



Bird Conservation Areas and Important Bird Areas

In recent years, alarming declines in a large number of North American bird species have led to programs dedicated to the conservation of game and non-game bird species. Conservation organizations and enthusiasts have begun working together to conserve "all birds in all habitats." The Iowa Bird Conservation Area (BCA) program was established by the Iowa DNR Wildlife Bureau in 2001 as an effort to preserve and protect high-quality habitat for nesting, wintering and migratory birds. Another program - the Important Bird Area (IBA) program - is a global effort initiated by the National Audubon Society to identify and conserve areas that are vital to birds and other biodiversity. All Iowa BCAs are also designated as IBAs. Many of the areas described in this brochure are part of these efforts to manage quality bird habitat. The total acres in these Bird Conservation Areas are comprised of both public and private lands.

 Designates Bird Conservation Area



Osprey
© Joe Jungers



Ruddy Duck
© Stan Buman

1 Cayler Prairie Bird Conservation Area Cayler Prairie, Dugout Creek, Freda Hafner Kettlehole, Kettleston Hogsback

Found west of Okoboji, this 37,000 acre area has a focus on grassland birds. Dickcissel, Grasshopper Sparrow and Sedge Wren can be found here along with the Iowa endangered Northern Harrier. The region contains many glacial relic landscapes alive with unusual plants and animals. Keep a sharp eye out for a glimpse of the secretive Yellow Rail which may be heard or seen as it migrates through the area. Dug Out Creek, the largest marsh in the complex, offers excellent roadside viewing of abundant waterfowl and wetland species such as the Northern Pintail, Canvasback, Ruddy Duck and Redhead. Kettleston Hogsback complex may be the best birding area in northwest Iowa, if not the entire state. The area offers outstanding habitat for wetland, prairie and forest species and features a bird list approaching 300 species. Some species to look for include Western Kingbird, Swamp Sparrow, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Trumpeter Swan, and Black-crowned Night Heron.



Wilson's Phalarope
© Stan Buman

2 Spring Run Bird Conservation Area

This 14,000 acre Bird Conservation Area is one of the best examples of a "prairie pothole" landscape. Numerous small wetlands and shallow lakes dominate the collection of county, state and federal lands. Area marshes house nearly every kind of water bird known to nest in Iowa such as American Bittern, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Marsh Wren and Black Tern. When water levels are low, mudflats can be dotted with migratory shorebirds. This location is a reliable place to observe American Golden Plover, Stilt Sandpiper and Wilson's Phalarope as well as many other shorebirds - both common and unusual. The abundant grassy uplands also provide a home to a wide variety of prairie species.



Yellow-headed Blackbird
© Bruce Morrison



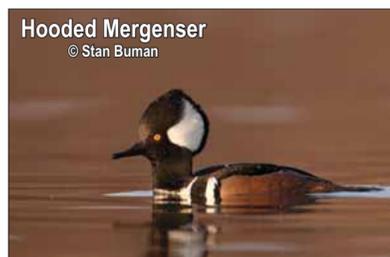
White Pelican
© Joe Jungers



Upland Sandpiper
© Joe Jungers

3 Ingham - High Wetland Complex Anderson Prairie, Cunningham Slough, Fort Defiance State Park

Emmet County provides good examples of the diverse habitats of Northwest Iowa. Over 3,000 acres of shallow lakes and marshes can be found at the Ingham-High Lake Complex. Fort Defiance State Park, near Estherville, is a stand of dense deciduous woods covering ridges and ravines. Pileated Woodpecker and Eastern Wood Peewee nest in these woods. Prairie birds such as Bobolink and meadowlark nest at Anderson Prairie, a beautiful native tallgrass prairie. Indigo Bunting utilize the edge where grasslands meet the oak and walnut trees along the river.



Hooded Merganser
© Stan Buman



Western Grebe
© Stan Buman



Bobolink
© Bruce Morrison



Northern Harrier
© Joe Jungers

4 Dewey's Pasture Bird Conservation Area Barringer Slough, Blue Wing Marsh, Dan Green Slough, Kirchner Prairie, Lost Island Lake, Trumbull Lake

This prairie wetland complex crisscrosses the border of Clay and Palo Alto counties encompassing 78,000 acres of public and private land. Over 230 species of birds utilize this diverse habitat. Species of Greatest Conservation Need, such as American and Least Bittern, Black Tern, Northern Harrier, Sedge Wren, Bobolink, and Grasshopper Sparrow can be found in the area.

The Iowa DNR has completed several shallow lake management projects in this region. Fish barriers, water control structures, draw-downs, and intense carp removal have greatly improved water quality in Lost Island Lake, Trumbull Lake, and Dan Green Slough. The benefits to birds and other wildlife are evident with nesting success of water birds including Western Grebe, Common Gallinule, Least Bittern and Forster's Tern. Barringer Slough is one of Iowa's largest natural marshes with over 1,700 acres and a great site for viewing waterfowl, White Pelican, Osprey, and heron. Sandhill Crane have been confirmed nesting in the Dewey's Pasture Complex. Watch for Great-tailed Grackle, Yellow-headed Blackbird, and Black Tern at Dan Green Slough, and drive gravel roads at dawn and dusk to see Gray Partridge.

5 Waterman Prairie Bird Conservation Area

Nestled into Iowa's Glacial Hills region, this 69,000 acre area is a unique mix of sprawling natural prairies and Bur Oak savannahs. Many birds on Iowa's list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need either nest here or use the area for important wintering grounds. It is also a stopover location on the journey of many migratory birds. Some species include Red-headed Woodpecker, Bobolink, and Field Sparrow. The location within the Little Sioux Watershed makes the area one of the best places in the state to see western bird species rare to Iowa such as the Mountain Bluebird, Townsend's Solitaire, Bohemian Waxwing, and Golden Eagle. Both Eastern and Western Meadowlark grace the prairies. Listen carefully to distinguish the "bird with two songs." This valley is a consistent place to find Bald Eagle throughout the winter and is a prime interior migration corridor for raptors in the fall.



Western Meadowlark
© Stan Buman



Bohemian Waxwing
© Joe Jungers

6 Little Sioux River Valley Bertram, Burr, Kindlespire, Oneota Park, Wanata Park

The Little Sioux River begins its journey near the Minnesota border and flows into the Missouri River near Onawa. As you travel through this region, take note of the impressive landscape features formed by glaciers. After the last glacier receded 12,000 years ago, the Little Sioux River carved a new channel from the Spencer area heading south and west. Fast flowing waters shaped a deep, scenic valley and towering wooded bluffs. Red-shouldered Hawk and Barred Owl share these woods with Scarlet Tanager, Wood Thrush, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and Cerulean Warbler. Many excellent birding locations can be found along this 250 mile corridor. Kindlespire Park and Burr Wildlife Area boast miles of trails that include prairie, woodland, and riverine ecosystems. Explore the scenic roads that wind through Wanata and Buena Vista County parks. Spring and fall are excellent times to find warblers and other migrating woodland birds.



Chestnut-sided Warbler
© Stan Buman



Red-headed Woodpecker
© Joe Jungers

7 West Des Moines River Corridor Basswood, Brushy Bayou, Burns Prairie, Kettlehole Prairie, Watson Heritage Area

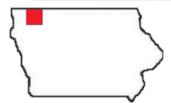
The West Fork of the Des Moines River both north and south of Emmetsburg offer excellent viewing of riparian species. This watershed drains east to the Mississippi River, and many private and public lands have been enrolled in the Wetland Reserve Program to protect the flood plain and provide buffer strips along the river. Wild Turkey and Bald Eagle are found nesting here. Greenbelt strips at Basswood and Brushy Bayou are great places to see eastern wood warblers during migration. Watson Heritage Area is home to the Wood Thrush and Eastern Towhee. It is also an important site for warbler migration. Be sure to walk the unique Kettlehole Prairie where you will see upland species like meadowlark and Dickcissel. Burns Prairie, a native and restored prairie with several restored wetland basins, is a great location to observe migrating shorebirds such as the American Golden Plover, Upland Sandpiper and yellowlegs.



Scarlet Tanager
© Stan Buman



Trumpeter Swan
© Joe Jungers

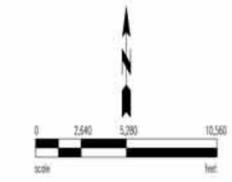
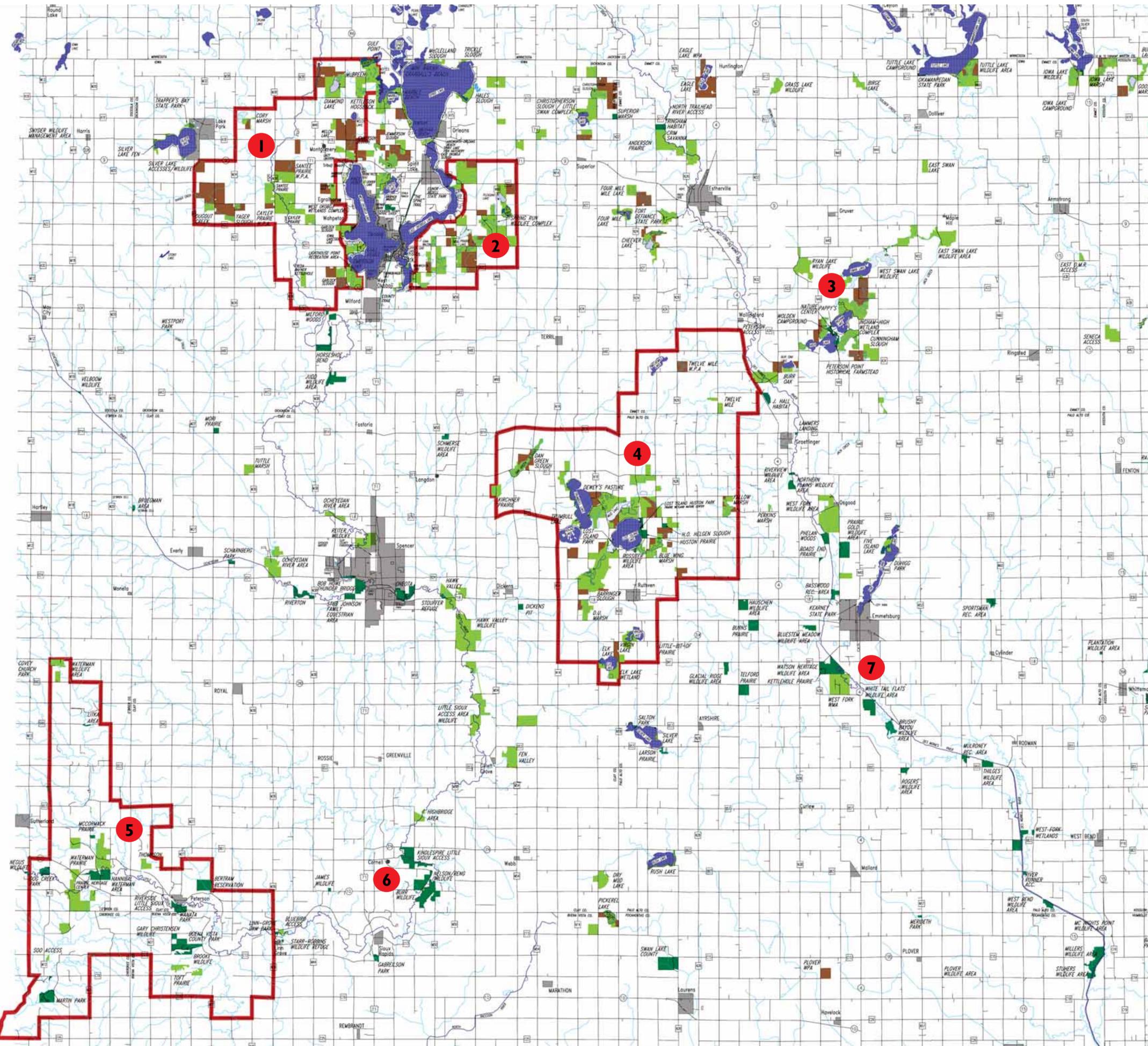


Welcome to the Iowa Prairie Lakes Region

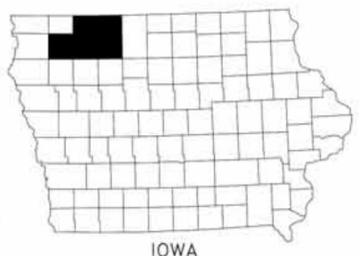
Numerous natural lakes and marshes characteristic of the prairie lakes region of Iowa provide excellent sites for bird watching as well as other outdoor recreation. These wet areas were formed by glaciers which covered this part of Iowa. Massive ice sheets scraped and scoured the land carrying gravel, rocks and giant boulders. When the temperatures warmed slightly, these glaciers melted, filled the shallow depressions they had carved out, and left their load of rocky materials behind. Small kettleholes, drumlins, eskers, and other unique geological formations remain today. Where there is water, there is abundant wildlife. Wetlands are home to more wildlife in number and variety than any other Iowa habitat. Great Blue Heron, White Pelican, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Upland Sandpiper, and Black Tern call these wetlands home. Some birds are found in the region all year long, some are summer nesters, and still others only pass through on their long migration north or south. Whether they are wet for a few weeks, or throughout all seasons, wetlands are important in providing food, nesting cover, and a place to stop and refuel on a long trip.

**Over 300 different birds can be seen in the region!
Come visit and stay for a day or a week!**

- This publication has been sponsored by:
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 - Conservation Foundation of Dickinson County
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 - Little Sioux Valley Conservation Association
 - Northwest Bank
 - Oneota Conservation Fund
 - Palo Alto County Conservation Foundation
 - Prairie Lakes Audubon Bird Club
 - 2015 Wings & Wetlands Bird-A-Thon Participants



- LEGEND**
- COUNTY PROPERTY
 - STATE PROPERTY
 - FEDERAL PROPERTY
 - MUNICIPALITIES
 - LAKES/MARSHES
 - U.S. HIGHWAY SYSTEM
 - STATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM
 - COUNTY ROAD SYSTEM
 - BCA BOUNDARIES



IOWA

BIRDING: THE IOWA PRAIRIE LAKES REGION MAP

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