

Birding Opportunities at Gneiss Outcrops SNA

Gneiss Outcrops SNA, located near Granite Falls on the Minnesota River in Chippewa County protects some unique rock outcrops and river-side prairies. The unit is 234 acres. The Gneiss-outcrops, formed approximately 3.6 billion years ago, are among the oldest known rock on the earth's surface. This SNA's significance steadily increases as other outcrops along the Minnesota River are exploited for granite mining, housing, and recreational use. These pyramidal outcrops along the Glacial River Warren Valley rise to about 50 feet above the general level of the land, revealing parallel bands of gneisses of various striking colors, from pink to gray/black. The majority of the unit is prairie, with some areas of cedar and other woodlands. A small lake is located in-between two areas of outcrops, which can be a good place to observe waterfowl in an unusual setting. The very rare Great Plains prickly pear and brittle cactus can be found on the dry rock surfaces.

129 bird species have been sighted on this SNA, making it an attractive and scenic prairie birding destination. Species seen include eastern phoebes, eastern kingbirds and northern shrike. Mountain bluebird has been spotted, and other unusual species include blue-gray gnatcatcher, and red-shouldered hawk. Prairie species such as Harris's Sparrow, LeConte's Sparrow and Western Meadowlark are also found. Views are spectacular over the river valley. Look for turkey vultures, bald eagles and northern harriers soaring above the hills.

Access to the SNA is on Township Rd. 66, which runs west toward the river from County Rd. 40. There are no trails in any part of the SNA, but the boundary fences can be paralleled to get to the small lake in the NW part of the unit. Birder access is medium; some route-finding ability required, and the hiking in the hills can be strenuous.

Taxonomy, Season and Abundance Key

The names and taxonomic arrangement of species follows that of the Checklist of the Birds of Minnesota (January, 2005) prepared by the Minnesota Ornithological Union (MOU) Records Committee.

The seasons in the checklist are defined as follows:

Sp (Spring) = March, April, May
 Su (Summer) = June, July
 Fa (Fall) = August, September, October, November
 Wi (Winter) = December, January, February

Abundance codes are defined as follows:

C = Common — present, relatively easy to find
 U = Uncommon — observed, may be difficult to find
 O = Occasional — may or may not be present in any year
 R = Rare — has occurred at least once, may recur

SNA Bird Checklist	Sp	Su	Fa	Wi
<input type="checkbox"/> Snow Goose	O		O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Cackling Goose	O		O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Canada Goose	C	C	C	
<input type="checkbox"/> Wood Duck	C	C	C	
<input type="checkbox"/> Gadwall	C	O	C	
<input type="checkbox"/> American Wigeon	U		U	
<input type="checkbox"/> Mallard	C	C	C	
<input type="checkbox"/> Blue-winged Teal	U	U	U	
<input type="checkbox"/> Northern Shoveler	O		O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Green-winged Teal	U		U	
<input type="checkbox"/> Ring-necked Duck	O		O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Bufflehead	O		O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Hooded Merganser	O	O	O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Ring-necked Pheasant	C	C	C	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Wild Turkey	C	C	C	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Pied-billed Grebe	O		O	
<input type="checkbox"/> American White Pelican	C	C	C	
<input type="checkbox"/> Double-crested Cormorant	O		O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Great Blue Heron	O	O	O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Green Heron	O	O	O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Turkey Vulture	U	U	U	
<input type="checkbox"/> Bald Eagle	O		O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Northern Harrier	O		O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Sharp-shinned Hawk	O		O	

SNA Bird Checklist	Sp	Su	Fa	Wi
<input type="checkbox"/> Cooper's Hawk	O		O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Red-shouldered Hawk			O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Red-tailed Hawk	U	U	U	O
<input type="checkbox"/> American Kestrel	O	O	O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Killdeer	O	O	O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Mourning Dove	C	C	C	
<input type="checkbox"/> Black-billed Cuckoo	O			
<input type="checkbox"/> Yellow-billed Cuckoo		O	O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Great Horned Owl	O	O	O	O
<input type="checkbox"/> Barred Owl	O	O	O	O
<input type="checkbox"/> Common Nighthawk	O		O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Chimney Swift	O	O	O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Ruby-throated Hummingbird	O		O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Belted Kingfisher	O	O	O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Red-bellied Woodpecker	C	C	C	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	U	O	U	
<input type="checkbox"/> Downy Woodpecker	C	C	C	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Hairy Woodpecker	C	C	C	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Northern Flicker	C	C	C	
<input type="checkbox"/> Pileated Woodpecker	U	U	U	U
<input type="checkbox"/> Olive-sided Flycatcher	U		U	
<input type="checkbox"/> Eastern Wood-Pewee	U	U	U	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	O		O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Alder Flycatcher	O		O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Willow Flycatcher	O		O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Least Flycatcher	U		U	
<input type="checkbox"/> Eastern Phoebe	U	U	U	
<input type="checkbox"/> Great Crested Flycatcher	U	U	U	
<input type="checkbox"/> Eastern Kingbird	C	C	C	
<input type="checkbox"/> Northern Shrike			O	O
<input type="checkbox"/> Yellow-throated Vireo	O	O	O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Warbling Vireo	O	O	O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Red-eyed Vireo	C	U	C	
<input type="checkbox"/> Blue Jay	C	C	C	C
<input type="checkbox"/> American Crow	C	C	C	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Purple Martin	O	O	O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Tree Swallow	C	C	C	
<input type="checkbox"/> Northern Rough-winged Swallow	U	U	U	
<input type="checkbox"/> Bank Swallow	O	O	O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Barn Swallow	C	C	C	

SNA Bird Checklist	Sp	Su	Fa	Wi
<input type="checkbox"/> Black-capped Chickadee	C	C	C	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Red-breasted Nuthatch	O		O	
<input type="checkbox"/> White-breasted Nuthatch	C	C	C	C
<input type="checkbox"/> House Wren	C	C	C	
<input type="checkbox"/> Sedge Wren	C	C	C	
<input type="checkbox"/> Marsh Wren	O	O	O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Golden-crowned Kinglet	O		O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Ruby-crowned Kinglet	U		U	
<input type="checkbox"/> Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	U		U	
<input type="checkbox"/> Eastern Bluebird	C	C	C	
<input type="checkbox"/> Mountain Bluebird			R	
<input type="checkbox"/> Hermit Thrush	O		O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Wood Thrush	O	O	O	
<input type="checkbox"/> American Robin	C	C	C	O
<input type="checkbox"/> Gray Catbird	U	U	U	
<input type="checkbox"/> Brown Thrasher	U	U	U	
<input type="checkbox"/> European Starling	U	U	U	
<input type="checkbox"/> Cedar Waxwing	C	C	C	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Tennessee Warbler	U		U	
<input type="checkbox"/> Orange-crowned Warbler	U		U	
<input type="checkbox"/> Nashville Warbler	U		U	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yellow Warbler	U	U	U	
<input type="checkbox"/> Chestnut-sided Warbler	O		O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yellow-rumped Warbler	C		C	
<input type="checkbox"/> Blackburnian Warbler	O		O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Palm Warbler	O		O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Black-and-white Warbler	O		O	
<input type="checkbox"/> American Redstart	O		O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Ovenbird	O		O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Connecticut Warbler			O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Mourning Warbler	O		O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Common Yellowthroat	C	C	C	
<input type="checkbox"/> Wilson's Warbler	O		O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Eastern Towhee	U	U	U	
<input type="checkbox"/> American Tree Sparrow	U		U	U
<input type="checkbox"/> Chipping Sparrow	C	C	C	
<input type="checkbox"/> Clay-colored Sparrow	C	C	C	
<input type="checkbox"/> Field Sparrow	C	C	C	
<input type="checkbox"/> Vesper Sparrow	U	U	U	
<input type="checkbox"/> Lark Sparrow	U	U		
<input type="checkbox"/> Savannah Sparrow	U	U	U	
<input type="checkbox"/> Grasshopper Sparrow	O	O	O	

SNA Bird Checklist	Sp	Su	Fa	Wi
<input type="checkbox"/> Le Conte's Sparrow			U	
<input type="checkbox"/> Song Sparrow	C	C	C	
<input type="checkbox"/> Lincoln's Sparrow	C		C	
<input type="checkbox"/> Swamp Sparrow	U		U	
<input type="checkbox"/> White-throated Sparrow	C		C	
<input type="checkbox"/> Harris's Sparrow	U		U	
<input type="checkbox"/> White-crowned Sparrow	O		O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Dark-eyed Junco	C		C	U
<input type="checkbox"/> Northern Cardinal	C	C	C	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Rose-breasted Grosbeak	C	C	C	
<input type="checkbox"/> Indigo Bunting	C	C	C	
<input type="checkbox"/> Dickcissel	U	U		
<input type="checkbox"/> Bobolink	U	U	U	
<input type="checkbox"/> Red-winged Blackbird	C	U	C	
<input type="checkbox"/> Western Meadowlark	O	O	O	
<input type="checkbox"/> Common Grackle	C	C	C	
<input type="checkbox"/> Brown-headed Cowbird	C	C	U	
<input type="checkbox"/> Orchard Oriole	U	U		
<input type="checkbox"/> Baltimore Oriole	U	U	U	
<input type="checkbox"/> Purple Finch	U		U	O
<input type="checkbox"/> House Finch	U	U	U	U
<input type="checkbox"/> American Goldfinch	C	C	C	C
<input type="checkbox"/> House Sparrow	O	O	O	O

This checklist contains the names of all birds that have been documented at this site by reliable observers, including Bob Janssen, volunteer observers, as well as MOU records, and data contained in research reports. Funding for this project was provided in part by the State Wildlife Grants program administered by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Checklist layout by Jennifer Lintelmann. Persons interested in the sources used in preparation of this list may contact Project Supervisor/Nongame Specialist Katie Haws at 218-308-2641.

For more information contact DNR Information Center, 500 Lafayette Rd. St. Paul, MN 53155-4000, 651-296-6157 or toll-free 888-MIN-NDNR (646-6367).

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Gneiss Outcrops

Scientific and Natural Area

✓ BIRD Checklist



Date: _____

Weather: _____

Observers: _____

Notes: _____



MINNESOTA'S
WILD & RARE

Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare is the state's conservation action plan for protecting Minnesota's native animal species that are rare or likely to become rare in the near future.

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