



IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION - Birding Sites in Lucas County

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Colyn area (Important Bird Area)

GPS Coordinates: 40.9258109207035,-93.2121706008911

Ownership: State

Description: This is a series of ponds and open freshwater marsh within the Rathbun Wildlife Area. Both fields and forested patches adjoin the wetlands. The land is administered by Iowa DNR, the local headquarters of which adjoin the property.

Habitat: Freshwater marshes and ponds. The habitat is good for shorebirds in migration (depending on water levels), and rails, waders and waterfowl in general.

Directions: In southeastern Lucas County: From the town of Chariton take U.S. Highway 34 east to County Road S-50 (signed 280th Ave). Take S-50 south 5 miles to a parking area near a pond on the left. From here a trail skirts the marsh and leads up a hill next to a wooded area. The marsh continues on both sides of 280th Ave. for the next mile to the south of the parking area. The gravel road is lightly traveled, so walking the road and observation from a vehicle on the road are possible

Public Hunting Area

Amenities: Parking | Trails |

Greenville Marsh

GPS Coordinates: 40.9234235832327,-93.1322836875916

Ownership: State

Description: This is an area of open water with adjacent marshlands which eventually drain into Lake Rathbun. A road traverses a dike which bisects the area, and this road will be impassible during periods of high water. Part of the Rathbun Wildlife Area, this land is administered by Iowa DNR.

Habitat: Open water and freshwater marsh. Good habitat for shorebirds in migration (depending on water levels) and waterfowl and waders in general. Note that a mile or so west of this site is pasture/cropland harboring Bobolink, Dickcissel, Horned Lark, and Eastern and Western Meadowlarks. Also, a mile or so to the east of this site is some scrubby open area good for orioles, Northern Bobwhite, Eastern Kingbird, Brown Thrasher, and Bell's Vireo.

Directions: In southeastern Lucas County: From the town of Chariton, take US Highway 34 east to S56 and go south about 6 miles to 420th St. Go east on 420th St. about 2 miles until you encounter water just past the 320th Ave intersection.

Amenities:

Pin Oak Marsh--Observation Area (eBird Hotspot)

GPS Coordinates: 40.9853732,-93.3068526

Ownership: County

Description: This open water and marshland adjoins the Chariton River just south of the city of Chariton. At the south end of the marsh is the Pin Oak Marsh Education Center, which houses the Lucas County Conservation Board office and a small nature center. The center offers a parking area and an ADA

accessible trail of about 1/3 mile which leads from the center through the edge of the marsh to a handicapped-accessible picnic table and then continues to the water's edge.

Habitat: Open water and marshland. Suitable for migrating shorebirds (depending on water levels) and rails, waders, and waterfowl in general. The marsh is adjoined by both forested and open areas.

Directions: In central Lucas Co., the marsh begins about a mile south of Chariton on both sides of Hwy. 14, just south of the Chariton River. The east side is generally the most productive. The Oak Marsh Education Center is on the left side of the highway at the south end of the marsh.

Amenities: Parking | Trails |

Red Haw SP (eBird Hotspot)

GPS Coordinates: 40.9918196,-93.2777023

Ownership: State

Description: This 640 acre state park in south central Iowa is well known for its crappie fishing and can be very busy, especially on weekends. The redbud blooming each spring can be spectacular. The park features 70 acre Red Haw Lake, with a multi-use trail around the lake.

Habitat: Primarily mixed woodlands surrounding a man-made lake. Open areas provide habitat for meadow and edge species. Woodpeckers (including Red-headed), orioles, bluebirds, and flycatchers are common during the breeding season.

Directions: Go east of Chariton on Highway 34 for approximately three miles. The entrance will be on your right. A DNR administered wildlife management area adjoins the park to the south.

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

Stephens State Forest--Lucas Unit (eBird Hotspot) (Important Bird Area)

GPS Coordinates: 41.013843,-93.4812927

Ownership: State

Description: The Lucas unit of Stephens State Forest is not only easily accessible but can provide for some fun birding. There are several forest trails in this 1267 acre unit, though they are minimally maintained. Birding along the roads and in the picnic and camping areas can be very productive. The whole unit can be effectively sampled in a couple of hours.

Habitat: Primarily upland mature oak forest. Nesting species include Pileated Woodpecker, Broad-winged and Red-shouldered Hawks, both tanagers, and Kentucky Warblers. Ovenbirds, cuckoos, and Wood Thrush will be heard during the breeding season. Chuck-wills-widow has been sporadically recorded here.

Directions: In western Lucas Co. Just west outside of Lucas, the entrance is on the south side of U.S. 34 less than one half mile west of its intersection with U.S. 65, marked 137 TR. The forest road is indicated with a brown sign when traveling westbound, but this sign is not visible when traveling eastbound. After crossing a wooden bridge of questionable merit over the railroad tracks, travel straight on for less than a mile to the forest entrance. A signed left turn leads to a birdy pond with an adjacent picnic and camping area about a mile east of this intersection. Traveling straight will lead past two small picnic/camping areas until exiting the forest at the south end.

Public Hunting Area

Amenities: Restrooms | Parking | Trails | Camping |

Stephens State Forest--Whitebreast Unit (eBird Hotspot) (Important Bird Area)

GPS Coordinates: 40.9876733,-93.5094452

Ownership: State

Description: This unit is nearly three times larger than the adjacent Lucas Unit, and somewhat less accessible. Upland hardwood forest with some open areas. Iowa DNR manages this unit for Wild Turkey. There is an extensive system of minimally maintained multi-use trails. This unit intentionally provides recreation opportunities for equestrian enthusiasts, with a very large equestrian campground and a network of trails appropriate for equestrian use.

Habitat: This unit is primarily upland mature oak forest, though there is evidence of silviculture with tracts of non-native species here and there, and occasional open areas of various degrees of brushiness. Expect under-canopy species like Wood Thrush, Ovenbird, Kentucky Warbler, Summer and Scarlet Tanager, and Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Open areas provide habitat for various edge species.

Directions: Southwest of Lucas in western Lucas Co. About two miles south on U.S. 65 from the town of Lucas, look for signs to the Whitebreast Unit to the west. If visiting the Lucas Unit, simply exit this forest unit to the south and turn right at 467th St. intersection. After about a mile you will enter the Whitebreast Unit. Note that the only vehicle access to this unit is from the east. The forest road has a western terminus and you cannot exit the forest from there to points west.

Public Hunting Area

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