

**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	___ <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	
___ Mallard*	___ <b>King Rail</b>
___ Blue-winged Teal*	___ Virginia Rail*
___ Northern Shoveler*	___ Sora*
___ <b>Northern Pintail*</b>	___ <b>Common Gallinule</b>
___ Green-winged Teal*	___ American Coot*
___ <b>Canvasback</b>	
___ <b>Redhead*</b>	___ <b>Sandhill Crane*</b>
___ Ring-necked Duck*	___ Black-bellied Plover
___ Greater Scaup	___ <b>American Golden Plover</b>
___ Lesser Scaup	___ Semipalmated Plover
___ Bufflehead	___ Killdeer*
___ Common Goldeneye	___ <b>American Avocet</b>
___ Hooded Merganser*	___ Spotted Sandpiper*
___ Common Merganser	___ <b>Solitary Sandpiper</b>
___ Red-breasted Merganser	___ <b>Greater Yellowlegs</b>
___ Ruddy Duck*	___ Willet
	___ <b>Lesser Yellowlegs</b>
___ Gray Partridge*	___ <b>Upland Sandpiper*</b>
___ Ring-necked Pheasant*	___ <b>Hudsonian Godwit</b>
___ Wild Turkey*	___ <b>Marbled Godwit</b>
	___ 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
	___ <b>Short-billed Dowitcher</b>
___ Double-crested Cormorant	___ Long-billed Dowitcher
___ <b>American White Pelican</b>	___ Wilson's Snipe
	___ <b>American Woodcock*</b>
___ <b>American Bittern*</b>	___ <b>Wilson's Phalarope</b>
___ <b>Least Bittern*</b>	
___ Great Blue Heron*	___ Franklin's Gull
___ Great Egret	___ Ring-billed Gull
___ Cattle Egret	___ Herring Gull
___ Green Heron*	___ Caspian Tern
___ <b>Black-crowned Night-Heron*</b>	___ <b>Black Tern</b>
___ White-faced Ibis	___ <b>Forster's Tern</b>
	___ Rock Pigeon*
___ Turkey Vulture*	
___ <b>Osprey</b>	

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

___ 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*
	___ Baltimore Oriole*
___ Scarlet Tanager*	___ Purple Finch
___ Northern Cardinal*	___ House Finch*
___ Rose-breasted Grosbeak*	___ Pine Siskin
___ Indigo Bunting*	___ American Goldfinch*
___ <b>Dickcissel*</b>	___ House Sparrow*
___ <b>Bobolink*</b>	
___ Red-winged Blackbird*	
___ <b>Eastern Meadowlark*</b>	
___ Western Meadowlark*	



Northern Harrier  
Photo by Jason Crotty

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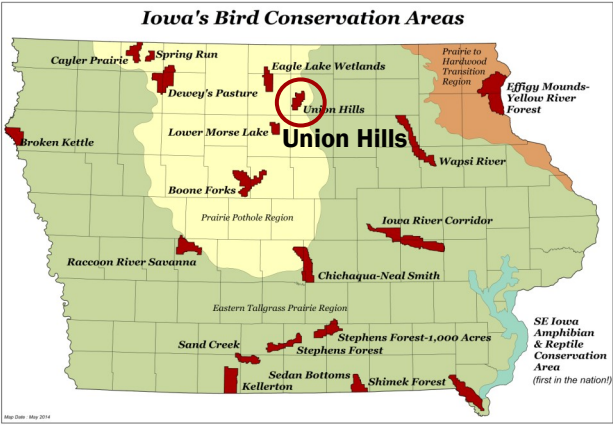
**Union Hills**

**Bird Conservation Area**



**Cerro Gordo County**





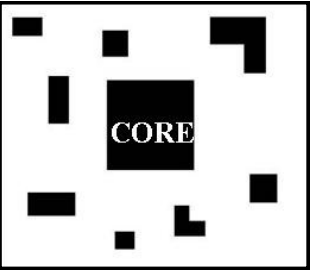
The Union Hills Bird Conservation Area (BCA) is located in the southwest portion of Cerro Gordo county near Mason City, Iowa. This BCA was dedicated in 2004 to recognize the important habitat contained therein for declining grassland and prairie-pothole bird species. In fact, the Union Hills Waterfowl 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 Dowichter, rely on this area for important stopover habitat along their migration route.



**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



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.



**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, 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.



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.

