

The Buena Vista County Conservation Board was awarded a \$900 grant in 2017 from the Iowa Ornithologists' Union (IOU) to construct a bird viewing station at Buena Vista County Conservation Park in Buena Vista County.

In the winter of 2017, Buena Vista County Conservation Staff used the grant funds to purchase materials to construct an 8 foot by 6 foot viewing station. The viewing station was built on skids so it can be moved and positioned within the park to provide the best bird viewing opportunities possible. The viewing station includes a viewing window that spans 7 feet and a built-in bench for seating up to four. The viewing station was built utilizing steel for the exterior and roof to reduce long term maintenance and to extend the overall life of the structure. The total cost of the bird viewing station was approximately \$1,000 dollars.



The 308 acres of Buena Vista County Conservation Park lays in the middle of the Waterman Prairie Bird Conservation Area and consists of bur oak savanna, prairie, riparian, and woodland habitat types. The diverse habitat types within the park translates into the opportunity to see a wide range of different avian species throughout the year. The viewing station was placed in the North Shelter Area of the park located adjacent to a one acre arboretum and a five acre native tallgrass prairie reconstruction which provides viewing opportunities for many species.

The goal of the bird viewing station was to educate park visitors and the public about local native bird species and to provide additional recreational opportunities for park users and the public to enjoy while visiting one of Buena Vista County's biggest recreation areas. Conservation Board staff also installed posters and other educational materials inside of the viewing station to assist the public in learning about Iowa bird species.

The bird viewing station will be used throughout the year for environmental education programs including: day camps, hikes, school field trips, and public bird watching programs which will be instrumental in teaching about the importance of Iowa's native bird species and the habitat required for those species. The bird viewing station is also open to the public to use all year long and with its close proximity to campgrounds and rental cabins it will be enjoyed by thousands of visitors each year.