Field Checklist for Union Hills BCA
* = confirmed or likely area breeder
Iowa Wildlife Action Plan Migratory Species of Greatest Conservation Need
Iowa Wildlife Action Plan Nesting Species of Greatest Conservation Need

___Greater White-fronted Goose
___Snow Goose
___Ross's Goose
___Cackling Goose
___Canada Goose*
___**Trumpeter Swan***
___Wood Duck*
___Gadwall*
___American Wigeon
___American Black Duck
___Mallard*
___Blue-winged Teal*
___Northern Shoveler*
___**Northern Pintail***
___Green-winged Teal*
___**Canvasback**
___**Redhead***
___Ring-necked Duck*
___Greater Scaup
___Lesser Scaup
___Bufflehead
___Common Goldeneye
___Hooded Merganser*
___Common Merganser
___Red-breasted Merganser
___Ruddy Duck*

___Gray Partridge*
___Ring-necked Pheasant*
___Wild Turkey*

___Common Loon
___Pied-billed Grebe*
___Horned Grebe
___Red-necked Grebe
___Eared Grebe
___Western Grebe

___Double-crested Cormorant
___**American White Pelican**

___**American Bittern***
___**Least Bittern***
___Great Blue Heron*
___Great Egret
___Cattle Egret
___Green Heron*
___**Black-crowned Night-Heron***
___White-faced Ibis

___Turkey Vulture*
___**Osprey**
___**Bald Eagle**
___**Northern Harrier***
___Sharp-shinned Hawk
___Cooper's Hawk*

___**Broad-winged Hawk**
___**Swainson's Hawk**
___Red-tailed Hawk*
___Ferruginous Hawk
___Rough-legged Hawk

___**King Rail**
___Virginia Rail*
___Sora*
___**Common Gallinule**
___American Coot*

___**Sandhill Crane***

___Black-bellied Plover
___**American Golden Plover**
___Semipalmated Plover
___Killdeer*
___**American Avocet**
___Spotted Sandpiper*
___**Solitary Sandpiper**
___**Greater Yellowlegs**
___Willet
___**Lesser Yellowlegs**
___**Upland Sandpiper***
___**Hudsonian Godwit**
___**Marbled Godwit**
___Sanderling
___Semipalmated Sandpiper
___Least Sandpiper
___White-rumped Sandpiper
___Baird's Sandpiper
___Pectoral Sandpiper
___Dunlin
___**Short-billed Dowitcher**
___Long-billed Dowitcher
___Wilson's Snipe
___**American Woodcock***
___**Wilson's Phalarope**

___Franklin's Gull
___Ring-billed Gull
___Herring Gull
___Caspian Tern
___**Black Tern**
___**Forster's Tern**

___Rock Pigeon*
___Eurasian Collared-Dove*
___Mourning Dove*
___**Yellow-billed Cuckoo***
___**Black-billed Cuckoo***

___Eastern Screech-Owl*
___Great Horned Owl*
___Snowy Owl

___Barred Owl*
___**Short-eared Owl**

___**Common Nighthawk**
___**Chimney Swift***
___Ruby-throated Hummingbird*
___Belted Kingfisher*

___**Red-headed Woodpecker***
___Red-bellied Woodpecker*
___Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
___Downy Woodpecker*
___Hairy Woodpecker*
___Northern Flicker*

___American Kestrel*
___Merlin
___**Peregrine Falcon**

___**Olive-sided Flycatcher**
___Eastern Wood-Pewee*
___Yellow-bellied Flycatcher
___Alder Flycatcher
___**Willow Flycatcher***
___**Least Flycatcher**
___Eastern Phoebe*
___Great Crested Flycatcher*
___Eastern Kingbird*

___**Loggerhead Shrike**
___Northern Shrike
___Yellow-throated Vireo*
___Blue-headed Vireo
___Warbling Vireo*
___Philadelphia Vireo
___Red-eyed Vireo*

___Blue Jay*
___American Crow*
___Horned Lark*
___Purple Martin*
___Tree Swallow*
___Northern Rough-winged Swallow*
___Bank Swallow*
___Cliff Swallow*
___Barn Swallow*

___Black-capped Chickadee*
___Red-breasted Nuthatch
___White-breasted Nuthatch*
___**Brown Creeper**
___House Wren*
___**Sedge Wren***
___Marsh Wren*
___Blue-gray Gnatcatcher*

___Golden-crowned Kinglet
___Ruby-crowned Kinglet

___Eastern Bluebird*
___**Veery**
___Gray-cheeked Thrush
___Swainson's Thrush
___Hermit Thrush
___**Wood Thrush***
___American Robin*

___Gray Catbird*
___Brown Thrasher*
___European Starling*
___American Pipit
___Cedar Waxwing*

___Lapland Longspur
___Smith's Longspur
___Snow Bunting

___Ovenbird
___Northern Waterthrush
___**Golden-winged Warbler**
___**Black-and-white Warbler**
___Tennessee Warbler
___Orange-crowned Warbler
___Nashville Warbler
___Mourning Warbler
___Common Yellowthroat*
___American Redstart*
___Cape May Warbler
___Northern Parula
___Magnolia Warbler
___Bay-breasted Warbler
___Blackburnian Warbler
___Yellow Warbler*
___Chestnut-sided Warbler
___Blackpoll Warbler
___Palm Warbler
___Yellow-rumped Warbler
___Black-throated Green Warbler
___**Canada Warbler**
___Wilson's Warbler

___Eastern Towhee
___American Tree Sparrow
___Chipping Sparrow*
___Clay-colored Sparrow*
___**Field Sparrow***
___Vesper Sparrow*
___Lark Sparrow*
___Savannah Sparrow*
___**Grasshopper Sparrow***
___**Henslow's Sparrow***
___**Le Conte's Sparrow**
___**Nelson's Sparrow**
___Fox Sparrow
___Song Sparrow*
___Lincoln's Sparrow
___Swamp Sparrow*
___White-throated Sparrow
___Harris's Sparrow
___White-crowned Sparrow
___Dark-eyed Junco

___Scarlet Tanager*
___Northern Cardinal*
___Rose-breasted Grosbeak*
___Indigo Bunting*
___**Dickcissel***
___**Bobolink***
___Red-winged Blackbird*
___**Eastern Meadowlark***

___Western Meadowlark*
___Yellow-headed Blackbird*
___**Rusty Blackbird**
___Brewer's Blackbird
___Common Grackle*
___Great-tailed Grackle*
___Brown-headed Cowbird*

___Orchard Oriole*
___Baltimore Oriole*
___Purple Finch
___House Finch*
___Pine Siskin
___American Goldfinch*
___House Sparrow*

To find out more about BCAs in Iowa or to download brochures for other BCA sites, visit www.iowadnr.gov/BirdConservationAreas.aspx.

Northern Harrier
Photo by Jason Crotty

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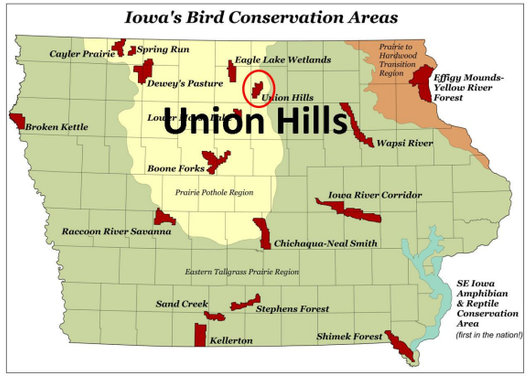
Produced by Natalie Randall, Bruce Ehresman, and Shane Patterson, 2012

Union Hills

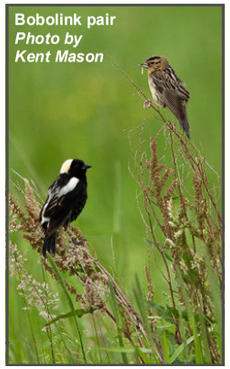
Bird Conservation Area

Cerro Gordo County



The Union Hills Bird Conservation Area (BCA) is located in the southwest portion of Cerro Gordo county near Mason City, Iowa. This BCA was dedicated in 2004 to recognize the important habitat contained therein for declining grassland and prairie-pothole bird species. In fact, the Union Hills Waterfowl Production Area (WPA) is the largest in the state, a function of the continuous tract of restored pothole wetlands present there. Union Hills BCA encompasses nearly 32,000 acres, over 4,000 acres of which comprise key protected habitat. Grassland areas of this BCA support declining nesting species such as Northern Harrier, Bobolink, and Grasshopper Sparrow. In wetland habitat of the Union Hills BCA, Northern Pintail, American Bittern, Wilson's Phalarope, and Forster's Tern may be found nesting. Migratory bird Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), such as American Avocet, Greater Yellowlegs, and Short-billed Dowichter, rely on this area for important stopover habitat along their migration route.

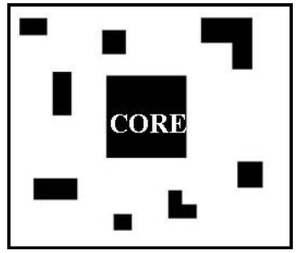
Northern Pintail
Photo courtesy USFWS


Bobolink pair
Photo by Kent Mason

BIRD CONSERVATION AREAS

Within the last two decades, alarming declines in a large number of species of North American birds have led to the emergence of national and international programs dedicated to the conservation of game and non-game birds. Since 1999, bird conservation organizations and enthusiasts have worked together under an umbrella called the North American Bird Conservation Initiative to "conserve all birds in all habitats." As part of this initiative and in an effort to protect dwindling populations of many Iowa birds, the **Bird Conservation Area** (BCA) program was established by the Iowa DNR Wildlife Bureau in 2001.

Forster's Tern
Photo by Rinus Baak



A BCA Model: shaded areas depict public habitat protected for birds; white is private land

The present model BCA encompasses at least 10,000 acres of public and/or private lands with at least 25 percent of the area established as key bird habitat. This concept is backed by research that suggests viable bird populations require conservation efforts at a landscape-oriented level. Each BCA should also include a large "core" area of protected high-quality habitat. Surrounding this core are private lands, plus additional public tracts, managed for good bird habitat or at least maintained to be neutral in how they affect bird life.

IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS

Audubon's Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program is a global effort to identify and conserve areas that are vital to birds and other biodiversity. Designated IBAs include sites for breeding, wintering, and/or migrating birds. All Iowa Bird Conservation Areas are also Important Bird Areas.

UNION HILL'S DIVERSITY

PLANTS

The restoration of the Union Hills WPA back into prairie pothole vegetation provides visitors the opportunity to encounter native plant species while birding. Lacustrine and Tussock Sedges may be found along prairie swales and marsh edges in concert with Marsh Bellflower and Swamp Milkweed. Small White Lady's Slipper, a species of special concern in Iowa, may appear in wet prairie areas or along pothole edges, blooming briefly in late May or early June. Upland prairie sites support mesic species like Big Bluestem, Canada Wild Rye, Indian Grass, Yellow Coneflower, Prairie Blazing Star, and Rattlesnake Master.

Small White Lady's Slipper
Photo by Jason Sturner

ANIMALS

There are many kinds of wildlife other than birds that can be found throughout the Union Hills BCA. Mammal species easily seen in wetland pond and stream habitats include Beaver and Muskrat; less easily observed, but present nonetheless, are River Otter and Mink. The Tiger Salamander, Western Chorus Frog, and Northern Leopard Frog are common amphibian species found in and around vernal potholes. Reptiles that may be encountered include the Redbelly Snake, Prairie Skink, Painted Turtle, and, more rarely, Smooth Green Snake. The Broad-winged Skipper, a small butterfly of native marshes, can be found in this area of Iowa, as can the Acadian Hairstreak. Both are species of special concern. Damselflies like the Northern Bluet and Sedge Sprite may also be observed flitting along the edges of ponds and wetlands in this BCA.

Northern Red-belly Snake
Photo by Ryan Rasmussen

Northern Bluet
Photo by Mathew Robinson

A list of Iowa's Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) can be found at www.iowadnr.gov by entering "Wildlife Action Plan" in the search. If you encounter uncommon or rare species in this BCA, please contact the Wildlife Diversity Program to report your sightings.

PARTNERSHIPS

Partners in the creation of the Union Hills BCA include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Cerro Gordo County Conservation Board, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, Big Bluestem Audubon Society, and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.