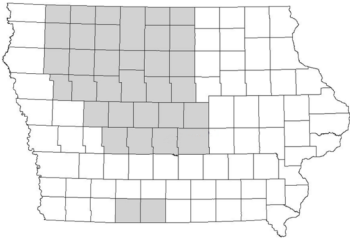


State Wildlife Grant Land Management Project

Habitat Improvement for Iowa's Species of Conservation Need

Prairie once covered over 80% of Iowa's landscape. Trees and shrubs were interspersed between the expanse of grassland, creating a wide variety of habitat types that supported the diversity of wildlife in Iowa. Now, less than 0.1% of this native habitat remains. The DNR strives to increase, improve, and restore native habitat to support Iowa's wildlife populations. Land managers create habitat diversity and connectivity in order to provide high quality habitat and winter cover for many different species across the state. This improves the survival and reproduction of species of conservation concern and helps increase local populations of wildlife.

Project Area



In northwest Iowa upland soils are often dry and easily eroded. At Jemmerson Slough, portions of Christopherson complex, and Dugout Creek WPA a xeric shortgrass prairie seed mix was used because it would perform better in drier soils. At Four Mile Lake, managers used a hydric seed mix which is suitable for enhancing marsh habitat.

Marsh Habitat at Four Mile Lake
Emmet County



Dickcissels are an obligate grassland species that require a mix of grass and forbs for foraging and breeding. Sedge Wrens breed and forage in wet areas with thick growths of sedges and grasses. Restored prairies and improved wetlands that are planted with diverse seed mixes provide important habitat for these Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

Project Goals

- Reconstruct and enhance mixed prairie and savanna habitat through seeding, mowing, or invasive woody vegetation removal and control
- Remove weedy tree species to create shrub habitat in southern Iowa



Reconstructed Prairie at Jemmerson Slough
Dickinson County



Sedge Wren
Photo Credit:
Aaron Brees



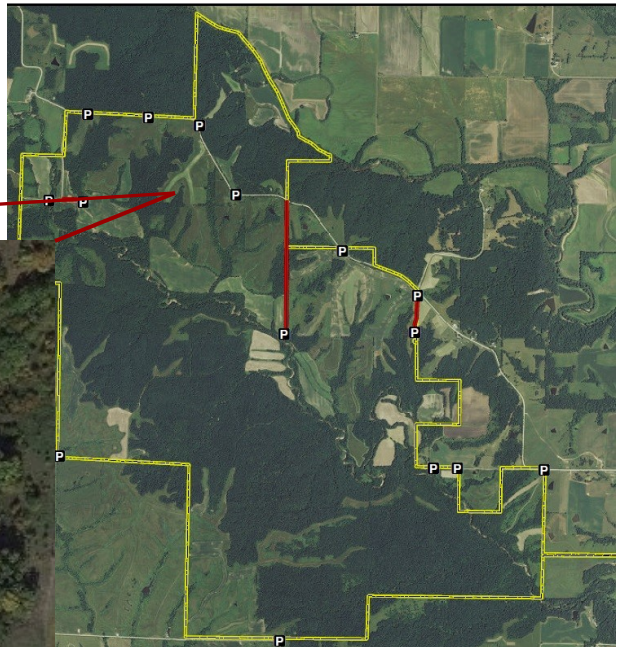
Dickcissel
Photo Credit:
Carl Kurtz

State Wildlife Grant Land Management Project

Edge feathering management, like that done at Sand Creek WMA in Decatur and Ringgold counties, softens the transition from forest to grassland by incorporating brushy habitat. Grassland, woodland, and edge dwelling wildlife are supported within this mix of habitat types.



Sand Creek Wildlife Management Area



Red-headed Woodpecker
Photo Credit: Carl Kurtz

During the breeding season, Red-headed Woodpeckers move from forest interiors to open areas such as savannas to find tree cavities for nest building. The loss of nearly all natural savannas in Iowa has contributed to the decline of this Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Savanna restoration like that done throughout the state in this project are important for preserving wildlife species in Iowa that prefer grassland habitat with scattered deciduous trees.



Project Accomplishments

Prairie Pothole Region

- Since 2004, >4300 acres were seeded with native prairie plants
- Invasive woody vegetation was cleared from >3000 acres of grassland to increase prairie quality
- Plantings have been maintained by mowing and prescribed burning

Southern Iowa Drift Plain

- Since 2010, >200 acres of edge feathering, 54 acres of savanna, and 75 acres of grasslands have been restored