

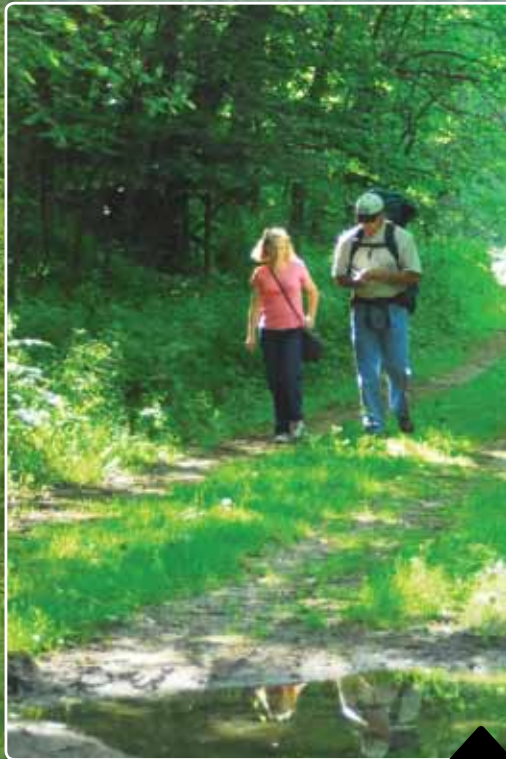
PERFECT DAY: SEEK SOLITUDE IN WILD WINNESHIEK COUNTY

NEARLY 1,000 ACRES OF LITTLE-USED COON CREEK WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA BECKON BACKPACKERS AND BIRDERS

“Get off the beaten path and go where few venture,” says Larry Reis, a Winneshiek County naturalist. Bushwhack or hike forestry roads in the Coon Creek Wildlife Area. Better yet, make it a rugged backpacking trip and spend a night in the wild. “There is good bird watching on rugged, steep primeval woodlands,” he says. Get lucky and see a bobcat or ruffed grouse.



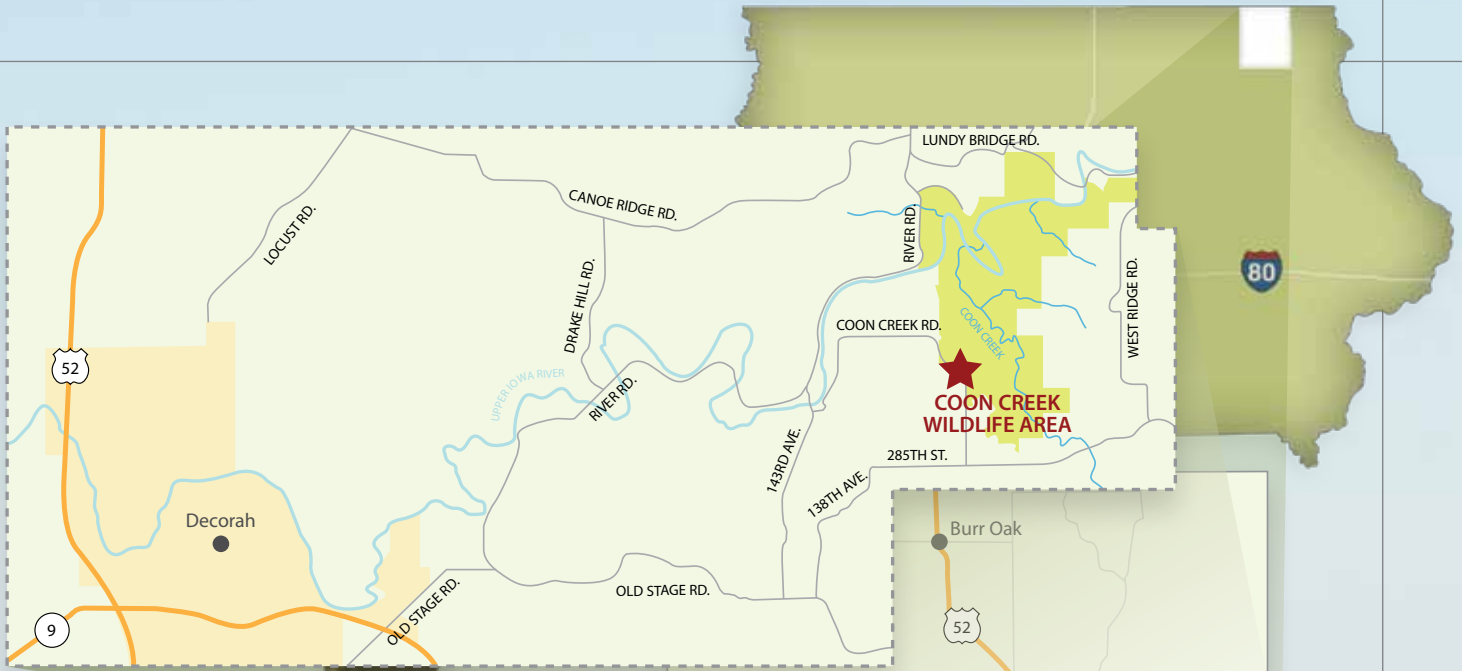
THRUSH



7:15 Grab a big Ronnie's cinnamon roll at Ruby's in Decorah.

8:03 Bump along Coon Creek gravel road to parking lot.

8:38 Hike along lush bottomland forestry road adjacent Coon Creek. View American redstarts perched on creekside branches.



SCARLET Tanager



10:19 Find raccoon and opossum tracks in mud puddles. Escape the sun—scramble into steep upland forest. Look for century-old oak and hickory stands to spy scarlet tanagers, Acadian flycatchers, thrush and ovenbirds.

12:05 Sit among northern lady and maidenhair fern and snack on deli sandwiches packed from Ede’s Gourmet in Decorah. Find sunlit, open areas for raspberries. Keep an eye out for blue-winged and Kentucky warblers.

BIRD IMAGES BY JIM DURBIN

AMERICAN REDSTART



2:00 Soak tired toes in Coon Creek. Find crayfish under rocks. Cast for trout in deep pools.

3:15 Explore stands of aspen for ruffed grouse, woodcock, eastern towhee and uncommon yellow- and black-billed cuckoos.

OVENBIRD



5:13 Drive to west access, hike half mile to prairie hillside, pitch tent among black-eyed Susan and red admiral butterflies. Gaze for hawks. View Upper Iowa River Valley in distance.

6:10 Sneak into Decorah for "The Regular" pizza at local icon Mabe's. Top off with a Boston Sundae at the Whippy Dip.

8:30 Watch sunset paint the skies and valleys below.

10:30 Gaze at stars in dark skies, hear barred owls hoot and coyotes howl.