



## APRIL 2025: WILDLIFE VIEWING HOTSPOTS

As the weather warms and the landscape turns green, it's the perfect time to head outdoors to view Iowa's plentiful wildlife. Here are the hotspots along Iowa's Byways that should not be missed!

### COVERED BRIDGES

[Pammel Park](#) was originally one of the first State Parks in Iowa (dedicated in 1928). It has been managed by the Madison County Conservation Board since 1989. The park is noted for its natural woodland beauty highlighted by its signature limestone ridge known as the "backbone." It is home to at least 140 species of birds and is part of the Makoke Bird Trail, including Woodland birds and Northern Parula.

Madison County also has the highest density of deer in the entire state - 47 deer per square mile! Eastern wild turkey and pheasants are plentiful as well, so be on the lookout! There are several trails through varied habitats within Pammel Park. Be sure to look down as well as up since Madison County is also home to the rare Timber Rattlesnake.



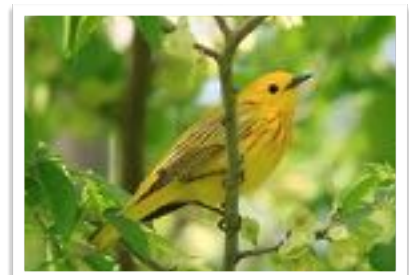
### DELAWARE CROSSING

[Bailey's Ford Park](#) in Manchester has a bubbling trout stream, Maquoketa River access, and an extensive trail system traversing semi-open, mixed cedar/hardwood habitats. It's a great spot for both migrant and summering songbirds and waterfowl, as well as "dual-purpose" birding when you can spot warblers while trout fishing, listen to owls when you tuck into your tent at night, or point out woodpeckers to your kids on the playground.



### DRIFTLESS AREA

Allamakee County is a world-renowned "birding hotspot." Visitors can watch for hawks and raptors from the overlooks in [Effigy Mounds National Monument](#), search for spring warblers in [Yellow River State Forest](#), view waterfowl from the observation deck at the [Driftless Area Education and Visitor Center](#), or wander the many other parks and natural areas in the county. The variety of facilities—from interpretive centers to county parks to rugged wildlife areas—can meet the needs of a wide range of birding skill and interest levels.



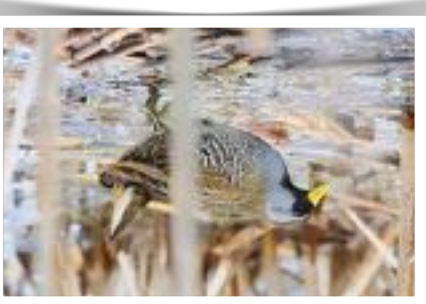
## GLACIAL TRAIL

Begin your wildlife viewing expedition on the Glacial Trail Scenic Byway at the [Prairie Heritage Center](#) near Peterson. It is a great place to enjoy educational and interactive displays, hike the trails, savor the wildflowers, and engage in bird and wildlife watching. O'Brien County Conservation manages a small herd of bison that visitors can view during their visit. Birders will rejoice that the entire corridor of the Glacial Trail Scenic Byway is within the [Waterman Prairie Bird Conservation Area](#). The BCA's unique location within the Little Sioux River watershed in northwestern Iowa makes it a fine place to see western bird species that are rarely observed in Iowa.



## GRANT WOOD

[Muskrat Slough](#), originally a glacial lake, is now the largest state wetland area in Jones County and features marshy areas with open water, cattails, and wet meadows. It is an important bird habitat, especially as a stopover for migrating waterfowl, but also for plant species. Spring is an excellent time to spot ducks, rails, geese, shorebirds, and more. Bring tall boots or a canoe or kayak for the best viewing.



## HISTORIC HILLS

The Historic Hills Scenic Byway is known by outdoor enthusiasts as an ideal location to enjoy hiking, hunting, horseback riding, bird watching, fishing, and photography. Explore the parks and wilderness in Southeastern Iowa! View nature at the bird-watching stations at [Lacey Keosauqua State Park](#) in Keosauqua and [Pioneer Ridge Nature Area](#) in Bloomfield. The Pioneer Ridge Nature Area bird blind is a great way to get up close and personal with some unique birds. Nestled into the natural area and easily accessible off of the paved trail, the bird blind is worth a stop for all birders. Similarly, the bird-watching area in Keosauqua is easy to find, located on the path behind the DNR office in the park.



## IOWA VALLEY

[Otter Creek Lake and Park](#) is a short 6-mile drive north of Toledo. The park has a circular hiking trail system that will take you through mixed wildlife habitat while hiking along scenic vistas of the lake, next to or through a remnant prairie and through native woodland. [Geocaches](#) are hidden in the park and there are two playgrounds for burning off any extra energy. Be sure to stop in at the Tama County [Nature Center](#) and view the displays. There may even be an Iowa Valley Scenic Byway [Audio Tour/App Stop](#) at this location!



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## JEFFERSON HIGHWAY

[Lime Creek Nature Center & Conservation Area](#) is located on 440 acres off of U.S. Highway 65 just north of Mason City. The Nature Center features an impressive variety of mounted animals and aquarium displays of reptiles, amphibians, and fish. There are numerous “hands-on” learning opportunities for all ages. The Conservation Area leads visitors through a 9-mile trail system with 12 distinct loops of various lengths, showcasing prairie, woodland, and wetland habitats, and limestone bluffs. The Nature Center Building and Conservation Area Trails are open daily (check website above for hours).



For nature lovers and bird watchers, the **Oakwood Grassland**, located along Highway 69 just 8 miles north of Osceola, offers a stunning prairie landscape teeming with wildlife. This vast grassland is home to a diverse range of birds, including upland game species, wild turkeys, and deer roaming freely among the native prairie grasses. With its open vistas and peaceful surroundings, Oakwood Grassland provides a perfect setting for spotting wildlife while enjoying breathtaking scenic views. Whether you're an avid birdwatcher or simply looking for a quiet place to take in nature, this hidden gem along the Jefferson Highway is worth the visit.

## LINCOLN HIGHWAY

For a rugged hiking experience near Cedar Rapids and Mt Vernon, [Palisades-Kepler State Park](#) is the place to go. Dramatic river bluffs, deep ravines, spring wildflowers, wildlife, Native American Indian mounds, and historic structures built by the Civilian Conservation Corps are just a few things you will see on hike in this park. Thanks to a county, city, and state [collaborative effort](#), and recent support from [Bass Farms LLC](#), a new layer of safety was added to the park in mid-March. New [emergency 911 signs](#) were added to the trails and other specific areas of the park which will save time in the event of emergencies. Visit the Iowa Lincoln Highway Heritage Byway [Recreation and Camping Guide](#) to find a hiking trail near you.



## LOESS HILLS

Explore the Loess Hills National Scenic Byway with these [unique wildlife viewing opportunities](#). Plymouth County, the northernmost county in the Loess Hills, is home to a variety of unique wildlife. [Broken Kettle Grasslands](#) is home to a herd of 200 bison and is the only known location of prairie rattlesnake in Iowa. It is also a bird conservation area. Also in Plymouth County, visit [Knapp Prairie](#) to see regal fritillaries and the elk herd at [Hillview Recreation Area](#). Birders flock to [Riverton Wildlife Area](#) in spring to witness the majesty of migration. [Hitchcock Nature Center](#) near Council Bluffs is home to the Hitchcock HawkWatch that counts thousands of raptors during fall migration.



## RIVER BLUFFS

[Volga River State Recreation Area](#) is a 5,700-acre natural area located in a forested and hilly region in Fayette County. The park has 22 miles of multi-use trails winding along the Volga River and a 138-acre lake, making it a prime place to spot a diverse mixture of songbirds, woodpeckers, ducks, owls, and raptors, as well as mammals including fox, deer, beaver, and mink.



## WESTERN SKIES

The [Western Skies Birding Trail](#) connects some of the best birding areas in Iowa and has many places to see birds (& other wildlife). Bird Conservation Areas and eBird Hot Spots are some of the best places for birding, but many other parks, wildlife areas and trails offer additional bird- and wildlife-viewing. Some of the birding hotspots along the Western Skies Byway counties include [Desoto National Wildlife Refuge](#) in Harrison County, especially great place for waterfowl migration. Audubon County has been designated a [Bird Friendly](#) county and has plenty of birding locations to explore. The county and city of Audubon are named after famous birder John James Audubon. Downtown Audubon has a walking tour of mosaic tiles of different bird species. Metal bird sculptures can be found along the [T-Bone Trail in Audubon](#).



## WHITE POLE ROAD

The Karl & Grace Correll Wildlife Area, located at 1000 Elk Avenue near Adair, is one of the best spots to experience nature and see wildlife along the White Pole Road Byway. This 45-acre area was donated in 1998 by the Correll families to honor Karl and Grace Correll's lifelong commitment to wildlife conservation. The area includes 30 acres of restored prairie, making it a beautiful place to explore. A 1.5-mile mowed trail winds through tall prairie grass, giving visitors a chance to spot various wildlife. A footbridge offers a peaceful spot to stop and enjoy the view. As a legacy for future generations, the Karl & Grace Correll Wildlife Area allows public hunting, making it a destination for both outdoor recreation and wildlife preservation.

