

Birding the Siouxland

Birds, Bison, Brews, and Views...Why Not You?

Crafted by local birders, this itinerary invites beginners and novices alike to discover the top birding hotspots in Sioux City, a Bird Friendly Iowa community located on the Missouri River Flyway, where prairies, wetlands, woodlands, and the Loess Hills create an unusually diverse birding landscape. Along the way, enjoy scenic Loess Hills views, local attractions, and a taste of the region's craft breweries—making birding both accessible and uniquely flavorful.

Day One



Coffee & Breakfast in Sioux City

Start your day in Sioux City with your choice of two great local spots. Grab a quality cup of coffee and a light bite at **Hardline Coffee Co.**, or opt for a cozy breakfast at **Brightside Café**.



AM Birding at Bacon Creek Park

Enjoy a relaxed birding experience along accessible trails, with chances to spot migrating songbirds, waterfowl, and shorebirds while connecting with fellow birders.



Explore Sioux City Attractions

Downtown has many lunch options, including two local breweries. Then, indulge your sweet tooth at **Palmer's Olde Tyme Candy Shoppe** or explore the **Sioux City Railroad Museum**.



PM Birding at Stone State Park

Head into the Loess Hills for an afternoon of woodland birding. Trails wind through forested ridges where you may encounter migrating warblers, woodpeckers, and other songbirds.



Dinner in Downtown Sioux City

Wrap up the day with dinner at **The Diving Elk**, known for its creative menu and welcoming atmosphere—an excellent way to unwind after a full day outdoors!

Day Two



AM Birding at Broken Kettle

Start early at Broken Kettle Grasslands for a premier prairie birding experience. Look and listen for Bobolinks, Dickcissels, and meadowlarks, and watch for the resident bison herd grazing across the hills.



Explore the Scenic Byway

Take in the views that define this unique landscape. Consider a few stops along the byway: **Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center**, **Sgt. Floyd River Museum**, or **Lewis & Clark Intrepretive Center**.



Lunch at Local Sioux City Brewery

Return to downtown Sioux City for lunch at **Jackson Street Brewing Company** or **Marto Brewing Co.**, located just a few blocks apart. Both offer great food and house-made craft brews.



PM Birding at Owego Wetland

These restored wetlands provide excellent habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, and migratory species, offering a peaceful and rewarding final stop.



Owego Wetland, Curtis Myers



█ Byway spine
█ Byway loop



Broken Kettle, TNC



Bacon Creek Park, R. Williams



Stone State Park, Lance Brisbois

Scan the QR code to explore the full itinerary



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BIRD FRIENDLY IOWA



Broken Kettle Grasslands

Visit the largest remnant prairie in Iowa!

Broken Kettle Grasslands is an excellent birding location year-round. Spring evenings are an excellent time to listen for Eastern Whippoorwills and American Woodcocks on Butcher Road, an excursion loop of the Loess Hills National

Golden Eagle, Dana Siefer

Scenic Byway that provides soaring views of the preserve and offers the best opportunity to see bison. 234th Street is a short, dead-end road but one of the best places on the preserve for finding American Woodcock, Northern Bobwhite, and migrant passerines. Camp Joy Hollow provides a change of scenery as it is centered around a heavily wooded and rugged creek valley. Look for Pileated Woodpecker, Louisiana Waterthrush, and Red-shouldered Hawks (rare) here.

Text by Tucker Lutter

Grasshopper Sparrow, Randall D. Williams

Habitat

- Open grasslands and some woodlands

Amenities

- Open-air visitor center off Highway 12
- Picnic tables at Camp Joy Hollow

Best times (season/time of day)

- Good at any time. Mornings are best spring-fall, afternoons in winter are better for raptors

Accessibility (trails, difficulty)

- Excellent location for experienced birders
- Birding by car along Butcher Road, 234th St, and Camp Joy Hollow access road
- Hiking south of Butcher Road (off trail)
- Hiking trails at Camp Joy Hollow maintained by Girl Scouts

Year-round Highlights: Northern Bobwhite, Pileated Woodpecker

Migrant Highlights: Franklin's Gull, Upland Sandpiper, Red-shouldered Hawk (rare), Swainson's Hawk, Say's Phoebe (rare), Harris's Sparrow

Summer Highlights: Whip-poor-will, Red-headed Woodpecker, Black-billed Cuckoo, Bell's Vireo, Loggerhead Shrike (rare), Louisiana Waterthrush, Dickcissel, Blue Grosbeak, Field Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Eastern and Western Meadowlarks

Winter Highlights: Golden Eagle, Rough-legged Hawk, Merlin, Northern Flicker (Red-shafted), Purple Finch



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Stone State Park

Urban wildlife sanctuary on the edge of Sioux City!

Stone State Park, an urban wildlife sanctuary on the edge of Sioux City, consists of 1,600 acres in Woodbury and Plymouth Counties and includes the 90-acre Mount Talbot State Preserve. The Civilian Conservation Corps built many



Lincoln's Sparrow, Randall D. Williams

Habitat

- Woodland in valleys with prairie hilltops

Amenities

- Camping spring to fall (tent and camper)
- Restrooms & showers (spring to fall)
- Playground & picnic areas
- Fishing pond (Turtle Lake)

Best times (season/time of day)

- Spring, Summer, and Fall in the morning are the best times

Accessibility (trails, difficulty)

- Suitable for beginning birders
- Over 15 miles of multi-use trails (mountain bike & equestrian); no accessible trails
- Roads throughout the park; can ride bikes but it is steep and difficult terrain
- Accessibility is limited in the winter as park roads are closed, but can still access via trails

of the park's structures in the 1930s, including entrance portals, the Calumet shelter, and a rustic stone lodge. A variety of prairie plants can be found on the steep slopes and ridges while bur oak forest resides in the valleys. The park is a popular destination for day visitors, overnight campers, mountain bike enthusiasts, and picnickers.

Pammel Valley is a great location where birders can walk down to Turtle Lake. Warblers, vireos, etc. are common in the bushes along the trail to Turtle Lake in the spring. The lake is a good place to see Spotted Sandpiper, Belted Kingfisher, and swallows. Go to the ridge tops to scan for soaring Broad-winged Hawks and to hear Field Sparrows. Check oak forests in the park for Scarlet and Summer Tanagers.



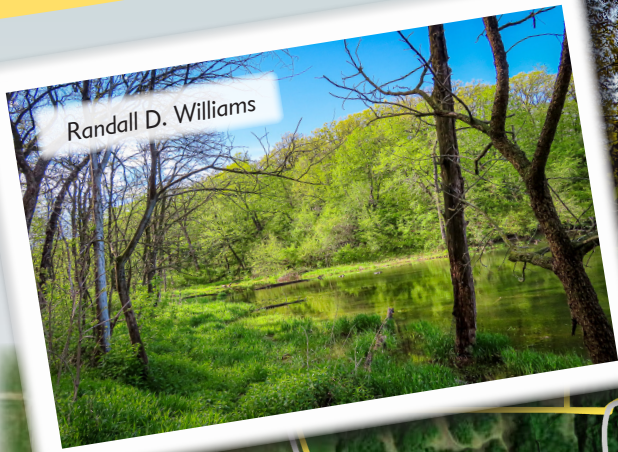
Yellow Warbler, Seth Brooks

Year-round Highlights: Wild Turkey, Pileated Woodpecker

Migrant Highlights: Winter Wren, migrant vireos, thrushes, flycatchers, and warblers

Summer Highlights: Broad-winged Hawk, Eastern Whip-poor-Will, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Wood Thrush, Scarlet Tanager, Summer Tanager, Louisiana Waterthrush, Northern Parula, Field Sparrow, Eastern Towhee

Winter Highlights: Bald Eagle, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Brown Creeper



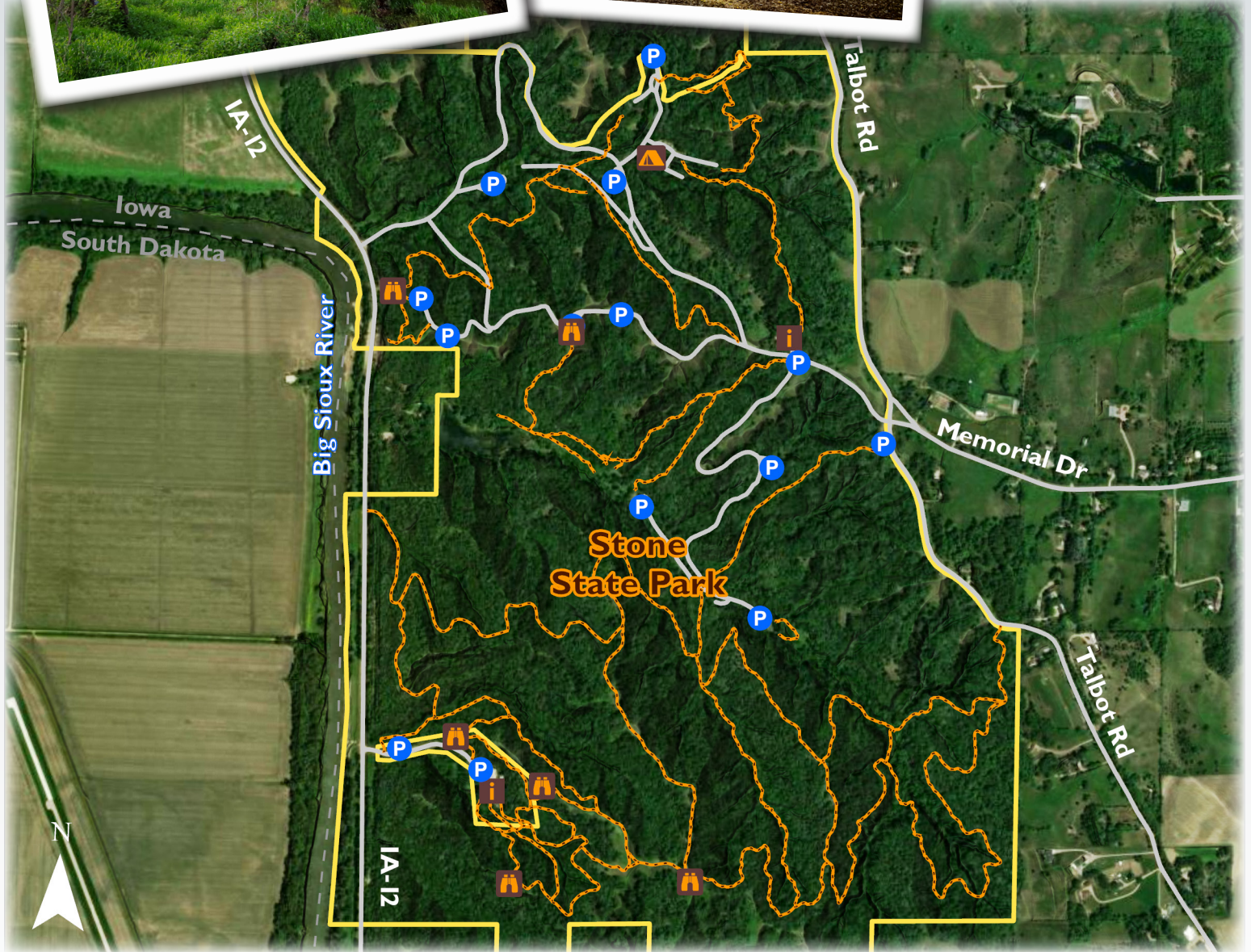
Randall D. Williams



Randall D. Williams

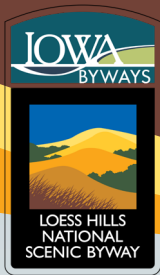


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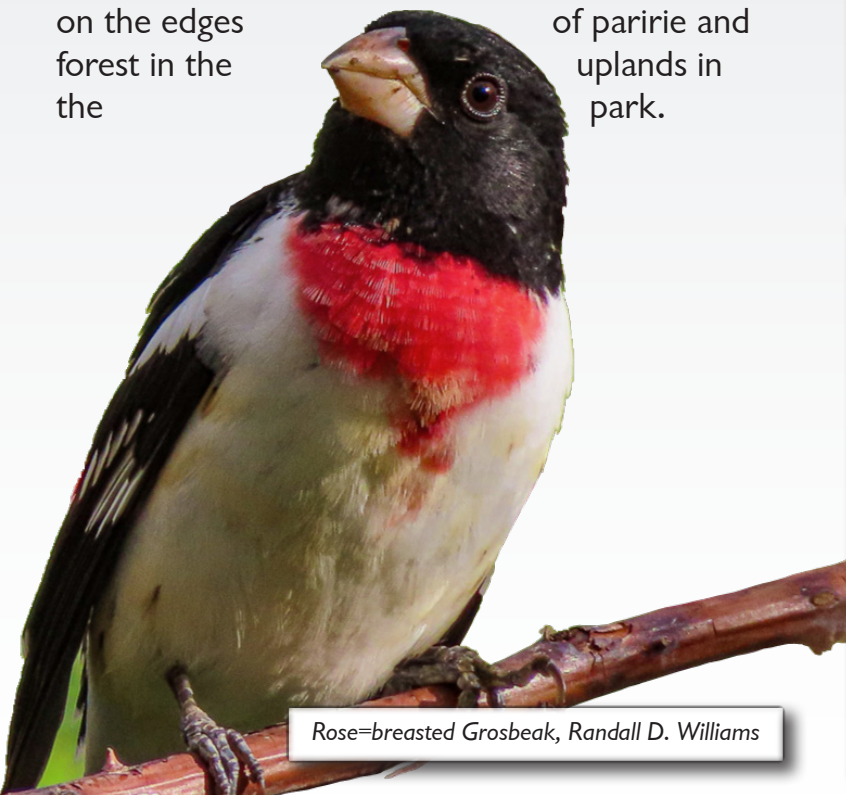


Bacon Creek Park

Loop trail around lake accessible year-round!

This 239-acre recreation site provides a variety of outdoor activities around a small lake. Other amenities include rest rooms, an off-leash dog park, picnic areas, playgrounds, as well as a 6.5-mile singletrack mountain bike trail.

Birders can walk along the paved paths around the lake looking for warblers, vireos, and other migrants eating insects along the wooded lakeshore. Green Herons also utilize the lakeshore and hide in tree branches overhanging the water. It is easy to scan the lake from parking areas and the main road looking for waterfowl or osprey during migration. Look for birds (Field Sparrows, Eastern Towhees, etc) on the edges of prairie and forest in the uplands in the park.



Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Randall D. Williams



Great Blue Heron, Jerry Mennenga

Habitat

- Woodlands and a small lake; some prairie

Amenities

- Picnic area & tables; two shelters
- Restrooms
- Playground
- Park Benches
- Off-leash dog area/dog park
- Kayaks and canoes allowed, no motorized watercraft

Best times (season/time of day)

- Spring and fall mornings for migration

Accessibility (trails, difficulty)

- 3-mile paved trail around the lake makes for easy accessibility year-round; bikes allowed.
- 6.5-mile single-track mountain bike trail

Migrant Highlights: Thirty species of warblers recorded in the park (one of the best places for warblers in the area); migrant vireos, thrushes, flycatchers, sparrows; some waterfowl in spring and fall

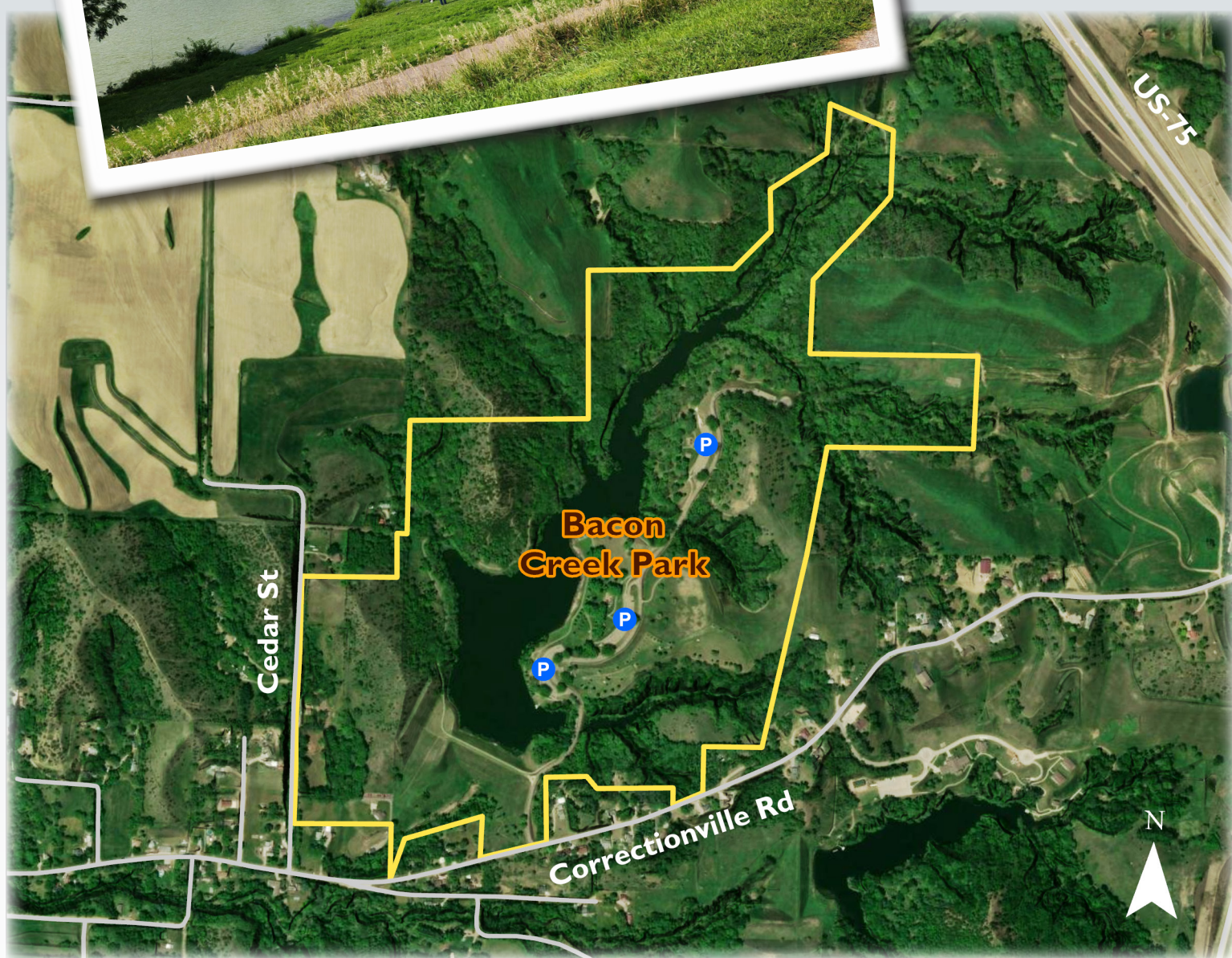
Summer Highlights: Green Heron, Yellow-throated Vireo, Scarlet Tanager

Winter Highlights: Bacon Creek Park is not a popular winter birding spot.



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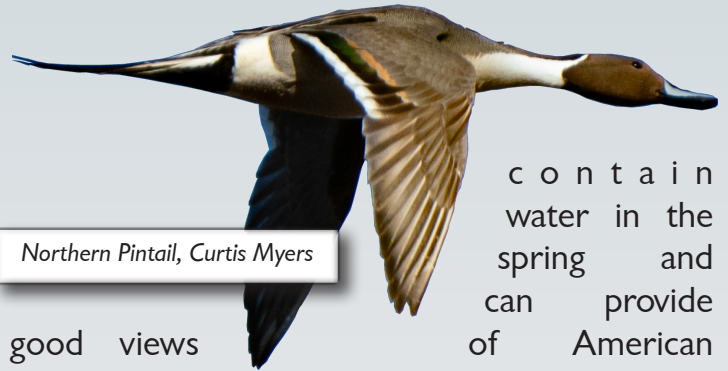
birdcity.org/iowa



Owego Wetland Complex

More than 200 species reported during seasonal migration!

Since the first acquisition in 1998, the Owego Complex has become a tremendous attraction for wildlife, especially migratory waterfowl. The most popular way to bird Owego is by vehicle because many of the species can be seen from the edge of the road. The roads are gravel and you can drive the whole perimeter. (Note of caution: 300th Street as you go east between Franklin Avenue and the canal can be quite tricky during periods of rain and melting snow.) As you drive the perimeter, watch and listen for Blue Grosbeak, Willow Flycatcher, and Bell's Vireo in the thickets. Dickcissels are abundant in summer, and meadowlarks, Upland Sandpiper, Sedge and Marsh Wren, and YellowheadednBlackbird can be seen in season. The road ditches normally



Northern Pintail, Curtis Myers

good views of American Bittern, Sora, and Virginia Rail. Generally, birding is best in the morning but Owego can have good birds anytime. There may be lots of birds one day and few the next, particularly in the late fall and winter. But seldom do you go away without finding something interesting.

contain water in the spring and can provide

Text from article by Jerry Von Ehwegen and Paul Roisen from Iowa Bird Life (Vol. 77, No. 1) published by the Iowa Ornithologists' Union.

Habitat

- Wetlands and grasslands, some open water
- Some wooded areas on east and west side

Amenities

- None except parking areas

Best times (season/time of day)

- Short-eared Owl viewing at dusk in winter
- Spring-summer-fall any time is good

Accessibility (trails, difficulty)

- Excellent location for experienced birders
- Accessible by roads, no trails; off-trail hiking permitted

Year-round Highlights: Northern Bobwhite, Great Horned Owl

Migrant Highlights: Shorebirds, waterfowl, egrets, herons, bitterns

Summer Highlights: Upland Sandpiper, Red-headed Woodpecker, Bell's Vireo, Blue Grosbeak, Bobolink, Dickcissel, Eastern and Western Meadowlarks

Winter Highlights: Short-eared Owl (premier spot for these in area and most sought after species), Rough-legged Hawk, Northern Harrier, and other raptors; large flocks of wintering blackbirds



Owego Wetland, Curtis Myers



Dickcissel Curtis Myers



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