

BIRDING LITTLE WALL AND ANDERSON LAKES AND TEIG'S MARSH

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Little Wall and Anderson lakes in Hamilton County and Teig's Marsh in Story County are typical of the prairie pothole habitat that covered central and north-central Iowa before this region was settled. These areas are not home to a great diversity of birds, although more than 230 species have been recorded here in the last 10 years. Some of the better finds include Pacific Loon, Red-necked and Western grebes, Little Blue Heron, ibis species, Oldsquaw, Black Scoter, Common Moorhen, Sandhill Crane, Pine Warbler, and Prothonotary Warbler.

Begin at the intersection of highways 69 and 175 in the center of Jewell (see Figure 1). Drive east on highway 175 for approximately 1.0 mi and turn left (north) on the first gravel road. Continue north on this road for 0.4 mi. Anderson Lake (1), formerly known as Goose Lake, is west of the road. The best viewing is from the shoulder of the road. This is a 135-acre, privately owned marsh and trespassing is not permitted.

Migration is the best time to visit this area. Summer birding is best when water levels are high. Breeding species include Pied-billed Grebe, Least Bittern, Green-backed Heron, American Coot, Marsh Wren, and Yellow-headed Blackbird. Sora, Virginia Rail, Ring-necked Duck and Common Moorhen nest here some years. For a better view of the south end of the marsh, return to the railroad tracks located immediately north of Highway 175 (2). You can park along the shoulder of the road and follow the tracks west for approximately 0.2 mi. This is the best place to see migrating waterfowl and herons. American White Pelican and Virginia Rail are seen here occasionally. When water levels are low (usually every 2-3 years), a wide variety of shorebirds may be seen here, including Black-bellied Plover, Hudsonian Godwit, and Wilson's Phalarope. Bell's Vireo may breed in the scrubby areas along the railroad tracks. Winter birding is often very slow, although Short-eared Owl may occasionally

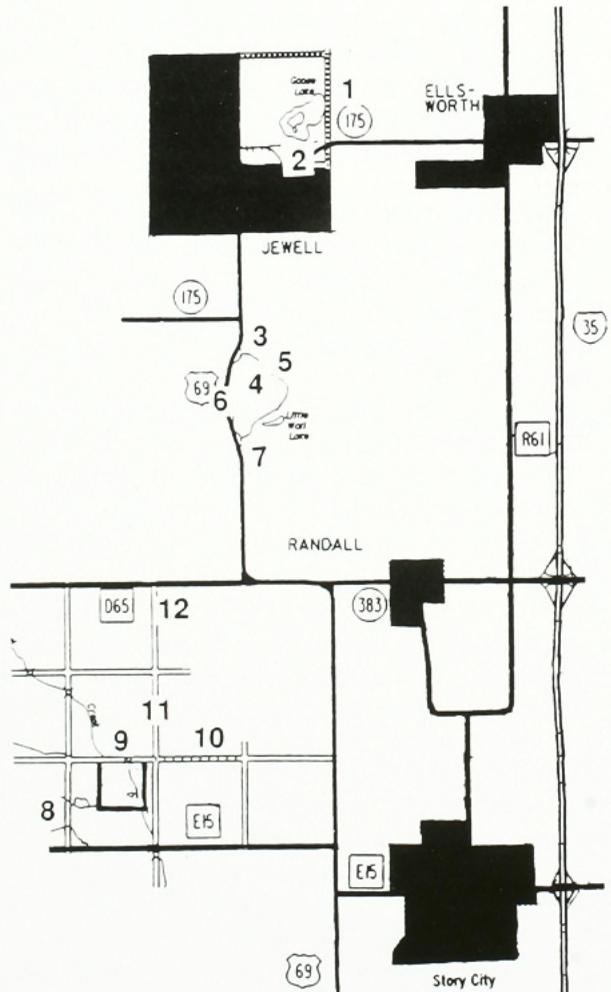
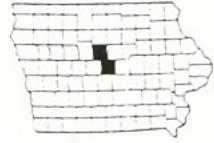


Figure 1. Map of the Little Wall and Anderson lake area. Numbers refer to areas discussed in text.

be seen foraging over the marsh during November-February.

Return to highway 175, turn right and proceed back to its intersection with highway 69 in Jewell. At that intersection, turn left (south) and drive 2.3 miles to the north edge of Little Wall Lake. This 273-acre lake was a typical prairie marsh until 1961 when the water level was raised to provide better boating and fishing. Turn left into the entrance to the Hamilton County park (3) along the north edge of the lake. Follow the gravel road east past the beach and boathouse and along the north end of the lake to a marshy cove at the northeast end of the lake (4). This area affords close views of waterfowl during migration. Herons, including Great Egret and Black-crowned Night-Heron, are occasionally seen here during migration. Continue south along the east shore of the lake to a parking area (5). From here you can scan a large section of the lake, including a closer view of the east end of the lake. The trees along the north shore of the lake to your east are often good for migrating passerines.

Return to highway 69 and turn left (south). Drive south for 0.4 miles to a pulloff on your left along the shore of the lake (6). From this location, you have an excellent view of most of the lake. Look for loons, grebes, and waterfowl during migration. Eared Grebe and American White Pelican are seen regularly during April and May. Osprey are occasionally seen flying over the lake during April-May. Fall migration is better, though, with Eared and Horned grebes, Tundra Swan, and all three species of scoters being seen in recent years.

Return to highway 69, turn left (south), and proceed for 0.2 miles to the entrance to the boat ramp at the southwest corner of the lake (7). The sheltered cove east of the boat ramp is good for ducks, as well as shorebirds if water levels are low. The trees along the parking lot often have Rusty Blackbirds during migration, especially during March and April.

The two lakes provide an interesting contrast. Originally both were prairie marshes typical of north-central and northwestern Iowa. Figures 2 and 3 show Little Wall Lake in its original form. In late 1961, the water level in Little Wall Lake was raised by about 5 feet and most of the emergent vegetation was flooded out. Since then, this lake has had little emergent vegetation and has been mostly open water. It receives heavy boat traffic from late spring through fall and as a result bird use is reduced in those seasons. In contrast, water levels have not been altered at Anderson Lake. In dry years it is completely dry but it still functions as a prairie marsh with most species typical of that habitat.

Return to highway 69, turn left (south) and drive 5.5 miles to county road E15. Turn right onto county road E15 and drive west for 3 miles. Almost the entire section on the right (north) is either pasture, marsh, or grassland. During migration, this area attracts numerous migrating raptors and shrikes. Turn right (north) and drive north for 0.5 miles. Stop near the two bridges (8). To your right (east) is the largest wetland on the area, this one being privately owned by the Teig family. The area is not accessible to the public but usually you can see most of the wetland from the road. During migration, ducks and geese occur here and during the late afternoon hours of winter (November-March), Short-eared Owls are often seen flying over the area or perched on fence posts.

Continue north and turn right at the next intersection. Just before the bridge (9) on your right there is a 80-acre area recently purchased by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Approximately 20 acres at the south end of the property is marshy and about 5 acres is open water, including several small gravel pits. Yellow-headed Blackbird, Mallard, and Wood Duck are found here during the nesting season. Great Horned Owls are often found in the cottonwoods just south of the road.

Continue east to the next intersection. During wet periods, the dirt road that continues east is not passable. If the road appears passable, go east for 0.5 miles. There is a wet area (10) on the north side of the road that is good for waterfowl and shorebirds. Return to the intersection, turn right, and proceed north for 0.5 miles (11). There are wet areas on both sides of the road that often have waterfowl and shorebirds during migration. Continue north to county road D65. Just before you reach the blacktop, there is a large low area (12) that is often flooded during wet periods. If flooded, check the area for waterfowl and shorebirds. At D65, turn right and drive 1 mile to the intersection with highway 69. This completes your tour of these three areas.

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Figure 3. West shoreline of Little Wall Lake looking east across the lake. Note the emergent vegetation in the foreground, a plant community largely eliminated when the water level was raised in 1961. Photograph taken in 1916 and currently in photo collection at the Iowa Department of Transportation, Ames.