



## IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION - Birding Sites in Dickinson County

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### **Big Spirit Lake (eBird Hotspot) (Important Bird Area)**

**GPS Coordinates:** 43.477,-95.098

**Ownership:** State

**Description:** At 5,685 acres (8.9 sq. mi.), Big Spirit Lake is Iowa's natural lake, formed by the retreating Des Moines Lobe of the Wisconsinian Glaciar about 12,000 years ago. Although very large, it is relatively shallow (26 ft. at greatest depth).

**Habitat:** Open water lake, with some emergent vegetation along the eastern and northeastern shorelines. One of Iowa's greatest stopover points for every kind of migrating waterfowl, plus various species of loon, grebes, pelicans and more.

**Directions:** Immediately north of the City of Spirit Lake, in northern Dickinson County. Accessible from all sides by paved roads, state parks, wildlife areas and boat launch sites.

#### **Public Hunting Area**

**Amenities:** Restrooms | Drinking Water | Parking | Trails | Camping | Cabins | ADA Accessible Trails

### **Buffalo Run**

**GPS Coordinates:** 43.4806084174085,-95.1257228851318

**Ownership:** State

**Description:** Small shoreline access to west side of Big Spirit Lake.

**Habitat:** Sand/gravel lake shoreline, with good views on Big Spirit Lake for spotting migratory waterfowl, loons, etc..

**Directions:** On the west shore of Spirit Lake in northern Dickinson Co. This point is about three miles north on Hwy. 276 from the south end of the lake, or 1.5 miles south on 276 from Jackson Co. Rd. 2 (Minn.), and adjacent to East Hottes Lake.

**Amenities:** Parking |

### **Cayler Prairie State Preserve (eBird Hotspot) (Important Bird Area)**

**GPS Coordinates:** 43.3963168,-95.2439117

**Ownership:** Multiple

**Description:** A huge complex (nearly 1500 acres) of native prairie--a State Preserve & National Natural Landmark surrounded by or linked to other state and federal public lands, all situated on rolling glacial moraine along the Little Sioux River, especially good for grassland birds.

**Habitat:** Cayler Prairie is relatively pristine native prairie. Surrounding public lands formerly were pastured or cropped but now are naturally recovering as prairie or have been replanted to prairie grasses and forbs. Santee Prairie, a large federal area 1 mi. north of Cayler Prairie (but part of the complex) has many restored potholes wetlands and native prairie.

**Directions:** In northwestern Dickinson Co. Take IA Hwy 9 west 3.5 miles from intersection with IA Hwy 86, then turn south on 170th Ave. and go 2 mi. south on gravel road to parking lot on west side of preserve. OR, from the west side of West Okoboji Lake, take A-22 west from Hwy. 86, 3.5 miles to 170th

Ave. Go north on 170th a little more than 1.5 miles to the parking area on the right, after 180th St. (both streets and avenues are numbered in Dickinson). A .pdf map of Cayler Prairie is found at: <http://www.state.ia.us/government/dnr/organiza/fwb/wildlife/maps/cayler~1.pdf>

### **Public Hunting Area**

**Amenities:** Parking |

### **Christopherson Slough (eBird Hotspot)**

**GPS Coordinates:** 43.4776,-94.936816

**Ownership:** Multiple

**Description:** Large natural prairie pothole marsh situated in rolling glacial moraine hills.

**Habitat:** Large prairie marsh surrounded by grasslands and restored native prairie, with an old oak savanna woodland (understory overgrown with invasive shrubs) on the south side of the marsh. This is actually part of a much larger 1260-acre complex of public lands encompassing Little Swan Lake and some of northern Iowa's most rugged and beautiful glacial topography. Outstanding complex for wetland birds, grassland birds and some forest birds.

**Directions:** From the town of Estherville, take Highway 9 west to the town of Superior. In Superior, turn north on 1st St. 1st St heads out of town and turns to the right briefly before becoming 330th Ave northbound. Take 330th Ave north to the slough.

### **Public Hunting Area**

**Amenities:** Parking |

### **Diamond Lake WMA (eBird Hotspot)**

**GPS Coordinates:** 43.4835666,-95.1863623

**Ownership:** Multiple

**Description:** An 1,100-acre wildlife management area centered around a shallow prairie lake.

**Habitat:** Lake is a 166-acre shallow wetland hosting many waterfowl, and, when water levels are low, a variety of shorebirds in migration. Uplands consist of native prairie, non-native grasslands, tree & shrub row plantings plus small native woodland on east shoreline of lake. Good mixed habitat for grassland, shrubland birds.

**Directions:** Diamond Lake is located just below the Minnesota border, west of Spirit Lake. From City of Spirit Lake, take IA Hwy 9 west to intersection with IA Hwy 86. Take hwy 86 north 3.5 miles to Diamond Lake public entrance road on west side of highway. OR, from Milford take US Hwy 71 north one mile, then take highway 86 west and proceed around west side West Okoboji. Continue north from intersection with Hwy 9 until reaching Diamond Lake entrance.

### **Public Hunting Area**

**Amenities:** Parking |

### **Dickinson County Nature Center (eBird Hotspot)**

**GPS Coordinates:** 43.3946749,-95.1265679

**Ownership:** County

**Description:** County Conservation board nature center situated overlooking a wetland and restored native prairie all situated next to a prominent glacial kame (gravel hill).

**Habitat:** Restored prairie pothole wetland with surrounding restored native prairie and small remnant oak savanna.

**Directions:** From US Hwy 71, between cities of Okoboji and Spirit Lake, take paved 170th Street 1/2 mile west to nature center entrance on south side of road.

**Amenities:** Restrooms | Drinking Water | Parking | Trails | ADA Accessible Trails

### **Dugout Creek Wildlife Area (eBird Hotspot) (Important Bird Area)**

**GPS Coordinates:** 43.408535,-95.304399

**Ownership:** Multiple

**Description:** Restored 95-acre prairie pothole marsh, with Dugout Creek flowing through it, surrounded by glacial moraine hills, plus vast area of surround tame and restored grassland. Dugout Creek Wildlife Area is actually a large complex of state and federal lands approaching some 1,200 acres in size, when a nearby sub-portion (Yager Slough--see description elsewhere on website) is included. This all is part of DNR's much larger Cayler Prairie-Dugout Creek Bird Conservation Area and Audubon Important Bird Area.

**Habitat:** Restored large, shallow, prairie pothole marsh surrounded by remnant and restored native prairie on steep glacial hills. Along Dugout Creek west of the marsh and road is the largest complex of glacial fen wetlands remaining in the state of Iowa. Outstanding habitat for nesting and migrating waterfowl, rails, and grassland birds. Yellow Rails are periodically found here in migration. BCA printed guide with checklist is available from Iowa DNR.

**Directions:** Just south of Lake Park (city) in northwest Dickinson Co., immediately south of Hwy. 9 along M-27, on the east side. for best site access and viewing, take 140th Ave. south from IA Hwy 9, 1 mile east of Lake Park turnoff on M27. Travel 1 mile south on gravel to see marsh in Dugout Creek valley, then continue 1/2 mile to parking area along road which bisects the wetland.

### **Public Hunting Area**

**Amenities:** Parking |

### **E. Okoboji Lake**

**GPS Coordinates:** 43.3842165998788,-95.1111316680908

**Ownership:** State

**Description:** Large glacial lake, approximate 5 miles long by 1/4 to 1/2 mile wide.

**Habitat:** Open water lake, good for waterfowl viewing especially on migration.

**Directions:** From the town of Estherville: Take state Highway 9 west to the town of Superior. Continue west through Superior, and Highway 9 and US 71 merge. Take 9/71 into the town of Spirit Lake. To view the north end of the lake, turn north at the intersection of 71/9 and Hill Ave. Continue north on Hill Ave. until it turns into Orleans Pkwy. Continue north until you hit a T-intersection with South Lake Shore Dr. (M-49) Take a right at the T-intersection until you reach the intersection with M-56. Take a right on M-56, and you can view much of the north end of the lake from this road.

## **Amenities:**

### **Freda Haffner Kettlehole State Preserve (eBird Hotspot)**

**GPS Coordinates:** 43.3461645,-95.2220116

**Ownership:** Private (see directions for access)

**Description:** This Nature Conservancy-owned State Preserve is one of the best examples of a glacial kettle anywhere in Iowa. As you walk north from the preserve's southside parking lot, you will approach a huge depression with steep 30-40 ft. walls and sometime having shallow water in the bottom during wet year. Perched on hills above the Little Sioux River, it is not only a spectacular sight, but also a good place to find grassland birds.

**Habitat:** Tallgrass prairie and mixed haylands around the kettlehole and mixed-grass prairie on the dry, steep side slopes. Excellent for Bobolinks, Grasshopper Sparrows, Upland Plovers, Western Meadowlarks, Horned Larks and all typical grassland species.

**Directions:** If you are in Spirit Lake, go west to the Vick's Corner intersection of Hwys. 9 and 86. Turn south on Hwy 86. Watch for the Oh Shucks bait store. Directly across is the gravel road 210th st. Turn right on the gravel road, travelling 2 mi. west toward the Kettle Hole

**Amenities:** Parking |

### **Grovers Lake (Iowa) (eBird Hotspot)**

**GPS Coordinates:** 43.4971,-95.1654

**Ownership:** State

**Description:** A large (300-acre) marsh located on the Iowa-Minnesota state line. All land and water south of the state line (which runs E-W across the northern 1/4 of the lake-marsh) is part of the larger Kattleson Hogsback Wildlife Management Complex, making Grover's lake part of perhaps the greatest birding area in NW Iowa

**Habitat:** Shallow lake-marsh with frequently dense emergent vegetation & lightly wooded south shoreline. Uplands south of lake contains a diverse mix of small restored wetlands, native prairie, restored prairie, and small strip-crop fields. On the very NE edge of the property, just south of the lakeshore, is a glacial esker, perhaps the best example of this once under-glacier river or sand and stone anywhere in Iowa. Dry, mixed-grass prairie dominates the esker. Birdlife includes nesting a huge diversity of grassland and wetland species, plus some woodland birds. Grover's lake has hosted nesting Canvasbacks, Red-necked Grebes, Black-crowned Night Herons and other rare Iowa nesters, plus almost every kind of migrating waterfowl.

**Directions:** At the Minnesota border in northern Dickinson Co. Near the north end of West Okoboji Lake, take Hwy. 86 north from Hwy. 9 five miles to 100th St., at the Minnesota border. Turn right (east) on 100th and follow this as it soon curves south and becomes 215th Ave. The boat ramp and parking area for the lake are about half a mile south on the east side. Also, continue following gravel road south and east until reaching another parking lot, for walk-in access to the entire area.

**Public Hunting Area**

**Amenities:** Parking |

### **Hales Slough WMA (eBird Hotspot)**

**GPS Coordinates:** 43.4732901,-95.0626373

**Ownership:** State

**Description:** An 242-acre area on the east side of Big Spirit Lake, containing a large marsh feeding into the lake, plus restored prairie uplands north of the marsh and shoreline trees along the lake.

**Habitat:** Marshy habitat dominated by emergent vegetation hosts many kinds of nesting and migratory waterfowl, American Bitterns. Restored prairie uplands offer good habitat for many grassland species.

**Directions:** From Iowa Highway 9, on the east side of the bridge over East Okoboji Lake, take Co. Highway M-56 winding north about 4 miles to the Hales Slough entrance road sign. Turn west and follow entrance road to parking area between lake and marsh. Also, continue about 1/4 mi. north on M-56 to a roadside parking area along the restored grasslands.

#### **Public Hunting Area**

**Amenities:** Parking |

### **Iowa Lakeside Laboratory (eBird Hotspot)**

**GPS Coordinates:** 43.3787582,-95.1838946

**Ownership:** State

**Description:** A teaching and research property serving Iowa's universities, this site is situated on the west shoreline of West Okoboji just north of Gull Point State Park. It houses teaching laboratories and classrooms, cabins and dining hall, and is located within a mix of woodlands and grasslands,

**Habitat:** Mixed oak woodlands with small patches of open grasslands, plus a larger native prairie on the north end of the lab's property. Serves a variety of woodland and grassland birds, as well as a variety of gulls and waterfowl on adjacent West Okoboji Lake.

**Directions:** From the intersection with U.S. 71 just north of Milford, turn west on IA Highway 86, following it about 5 miles west and north until arriving at Lakeside Lab along the east side of the highway, OR take IA highway 86 south from its intersection with IA High 9 near the NW corner of West Okoboji Lake.

**Amenities:** Restrooms | Drinking Water | Parking | Trails | Cabins | ADA Accessible Trails

### **Kettleon Hogsback WMA (eBird Hotspot) (Important Bird Area)**

**GPS Coordinates:** 43.4689299,-95.1411724

**Ownership:** State

**Description:** One of the largest and most diverse wildlife habitat complexes in northern Iowa. Comprised over over 2,000 acres of lakes, marshes, grasslands and forest on steeply rolling glacial moraine

**Habitat:** Shallow lakes, prairie pothole wetlands (natural and restored) native prairie, tame grasslands, croplands, oak woods, and more. Kettleon Hogsback holds the record for avian species in Dickinson County, with at least 276 species recorded here. It is home to a huge variety of nesting and migrating waterfowl and other waterbirds, grassland birds (including nesting Clay-colored Sparrows, Grasshopper Sparrow, Upland plovers and many others), nesting and migrating forest birds (at least 28 species of

warblers have been observed here), nesting Bald Eagles, Osprey, Great Blue Herons. The list is almost endless.

**Directions:** While there are many accesses to this sprawling complex, best access is via the main entrance road to the area and wildlife unit headquarters. From IA Highway 9, take the main street of downtown Spirit Lake (Hill Ave.) and follow it north around the NE side of East Okoboji Lake to the T-intersection on the south shore of Big Spirit Lake. Then turn left and follow Co. Hwy. M-49 around the SW side of Big Spirit Lake about 2.5 mi. until reaching 125th Street (across from Marble Beach State Park. Turn west on 125th and go about 1 mi. until reach Kettleon Hogsback entrance sign and road on north side. Follow entrance road into wildlife area headquarters and multiple parking areas.

**Amenities:** Parking | Trails |

### **Krummen Tract, Spring Run Wetland Complex (eBird Hotspot)**

**GPS Coordinates:** 43.3531362731201,-95.0915193557739

**Ownership:** None listed

**Description:** A mix of restored prairie and tame grasslands with Spring Run Creek flowing through it from east to west,

**Habitat:** This is a tract of restored prairie grasslands and a glacial fen. It part of the much larger Spring Run Complex, for fuller description of habitat and birdlife, please go to the list for the Spring Run Complex on this website

**Directions:** From north end of downtown Milford, take A-34 (a.k.a. 220th St.) east two miles from U.S. 71, to 240th Ave. Turn north on 240th and continue 1 1/2 mi. north. Tract is on west side of road.

#### **Public Hunting Area**

**Amenities:** Parking |

### **Lair Tract, Spring Run Wetland Complex (eBird Hotspot)**

**GPS Coordinates:** ,

**Ownership:** None listed

**Description:** This is a tract of restored prairie grasslands and pothole wetlands. It part of the much larger Spring Run Complex, for fuller description of habitat and birdlife, please go to the list for the Spring Run Complex on this website

**Habitat:** Restored prairie grasslands and pothole wetlands

**Directions:** Northeast of Milford in northeast Dickinson Co. Out of Milford, take A-34 five miles east from U.S. 71 to 270th Ave. Proceed north on 270th two miles to 200th St., and continue north 3/4 mile to the parking area on the west side, at the only deciduous woodlot.

#### **Public Hunting Area**

**Amenities:** Parking |

### **Marble Beach SP (eBird Hotspot)**

**GPS Coordinates:** 43.4651923,-95.1228261

**Ownership:** State

**Description:** Oak woodland state park and recreation area on the west shore of Big Spirit Lake. Also known as Marble Beach Recreation Area, because a small part of the area is open to public hunting in season (but seldom used).

**Habitat:** Mostly oak woodlands maintained in park-like conditions, but also some grasslands and conifer and brush plantings between the camping areas and M-49.

**Directions:** From downtown Spirit Lake, follow the main street north, winding around the NW side of East Okoboji Lake. Turn west on Co. Highway M-49 at the T-intersection on south shore of Big Spirit Lake. Continue west and north to the entrance of Marble Beach RA on the east side of M-49.

#### **Public Hunting Area**

**Amenities:** Restrooms | Drinking Water | Parking | Trails | Camping | ADA Accessible Trails

#### **Martha Yarns Memorial Beach**

**GPS Coordinates:** 43.4908058042249,-95.0538396835327

**Ownership:** Private (see directions for access)

**Description:** A private beach lined with cabins on the east side of Big Spirit Lake.

**Habitat:** Sandy/rocky shoreline with occasional small areas of emergent vegetation. Mostly migratory waterfowl are viewed from this site.

**Directions:** On the east side of Spirit Lake in northern Dickinson Co. Take Hwy. 327 about four miles north from Orleans to 110th St. A few hundred yards further, on the left, is Martha Yarns Dr., and a sign for the beach. Property above ordinary high water mark is all privately owned. Birders should stay on the road while viewing birds on the lake and not try crossing private properties to reach the beach.

**Amenities:**

#### **McBreen Marsh (Important Bird Area)**

**GPS Coordinates:** 43.4742244443136,-95.167350769043

**Ownership:** State

**Description:** A mixture of restored prairie grasslands and pothole wetlands. Part of the much larger Kettleson Hogsback Wildlife Complex. Go to that site on this website for a more complete description

**Habitat:** Prairie, other grasslands and wetlands. Sites hosts many grassland birds plus lots of nesting and migrating waterfowl. Also, in the 1980s a Black Rail was observed here by the DNR Waterfowl Biologist and son.

**Directions:** From the intersection of Iowa Highways 9 and 86, travel 3 mi. north on 86, then turn east on 120th street. Go 3/4 mi to parking lot on north side of road.

#### **Public Hunting Area**

**Amenities:** Parking |

#### **Mini-Wakan SP (eBird Hotspot) (Important Bird Area)**

**GPS Coordinates:** 43.4995695,-95.0992012

**Ownership:** State

**Description:** A very small, wooded State Park on NE portion of Big Spirit Lake. Situated on North shore

of Big Spirit Lake and on east shore of North Bay (and "The Grade").

**Habitat:** Oak-walnut woodlands, with understory lawns mowed for park maintenance and public use. Good for migrating warblers and summer-nesting songbirds, as well as observing waterfowl, gulls, pelicans and other waterbirds on the lake and North Bay.

**Directions:** Follow Co. Hwy. M-49 north along the west side of Big Spirit Lake. On reaching the Minnesota state line, turn east on paved road (100th St). Continue across "the Grade" and look for state park entrance sign on S side of road immediately after crossing.

**Amenities:** Restrooms | Drinking Water | Parking |

### **Sandbar Slough (eBird Hotspot) (Important Bird Area)**

**GPS Coordinates:** 43.482539,-95.0538826

**Ownership:** Private (see directions for access)

**Description:** A moderate-sized marsh directly feeding into Big Spirit Lake. All surrounding land is privately owned, so bird observations must be made from the side of M-56.

**Habitat:** Typical glacial wetland surrounded by emergent vegetation. Uplands are private pasture, grassland, cropfields and a couple of small patches of trees. Sandbar Slough is excellent for viewing both nesting and migrating waterfowl of all species, plus pelicans, herons and other waterbirds.

**Directions:** From the DNR Fish Hatchery on the South shore of Big Spirit Lake, go east to junction with Co. Hwy. M-56, then turn north and travel about 3 miles to the slough on the east side of the highway.

**Amenities:**

### **Smith's Bay (eBird Hotspot)**

**GPS Coordinates:** 43.3719423586807,-95.1304221153259

**Ownership:** State

**Description:** A large bay of West Okoboji Lake

**Habitat:** Open deepwater lake. Best for viewing migrating waterfowl and gulls.

**Directions:** The eastern lobe of West Okoboji Lake in northern Dickinson Co. One viewing point is near the U.S. 71 bridge at the north edge of the city of Arnolds Park.

**Amenities:** Restrooms | Parking | Trails | ADA Accessible Trails

### **Spirit Lake Fish Hatchery**

**GPS Coordinates:** 43.4453947454901,-95.0954675674438

**Ownership:** None listed

**Description:**

**Habitat:**

**Directions:** - at the east end of the isthmus (Hwy. 327), which is just north of the town of Spirit Lake, between East Okoboji Lake and Spirit Lake in northern Dickinson Co.

**Amenities:**

### **Spirit Lake--The Grade (Iowa) (eBird Hotspot)**

**GPS Coordinates:** 43.5002077,-95.1079774

**Ownership:** None listed

**Description:**

**Habitat:**

**Directions:** "The grade" - at the western end of the north shore of Spirit Lake in northern Dickinson Co. Just east of Hwy. 276 along Jackson Co. Rd. 2 (Minn.), check the small bay and the rock jetty.

**Amenities:**

### **Spring Run Wetland Complex (eBird Hotspot) (Important Bird Area)**

**GPS Coordinates:** 43.3797876,-95.0446129

**Ownership:** Multiple

**Description:** A huge, sprawling complex (approximately 4,800 acres) of prairie lakes, marshes, native & mostly open uplands. One of NW Iowa's largest wildlife management complexes, comprised of both state and federal lands, under management of DNR. Entire complex is a DNR Bird Conservation Area and Audubon Important Bird Area.

**Habitat:** Shallow prairie lakes, original and restored prairie pothole marshes, tame grasslands, native and restored prairies, scattered small cropfields and small patches of trees/brush. Virtually every grassland and wetlands bird nesting in or migrating through NW Iowa may be found here. A BCA site guide and bird checklist is available from Iowa DNR.

**Directions:** Northeast of Milford in northeast Dickinson Co. (See also separate listings for Bartley Tract, Krummen Tract, Prairie Lake, Reiter-Lair W.A., and Wolthius Tract, all sub-portions of Spring Run, elsewhere on this website). The original core area of 950 acres is most easily reached as follows: from main downtown intersection with Hill Ave. in City of Spirit Lake, take IA Hwy 9 & US 71 east about 4 miles to reach 280th Ave. Turn south on 280th and travel 3 miles to reach the NE corner of the historic core area.

**Public Hunting Area**

**Amenities:** Parking |

### **Stony Lake**

**GPS Coordinates:** 43.3656249130081,-95.3554058074951

**Ownership:** Private (see directions for access)

**Description:** The largest (~300 acres) historic natural lake/marsh in private ownership in Iowa. Rocky glacial moraine slopes surround most of the area. Very similar to what might be found in northeastern South Dakota.

**Habitat:** Shallow lake/marsh with extensive emergent vegetation. Surrounding hillsides mostly grazed and degraded native prairie. Good for many aquatic birds, as well as grassland birds on side hills.

However, this is a private are, so all viewing must be don from public roadways on the north, west or south sides.

**Directions:** On the west side of Dickinson Co. From Hwy. 9 just south of Lake Park, take M-27/130th four miles south to 190th. Take 190th right (west) two miles to 110th Ave. and the lake is in the vicinity

southeast of this intersection.

**Amenities:**

**Stover Tract, Spring Run Wetland Complex (eBird Hotspot)**

**GPS Coordinates:** 43.3732915550128,-95.072432756424

**Ownership:** None listed

**Description:** A mix of restored prairie and grasslands, with restored prairie pothole wetlands

**Habitat:** This is a tract of restored prairie grasslands and pothole wetlands. It part of the much larger Spring Run Complex, for fuller description of habitat and birdlife, please go to the list for the Spring Run Complex on this website.

**Directions:** Northeast of Milford in northeast Dickinson Co. Out of Milford, take A-34 east four miles to M-56/260th Ave. Proceed north on M-56 three miles to 190th St., and continue north 1/4 mile to the parking area on the west side of the road.

**Public Hunting Area**

**Amenities:** Parking |

**Trickle Slough WMA (eBird Hotspot) (Important Bird Area)**

**GPS Coordinates:** 43.4998185,-95.0643539

**Ownership:** State

**Description:** A small wetland separated by a spit from Angler's Bay, on the NE corner of Big Spirit Lake.

**Habitat:** small marsh surrounded by riparian trees, and a small area of restored prairie west of the wetland. Parking area is on NW corner of the area's grassland.

**Directions:** From the intersection with Hwy (9 & 71 about 1.5 miles east of downtown Spirit Lake, turn north on Co. Highway M-56. Follow this as it winds north approximately 5 1/2 mi. until reaching a curve west on the IA/MN state line. Continue 1/8 mi. west; Trickle Slough is on south side of road.

**Public Hunting Area**

**Amenities:** Parking |

**W. Okoboji Lake**

**GPS Coordinates:** 43.3500234636655,-95.158896446228

**Ownership:** State

**Description:** The deepest (136 ft.), and 3rd largest (3,949 acres), glacial lake in Iowa.

**Habitat:** Large, open, deepwater lake. Surrounded by developments with very little adjacent upland habitat. However, the lake itself is a major migratory stopover for almost every species of waterfowl known in Iowa, plus loons, grebes and a large variety of gulls. Facilities are mostly located at State Parks situated around the lake: Gull Point SP (see description elsewhere on this website), Emmerson Bay, and Pillsbury Point.

**Directions:** From the town of Estherville: Take state Highway 9 west to the town of Superior. Then take US Highway 71 westbound. Stay on 71 until you get to the town of Spirit Lake. Once in town, turn south on 71, and continue to the town of Arnold's Park. Go through Arnold's Park, and past the Emerald Hills

Golf club. You will soon see Okoboji Blvd. to your right. Take a right on Okoboji Blvd. and that will take you along the entire south end of the lake.

**Amenities:** Restrooms | Drinking Water | Parking | Trails | Camping | ADA Accessible Trails

### **Welch Lake WMA (eBird Hotspot) (Important Bird Area)**

**GPS Coordinates:** 43.45822,-95.17162

**Ownership:** Multiple

**Description:** One of the largest complexes of restored & natural wetlands in NW Iowa, surrounded by restored prairie on rolling glacial moraine. The namesake lake is located at the north end and is a typical small prairie lake, surrounded by trees and having a rocky shoreline.

**Habitat:** Over 34 natural and restored wetlands, plus a shallow prairie Lake (Welch Lake, surrounded by mostly restored native prairie, some remnant prairie, tame grasslands, and a few small crop fields. Wetlands host countless nesting and migrating waterfowl, other waterbirds, and shorebirds, while uplands are rich in everything from nesting Upland Plovers to multiple migrating species of longspurs.

**Directions:** Take IA Hwy 86 north from junction with Hwy 9, near NW corner of West Okoboji Lake. State and federal lands that comprise this approximately 1,100-acre complex are immediately adjacent on east side of 86. Continue north 2 miles, and most lands on both sides of highway are all part of the complex.

#### **Public Hunting Area**

**Amenities:** Parking |

### **Wolthius Tract, South, Spring Run Wetland Complex**

**GPS Coordinates:** 43.3528827294504,-95.0932359695435

**Ownership:** State

**Description:** A mix of restored prairie and other grassland, plus restored pothole wetlands.

**Habitat:** This is a tract of restored prairie grasslands and pothole wetlands. It part of the much larger Spring Run Complex, for fuller description of habitat and birdlife, please go to the list for the Spring Run Complex on this website

**Directions:** Northeast of Milford in northeast Dickinson Co. Out of Milford, take A-34 east three miles from U.S. 71, to 250th Ave. Proceed north on 250th two miles to a sharp left turn, 202nd St. The tract is on the south side along 202nd, just after the turn, past the Krummen Tract parking area.

#### **Public Hunting Area**

**Amenities:** Parking |