

PHOTOGRAPHING MINNESOTA

A Nature Photographer's Guide To Minnesota

By Dale Bohlke



Maintained by:
MINNESOTA NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY CLUB
www.minnesotanature.org

2016

Foreword

This project started as a collection of notes I last looked at in 2004. It has been sitting on the shelf since then. Ron Cleveland and John Pennoyer are the photographers that took it to the next level, the level it was intended to reach. A special thank you to the others who have shared locations. Some locations have changed in the last ten years just as this photographer has changed. I encourage you to copy and complete the worksheet in the back and submit it so this can be a perpetual work in progress.

Many photographers are secretive about their prime locations. I have thought about this and firmly believe that the more a subject is photographed and shared the more likely it will be available for the next generation to enjoy. I firmly believe in the good side of human nature and trust you will respect the areas/subjects described in this book. No image is worth the life of another living organism.

Dale Bohlke (db)
December 2011

Edited by Ron Cleveland 2010 & 2011

Information built on original 2001 document by Dale Bohlke with additional information submitted in 2010-11 by Romain E Bayless, Dale Bohlke, Ron Cleveland, John LaMere, Carol Madison, John Pennoyer and other sources.

Edited by Ron Lagerquist and Kathy Bishop in 2016.

New Information added in 2016 submitted by Ron Lagerquist (rl), Kathy Bishop (kb), John Pennoyer (jp), Mariann Cyr (mc) and John Gregor.

This document is available to members of Minnesota Nature Photography Club for their personal use only. It is not to be used for reproduced commercially in any way.

Locations shown after the County in Part One are taken from Minnesota: Delorme Atlas & Gazetteer ©2016. (D: page-grid)

File: photographingmn.08.22.2016

Table of Contents

Part One: Locations by Season.....	4
Winter Photography.....	4
Spring Photography.....	7
Summer Photography.....	18
Fall Photography.....	24
Part Two: Minnesota Locations by County.....	30
Part Three: Informational Articles	44
Where to Go to Find Wildlife: John Pennoyer.....	44
Photographing the Night Sky: John Pennoyer.....	46
Exploring North Shore Backroads: John Gregor.....	48
Part Four: Resources	50
Informational websites:.....	50
Guide and Resource Books:.....	52
Photography Websites:.....	54

Part One: Locations by Season

Winter Photography: December, January, February

The world of white! Snow and ice patterns can be found almost anywhere starting in your home. Subjects to photograph inside include frost on the windows and the birds at your feeders. Winter photography can be a great opportunity to escape cabin fever and get outdoors! Walk out on any lake and look down. Side lighting will accentuate these patterns in the ice. The color of the sky will affect the color of the ice so shooting early or late in the day will give the ice a warmer color.

All winter shooting scenarios have a common photographic challenge. Unless you override your camera's metering system, the result will be a muddy gray color, not the brilliant white you see. Compensate by opening up at least one stop, perhaps as much as two stops to retain the white in the scene.

Winter is a great time to photograph birds. Most local nature centers have feeders and stock them regularly. With patience, a 300mm to 400mm lens will give good results. Position yourself so the light is at your back to get a good catch light. Don't be surprised if a deer walks up to the feeder area while you are photographing.

Since February tends to be drier than January (more blue sky days), winter landscapes are easier to shoot and say "winter" better than those gray days of January. Windswept county roads and ditches create easy access to great abstractions. The snow takes on the sky color and you can get hot pink to cool blue snow depending on the time of day you are shooting.

March is one of the months with the greatest snowfall. It can be an excellent time to photograph fresh snow on trees. If the rivers start to thaw before the snow melts, there can be wonderful shots of rushing water amidst snow covered woods. Spring migration often begins in March as well, so bird photography is another option.

Westwood Hills Nature Center: Hennepin County-Metro D:70-C3*

A good spot to sit out of the elements while photographing birds is Westwood Hills Nature Center in St. Louis Park. Occasional owls can be photographed in the trees behind the visitor center and deer are abundant in the park. A walk around the lake may give you an interesting shot of snow on cattails or trees. Be sure to ask permission to be out by the feeders. Stand or sit under the feeder to get shots of the birds perched on the trees before landing on the feeders.
www.westwoodhillsnaturecenter.org

Veterans Memorial Park: Shakopee: Scott County-Metro D:70-D3

Veterans Memorial Park in Shakopee is a great place to shoot habituated ducks and geese during the winter months. Local residents feed the birds around noon each day. A normal or wide-angle lens will get some good shots. A typical bird lens is at a disadvantage as the birds are so close. In addition to the usual Mallards and Canada Geese, there are a few Gadwalls and an assortment of other species present. Late morning, after the light is over the hill or late afternoon are the best light times.

*Locations shown after each County are taken from Minnesota: Delorme Atlas & Gazetteer ©2016. (D: page-grid)

Colville Park: Red Wing: Goodhue County-SE D:77-A8

Bald Eagles congregate at Colville Park in Red Wing, in open water below the power plant. These birds are very close and active. You can get good flight shots and view fishing just by staying in the parking lot and near your car. Avoid the temptation to walk up close to the birds. Although they are habituated, they will fly away and besides, who wants a shot of an Eagle's tail? There are nice snow patterns on the rocks at the edge of the water. The eagles are at Colville Park all winter but seem most active later, especially on those bitter cold days. The light and wind are usually good for all day shooting.

Swan Park: Mississippi Drive: Monticello: Wright County-Central D:70-A1

Swan Park is actually a narrow lot that has been adopted by the city for viewing the thousands of Trumpeter Swans that winter in Monticello on the open water of the Mississippi River. The park is located on a dead end street, which is normally peaceful, is transformed into a bustling neighborhood each winter. Afternoon lighting is best for flight shots when the birds come directly overhead on their way to landing on the river. Early morning with steam rising from the river is another good time to photograph the Swans. Late morning is best left for viewing since the strong sidelight combined with the white birds exceeds the exposure range of digital sensors and you will get burned out whites or unnaturally dark blues. www.monticellochamber.com

Ellison Park: Monticello: Wright County-Central D:70-A1

This is my favorite early morning location for swan photography. The birds spend the night along the shore and swim to the feeding area later in the morning. If you stay in your vehicle, which is much warmer than the moist river air, great shots are possible as they swim in the fog.

Lake Maria State Park: Wright County-Central D:69-A8

If you get bored with Swans or are frozen out, the visitor's center at Lake Maria State Park is warm and has feeders positioned for the traditional Nuthatches and Chickadees of winter. Several winter trails have the potential for winter landscapes. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Split Rock Lighthouse State Park: Lake County-NE D:48-C3

During January and February, the full moon will rise right over or very close to Split Rock Lighthouse. If you have never photographed this sight, I recommend you start at the beach near Little Two Harbor. The best time is the evening before and the evening of the full moon. Moonrise will be close to sunset, which gives you some additional light to work with. Remember to arrive at your destination early and watch your histogram for correct exposure. www.dnr.state.mn.us

North Shore of Lake Superior-NE D: 38, 48 & 49

Usually, beginning in February, the North Shore of Lake Superior has great ice formations anywhere from Duluth to Grand Marais. Any pullout on Highway 61 along the shore has potential. I like the picnic area of Cascade State Park because you can get a great sunrise or sunset with ice in the foreground. If you park here be sure you have a current state park sticker. The ranger is very friendly but insistent that your vehicle has a sticker.

Sax-Zim Bog: Forbes: St Louis County-NE D:46-B4

Sax-Zim Bog is an excellent area for wintering Northern Owls, especially Northern Hawk Owls and Great Gray Owls. To check sighting reports go to the MOU web site. ww.moumn.org and look under the "Hotline Reports" tab. There are also feeding stations that have been set up for backyard type birds. Many of the birds are species that are difficult to find and photograph-such as Boreal Chickadee, Gray Jay and Pine Grosbeak. The most popular feeding stations are on Admiral Road. Drive slowly, because the birds can be all along these roads also. Northern Hawk Owls like to perch on the very tippy top of trees or power poles. Lenses from the 80-400mm, 100-400mm along with big glass from 500MM up all work well. This is also a good place to get out the snowshoes and do some landscape photography especially at sunrise or sunset. Other wildlife native to the Sax-Zim area includes Black Bear, Moose, Beaver, Deer, Pine Martins and Timber Wolves. www.sax-zim.org

Wisconsin location:**Rieck's Lake Park: Alma WI D:78-C4**

Tundra Swans along the Mississippi River are very active. One of the best places to photograph these birds is Rieck's Lake Park just north of Alma, Wisconsin. Rieck's Lake habitat has been deteriorating over the years and fewer birds are on the lake each year – a bad situation for the birds. The good news is that the remaining birds are closer to the viewing platform and therefore are easier to photograph. www.wigrr.com/riecks-lake-park-campground

Spring Photography: March, April, May

Spring ephemerals live up to the label “ephemeral” to the nth degree. Most are at peak bloom for less than a week and this week of peak can vary considerably from year to year based on weather conditions. It may take years to get the flower species you want at peak bloom. As I get older, I like to head for the hills the first part of May for Hepatica, Bloodroot, Anemone and all the other early woodland flowers. Why head for the hills? Hillsides have different bloom times depending on the sun exposure. You therefore have a longer peak bloom in a specific area. It is also easier to get low if you are on the downhill side of the plants. Setting up the tripod is easier than planting the camera in the dirt, for that ground level shot.

Three Rivers Park District: Metro

The Three Rivers Park District includes twenty parks in Hennepin, Wright, Carver and Scott counties. Most of the hardwood areas in the parks have good populations of wildflowers. Call before you visit and ask the staff about what is currently blooming. www.threeriversparks.org

William O’Brien State Park: Washington County-Metro D:71-B7 *

William O’Brien is a frequently overlooked State Park that is close to the Twin Cities. I like to make a visit to this park at least once a year. It is great for shooting, Large Flowered Trillium. This park also has many other spring ephemerals to keep a photographer’s interest. Part of the park is prairie, which is always worth a trip later in the summer. Also, while hiking through the woods, keep your eyes open for a native Orchid, Downy Rattlesnake Plantain I have found a few clusters of them in this state park. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Nine Mile Creek in Bloomington: Hennepin-M D:70-D4

A good place to photograph spring flowers in the Twin Cities area is Nine Mile Creek in Bloomington. In fact, local photographers have dubbed this area “crocus hill”. Park in the parking lot west of the bridge on 106th Street and walk on the trail above the ravine to the west of the creek. Eventually you will be rewarded with an open hillside with many Pasque Flowers in bloom.

Eloise Butler Wildflower Gardens: Hennepin-Metro D:70-C4

Eloise Butler Wildflower Sanctuary is part of Wirth Park in Minneapolis. The Garden is home to more than 500 plant species and 130 bird species. It offers spectacular seasonal displays of native wildflowers in woodland, wetland and prairie areas. Each area creates a different habitat that fosters different types of plants, animals and birds. Visit the woodland section in April and May for Bloodroot, Wild Ginger, Trillium, Bluebells and Trout Lilies. The wetland area has showy lady’s slippers, native irises and cardinal flowers. Open April 1st thru October 15th. Open daily from 7:30 am to one hour before sunset. www.minneapolisparcs.org

*Locations shown after each County are taken from Minnesota: Delorme Atlas & Gazetteer ©2016. (D: page-grid)

Wood Lake Nature Center: Hennepin-Metro D:70-D4

The first week in May is traditionally the best time for woodland flowers. Many species of birds, both migratory and resident, can be easily seen and photographed at Wood Lake Nature Center in Richfield. www.cityofrichfield.org

Springbrook Nature Center: Anoka-Metro D:70-B3

Check out Springbrook Nature Center on the Mississippi River in Fridley. “Explore our 127 acres of pristine wilderness, hidden right in the heart of a suburban community. Home to more than 2,000 species of birds, mammals, reptiles, insects, amphibians, fish, trees, shrubs, wildflowers and other plants, this peaceful refuge allows you to become one with the incredible art and beauty of the natural world. Enjoy 3 miles of hiking trails through Oak and Aspen forests, past prairies and through wetlands with floating boardwalks. www.springbrooknature.org

Hastings SNA: Dakota County-Metro D:77-A7

The Hastings SNA is a great location for spring ephemerals, including Sharp-lobed Hepaticas, Spring Beauty and others. Most will bloom around the end of April, however this is also a great location for Snow Trillium. This smallest member of the Trillium family will be probably a little earlier than the other spring ephemerals. (jp) www.dnr.state.mn.us

Wolsfeld Woods SNA: Hennepin County-Metro D:70-C2

This is one of my favorite “Big Woods” forests to visit, close to Orono and Long Lake, MN. You park in the corner of a parking lot that belongs to a Lutheran Church. I have never had much luck with any of the spring ephemerals, but this is definitely a great place for “Big Woods” landscapes. (jp) www.dnr.state.mn.us

Wood-Rill SNA: Hennepin County-Metro D:70-C2

This is another “Big Woods” area. There are some spring ephemerals, but again not in abundance. Still, it is worth looking for that one composition of Hepatica we know is out there. (jp) www.dnr.state.mn.us

Grey Cloud Dunes SNA: Washington County-Metro D:71-D6

This is a “sand prairie”. Many sand prairie botanical subjects are in this environment. Every time you go there will be another subject in bloom. It is a perfect environment for one of the prettiest Violets that we have in Minnesota. Bird’s-foot Violets grow in abundance at this SNA and bloom in late April early May. This is a great prairie for close-up images as well as environmental images, and is worth visits throughout the summer and fall. (jp) www.dnr.state.mn.us

Henry's Woods City Park: Hennepin County-Metro D:70-B2

This very small "Big Woods" is located not far from Cabelas in Rogers, MN. It is just south of South Diamond Lake Road on CR 39. When you see the "Red Barn", pull into the parking area. This whole area is being developed as an industrial park and this section is being saved as a Big Woods. Be sure to read the story about "the Henry" family on the monument in the parking area. I visit this area 7-8 times a year only because it is so close to where I live. Around the end of April to the end of May is the best time for the spring ephemerals, such as Anemones, Large-flowered Trillium, Sharp-lobed Hepaticas, Blue Violets, Bloodroot and many others. This is also a great place for big woods landscapes, especially with the abundance of ostrich ferns and Jack-in-the-Pulpit! There is a nice bridge for many landscape photo ops using the bridge as your anchor point. This location may not be worth a special trip, but if visiting Cabelas it is definitely worth a stop. Also with all of the Maples, some great fall landscape images can be taken here. (jp) www.cityofrogers.org

Minnesota Landscape Arboretum: Carver County-Metro D:70-D2

There are so many photo ops at this Arboretum it's hard to talk about one subject. The magnificent Grace B Dayton wildflower garden has many of the spring ephemerals. The best time for these wildflowers is late April to the middle of May. Many Minnesota native orchids also reside here. The orchids generally bloom from May 15 to June 15 and include Showy Lady's Slippers, Large Yellow Lady's Slippers, Small Yellow Lady's Slippers, Ram's Head Lady's Slippers, and Northern Green Bog Orchid. Also on the Three Mile Drive, Winton Prairie will have many of the prairie flowers, both in the prairie itself and in the garden next to the parking area of the prairie. As long as they do not show the "hand of man", images made here will qualify for our nature club salons. However, I recommend that you don't just photograph the native species because there are so many photo ops with spring tulips, blooming crab apples and many more. While such images would not qualify for our salon, they are great images to have in your files. There is a daily fee to enter the Arboretum grounds. Tripods are allowed but you must stay on the trails! The gates technically do not open until 8:00AM but usually they open up by 7:00AM to allow workers/volunteers to enter. Just pay your fee in the visitor center or as you exit! (jp) www.arboretum.umn.edu

Nerstrand Big Woods State Park: Rice County-SE D:77-C5

Nerstrand Big Woods State Park is a great location for spring flowers, including the rare Minnesota Dwarf Trout Lily. It's also a good place to find migrating songbirds. While you are there don't forget to photograph the waterfall. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Caron County Parks: Rice County-SE D:77-C5

A small Rice County park just west of Nerstrand State Parks, this park has many gentle trails for finding spring wildflowers. Like its neighbor, the forest floor is carpeted with Trout Lilies in early spring. This is a great place to go if you think Nerstrand State Park is too crowded. There is a waterfall in the park. www.co.rice.mn.us

Frontenac State Park: Goodhue County-SE D:78-B2

Frontenac State Park is located on Lake Pepin on the bluffs above the Mississippi River. You will find Columbine, May Apples, Large-flowered Trillium and Wild Ginger. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Whitewater State Park: Winona County-SE D:86-A3

Nearly 50 kinds of mammals and 250 kinds of birds use the Whitewater River Valley during the course of a year. Wild Turkeys are in the valley and Bald Eagles can be found year-around. In the spring, listen and look for the rare bird, the Louisiana Waterthrush. Of Minnesota's rare animals and plants, 43 percent live in the Blufflands. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Beaver Creek State Park: Houston County-SE D:87-C6

Nestled in the Blufflands of southeastern Minnesota, Beaver Creek Valley State Park is known for its clear streams fed by the "Big Spring." Its streams are home to brown and native brook trout. In spring, wildflowers that blanket the woodland hills and valleys attract migratory songbirds like the rare Acadian Flycatcher, Cerulean warbler, and Louisiana Waterthrush. These birds nest in the park. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Forestville/Mystery Cave State Park: Fillmore County-SE D:86-C2

The park has many wildflowers in the spring. On the prairie you can see Ruffed Grouse and wild Turkeys. www.dnr.state.mn.us

River Terrace Prairie SNA: Goodhue County-SE D:77-B7

In April, Pasque Flowers brighten the prairie. I associate April 15th with Pasque Flowers, not the tax deadline. They are a much more pleasant thought. Pasque Flowers are found on gravel and dry prairies where the soil is too poor for growing crops and even marginal for grazing. One of the best locations is River Terrace Scientific and Natural Area east of Cannon Falls. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Cannon River Wilderness Area: Rice County-SE D:76-D4

The Cannon River Wilderness Area has spring ephemerals on the hillsides and flood plain. You will find Bellwort, Marsh Marigold and others. Look up to see if the Turkey Vultures are circling. The steep hillside has a good hiking trail and going from top to bottom of the hillside changes the variety of flowers. www.co.rice.mn.us

Carley State Park: Wabasha-SE D:78-D2

A small state park in southeastern Minnesota, it is certainly a beautiful one. This park has a variety of spring ephemerals, but is well known for Virginia Bluebells. Certain area of the forest floor will be carpeted in blue when they are in full bloom. The best time for this flower will be around Mother's Day. While in the area, Whitewater State Park and Wildlife Management Area is just a short drive away and has a number of good photographic possibilities. (jp) www.dnr.state.mn.us

Sakatah State Park: Rice County-SE D:76-C3

Compared to the neighboring Nerstrand State Park this state park is not as heavily visited. But it is a great state park for many of the spring ephemerals, such as Trout Lily, Hepaticas, Anemones, Wild Ginger, Marsh Marigolds, Spring Beauty and many others. The best time is at the end of April and early May. Around May 20th Showy Orchis are quite abundant. Also if there is a wet spring, Morel Mushrooms are ready for picking around the same time as the Showy Orchis bloom. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Iron Horse Prairie: SNA Dodge County-SE D:85-B6

This is a beautiful wet prairie located in SE Minnesota just a short distance from Hayfield, MN. It is not a large prairie, only 35 acres, but around May 20th, there is a fantastic display of Small White Lady's Slippers. Also, usually in July, there can be a fantastic display of prairie flowers if the conditions are right. This is one of the finest prairies to photograph Rattlesnake Master. This is not necessarily a pretty flower but under the right light a photographer can come up with a unique image. (jp) www.dnr.state.mn.us

Zumbro Falls Woods SNA: Wabasha County-SE D:78-C1

This SNA is on the steep cliffs of the Zumbro River. Hiking the steep bluffs will be a challenge, but the many spring ephemerals will make it worth the effort. This area is also a great place to photograph the Jeweled Shooting Star. The end of April to end of June for the spring ephemerals is the only time I have been to this SNA. (jp) www.dnr.state.mn.us

Townsend Woods SNA: Rice County-SE D:76-D3

This SNA is located just outside of Sakatah Lake State Park; it will have the common spring ephemerals that are located in this area of Minnesota, Trout Lily, Hepatica's, and Bloodroot). The best time to visit is around the end of April to early May. It is also considered to be a "Big Woods" with lots of Maples, Oaks etc. so big woods landscapes are possible, along with fall color photography.-If your timing is right, this can be a great place for Morel mushrooms, generally around the middle of May. (jp) www.dnr.state.mn.us

Mound Prairie SNA: Houston County-SE D:87-B7

In May the sun-drenched goat prairies of Mound Prairie SNA near Houston are a great location for Pussytoes, Hoary Puccoon, Indian Paintbrush, Prairie Smoke, Blue-eyed Grass, Wood Betony and Jeweled and White Shooting Star. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Kasota Prairie SNA: LeSueur County-SW D:75-C8

The Kasota Prairie SNA offers opportunities to photograph prairie landscapes all year. Located on an extensive rock terrace 70 feet above the Minnesota River Valley, the Kasota Prairie is named for its view. It is an early spring location for Pasque Flowers and Prairie Violets. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Wayside Rest South of Mankato on Hwy 22: Blue Earth County-SW D:75-D8

Early spring ephemerals start in southern Minnesota with Pasque Flowers on the Prairie and Skunk Cabbage in the woodland areas. The earliest flower to bloom is the endangered Snow Trillium. It typically blooms briefly during the first week of April. The plant grows in profusion along the edge of the parking lot. If you find this tiny plant with a big white flower, get on your knees and start shooting. Be careful kneeling because broken glass has accumulated over the years. Remember that if the frame is filled with a white flower, you will need at least 1 stop of exposure compensation to avoid showing the flower as grey. Snow Trillium are is about three or four inches high so you will bury your face in the ground to look through the viewfinder or use an angle-finder attached to the viewfinder of your camera. A beanbag or jacket works better than a tripod at this low level.

Seven Mile Creek County Park: Nicollet County-SW D:75-C7

Seven Mile Creek County Park is another good place to photograph spring ephemerals. It's located between St. Peter and Mankato on Highway 169. The creek is also a good place to photograph Warblers and other spring migrants as they fly and perch on the rocks in the creek. www.co.nicollet.mn.us

Red Rock Falls County Park: Cottonwood County-SW D:74-D1

Red Rock Falls is a good place to photograph a waterfall and geologic features in the spring and summer. www.co.cottonwood.mn.us

Lac Qui Parle Mission MHS: Chippewa County-SW D:67-C5

Lac Qui Parle Mission lies eight miles northwest of Montevideo on County Road 13. Like other prairies in southeastern Minnesota, it offers good subjects in early May as well as July and early August and late September. You'll find pelicans at the dam. www.mnhs.org

Chippewa Prairie TNC: Chippewa & Swift Counties-SW D:66-B4

Chippewa Prairie is a good spot for Prairie Chickens and Night Hawks. It lies along a reservoir of the Upper Minnesota River, named Lac qui Parle ("lake that speaks") by early French explorers. Chippewa Prairie represents a small remnant of the once vast northern tallgrass prairie ecosystem. A Large numbers of migratory waterfowl use the Chippewa Prairie; it is a vital natural area link to Big Stone NWR and Lac qui Parle WMA. The 1,143 acres prairie is located between Milan and Appleton in western Minnesota. www.nature.org/minnesota

Gneiss Outcroppings SNA: Chippewa County-SW D:67-D7

Gneiss Outcroppings SNA is named for the granite outcropping tucked behind several old fields along the Minnesota River east of Granite Falls. It is quite a hike to the namesake for this area but well worth the effort. Prickly and Brittle Prickly Pear Cactus bloom in late June at this site. Cactus blooms open during midday when the insect pollinators have warmed up. Head for the northwest corner of this site. Cross the small lake on the western end where a narrow bridge crosses the outflow just below the SNA sign on the hillside. If the area is dry you will not need the bridge. Be sure to take plenty of water, a macro lens and a diffuser. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Lac qui Parle State Park: Lac qui Parle County-SW D:67-C5

The geese arrive in early March from their primary wintering post at Swan Lake, Missouri. Spring migrations continue through April. In late September, Geese arrive and continue until the last birds leave in early December. Flights of whistling Swans pass over Lac qui Parle in April and November. Pelicans nest in the area on a one-acre island. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Lake Mille Lacs: Aitkin/Mille Lacs County-Central D:55-C6

Many Lakes start ice breakup in March. The northwest shoreline of Lake Mille Lacs can have great ice formations. The icehouses have been removed and the western horizon is clean. Any pullout has potential. Since the winds are primarily westerly, the east or northern shore is best for the ridges. The conditions of the year will determine the patterns and timing of these ridges.

Father Hennepin State Park: Mille Lacs County-Central D:55-D7

Father Hennepin State Park is close to Mille Lacs Lake. The park is home to a variety of wildlife. Hawks, Ospreys, Owls and Eagles are common. The aspen stands and small clearings are excellent for Ruffed Grouse. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Mary Schmidt Crawford Woods SNA: Wright County-Central D:70-B1

Located near Buffalo, MN and considered to be a “Big Woods”, this area has spring ephemerals such as Trillium, Sharp-lobed Hepaticas, and False-Rue Anemone. However, on my visits there, none of them have been in abundance. I especially like this location for fall color photography. With many Maples, it offers opportunities for nice “Big Woods” landscapes, especially in the fall. (jp) www.dnr.state.mn.us

Banning State Park: Pine County-Central D:56-D2

The Kettle River runs right through this park, offering the photographer many chances for river landscapes images. Also many canoeists and kayakers use this as a launching spot, giving photo ops of this activity as well as nature shots. Generally my visits are for the abundance of Large Flowered Trillium that grows in this area. The best time for this flower is generally a few days before Memorial Day to a few days after. I prefer overcast days to reduce the contrast. I recommend you bring along your macro/close-up lens, but if the conditions are right, use the wide angle for “FlowerScapes”! Also one of state’s most photogenic waterfalls is in this park. It is a short hike to Wolf Creek Falls, but it takes a long time because of the many photo subjects on the trail! (jp) www.dnr.state.mn.us

Mille Lacs Kathio State Park: Mille Lacs County-Central D:55-D5

I probably visit this park 3-4 times every year, not because I find lots of subjects, but because when I am in this area it is always worth a stop to check things out. In late March to the end of June, Ruffed Grouse can be heard on their drumming logs.

To avoid predators, the grouse usually choose a drumming log in very heavy cover, making photos nearly impossible. But on one occasion I did find a male “Ruffie” in a more photogenic location. This is not a bad park for spring ephemerals either. It’s the park I go to for my Round-lobed Hepaticas. Also, in late fall, it is a good park for Whitetail bucks during the rut (late October to end of November). This park is surrounded by reservation land, so if these bucks leave the park they can be hunted. This means most of your images will be taken out of your vehicle. (jp)

www.dnr.state.mn.us

Sherburne NWR: Sherburne County-Central D:63-D5

If there is a NWR I am comfortable telling anyone about, this is the one. Located just north and west of Zimmerman, Minnesota, it is just a 20-minute drive from my house. I visit this NWR 6-10 times a year. Being so close to the Twin Cities, it is always worth numerous visits throughout the spring to fall seasons. You will always find new botanical subjects to photograph, plus the many birds and animals that can be found here. I recommend both Blue Hill and Mahnomen trails. They are great birding trails so bring your camera along with your binoculars. However, most of the time, I focus on the 7 mile “Wildlife Drive”. This drive will take you along many of the locks and dams, which are a magnet for migrating waterfowl. Common Loons often nest in this area, so have your “big glass” ready! Unfortunately, this drive is “not” open in the winter! Sherburne NWR is one of the best areas to photograph our native Lupine. In the right conditions, parts of this oak-savanna prairie will be covered in blue! The best time is usually around the middle of May. Note: The Lupine found in NE Minnesota is not native. It is an “escaped” horticultural plant and can be very invasive! (jp)www.fws.gov/refuge/sherburne

Black’s Grove City Park: Otter Tail County-Central D:55-B5

The special feature here is Oak Creek, which flows through the park with several areas of rapids. I like to wander along the stream using the abundant deer trails to guide me. The established trail system winds through several habitats and will give you a variety of subjects from the Ferns in the flood plain, to open grasslands at the top of the hill. Ephemerals in May, followed by Ferns in June make this a great spring location. The Oaks, Birch, and running water in autumn produce an entirely different photographic experience. It is also a great place to spend a couple hours cross-country skiing in the winter.

Charles A Lindbergh State Park: Morrison County-Central D:62-A1

Many spring wildflowers can be found along the creek trails in this park.

www.dnr.state.mn.us

Big Stone Lake State Park: Big Stone County-Central D58-D4

In the spring the prairie is blanketed with wildflowers. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Maplewood State Park: Otter Tail County-Central D:51-B8

The park is located in a transition area between the western prairies and the eastern forests and contains plants and animals found in both landscapes. The park is known for its hardwood trees including Sugar Maple, Basswood, and Oak. These same trees provide a stunning display of fall colors each year. In addition, Red Cedar and Tamarack are found in the park. Wildflower lovers will find flowers and grasses representative of both the prairies and forests. Spring through fall, the park is "dressed" with displays of Trillium, Hepatica, Bloodroot, Yellow Lady's Slipper, Wild Onion, Prairie Rose, and Showy Milkweed. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Bluestem Prairie SNA: Clay County-NW D:41-D5

Bluestem Prairie is the place for wildlife photographers to get shots of Prairie Chickens doing their courtship dances. The blinds are posh with padded seats and wood walls. Two photographers can set up with ease in each blind. A long lens is best since the birds seem to know something is amiss and rarely get real close. You may see 50 or 60 birds during a morning. The light is highly variable. Hope for a sunny day and if you get clouds, just sit back and enjoy – your photos will be awful in the gray light. The birds are also active at dusk but they are all backlit. During the day you can find Pasque Flowers at the parking area north of the prairie drumming grounds. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Tamarack National Wildlife Refuge: Becker County-NW D:42-C2

NE of Detroit Lakes, Tamarac NWR, lies in the heart of one of the most diverse transition zones in North America. Here eastern deciduous hardwoods, northern coniferous forests and western tall grass prairie converge, creating a rich assemblage of both plants and animals. Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge was established as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife. www.fws.gov/refuge/tamrac

Iron Springs Bog SNA: Clearwater County-NW D:42-A4

This is a bog area with large areas of Showy Lady Slippers and Pitcher Plants. Be prepared to get wet, whether from sweating, difficult walking or sinking in the Sphagnum Moss. On the east side as you are going up a small hill on the power-line road, there are many Stemless Lady Slippers. I am sure there are more locations and flowers just waiting to be discovered in this rather inhospitable habitat.

Iron Springs SNA is on the north side of Itasca State Park and somewhat hard to find since there is only a small part of it that abuts a road. I like to go past the north entrance to Itasca State Park about two miles and turn on a gravel road (County Road 2) on your right. Park along the road and go down to the power-line road. The bog is on your left as you walk east. An official parking area is off State Highway 200. Take a compass along so you know what direction you are going as you enter the bog and what direction you need to follow to get out. Better yet, go in with a partner. It is very easy to get lost in a bog. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Itasca State Park: Clearwater County-NW D:43-B5

The Wilderness Loop in Itasca State Park is a good location for northern ephemerals and small lady's slippers. One option for exploring the park is to drive. Enter the park from the north entrance and follow the signs. You will drive through a diverse habitat collection and can pull over whenever the mood strikes you. You will also pass the Itasca Wilderness SNA that has a nice trail through it. If you prefer to walk, enter the south entrance, drive to the end of the two-way section of the wilderness loop at Many Lake and park. Walk the road to Elk Lake and you will see an abundance of photo opportunities, many more than while driving. Itasca Wilderness SNA, which is inside the State Park, has an amazing selection of woodland and bog flowers that include Ladies-tresses as well as four types of bog orchids, Striped and Spotted Coralroot and Yellow and Showy Lady's Slippers. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Agassiz Dune NWR: Polk County-NW D:29-D6

This NWR is located deep in northwestern Minnesota, about a 5-hour drive from the Cities. How I wish it were closer to the Twin Cities. I have been there twice and for the waterfowl photographer, it is paradise. Both times were during the month of May and I personally have not seen so many migrating ducks as this place offers. Unfortunately for me both times were just short visits as I was traveling home from my travels for work. But from my viewpoint this is a refuge that a person could spend 2-3 days at, not only for waterfowl but for the many possibilities for landscape images of the wetland environment. If there is a negative on this refuge is that most of the roads are "closed" and you must get a "key" from the visitor center. (Not easy to get a key) But stop in the visitor center and check to see what is necessary to get the gates unlocked so you can drive the roads. There is 100 ft observation tower near the headquarters but you also have to get the key for access. Note: I have not been to this refuge in 10 years so definitely call ahead (218.449.4115) and check the regulations. This is the refuge where the park manager seriously questioned me on what I was going to do with my images, claiming that I could not sell any images taken of the refuge. He was totally wrong! (jp) www.fws.gov/refuge/agassiz

Buffalo River State Park: Clay County-NW D:41-D5

The prairie areas within the park are not just for the wildflower enthusiast. In spring, the song of the Bobolink brings the prairie alive. Prairie Chickens, Upland Sandpipers, and Marbled Godwits (uncommon prairie birds) can also be seen and heard. Red Foxes, Badgers, Coyotes, Prairie Toads, White-tailed Deer and Jackrabbits are also a part of the grassland community. The landscape contains more than 250 species of wildflowers and grasses including some plants now rare in Minnesota. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Lake Bemidji State Park: Beltrami County-NW D:31-D7

Explore the beauty of a tamarack bog carpeted with Showy Lady's Slippers, Pitcher Plants, Dragon's Mouth, Grass Pink, and insect-eating Sundews. Most flowers are blooming in the bog during late spring and early summer. A quarter mile long boardwalk leads into one of these areas so that visitors can observe Pitcher Plants, insect eating Sundews, Orchids, and other plants. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Judge C R Magney State Park: Cook County-NE D:38-C3

The forested areas of this park are dominated by Birch and Aspen stands. Wildflowers begin to show in early spring with the Marsh Marigold, Wood Anemone, and Violets. In summer, look for the Rose, Thimbleberry, Moccasin Flower, Coral Root, Clintonia, Wild Sarsaparilla, and Fireweed. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Wisconsin locations:

Crex Meadows Wildlife Area: Grantsburg, WI D:65-B4

Many Minnesota nature photographers feel Crex Meadows should really be considered a Minnesota location. It is a huge area of wetlands, with small sections of prairie and woodland ecosystems as well. In spring, there are lupine, hoary puccoon and flax. Wildlife is also plentiful. Sandhill Cranes mate and nest here, and there are lots of migratory and resident waterfowl as well as songbirds. www.crexmeadows.org

Perrot State Park: Trempealeau WI D:87-A7

Perrot State Park's rivers, wetlands, upland fields, steep wooded slopes, deep valleys and bluff tops are home to hundreds of kinds of plants and animals. In spring, the woods offer Blue, White and Yellow Violets, Hepaticas, Dutchman's Breeches, Woodland Phlox, Wood Geraniums, Bellworts, Jack-in-the-Pulpits and graceful Ferns. Spring also brings Shooting Stars which carpet the woods with purple and fill the air along the west Brady's Bluff trail with their wonderfully sweet aroma. Oaks, Hackberries, Black Walnuts and Shagbark and Bitternut Hickories are found in the woods. In Brady's Bluff Prairie, Pasque Flowers, Bird's-foot Violets, Puccoon and Lead Plant bloom in the spring. In late summer and fall this prairie turns into a blaze of color with Blazing Stars, Compass Plants, Big Bluestem, Indian Grass, Sunflowers and Coneflowers. www.dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/name/perrot/ (mc)

Very good wildflower references include:

Wildflower E-Book: Wildflower Photography by Steve Berardi-
www.photonaturalist.net/

Minnesota Wildflower Website: www.minnesotawildflowers.info/

Summer Photography: June, July, August

Summer offers the nature photographer many options for landscape, wildlife and botanical photography. Minnesotans typically head “up north” to our many lakes and wilderness areas, which abound with photo ops of all kinds. The state parks on the north shore of Lake Superior are some of the most heavily visited and photographed parks in the state. For those of you who want to escape the crowds, other areas are less hectic and equally rich in photo opportunities. In late summer, hot, windy prairie days and dark, mosquito-infested forests make for photographic challenges. Fortunately, the sun is rising later and those civil twilight landscapes are getting easier to get up and on location for. During this time, it can be fascinating to photograph Monarch Butterflies. Monarchs are fun to photograph because they are easy to find. Just look for the food source, which is any pink flowering plant. They also spend nights on coneflowers or in low branches of shrubs and trees. The monarch migration passes through the state, usually hitting the Twin Cities during the last two weeks of August. Butterfly Gardens are located at Minnesota Valley NWR Visitor’s Center in Bloomington and Lake Harriet Gardens in Minneapolis.

Blaine Preserve SNA: Anoka-M D:71-D5 *

This is one of our newest SNA’s (2013) and one that I visit numerous times during the course of the summer. A “wet prairie” with one of the most outstanding displays of Prairie Blazing Star that you will find anywhere. But it is also one of the most difficult areas for landscape images because of the many buildings in this metropolitan area. The best time to photograph the Blazing Star is around the middle of July. The rare “Yellow-eyed Grass” is also on this prairie. Because of the *Liatris*, this is a great spot for Monarch Butterflies. This prairie has a lot of Common Milkweed, the only plant Monarchs will lay their eggs on. Over the years, I have been able to photograph Monarch caterpillars as they feed on the leaves of the Milkweed. (jp) www.dnr.state.mn.us

Black Dog Nature Preserve SNA: Dakota-M D:70-D4

Black Dog Nature Preserve SNA, in Burnsville on Cliff Road West of I35W is a good place to photograph Monarchs in the metro area, but as of 2016, the trails are not maintained. If you want to explore this SNA, park at Fen Park and walk the trail heading east. To find the Monarchs, look for a triangle resting on a tall plant. You may need to go out into the prairie and face the sun to see this black triangle. Once you have found one butterfly, the others will be easier to see. Stay low and work the subject trying to stay 12 to 18 inches away so as not to spook them. Remember, it is a long way to the winter home in Mexico and their energy should be conserved for the trip. www.dnr.state.mn.us

*Locations shown after each County are taken from Minnesota: Delorme Atlas & Gazetteer ©2016. (D: page-grid)

Myre-Big Island State Park: Freeborn County -SE D:84-C4

The trails take visitors around wet lowlands, oak savanna, and grasslands. Albert Lea Lake and park marshes draw hundreds of waterfowl during migration. Oak savanna and prairie landscape, including wetlands, dominate most of the park. Enjoy the numerous types of natural communities: Oak savanna, wetlands, northern hardwood forests, grasslands, and restored prairie. Typical prairie grasses include Big and Little Bluestem, Side-oats Grama, Porcupine, Indian, and Switch grasses. Flowering plants include Lead Plant, Rattlesnake Master, Prairie Clover, Prairie Smoke, Bottle Gentian, Blazing Star, Black-eyed Susan, and numerous Coneflowers. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Blue Mounds State Park: Rock-SW D:80-C3

At Blue Mounds State Park in southwestern Minnesota, you'll find a rock prairie, a granite bluff at an old quarry site and a small herd of Buffalo. There is also prickly pear cactus, which usually bloom in June. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Northern Tallgrass Prairie "Touch the Sky" NWR: Rock County-SW D:80-C2

This is Jim Brandenburg's dedicated prairie near Blue Mound State Park. This prairie is a small unit of the much larger Northern Tallgrass Prairie. Although I have only made one visit here; it is a gem of a prairie. So if you are in this section of Minnesota it is a must visit! On my July visit this prairie was loaded with Big Bluestem grasses and numerous tallgrass prairie flowers, too numerous to list. My recommendation would be to visit anytime from July to late September. (db) www.fws.gov

Hole-in-the-Mountain Prairie TNC: Lincoln County-SW D:72-D2

Hole-in-the-Mountain Prairie is a Nature Conservancy site 1.5 miles south of the city of Lake Benton on U.S. Highway 75. Park at the turnout along the west side of the highway. Pack your gear for wildflower, butterfly, and scenic shots. Early July is probably the best time for Prairie Coneflowers. www.nature.org/minnesota

Big Stone NWR: Lac Qui Parle County-SW D:66-B2

Big Stone NWR near Ortonville, protects over 11,000 acres of wetlands, tallgrass prairies and river ravine habitat that provide homes to countless number of native plant and animal species. Pin Cushion and Ball Cactus bloom in the third week of June. www.fws.gov/refuge/big-stone

Joseph A Tauer Prairie SNA: Brown County-SW D:75-D3

The highlights at the Joseph A Tauer Prairie SNA are Turk's Cap Lilies, Rattlesnake Master and wild Iris. Take County Road 13 eight miles south of New Ulm then two miles west of the junction of County Roads 13 and 22. Park on the west side of the township road. Flandreau State Park is also nearby. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Cottonwood River Prairie SNA: Brown County-SW D:74-D1

The Cottonwood River Prairie SNA in Brown County is good all summer for shots of the prairie landscape with hills. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Kilen Woods State Park: Jackson County -SW D:82-C1

Trails wind through the park's oak forest, sunny river bottom meadows, flood plain forest, oak savanna and prairie. Oak trees grow on the steep river valley slopes. Scattered Bur Oak trees, Wild Plums and Hawthorns occur among prairie grasses and wildflowers at the edge of the Des Moines River Valley. Look for Big Bluestem, Indian Grass, Blazing-star, and Purple Coneflowers along the grassy ravines. Seven-foot tall Prairie Grasses, Butterfly Milkweed, and Grey-headed Coneflowers dominate the late summer river bottom prairie. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Roscoe Prairie SNA/TNC: Stearns County-Central D:61-D8

I visit this prairie probably 3 times a year. It is a small prairie is located just a short distance from Roscoe, MN. While it is only about 57 acres, it is a gem! It is a combination prairie and wetland. July to early August is the best time for general prairie photography. That is generally the peak time for Prairie Blazing Star, Purple Coneflower, Black-eyed Susan, and many other prairie botanical subjects. Calm cool mornings in the end of summer can be great for sunrise and monarchs. In late August into the middle of September all of the Gentian family will bloom here Bottle, Fringed, Downy, as well as and also Great Plain Ladies'-tresses Orchid. (jp) www.dnr.state.mn.us

Ordway Prairie TNC: Pope County-Central D:60-D4

Located not too far from the town of Brooten, MN, this is a great prairie to visit from spring to late fall. This is a combination of a tallgrass prairie, oak-savanna prairie and wet prairie. My visits have usually been in the month of July, but they do list this prairie having White Lady's Slippers. These would be blooming sometime in the middle of May and you would locate them in the "wet" part of the prairie. This prairie has numerous prairie grasses, Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem, Dropseed but also has lots of prairie flowers such as Purple Coneflowers, Prairie Phlox, Blazing Star and Hill's Thistle. Not all thistles are bad. This is Minnesota's only "native" Thistle and it is very colorful. My goal is to visit in the spring for the white lady's slippers and later in the early fall for landscapes of the prairie grasses. (jp) www.nature.org/minnesota

Regal Meadows TNC-Regal Meadows WMA: Kandiyohi County-Central 68-A3

This Nature Conservancy prairie is located on Highway 55 west of Paynesville, MN. This prairie also has the White Lady's Slippers, but I usually go in the July time frame for the other prairie flowers, such as Prairie Blazing Star and Coneflowers. Also, there are a few Wood Lilies (prairie lilies). This prairie has a nice display of prairie grasses such as Little Bluestem, Indian Grass and others. This is a one of the prairies that also have Rough Blazing Star. This colorful Liatris also has a peak bloom in the middle of August, just in time for the Monarch Butterfly migration. This can be a good prairie to photograph this butterfly. (jp) www.dnr.state.mn.us

Pembina Trail Preserve SNA: Polk County-NW D:29-C6

This prairie is way up in Northwestern MN, about a 4½-hour drive from the Twin Cities. The closest town is Mentor, MN. This "Tallgrass Prairie" has a few Western Prairie Fringed Orchid which bloom around July 4th. Later in July and into early August, this prairie also has a great display of tallgrass prairie flowers such as Prairie Blazing Star and Bergamot. (jp) www.dnr.state.mn.us

Lake Bemidji State Park: Beltrami County -NW D:31-D7

There is a very nice boardwalk in Bemidji State Park, offering easy walking access to many different botanical species. Starting in the June, there are Wild Calla, Wild Iris and the insect-eating Sundew. All told, you can find nearly 40 varieties of flowering plants, including the Stemless Lady's Slipper, Dragon's Mouth Orchid and Grass Pink. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Pennington Bog SNA: Beltrami County-NW D:39-D1

There are many species of native orchids in this SNA. This is a good bog to visit in late spring to end of July as you search for various orchid species. It important for you to know the bloom dates for the species you are searching out. Most orchid species have a narrow window for peak bloom. Also bogs are always difficult to maneuver in and you should wear old tennis shoes or waterproof footwear. I always wear my knee-high rubber boots. Also be sure to have a regular compass with you. Sometimes the bog is so thick cell phones won't pick up a satellite signal. You must be careful where you walk as this is a very sensitive environment and many orchid species are not the big "showy" type. It is very easy to trample a rare orchid if you do not look where you are walking! Also don't get so carried away with the orchids or other bog botanical subjects that you forget to take some bog environmental images. They can be stunning. This bog is located on the Lady's Slipper Scenic Byway- County Road 39 from Blackduck to US highway 2 east of Cass Lake. Note: A permit is required to enter this SNA. Get in touch with the Bemidji DNR office for permit applications. (jp) www.dnr.state.mn.us

Minnesota Highway 11 & 310: Roseau County-NW D:18-D1

There are literally hundreds of Showy Lady's Slippers on the north side of Highway 11 going east from Badger to Roseau and then continuing on as far as International Falls. This is the Lady's Slipper route. There are also many of these orchids north of Roseau on Hwy. 310 going to Canada and the Northwest Angle. They bloom from about the middle to the end of June, depending on the season. Also Lake Bronson State Park has many along their roadsides. It is truly a feast for the eyes.

Big Bog Recreation Area: Beltrami County -NW D:24-D1

The 500 square mile peat bog is the largest in the lower 48 states, is located in the northern unit. A mile-long boardwalk enables visitors to get a first-hand look at the unique plant and animal life of this rare resource. Many of the native plants, including Yellow-eyed Grass, Bog Rush and two kinds of Sundews, are on Minnesota's endangered or threatened species list. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge: Polk County-NW D:29-C6

Glacial Ridge is located in the Mississippi Headwaters/Northern Tallgrass Prairie ecosystem. It is a key component of the prairie pothole mix of small wetlands surrounded by upland prairies and woodland savannas. This mix of small wetlands and uplands are crucial as breeding habitat for an array of migratory birds, including waterfowl, songbirds, shorebirds, and others. Sandhill Cranes and Greater Prairie Chicken are found at the refuge. It hosts one of the state's largest populations of Western Prairie Fringed Orchids and many other wildflowers including the Prairie White Lady's Slipper. www.fws.gov

Lost 40 SNA: Itasca County-NE D:32-B3

If this were not so far, it certainly would be an SNA to which I would make yearly visits. As it is, I have only been there twice. I did find my one and only Small Green Wood Orchid here. This is old-growth Red-pine forest. It is one of the only SNA's that does have a trail system, but it is not maintained. There are some flowers associated with a boreal forest such as Fringed Polygala and Twinflowers. My visits there were in the end of June and I did mostly old-growth pine forest environmental images. (jp) www.dnr.state.mn.us

Vince Shute Wildlife Sanctuary: St Louis County-NE D:26-D1

There is a lot to photograph at this sanctuary. Mornings can be spent on botanical subjects and evenings looking for wildlife. The bog walk trail is good for wildflowers, including Purple-fringed Orchids. www.americanbear.org

Crane Lake & Vermillion Gorge: St Louis County-NE D:26-C4

Crane Lake and the walk to Vermillion Gorge are great, especially if you start in the dark and get to the old trading post site for sunrise. Walking back in the early morning with the dew on the Ferns is quite magical.

Vermillion Falls: St Louis County-NE D:26-C4

Vermillion Falls has a nice overlook and is handicap accessible. Another trail takes you through a picnic site to a beaver dam.

Artist's Point: Grand Marais: Cook County-NE D:38-C1

Artist's Point in Grand Marais is a good spot to photograph sunrise and sunset.

Gooseberry Falls State Park: Lake County -NE D:48-C3

At Gooseberry Falls State Park, there are five waterfalls, a big gorge and the rocky shoreline of Lake Superior. Trails lead through a mixed evergreen, Aspen and Birch forests with a variety of birds, plants and other animals. It is a great park to explore in all seasons. It can also be fun to photograph the falls at night, maybe even with some Northern Lights dancing in the sky. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Wisconsin locations:

Fish Lake WMA: Grantsburg WI -Central D:65-C3

There are blazing stars and lots of deer at the Fish Lake WMA south of Grantsburg, WI. Explore the area along Stolte Road and the Dueholm Flowage. The Crex Meadows visitor center and local establishments have the Fish Lake Wildlife Area map and a map of Burnett County www.bcrca.com. This is also a good location for night photography. There are some nice trees near Hickerson Road that are good foreground subjects for nighttime photography.

Fall Photography: September, October, November

The north to south distance of Minnesota is no more apparent than during the fall. Color starts turning early in September along the Canadian border and finishes along the Iowa border in late October. The trick is to get the color at its peak. Maples and Oak provide the bulk of woodland color, while Sumacs, Asters, and grasses give color to the prairie. Grand landscapes catch the eye but are hard to capture photographically. Look for those isolated leaves or patterns that scream “fall color”.

Traditionally the north shore of Lake Superior and the Superior National Forest are the places to photograph fall color. Any of the north shore state parks have potential. Weekends are crowded so try to plan a couple of days during the week for a quieter time. A detailed ½” = 1-mile map of the Superior National Forest is for sale at Forest Service offices, visitor centers at state parks in the area and some local establishments. You can also buy it online at the National Forest Store. www.nationalforeststore.com

Fall color in southern Minnesota peaks in October. Rice Lake, Nerstrand Big Woods and Myre-Big Island State Parks are great places if you missed the fall color up north. Locations for fall color are very well covered by the Minnesota tourism industry. Weekly updates are available during the season at the DNR website. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Late in the fall, look for ponds with freshly fallen leaves that still retain color. Winter birds are at feeders. Get out for the first snow of the season. Typically there is one snowfall before Thanksgiving in the metro area that is a great transition shot of late falls to winter, especially if you can find a remaining leaf or two with color. Keep your gear packed and watch the weather forecast. I like to use www.accuweather.com for my serious weather information. Enter a zip code and you can get local weather forecasts right down to the percentage chance of precipitation for each four hours time block. Cloud cover and cloud height is good information to determine what type of light you can expect. The wind speed and direction can also make or break photography of birds in flight. It’s no fun to get there and discover the birds are all taking off and landing away from you. Just before the onset of winter, color is hard to find so I like pastel shades on the prairie in the morning with frost on the plants. Good, thin gloves are a must, as are extra batteries.

Wolsfeld Woods SNA: Hennepin County-Metro D:70-C2 *

This is one of my favorite “Big Woods” forests to visit. It is close to Orono and Long Lake, MN. You park in the corner of a parking lot that belongs to a Lutheran Church. This is definitely a great place for “Big Woods” landscapes. Go in the middle of October for a forest filled with yellow Maple leaves on the forest floor and some still hanging on to the huge Maple trees. (jp) www.dnr.state.mn.us

*Locations shown after each County are taken from Minnesota: Delorme Atlas & Gazetteer ©2016. (D: page-grid)

Wood-Rill SNA: Hennepin County-Metro D:70-C2

The best time to visit this SNA is in the fall for autumn landscapes. There can be fantastic Maple color. Also on the far end of this SNA is a small lake to give some beautiful big woods fall reflections. (jp) www.dnr.state.mn.us

Brownsville: Houston County-SE D:87-C8

An area with potential for swan photography is on the Minnesota side of the river south of Brownsville. There is a peninsula near Brown's Island that looks good for morning shots. A portable bag blind that you can take cover under combined with extreme patience should eventually get some good Tundra Swan pictures. www.brownsville.mn.org

Beaver Falls County Park: Renville County-SW D:74-B1

Beaver Falls County Park in Renville County has nice fall color and a whitewater stream. It's located west of Morton on County Road 2, west of US 71. www.co.renville.mn.us

Mound Creek County Park: Brown County-SW D:74-D1

Mound Creek County Park is adjacent to Cottonwood County's Red Rock Falls County Park, and is two miles from the Jeffers Petroglyphs historic site. There is a nice waterfall and a lakeside prairie that offers photo opportunities in early autumn. www.co.brown.mn.us

Mary Schmidt Crawford Woods SNA: Wright County-Central D:70-B1

Located near Buffalo, MN, this is a great place for some fall color. There are many maples, a great place for "Big Woods" landscape. (jp) www.dnr.state.mn.us

Banning State Park & Sandstone Area: Pine County-Central D:56-D3

Banning State Park in Pine County has fall color scenery, the Kettle River, and Wolf Creek Falls. Big Springs Falls near Sandstone and Robinson Park in Sandstone are great locations also. All offer possible sightings of Deer, Black Bear, Ruffed Grouse and Pileated Woodpeckers. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Crane Meadows NWR: Morrison County-Central D:62-A2-3

This refuge is located off of Highway 10 just a short distance from Little Falls, MN. Of course the name comes from the thousands of Sandhill Cranes that migrate through this area. Although I have never photographed the fall migration in this refuge because I go to Crex Meadows WMA. I go to this refuge because many of the Cranes nest here. I am always looking for images of the "Colts" but I have had no luck seeing them. This is an oak-savanna prairie, so I have taken lots of landscape images here. There are some prairie grasses and flowers in this prairie but from my visits I know of better places for prairie flowers. If you have never been to this prairie, it is just a short drive from the metro area. It is a nice refuge to explore, with a nice trail system. (db) www.fws.gov/refuge/crane-meadow

Caribou Trail: Cook County-NE D:37-D7

Fall Color Drive: Start at County Road 4 just north of Lutsen off Highway 61. Wind past Caribou Lake and take Honeymoon Trail 164 to the left (Forest Road). When you come to Sawbill Trail (County Road 2), take another right on County Road 7 to reach Highway 61 at Tofte. www.visitcookcounty.com

Grand Marais: Cook County-NE D:38-C1

Fall Color Drive: Start at 5th Avenue West, just off Highway 61. Take a left at County Road 7, by the Hospital. When you get to County Road 45, take a right and continue up to Pike Lake. Return to Grand Marais on the same road or take a right on County Road 42 and another right on County road 7 to reach Highway 61 close to Cascade State Park. www.ci.grand-marais.mn.us

Gunflint Trail: Cook County-NE D:38-C1

Fall Color Drive: Start at County Road 12 just off Highway 61 in Grand Marais. For a scenic side trip, take Maple Hill Drive (County Road 54). Return to the Gunflint Trail and continue north to County Road 60. For a short tour take a right or left at County Road 14 (either way will take you back to Highway 61. For a longer tour, turn left onto County Road 14 then left on to Forest Road 140 (with a scenic side trip on the bogus Lake Road (Forest Road 140G) Back on Forest Road 140, two miles after passing Trout Lake, you will reconnect with the Gunflint Trail. A left turn will take you back to Grand Marias. www.visitcookcounty.com

Arrowhead Trail: Cook County-NE D:38-C3

Fall Color Drive: Take the Arrowhead Trail (County Road 16) off Highway 61 in Hoveland. Watch for Jackson Lake Road where you will take a right, follow the road for a bit and then a left onto Otter Lake Road which will connect with Arrowhead Trail. Make a side trip off Arrowhead Road on Tower Road and on the Hoveland Road Lookout Road before returning to Highway 61.

Oberg Mountain and LeVeaux Mountain Trailheads: NE D:37-D7

Both of these locations are served by the same parking area on Onion River Road (Forest Road 336) on Highway 61, 4.7 miles north of Tofte. Proceed up the unpaved Onion River Road about 2.1 miles to the parking lot.

Grand Portage State Park: Cook County-NE D:39-B5

Mixed hardwood forest covers most of the park and is dominated by Paper Birch and Quaking Aspen, with occasional White Spruce, White Pine, Balsam Fir, White Cedar, Poplar, and Black Ash. Visitors will also see Mountain Ash, Mountain Maple, Redosier Dogwood, and Thimbleberry. The slopes and crest of the large ridge are boreal forest communities containing abundant groundcover that includes Clintonia, Bunchberry, Wild Sarsaparilla, and Club Mosses and Ferns. The forested areas provide a beautiful backdrop to the rugged beauty of the falls and the shoreline of the Pigeon River that runs through the park. This is a great location for fall colors. www.dnr.state.mn.us

Judge C R Magney State Park: Cook County -NE D:38-C3

Early fall is a good time to observe migrating Hawks as they congregate along the shore of Lake Superior. Large White Spruce graces the campground and other upland areas. Asters and Goldenrod add to the fiery colors of autumn.
www.dnr.state.mn.us

Superior Hiking Trail: Lake & Cook Counties-NE

The Superior Hiking Trail Association maintains a trail along the North Shore ridgeline from Duluth to the Canadian border. They publish a guidebook and maps for all sections of the trail. Consider joining the SHTA so you can get their quarterly newsletter. One of the more popular fall hikes is around Oberg Mountain with several views of Lake Superior and nearby hillsides. Guides, maps and clothing items are sold at their store and office on Highway 61 in Two Harbors. Information about guided hikes and more is on their web site: <http://www.shta.org/>

Wisconsin locations:

Crex Meadows Wildlife Area: Grantsburg WI- Central D:65-B4

Each fall, Sandhill Cranes use the wetlands at Crex Meadows to stage their annual migration. Some years, there have been as many as 20,000 cranes stopping here during October and early November. The visitor center offers maps and current information on the cranes. Sunrise and sunset are both good for photography. The cranes spend the night in the marsh and leave just after sunrise for their daily foraging in nearby cornfields. They return to the marsh just before sunset. Go there at the time of the October full moon and you'll likely find a few MNPC members trying for that shot of cranes flying in front of the full moon.

Goose Island: LaCrosse WI -SW D:87-C8

Goose Island is south of LaCrosse and contains a habituated Deer herd. They can come very close so any normal lens, and a good eye, will give you a good composition.

Conclusion: Thinking about new locations:

Remember the places you traveled in the past winter, spring and summer. How would you assess the possibilities of those locations for fall photography? There is probably a new place you would like to explore. Wherever it is, it is on someone's list. Familiar places also change from year to year and offer new challenges with each visit. Are you accumulating a library and a list of resources that give you a greater appreciation and knowledge of the natural world? There are nature stories waiting to be told with your camera. Be open to the opportunities.

Please send any update to location listed or information on new locations to [mnnaturephotographyclub@gmail.com/](mailto:mnnaturephotographyclub@gmail.com)

New Location Worksheet

Your Name: _____ Date Visited: _____

Email: _____

New Location Name: _____

Nearest Town: _____ County: _____

General Description:

Website: _____

Ownership: _____

What to Photograph:

Season/Month: _____ Time of Day: _____

GPS: _____

Delorme Atlas & Gazetteer: Page: _____ Grid: _____

Facilities:

Parking: Y N Toilets: Y N Fee: Y N \$ _____ Hours: _____

Please send information on new locations to:
mnnaturephotographyclub@gmail.com

Part Two: Minnesota Locations by County

Minnesota

National Wildlife Refuge

www.fws.gov

Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge: Western Minnesota Canada to Iowa

Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife & Fish Refuge: Lake Pepin to Iowa Border

Aitkin County: Central

National Wildlife Refuge

www.fws.gov/refuge/rice_lake

Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge

MN State Parks

www.dnr.state.mn.us

Savanna Portage State Park

Anoka County: Metro

MN Wildlife Management Areas

www.dnr.state.mn.us

Carlos Avery Wildlife Management Area

www.dnr.state.mn.us

MN Scientific and Natural Areas

Boot Lake Scientific and Natural Area

Helen Allison Savanna Scientific and Natural Area

Blaine Preserve Scientific and Natural Area

Blaine Airport Rich Fen Scientific and Natural Area

County Parks

www.anokacountyparks.com

Bunker Hills Regional Park, Coon Rapids

Cedar Creek Conservation Area

Columbus Lake Conservation Area

Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park, Coon Rapids

Lake George Regional Park

Martin-Island Linwood Lake Regional Park

Mississippi West Regional Park

Rice Lake Chain of Lake Park Reserve, West of Centerville

Riverfront Regional Park

Sandhill Crane Nature Area

Nature Centers

Springbrook Nature Center, Fridley

www.springbrooknature.org

Wango Nature Center, Lino Lakes

www.anokacounty.us/

Becker County: NW

National Wildlife Refuge

www.fws.gov/refuge/tamarac/hamden_slough

Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge

Hamden-Slough National Wildlife Refuge

Nature Conservancy

www.nature.org/minnesota

Zimmerman Prairie

Beltrami County: NW

MN State Parks

Lake Bemidji State Park

MN State Recreation Area

Big Bog State Recreation Area

MN Scientific and Natural Areas

Pennington Bog Scientific and Natural Area

Big Stone County: SW

MN State Parks

Big Stone Lake State Park

Blue Earth County: SW

MN State Parks

Minneopa State Park

Carlton County: NE

MN State Parks

Jay Cooke State Park

Carver County: Metro

MN State Recreation Area

Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area

MN Scientific and Natural Areas

Seminary Fen Scientific and Natural Area

National Wildlife Refuges

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Chaska Unit

Rapid Lake Unit

Three Rivers Parks District

Carver Park Reserve

Nature Centers

Lowry Nature Center, Victoria

Arboretums

Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, Chanhassen

www.threeriversparks.org

www.victoria.mn.us

www.arboretum.unm.edu

Chisago County: Central

MN State Parks

Interstate State Park

Wild River State Park

Chippewa County: SW

Nature Conservancy

Chippewa Prairie

MN Historical Society

Lac Qui Parle Mission, Montevideo

www.mnhs.org

Clay County: NW

MN State Parks

Buffalo River State Park

Nature Conservancy

www.nature.org/minnesota

Bluestem Prairie Scientific and Natural Area, Near Moorhead

Margheria Preserve Audubon Prairie

Clearwater County: Central

MN State Parks

Itasca State Park

Crow Wing County: Central

MN State Parks

Crow Wing State Park

MN Scientific and Natural Areas

Cuyuna County Scientific and Natural Area

Nature Conservancy

Paul Bunyan Savanna, Brainerd

Cook County: NE

National Forests

Superior National Forest

www.fs.usda.gov/superior

MN State Parks

Temperance River State Park

Cascade River State Park

Grand Portage State Park

Judge C R Magney State Park

Nature Conservancy

www.nature.org/minnesota

Pigeon River Cliffs, Near Hovland

Susie Island: Francis Lee Jaques Memorial Preserve

Nature Centers

Sugarloaf Cove Nature Center, Schroeder

www.sugarloafnorthshore.org

Chik-Wauk Museum & Nature Center, Grand Marais

www.chikwauk.com

Cottonwood County: SW

MN Historical Society

Jeffers Petroglyphs

Nature Conservancy

Red Rock Prairie

County Parks

Red Rock Dells County Park

www.co.cottonwood.mn.us/county.../parks

Dakota County: Metro

National Wildlife Refuges

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Black Dog Preserve

MN Scientific and Natural Areas

Black Dog Preserve Scientific and Natural Area, Burnsville

Hastings Scientific and Natural Area, Hastings

Hastings Sand Coulee Scientific and Natural Area, Hastings

Chimney Rock Scientific and Natural Area

Pine Bend Bluff Scientific and Natural Area

Natural History Study Area

Katharine Ordway Natural History Study Area, Inver Grove Heights

Nature Centers

Carpenter St Croix Nature Center, Hastings

Dodge Nature Center, West St Paul

www.carpenternaturecenter.org

www.dodgenaturecenter.org

County Parks

www.co.dakota.mn.us/parks

Lebanon Hills Regional Park

Spring Lake Park Reserve

Thompson County Park

Lake Byllesby Regional Park

Miesville Ravine Park Reserve

Whitetail Woods Regional Park

Big River Regional Trails

Mississippi River Regional Trails

Dodge County: SE

MN Scientific and Natural Areas

Iron Horse Prairie Scientific and Natural Area, Near Hayfield

Douglas County: Central

MN State Parks

Lake Carlos State Park

Nature Conservancy

Staffanson Prairie

Fillmore County: SE

MN State Parks

Forestville-Mystery Cave State Park

Freeborn County: SE

MN State Parks

Myre-Big Island State Park

Goodhue County: SE

MN State Parks

Frontenac State Park

MN Scientific and Natural Areas

River Terrace Scientific and Natural Area

City Parks

Red Wing: Colville Park

Hennepin County: Metro

National Wildlife Refuges

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

 Bloomington Ferry Unit

 Long Meadows Unit

MN State Parks:

Fort Snelling State Park

MN Scientific and Natural Areas

Wolsfeld Woods Scientific and Natural Area

Wood-Rill Scientific and Natural Area

Three Rivers Parks District

 Baker Park Reserve

 Bryant Lake Regional Park

 Cedar Lake Farm Regional

 Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park

 Crow-Hassan Park Reserve

 Eagle Lake Regional Park

 Elm Creek Park Reserve

 Fish Lake Regional Park

 French Regional Park

 Hyland Lake Park Reserve

 Lake Minnetonka Regional Park

 Lake Rebecca Park Reserve

 Noerenberg Gardens

 North Mississippi Regional Park

 Spring Lake Regional Park

 The Landing

www.threeriversparks.org

Nature Centers

Woodlake Nature Center, Richfield
Westwood Hills Nature Center, St Louis Park
Richardson Nature Center, Bloomington
Eastman Nature Center, Osseo

..... www.cityofrichfield.org
www.westwoodhillsnaturecenter.org
www.threeriversparks.org
www.threeriversparks.org
www.minneapolisparcs.org

Minneapolis Parks

Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden: Theodore Wirth Park
Quaking Bog: Theodore Wirth Park
Minnehaha Falls Regional Park

Bloomington Parks

Central Park-Nine Mile Creek

Houston County: SE

MN State Parks

Beaver Creek State Park

MN Scientific and Natural Areas

Mound Prairie Scientific and Natural Area

Nature Centers

International Owl Center, Houston
Houston Nature Center, Houston

www.internationalowlcenter.org
www.houstonnaturecenter.com/

Hubbard County: NW

MN Scientific and Natural Areas

La Salle Lake Scientific and Natural Area

Itasca County: NE

MN State Parks

Scenic State Park
Hill Annex State Park
Schoolcraft State Park

MN Scientific and Natural Areas

Lost 40 Scientific and Natural Area

Jackson County: SW

MN State Parks

Kilen Woods State Park

Nature Conservancy

Lindgren-Traeger Bird Sanctuary

Kandiyohi County: Central

MN State Parks

Sibley State Park

MN Scientific and Natural Areas

Regal Meadows Scientific and Natural Area

Nature Conservancy

Moe Woods

Kittson County: NW

MN State Parks

Lake Bronson State Park

Nature Conservancy

Wallace C Dayton Conservation & Wildlife Area

Norway Dunes

Lac Qui Parle County: Central

National Wildlife Refuge

Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge

MN State Parks

Lac que Parle State Park

Nature Conservancy

Plover Prairie

Lake County: NE

National Parks

Voyageurs National Park

www.nps.gov/voya

National Forests

Superior National Forest

www.fs.usda.gov/superior

MN State Parks

George H Crosby-Manitou State Park

Gooseberry Falls State Park

Split Rock State Park and Lighthouse

Tettegouche State Park

Nature Conservancy

Upper Manitou Forest Preserve, Near Finland

Lake of the Woods County: NW

MN State Parks

Zippel Bay State Park

LeSueur County: SW

Nature Conservancy

Ottawa Bluffs

Lincoln County: SW

Nature Conservancy

Hole-in-the Mountain Prairie, Near Lake Benton

Lyon County: SW

MN State Parks

Camden State Park

Marshall County: NW

National Wildlife Refuge

Agassiz Dunes National Wildlife Refuge

www.fws.gov/agassiz

MN State Parks

Old Mill State Park

Nature Centers

Agassiz Audubon Center, Warren

www.agassizaudubon.blogspot.com

McLeod County: Central

Nature Conservancy

Schaefer Prairie, Near Glencoe

Mille Lacs County: Central

National Wildlife Refuge

Mille Lacs National Wildlife Refuge

www.fws.gov/refuge/mille_lacs

MN State Parks

Father Hennepin State Park

Mille Lacs Kathio State Park

Morrison County: Central

National Wildlife Refuge

Crane Meadows National Wildlife Refuge

www.fws.gov/refuge/crane_meadows

MN State Parks

Charles A Lindbergh State Park

Nature Conservancy

Lake Alexander Reserve

Mower County: SE

MN State Park

Lake Louise State Park

Nature Centers

J C Hormel Nature Center, Austin

www.hormeinnaturecenter.org/

Murray County: SW

MN State Parks

Lake Shetek State Park

Nicollet County: SW

MN State Parks

Flandrau State Park

MN Scientific and Natural Areas

Kasota Prairie Scientific and Natural Area

County Parks

Seven Mile Creek County Park: St Peter

www.co.nicollet.mn.us/349/parks-trails

Norman County: NW

Nature Conservancy

Frenchman's Bluff SNA

Twin Valley Prairie SNA

Olmsted County: SE

Nature Centers

Quarry Hill Nature Center: Rochester

www.qhnc.org

Cascade Meadows Wetlands & Environ Ctr: Rochester www.cascademeadows.org/

County Parks:

Oxbow County Park: north of Byron

www.co.olmsted.mn.us/pw/parks

Otter Tail County: Central

MN State Parks

Maplewood State Park

Glendalough State Park

Nature Conservancy

Seven Sisters Prairie, Otter Tail County

Pine County: Central

MN State Parks

Banning State Park

Pipestone County: SW

MN State Parks

Split Rock Creek State Park

Polk County: NW

National Wildlife Refuge

Rydell National Wildlife Refuge
Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge

www.fws.gov/refuge/rydell/glacial_ridge

MN Scientific and Natural Areas

Pembina Trail Preserve SNA
Malmberg Prairie SNA

Nature Conservancy

Pankratz Memorial Prairie
Standness Prairie

Pope County: Central

Nature Conservancy

Ordway Prairie

Ramsey County: Metro

MN Scientific and Natural Areas

Grey Cloud Dunes Scientific and Natural Area
Pig's Eye Heron Rookery Scientific and Natural Area

Regional Parks

www.ramseycounty.us/residents/park-recreation

Bald Eagle-Otter Lakes Regional Park
Battle Creek Regional Park
Long Lake Regional Park
Tony Schmidt Regional Park
Vadnais-Snail Lakes Regional Park
Vadnais-Sucker Lakes Regional Park

St Paul Parks

www.stpaul.gov/parks/

Hidden Halls Regional Park
Crosby Farm Regional Park
Lilydale Regional Park
Cherokee Regional Park

Nature Centers

Harriet Alexander Nature Center, Roseville
Maplewood Nature Center, Maplewood
Tamarack Nature Center, White Bear Lake

www.ci.roseville.mn.us/

www.maplewoodnaturecenter.com/

[www.parks.co.ramsey.mn.us/tamarack /](http://www.parks.co.ramsey.mn.us/tamarack/)

Redwood County: SW

MN State Parks

Fort Ridgely State Park

Nature Conservancy

Wahpeton Prairie

Rice County: SE

MN State Parks

Nerstrand Big Woods State Park

Sakatah State Park

MN Scientific and Natural Areas

Prairie Creek Woods Scientific and Natural Area

Cannon River Trout Lily Scientific and Natural Area

Nature Centers

River Bend Nature Center: Faribault

County Parks

www.co.rice.mn.us/parks

Caron Park- West of Nerstrand Big Woods SP

Cannon River Wilderness Area- South of Northfield

Rock County: SW

National Wildlife Refuges

Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge

MN State Parks

Blue Mound State Park

Roseau County: NW

MN State Parks

Hayes Lake State Park

Scott County: Metro

National Wildlife Refuges

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Louisville Swamp Unit

MN Scientific and Natural Areas

Savage Fen Scientific and Natural Area

Three Rivers Parks District

Cleary Lake Regional Park

Murphy-Hanrehan Park Reserve

City Parks

Veterans Memorial Park, Shakopee

www.threeriversparks.org/

Sherburne County: Central

National Wildlife Refuges

Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge

.....www.fws.gov/refuge/sherburne

Sibley County: SW

Nature Centers

Ney Nature Center, Henderson

www.neycenter.org/

Stearns County: Central
Nature Conservancy
Roscoe Prairie

Steele County: SW
MN State Parks
Rice Lake State Parks

St Louis County: NE
National Forests
Superior National Forest
MN State Parks
Lake Vermillion-Suodan Underground Mine State Park
Bear Head Lake State Park
McCarthy State Park
MN Wildlife Management Areas
Sax-Zim Bog: Important Bird Area
Nature Centers
North American Bear Center, Ely
International Wolf Center, Ely
Hartley Nature Center, Duluth
Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve, Duluth
Vince Shute Wildlife Sanctuary

www.sax-zim.org/

www.bear.org/

www.wolf.org/

www.hartleynature.org/

www.hawkridge.org/

www.americanbear.org/

Swift County: SW
MN State Parks
Lac Que Parle State Park

Wabasha County: SE
MN State Parks
Carley State Park
MN Scientific and Natural Areas
Zumbro Falls Woods Scientific and Natural Area
Nature Conservancy
Weaver Dune Scientific and Natural Area, Near Kellogg
Nature Centers
National Eagle Center, Wabasha

www.nationaleaglecenter.org/

Washington County: Metro

MN State Parks

Afton State Park

William O'Brien State Park

MN Scientific and Natural Areas

Fall Creek Scientific and Natural Area

Lost Valley Prairie Scientific and Natural Area

St Croix Savanna Scientific and Natural Area

Grey Cloud Dunes Scientific and Natural Area

Nature Centers

Oakdale Discovery & Nature Preserve, Oakdale

Lee and Rose Warner Nature Center, Stillwater

www.oakdale.mn.us/
www.warnernaturecenter.org

Regional Parks

Pine Point Regional Park

County Parks

Big Marine Park Reserve

Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park

Hardwood Creek Regional Trail

Lake Elmo Park Reserve

Pine Point Regional Park

Point Douglas Park

Square Lake Park

St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park

www.co.washington.mn.us/

Wilkins County: NW

MN Scientific and Natural Areas

Richard M & Mathilde Rice Elliott SNA

Western Prairie SNA

Nature Conservancy

Ann Gronseth Prairie

Foxhome Prairie

Town Hall Prairie

Winona County: SE

MN State Parks

Whitewater State Park

John A Latsch State Park

Great River Bluff State Park

Wright County: Central

MN State Parks

Lake Maria State Park

MN Scientific and Natural Areas

Mary Schmidt Crawford Woods SNA

Monticello Swans

Mississippi Drive Park

Ellison Park

www.monticellochamber.com/

Yellow Medicine County: SW

MN State Parks

Upper Sioux Agency State Park

Part Three: Informational Articles

“Where to Go to Find Wildlife” by John Pennoyer

When doing a “where to go” type of information booklet, botanical and landscape subjects are always the easiest because the subjects don’t move (although botanical subjects will vary in abundance because of weather and season). On the other hand, wildlife has wings and feet, and often roams extensively. One week a location can be great and the next week not one of the species can be found. That is just the way wildlife photography is. These are some locations I go to for certain species of wildlife.

Waterfowl: ducks, geese etc.

Winter: In Minnesota any open water will hold waterfowl. It is as simple as that. Most of the over-wintering waterfowl are Mallards, Canada Geese etc. but many of the migrating species will spend the winter here if water is open and available food. Common Goldeneyes, Mergansers, Lesser Scaup and Redheads are just some of the species that will over-winter in Minnesota.

Veteran Park: Shakopee From January to March, I make 10-12 visits here. While mostly I see the common species, every year I get images of the hard to get species. For me the colder it is the better for all waterfowl photography. The ice eliminates much of the open water and makes the waterfowl congregate closer to the photographer.

Colville Park, Red Wing and Reads Landing, south of Red Wing: These are well known Bald Eagle spots but Colville Park is also a great place for waterfowl.

Bass Ponds: If there is any open water, these ponds seem to be a magnet for waterfowl. This is part of the Minnesota Valley National Refuge system.

Monticello Park: Mainly known for the Trumpeter Swans, this is also a great spot to photograph ducks as they fly along the river!

Spring Migration (all of the above mentioned are good for this also)

For me, I really like a normal spring warm-up. As the shoreline gets warm, the ice will melt from shore and when the first 40-50 feet of shore line is clear of ice, the early migrants will be much closer to the photographer.

City Lakes: I much prefer other lakes where I can use my blinds and decoys, but any city lake will hold early migrants.

Loring Park: Minneapolis: The little pond at Loring Park is a magnet for Wood Ducks. I go there once every year mainly for flight shots of the Woodies. But the Woodies are semi-wild because so many people feed them, I do not participate in that, but it is not against the law, so use your own discretion.

Crex Meadows and Fish Lake WMA: For me, these are probably the best place for migrating waterfowl. You can use blinds, decoys, calls etc. without any problems, just do not disturb any nesting waterfowl. Also you can shoot from your vehicle!

Any Lake: All lakes will hold migrating waterfowl if it has a food source. They use this area for a resting spot before moving further north. Just find a lake close to where you live or work!

Trumpeter Swans

Two of the best places are Monticello Park on the Mississippi River (also at the public boat landing) and Hudson, WI, but Veterans Park in Shakopee is now getting well over a hundred Trumpeters that over-winter at this site.

Wintering Bald Eagles

From Red Wing to Wabasha on the Mississippi, especially at Colville Park (Red Wing) and Reads Landing!

Eastern Wild Turkey

They have become so common now and almost a nuisance to many homeowners and businesses. Years ago, I used decoys, turkey calls and blinds but now I only need to do that when I am actually out turkey hunting. Just find a local park that has them and you can usually get some Strutting Tom images! But you do need to find those that have never been hunted!

Whitetail Deer

First of all you need to find a location where they have never been hunted or hunted only on a limited basis. Some of the state parks that have a healthy deer herd are Kathio State Park, Father Hennepin State Park (they have a few white deer) and Ft. Snelling State Park. Also many community/regional type parks will have a healthy population of Whitetails!

“Photographing the Night Sky” by John Pennoyer

Digital photography has certainly made photographing the night sky much easier than it was in the film days! That is not saying that it still does not have its challenges. I know that everything that you are told or read it will say; that the photographer must be in a “dark” area with no light pollution! I certainly agree with that statement, but like most of you, I live in the Twin Cities and when the conditions are right for some night photography, I cannot just go “up north” 250 miles to a “dark” area of the state at the drop of a hat. So I have learned to live with light pollution in my night photography. Still, I do all I can do to minimize it! Some of the areas that I go to are Sherburne NWR near Zimmerman, MN and Fish Lake WMA and Crex Meadows WMA in Western WI near Grantsburg, WI. All of these are close enough for an evening of star or Aurora shooting. For the Aurora it has to be a KP 5 or higher to get any kind of dancing lights. There are many other locations within 100 miles of the Twin Cities that will allow the photographer a nice evening to shoot the night sky. Here are some tips for finding locations to shoot the night sky.

Foreground

This is my personal bias, but I find the night sky kind of a boring subject (excluding auroras), so my goal is to always find a foreground to add interest in my images. The foreground could be star and/or aurora reflections on a calm lake, old buildings, trees with unique shapes etc. Scout out areas during the daytime to look for potential foregrounds for night photography!

North

When scouting a new area I always have my compass with me, I am always checking towards the “North”, so when scouting I am using my compass but looking for a foreground that will add to my image in the northerly direction. Especially if going to shoot star trails I like to have Polaris in my star trail image. Of course you can shoot in any direction you desire. However it will affect the pattern of star trails and of course they call them Northern Lights for a reason.

Light Pollution

Do your best to minimize light pollution in your image. Try not to shoot towards a town. If at Crex Meadows, Grantsburg has the worst light pollution in that area. Many times if in a hilly area, getting low will help avoid the skyline where most of the light pollution exists. Also you can do a lot of post-processing to minimize the light pollution just by using the tonal controls in your post-processing software.

Vehicles and Airplanes

This is light pollution that can really ruin your images! For vehicles, try to find a location that eliminates a road. At night, those headlights really shine through the night sky. It may require you to walk away from your vehicle to set up for your night shoot. Air traffic is another matter. There is always less air traffic (and vehicles for that matter) from Midnight to 3:00AM, but all it takes is one plane! When that does happen, I use Photoshop to clone out the airplane trail. Of course, if you do clone out a vehicle or airplane trails that would make the image ineligible for nature competition.

General Night Shooting Tips

Sturdy Tripod: It goes without saying, for long exposures a good sturdy tripod is essential!

Cable/Remote Release: You must keep your hands off the camera. If you do not have either one of the releases, use your self-timer. Be careful with this however because many of the cameras will flash a light during the self-timer and that light may get in your image!

Composition: Move the camera to get your composition and “lock it down”!

Focus: Generally focus to infinity if your foreground subject is more than 100 feet away. You must get comfortable with the infinity setting on your camera. Practice in the daytime so you know the exact location of the infinity setting. On some lenses the infinity mark is not accurate.

Aperture setting: I almost always shoot “wide open”, which for me with my lenses is F 2.8.

Shutter Speed: This could be anywhere from 5 seconds to 30 seconds, totally depending on how much light there is from the moon and light pollution.

ISO: For general night shooting, I would recommend to start at ISO 1600. You may change the setting based on the first image you take. The darker the night, the higher the ISO will be for a starting point. With moonlight or light pollution you may find starting at ISO 1250 may be sufficient.

Start by taking an image: Example: ISO is 1250 @ 15 seconds

- If image too dark (under-exposed), add more light. Shutter speed can go up to 30 seconds and can increase ISO.
- If image too bright (over-exposed), take away light. I almost always decrease ISO.

Expose to the right: Because of “digital noise” I try to be on the brighter side without blowing out highlights, more pixels that equals less noise issues!

Night Photography Resources:

Photography Night Sky, Jennifer Wu & James Martin
Night Sky-A Field Guide to the Constellations, Jonathan Poppele

“Exploring the North Shore of Lake Superior Backroads” **by John Gregor** (Spring 2013)

This article is particularly written for North Shore foamers; those of us who foam at the mouth for a chance to spend time and photograph on the North Shore—and I count myself in that group. There is no better time than experiencing an early morning sunrise, or photographing the fall moon as it rises on a mirror still lake, or capturing a foggy morning in late summer. However, from time to time even the most rabid foamer likes to get off the well-worn Highway 61 and explore the inland lakes, streams, and woods. This article is for those that are interested in looking beyond the shore of Lake Superior for photographic opportunities.

Last spring I gave myself the assignment to find a back road route from Grand Marais to Two Harbors without traveling on Highway 61. The images accompanying this article are from that trip.

Here is the route I took:

Leaving from Grand Marais and traveling south to Two Harbors, take the Gunflint Trail (County Road 12) out of Grand Marais. About 2 miles west of Grand Marais turn left onto Devil Track Road (County Road 8). Devil Track Road turns into Forest 57 Rd. Follow it to Bally Creek Road (Forest Road 158), turn right and head north to the end of Bally Creek Road where it T's with The Grade (Forest Road 153). Turn left and head west-south. Follow The Grade to the Sawbill Trail (County Road 2). Turn left onto the Sawbill Trail and follow that until you come to 6 Hundred Road (Forest Road 166). Turn right and head west on 6 Hundred Road until you come to the end where it will T with Cramer Road (County Rd 7).

If you are hungry at this point, turn right and go about 1-2 miles to the Trestle Inn on the left side of the road, which is a great place to get burgers and a beer or root beer. To continue towards Two Harbors, make a left at the T of 6 Hundred Road and Cramer Road. Follow Cramer Road south/west to State Highway 1 in Finland. Turn left onto Highway 1 follow that to the top of the hill on the east side of Finland where you will turn right onto Lax Lake Rd (County Rd 31). Follow the Lax Lake Road south/west to Forest Road 11/4. Turn left onto Forest Road 11, follow that a short distance (about 1 mile) to County Rd 4 and turn right. Follow County Rd 4 to County Rd 3 (just past RR overpass) and turn right onto County Rd 3. Follow County Rd 3 to Hwy 61 just north of Two Harbors.

Here are some of the things to look for along the way:

Devil Track Lake–campground where you can pause to photograph and admire the lake. The Forest Road goes through wonderful stands of Red and White pines. Bally Creek Road dead ends at the trail head for Eagle Mountain so if you have time you may want to hike for a while. The Grade winds around and next to several lakes. There are also some streams and fields along the way worthy of photo stops. Once you get to the Sawbill Trail if it is during the fall color season you may want to consider a detour back down Honeymoon Trail which is about half way between The Grade and 6 Hundred Road on the Sawbill, on your left. During the fall color season Honeymoon Trail winds around and through some of the most spectacular maples anywhere in Minnesota. The entrance to 6 Hundred Road off the Sawbill with its distinctive bridge is a great photo opportunity too. The Cramer Road follows the Blesner Creek and one of the most scenic bogs you will find anywhere. Look for the Sonju Lake Road off the Cramer Road for a scenic little lake worthy of the side trip. County Road 3 follows the Baptism River for a short way. Look for a small dirt track on the left side of the road about 1 mile down County Road 3. This little turn off–which is kind of rugged and only fit for high clearance vehicles, leads to section of the river that the locals call “Glen Avon” a very pretty section of rapids and worth an hour or two of shooting at least.

All along this route you will find little surprises depending upon the time of the year and what is blooming.

A note about the road conditions:

Most of this route is gravel. In general the road conditions are very good. You do not need a SUV or 4-wheel drive for this trip, however you will be traveling on gravel roads.

Have fun and explore!

Part Four: Resources

Informational Websites:

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

MN Dept of Natural Resources: www.dnr.state.mn.us
MN DNR State Parks - www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/
MN DNR SNA: www.dnr.state.mn.us/snas/
E-book: MN SNA
MN DNR WMA: www.dnr.state.mn.us/wmas/
MN DNR Current Conditions www.dnr.state.mn.us/current_conditions/

Wisconsin Dept of Natural Resources

Wisconsin State Parks www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/LAND/parks/

Nature Conservancy Sites

The Nature Conservancy: National www.nature.org
The Nature Conservancy: Minnesota www.nature.org/minnesota

Minnesota Locations

Minnesota Landscape Arboretum: www.arboretum.umn.edu/
Superior Hiking Trail Association - www.shta.org/
Minnesota Tourism - www.exploreminnesota.com/

Bear Information

American Bear: www.americbear.org/

Bird Information

Minnesota Ornithologists Union: www.moumn.org/

Wildflower Information:

Minnesota Wildflowers www.minnesotawildflower.info/
Desert Wildflowers - www.desertusa.com/

Weather, Sun, Moon and Maps

Topographic Maps - www.trails.com/maps.aspx/
Minnesota Atlas and Gazetteer, www.delorme.com/
Google Earth - www.google.com/earth/index.html/
Sunrise and Sunset Data - www.usno.navy.mil/USNO/astronomicalapplications
Photography's Ephemeris www.photoephemeris.com/
Aurora Forecasts www.gi.alaska.edu/auroraforecast/
Weather Information - www.accuweather.com/

Periodicals

Outdoor Photographer Magazine

www.outdoorphotographer.com/

Photography Centers: Classes, Gallery Space & Competitions

Mpls Photo Center

www.mplsphotocenter.com

Minnesota Exposure

www.minnesotaexposure.com/

Guide and Reference Books

Minnesota

Backroads of Minnesota, Shawn Perich

Minnesota North Shore

Gentle Hikes of Minnesota's North Shore: The North Shore's Most Scenic Hikes Under 3 Miles, Ladona Tornabene, Melaina Morgan & Lisa Vogelsang

Guide to the Superior Hiking Trail

Waterfalls of the Minnesota's North Shore, Eve & Gary Walling

Wildflowers of the BWCA and the North Shore, Mark Spark Stensaas & Rick Kollath

Scientific and Natural Areas

A Guide to Minnesota's Scientific and Natural Areas, MN DNR 1999 edition (last one printed)

MNDNR E-Book: Minnesota's Scientific and Natural Areas (Sample Copy in 2016)

Nature Conservancy Sites

A Guide to Nature Conservancy's Preserves in Minnesota, 2000 edition (last one printed)

Wildflowers:

Northland Wildflowers, John B Moyle & Evelyn W. Moyle, U of M Press

Wildflowers of Minnesota, Stan Tekiela

Guide to Spring Wildflower Areas, Minnesota Native Plant Society, Twin Cities, 1996 edition

Traveler's Guide to Wildlife in Minnesota, MN DNR

Wildflowers of the Tallgrass Prairie, Sylan T Runkel & Dean M Roosa

Wild and Beautiful: Native Wildflowers of SE Minnesota ©1996, 800-828-1231, \$3.95

North Woods Wildflowers, Doug M. Ladd, Falcon Press

Orchids of the North Woods, Kim & Cindy Risen, Adventure Publications

Wildflower Guide to Wisconsin, Stan Tekiela, Adventure Publications

Native Orchids of Minnesota, Welby R Smith, MN DNR, University of Minnesota Press

What's Doin' the Bloomin'? Clayton and Michelle Oslund, Plant Pics, Duluth, MN

Wildflowers of the Northern Great Plains, Vance, Jowsey, McLean, U of M Press

Wildflowers and Weeds, Courtenay & Zimmerman, Simon & Schuster

Birds:

Birds of Minnesota State Parks, Robert B Janssen

Birds of Minnesota, Stan Tekiela

Birds of Prey of the Midwest, Stan Tekiela, Adventure Publications

Ducks and Geese of Minnesota, Stan Tekiela, Adventure Publications

Mammals:

Mammals of Minnesota, Stan Tekiela, Adventure Publications

Waterfalls:

Minnesota Waterfalls, Steve Johnson & Kenneth Belanger

A Field Guide to Waterfalls in Southern Minnesota, Bob Douglas

Waterfalls of Minnesota, Lisa Crayford

Mississippi River:

Mississippi River Companion, National Park Service

Minnesota State Parks:

Minnesota's State Parks, Anne Arthur

Birds of Minnesota State Parks, Robert B Janssen

Landscape Photography:

The Landscape Photography Field Guide, Carl Heilman II

National Audubon Society Guide to Landscape Photography, Tim Fitzharris

Nature Photography:

National Audubon Society Guide to Nature Photography, Tim Fitzharris

Photography Websites

Minnesota Photographers:

Rikk Flohr:

www.rikkflohr.com

John Gregor:

www.coldsnap.com

Craig Blacklock:

www.blacklockgallery.com

Jim Brandenburg

www.jimbrandenburg.com

Dale Bohlke:

<http://dbphotog.zenfolio.com>

Stan Tekelia:

www.naturemart.com

Ian Plant:

www.inaplant.com

Professional Photographers:

Steve Berardi:

www.photonaturalist.net

Mike Moats:

www.tinylandscapes.com

Rob Sheppard:

www.natureandphotography.com

Jeff Morgan: (former member)

www.elmstudio.com

Anne McKinnell:

www.annemckinnell.com

Michael Frye:

www.michaelfrye.com

Jennifer Wu

www.jenniferwu.com

James Martin

www.jamesbmartin.com

Denise Ippolito

www.deniseippolito.com

MNPC Members:

John Pennoyer:

www.impressionsofnature.net

Don Tredinnick:

www.frozenhikephotography.com

Ron Cleaveland:

<http://ronc.zenfolio.com>

Mariann Cyr:

<http://mcyrphoto.zenfolio.com>

Dee Hunnisett-Dritz:

www.deehdphotography.com

John LaMere:

<http://lamerephotography.zenfolio.com>

Kathy Bishop:

www.kathybishopphotography.com

Roger Williams

www.pixelsgonewild.com

Don Nadreau

www.mikesimages.smugmug.com

Photography Clubs:

Minnesota Nature Photography Club

www.minnesotanature.org

Twin Cities Area Council of Camera Clubs

www.cameracouncil.org

Photographic Society of America (PSA)

www.psa-photo.org