



Self-Guided Winter Waterfowl Walks

The weather outside may be frightful, but nature in the winter is so delightful! Lake County is home to hundreds of species of migratory birds, but many may not think about looking for them in winter. The truth is, Ohio is “south for the winter” for many species, especially waterfowl. Here are a few places to see winter waterfowl.

Fairport Harbor Lakefront Park

While most of us think of visiting the beach in the summer, it’s a great place to look for wintering ducks. Here, the lake is still protected by offshore breakwalls, making for calmer water. This park is a great spot to look for diving ducks like common goldeneyes, scaups, buffleheads and ruddy ducks. Simply scan the waters from the beach. Many ducks cluster into flocks in winter. Non-duck waterfowl like horned grebes and common loons are also seen here.

Hidden Lake

Inland ponds are home to mostly dabbling ducks. In addition to resident Canada geese and mallards, Hidden Lake can be home to wintering gadwalls and American wigeons. Be sure to check out the wetlands off of the Birder’s Loop Trail. As long as there’s open water, you may see hooded mergansers or pied-billed grebes.

Lake Erie Bluffs & Painesville Township Park

Scanning the more open waters of Lake Erie from parks such as Lake Erie Bluffs and Painesville Township Park may prove a test of your ability to stay warm some days, but it’s often worth it. Keeping watch out over the lake and you’re likely to see hundreds (even thousands) of red-breasted mergansers—Lake Erie is one of the largest wintering areas for these fish-eating ducks. Other waterfowl like horned grebes, greater and lesser scaups, and common loons can be seen on the lake as well. Even less common sea ducks like black scoters sometimes head up into the Great Lakes in winter.

Veterans Park

Granger Pond at Veterans Park is a great spot for dabbling ducks. As long as there’s open water, you’re likely to see ducks such as gadwalls, American wigeons and northern shovelers. Also look for diving ducks such as ring-necked ducks, buffleheads and ruddy ducks. Non-duck waterfowl such as pied-billed grebes are also common on the waters.

Fairport Harbor Lakefront Park

301 Huntington Beach Dr.
Fairport Harbor, Ohio 44077

Hidden Lake

North Entrance
6850 Kniffen Rd.

South Entrance
7024 Kniffen Rd.
Leroy Twp., Ohio 44077

- Birder’s Loop Trail
- Goldenrod Loop Trail
- Hidden Lake Loop Trail

Lake Erie Bluffs

3301 Lane Rd.
Perry Twp., Ohio 44081

2901 Clark Rd.
Perry Twp., Ohio 44081

- Eagle View Loop Trail
- Bluff Loop Trail
- Lakeview Trail
- Shoreline Trail

Painesville Township Park

1025 Hardy Rd.
Painesville Township, Ohio 44077

- Lakefront Trail
- Sunset Loop Trail

Veterans Park

5730 Hopkins Rd.
Mentor, Ohio 44060

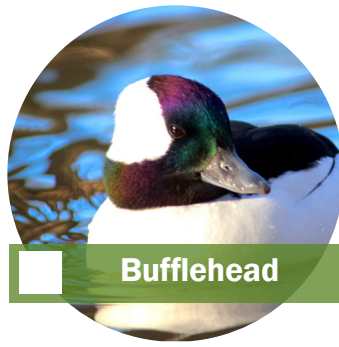
- Cardinal Loop Trail
- Lookout Trail
- Mallard Point Trail
- Swamp Forest Trail

Park maps and more information can be found at goto.lakemetroparks.com/bingewalk



American wigeon

American wigeons are medium dabbling ducks. Males have white foreheads and green faces while females are mottled brown. Both have smallish gray bills.



Bufflehead

Buffleheads are small black and white diving ducks. Males show a beautiful iridescence on their heads in good light. Look for black backs, white bellies and small white spots on the cheeks of females.



Common goldeneye

Common goldeneyes are medium-sized diving ducks. They have short bills, golden eyes and pointed triangular heads. Males have dark iridescent green heads and females have chocolate brown heads.



Ring-necked duck

Ring-necked ducks are medium diving ducks. Similar in coloration to scaups, look for black backs and white points on sides with dark heads and ringed bills. They get their name from the chestnut bands on their necks.



Gadwall

Gadwalls are brown dabbling ducks that are slightly smaller than mallards. They have steep foreheads, and black rears with white wing stripes. In good light, males have salmon-pink highlights.



Greater scaup

Greater scaups are medium diving ducks similar in appearance to lesser scaups. They have dark iridescent green heads. Greater scaups have rounder heads and are less common on inland ponds.



Hooded merganser

Hooded mergansers are small diving ducks. Males have ornate black and white crests, black backs and brown sides. Females have crests and are all brown.



Lesser scaup

Lesser scaups are visually similar to greater scaups. They have dark iridescent purple heads with slight points to them. Lesser scaups are more common on inland ponds than greater scaups.



Horned grebe

Horned grebe are a smallish waterbird. They are not ducks. They have a small head with small pointed bill. At close range note their red eye. Winter plumage is mostly gray with white face and throat. Horned grebe are seen on Lake Erie and rarely inland.



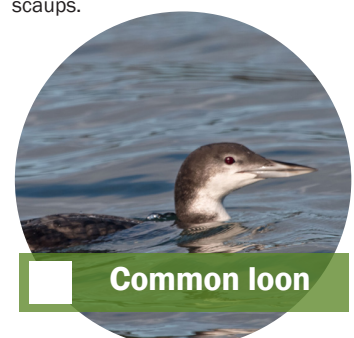
Northern shoveler

Northern shovelers are small dabbling ducks with absurdly large bills. Males have green heads, black bills and chestnut sides while females have orangish bills and are mottled brown.



Red-breasted merganser

Red-breasted mergansers are large diving ducks and are abundant on Lake Erie throughout winter. Males have dark green heads with messy crests while females have crested brown heads and gray bodies.



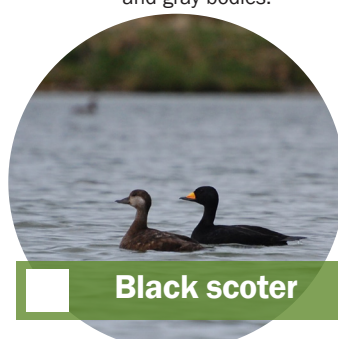
Common loon

Common loon are large diving birds. Though not ducks, common loon are, well, common on Lake Erie during winter. Look for a large bird sitting low in the water with a heavy spear-like bill. Note winter plumage (pictured) is mostly gray with a white throat.



Ruddy duck

Ruddy ducks are small diving ducks. Winter plumage is mostly grayish with whitish cheeks, while breeding plumage is a reddish brown with bright blue bills. Look for small ducks on large ponds or Lake Erie with their tails sticking up in the air.



Black scoter

Black scoters are large sea ducks. Males are entirely black with distinct yellow knobs at the base of their bills while females are brownish with white cheeks. Black scoters tend to be seen further out in Lake Erie and are seldom close up.

Ducks are often divided into dabbling (foraging on the water's surface) and diving (diving underwater for food) categories. Not every bird here is a duck, but they all share similar behavior and can be seen in many of the same areas.