

# Mystery Geocaching - Lansing Big Lake Tour



## Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge

This tour will take you into the Lansing Big Lake Area to explore the habitat, plants and animals found on the Upper Miss Refuge.

These coordinates should get you within 40'-50' of the target site. At the sites, you should be able to find the answers to the questions. Your final set of coordinates will help you return to your starting point.

### What are the rules for Mystery Geocaching on the Refuge?

Have fun trying to figure out the clues, but always be respectful of the wildlife and habitat.

Do not leave a cache, it is illegal.

### What will you need?

You will need some type of watercraft to take this tour . . . boat, canoe, kayak, etc.

A flat bottom boat is the preferred type of boat, but if you are careful, you should still be able to take this tour in a pontoon or v-hulled boat under ordinary water conditions.

A GPS unit. You may use your own and enter the coordinates found with each clue or you can check out a GPS unit from the Lansing Public Library. These units have the coordinates preset on the Waypoint menu page and were found utilizing the WGS84 Map Datum. They are identified as BL1-BL9. It is best to run these points in sequence.

The **Clues** on this sheet.

Pencil or pen to record your answers.

Optional – a digital camera. For fun, take pictures of yourself on the tour. If you send us your pictures, we will try to put them on our website.

**Starting Point** - Big Slough Boat Landing located directly across the main channel from Lansing, IA.

Here are your coordinates and clues!

#### **BL1 – N 43 22.216 W 91 12.966**

The island in front of you is named after its shape. What do you think its name is? \_\_\_\_\_  
In the late summer you will find the American Lotus plant growing and blooming in the water off of the tips of this island. The lotus plant has a very beautiful and aromatic yellow flower. If you can get close to one of its floating leaves, splash some water on them, what happens when you do this? \_\_\_\_\_

#### **BL2 – N 43 22.791 W 91 12.939**

You should see an animal's home if front of you. What animal lives here? \_\_\_\_\_  
Did you know this animal continues to grow throughout its life. On average they may be about 3-4 feet long and might weigh between 40-50 pounds. But those that are lucky enough to live 10-12 years or more might grow to 5 feet in length and up to 90 pounds. They also have nictitating membranes on their eyes, a second set of eyelids that function much like a pair of swimmer goggles, to allow them to see underwater, while protecting their eyes from being scratched.

**BL3 – N 43 23.022 W 91 13.110**

If you find this site, you have stumbled onto a project to help restore one of the Refuge's most threatened animals. What group of animals is it? \_\_\_\_\_. Please do not disturb this piece of equipment! To learn more about this program, please visit the website for the Genoa National Fish Hatchery. (<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/Genoa/>)

**BL4 – N 43 23.137 W 91 13.150**

You will have to look high in the tree tops for this next site. Look for the tallest cottonwood on the Island. This is home to one of our favorite residents. What animal lives here? \_\_\_\_\_ Look for them in the nest from February to June. Occasionally they may be sitting nearby, during the rest of the year. This animal has lived on this island since 1992 and has raised almost 30 young over the years.

**BL5 – N 43 23.377 W 91 13.092**

You are entering the original Big Lake Basin. Prior to the construction of the Lock and Dam System, the area to the north was a lake within the river floodplain. Look at the bluffs, these areas serve as important buffers to the Refuge. What is happening to the tops of the bluffs, especially on the Wisconsin side?

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**BL6 – N 43 22.974 W 91 12.846**

You are in the middle of a large backwater marsh. This area is dominated by a plant that is named for its shape. What do you think its name might be? \_\_\_\_\_ This plant is an important food source for muskrats, beavers, ducks, geese and swans. They all eat the starchy roots or tubers that this plant produces. American Indians included them in their diet as well. One of the nicknames for this plant is the "duck potato". As you navigate through this marsh keep an eye out for wildlife. You will often see great blue herons fishing in these backwaters.

**BL7 – N 43 22.850 W 91 12.569**

You are at the entrance to Natchway Slough. Many of the backwater lakes and sloughs take their names from colorful figures or events of the past. Look at the islands bordering the entrance. You should see natural succession at work. Sediment laden water enters the slough and drops off as the current slows down. Arrowhead and other emergent wetland plants give way to these pioneering trees, before eventually giving way to silver maple trees and other upland species. What is the name of these pioneering trees? \_\_\_\_\_

**BL8 – N 43 22.755 W 91 12.298**

Welcome back to the Main Channel. The current here is much swifter and the water is deeper than we find in the backwaters. Some of the most interesting fish species on the refuge live primarily in the main channel. Can you name a few of these fish? \_\_\_\_\_. To learn more about our native fish species, we would encourage you to visit the home page of the LaCrosse Fishery Resources Office. (<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/LaCrosseFisheries/>) They have all kinds of great information on our native fish.

Well that brings you to the end of our Big Lake Tour to get back to the Big Slough Landing use the following coordinates:

**BL9 – N 43 22.010 W 91 12.526**

We hope you enjoyed this tour and invite you to try another one on our website. If you follow this final set of coordinates you should find a log book. This log book has the answers to the questions from your Mystery Geocache. It also has space for you to share a little about your adventure with everyone. It would be fun to know what city you live in and some of the things you saw while you were out on your tour. If you have ideas or suggestions for other tours, be sure to tell us your ideas.