



IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION - Birding Sites in Boone County

Printed on 7/5/2025

Avenue S Pond

GPS Coordinates: 42.2023987679318,-93.8157507777214

Ownership: Private (see directions for access)

Description: Periodically flooded private pasture in spring or after heavy rains. Private land site can be observed only from the county graveled road (Ave. S).

Habitat: Wet meadow/periodically flooded grass pasture, but recently with improved drainage tile, which is reducing the value of this site to shorebirds or other migrating waterbirds.

Directions: This pond in Boone County is one mile south of Bjorkboda Marsh (which is actually in Hamilton County), on the east side of S Avenue. Please see Bjorkboda Marsh directions in the gazateer.

Amenities:

Dickcissel Recreation Area (eBird Hotspot)

GPS Coordinates: 42.0362553367922,-93.8253021240234

Ownership: County

Description: 38 Acres with a 5 acre pond.

Habitat: Small lake.

Directions: From Highway 30, exit at Highway 17. Area is just north of that intersection on the west side of Highway 17.

Amenities: Parking |

Harrier Marsh WMA (eBird Hotspot)

GPS Coordinates: 42.0227733,-94.013443

Ownership: Multiple

Description: 423 acres of restored prairie and pothole wetlands.

Habitat: Large expanses of restored native prairie grasslands, tame grass haylands and a few crop fields farmed as wildlife food patches. All with scattered restored pothole wetlands from 1 to 20+ acres in size. Excellent area for all migrating and nesting wetland birds (waterfowl, waders, shorebirds, etc.; nesting Virginia Rails, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Sedge Wrens, Marsh Wrens, Swamp Sparrows. Also migrating Yellow Rails, Nelson's Sparrows, LeConte's Sparrows, and wintering Lapland Longspurs

Directions: This area is located just SE of Ogden along US Highway 30. Turn south on I Ave to traverse the east side of the main tract. Also accessible from US Highway 169 on the west side, south of intersection with US 30 st south edge of Ogden.

Public Hunting Area

Amenities: Parking |

High Trestle Trail (eBird Hotspot)

GPS Coordinates: 41.8691134,-93.8537979

Ownership: County

Description: Hiking/biking trail located between Madrid and Woodward. Old high railroad trestle converted into one of the nation's most spectacular pedestrian bridges, near 180 ft. above the Des Moines River Valley

Habitat: Des Moines River valley, with heavily wooded slopes on either side of bridge and valley. Trestle bridge particularly good lookout for waterbirds on river below, and in the fall for migrating raptors and many other birds.

Directions: Must walk or bike to and from the high trestle from Madrid, 2 miles to the east, or from Woodward, 2.5 miles to the west. Also accessible from parking lot on country graveled road one mile east of the trestle.

Amenities: Parking | Trails | ADA Accessible Trails

Holst SF (eBird Hotspot)

GPS Coordinates: 42.1182166879748,-93.9741325378418

Ownership: State

Description: 313-acre State Forest located SW across Des Moines River from small town of Fraser.

Habitat: Deciduous forest with old pine plantation. Hotspot for migrating warblers, all summer nesting forest birds, plus nesting Broad-winged Hawks.

Directions: From junction of US 30 & US 169 at Ogden, take Boone Co. Hwy P70 north 5.5 mi. and turn right (east) on Co. Hwy. E26. Drive 3 mi. and turn left (north) on Kale Ave. Go 1/4 mi. on Kales, then turn left (west) on 168th Ave. Follow this often muddy and poorly maintained access road to forest gate. Parking space limited to 2 vehicles.

Amenities: Parking | Trails |

Ledges SP (eBird Hotspot) (Important Bird Area)

GPS Coordinates: 41.9934361,-93.8877869

Ownership: State

Description: 1200-acre forested state park adjacent to the Des Moines River and extensive additional DNR/Corps of Engineers wildlife and recreation lands.

Habitat: Primarily hardwood forest on hills, valleys and steep canyon walls. Also has small fields of restored prairie, patches of savanna restoration adjacent to larger forest areas, willows and grassy river banks, isolated wetlands, and small rugged stream valleys. Park hosts virtually every species of Iowa's migrating and nesting warblers, vireos, woodpeckers, forest sparrows, raptors and much more. Many consider this park to be the best forest birding area anywhere in central and western Iowa.

Directions: From Highway 17, go west on Highway E52 three miles to park entrance. Or, from this entrance, turn south on P Avenue, staying on the paved road to a south entrance. Also accessible via a North entrance: take County Highway R28 south 4 miles, from junction with US Highway 30 at the south edge of city of Boone.

Amenities: Restrooms | Drinking Water | Parking | Trails | Camping | ADA Accessible Trails

McHugh Wetlands (eBird Hotspot)

GPS Coordinates: 42.2089516356455,-93.8368882486034

Ownership: Private (see directions for access)

Description: This is another ag wetland one mile from Bjorkboda Marsh WMA in Hamilton Co. It is on private property but is easily scanned from the road.

Habitat: Marsh/wetlands

Directions: In northwestern Boone Co., at the Hamilton Co. border, two miles west of Hwy. 17, although there is no road directly west to the marsh from 17. FROM THE SOUTH in Boone Co., take Hwy. 17 north two miles past E-18/130th St. to 110th St. Proceed west one mile on 110th to S Ave., and then one mile north and one mile west to the wetlands. FROM THE NORTH in Hamilton Co., take Hwy. 17 south four miles out of Stanhope to 390th St. Proceed one mile west on 390th to Inkpaduta Rd., and then one mile south and one mile west to the wetlands.

Amenities: