refuge, see our two other maps (Overview and Trails) at www.bsbo.org/birding

Notes by Kenn Kaufman, updated April 2012