

## Greater Grand Forks Greenway

The Greenway is the area along the Red and Red Lake Rivers that lies between the permanent dikes erected after the flood of 1997. Visit [www.grandforksgov.com/greenway](http://www.grandforksgov.com/greenway), to learn more about the Greenway and to download maps showing multi-use trails and access points. Approximately 20 miles of hard-surfaced, multi-use trails are available for hiking and biking. In addition, unpaved trails are often present closer to the river that provide additional birding opportunities for the more adventuresome. A city map will be useful in navigating the two cities.

Some birders prefer to bird the Greenway from their bicycles with the loop between the North Pedestrian Bridge and the Pat Owens Pedestrian Bridge being particularly popular. Others bird one segment at a time, driving to each access point of interest. Each segment can easily take 1-2 hours to cover. On the North Dakota side, three areas within the Greenway can be birded from an automobile: Riverside Park, Lincoln Drive Park, and the Lincoln Golf Course parking area.

Visitors to Grand Forks/East Grand Forks can camp at the Red River State Recreation Campground, located between US 2 and the commercial area of East Grand Forks, MN. A BIRDS OF THE GREENWAY Checklist is available at the campground office located on the south side of the campground. This checklist provides information on the seasonal occurrences and relative abundances of the approximately 250 species regularly found in the Greenway, which for checklist purposes includes the East Grand Forks Sewage Lagoons. The list also denotes nesting species.

When enjoying the Greenways, it should be appreciated that what we increasingly regard as wonderful public space came about after one of the greatest disasters this country has experienced. After the flood of 1997, numerous homeowners were bought out to make way for the dikes and flood walls that were located far enough back from the river to be stable and defensible. The properties of many owners had extended all the way to the river's edge. Today it is often hard to imagine the homes and yards that used to be here, but the evidence is still there in the trees and shrubs that were left behind. These add interest to the Greenway and support a greater diversity of birds than would otherwise be present.

The Greenway will evolve over time. This is especially true of the space between the bike paths and the river, which will be allowed to become reforested. Stands of cottonwoods, willow, green ash, and box elder are already becoming apparent as of 2009. These areas of tree growth come at the expense of the grassy areas. In other places, storm-water retention ponds have been installed that are acquiring their own vegetation. As the Greenway changes, so will its birdlife.

Listed below is information on various sections of the Greenway, North Dakota side through Minnesota Side.

## **North Dakota Side of the Greenway**

The North Dakota side of the Greenway extends more than 7 miles, from 47th Ave S northward to the North Pedestrian Bridge. Information below describes the access points and is arranged in order from north to south. Each section describes a segment of the Greenway and gives tips on the birds that can be found there.

### **Riverside Dam**

Access: From US 2, take Mill Road north and turn right onto Red Dot Pl. Access to the Dam is just ahead on the left. The pedestrian bridge just north of the dam provides linkage between the North Dakota and Minnesota sides of the Greenway.

In summer, the bridge is an excellent place to see Cliff and Barn Swallows and perhaps a Belted Kingfisher. In winter the largest area of open water in the area occurs here and should attract the occasional rarity, especially as wetlands and lakes of the area begin to freeze over. A nearby nesting pair of Bald Eagles can show up anywhere along the Red River for most of the year. During migration, Osprey also visit this area.

### **Riverside Park**

Access: Take US 2 east from Washington Ave. As you approach the Kennedy Bridge, take a left onto N 1st St., which goes directly into the Greenway where parking is available. Just after passing through the dike opening, a meeting house with restrooms is available on your left.

Once in the park, you can bird to your left (westward) along the multi-use trail until you reach Riverside Dam. You can also proceed to your right (eastward and then south) to the Kennedy Bridge across the Red River. This latter sojourn will take you through a former residential neighborhood that was abandoned after the 1997 flood. However, non-native trees and shrubs remain that diversify the habitat for birds. Unpaved trails are available nearer the river.

Riverside Park has the best stand of native oak on the ND side of the river. The oaks are especially attractive to passerines, including vireos and warblers, when in bloom in May. In summer, watch for Red-headed Woodpeckers, Eastern Bluebirds, and Eastern Wood-Pewees.

Along the river, the excellent stand of mature cottonwoods with heavy undergrowth is an excellent place to look for migrant passerines including Ovenbirds, Northern Waterthrushes, and Mourning Warblers.

At river's edge, you might see Spotted Sandpiper or Belted Kingfisher. Much of the park is left unmowed and this provides habitat attractive to migrant sparrows and finches.

Downy, Hairy, and Pileated Woodpeckers can be seen here anytime of the year, along with Black-capped Chickadees and White-breasted Nuthatches. The Kennedy Bridge hosts a large flock of pigeons, which may account for why a Red-tailed Hawk sometimes winters in that area. For the same reason, it should be a place that will attract the occasional Northern Goshawk.

### **Kennedy Bridge to Point Bridge**

Access: The 7th Ave N Access located just south of the Kennedy Bridge can best be reached by proceeding northward from the downtown area along N 3rd St (caution, one way!). Look for the parking lot on your right across from 7th Ave N. An opening in wall allows hikers and bikers to pass through. The multi-use trail to the right proceeds through the downtown area, past the Sorlie Bridge, to the Point Bridge. The multi-use trail can also be accessed in the downtown area by walking to the foot of the Sorlie Bridge where the trail goes north to the Kennedy Bridge and south to the Point Bridge.

This stretch of the Greenway is a very pleasant place to spend some time, although the bird diversity is rather low. Mature cottonwoods occur along the river from the Kennedy Bridge (US Highway 2) to the downtown area, but the understory was cleared several years ago. A more lawn-like area opens up as you go South past the downtown area and on to the Point Bridge. As a result, the habitat is not as diverse as in Riverside Park.

Watch the sky for aerial species such Chimney Swifts, swallows, and Common Nighthawk. The latter species may now be seen only as a migrant. The area around Kennedy Bridge is a good place to spot a hawk or an eagle. The open skies make it easier to see raptors migrating in the fall or spring. Spotted Sandpiper may be seen at waters edge and Red-headed Woodpeckers sometimes nest in dead cottonwoods.

### **Kannowski Park**

Access: As you approach the Point Bridge going east on Minnesota Ave, turn right onto S 3rd St and look for the parking lot for Kannowski Park on your left. Access to the Greenway is via an up-and-over walkway.

Once you cross the dike, the large, open-space to the left is the former Central Park. Despite the loss of many elms, a number of mature trees including spruce are still present. Some of the grassy area has been planted to native grasses including little bluestem and side-oats grama. Mature cottonwoods along the river have provided records for nesting American Kestrel, Red-headed Woodpecker, and Pileated Woodpecker. Some of the area, when left unmowed, has attracted nesting pairs of Sedge Wren and Bobolink. Areas adjacent to the bike path have been used by Lark Sparrows.

A storm-water retention pond is particularly good in season for Wood Duck. Spruces should be checked for species partial to conifers. The habitat is quite diverse here, which makes it an excellent place to find migrant passerines.

The area to the right of the up-and-over pathway is adjacent to the Reeves Drive neighborhood, which is one of the oldest in Grand Forks. A nice woodland next to the river retains much of the native understory. It is one of the best areas to find migrants in spring or fall, permanent residents year-round, and on an especially lucky day, a Pileated Woodpecker or an Eastern Screech Owl. Indigo Buntings regularly occur here in the nesting season.

## **Lincoln Drive Park**

Access: At the intersection of 13th Ave S and Belmont Road, take Lincoln Drive into Lincoln Drive Park. A parking lot is available on your left. The main multi-use trail of the Greenway is located on the west side of the park, just after you pass through the park gates. An older, narrow trail (Lower Trail) that ran close to the river before the 1997 flood is still available for birding and biking. This trail goes along the river from east of the boat ramp parking lot to just north of the dog park.

Much of this 120-acre park nestles in a large loop on the Red River and was a residential area before the Flood of 1997. Some streets remain and these provide a drivable loop through the park. Mature trees, including oaks and spruces, along with shrubs of the former neighborhood provide excellent habitat for birds. Expect to find a good variety of woodland species during migration and the nesting season. In summer, look for Baltimore Oriole, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Indigo Bunting.

Much of the interior of the park is a Frisbee golf course that is highly used in the afternoons and early evenings. It is unlikely to be used in early morning and thus is available for birding.

## **Lincoln Golf Course Trail Head**

Access: From Belmont Road proceed eastward on Elks Drive to the parking lot for the Lincoln Golf Course. The multi-use trail parallels the road just after passing through the dike opening. Go left (northward) on the trail.

Although the golf course itself is closed to birding, the multi-use trail proceeds along the east side of the course. About 200 yards from the parking lot, the trail branches with the right branch leading to the Pat Owens Pedestrian Bridge across the Red River. The left branch goes past a good woodland with a heavy understory, and then past a storm-water retention pond before reaching Lincoln Drive Park.

Beginning at the parking lot, a line of crabapple trees adjacent to the bike path is an excellent spot to look for wintering robins, waxwings, Purple Finches, and in some years, Pine Grosbeaks. These same trees are well worth checking in migration. The woodlands between the golf course and the river is a prime birding area, especially

during migration. In recent years, one or more pairs of American Redstarts have been present in summer. Singing Yellow-throated Vireos may be more easily heard here than elsewhere on the Greenway. American Elms use to dominate this area, but their demise has now opened up the canopy allowing a thick understory dominated by Green Ash. Other nesting species include Indigo Bunting, Baltimore Orioles, and Wood Ducks.

The storm-water retention pond just north of the golf course attracts a variety of birds depending on water levels. In summer look for Spotted Sandpiper, Mallard, and Wood Duck. In fall migration, shorebirds present can include Solitary Sandpiper, both species of yellowlegs, Stilt Sandpiper, and Wilson's Snipe. Great Egret, Great Blue Heron, and Green Heron also occur occasionally.

### **Elmwood Access**

Access: From the intersection of Washington St and 32nd Ave S, drive east on 32nd Avenue until it curves left onto E Elmwood Drive. The entry into the Greenway is just ahead.

The area behind the dike, long known as Koininia, was once the site of a private residence whose owner made a number of plantings including the line of crabapples. During construction of the dikes, some of the area was used as a source of clay. However, good habitat remains, and disturbed areas are being restored.

Because of its open fields, rows of crabapples, and clumps of spruce trees, this area consistently attracts species that are hard to find elsewhere within the city. In winter the crabapples attract both species of waxwings, Pileated Woodpecker, House and Purple Finches, and robins. It is a good place to find Northern Shrike in winter, and Pine Grosbeak in an irruptive year. Two Eastern Bluebirds were found on a recent Christmas Bird Count. The spruce trees at times host such species as Northern Sawwhet Owl, both species of crossbill, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and Golden-crowned Kinglet. The grassy areas when left unmowed have drawn Bobolink, Savannah Sparrow, LeConte's Sparrow, and Sedge Wren. Weedy areas on the south side of the property draw large numbers of migrant sparrows. The native woodland located just to the north is one of the best for finding Pileated Woodpecker and Eastern Screech Owl.

The area to the right of the Elmwood entry is a former neighborhood. The small grove of spruce trees can be checked for species that favor conifers.

### **Sunbeam Trail Head**

Access: The north end of the Sunbeam Trail is reached by driving south on Belmont Road from 32nd Ave S. A parking lot is available at the Trail Head. Although the multi-use trail initially goes north, it soon curves southward and proceeds to the 47th Ave S Access. An older hard-surface trail runs closer to the river and may be better for birding.

The multi-use trail passes through a large expanse of tall grass, some of which is quickly being reforested naturally. As grassland, it has hosted Bobolinks and Savannah Sparrows during the summer. A Purple Martin colony has been present for several years in the neighboring residential area. The trees along the river can be good for kingbirds, and an American Kestrel probably nested here a few years back. Upon approaching the south end, a shrubby thicket along the river is home to Yellow Warblers and Song Sparrows during the nesting season. Other nesting species to look for include Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Baltimore Oriole, Gray Catbird, and Eastern Bluebird.

### **47th Avenue South Access**

Access: Drive south on Belmont Road to 47th Ave S. Turn left and proceed to the curve. Park and take the up-and-over path. Here there are 3 options: (1) take the main multi-use trail to the left that proceeds northward along the dike and flood wall to the Sunbeam Trail Head. (2) Take the multi-use trail eastward to the river. This trail follows the river more closely. It eventually turns northward and rejoins the main multi-use trail near the Sunbeam Trail Head. (3) Take the multi-use trail going south for about one-fourth mile.

This access marks the south end of the Sunbeam area. Look for woodpeckers including Red-headed in the cottonwoods along the river. A pair of Indigo Buntings can usually be found along the wooded edges, especially as the trail goes east near the river. Eastern Bluebirds favor the grassy areas with scattered trees. The taller cottonwoods in the grassy areas may host both Baltimore and Orchard Orioles. Purple Martins nest in nearby neighborhood and may be seen foraging overhead.

The multi-use trail going south eventually turns westward and goes to King's Walk Golf Course. In about a hundred yards, it begins to parallel a dense forest on the left that is dominated by cottonwood and boxelder. By going off-trail, this forest can be searched for woodpeckers, chickadees and nuthatches. There are records here for Eastern Screech-Owl, and the boxelders may have Purple Finch in winter.

## **Minnesota Side of the Greenway**

### **River Heights Trail Head**

Access: From U.S. 2 just east of the Kennedy Bridge, go north on River Road. Proceed just past 12th St NW and turn right into the parking lot for River Heights Trail Head. Walk across River Road to the multi-use trail which can be taken south to Kennedy Bridge, or north to Riverside Dam and the North Pedestrian Bridge across the Red River.

The area just north of Kennedy Bridge is changing rapidly as a cottonwood forest is emerging.

Mature cottonwoods along the Red River should be checked for hawks and Red-headed Woodpecker. As the trail goes north and then veers away to proceed behind the flood wall, mature trees with a good understory is attractive to passerines in all seasons. Farther along, bur oaks predominate and this is excellent habitat for woodpeckers, including Pileated, and has been one of the better places to find Red-bellied Woodpecker from late fall to early spring. Other species to look for include Eastern Bluebird and Indigo Bunting.

### **Red River State Recreation Area**

Access: Parking is readily available in the large parking lot between the commercial area to the south and the State Recreation Area to the north. From the parking lot, go west to the Greenway trail. This multi-use trail runs close to the river, from the Sorlie Bridge to Kennedy Bridge. A portion of Sherlock Park lies within the dike and is located across 4th Street NW from the campground.

The State Recreation Area is quite large and is dominated by a variety of mature trees, especially bur oak and basswood. It occupies the former Sherlock residential neighborhood and may well be the best and most accessible area for woodland passerines on either side of the Red.

As is true of other segments of the Greenway, most of the area between the multi-use trail and the river is being allowed to become naturalized. During the nesting season, Red-headed Woodpecker, Eastern Bluebird, Lark Sparrow and Indigo Bunting may be found along the trail. The recreation area with its mature trees is a good place to find permanent residents, especially Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, Black-capped Chickadees, and White-breasted Nuthatches. The diversity of habitat attracts a diversity of migrant song birds during migration.

### **Sorlie Bridge to Louis Murray Bridge**

Access: Parking is available on the south side of DeMers Ave near the Sorlie Bridge. A multi-use trail runs southward along the Red River, and then follows the Red Lake River to Murray Bridge. Griggs Park and LaFave Park provide alternatives areas to park, and an alternative multi-use trail runs through these parks.

The main feature in this segment is the confluence of the Red and Red Lake Rivers, for which the cities are named. This area is very open with limited habitat and thus will not attract a wide variety of birds. Some of it is barren, the kind of habitat that is attractive to Killdeer. As with similar areas on the ND side, watch for aerial species and at waters edge, Spotted Sandpiper. The few cottonwoods attract Red-headed Woodpecker and provide perches for hawks and eagles. Cliff Swallows nest under the Point Bridge. The area below the dam on the Red Lake River remains open throughout the winter and a Canada Goose, possibly flightless, once spent the winter here. A pair of Merlins recently nested in a spruce tree in Griggs Park.

## **Point Bridge to Pat Owens Pedestrian Bridge**

Access: When coming from the north over the Louis Murray Bridge, turn right at the stop light and then right again into the parking lot. If coming from the west across Point Bridge, look for the parking lot on the left, just before the stoplight, which is at the intersection of 1st St SE and 2nd Ave SE. Cross the street and take the multi-use trail going south. This segment covers the area from the Point Bridge to the Pat Owens Pedestrian Bridge.

The early part of the trail skirts a large area to the west that lies in a large loop of the Red River. This area is in transition as it is being allowed to revert to a natural state. As a result, the species that favor this area will change over time.

An area just south of the Point Bridge has been planted to native grasses and forbs. Where left unmowed, this habitat has attracted such prairie species as Sedge Wren, Bobolink, LeConte's Sparrow, and Nelson's Sparrow. An oxbow is favored by a variety of ducks and Great Blue Heron. The dense shrubby area farther in has not been explored, but appears to be a good spot for Black-billed Cuckoo.

Farther along the trail, there is riverine forest, along with ornamental trees remaining from the time this was a residential area. During the nesting season, look for Red-headed Woodpecker, Cedar Waxwing, Baltimore Oriole, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Indigo Bunting. As the trail turns westward toward the pedestrian bridge, old field-type habitat exists where one may find Dickcissel, Bobolink, and Sedge Wren. North of the pedestrian bridge, note the emerging cottonwood forest.

## **Red Lake River Greenway**

Access: Drive to the stoplight at the south end of the Murray Bridge across the Red Lake River, which can also be reached by driving east over the Point Bridge. Just past this intersection, note the large stone inscribed with Bob Zavoral Memorial Park. From the parking lot there, a multi-use trail goes south and east for more than two miles. The trail goes first through a Frisbee golf course.

Three additional access points can be found by proceeding south from the stoplight. In a very short distance, 2nd Ave SE becomes 3rd Ave SE and then Bygland Road. Turn left at 4th St SE and then in 0.1 mile turn left at the soccer field and drive back to the Crestwood Trail Head. The 3rd access is reached by continuing down 4th St SE to James Ave S, turning right and looking for the up-and-over on your left. The 4th access is found by continuing on James Ave S, turning left onto 10th St SE, then left on 16th Ave SE.

Just east of the Frisbee golf course, the multi-use trail descends and crosses a low field. Here the trail forks with the left fork running closest to the Red Lake River and offering the best birding habitat.



There is a variety of habitat ranging from mature riverine forest to old field to the trees and shrubs that remain from numerous homes that occupied the Greenway before the 1997 flood. Planted trees include spruce, green ash, crabapples, and mountain ash. A particularly good example of these former neighborhoods is at the third access, the one off James Ave S.

The birds seen along this Greenway will be the same as those found along the Red River Greenway. But one never knows what they will find if they simply look. For example, in 1988, a Brambling was present for several days in mid-Winter. It was the first state record for Minnesota, and North Dakota has only one record for this Eurasian finch.

### **East Grand Forks Sewage Lagoons**

Access: When going east over the Kennedy Bridge on US 2 (Gateway Drive), take the first ramp and then turn left on River Road NW. Follow this road through the residential area, across Valley Golf Course, to the section road one-half mile ahead. The southeast corner of the sewage lagoons is to the northwest.

Before surveying the ponds, note the cottonwood grove to the right where a pair of Bald Eagles has nested for several years. The nest is almost over the road going east.

There are two lagoons with the second, smaller lagoon located about a half-mile farther down the road. Although the thought of birding the lagoons may be off-putting to many people, birds obviously have no such qualms. Over the course of the year, every waterfowl species that occurs regularly in this region likely can be seen here. It is an excellent place to see broods of Wood Duck and Hooded Merganser, perhaps they nest in the woodland to the west of the lagoons. The north lagoon can be covered with ducks for days following spring melt.

The ponds also draw terns and gulls in large numbers during migration. Grebes are also attracted and, by mid-summer, dozens of Eared Grebes nest on floating platforms built from submergent vegetation.

A variety of shorebirds occur here including nesting Spotted Sandpipers. Several species use the dike for loafing, and both Wilson Phalaropes and Red-necked Phalaropes may be seen spinning on the surface waters, especially during spring and fall migration.

Up to six species of swallows patrol the airspace above the ponds where they feed on insects. Numbers can reach the many thousands.