



LOWER LOESS HILLS BIRD CONSERVATION AREA

The Lower Loess Hills Bird Conservation Area (BCA) is located in a most unique Iowa landform; created by windblown loess from the Missouri River floodplain and piled over 200 feet deep. Once mostly prairie, the Loess Hills' land-cover today is a mixture of native prairie, Bur Oak savanna, and oak woodlands. This BCA contains ~87,000 acres in Mills and Fremont counties, and also includes over 3,500 acres of bottomland wetlands. Nearly ~16,000 acres are protected by conservation easements or are publicly owned.

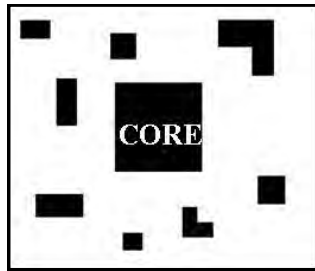
Bird diversity here is exceptional, with 282 species identified, including 92 Iowa Species of Greatest Conservation Need.



Western Meadowlark
Doug Harr

Currently, 128 species are known to nest in this BCA's prairies, savannas, woodlands, and wetlands. This same crucial habitat supplies important bird wintering grounds and migratory stopover sites. Special birds of this area include the

Endangered Barn Owl, Wood Thrush, Bell's Vireo, Chuck-will's-widow, Red-headed Woodpecker, Grasshopper and Field sparrows, Kentucky Warbler, and both meadowlark species. This BCA holds more bird species than any other, and its location makes it a good place to see western bird species that are less often seen elsewhere, like Western Kingbird, Blue Grosbeak and Townsend's Solitaire.



The BCA Model: shaded areas depict special habitat

In recent 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** (NABCI) to "conserve all birds in all habitats." As part of this initiative and in an effort to protect dwindling populations of many Iowa birds, Iowa's **Bird Conservation Area** (BCA) program was established by the DNR Wildlife Bureau in 2001.



Barn Owl

The present model BCA encompasses at least 10,000 acres of public and/or private lands with 35% or more of the area as key bird habitat. Research suggests that viable bird populations require conservation efforts at a landscape-oriented level. Each BCA should also include a large "core" area (at least 2,000 acres) of protected high-quality habitat. Around this core is both private land and additional public tracts, managed for good bird habitat or at least maintained to be neutral in how they affect bird life.

IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS

The Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program is a global effort initiated by the National Audubon Society to identify and conserve areas that are vital to birds and other biodiversity. Designated IBAs include sites for breeding, wintering, and/or migrating birds. By working to identify and implement conservation

BIRD CONSERVATION AREAS

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strategies, the IBA Program hopes to minimize the effects of habitat degradation and loss on birds and other wildlife. All Iowa BCAs are also considered IBAs.

LOESS HILLS PRAIRIE DIVERSITY



B. Ehresman

PLANTS

The Loess Hills contain many unique native prairie species.

Bluestem prairies are sprinkled with several colorful milkweed species, as well as Yucca, Prairie Larkspur, Fringed Puccoon, Dotted Blazing Star, Locoweed, and Western Purple Coneflower. Interspersed with sprawling Bur Oaks, another unique and threatened Iowa ecosystem - Oak Savanna - includes prairie plants such as Side-oats Grama, Lead Plant, Meadow Rose, Prairie Phlox, and Wild Strawberry.

ANIMALS



Great Plains Skink
Jeff LeClere

Besides birds, this BCA is home to a diverse group of other animals. These include 105 butterfly species, such as the Zabulon, Ottoe, Pawnee, and Fiery skippers, as well as Monarch, Zebra Swallowtail, and Regal Fritillary. Bumble Bees, Long-horned Bees and Mason Bees are important prairie flower pollinators. While strolling through the prairies, keep an eye open for unique reptiles, such as the Great Plains Skink, Bullsnake, and Blue Racer, as well as for small mammals, like the Plains Pocket Mouse, Western Harvest Mouse, and Prairie Vole. After heavy summer rains, listen for the loud quacking call of a most unique amphibian, the Plains Spadefoot. Two other amphibians that may be encountered, also unique to western Iowa, include Woodhouse's Toad and Great Plains Toad.



Black-billed Cuckoo

PARTNERSHIPS

The Loess Hills Bird Conservation Area is made possible by many partnerships, including: Natural Resources Conservation Service, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, Fremont County Conservation Board, Iowa Audubon, Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, National Wild Turkey Federation, Loess Hills Audubon Society, Loess Hills Alliance, Loess Hills Preservation Society, and Iowa Department of Natural Resources.



Bird Checklist for Lower Loess 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 | ___ White-faced Ibis |
| ___ Snow Goose | ___ Turkey Vulture* |
| ___ Ross's Goose | ___ Osprey |
| ___ Cackling Goose | ___ Mississippi Kite |
| ___ Canada Goose* | ___ Bald Eagle* |
| ___ Trumpeter Swan* | ___ Northern Harrier* |
| ___ Tundra Swan | ___ Sharp-shinned Hawk |
| ___ Wood Duck* | ___ Cooper's Hawk* |
| ___ Gadwall | ___ Northern Goshawk |
| ___ American Wigeon | ___ Red-shouldered Hawk |
| ___ Mallard* | ___ Broad-winged Hawk* |
| ___ Blue-winged Teal* | ___ Swainson's Hawk |
| ___ Cinnamon Teal | ___ Red-tailed Hawk* |
| ___ Northern Shoveler | ___ Rough-legged Hawk |
| ___ Northern Pintail | ___ Golden Eagle |
| ___ Green-winged Teal* | |
| ___ Canvasback | |
| ___ Redhead* | ___ Yellow Rail |
| ___ Ring-necked Duck | ___ King Rail* |
| ___ Greater Scaup | ___ Virginia Rail |
| ___ Lesser Scaup | ___ Sora* |
| ___ Bufflehead | ___ Common Gallinule* |
| ___ Common Goldeneye | ___ American Coot* |
| ___ Hooded Merganser* | |
| ___ Common Merganser | ___ Sandhill Crane* |
| ___ Red-breasted Merganser | ___ Black-necked Stilt |
| ___ Ruddy Duck | ___ American Avocet |
| | ___ Black-bellied Plover |
| | ___ American Golden-Plover |
| ___ Gray Partridge | ___ Semipalmated Plover |
| ___ Ring-necked Pheasant* | ___ Piping Plover |
| ___ Greater Prairie-Chicken | ___ Killdeer* |
| ___ Wild Turkey* | ___ Spotted Sandpiper* |
| ___ Northern Bobwhite* | ___ Solitary Sandpiper |
| | ___ Greater Yellowlegs |
| ___ Pied-billed Grebe* | ___ Willet |
| ___ Horned Grebe | ___ Lesser Yellowlegs |
| ___ Eared Grebe | ___ Upland Sandpiper* |
| | ___ Whimbrel |
| ___ American White Pelican | ___ Hudsonian Godwit |
| ___ Neotropic Cormorant | ___ Marbled Godwit |
| ___ Double-crested Cormorant | ___ Stilt Sandpiper |
| | ___ Dunlin |
| ___ American Bittern | ___ Baird's Sandpiper |
| ___ Least Bittern* | ___ Least Sandpiper |
| ___ Great Blue Heron* | ___ White-rumped Sandpiper |
| ___ Great Egret* | ___ Buff-breasted Sandpiper |
| ___ Snowy Egret | ___ Pectoral Sandpiper |
| ___ Little Blue Heron | ___ Semipalmated Sandpiper |
| ___ Cattle Egret* | ___ Western Sandpiper |
| ___ Green Heron* | ___ Short-billed Dowitcher |
| ___ Black-crowned Night-heron* | ___ Long-billed Dowitcher |
| ___ Yellow-crowned Night-Heron | ___ Wilson's Snipe |
| ___ Glossy Ibis | |

- ___ **American Woodcock***
- ___ **Wilson's Phalarope**
- ___ Red-necked Phalarope
- ___ **Franklin's Gull**
- ___ Ring-billed Gull
- ___ Herring Gull
- ___ **Least Tern**
- ___ **Caspian Tern**
- ___ **Black Tern**
- ___ Common Tern
- ___ **Forster's Tern**

- ___ Rock Pigeon*
- ___ Eurasian Collared-Dove*
- ___ Mourning Dove*

- ___ **Yellow-billed Cuckoo***
- ___ **Black-billed Cuckoo***

- ___ **Barn Owl***
- ___ **Eastern Screech Owl***
- ___ Great Horned Owl*
- ___ Snowy Owl
- ___ **Burrowing Owl**
- ___ Barred Owl*
- ___ **Long-eared Owl**
- ___ **Short-eared Owl**
- ___ Northern Saw-Whet Owl

- ___ **Common Nighthawk***
- ___ **Chuck-will's-widow***
- ___ **Eastern Whip-poor-will***
- ___ **Chimney Swift***
- ___ Ruby-throated Hummingbird*
- ___ **Belted Kingfisher***

- ___ **Red-headed Woodpecker***
- ___ Red-bellied Woodpecker*
- ___ Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
- ___ Downy Woodpecker*
- ___ Hairy Woodpecker*
- ___ **Northern Flicker***
- ___ Pileated Woodpecker

- ___ American Kestrel*
- ___ Merlin
- ___ **Peregrine Falcon**
- ___ Prairie Falcon

- ___ **Olive-sided Flycatcher**
- ___ **Eastern Wood-Pewee***
- ___ Yellow-bellied Flycatcher
- ___ **Acadian Flycatcher**
- ___ Alder Flycatcher
- ___ Willow Flycatcher*
- ___ Least Flycatcher
- ___ Eastern Phoebe*
- ___ Great Crested Flycatcher*
- ___ Western Kingbird*
- ___ **Eastern Kingbird***
- ___ Scissor-tailed Flycatcher

- ___ **Loggerhead Shrike***
- ___ Northern Shrike

- ___ **White-eyed Vireo**
- ___ **Bell's Vireo***
- ___ Yellow-throated Vireo*
- ___ Blue-headed Vireo
- ___ Warbling Vireo*
- ___ Philadelphia Vireo
- ___ Red-eyed Vireo*

- ___ Blue Jay*
- ___ Black-billed Magpie
- ___ American Crow*
- ___ **Horned Lark***
- ___ **Purple Martin***
- ___ Tree Swallow*
- ___ Northern Rough-winged Swallow*
- ___ **Bank Swallow***
- ___ Cliff Swallow*
- ___ Barn Swallow*

- ___ Black-capped Chickadee*
- ___ Tufted Titmouse*
- ___ Red-breasted Nuthatch
- ___ White-breasted Nuthatch*
- ___ Brown Creeper
- ___ House Wren*
- ___ Winter Wren
- ___ **Sedge Wren***
- ___ Marsh Wren*
- ___ Carolina Wren*
- ___ **Bewick's Wren***

- ___ Blue-gray Gnatcatcher*
- ___ Golden-crowned Kinglet
- ___ Ruby-crowned Kinglet

- ___ Eastern Bluebird*
- ___ Townsend's Solitaire
- ___ **Veery**
- ___ Gray-cheeked Thrush
- ___ Swainson's Thrush
- ___ Hermit Thrush
- ___ **Wood Thrush***
- ___ American Robin*

- ___ Gray Catbird*
- ___ **Brown Thrasher***
- ___ Northern Mockingbird*
- ___ European Starling*
- ___ American Pipit
- ___ Cedar Waxwing*

- ___ Lapland Longspur
- ___ **Smith's Longspur**
- ___ Snow Bunting

- ___ Ovenbird*
- ___ Louisiana Waterthrush*

- ___ Northern Waterthrush
- ___ **Golden-winged Warbler**
- ___ Blue-winged Warbler*
- ___ Black-and-white Warbler*
- ___ **Prothonotary Warbler**
- ___ Tennessee Warbler
- ___ Orange-crowned Warbler
- ___ Nashville Warbler
- ___ Connecticut Warbler
- ___ Mourning Warbler
- ___ **Kentucky Warbler***
- ___ **Common Yellowthroat***
- ___ American Redstart*
- ___ Cape May Warbler
- ___ **Cerulean Warbler**
- ___ Northern Parula
- ___ Magnolia Warbler
- ___ **Bay-breasted Warbler**
- ___ Blackburnian Warbler
- ___ Yellow Warbler*
- ___ Chestnut-sided Warbler
- ___ Blackpoll Warbler
- ___ Black-throated Blue Warbler
- ___ Palm Warbler
- ___ Yellow-rumped Warbler
- ___ Yellow-throated Warbler
- ___ Black-throated Green Warbler
- ___ **Canada Warbler**
- ___ Wilson's Warbler
- ___ Yellow-breasted Chat*

- ___ Spotted Towhee
- ___ 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
- ___ Summer Tanager*
- ___ Scarlet Tanager*
- ___ Northern Cardinal*
- ___ Rose-breasted Grosbeak*
- ___ Blue 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*
- ___ Red Crossbill
- ___ Common Redpoll
- ___ Pine Siskin*
- ___ American Goldfinch*

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Fremont & Mills Counties