

**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**

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|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ___ Greater White-fronted Goose       | ___ <b>Bald Eagle</b>             |
| ___ Snow Goose                        | ___ <b>Northern Harrier*</b>      |
| ___ Ross's Goose                      | ___ Sharp-shinned Hawk            |
| ___ Cackling Goose                    | ___ Cooper's Hawk*                |
| ___ Canada Goose*                     | ___ <b>Broad-winged Hawk</b>      |
| ___ <b>Trumpeter Swan*</b>            | ___ <b>Swainson's Hawk</b>        |
| ___ Wood Duck*                        | ___ Red-tailed Hawk*              |
| ___ Gadwall*                          | ___ Ferruginous Hawk              |
| ___ American Wigeon                   | ___ Rough-legged Hawk             |
| ___ American Black Duck               | ___ <b>King Rail</b>              |
| ___ Mallard*                          | ___ Virginia Rail*                |
| ___ Blue-winged Teal*                 | ___ Sora*                         |
| ___ Northern Shoveler*                | ___ <b>Common Gallinule</b>       |
| ___ <b>Northern Pintail*</b>          | ___ American Coot*                |
| ___ Green-winged Teal*                | ___ <b>Sandhill Crane*</b>        |
| ___ <b>Canvasback</b>                 | ___ Black-bellied Plover          |
| ___ <b>Redhead*</b>                   | ___ <b>American Golden Plover</b> |
| ___ Ring-necked Duck*                 | ___ Semipalmated Plover           |
| ___ Greater Scaup                     | ___ Killdeer*                     |
| ___ Lesser Scaup                      | ___ <b>American Avocet</b>        |
| ___ Bufflehead                        | ___ Spotted Sandpiper*            |
| ___ Common Goldeneye                  | ___ <b>Solitary Sandpiper</b>     |
| ___ Hooded Merganser*                 | ___ <b>Greater Yellowlegs</b>     |
| ___ Common Merganser                  | ___ Willet                        |
| ___ Red-breasted Merganser            | ___ <b>Lesser Yellowlegs</b>      |
| ___ Ruddy Duck*                       | ___ <b>Upland Sandpiper*</b>      |
| ___ Gray Partridge*                   | ___ <b>Hudsonian Godwit</b>       |
| ___ Ring-necked Pheasant*             | ___ <b>Marbled Godwit</b>         |
| ___ Wild Turkey*                      | ___ Sanderling                    |
| ___ Common Loon                       | ___ Semipalmated Sandpiper        |
| ___ Pied-billed Grebe*                | ___ Least Sandpiper               |
| ___ Horned Grebe                      | ___ White-rumped Sandpiper        |
| ___ Red-necked Grebe                  | ___ Baird's Sandpiper             |
| ___ Eared Grebe                       | ___ Pectoral Sandpiper            |
| ___ Western Grebe                     | ___ Dunlin                        |
| ___ Double-crested Cormorant          | ___ <b>Short-billed Dowitcher</b> |
| ___ <b>American White Pelican</b>     | ___ Long-billed Dowitcher         |
| ___ <b>American Bittern*</b>          | ___ Wilson's Snipe                |
| ___ <b>Least Bittern*</b>             | ___ <b>American Woodcock*</b>     |
| ___ Great Blue Heron*                 | ___ <b>Wilson's Phalarope</b>     |
| ___ Great Egret                       | ___ Franklin's Gull               |
| ___ Cattle Egret                      | ___ Ring-billed Gull              |
| ___ Green Heron*                      | ___ Herring Gull                  |
| ___ <b>Black-crowned Night-Heron*</b> | ___ Caspian Tern                  |
| ___ White-faced Ibis                  | ___ <b>Black Tern</b>             |
| ___ Turkey Vulture*                   | ___ <b>Forster's Tern</b>         |
| ___ <b>Osprey</b>                     | ___ Rock Pigeon*                  |

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|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ___ Eurasian Collared-Dove*        | ___ Marsh Wren*                    |
| ___ Mourning Dove*                 | ___ Blue-gray Gnatcatcher*         |
| ___ <b>Yellow-billed Cuckoo*</b>   | ___ Golden-crowned Kinglet         |
| ___ <b>Black-billed Cuckoo*</b>    | ___ Ruby-crowned Kinglet           |
| ___ Eastern Screech-Owl*           | ___ Eastern Bluebird*              |
| ___ Great Horned Owl*              | ___ <b>Veery</b>                   |
| ___ Snowy Owl                      | ___ Gray-cheeked Thrush            |
| ___ Barred Owl*                    | ___ Swainson's Thrush              |
| ___ <b>Short-eared Owl</b>         | ___ Hermit Thrush                  |
| ___ <b>Common Nighthawk</b>        | ___ <b>Wood Thrush*</b>            |
| ___ <b>Chimney Swift*</b>          | ___ American Robin*                |
| ___ Ruby-throated Hummingbird*     | ___ Gray Catbird*                  |
| ___ Belted Kingfisher*             | ___ Brown Thrasher*                |
| ___ <b>Red-headed Woodpecker*</b>  | ___ European Starling*             |
| ___ Red-bellied Woodpecker*        | ___ American Pipit                 |
| ___ Yellow-bellied Sapsucker       | ___ Cedar Waxwing*                 |
| ___ Downy Woodpecker*              | ___ Lapland Longspur               |
| ___ Hairy Woodpecker*              | ___ Smith's Longspur               |
| ___ Northern Flicker*              | ___ Snow Bunting                   |
| ___ American Kestrel*              | ___ Ovenbird                       |
| ___ Merlin                         | ___ Northern Waterthrush           |
| ___ <b>Peregrine Falcon</b>        | ___ <b>Golden-winged Warbler</b>   |
| ___ <b>Olive-sided Flycatcher</b>  | ___ <b>Black-and-white Warbler</b> |
| ___ Eastern Wood-Pewee*            | ___ Tennessee Warbler              |
| ___ Yellow-bellied Flycatcher      | ___ Orange-crowned Warbler         |
| ___ Alder Flycatcher               | ___ Nashville Warbler              |
| ___ <b>Willow Flycatcher*</b>      | ___ Mourning Warbler               |
| ___ <b>Least Flycatcher</b>        | ___ Common Yellowthroat*           |
| ___ Eastern Phoebe*                | ___ American Redstart*             |
| ___ Great Crested Flycatcher*      | ___ Cape May Warbler               |
| ___ Eastern Kingbird*              | ___ Northern Parula                |
| ___ <b>Loggerhead Shrike</b>       | ___ Magnolia Warbler               |
| ___ Northern Shrike                | ___ Bay-breasted Warbler           |
| ___ Yellow-throated Vireo*         | ___ Blackburnian Warbler           |
| ___ Blue-headed Vireo              | ___ Yellow Warbler*                |
| ___ Warbling Vireo*                | ___ Chestnut-sided Warbler         |
| ___ Philadelphia Vireo             | ___ Blackpoll Warbler              |
| ___ Red-eyed Vireo*                | ___ Palm Warbler                   |
| ___ Blue Jay*                      | ___ Yellow-rumped Warbler          |
| ___ American Crow*                 | ___ Black-throated Green Warbler   |
| ___ Horned Lark*                   | ___ <b>Canada Warbler</b>          |
| ___ Purple Martin*                 | ___ Wilson's Warbler               |
| ___ Tree Swallow*                  | ___ Eastern Towhee                 |
| ___ Northern Rough-winged Swallow* | ___ American Tree Sparrow          |
| ___ Bank Swallow*                  | ___ Chipping Sparrow*              |
| ___ Cliff Swallow*                 | ___ Clay-colored Sparrow*          |
| ___ Barn Swallow*                  | ___ <b>Field Sparrow*</b>          |
| ___ Black-capped Chickadee*        | ___ Vesper Sparrow*                |
| ___ Red-breasted Nuthatch          | ___ Lark Sparrow*                  |
| ___ White-breasted Nuthatch*       | ___ Savannah Sparrow*              |
| ___ <b>Brown Creeper</b>           | ___ <b>Grasshopper Sparrow*</b>    |
| ___ House Wren*                    | ___ <b>Henslow's Sparrow*</b>      |
| ___ <b>Sedge Wren*</b>             | ___ <b>Le Conte's Sparrow</b>      |
| ___ Fox Sparrow                    | ___ <b>Nelson's Sparrow</b>        |

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|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| ___ Song Sparrow*              | ___ Yellow-headed Blackbird* |
| ___ Lincoln's Sparrow          | ___ <b>Rusty Blackbird</b>   |
| ___ Swamp Sparrow*             | ___ Brewer's Blackbird       |
| ___ White-throated Sparrow     | ___ Common Grackle*          |
| ___ Harris's Sparrow           | ___ Great-tailed Grackle*    |
| ___ White-crowned Sparrow      | ___ Brown-headed Cowbird*    |
| ___ Dark-eyed Junco            | ___ Orchard Oriole*          |
| ___ Scarlet Tanager*           | ___ Baltimore Oriole*        |
| ___ Northern Cardinal*         | ___ Purple Finch             |
| ___ Rose-breasted Grosbeak*    | ___ House Finch*             |
| ___ Indigo Bunting*            | ___ Pine Siskin              |
| ___ <b>Dickcissel*</b>         | ___ American Goldfinch*      |
| ___ <b>Bobolink*</b>           | ___ House Sparrow*           |
| ___ Red-winged Blackbird*      |                              |
| ___ <b>Eastern Meadowlark*</b> |                              |
| ___ Western Meadowlark*        |                              |



Northern Harrier  
Photo by Jason Crotty

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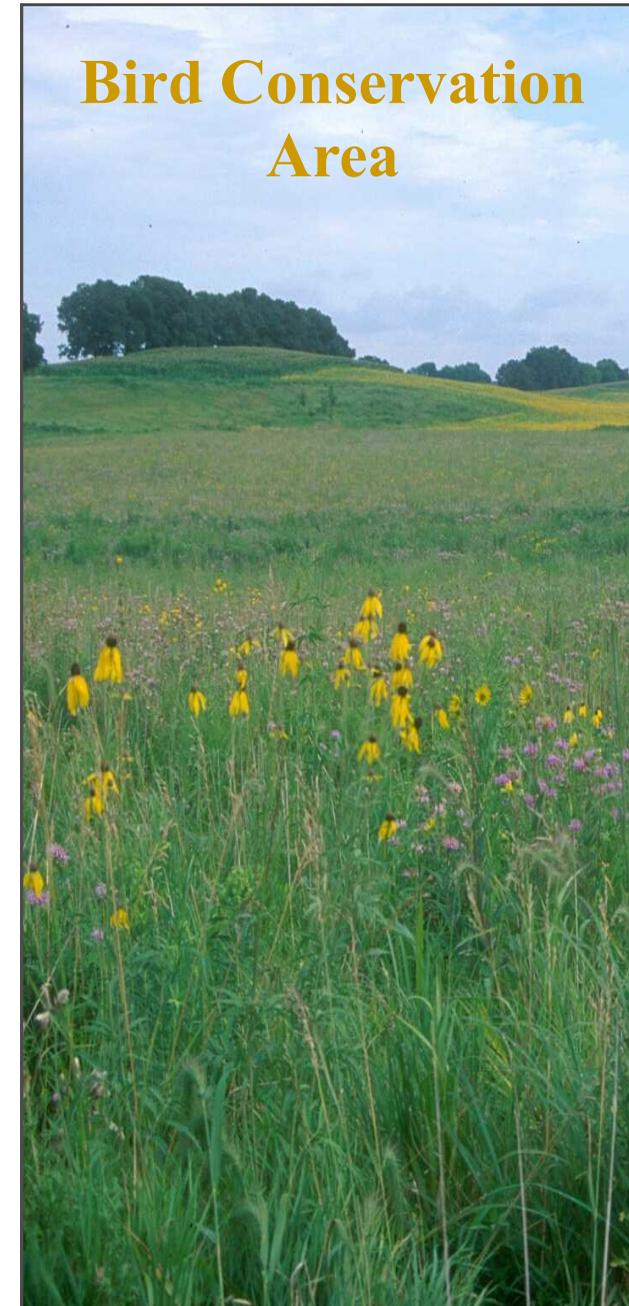


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# Union Hills

## 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



Northern Pintail  
Photo courtesy USFWS

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 Pintails, Redheads, American Bitterns, and Sandhill Cranes may be found nesting. Migratory bird Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), such as American Avocet, Greater Yellowlegs, and Short-billed Dowitcher, rely on this area for important stopover habitat along their migration route.



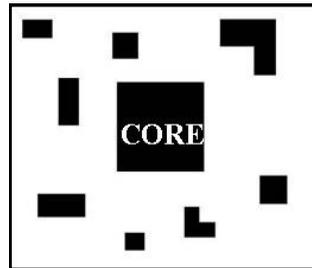
Bobolink pair  
Photo by Kent Mason

## 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. The present model BCA encompasses at least 10,000



Forster's Tern  
Photo by Rinus Baak



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

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 HILLS 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, Pale Purple Coneflower, Prairie Blazing Star, and Rattlesnake Master.



Small White Lady's Slipper  
Photo by Jason Sturner

## ANIMALS

Many kinds of wildlife other than birds 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. 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,



Northern Red-belly Snake  
Photo by Ryan Rasmussen

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 Bluet  
Photo by Mathew Robinson

A list of Iowa’s Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) can be found at [www.iowadnr.gov](http://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, Iowa Audubon, the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

