

## ARIZONA IBA SITE PROFILE

Name: Watson and Willow Lakes Ecosystem  
County: Yavapai  
Site Status: Identified  
Ownership: City of Prescott  
Area: 769 hectares (1900 acres approx.)



Criteria: D1: State: State Species of Conservation Concern  
D4ii: State: waterfowl Significant Concentration (>2000)  
D4iii: State: wading birds concentration site  
D4v: State: shorebirds concentration site (> 100)

### **Site Description:**

This IBA is located within the city limits of Prescott, AZ at 5100 ft. elevation. It occurs in two sections, Watson Lake east of Highway 89 and Willow Lake west of Highway 89. The IBA includes Watson and Willow Lakes and immediate surrounding uplands, and 2 miles of Granite Creek flowing into Watson Lake. Prescott Audubon Society is the steward for this IBA. Information about Prescott Audubon Society can be found at <http://www.prescottaudubon.org/>

### **Ornithological Summary:**

Ornithological Summary: These two lakes of this IBA are most notable for the number of waterfowl they support during the migration periods and during the winter period. These lakes are particularly important to large numbers of waterfowl and shorebirds during the fall passage. In wet years waterfowl numbers can exceed 5000 birds at one time. Notably abundant are Northern Pintails and Northern Shovelers. Shorebird numbers in fall passage can exceed greater than 300 birds, including Black-necked Stilts and American Avocets. White-faced Ibis and Forester's Tern also regularly occur in the fall passage, and Marbled Godwits occur in the spring passage period. There are no other comparable lake systems within a distance of 200-300 miles east and west, and 60 to 150 miles north and south, thus indicating the importance of the lakes ecosystem as stop-over feeding and resting site for these migrants. Ruddy and Ring-necked Ducks and Common Merganser over-winter in this lake system in large numbers. Bald Eagles are also present (4-10 individuals) during the winter period, finding available prey among the waterfowl flocks. Wood Duck (approximately 50 pairs) are notable breeders within the two lakes ecosystem. There are Great Blue Heron and Double-crested Cormorant rookeries at Willow Lake as well. The riparian area is small, but supports breeding Yellow Warbler in abundance, breeding Lucy's Warblers, and nesting Green Heron. Data is collected monthly, December through March, and has been since 2005, on the numbers of waterfowl, waders, and shorebirds found in this IBA and is posted on the Arizona IBA website, [www.aziba.org](http://www.aziba.org).

### **Conservation Issues:**

The City of Prescott has implemented some regulations regarding recreational use of the two lakes, most notably a "no wake" regulation on Watson Lake with limited horsepower motors. Kayaking is the only boating allowed on Willow Lake. Kayakers do disturb the waterfowl in the winter, but this is intermittent, and the birds seem to



stay in spite of these disturbances. Periodic consultation with City staffers and council by Prescott Creeks and Prescott Audubon have increased the City's awareness of the value of the IBA as an ecotourism value.

Prescott Creeks is a local nonprofit organization dedicated to the protection of the ecological integrity of the Granite Creek Watershed riparian systems and associated wetlands through conservation, restoration and education. This organization is currently restoring Watson Woods Riparian Preserve just south of Watson Lake and a part of this IBA. As part of the restoration project, avian monitoring is ongoing throughout the year. Data is submitted to the Arizona IBA program website. The website for Prescott Creeks is [www.prescottcreeks.org](http://www.prescottcreeks.org).



Watson Lake



Willow Lake