

English Coulee Greenway

The English Coulee enters the City of Grand Forks near 17th Ave S. It connects with other coulee drainages, traverses the UND campus, and enters the Red River about a mile north of Riverside Dam. Considerable green space exists along the Coulee and multi-use trails are present along two segments. The habitat and bird species found here are somewhat different than that found elsewhere in the city.

Farm North of Highway 2

Access: The English Coulee passes through a farm located on the west side of Columbia Road, beginning about 1/4th mile north of US 2/Gateway Drive. Be aware that Columbia Road is heavily traveled, and there are very few places to safely park. There is a field approach along the west side of the road, and a couple of wide places along the right (east) side where one can park for a short time, taking care not to block entryways. Once safely parked, scan the Coulee area to the west.

A dam on the English Coulee, near the barns on the north end of this area, creates considerable open water in the midst of a large pasture. Canada Goose is often the most conspicuous species here. In addition, look for any species of duck, Double-crested Cormorant, and Great Blue Heron. There are records for Green Heron, Great Egret, and Snowy Egret. Gulls, especially Ring-billed, can gather in large numbers. Shorebirds that may be present include Killdeer, either species of Yellowlegs, Spotted Sandpiper, and Solitary Sandpiper.

Multi-Use Trail along English Coulee from 6th Avenue North to Gateway Drive

Access: A multi-use trail runs along the east side of the coulee. If you don't have the proper permit to park on the UND campus, park on a side street and walk along 6th Ave N to the bridge across the English Coulee. Then walk north along the multi-use trail.

The different habitat here makes it likely that a different mix of species will be seen here than in the nearby cemetery or along the Red River Greenway. Furthermore, the birds are more likely to be present near eye level. Along the coulee banks, a dense growth of boxelder is found in many places. On the other side of the trail is first a thick shrub row and then what appears to be the remnant of a nursery, Still farther along, a shelterbelt dominated by willow occurs. A housing development on the opposite side of this latter windbreak has increased the attractiveness of the area to birds, primarily because of bird feeders there.

In spring, flowering shrubs, notably plum and crabapples, attract vireos, warblers, and orioles. In fall, these same shrubs offer fruits and berries.

In the coulee and at water's edge, watch for Wood Duck, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Green Heron, Solitary Sandpiper, and Spotted Sandpiper. The first nesting record for Northern Cardinal in the Grand Forks area occurred in the large thicket behind the Wellness Center in about the year 2000. A high density of Yellow Warblers occurs from mid-May to early July. Nearer to Highway 2, Lark Sparrows nested in 1997. Other nesting species include Brown Thrasher, American Goldfinch, Chipping Sparrow, Warbling Vireo, Baltimore Oriole, and Orchard Oriole. Although most any warbler species can be found during migration, this is an especially good area to look for ground foragers such as Palm Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, and Ovenbird. Unusual winter records here include Gray Jay, Varied Thrush, Sharp-tailed Grouse, and Townsend's Solitaire.

UND Campus Area

The English Coulee runs through the University of North Dakota Campus. The entire campus can be a pleasant place to bird on weekends and between sessions. A multi-use trail runs along the west side of the Coulee from 6th Ave N to University Avenue. From there it is possible to bird southward along the coulee to the railyard.

During winter in recent years, scattering of seeds by a UND faculty member has resulted in 10-20 White-throated Sparrows overwintering on the UND campus. The best place to find these birds is the shrubbery on the south side of Chester Fritz Library. During the day, the sparrows often hang out in nearby Soaring Eagle Prairie. Harris's Sparrows have also been found there in some winters. American Robins and Cedar Waxwings can sometimes be found in a crabapple tree on the south side of the library.

In summer, watch the coulee for Wood Ducks with their broods, and listen for Chimney Swifts twittering overhead.

The campus regularly has nesting pairs of Cooper's Hawk and Merlin. Peregrine Falcons rest on the UND water tower during migration. In the fall of 2009, the nest box on the Smiley water tower was moved to the UND tower in hopes that the pair of peregrines will relocate to there.

The junipers behind the North Dakota Museum of Art recently harbored an overwintering Northern Shrike.

Multi-Use Trail along English Coulee South of DeMers Avenue

Access: From DeMers Ave, turn left on S 34th St and park at Ray Richards Golf Course. Walk east, across S 34th St, to the multi-use trail on the west side of the English Coulee. This trail goes south a little more than a mile to 17th Ave S. After crossing 11th Ave S, stay left to follow the east side of a "side coulee" to 17th Ave S. English Coulee itself runs southwestward along the e. side of Sertoma Park.

The habitat along this segment of the coulee is different than that found north of 6th Ave N. Early on, the coulee bank is dominated by Russian olive. After passing the condominiums on your right, a mixed-species shelterbelt occurs to the west of the multi-use trail. An unpaved trail can be taken down the center of much of this shelterbelt. This is a good place for migrant passerines including various thrushes. A Whip-poor-will was once found there. After crossing 11th Ave S, Altru Hospital is soon on your left. Next is a thick understory of red osier dogwood that occurs in a green ash windbreak. A heavy cattail growth occurs along most of this stretch of Coulee.

Nesting species along the coulee include Wood Duck, Mallard, Cedar Waxwing, Common Yellowthroat, and Song Sparrow. Purple Martins and Barn Swallows are easy to find here.

During spring migration, watch for American Bittern, Sora, and Marsh Wren. Blooming shrubs are especially good places to find vireos and warblers, often near eye-level. Watch also for Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks.

Feeders along the Coulee have provided CBC records for Song and White-throated Sparrows. The first Eurasian Collared-Dove found on a North Dakota CBC was on the Coulee, near 14th Ave.

After crossing 11th Ave S, Sertoma Park lies to the southwest and offers additional opportunities for birding.