

Watson and Willow Lakes Ecosystem

IBA web pages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> http://www.audubon.org/important-bird-areas/watson-and-willow-lakes-ecosystem http://aziba.org/?page_id=674
Priority	State
Qualifying Criteria	<p>D1: Site Important to Special Status Avian Species (<i>Peregrine Falcon, Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Western Burrowing Owl, Lucy’s Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Wood Duck, Western Grasshopper Sparrow, Common Nighthawk, Lincoln’s Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Gila Woodpecker</i>)</p> <p>D4ii: Significant numbers of wintering and migrating waterfowl (2000+) (<i>Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, American Widgeon, Ring-necked Duck, Ruddy Duck, Common Merganser</i>)</p> <p>D4iii: Significant concentration of wading birds (<i>Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, Marbled Godwit, White-faced Ibis</i>)</p> <p>eBird Checklist: https://ebird.org/barchart?byr=1975&eyr=2020&bmo=1&emo=12&r=US-AZ_952</p>
IBA Polygon Center Point (Latitude, Longitude)	34.5887° N, 112.4177° W
Size	1,501 acres
County	Yavapi
Local Communities	Prescott
Description	<p>This IBA is located within the city limits of Prescott, Arizona. It occurs in two sections - Watson Lake east of Highway 89 and Willow Lake west of Highway 89. The IBA includes both lakes, the immediate surrounding uplands, and 2 miles of Granite Creek flowing into Watson Lake.</p> <p>The lakes are water supply storage for the City of Prescott. Recreation use is primarily non-motorized boating, hiking, biking, and bird watching. Watson Lake and Woods include a developed hiking and biking trail that follows the granite Creek drainage.</p>
Mission/Goals	To conserve and protect a regionally-unique lake ecosystem and the wintering and migratory waterfowl and wading birds that depend on it.
Current Habitat Conservation, Planning, and Management Activities	This IBA is managed by the City of Prescott as recreational lakes and natural areas. They have implemented some regulations regarding recreational use of the two lakes, most notably a “no wake” regulation on Watson Lake with limited horsepower motors.



	<p>Prescott Creeks, a local nonprofit organization, is dedicated to the protection of the ecological integrity of the Granite Creek watershed and associated riparian and wetland systems through conservation, restoration, and education. Prescott Creeks is currently restoring Watson Woods Riparian Preserve just south of Watson Lake and a part of this IBA. As part of the restoration project, avian monitoring is ongoing throughout the year and data is submitted to the Arizona IBA program website.</p>
<p>Land Cover Type¹ (%) and Associated Priority² Birds</p> <p>¹Southwest Regional Gap Analysis modified to align with ABBA/SWAP habitat types</p> <p>²AGFD SGCN and IBA Qualifying Species</p>	<p>39.83 Riparian/Open Water (<i>Peregrine Falcon, Bald Eagle, Lucy’s Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Wood Duck, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, American Widgeon, Ring-necked Duck, Ruddy Duck, Common Merganser, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, Marbled Godwit, White-faced Ibis</i>)</p> <p>28.99 Pinyon Pine-Juniper Woodland (<i>Common Nighthawk</i>)</p> <p>14.36 Semiarid/Sonoran Savannah Grassland (<i>Western Burrowing Owl, Western Grasshopper Sparrow, Common Nighthawk, Lincoln’s Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Gila Woodpecker</i>)</p> <p>5.75 Urban/Residential (<i>Gila Woodpecker</i>)</p> <p>5.64 Interior Chaparral (<i>Golden Eagle, Common Nighthawk</i>)</p> <p>2.55 Rock (<i>Peregrine Falcon, Golden Eagle</i>)</p> <p>1.91 Wash</p> <p>0.97 Madrean Pine-Oak Woodland</p>
<p>Related Habitat Accounts*</p>	<p>Lowland Riparian Pinyon Juniper Sonoran Desert Madrean Pine-Oak</p>
<p>Biological Description</p>	<p>The riparian habitat is Fremont cottonwood gallery intermixed with Goodding’s willow, Arizona Ash, and seep willow. The uplands are Arizona desert grassland, with granite monoliths and scattered Pinyon pine. Three species of cottonwood are present - <i>Populus fremontii</i>, <i>P. angustifolia</i>, and <i>P. hinckleyana</i>. In addition to the lakes, there is a perennial pond within the preserve as well, bordered by lush riparian habitat. The open water of the lakes totals approximately 440 acres.</p> <p>Watson and Willow Lakes are most notable for the number of waterfowl they support during the migration and winter periods. These lakes are particularly important to large numbers of waterfowl and shorebirds during the fall migration. In wet years waterfowl numbers can exceed 5000 birds at one time. Notably abundant are</p>

	<p>Northern Pintail and Northern Shovler. Shorebird numbers in the fall can exceed 300 birds on a given day, including Black-necked Stilt and American Avocets. White-faced Ibis and Forester’s Tern also regularly occur in the fall, and Marbled Godwit occur in the spring migration. There are no other comparable lake systems within a distance of 200-300 miles east and west, and 60 to 150 miles north and south, thus indicating the importance of the lakes ecosystem as stop-over feeding and resting site for these migrants. Ruddy and Ring-necked Duck and Common Merganser over-winter in this lake system in large numbers. Wintering Bald Eagle and resident Peregrine Falcon find available prey among the waterfowl flocks. Wood Duck (approximately 50 pairs) are notable breeders within the two lakes ecosystem. There are Great Blue Heron and Double-crested Cormorant rookeries as well. The riparian area is small, and supports breeding Yellow Warbler in abundance, breeding Lucy’s Warbler, and nesting Green Heron.</p>
<p>Focal Bird Species</p>	<p><u>IBA Qualifying Species</u></p> <p>State: Peregrine Falcon, Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Western Burrowing Owl, Lucy’s Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Wood Duck, Western Grasshopper Sparrow, Common Nighthawk, Lincoln’s Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Gila Woodpecker, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, American Widgeon, Ring-necked Duck, Ruddy Duck, Common Merganser, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, Marbled Godwit, White-faced Ibis</p> <p><u>AGFD Species of Greatest Conservation Need</u></p> <p>Tier A: Peregrine Falcon, Bald Eagle</p> <p>Tier B: Wood Duck, Western Grasshopper Sparrow, Golden Eagle, Common Nighthawk, Yellow Warbler, Lincoln’s Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Gila Woodpecker</p> <p><u>Federal Threatened or Endangered Species</u></p> <p>None</p> <p><u>USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern</u></p> <p>National – Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Marbled Godwit, Lucy’s Warbler</p> <p>USFWS Region – Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Lucy’s Warbler, Yellow Warbler</p>
<p>NABCI Bird Conservation Region</p>	<p>33: Sonoran and Mohave Deserts 34: Sierra Madre Occidental</p>

Ownership	City of Prescott
Conservation Land Status**	Managed as recreational lakes and natural areas
Human Population Density	Suburban
Legislative District(s)	Arizona Congressional District 4 and State Legislative District 1
NRCS Major Land Resource Area	38: Mogollon Transition
Visitation, main access, and permits needed	For more information about visiting Watson and Willow Lakes, please visit the City of Prescott’s website at http://www.prescott-az.gov/services/parks/parks/

*References available written narratives (located on the SJV website) for general habitat types occurring within the IBA.

**Identifies whether the IBA or portions of the IBA have a special land management designation such as: wilderness, primitive area, wildlife area, refuge, park, monument, designated conservation area, conservation easement, or other similar designation

IBA Activities:

Issue or Activity	Priority	Description	Actions
CBC	M	Annual winter count	Periodically check results for focus bird species high counts.
AZ IBA Surveys	M	PAS Census Surveys in winter and migration	Cycle time every 3 years
IBA Signage	Done	Install signs identifying the site as an IBA	Completed
IBA Dedication	Done	A formal recognition event	Complete - April 16, 2011 as part of the first annual “Get Out...Get Into It Nature and Outdoor Festival.”

Partners:

Name	Role(s)	Contact Information	Actions
Prescott Audubon Society	Site Steward	P.O. Box 4156 – Prescott, Arizona 86302 (928) 778-6502 (928) 848-1513 contact@prescottaudubon.org www.prescottaudubon.org	Coordinate CBC and periodic winter and migration IBA surveys
Granite Creeks	Local partner	www.prescottcreeks.org	Restoration at Watson Woods
Prescott Parks and Recreation Department	Site Owner and Manager	824 E Gurley St, Prescott, AZ 86301 (928) 777-1122	Manage recreation activities and maintain trails.

Conservation Targets:

These are species, communities, or ecological systems that represent and encompass the full array of biodiversity found in this IBA.

Conservation Target	Current Condition
Low Elevation Riparian Birds	Good
Waterbirds, Waterfowl, Shorebirds	Good

Conservation Challenges:

Conservation challenges are primarily human activities that immediately affect what we are trying to conserve. Through a Miradi process, it was found that drought and water diversion pose the greatest threats to birds within this IBA.

Challenges	Waterbirds, Waterfowl, Shorebirds	Low Elevation Riparian Birds	Summary Rating
Water Diversion or Pumping	Medium	High	Medium
Drought	High	Medium	Medium
Human Disturbance (Boating and off-trail hiking)	Medium	Medium	Low
Summary Ratings:	Medium	Medium	High

Watson and Willow Lakes	Severity (1-3)		Scope (1-3)	Permanence (2-4)
Threats on National Database				
Disturbance to birds Boats	5	1	2	2
Water Diversion	6	2	2	2
Drought	6	2	2	2