

The Emiquon Complex Designated a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance: A Local Global Achievement




by Michelle Carr, Director
The Nature Conservancy in Illinois

*Governor's Conference on Management of the Illinois River System
1-3 October 2013, Peoria, Illinois*

CONSERVATION

Wetlands internationally important

Emiquon, Dixon among only 34 sites nationwide given designation



EMIQUON COMPLEX



WETLAND of INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE
 Ramsar designated 2012




Photographs courtesy of The Wetlands Center



The Sue and Wes Dixon Waterfowl Refuge at Hennepin and Hopper Lakes in Putnam County



Yellow-headed blackbird

Photograph by L. B. Zentgraf



Black meadowhawk dragonfly



Red-winged blackbird chick

Illinois wetlands get international designation

Peoria sits on the Illinois River about 45 miles between two wetland complexes that have been recently designated as having international importance.

South of Peoria, near the town of Havana, where the Spoon River meets the Illinois, sits the nearly 14,000-acre Emiquon Complex. The expanse of wetlands, which comprises the Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge, the Emiquon National Wildlife Refuge and the Emiquon Preserve, are owned and managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and The Nature

“What this adds up to is, this is a great day for the Illinois River. That, to me, is the summary message. We hope that this recognition will bring to some people’s attention who aren’t aware of all the good and exciting stuff that’s happening in the central Illinois river valley,” Botts says.

Both Emiquon and the Dixon Refuge sites are open to the public and are unusual in that they are the result of restoration rather than preservation efforts, Botts says.

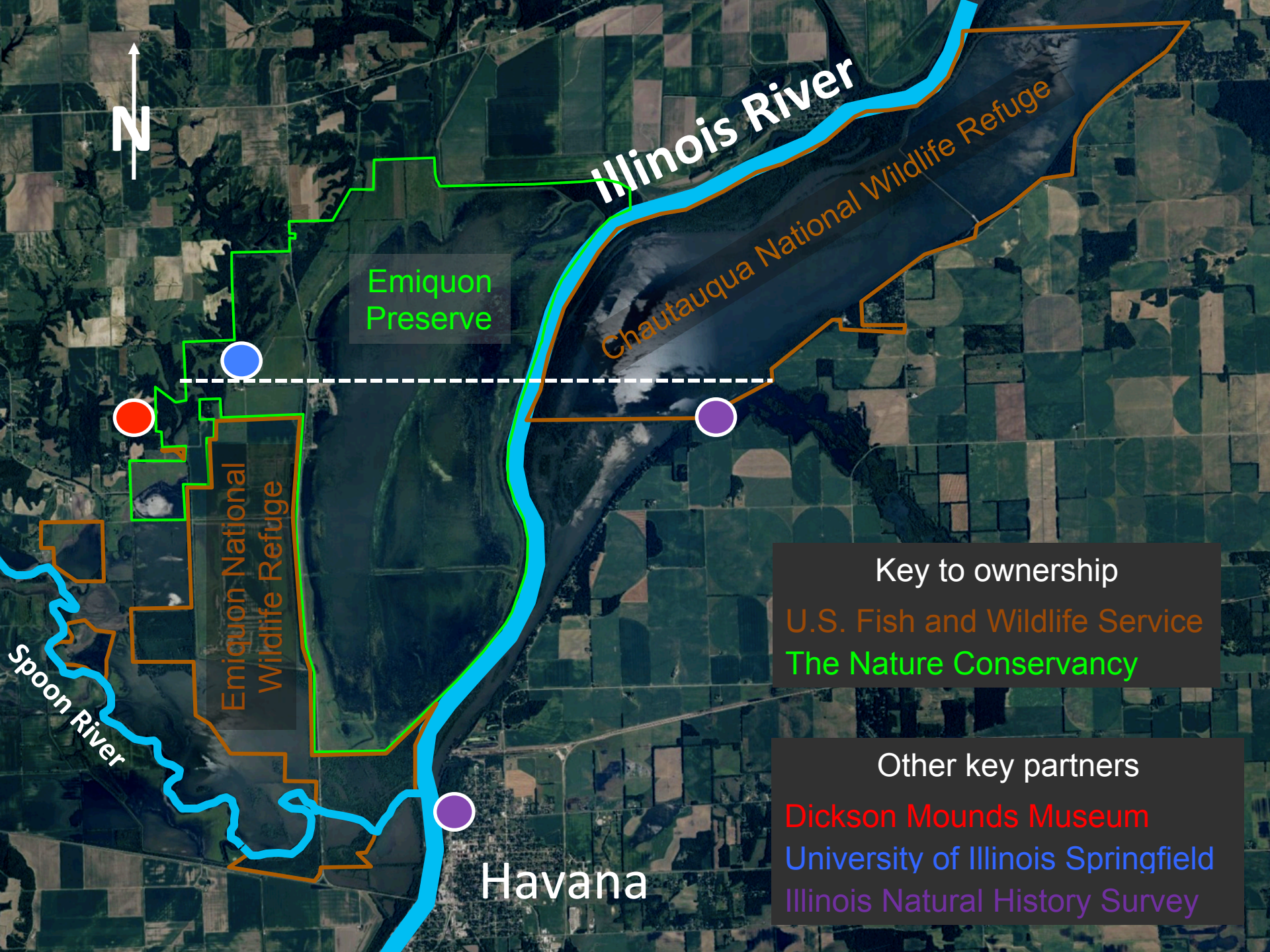
“If you talked to folks in the ‘80s and ‘90s — experts in the field of conservation — many were not sure that you could do this: that you could put back truly high-



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS
 CONVENTION SUR LES ZONES HUMIDES
 CONVENCIÓN SOBRE LOS HUMEDALES
 (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

Emiquon





Illinois River

Emiquon Preserve

Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge

Emiquon National Wildlife Refuge

Spoon River

Havana

Key to ownership

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
The Nature Conservancy

Other key partners

Dickson Mounds Museum
University of Illinois Springfield
Illinois Natural History Survey





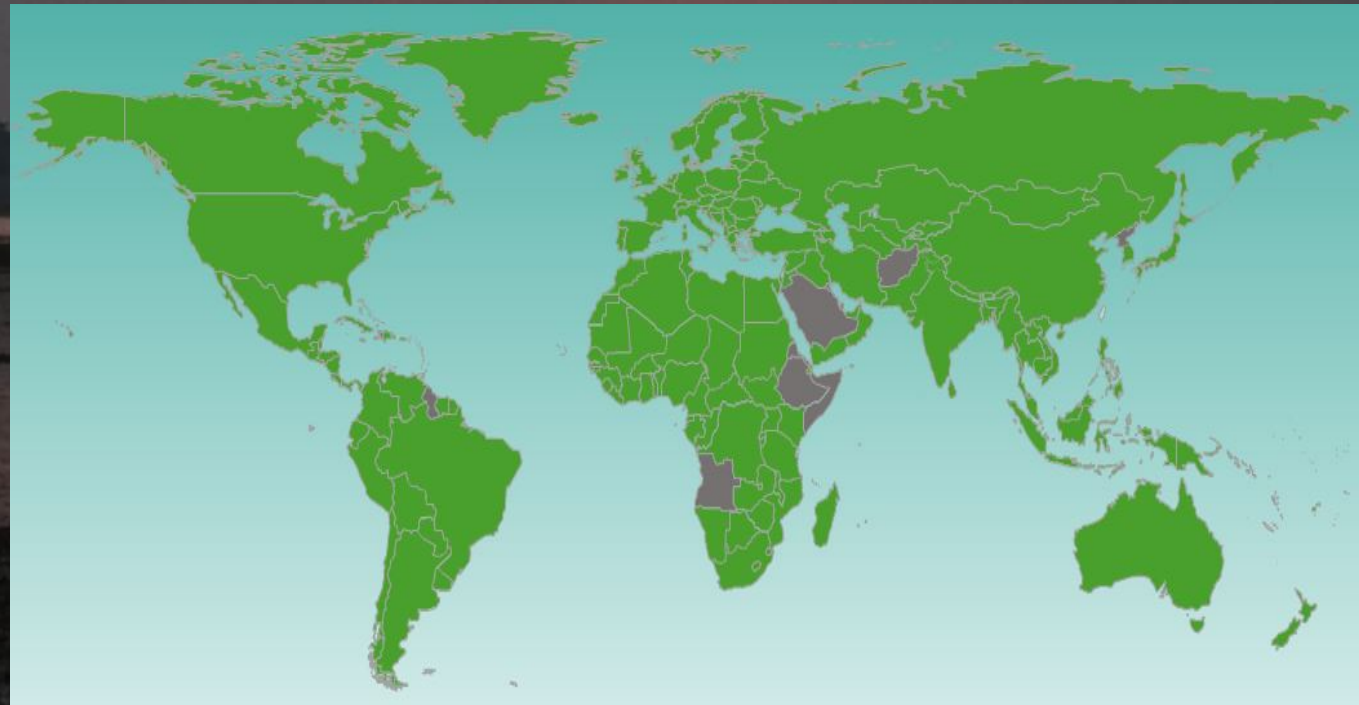
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The Ramsar Convention's mission is ...
“the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world.”



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168 Contracting Parties



2161 Designated Sites

totaling 205,682,155 hectares
or 508,250,889 acres
or 794,143 square miles

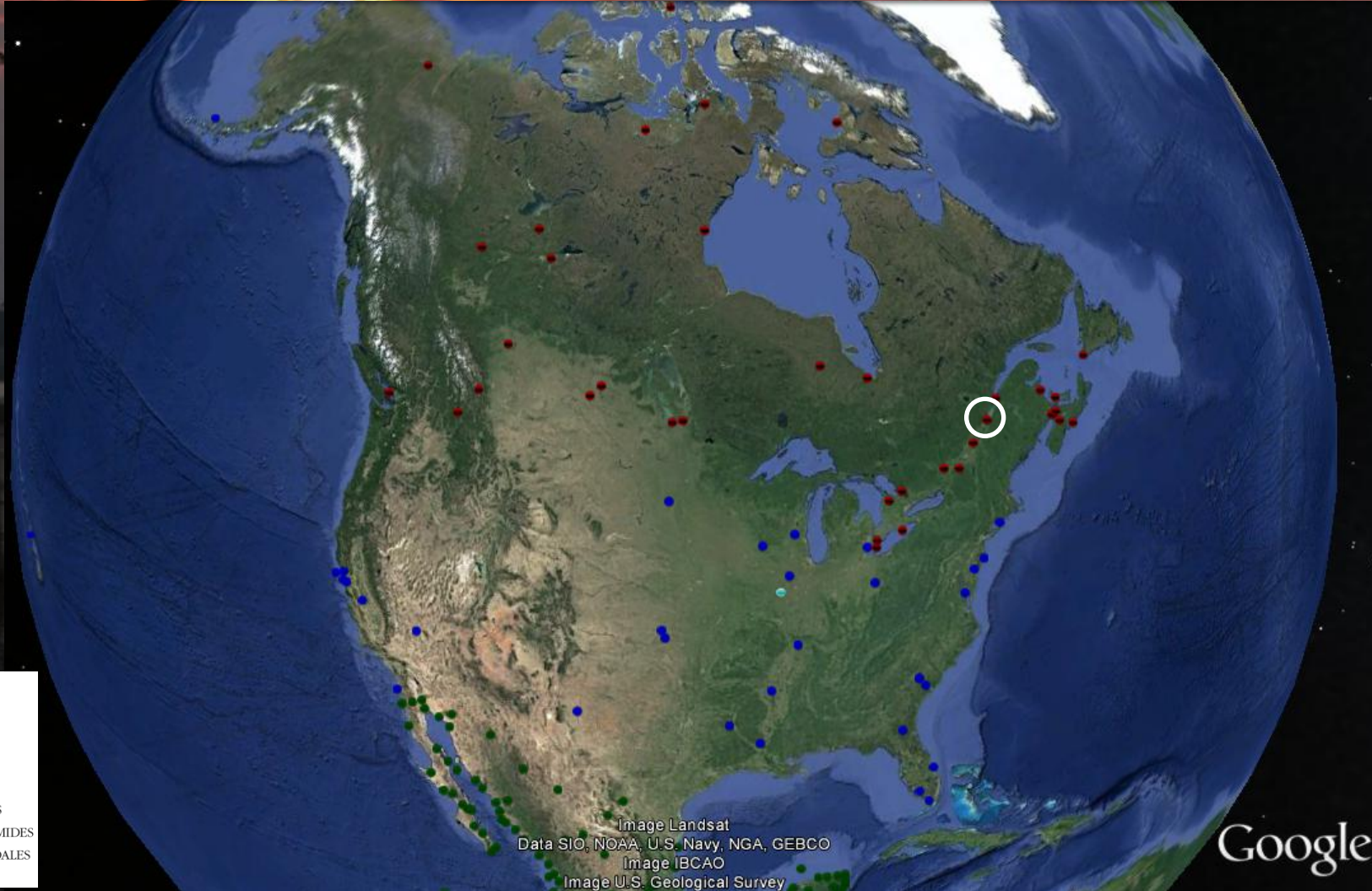
Slightly greater than the surface area of Alaska and Arizona combined

Currently 209 Ramsar sites in North America

First North American Ramsar site in 1981

Cap Tourmente, Canada

Ramsar site # 381



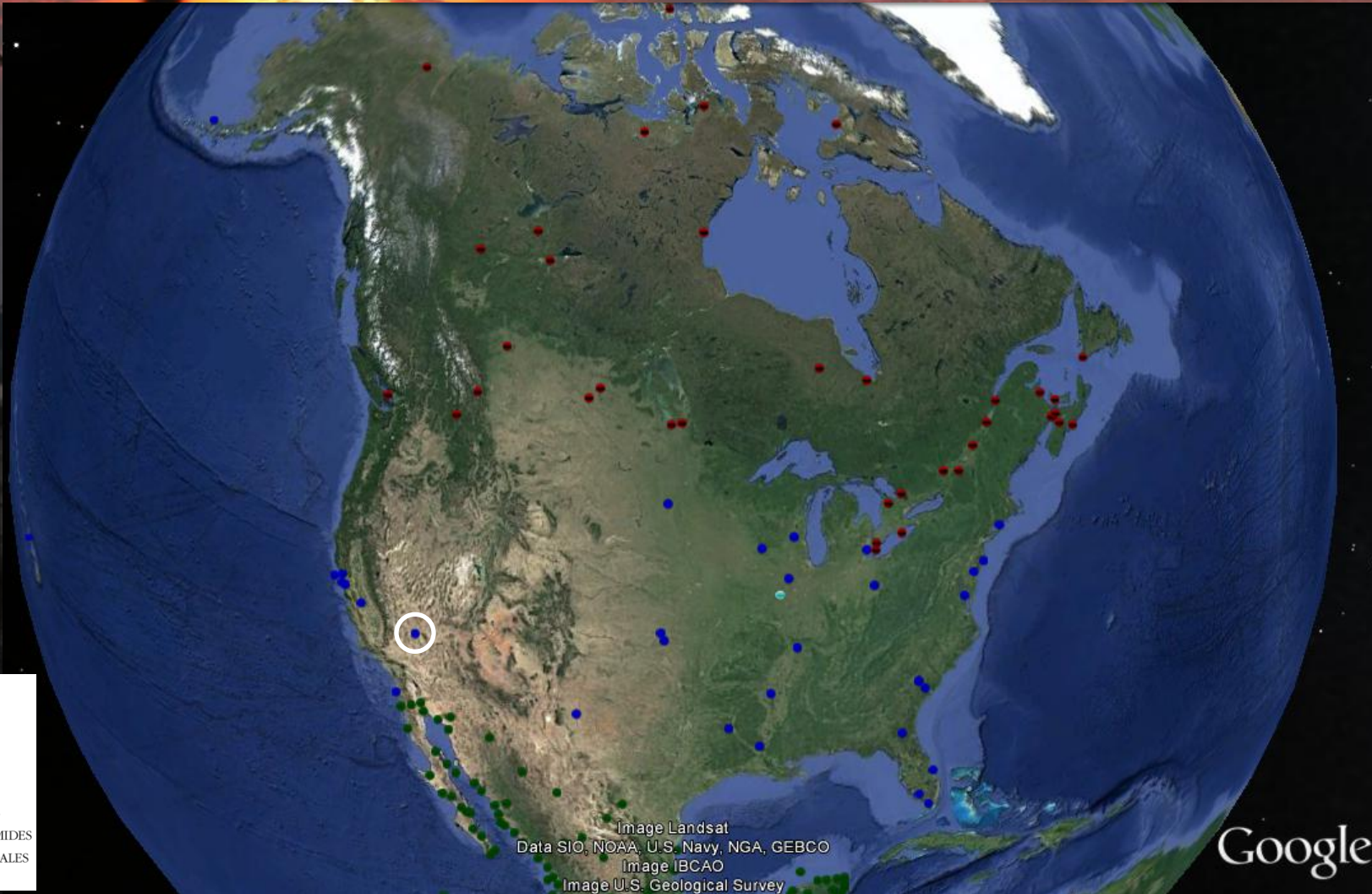
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Image Landsat
Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO
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First U.S. site in 1987

Ash Meadows, Nevada

Ramsar site # 386



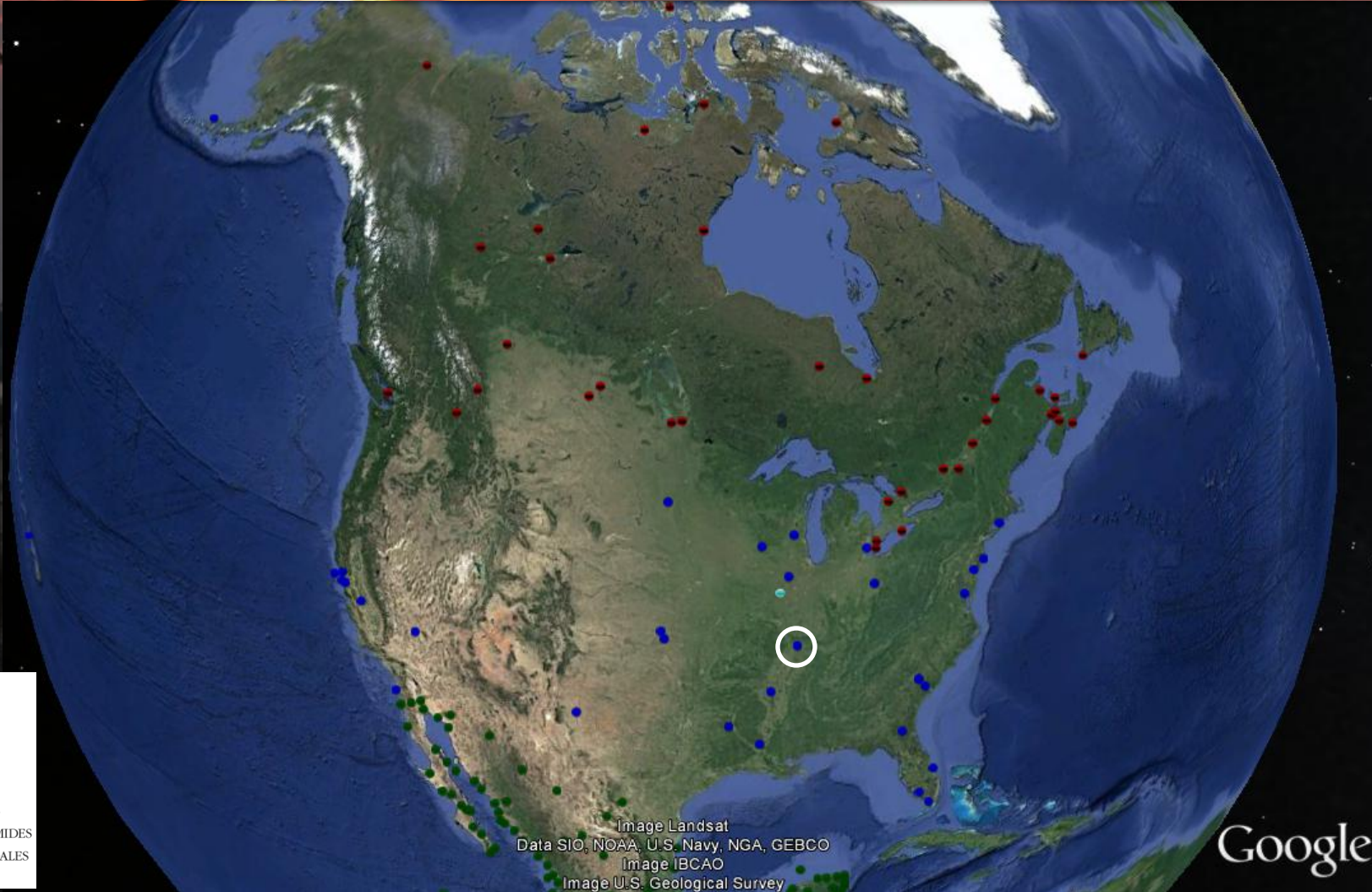
Ramsar
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First Illinois site was in 1994

Cache River-Cypress Creek Wetlands

Ramsar site # 711



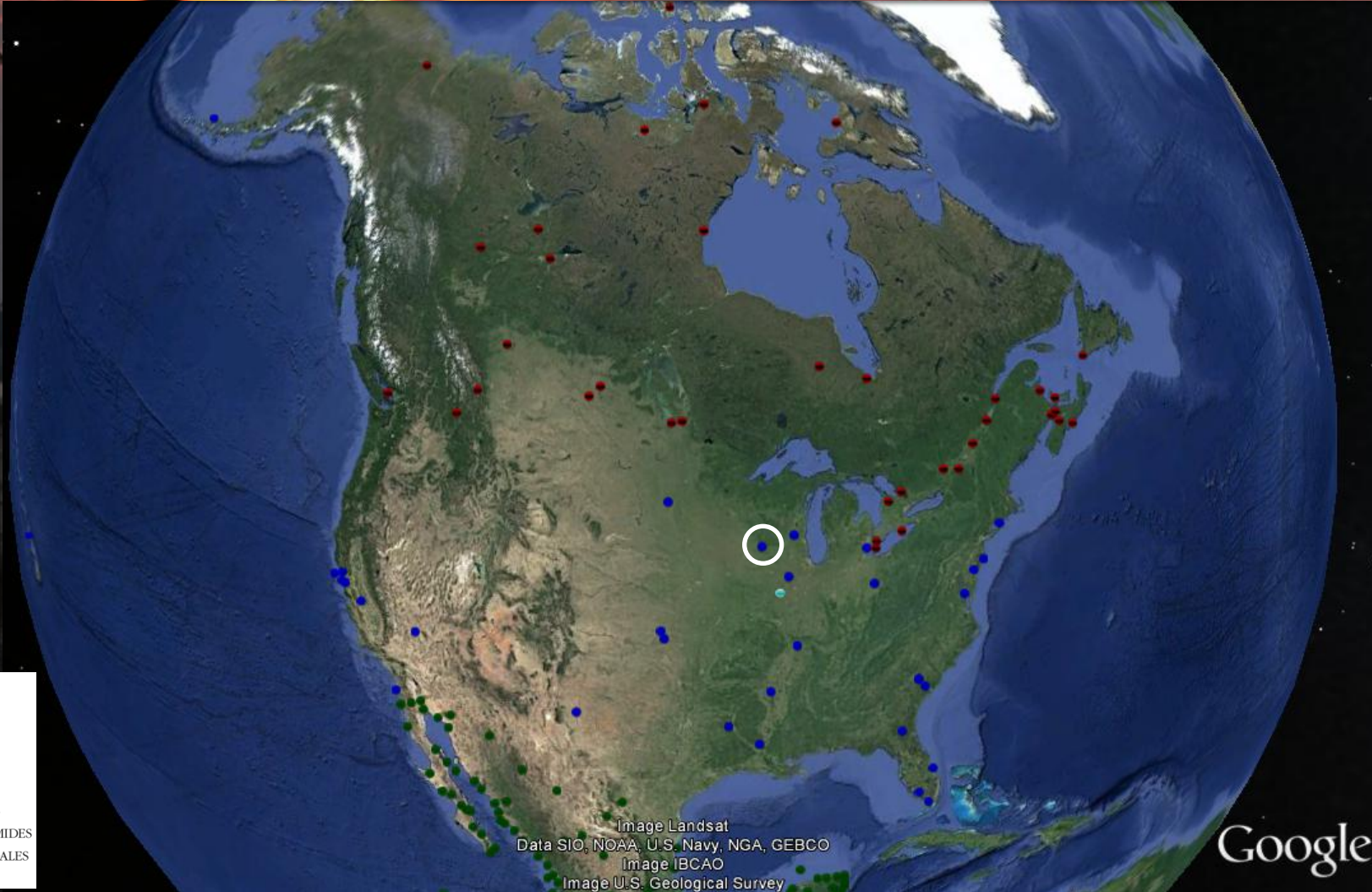
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Upper Mississippi River Floodplain Wetlands, 2010

Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa and Illinois

122,357 hectares or 302,351 acres

Ramsar site # 1901



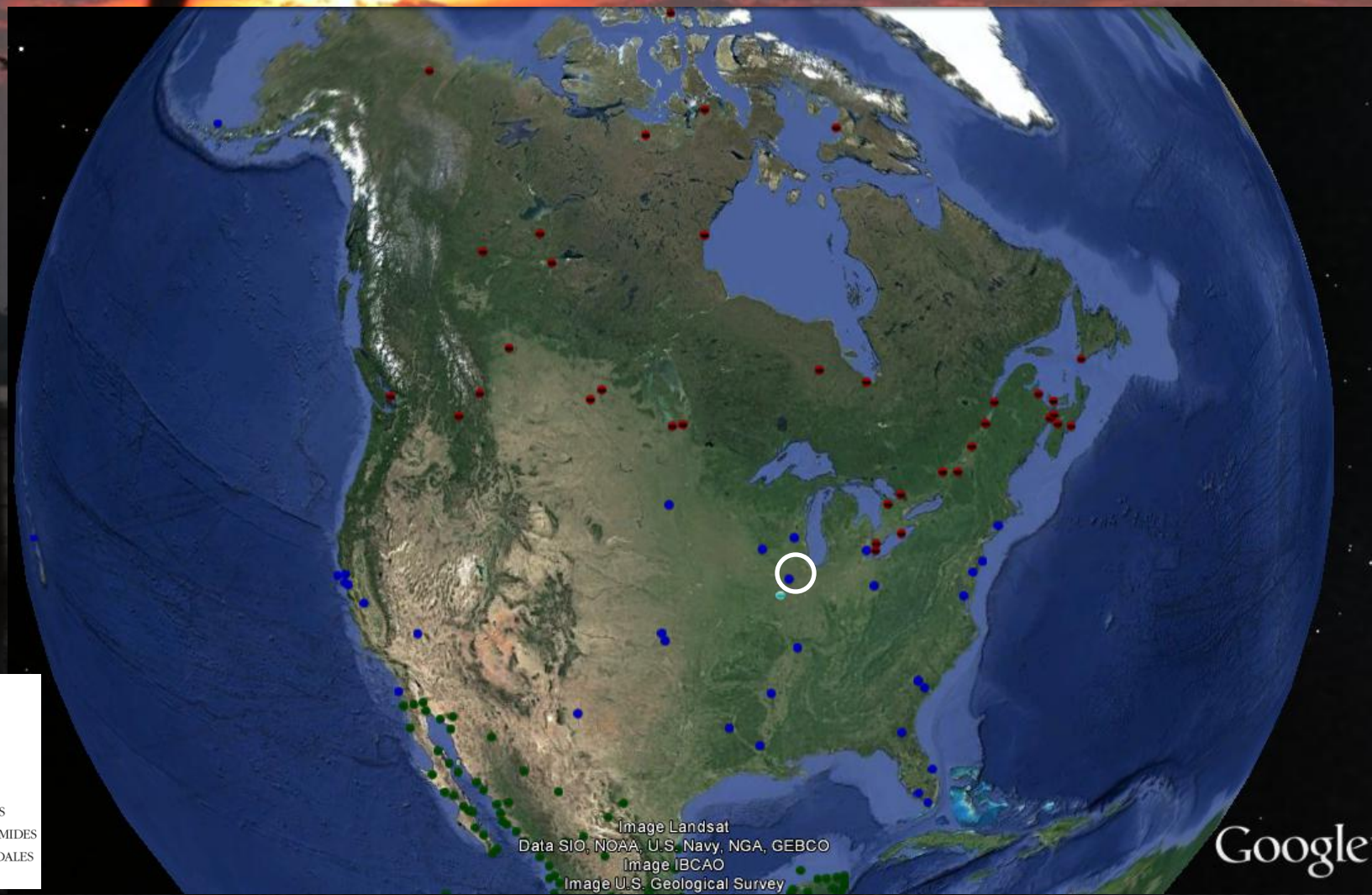
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Sue & Wes Dixon Waterfowl Refuge, 2012

1117 hectares or 2760 acres

Ramsar site # 2042, US site 34



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There are 9 criteria for designating Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention including:

A wetland should be considered internationally important if it ...

- *supports plant and/or animal species at a critical stage in their life cycles, or provides refuge during adverse conditions.*

The diversity of wetlands within the Emiquon Complex provides essential habitats for a wide variety of different life stages of a multitude of animal species, both aquatic and terrestrial.



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The Emiquon Complex is a haven for migratory birds, supporting roughly 45% of the waterfowl using the Illinois segment of the Mississippi Flyway and nearly 70% of the waterfowl that use the Illinois River corridor .



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From 2000-2010, the Emiquon Complex provided an annual average of 2,812,728 fall duck use days or 22.8% of total fall duck use days for entire Illinois River Valley.



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- *regularly supports 20,000 or more waterbirds.*



Each year, the Emiquon Complex supports hundreds of thousands of migratory birds as they stop to rest and feed during spring and fall migrations along the Illinois River.

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Waterfowl surveys from 2000-2010 documented mean one-day peak abundance of 71,450 ducks alone with historic peaks as high as 1.5 million.



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- *regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of waterbird.*



Since 2007, peak one-day fall populations of American Coot on the Emiquon Complex have averaged 67,166 or 2.2% of the North American population and 1.1% of the 2009 global population.



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- *is an important source of food for fishes, spawning ground, nursery and/or migration path on which fish stocks, either within the wetland or elsewhere, depend.*



The complex provides a diversity of essential habitats for native fishes to carry out life requisites such as spawning, development of young, feeding, and wintering.

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Additionally, primary and secondary productivity from the Emiquon Complex is transported to the river providing abundant and high quality food for riverine fishes as well as macroinvertebrates such as freshwater mussels.



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The complex provides wetland habitat vital for federally-listed Decurrent False Aster, a species nearly endemic to the Illinois River floodplain.



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Greg Lavaty



Other federally endangered species documented using the complex infrequently include migrating Least Tern and Piping Plover.



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Jane Ward



The complex supports nesting and wintering American Bald Eagle, a recently delisted federally endangered species.



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Additionally, Illinois State threatened or endangered species documented on the complex include at least 23 bird, 3 fish, and 1 mammal species.

Wetlands provide a variety of benefits that include ...

- Habitat for native plants & animals (aquatic & terrestrial, resident & migratory)
- More natural hydrology by storing storm water (moderates unnatural water level fluctuations, reduces flooding & associated damages, provides base flow)
- Infiltration & associated groundwater recharge
- Processing & storage of nutrients (e.g., nitrogen, phosphorous) & sediments
- Water quality improvements
- Sequestering of carbon (helps reduce global climate change)
- Opportunities for recreation, education, & economic development

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