



**SIERRA
CLUB**

IOWA CHAPTER

Preserving and Protecting Iowa's Wild Lands and Wildlife

Iowa may lack oceans and mountains, but our state does enjoy tall grass prairies, woods, savannas, prairie pothole wetlands, lakes and streams. Iowa enjoys incredibly diverse wildlife species of birds (425)¹, mammals (61)², fish (148)³, reptiles (56)⁴ and amphibians (22).⁵ Even more significant, Iowa attracts some of the western-most, eastern-most and northern-most species found in the country.

Iowa's parks and natural areas provide many benefits for our health and enjoyment. Iowa's prairies, forests, wetlands, rivers, and lakes:

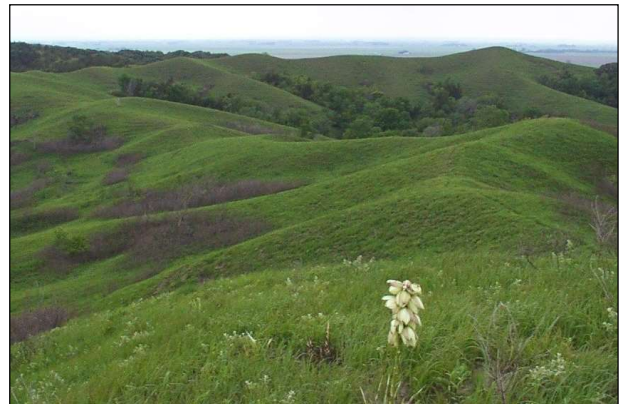
- Supply habitat for wild plants and animals.
- Offer recreation opportunities for hiking, camping, canoeing, viewing wildlife, fishing
- Cleanse the air and water, retain and absorb water, sequester carbon
- Provide relaxation, stress relief and satisfy spiritual needs
- Offer beautiful scenery
- Support economic benefits to the neighboring communities
- Enable jobs and careers to workers in parks and recreation
- Preserve learning and play opportunities for children



*Goldfinch. Photo by Mike
"Augie" Augspurger*

A significant amount of the state's natural area has vanished since the Europeans settled here. Wild lands and wildlife face numerous challenges.

- Significant weather pattern changes affect the ability of plants and animals to live and reproduce.
- Destroying prairies, savannas and woodlands through poorly planned growth and development, as well as highway construction, results in fragmentation of natural areas and the loss of corridors for wildlife to travel and native plants to spread.
- Iowa's waters are under siege from pollutants. Urban streams face thermal pollution from storm water runoff.
- Butterflies and ground nesting birds face challenges from controlled burns occurring in a three-year rotation, not enough time for the species to recover between burns.
- Air pollution creates unpleasant odors and results in toxins in the air.
- Public land managers face threats to sell or donate public lands to private entities for economic development, to shore up treasuries or to allow private companies to harvest timber from public parks and recreation areas.
- Invasive species, both plant and animal, threaten the continued existence and habitat of native species.
- Lack of management plans for hunted and trapped animals resulting in the potential for over-harvest.



Loess Hills. Photo by Jim Redmond

¹ Iowa Ornithologists' Union, www.iowabirds.org/Checklists/

² "Checklist of Iowa Mammals with Atlas Links", www.gis.iastate.edu/gap/terra/atlas/mammals.htm

³ Iowa Department of Natural Resources, www.iowadnr.gov/Fishing/IowaFishSpecies.aspx

⁴ "Checklist of Iowa Herps with Atlas Links", www.gis.iastate.edu/gap/terra/atlas/herps.htm

⁵ "Checklist of Iowa Herps with Atlas Links", www.gis.iastate.edu/gap/terra/atlas/herps.htm

Recommendations

Expanding Iowa's parks and natural areas is good for all Iowans. Yet to protect additional natural areas in Iowa and to continue preserving the public lands already protected by the state, counties and cities, more work must be done. The Iowa Chapter supports policies that will continue to preserve and protect Iowa's natural areas.

- Protecting existing public natural areas and acquiring additional public land
- Ensuring public land departments are adequately staffed to enable their being good stewards of the public lands
- Retaining free access to state and county parks for all who want to enjoy and recreate in them.
- Preserving wild lands and acquiring additional natural areas such as prairies and woodlands
- Implementing effective measures to prevent pollution from entering water bodies and establishing enforceable criteria and implementing measures to restore water quality in those streams and lakes that are currently degraded
- Restoring wetlands and minimizing fill placed in floodplains
- Updating Iowa's list of endangered, threatened and special concern plants and animals
- Protecting wildlife through controlled prairie burns longer than three years apart, prairie planting in ditches, pre-construction studies and monitoring of new transmission lines and wind turbines to ensure wildlife protection
- Ensuring sustainable hunting, fishing and trapping
- Improving recreation opportunities by increasing public access to water trails, removing low head dams and improving water quality
- Prohibiting the use of lead in ammunition and fishing tackle
- Encouraging Iowans to support Iowa's wildlife, natural areas, parks and recreation areas by purchasing REAP license plates, contributing to the Chickadee Checkoff, planting native prairie plants, native shrubs and trees and avoiding the use of herbicides, pesticides and artificial fertilizer
- Introducing children to the natural world



Photo by Pam Mackey Taylor



Low head dam on the Cedar River at Palisades Kepler State Park. Photo by Pam Mackey Taylor

Conclusion

We all have a responsibility to protect wildlife and wild places and leave a better world for future generations. The natural legacy we leave our children and grandchildren depends on the steps we take today as stewards of Iowa's and America's wild places and wild life.