

On the Fermilab grounds, the birder will find upland forest, flood plain woods, oak savanna, restored prairie, grasslands, pasture, croplands, fence rows, scrub, lakes, streams, and wetlands. Fermilab, which is mostly located in DuPage County, is a premiere site for unusual geese, shorebirds, owls, grassland birds, and shrikes. The western portion of the site spills over into Kane County and although less diverse, still offers interesting birding. The accompanying map shows the county line division.

Despite these attractions Fermilab is often overlooked by birders probably because much of the site is closed to the general public. However, birders will find enough accessible areas to comfortably fill an entire day of birding in any season.

Site Access

If you limit your birding to the areas described in this article you should have no problems with Fermilab security. However, be careful not to enter the restricted areas without permission. If interested in birding any areas not mentioned, check with Site Security located on the first floor of Wilson Hall. Note also that Fermilab grounds have been declared a National Environmental Research Park; hence you may occasionally come across special research areas that should be avoided since the disturbance may prejudice research project results. Regard your birding opportunities at Fermilab as a privilege rather than as a right.

Birding Areas

The lakes near the east entrance are a good place to start your day's birding in any season. A short distance after entering Fermilab on

Batavia Road (west from Route 59), you will pass between two lakes; north is DUSAF Pond [8] and south is A.E.Sea [2] (an example of physicist humor). A little farther you will come to a stop sign. Parking is available by the Red Barn [6] south of the sign. South of the barn is Lake Law [5]. Two trails start here giving access to the lakes and surrounding grasslands and scrub. The first trail heads west around Lake Law through a small pine plantation (the village pines [7]) and then heads out across grassy fields ending at Eola Rd. The second trail runs around the east side of Lake Law and soon forks; the east fork takes you to the south end of A.E.Sea and the Sea of Evanescence [3] which, despite its grandiose name, is a rather small lake to the south of A.E.Sea. The west fork continues

With its diversity of habitat, there are certainly more discoveries to be made at Fermilab every year.

around to the south end of Lake Law where it intersects an east-west trail which runs from Eola Road to the Sea of Evanescence.

In winter, check the village pines west of the Red Barn for Long-eared Owls, Cooper's Hawk, and the occasional Red-breasted Nuthatch. When searching for the owls, be careful not to disturb them. The idea is to spot them at their roost site. Once flushed they become very shy. Further pursuit will only drive them from the area. If you do flush them, give up the search for that day.

Lake Law and A.E.Sea are the most productive lakes for migrating waterfowl, loons, and grebes in early spring and late fall. All inland duck

species have been found on these two lakes including Canvasback, Red-head, Greater Scaup, and all three mergansers. Northern Harriers can be found hunting the fields south and west of Lake Law. A Glaucous Gull on DUSAF pond in March of 1994 was the latest species added to the Fermilab list.

During migration, Ospreys and Bald Eagles have been located near the small woods at the south end of A.E.Sea. In spring 1992 a Cinnamon Teal was found on Lake Law and in 1989 an Eared Grebe was recorded on A.E.Sea. On Halloween day, 1991, a Ross' Goose, 20 Tundra Swans, and 11 Common Loons were seen at Lake Law within an hour.

Sparrows are present in good numbers in late fall. The best area is along the hedgerow [4] which parallels the trail from the south end of Lake Law to the Sea of Evanescence. Many sparrow species have been seen in this area, including Fox, Vesper, and Clay-colored. Most of the Fermilab records for Harris' Sparrow come from this hedgerow. This area can also be productive for Orange-crowned and Pine Warblers. Depending on water levels appropriate habitat may also have developed for LeConte's and Sharp-tailed Sparrows; the south end of Lake Law is your best bet, though you will have to search through hundreds of Savannah and Swamp Sparrows.

Late spring and early fall are the best times to find migrating terns on these lakes. Caspian, Forster's, and Black Terns can all be seen with A.E.Sea, Lake Law, and DUSAF Pond being the most productive. In 1993 a first year Common Tern was found on Lake Law. Ospreys have been known to linger at the south end of A.E.Sea until late May. The cat-tails at the south end of Lake Law often harbor Sora, Virginia Rail, and Marsh Wrens.

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