

Not your typical spring birding event - a woodcock walk at dusk

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Agency: Natural Resources

April 4, 2017

If you're looking to get out and stretch your legs, a spring birding event might be just the ticket. Grab your flashlight and binoculars and join Michigan Department of Natural Resources staff before dusk for a short walk to hear the "peent" call of a male American woodcock just before it lifts off the ground in its spiral dance 200 to 350 feet in the air.



The woodcock walk will be held Thursday, April 27, at 8 p.m. in northern Gladwin County at the Lame Duck Foot Access Area GEMS, an area showcased as a fall ruffed grouse and woodcock hunting location.

"This GEMS location has prime habitat for woodcock migrating back to their summer range in northern Michigan," said DNR wildlife biologist Bruce Barlow. "In the spring, you can hear the 'peents' in large fields we maintain annually and, if you're lucky, you can see them lift off into the night sky."

Attendees will get a brief overview of the management of the area and the history and habitat needs of woodcock, followed by a short walk to a spot known to have male woodcock displaying at dusk.

The prime time to hear a male woodcock and watch its display is just after sunset from mid-April to mid-May. Farther south, woodcock can be observed earlier in April. It takes them a bit longer to make it to the northern reaches of the Upper Peninsula.

"Michigan is one of the top woodcock production states in the nation," said DNR upland game bird specialist Al Stewart. "In Michigan, we have an active forest management program which helps to create young forests, giving woodcock areas to feed, rest, breed and rear young."

Woodcock are very unique in appearance, with their plump, round bodies and long, skinny, pointed bills, which are perfect for picking earthworms out of moist soil. Their buff bellies and black and tan speckle-patterned feathers give them the best camouflage Mother Nature could provide.

"We would love to share one of the most unique spring birding displays at one of our most popular fall hunting areas," said Barlow. "Woodcock are very common in northern Michigan in spring, summer and fall once they've migrated up from Louisiana or other southern states."

The woodcock walk meeting location is at the [Lame Duck Foot Access Area GEMS](#) – 15 miles northeast of Gladwin or 3 miles southwest of Alger in Bourret Township – at the northern information and parking area. Be sure to look for event signs. [See a PDF map of the Lame Duck GEMS.](#)

To RSVP, or for more information about the event, contact Katie Keen at 989-385-0336.

Michigan currently has 17 GEMS (Grouse Enhanced Management Sites) locations across the Upper and northern Lower peninsulas that are actively managed to maintain hundreds of acres of young forest. GEMS locations are destinations for upland bird hunters looking for grouse and woodcock in the fall, but also can be great destinations for birding in the spring. Young forests are great places for people who may be looking to check off birds on their list. [Learn more about GEMS at mi.gov/gems.](#)

This event is presented in partnership with the Ruffed Grouse and American Woodcock Society.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use and enjoyment of the state's natural and cultural resources for current and future generations. For more information, go to www.michigan.gov/dnr.

Accompanying images – including a photo of a woodcock and a graphic about young forests and birding – are available below for download. A suggested photo caption follows.

Woodcock: *The American woodcock will be the focus of a spring birding event in Gladwin County at dusk on April 27./*

- [Young+forests+great+birding.pdf](#)
- [woodcock.jpg](#)