

Pablo NWR IBA

Important Bird Areas are sites that provide essential habitat for threatened, unique, or particularly abundant species, during breeding, migration, or winter seasons.



Baird's Sandpiper and Semipalmated Plovers rely on habitats within this IBA.

Pablo National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and Important Bird Area (1,030 hectares) encompasses a large reservoir surrounded by stands of cottonwood and willow, pothole wetlands, and rolling agricultural fields near the base of the Mission Mountains. The refuge is located within the Flathead Indian Reservation. Extensive mudflats exist within the refuge when water levels are low, and this feature attracts many shorebirds during southern migration in the late summer. Up to 18 species and over 1000 individual shorebirds have been counted on one day in August.

This area also provides migration stopover habitat for Redhead ducks that may congregated by the thousands. In addition, Bald Eagles have nested here for many years along with waterfowl species such as Green-winged Teal, and Canada Goose, and colonial nesting species such as Great Blue Heron. The refuge is used mostly by fisherman and birdwatchers, and portions are closed in spring to provide a sanctuary for nesting waterfowl and migrating shorebirds.





Landscape by Janene Lichtenberg



Notable bird species associated with the IBA

- > Redhead
- > Semipalmated Sandpiper (above)
- > Least Sandpiper
- > Baird's Sandpiper
- > Stilt Sandpiper
- > Semipalmated Plover
- > Bald Eagle

Coordinated by BirdLife International, the Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program is a global initiative aimed at identifying and conserving the most important places for birds. The IBA Program's foundation is an emphasis on science-based identification, assessment, and conservation of birds and the habitats needed to survive. IBAs rely on local stewardship and focus on engaging individuals, private landowners, local communities, businesses, partner organizations, and government agencies in site conservation. Important Bird Area designation does not confer legal or regulatory status to a site. Instead, participation in conservation is voluntary on the part of landowners and land managers. IBA boundaries serve as an initial spatial guide and help identify areas that warrant prioritization for protection and conservation actions.

You can help with the conservation of this IBA by submitting your bird observations through Montana Natural Heritage Program or at ebird.org, an online bird sighting database. If you are planning on visiting CSKT lands you will need a Tribal Recreation Permit.

sandpiper photo by Bob Martinka