Chapter Eleven

Implementation Highlights: The First Ten Years

Introduction

The ultimate purpose of the Wildlife Action Plan (Plan) is to improve the status of wildlife populations and their habitats, allowing people to continue enjoying Iowa's natural resources for years to come. This is a huge effort that requires cooperation between many stakeholders, including private land owners, conservation entities, and lawmakers.

In Chapter 6, six visions for Iowa are described, as well as the conservation actions required to achieve those visions. Conservation organizations across the state have taken many different approaches to preserve and protect Iowa's wildlife by conducting projects intended to implement the goals of the Plan. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight a small portion of the work that has been done to improve the status of Iowa's wildlife populations and to get Iowa's citizens more involved in the effort.

Implementing the IWAP through Cooperative Natural Resources Management

Vision #1: Iowa will have viable wildlife populations by the year 2030

Achieving this vision requires keeping common species common and increasing populations of Species of Greatest Conservation Need to self-sustaining levels. In order to do this it is necessary to have current knowledge on the distribution and abundance of wildlife populations, particularly Species of Greatest Conservation Need. This information helps managers understand how their work is affecting wildlife and identifies species that need more conservation focus than others. In the past, substantial effort has been put towards monitoring game populations, however, knowledge is still lacking about many of the non-game species across the state, including some Species of Greatest Conservation Need. The Multiple Species Inventory and Monitoring Program and the Volunteer Wildlife Monitoring Program are two major sources of information about non-game species. As managers gain more knowledge about the status of Iowa's wildlife and the challenges they face, actions can be taken to help populations that are in decline through specific habitat management and protection actions, as well as reintroduction of species, where appropriate.

The Multiple Species Inventory and Monitoring Program

The largest effort directed towards increasing knowledge about the status of Iowa's non-game wildlife is the Multiple Species Inventory and Monitoring (MSIM) program. Seasonal field technicians are employed each year through a partnership between Iowa State University and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources to survey for fish, mussels, crayfish, amphibians, reptiles, dragonflies, damselflies, birds, butterflies, and mammals (Figure 11- 1-Figure 11- 3), as well as to conduct habitat assessments across the state (see Chapter 7 for a more detailed description of the program). The MSIM program has produced 10 years of data thus far, and continues to inform wildlife experts on the status of Iowa's wildlife populations. This information helps ensure that conservation management is appropriate and effective.

Figure 11- 1.
Mussel Surveys

Figure 11- 2.
Fish Surveys in Ledges State Park

Figure 11- 3.
In 2014 a technician recorded the extremely rare Olympia Marble butterfly (left), a state Special Concern species. In 2012 the Stream Cruiser (below) and the Springtime Darner were recorded in Iowa for the first time after being discovered during MSIM field work.

MSIM crews help document Species of Greatest Conservation Need such as the Black-billed cuckoo (above) and the Eastern Hognose Snake (right).

Citizen Science: The Volunteer Wildlife Monitoring Program

A second way that wildlife is being monitored in the state is through the Volunteer Wildlife Monitoring Program. This program gets citizens who are interested in Iowa's wildlife involved in the monitoring effort and makes it possible to track a larger number of species than the Iowa Department of Natural Resources would be able to keep up with on its own. Figure 11- 4 displays a portion of the volunteer brochure, available on the DNR website.

Figure 11- 4. Brochure for the Volunteer Wildlife Monitoring Program

WHAT'S REQUIRED

Assignments involve recording what you observe on a form at the assigned location and reporting the observances on-line.

Volunteers must attend a training workshop before beginning assignments. These are offered annually in three locations across the state, usually on Saturdays or in the evening. Held in partnership with the local County Conservation Board, workshop content emphasizes biology, conservation, habitat description and how to perform the monitoring.

At the workshops for Raptor or Colonial Water Bird nest monitoring, you'll learn bird watching basics and bird identification, as well as how to find and map a nesting site. Bird nest volunteers must have binoculars and/or a spotting scope.

Frog and toad surveyors are provided a CD with frog and toad calls to learn their distinctive voices. Surveyors must pass a frog and toad call test offered on the Internet before beginning surveys. Eighty-one routes are set up in Iowa by the North American Amphibian Monitoring Program, in which Iowa participates, or you may set up your own route.

Why are volunteers needed to monitor raptors, colonial waterbirds, and frogs and toads?

Raptors (hawks, eagles, falcons and owls) and Colonial Waterbirds (herons, egrets night-herons and cormorants) are two groups of top predators particularly sensitive to environmental changes. Not only are they fascinating to observe, they are important animals to monitor.

Amphibians are currently in global decline and face many environmental stressors. These melodious inhabitants of Iowa's wetlands have been surveyed in Iowa since 1991. Now that the DNR has joined the North American Amphibian Monitoring Program, our data will be used at regional and national levels too.

WHAT YOU'LL GAIN

Learn more about Iowa's wildlife, identify their calls, search out their habitat, and understand their challenges and contributions to the ecosystem. You'll feel more connected to Iowa's outdoors.

You'll be able to share your experiences with friends and family, even invite them along on your observation routes, and grow the number of people who value our ecosystem.

You'll enjoy meeting others who share your passion for protecting Iowa's wildlife.

Bolstering Iowa's Wildlife Populations through Relocation and Reintroduction

"Wildlife conservation programs have returned adaptable wildlife like deer and wild turkey to our forests, Canada geese and trumpeter swans to our wetlands, bald eagles and peregrine falcons to our skies, and river otters to our streams." – IWAP Chapter 6

Efforts to restore wildlife populations through relocation and reintroduction have been going on in the state since the early 1900s. They began with game species and eventually expanded to non-game species as well. Reintroduction and relocation has continued under the Plan, including the ongoing Greater Prairie-chicken restoration efforts in southern Iowa. The Greater Prairie-chicken was an abundant nesting species in Iowa up until about 1900. Their decline is attributed to a combination of habitat loss and excessive hunting pressure. Since the 1980s multiple reintroduction attempts have been made to bring back the Greater Prairie-chicken population in Iowa. Between 2012 and 2015 more than 350 birds were translocated from Nebraska to the Grand River Grasslands area, which includes portions of Ringgold County, Iowa and Harrison County, Missouri (Figure 11- 5). Land in this region is primarily used for pasture and hay which provides the large tracts of grassland habitat that the Greater Prairie-chicken requires. Public lands in this area are also managed specifically for Greater Prairie-chicken habitat. Between 2005 and 2015 the number of confirmed Iowa breeding sites, or leks, has fluctuated between two to five. The most recent count in 2015 was five active leks, with 55 birds detected across Ringgold and Decatur counties.

"[Iowa] was once a land of unparalleled wildlife abundance and diversity. Early settlers discovered, however, that underneath Iowa's prairies lay the finest farmland in the world. In less than a century the prairies were plowed and with them went flocks of prairie chickens, herds of bison and elk and the cougars, gray wolves, black bear and bobcat that preyed on them. Wetlands were drained and flocks of waterfowl numbering in the millions that nested here were diminished to a tiny fraction of their former numbers. Most of the forests were cleared, the white-tailed deer and wild turkey disappeared and once-uncountable flocks of passenger pigeons became extinct."

- IWAP Chapter 6

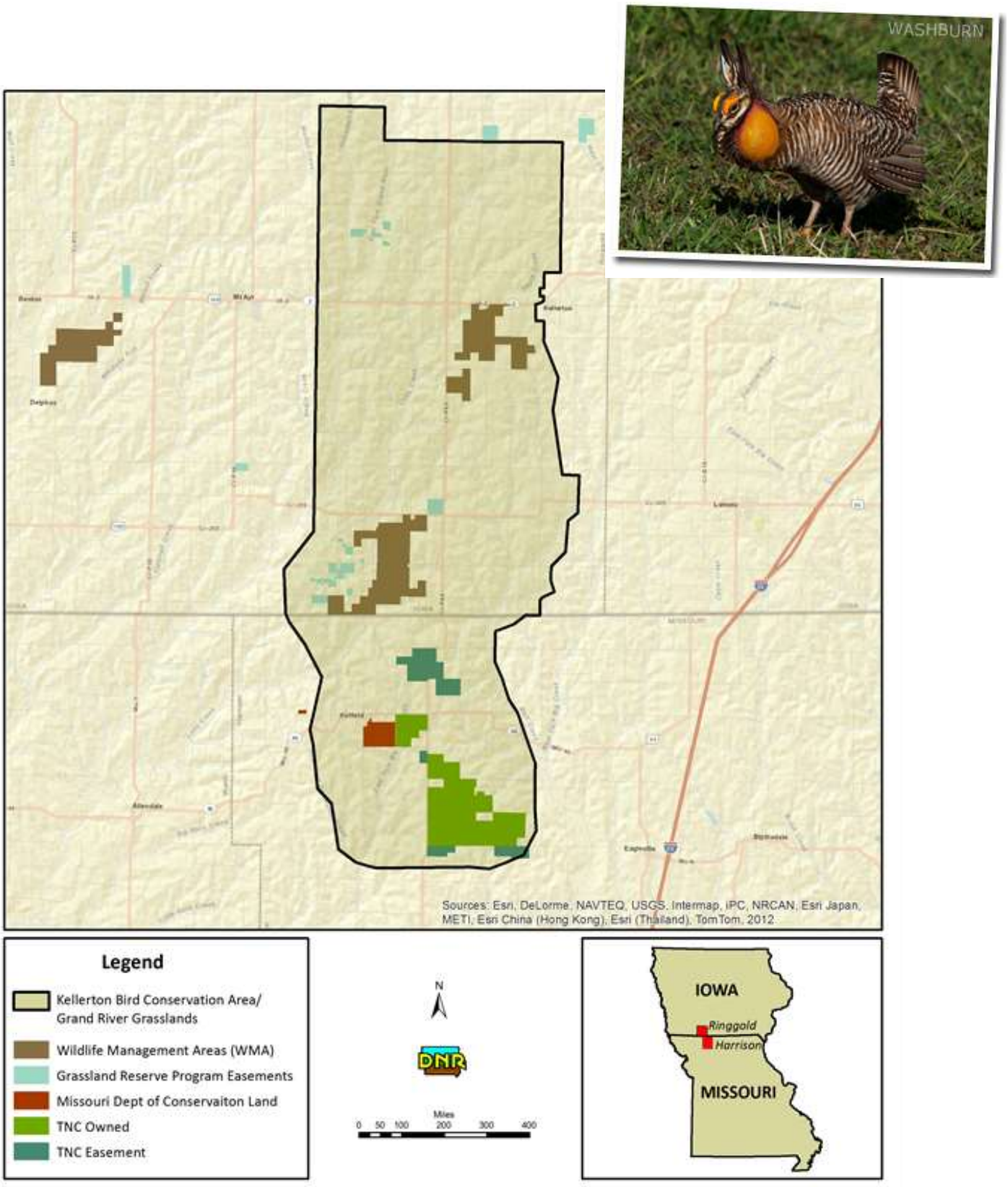


Figure 11- 5. Grand River Grasslands and Kellerton Bird Conservation Area
Through relocation and appropriate habitat management, Greater Prairie-chickens (upper right) are slowly making a comeback within the 70,000 acre Grand River Grasslands. This area includes both public and private land that provides the extensive grassland habitat necessary to support the Greater Prairie-chicken population.

Vision #2: Provide healthy ecosystems that incorporate diverse, native habitats capable of sustaining viable wildlife populations.

The second vision of the Plan requires permanently protecting, restoring, and reconstructing habitat across the state. This goal could not be achieved without cooperation between natural resource agencies and non-government organizations to identify important habitat types, landscapes, and travel corridors in all regions of the state. Work has already been done to identify high opportunity areas for conservation actions (Figure 11- 6). These areas are determined based on combined data from various conservation entities across the state on the regions that contain key habitat for wildlife. Prioritizing conservation efforts in those areas is important for providing high quality habitat for wildlife. It is equally important to provide private land owners with technical guidance that demonstrates how to benefit wildlife while still meeting owners' land-use goals.

Iowa's Bird Conservation Areas

The Bird Conservation Area (BCA) program was established in 2001 by the Wildlife Diversity Program of the Department of Natural Resources as part of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI). NABCI is a broad collective of national and international bird conservation efforts directed towards reducing the serious declines in North American avian species that have been observed over the last two decades. Although the BCA program was established before the Plan was written, it has been an exemplary mode of Plan implementation, serving to achieve multiple Plan goals.

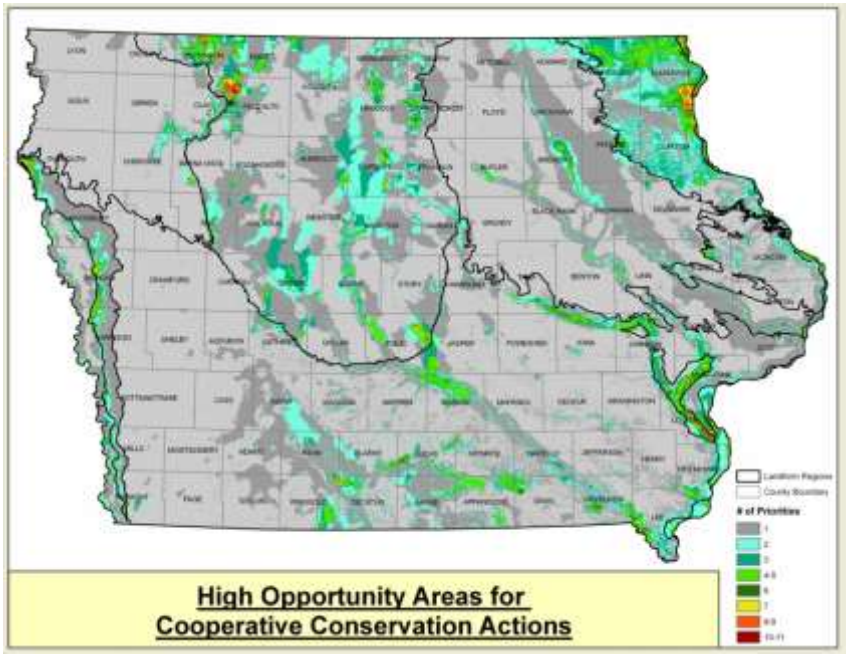


Figure 11- 6. Areas in Iowa that have been designated as Conservation Priorities by various conservation entities. BCAs are one layer within these high priority areas.

There are no legal regulations that come with establishment of a BCA. Rather, these places serve to encourage and focus protection in areas where birds and other wildlife are most likely to benefit. The BCA model was adapted from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and Midwest Partners-In-Flight Working Group large-scale landscape recommendations. This model is based on research suggesting that viable bird populations require habitat spread across a large landscape. Under this model a BCA must be at least 10,000 acres in size, with a minimum area of 2,000 acres at the core being permanently protected. In addition to the core area, blocks of habitat greater than 40 acres need to be scattered throughout the complex (Figure 11- 7). A portion of these blocks are on public land that is managed for bird habitat. Private pastures, easements, prairie remnants, and land that is idle, or land enrolled in a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) can also help meet the habitat requirements within the BCA.

NABCI designated three bird conservation regions in Iowa: Eastern Tallgrass Prairie, Prairie Potholes, and Prairie-Hardwood Transition. Iowa now has at least one Bird Conservation Area in each of the three regions (Figure 11- 9) that serve to conserve woodland, savanna, wetland, and grassland habitat. Many of the BCAs also align with the High Opportunity Areas for Cooperative Conservation. Signs posted in each BCA (Figure 11- 8) indicate the partners that

have worked together to protect and manage land in the area. Seven BCAs have even been strategically positioned to extend up to a state border in order to encourage partnership with other states.

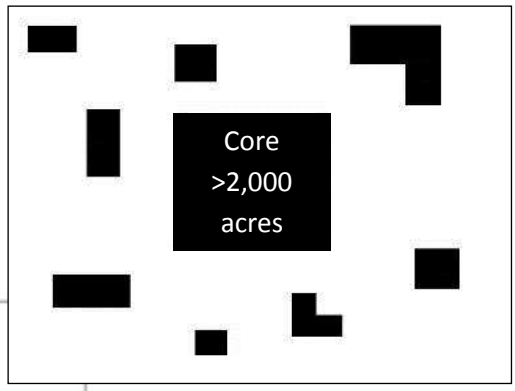


Figure 11- 7. Bird Conservation Area Model. White portions represent private land. Black boxes indicate protected public land with habitat managed for birds. The entire complex is at least 10,000 acres.

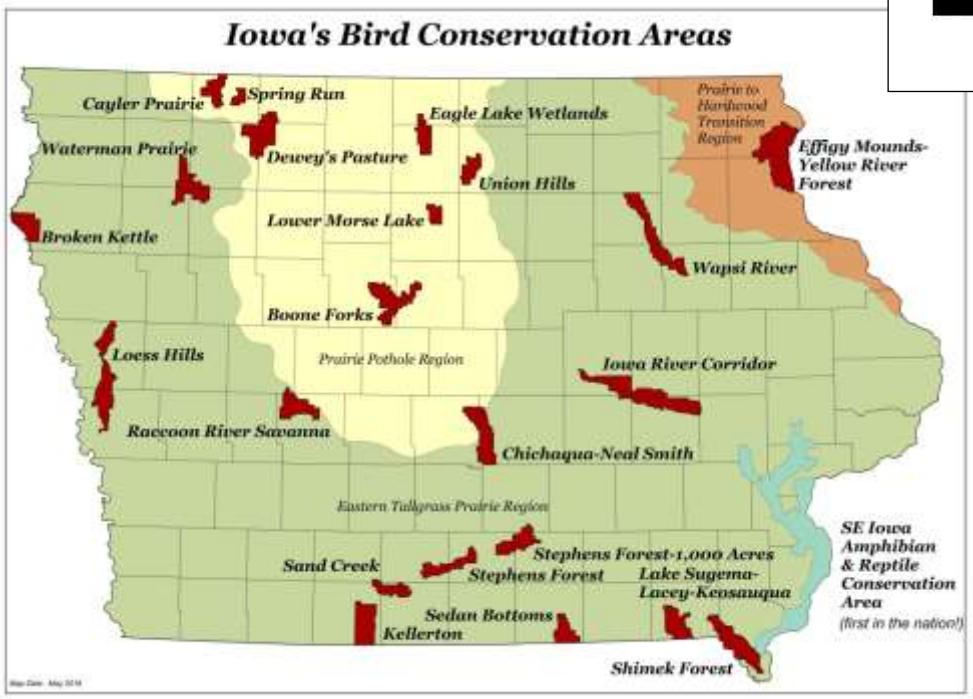


Figure 11- 9. Iowa's Bird Conservation Areas. There is at least one BCA in each of the three bird conservation regions designated by the North American Bird Conservation Initiative.

Figure 11- 8. BCA Signs. Each sign includes names of the major partners that contribute to land protection or land management in the area. Partnership is an essential part of establishing BCAs across the state.

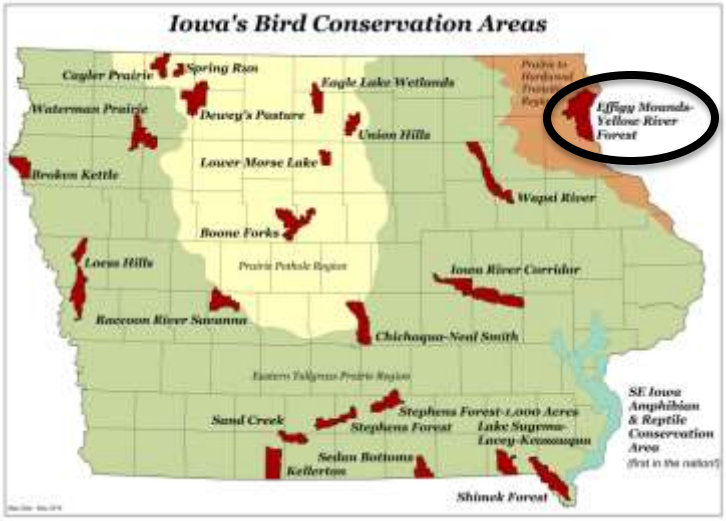
Partnerships with Private Landowners

Oak Woodland and Savanna Restoration in the Stephens State Forest BCA

Cooperation with private land owners is an important part of successful wildlife conservation. Public education and assistance efforts are often conducted in high priority areas in order to help interested individuals increase the quality of wildlife habitat on their land. These education efforts are conducted by a variety of conservation entities.

In 2010 a program was implemented in the Stephens State Forest BCA that provided education to private land owners as well as technical assistance, custom management guides, and cost-share assistance. The educational component consisted of identifying landowners within the BCA and mailing them information about the historical prevalence of oak woodland and savannah habitat in Iowa and the importance of these habitats for wildlife. Landowners were encouraged to indicate in a questionnaire if they would like more information or technical assistance for improving their land for wildlife. A workshop was then held to demonstrate oak habitat management practices for interested landowners. A field day was also coordinated to educate volunteer firefighters on prescribed burning, a key element required for increasing oak regeneration, with the goal of getting fire departments to help landowners implement a prescribed burn on their property. Personnel from the Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the National Wild Turkey Federation provided guidance to interested landowners on how to improve their woodlands and savannas. Approximately 90% of Iowa's forests are privately owned; therefore projects like this that involve voluntary participation of private land owners are extremely important for protecting and preserving habitat in Iowa. Funding for this program was provided by The Southern Iowa Oak Savanna Alliance, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and The Iowa chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation. Additional funding was contributed from the proceeds from the sale of Natural Resource License Plates.

Mature Forest Preservation in the Effigy Mounds-Yellow River State Forest BCA



Public education and land protection has also been conducted in the Effigy Mounds Yellow River State Forest BCA in northeast Iowa. This BCA was further designated as an Audubon Society Globally Important Bird Area due to the relatively large population of Cerulean Warblers in the area. Cerulean Warbler populations are declining precipitously and have been designated as a Species of Global Conservation Concern. This species depends on large stands (many thousands of acres) of mature old growth forest (Figure 11- 10). Creating new forest habitat provides

benefits for this species in the future, however maintaining the current existing population requires preserving old growth forest that is already on the landscape. A private land owner education and outreach initiative was conducted in northeast Iowa to help maintain and improve mature forest on private lands. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources also purchased 485.5 acres within the BCA, providing protection for forest habitat that is predicted to support approximately 500 breeding pairs of Cerulean Warblers. This land acquisition was made possible by match contributions from seven non-governmental organizations: the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Iowa Audubon, Hawkeye Fly Fishing Association, The Iowa Driftless, Nebraska, and North Bear Chapters of Trout Unlimited, and Dubuque Fly Fishers. This habitat will also benefit other bird Species of Greatest Conservation need in the area including the Wood Thrush, Worm-eating Warbler, Golden-winged Warbler, Veery, Black-billed Cuckoo, Prothonotary Warbler, and Kentucky Warbler. In addition, the land within these newly protected areas includes rare algific talus slope habitat that supports the Iowa Pleistocene snail, a federally listed endangered species. The project was part of a larger conservation effort within the Driftless Area of the Upper Mississippi River Basin that includes the Wisconsin and Minnesota Departments of Natural Resources, The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Army Core of Engineers, and the Upper Mississippi and Great Lakes Joint Venture.


Photo Credit: Jerry Oldenettel

Figure 11- 10. Cerulean Warblers (right) require large stands of mature forest like that in the Effigy Mounds-Yellow River Forest BCA (below)


Photo Credit: Doug Harr

Aquatic Habitat Improvement in the Boone River Watershed

In addition to the work being done in Bird Conservation Areas around the state, many other projects have been conducted that achieve the goal of protecting, restoring, and reconstructing habitat through cooperation with partner conservation agencies and private landowners. The Fisheries Bureau of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources works with The Nature Conservancy, Iowa Soybean Association, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to restore oxbow habitat on the Boone River Watershed. An important component of this project is landowner support since many of the oxbows are on private property. The Nature Conservancy conducts outreach and holds meetings to inform land owners of the goals and benefits of the restoration projects. This project improves aquatic habitat for fish, reptile, amphibian, and bird species that depend on backwater areas and improves water quality in the restoration area (Figure 11- 11). This restoration project is part of a larger effort to restore watersheds in Iowa and in the Midwest. The Nature Conservancy created an action plan for the improvement of the Boone River Watershed in 2008. This watershed is part of the Mississippi River Basin Initiative of the U.S. Department of Agriculture that is meant to reduce nutrient and sediment loading in aquatic areas.

Figure 11- 11. Images from before (left) and after (below) restoration at Peterson Oxbow in Wright County. Improved water quality makes this habitat suitable for multiple species of wildlife.

Vision #3: Develop diverse wildlife communities through science based adaptive ecological management.

Sustaining the diversity of wildlife within the state requires managing for a variety of native habitat types. Prairie once covered over 80% of Iowa's landscape. Trees, shrubs, and wetlands were interspersed within the expanse of grassland, creating a wide variety of habitat that supported a huge diversity of wildlife. Now, less than 0.1% of this native prairie habitat remains. Land managers strive to create habitat diversity and connectivity across the state in order to provide high quality habitat and winter cover for many different species (Figure 11- 12-Figure 11- 15). This improves the survival and reproduction of species of conservation concern and helps increase local populations of wildlife. The management plans implemented across the state use methods that have been successful in the past to

support healthy wildlife populations and also incorporate innovative approaches to solve ecological problems in a variety of ways.

Figure 11- 12. In northwest Iowa, upland soils are often dry and easily eroded. Managers used a xeric shortgrass prairie seed mix that performs best in drier soils to restore prairie habitat at Jemmerson Slough (right) in Dickinson County.

Figure 11- 13. During a restoration project at Four Mile Lake (left) in Emmet County, managers used a hydric seed mix which is suitable for enhancing wet marsh habitat.

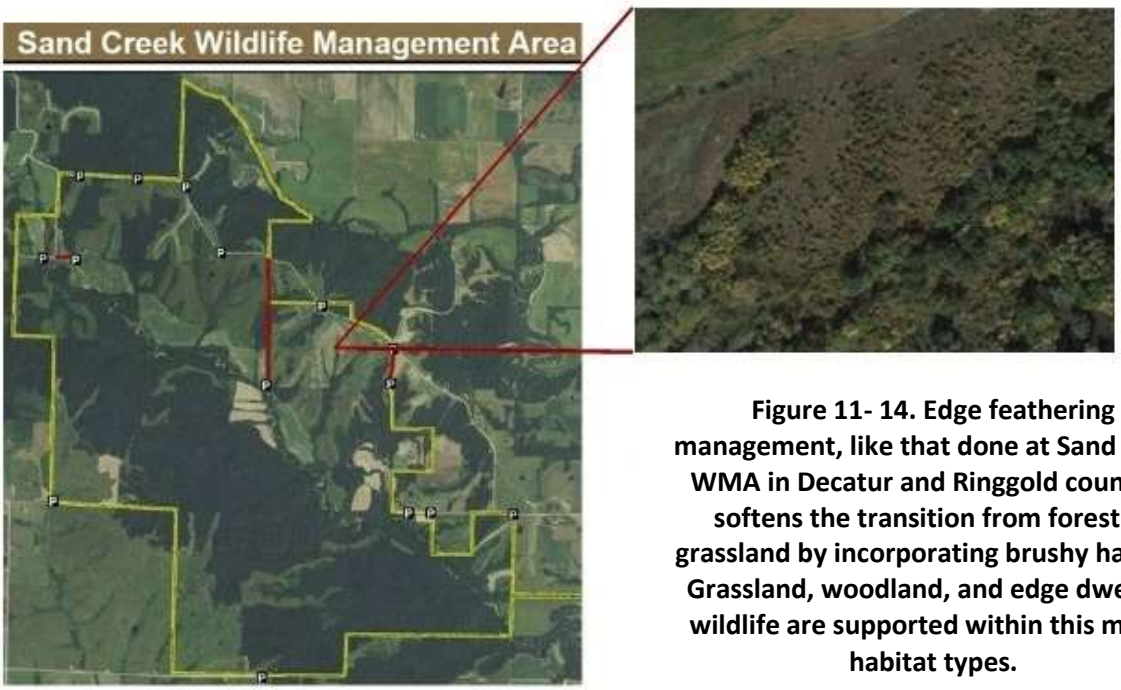


Figure 11- 14. Edge feathering management, like that done at Sand Creek WMA in Decatur and Ringgold counties, softens the transition from forest to grassland by incorporating brushy habitat. Grassland, woodland, and edge dwelling wildlife are supported within this mix of habitat types.

Figure 11- 15. Dickcissels (middle) are an obligate grassland species that require a mix of grass and forbs for foraging and breeding. Sedge Wrens (right) breed and forage in wet areas with thick growths of sedges and grasses. Restored prairies like Jemmerson Slough and improved wetlands like Four Mile Lake that are planted with diverse seed mixes provide important habitat for these Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Edge feathering, like that at Sand Creek WMA provides key habitat for the Blue-winged Warbler (left) which prefers shrubby openings on the edges of woodlands.

Restoring native habitat is only one component of wildlife management. With much of the landscape being used for agriculture, it can be difficult for species to find areas that fit their specific needs. For instance, reptiles require places to hibernate through the winter and areas to bask during cool periods in order to regulate their body temperature. The Grand River Unit in southern Iowa repurposed a large pile of unused riprap at the headquarters in order to construct a snake hibernaculum and basking area (Figure 11- 16). A long trench was dug and the riprap was placed in the trench. It was then covered with soil, leaving rock exposed to the south for the entrance and basking area. The snakes crawl in through the spaces in the rocks and make their way underground where they will be protected from freezing in the winter. A similar structure was built for snakes at McCoy Wildlife Management Area in Boone County Iowa (Figure 11- 16) and a turtle hibernaculum was created there as well (Figure 11- 18). These structures were created based on designs provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service which employs engineers to create a wide variety of designs for conservation efforts.

Figure 11- 16. Hole dug at McCoy WMA that was filled with logs to provide a hibernaculum for snakes (above). The hole was filled and the south side was covered with rock to provide an entrance (below).

Figure 11- 17. Snake hibernaculum at the Grand River Unit in Southern Iowa constructed out of riprap (below). Snakes enter through the rocks and are able to access spaces underground between the soil and buried rock.

Exposed rock faces south and also provides basking areas.

Figure 11- 18. Turtle Hibernaculum. In the winter reptiles must hibernate underground or underwater to prevent their bodies from freezing. This wooden structure provides a secure wintering area for turtles.

Another important component of land management is invasive species control. Invasive species tend to spread aggressively and take over an area. When this happens they choke out native plants, reducing species diversity and making habitat less suitable for wildlife. Invasive plant species are often removed from an area through chemical sprays or mechanical approaches which include pulling plants by hand and mowing. These approaches have varying levels of effectiveness depending on the hardiness of the plants and the persistence of treatments. Purple Loosestrife is a plant native to Europe and Asia that can take over wetland areas and reduce native emergent vegetation that is characteristic of healthy wetland habitat (Figure 11- 19). At the Little Storm Lake Wildlife Management Area in Buena Vista County, managers took an innovative approach to controlling a Purple Loosestrife invasion by releasing a beetle (*Galerucella pusilla*) that eats the leaves of this species and eventually kills the plant (Figure 11- 19). This reduces the

amount of time managers have to be out on the land dealing with this issue and as the beetles reproduce they can be used on different infestation sites and can be shared with other wildlife management units.

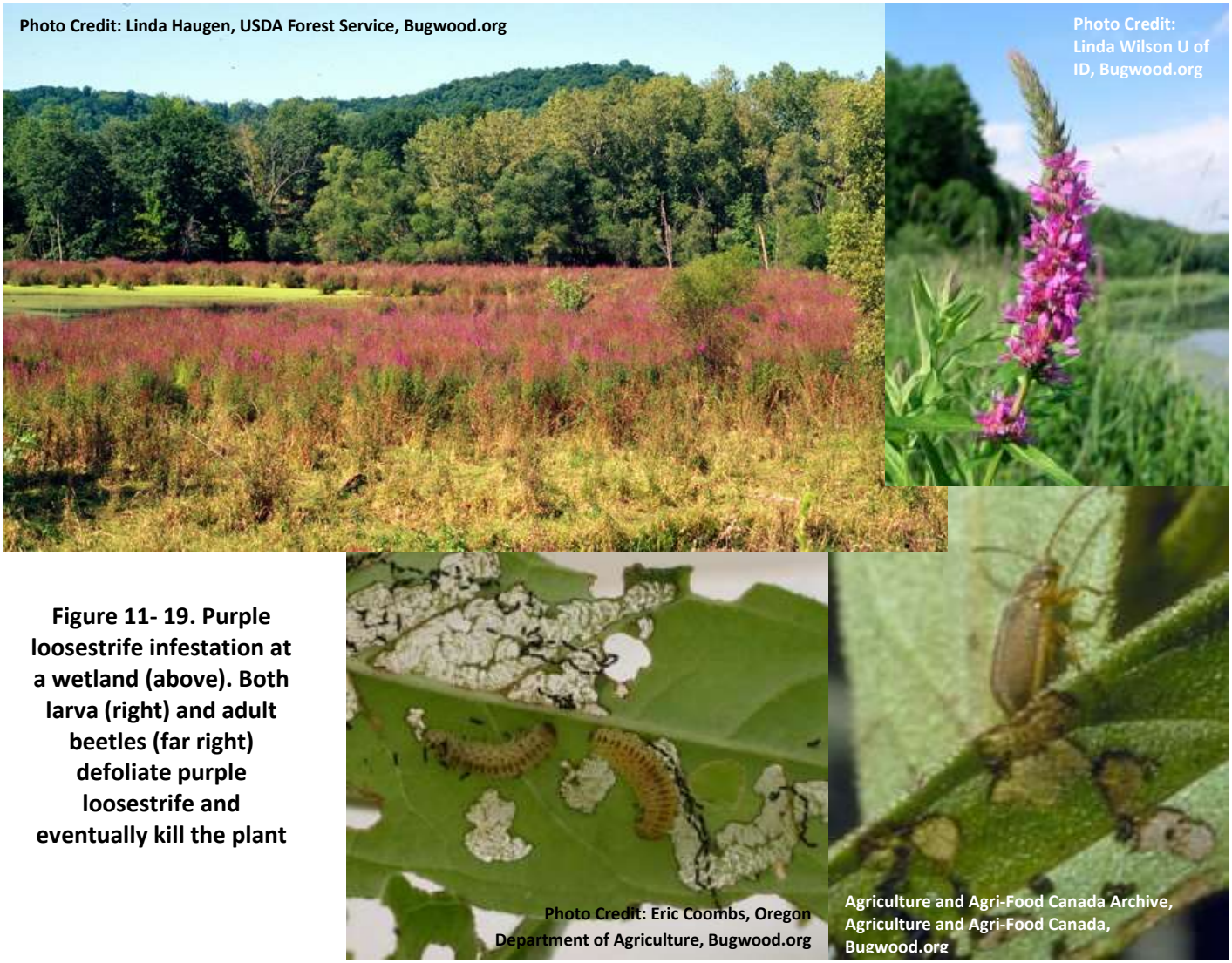


Figure 11- 19. Purple loosestrife infestation at a wetland (above). Both larva (right) and adult beetles (far right) defoliate purple loosestrife and eventually kill the plant

Vision #4: More Iowans will participate in wildlife-associated recreation, and all Iowans will have access to publicly owned recreation areas to enjoy wildlife in its many forms.

Vision #5: Iowans will respect wildlife for its many values and they will advocate effectively for conservation of wildlife and wildlife habitats.

Outreach and education are fundamental for increasing citizen respect and appreciation for wildlife and their habitats. Providing opportunities for people to experience wildlife first hand is one of the best ways to pique their interest in outdoor recreation and demonstrate the benefits of having healthy and diverse wildlife populations. Getting people involved in outdoor activities also contributes to the state's economy and increases public health. Iowa State University Extension's Master Conservationist Program reached out to Iowans with experience in natural resources to send letters relating to conservation in Iowa. The following is an excerpt from an essay entitled "The Importance of Wildlife Diversity to Iowa's Economy" submitted by Doug Harr, former Wildlife Diversity Program coordinator for Iowa DNR, and current Iowa Audubon President:

> "There's little doubt that ring-necked pheasants, white-tailed deer, walleye and large-mouthed bass contribute to Iowa's economy….Unrecognized until the past few years, however, is the economic contribution of all the wildlife in Iowa not considered game or sport fish. In fact, the 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation indicated that wildlife viewing contributes approximately $304 million dollars annually to Iowa's economy – actually exceeding the $296 million brought in by hunting…
>
> …this speaks to the necessity for preserving as wide a diversity of wildlife as possible…
>
> Through many nature centers… birding trails… [and] the high-visibility efforts to re-establish… creatures that had nearly or completely disappeared, citizens again have the opportunity to see and enjoy the incredible diversity and beauty that wildlife brings to our landscape. This brings along a greater citizen commitment to conservation… As more citizens take advantage of this diversity, they will need places to go and equipment to see, photograph and enjoy that wildlife, the importance of their expenditures to Iowa's economy is bound to rise."

Iowa has over 450 state-managed wildlife areas and numerous county wildlife areas, state forests and other public areas across the state that are open to the public for hunting, wildlife viewing, and other outdoor reaction activities. The DNR website offers a user friendly, interactive map of these areas in their Hunting and Recreation Atlases (Figure 11- 20 and Figure 11- 21). Through these programs people can search for public areas near their home or favorite vacation spot in the state and learn more about what opportunities are available at each location.

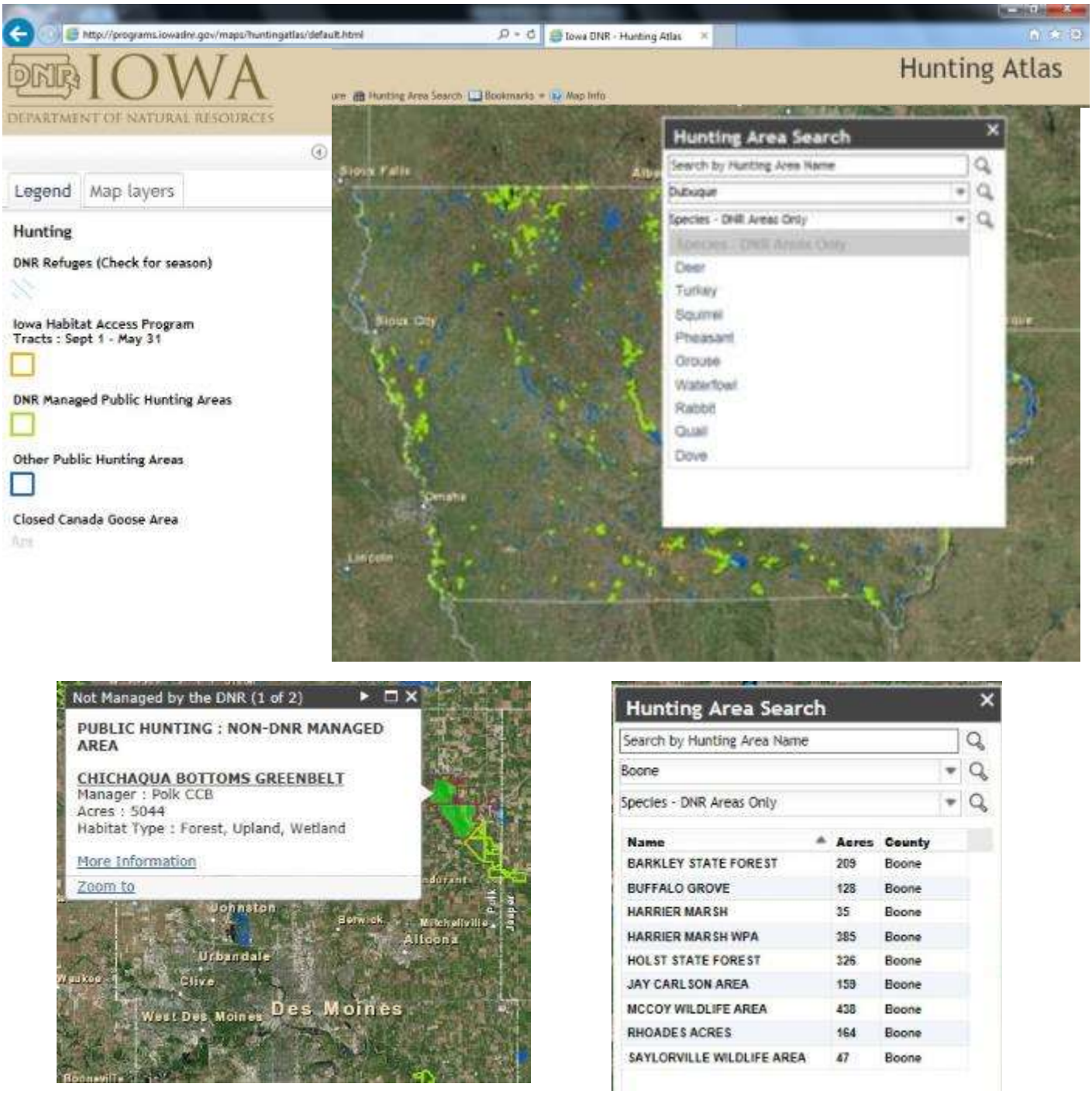


Figure 11- 20. The hunting atlas has information about public land with hunting in the state. Search options allow users to find out where they can hunt certain game species (top) as well as locate hunting areas in a specific county (lower right). The zoom tool allows user to locate hunting areas in specific regions as well. Clicking on a wildlife area will give more detailed information about the location (lower left). http://www.iowadnr.gov/Hunting

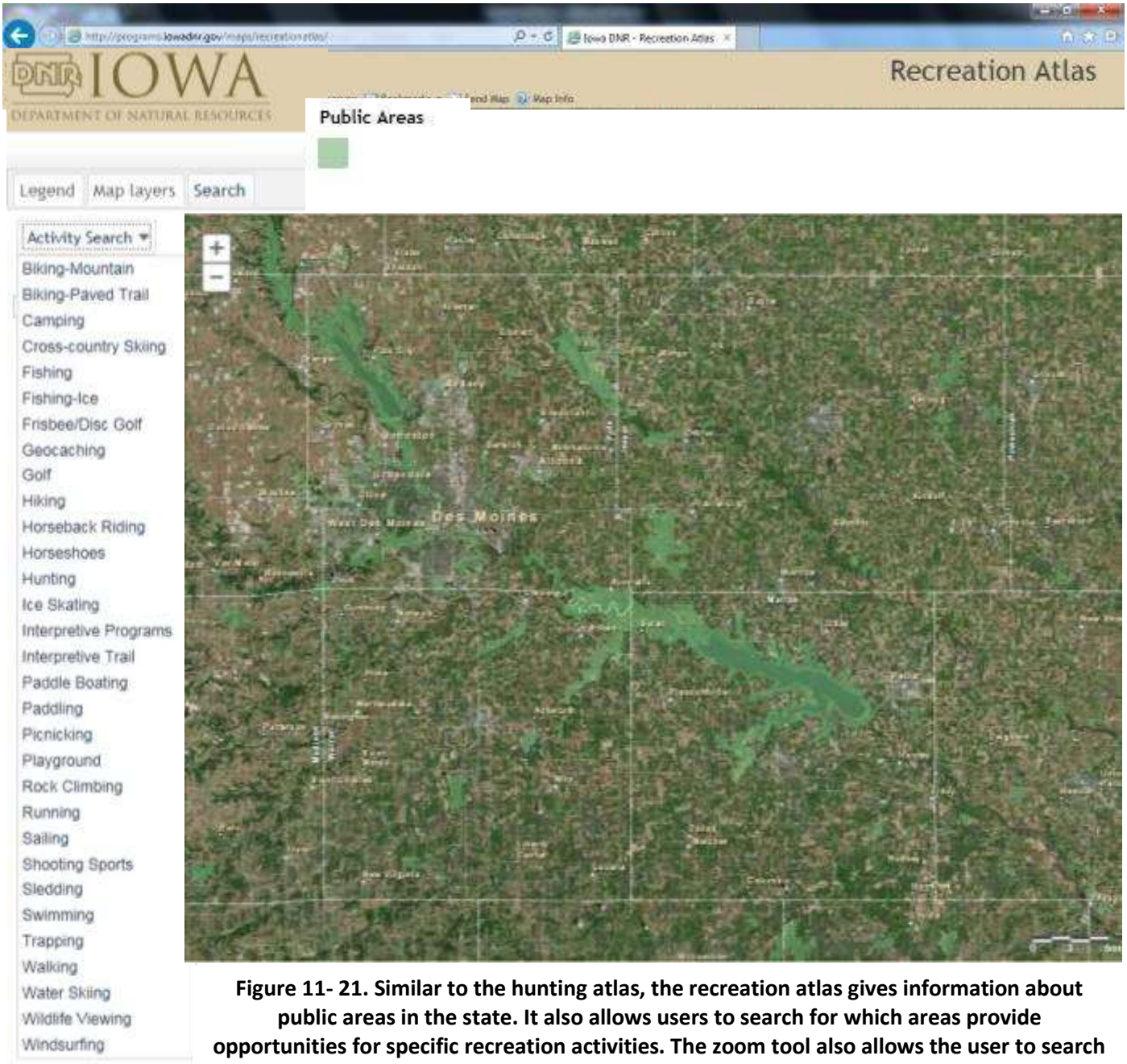


Figure 11- 21. Similar to the hunting atlas, the recreation atlas gives information about public areas in the state. It also allows users to search for which areas provide opportunities for specific recreation activities. The zoom tool also allows the user to search within a certain area of interest. http://www.iowadnr.gov/Conservation/Mapping-GIS

These online resources are important for helping people pursue their outdoor recreation passions. Reaching out to get more people interested in the outdoors and what Iowa has to offer is also an important part of increasing citizen appreciation of wildlife and their habitats. The Springbrook Conservation Education Center is one of many places across the state that hosts camps and field trips for people of all ages who are interested in having fun outside and learning more about Iowa's wildlife. Figure 11- 22 show a portion of Springbrook's informational brochure and Figure 11- 23 and Figure 11- 24 highlight a few outdoor programs offered at Springbrook.

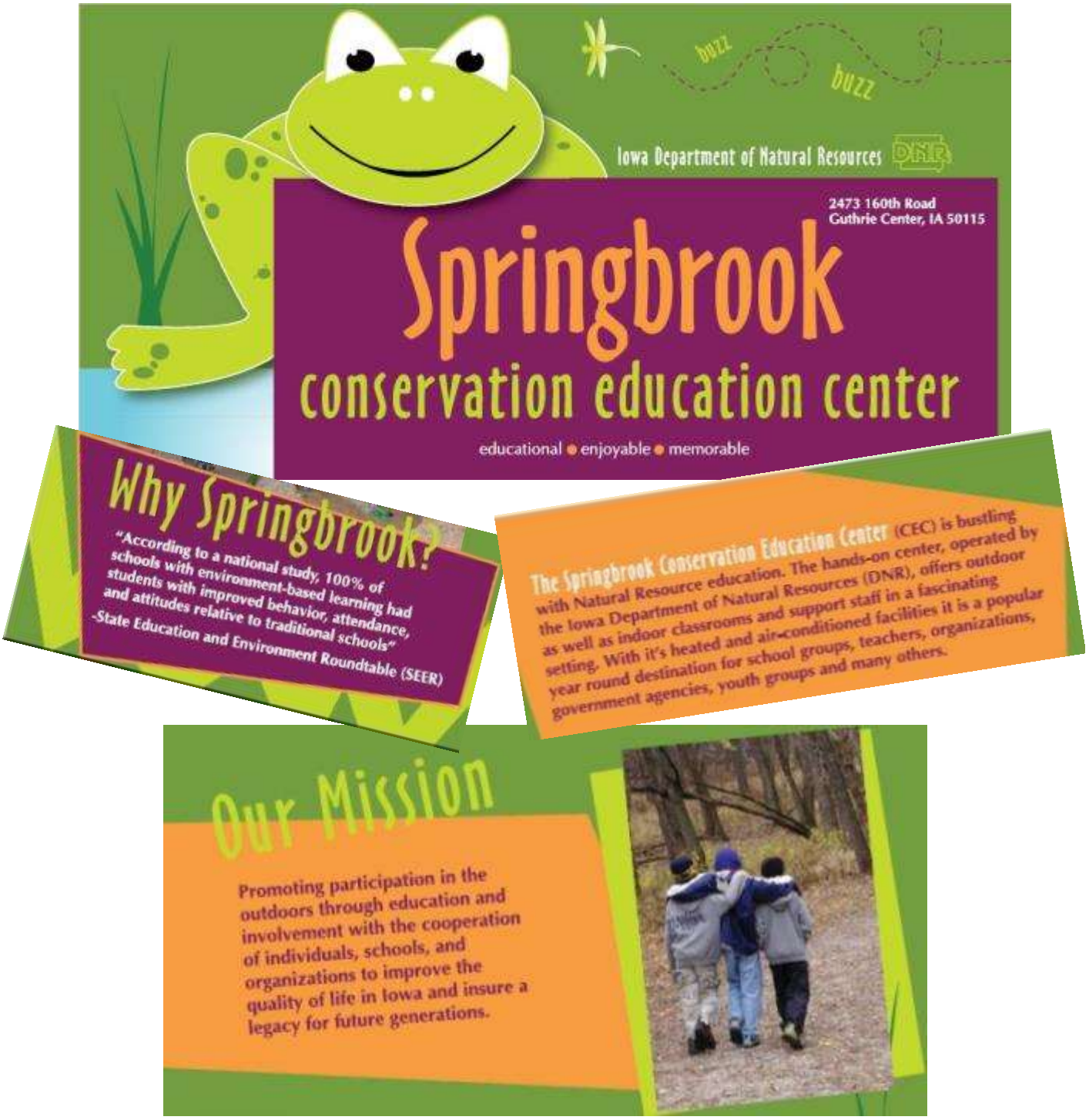


Figure 11- 22. Springbrook Conservation Education Center Informational Brochure

Outdoor Journey for girls

Outdoor Journey for Girls (OJ) is a three-day, two-night program introducing outdoor skills to girls ages 12-to-15 in a supportive, learning environment where they have opportunities to gain hands-on experience.

Three programs are held each summer. June and August programs are located at the Springbrook Conservation Education Center (Guthrie County) and the July program is held at Hickory Hills County Park (Black Hawk County).

Canoeing and Water Safety
Basic Orienteering
Fish and Wildlife Identification
Archery
Firearm Safety and Basic Shooting
Camping and Outdoor Survival
Game Care
Fishing and Preparing the Catch
Hunter Education Certification

Figure 11- 23. Outdoor Journey for Girls is provided through a partnership with Iowa Women in Natural Resources, DNR, and Pheasants Forever. This program allows girls who may not otherwise have a chance to participate in outdoor activities the opportunity to learn about Iowa's wildlife and the outdoor recreational activities that are possible in Iowa.

Promoting participation in outdoor skills through education and involvement with a partnership between Pheasants Forever and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources

HACC

HUNTING AND CONSERVATION CAMP

HISTORY

The HACC program started in 1997 as a partnership between local Iowa Pheasants Forever chapters and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Two camps are offered each summer, each accommodating more than 80 12- to 15-year-old boys. All are given the opportunity to experience the outdoors, through the experience and knowledge of professionals from varying fields in an educational and supportive environment.

AGENDA

Hands-on and packed with experiences! During the three-day camp, participants and mentors:

- shoot .22 rifles, shotguns, muzzleloaders, bows
- throw atl-atls
- learn about dog training, bird banding, hunting basics, animal calls, furharvesting, bowhunting, fishing, fish management, game care, turkey hunting, waterfowl hunting and upland bird hunting

Other outdoor skills camps/workshops available through the DNR include:

American Wilderness Leadership School (AWLS) for teachers and outdoor educators

Becoming an Outdoors-Woman (BOW) for women 18 years and older

The Fly Tying and Fishing Experience for people interested in fly tying/fishing

Figure 11- 24. Hunting and Conservation Camp informational brochure and list of other outdoor activities offered by the DNR.

The Education and Recreation working group of the IWAP Implementation Committee was established to help achieve visions four and five. Working group member Jim Pease, retired Iowa State University Extension Wildlife Specialist, participates in a radio show called Wildlife Day hosted on Iowa Public Radio that shares interesting facts about a wide variety of wildlife species in Iowa. While appealing to naturalists and outdoor recreationists alike, this radio show also reaches those who may not be able to participate in outdoor recreation. Working group member Pat Schlarbaum, a staff member in the DNR's Wildlife Diversity Program, has helped get viewing platforms installed at bird conservation areas to help draw people to watch wildlife in the area (Figure 27-28). As of 2015 there were six platforms in existence or being built. The view from the platforms also fosters an appreciation for the landscape within wildlife management areas. These platforms are constructed through cooperation with various conservation partners.

Figure 11- 25. One of the most popular viewing platforms is at the Kellerton BCA, where people gather to hear the prairie chickens booming in the early mornings of the springtime mating season.

Figure 11- 26. Pat Schlarbaum created an eagle design for the viewing platforms at Otter Creek and Sweet Marsh WMAs. The wooden design pictured above was also used adapted by Polk County Conservation for use at Chichauqua Bottoms Greenbelt.

Vision #6: Stable, permanent funding dedicated to wildlife management at a level adequate to achieve plan goals

Chapter 6 states that in order to achieve this goal there will need to be a marketing campaign to convince citizens, conservation professionals, activists, leaders, and law makers of the need to fund the plan. Although funding has never been dedicated to wildlife conservation at the level adequate to achieve plan goals, partnership between agencies has made many projects possible that could not be completed by any entity on their own. One funding

source in Iowa for non-game wildlife is the Chickadee Checkoff. At the national level, the Teaming with Wildlife Coalition (TWW) advocates for a solution to the problem of inadequate wildlife diversity funding.

The Chickadee Checkoff

The Chickadee Checkoff provides tax-payers with the opportunity to donate money directly to the Wildlife Diversity Program when they fill out their Iowa 1040 tax form. Although the Chickadee Checkoff was enacted in 1981, long before the publication of the Plan, the money that has been raised through this means has been used to benefit non-game wildlife and has contributed to Plan implementation since the Plan was formed. All of the money donated through the Chickadee Checkoff goes to the Wildlife Diversity Program and helps fund projects that help achieve Plan goals such as wildlife research, monitoring and restoration, educational events about wildlife, and public land acquisition and management. Over the years donations to the Chickadee Checkoff have declined. Efforts have been made to spread awareness about the existence of this important funding source for Iowa's non-game wildlife, Including the design and distribution of Chickadee Checkoff posters (Figure 29). As an increasing number of citizens have turned to tax preparation services, the importance of tax preparers' awareness of this option on the tax form has increased. Therefore, members of the Wildlife Diversity Program of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources bring the posters to tax schools where tax preparers are trained, and discuss the importance of the Chickadee Checkoff with those attending the trainings. Postcards are also mailed to those who have donated in previous years, to thank them for their past donations and remind them about the Chickadee Checkoff as the next tax season approaches.

Figure 11- 27. Two Examples of Chickadee Checkoff Posters. Recent designs, like the dragonfly and damselfly poster, have featured a species identification legend where each species can be matched to its common name at the bottom.

Teaming With Wildlife Coalition

Teaming With Wildlife (TWW) is a national coalition dedicated to finding a sustainable, long-term funding source for the conservation of all wildlife. Iowa boasts one of the top ten Teaming With Wildlife Coalitions in the nation, which is a testament to how much Iowans value wildlife. Over 180 organizations and businesses from across Iowa have come together to spread the word about the Iowa Wildlife Action Plan and to secure the funding it needs for success. Member organizations and businesses can help in variety of ways, by engaging organizations in their communities, sharing TWW updates within their networks, and by urging elected officials to support the federal State Wildlife Grants Program and legislation providing long-term, dedicated funding for wildlife conservation and related education and recreation. - See more at: http://www.teaming.com/state/iowa#sthash.R77XJYxg.dpuf

Teaming With Wildlife Fly-In Days

The State and Tribal Wildlife Grants (SWG) Program is the only source of federal funds that is dedicated to implementation of State Wildlife Action Plans. Administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this program provides annual allocations of funding to states, territories, and tribes. These funds are to be used solely for the conservation of wildlife, particularly Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Funding for the SWG program must be appropriated by congress on a yearly basis. In order to help Iowa's lawmakers make informed decisions about the value of the SWG, staff from the wildlife diversity program, as well as occasionally other DNR staff and outside partners have traveled to Washington D.C. at the end of February to participate in Teaming With Wildlife's Fly-in Days. This event provides an opportunity to meet with Iowa's delegates and their staff to educate them about wildlife funding mechanisms in Iowa as well as the work accomplished due to the SWG program (Figure 30). Along with other discretionary programs, SWG funds are often subject to elimination through budget cuts, so the Fly-In Days have been an important communication tool to maintain this funding source. Iowa has received an average of about $720,000 per year through the 15 year life of the program.

Figure 11- 28. Stephanie Shepherd, Wildlife Diversity Program Biologist, with Former Iowa Senator Tom Harkin. Senator Harkin is holding a wren house made by Pat Schlarbaum, Wildlife Diversity Natural Resources Technician II. Senator Harkin was a longtime champion of wildlife and natural resource conservation.

Conclusion

Although Iowa is an agricultural state, it also hosts thousands of vertebrate and invertebrate species. Continuing to develop a diverse base of native habitats and movement corridors for wildlife is essential for the preservation of Iowa's wildlife populations. Maintaining Iowa's rich natural resource legacy also creates a wide variety of enjoyable recreational opportunities for Iowans and visitors alike, thereby improving public health and contributing to the state's economy. This chapter highlights just a few of the many projects that are being conducted across the state to preserve and restore Iowa's natural resources as well as provide opportunities for people to enjoy them. As implementation of the Iowa Wildlife Action Plan continues, more benefits will be seen across the state for wildlife as well as for the people who enjoy outdoor recreation and who value wildlife and wild spaces.

Unless otherwise noted, photos are courtesy of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources