

# Upper Mississippi River

*National Wildlife  
& Fish Refuge*

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*Tundra Swan  
Facts*



## Tundra Swan Facts

The melancholy “woo-hoo, woo-hoo” sound of flocks of tundra swans flying overhead is a true sign and sound of fall on the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

**Identification:** Adults are white with black bills; the young, called cygnets, are gray with pink bills.

**When are they here?** In fall, 20-45% of the eastern population of tundra swans use the refuge as a stopover point to refuel and rest en route to their wintering areas on the Atlantic Coast. The swans begin arriving in late October. The largest numbers of birds gather in mid-November and will remain until freeze-up. In spring, small flocks may be seen in late March as they migrate to their breeding grounds on the tundra in Canada and Alaska.

### Where to see tundra swans on the refuge:

#### Minnesota

- Brownsville Overlook, located three miles south of Brownsville on Highway 26
- Weaver Bottoms, north of Minneiska on Highway 61

#### Wisconsin

- Shady Maple Overlook, south of La Crosse on Highway 35
- Potosi Point, south end of Potosi on Highway 133, Point Road

#### Iowa

- Green Island Wildlife Management Unit, 10 miles south of Bellevue on Highway 52

#### Illinois

- Spring Lake, 1 mile south of Savanna on Highway 84
- Thomson Causeway, Thomson

**What are they eating?** In the fall, the swans fuel up on starchy bulbs, or tubers, of plants like arrowhead (duck potato), wild celery, and sago pondweed. The swans use their large webbed feet to dislodge the tubers, which are buried in the river bottom. They reach down into the water with their long necks to retrieve the tasty morsels.

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**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**

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