



## **Connecting Owners and Managers of Iowa Important Bird Areas (IBAs) to the Global Network of IBAs**

*Habitat Management Recommendations for 37 of Iowa's Most Seriously Declining Birds*

### **Part 1: Introduction**

Welcome to a new four-part educational initiative focusing on thirty-seven of Iowa's most seriously declining bird species and improved management of the primary habitats essential to the survival of those species. We consider this project to be a major step toward building long-term partnerships, improving on-site management at our state's numerous Important Bird Areas (IBAs), and expanding overall public support for all-bird conservation.

#### **Part 1:**

Introduces and explains the entire initiative, and provides selected reference information for more in-depth learning.

#### **Part 2:**

Describes a global network of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) which owners and managers of Iowa's IBAs should rightfully feel proud to be a part of. For Iowa's IBAs include many of our state's most notable habitats – currently 92 official IBAs in some 60 counties – but gradually with additional sites being approved for IBA status in even more counties as new field data is obtained.

#### **Part 3:**

Summarizes recommended habitat management practices for each of our state's 3 primary habitats types that 37 IBA Criteria Species depend upon: wetlands, woodlands and grasslands.

#### Part 4:

Provides individual species accounts which summarize habitat preferences, feeding habits, breeding biology, concerns and limitations, and habitat management issues, for each of our state's 37 IBA Criteria Species.

### Overview of this Educational Tool

It is important to recognize that this initiative by Iowa Audubon provides individuals with the flexibility for accessing the same information in different formats. The information you are now viewing is available on a data CD. It is also found at Iowa Audubon's website

[www.iowaaudubon.org/iba](http://www.iowaaudubon.org/iba)

and, as a downloadable PDF file also found on the Iowa Audubon website. This flexibility is possible due to advances in technology since the project was begun. This eco-friendly or "green" methodology of downloading information from the Iowa Audubon web site eliminates the need to use excessive numbers of CDs, CD cases, CD labels, and mailing envelopes – while making the same content even more broadly accessible.

Using this approach, Iowa Audubon will be able to revise and update this document as well as provide additional up-to-date and timely information on their website for years to come.

During the early stages of the planning of this project, it became clear for the need to gather, distill and summarize the wide range of available information – online and in print – into one easily accessible document, concerning Iowa's thirty-seven highest conservation priority birds as well as the recommendations for managing the wetland, woodland and grassland habitats that sustain those species. Producing this document, along with updating the Iowa IBA website (with downloadable PDF file) was viewed as the preferred method for

delivering specific details and recommendations to a widely dispersed target audience. The most probable alternative to this approach would have been to hold several multi-day conferences in which many recipients would probably have declined to attend due to the rising travel costs, the inconvenience of overnight travel, and many already overtaxed work schedules.

Delivery of information directly to desktop and laptop computer screens, where individual users can learn at their own pace has become far more commonplace. REAP-CEP leaders recognized this trend and provided the essential funding required to go forward with this project. We hope the built-in flexibility and convenience of a CD, and viewing and/or downloading content from the Iowa IBA website directly to your work space will be used to its maximum effectiveness.

Effective management of our natural resources is a long-term, hands-on process. It has to begin somewhere. In many cases the document you are now reading will be a person's first introduction to Iowa's IBA Program. Therefore, we hope it will be studied carefully, and reviewed frequently, in whatever format that is utilized. Obviously, we wish to have owners and managers of Iowa's IBAs and potential IBAs understand the content of the document, but it is even more important, over the long-term, to also become familiar with and to actively utilize new information that will become available on the Iowa Audubon IBA website.

The project's intent is to highlight progressive habitat management practices for IBAs, potential IBAs, and for all of our state's wetland, woodland and grassland habitats, and to help build overall habitat management capacity. Iowa Audubon hopes to engage, inform and partner with, the key individuals who can make

significant conservation progress at each of these vital habitats.

Any modern computer should be capable of using a data CD, accessing the Iowa IBA website, or downloading a PDF file. Obviously, Internet access is necessary to utilize embedded links found in the document - fortunately, Internet access has become ubiquitous.

### **REAP-CEP and Iowa Audubon Partnership**

Production of this user-friendly and readily accessible document was funded by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Resource Enhancement And Protection – Conservation Education Program (REAP-CEP). Great appreciation is extended to the staff and citizen leaders of REAP-CEP for funding this initiative, and especially for their patience while the product was being produced and distributed.

An enormous amount of detailed information was willingly shared by a variety of sources, and each is also greatly appreciated. The final products were produced and distributed by the Iowa Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program. The Board of Directors of Iowa Audubon received and administered the REAP-CEP funds. The text for this project was prepared by Ric Zarwell, Iowa Important Bird Areas (IBA) Coordinator, under contract to the Iowa Audubon Board of Directors.

For additional details and updates on Iowa's IBA Program readers may go to the IBA website: [www.iowaaudubon.org/iba](http://www.iowaaudubon.org/iba). Or, to discuss new issues that arise related to Iowa's birds and habitats, you can contact leaders of Iowa Audubon through links on their website.

### **Target Audience**

This project was developed specifically for the landowners and land managers who have responsibility for Iowa's 92 official IBAs located in some 60 counties, and for

the 100+ additional sites that have been nominated for IBA status (in approximately 25 other counties). This information will also be useful to any other Iowan with an interest in improving management of wetlands, woodlands, or grasslands in general, or in the thirty-seven rapidly declining species of birds described here.

Follow-up with members of the target audience is a major component of this initiative, as well as for the overall Iowa IBA Program as it continues to grow and mature. We want to open up new methods of sharing and benefiting from bird conservation information, and to continue strengthening that effort far into the future.

Again, this is an early step in a long-term process. Our primary goal is to work in partnership with landowners and land managers to develop or revise habitat management plans for IBAs, and then to assist with preparing grants or securing and organizing the most appropriate technical assistance to effectively implement those IBA conservation plans.

As more is known about the conservation of seriously declining populations of birds in Iowa and across North America, and these efforts continue to be highlighted as a high priority within our society, a variety of new public and private funding sources and new forms of technical assistance from federal, state and local sources are expected. Consequently, critical long-term all-bird conservation will likely become an essential component of land management at local, state and national levels. The global network of IBAs is developing steadily, and there will be a great deal of habitat conservation projects for all of us to collaborate on in the future.

### **Additional Sources of Information**

Online and printed sources offer an enormous amount of information about birds, natural habitats and bird conservation. Some sources are quite useful, while others definitely are not. Found below is a list containing the primary references that were used to assemble Parts 1, 2 & 3 of this project. The first several resources on the list were used most extensively by the author. Each of these sources is hereby given a very sincere “thank you” for providing helpful data. Everyone is encouraged to use the following references for a wide variety of additional details.

#### ***Managing for Iowa’s Birds of Greatest Conservation Need***

This paper was written by Bruce Ehresman, Wildlife Ecologist, Iowa DNR Wildlife Diversity Program, as a creative component of Animal Ecology 599 at Iowa State University, in the fall of 2005; and was in partial fulfillment of Bruce’s M. S. degree from ISU in 2006. No online link is known for this information, but copies should be available at ISU.

#### ***State of the World’s Birds – 2004***

An excellent resource available from Birdlife International: [www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org)

#### ***USGS Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center Biological Resources***

A very good source of research data: [http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/type\\_a.htm](http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/type_a.htm)

#### ***2007 Watchlist prepared jointly by the American Bird Conservancy and Audubon***

25% of U.S. birds need help to avoid slipping toward extinction: <http://www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/science/watchlist/photopage.html>

#### ***Birder’s Conservation Handbook: 100 North American Birds at Risk, 2007 - Jeffrey V. Wells***

#### ***Restoring North America’s Birds: Lessons from Landscape Ecology, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. 2002 - Robert A. Askins***

#### ***Saving Migrant Birds: Developing Strategies for the Future, 2002 - John Faaborg***

#### ***101 Ways to Help Birds, 2006 - Laura Erickson***

LINK TO [IOWA IBA](http://www.iowaiba.org):

***Securing a Future for Fish and Wildlife:  
A Conservation Legacy for Iowans***

This comprehensive document is known as the Iowa Wildlife Action Plan,  
Revised 2006, Iowa Department of Natural Resources

***Strategies for Bird Conservation***

The Partners In Flight Planning Process

<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pifcapemay/>

***Iowa – Portrait of the Land, 2000***

Published by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources

***NatureServe***

A network that connects science to conservation

Started by The Nature Conservancy: <http://www.natureserve.org/>

***Basics of Bird Conservation in the U.S***

<http://www.epa.gov/owow/birds/basics.html#sub6>

***Bird Conservation Initiatives in the U.S***

<http://www.epa.gov/owow/birds/bird.html>

***15 pdf files detailing benefits of the USDA Farm Bill 2000-2005***

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/NRI/ceap/fwbenefit.html>

***PIF Species Assessment Database with scores by  
Bird Conservation Region (BCR)***

<http://www.rmbo.org/pif/scores/scores.html>

***PIF Best Management Practices (with an excellent list of sources)***

<http://www.partnersinflight.org/pubs/BMPs.htm>

***A Bird's Eye View by Marlene Ehresman***

a helpful booklet published by the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation:

<http://www.inhf.org/neotropbook.htm>

***The Importance of Migratory Stopovers Chipper Woods  
Bird Observatory, New Jersey***

<http://www.wbu.com/chipperwoods/photos/migrstop.htm>