

Bulletin

Super Bird Fests 2016

A Calendar of Great Festivals on or near National Wildlife Refuges

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New birder or old hand? No matter. It's hard not to be moved by the sight of more birds erupting in flight than you've ever seen in your life.

[National wildlife refuges](#) make great festival sites because so many of these special places are located along the country's key migratory bird routes. Many festivals coincide with spring or fall migration. Here are some great refuge bird festivals to catch in 2016.

The National Wildlife Refuge System, part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, protects natural habitat for America's treasured wildlife species.

JANUARY 2016

[Space Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival](#)

January 20-25, 2016
Titusville, FL

[Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge](#) is a field trip destination for this yearly bird festival, billed as one of the country's largest and best. Register by January 15 to attend workshops, exhibits and demonstrations.

[Snow Goose Festival of the Pacific Flyway](#)

January 27-31, 2016
Chico, CA

[Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge](#) is one of several field trip destinations for this major West Coast bird festival. The refuge, a Central Valley birding hotspot, boasts a large viewing platform overlooking wetlands teeming with bird life, a photography blind (available by reservation), an auto-tour route and miles of hiking trails.

FEBRUARY 2016

[Winter Wings Bird Festival](#)

February 11-14, 2016
Klamath Falls, OR

The four-day festival offers visitors the chance to visit nearby [Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge](#), [Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge](#), [Crater Lake National Park](#) and other Klamath Basin birding hotspots. Register by February 7.

Eagle Watching Open House

February 13, 2016

10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Brussels, IL

Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge

Learn about bald eagles. Then venture out to watch for eagles with a refuge ranger. Experienced eagle watchers will be set up with viewing scopes at various locations at the wildlife refuge.

Florida Scrub-Jay Festival

February 13, 2016

10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Oscar Scherer State Park, Osprey, FL

The festival celebrates the only bird species unique to the Sunshine State. Florida scrub-jays are found at [Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge](#), [Lake Wales Ridge National Wildlife Refuge](#) and [Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge](#). Enjoy live music, guided nature walks, live animal displays, children's crafts and environmental exhibits.

San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival

February 19-21, 2016

Vallejo, CA

The festival includes field trips to [San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge](#).

Whooping Crane Festival

February 25-28, 2016

Port Aransas, TX

Port Aransas, two hours from [Aransas National Wildlife Refuge](#), bills itself as "America's Birdiest Small Coastal City." Festival-goers have a chance to see cranes in their winter habitat. Wade Harrell, whooping crane recovery coordinator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, based at Aransas Refuge, is a festival panelist on February 27.

MARCH 2016

San Diego Bird Festival

March 3-6, 2016

Marina Village Park, San Diego, CA

Festival field trip destinations include [San Diego National Wildlife Refuge](#), [San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge](#) and [Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge](#). Also featured: workshops, sea bird trips and cultural activities.

Monte Vista Crane Festival

March 11-13, 2016

Monte Vista, CO

Thrill to the sight of thousands of sandhill cranes that stop and rest here each spring on their way back north. This year's 33rd annual festival includes bus tours to [Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge](#). Lots of waterfowl add to wildlife viewing opportunities. Enjoy workshops and birding tours.

Othello Sandhill Crane Festival

March 18-20, 2016

Othello, WA

Experience the beauty and wonder of the natural world, highlighted by the return of sandhill cranes to the Channeled Scablands of Eastern Washington. [Columbia National Wildlife Refuge](#) is one of many field trip destinations. The three-day community event includes wildlife tours, lectures on the area's natural and cultural heritage, an art contest and children's activities.

APRIL 2016

Attwater's Prairie-Chicken Festival

April 9-10, 2016

Eagle Lake, TX

[Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge](#)

See the courtship dance of the endangered Attwater's prairie-chicken in coastal prairie habitat at this annual celebration. Tours to view these imperiled birds start at 7 a.m.

Godwit Days

April 13-19, 2016

Arcata, CA

Field trip destinations for this festival along the northern California coast include [Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge](#). The event also includes scores of eco-tours and workshops, an art show and live birds of prey.

Featherfest

April 14-17, 2016

Galveston, TX

The festival includes field trips to [Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge](#) and [Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge](#).

Bayou Teche Black Bear and Birding Festival

April 15-16, 2016

Franklin, LA

The threatened Louisiana black bear gets top billing, but this annual festival also celebrates bird species found in North America's largest river swamp, such as the American white pelican and roseate spoonbill. The festival features guided boat tours and paddling trips into [Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge](#). Find updates on the Friends of Bayou Teche Refuge website as the festival date nears: <http://bit.ly/1Ywa2Es>.

Great Dismal Swamp Birding Festival

April 21-23, 2016

Suffolk, VA

Enjoy a festival in a birder's paradise during the height of the spring neotropical songbird migration. You might catch a glimpse of a Swainson's warbler or Wayne's warbler, two of North America's most secretive birds. The festival is part of International Migratory Bird Day, which celebrates the incredible journeys of migratory birds between their breeding grounds in North America and their wintering grounds in Mexico and Central and South America.

Balcones Songbird Festival

April 22-24, 2016

Marble Falls, TX

Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge

Enjoy guided birding and nature tours of the refuge, which boasts some of the finest birding habitat in the state.

MAY 2016

International Migratory Bird Day Celebrations

International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) is the only international education program that highlights and celebrates the migration of nearly 350 species of migratory birds between nesting habitats in North America and non-breeding grounds in Latin America, Mexico, and the Caribbean. While IMBD events take place year-round, most U.S. events take place during May at the height of the spring migration. Each year, IMBD explores a different aspect of migratory birds and their conservation; for 2016, the focus is on how birds have inspired many of the most significant environmental conservation actions in the Americas, beginning with the signing of the first [Migratory Bird Treaty in 1916](#). Many wildlife refuges take part in IMBD celebrations. To find an IMBD event near you, see the [Bird Day Map](#). Learn more about [International Migratory Bird Day](#). As May approaches, check the Refuge System [special events calendar](#) for more IMBD event listings.

Horicon Marsh Bird Festival

May 6-9, 2016

Southeastern Wisconsin

For the past 50 years, Horicon Marsh Boat Tours has been helping people experience one of America's great natural treasures. Avid birdwatchers, nature enthusiasts and people just curious about the Horicon Marsh have found new adventure on the pontoon boat tour. Visit nearby [Horicon Marsh National Wildlife Refuge](#).

Biggest Week in American Birding

May 6-15, 2016

Northwest Ohio

This major bird festival, organized by Black Swamp Bird Observatory, takes place at the peak of spring bird migration in the Lake Erie Marsh region of the state. The festival features field trips to [Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge](#) and [Magee Marsh Wildlife Area](#).

Cache River NatureFest

May 7, 2016

Southern, Illinois

[Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge](#)

The 15th annual festival highlights the rich diversity of habitats and wildlife in the Cache River Watershed. The festival will include guided birding hikes, canoe tours, live animal demonstrations plus many exhibitors and programs.

[Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival](#)

May 12-15, 2016

Homer, AK

The state of Alaska's largest wildlife festival includes field trips to [Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge](#).

[Great Salt Lake Bird Festival](#)

May 12-16, 2016

Farmington, UT

[Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge](#) is among the festival's field trip destinations.

[Chincoteague International Migratory Bird Day Celebration](#)

May 14, 2016

Chincoteague, VA, and other locations

[Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge](#)

Celebrate the spring arrival of thousands of shorebirds at this annual fest, one of many to celebrate the journey of migratory birds. Chincoteague's annual celebration features workshops, bird walks and guided lighthouse tours.

[Wings Over Muscatatuck Bird Festival](#)

May 14, 2016

South central Indiana

[Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge](#)

The all-day festival includes guided bird van tours, bird and nature walks, kids' activities, live birds of prey programs, birdhouse building, a bird-calling contest, and the Junior Duck Stamp Contest Awards ceremony. Visitors are also welcome to take part in a May Day Bird Count, part of a statewide count.

[Chequamegon Bay Birding & Nature Festival](#)

May 19-21, 2016

Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center, Ashland, WI

The 9th annual festival features field trips to [Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge](#), guided by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff. Other field trip and hike destinations: the Moquah Pine Barrens, Bibon Swamp, Morgan Falls and St. Peter's Dome.

[Detroit Lakes Festival of Birds](#)

May 19-22, 2016

Detroit Lakes, MN

Tours of [Hamden Slough National Wildlife Refuge](#) and [Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge](#) will be part of this year's 19th annual festival.

Kenai Peninsula Birding Festival

May 19-22, 2016

Kenai, AK

This three-day festival includes field trips to [Kenai National Wildlife Refuge](#), workshops, kids' activities and a Kenai River float with local birding experts.

South Dakota Birding Festival

May 20-22, 2016

Fort Randall, SD

[Lake Andes National Wildlife Refuge](#) and [Karl E. Mundt National Wildlife Refuge](#) are the host locations for this annual festival. The festival offers a rare opportunity to see Karl E. Mundt Refuge, normally closed to the public. The festival includes field trips by foot and bus, songbird banding and presentations.

Down East Spring Birding Festival

May 27-30, 2016

Near Calais, ME

The annual festival includes guided hikes, boat tours and expert presentations. It also features field trips to [Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge](#), one of the event sponsors.

JUNE 2016

Potholes & Prairie Birding Festival

June 8-12, 2016

Jamestown, ND

Field trips to [Arrowwood National Wildlife Refuge](#) and [Chase Lake National Wildlife Refuge](#) are highlights of this festival celebrating remote prairie, wetland and meadow birding hot spots.

OCTOBER 2016

Ridgefield Birdfest and Bluegrass

October 1-2, 2016

Ridgefield, WA

[Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge](#)

The annual festival, along the lower Columbia River, offers guided bus tours, Audubon bird shows, live music, arts and crafts, and activities at the Cathlapotle Plankhouse, a full-scale replica of a Native American structure found in the old town of Cathlapotle.

Ding Darling Days

October 16-22, 2016

Sanibel, FL

Enjoy a week of fun-filled and informative programs, bird walks, tours, paddling and family activities at [J. N. 'Ding' Darling National Wildlife Refuge](#)

Wings over Water Festival

October 18-23, 2016

Northeast North Carolina

This multi-day festival features field trips to five national wildlife refuges: [Pea Island](#), [Alligator River](#), [Mattamuskeet](#), [Pocosin Lakes](#) and [Mackay Island](#). Also included: classroom programs, bird walks, paddling trips and talks on wildlife photography and natural history.

NOVEMBER 2016

[Rio Grande Valley Bird Festival](#)

Harlingen, TX

November 2-6, 2016

Field trip destinations include [Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge](#), [Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge](#) and [Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge](#). Buses and minivans at the [South Texas Refuge Complex](#) will support festival-goers.

[Festival of the Cranes](#)

November 15-20, 2016

San Antonio, NM

[Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge](#)

See wintering sandhill cranes and snow geese by the thousands at this scenic refuge outside of Socorro. Enjoy workshops, tours and other events at one of the most celebrated bird festivals in the country.

[Assateague Island Waterfowl Weekend](#)

November 24-27, 2016

Chincoteague, VA

[Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge](#)

The refuge will offer guided walks, tours and other special events to mark the fall migration of waterfowl to the refuge. Some tours will be in areas normally closed to the public. The refuge provides habitat for greater snow geese and many other migratory birds.