

Willcox Playa Important Bird Area

*Important Bird Area near Willcox,
Arizona.*

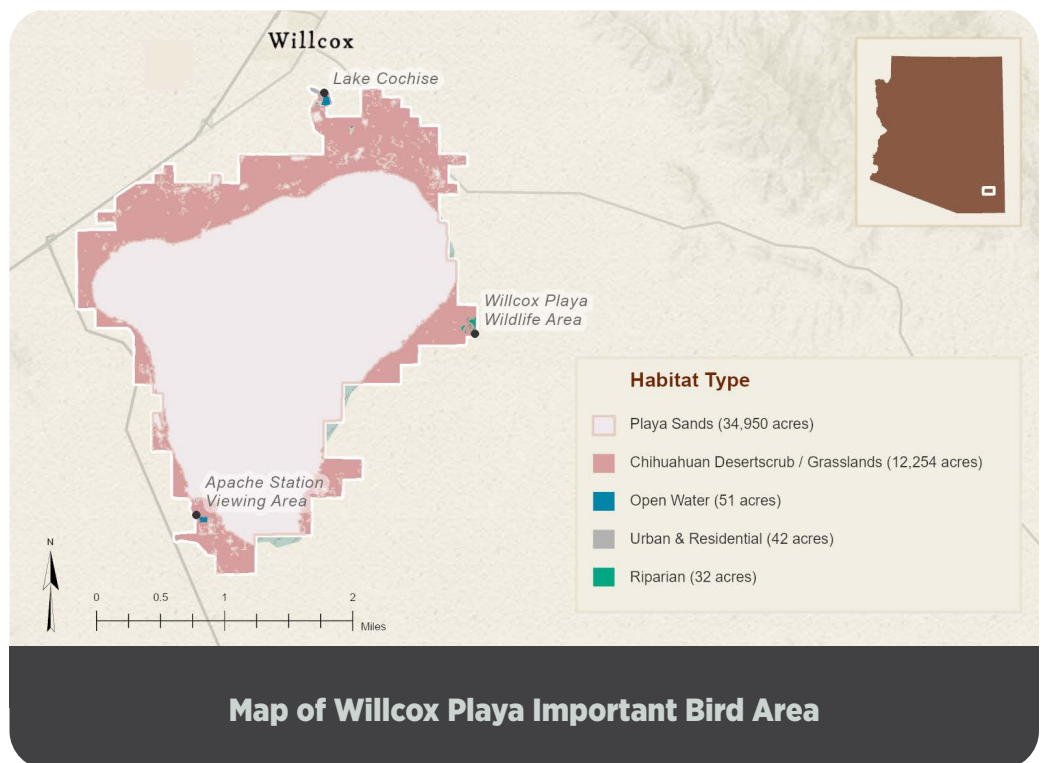
The Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program identifies vital bird habitat, raising awareness and designating areas that benefit bird populations.

ABOUT

The Willcox Playa IBA is located in southeastern Arizona within Cochise County near the City of Willcox, spanning 47,343 acres, or 74 square miles. The heart of this IBA is the massive Willcox Playa, a lakebed surrounded by grasslands and some mesquite trees, that seasonally floods when it rains. On the outskirts of the Playa are Lake Cochise, smaller lakes and wetlands, alkali flats (dried-out lake areas), and the Willcox Playa Wildlife Area.

Sandhill Cranes and other migratory bird species winter in this area, using it for roosting, resting, and feeding. This IBA supports the second largest winter concentration of Sandhill Cranes in Arizona (up to 15,000 birds). The Sandhill Cranes depend heavily on the surrounding agricultural lands of the Sulphur Springs Valley for feeding, particularly within corn fields after the harvest.

The Willcox Playa itself is a former military bombing range and much of it is closed to the public. Landownership includes the Arizona Game and Fish Department and the U.S. Department of Defense.



Map of Willcox Playa Important Bird Area

PUBLIC ACCESS AND VISITING

Much of the Willcox Playa is posted no trespassing and does not allow public access. However, there are three primary locations for wildlife viewing within the Important Bird Area: Apache Station viewing area, the Willcox Playa Wildlife Area (555 acres managed by the Arizona Game and Fish Department), and Lake Cochise (adjacent to Willcox Golf Course). The Willcox Playa Wildlife Area creates habitat for waterfowl (mid-sized to large birds found on or near water, like ducks, geese, and coots) and provides hunting opportunities. Lake Cochise attracts migrating birds including waterfowl, waterbirds (like the White-faced Ibis), and shorebirds (such as Wilson's Phalaropes).

The Wings Over Willcox Birding and Nature Festival provides an excellent opportunity for community gathering and bird watching.

Learn more about visiting the area here:
<https://bit.ly/47hjrM1>

ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE

Outdoor recreation along Cochise County's rivers, lakes, and streams generates \$279 million annually and supports 2,000 jobs in Arizona. Every year, 78,000 Arizona residents participate in water-based outdoor recreation in Cochise County. The top three outdoor recreation activities in the county include: wildlife watching, camping, and fishing. More: audubon.org/azrivers

BIRDS OF THE WILLCOX PLAYA IMPORTANT BIRD AREA



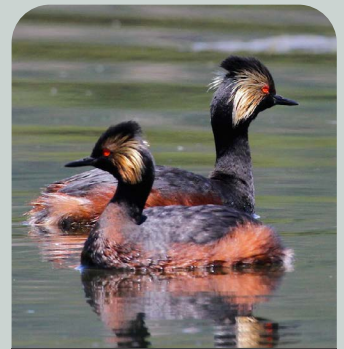
Wilson's Phalarope



Sandhill Crane



Long-billed Curlew



Eared Grebe

FOR MORE INFORMATION



Cover photo: Wilson's Phalarope. Photo: Marlin Greene/ Audubon Photography Awards
Birds of the Willcox Playa IBA, left to right: Wilson's Phalarope. Photo: Melissa Rowell/
Audubon Photography Awards; Sandhill Crane. Photo: Rolland Swain/ Audubon Photogra-
phy Awards; Eared Grebe. Photo: Willie Hall/ Audubon Photography Awards; Long-billed
Curlew. Photo: Mick Thompson