

Field Checklist for Kellerton Grasslands BCA

* = confirmed or likely area breeder

Iowa Wildlife Action Plan **Migratory Species of Greatest Conservation Need**

Iowa Wildlife Action Plan **Nesting Species of Greatest Conservation Need**

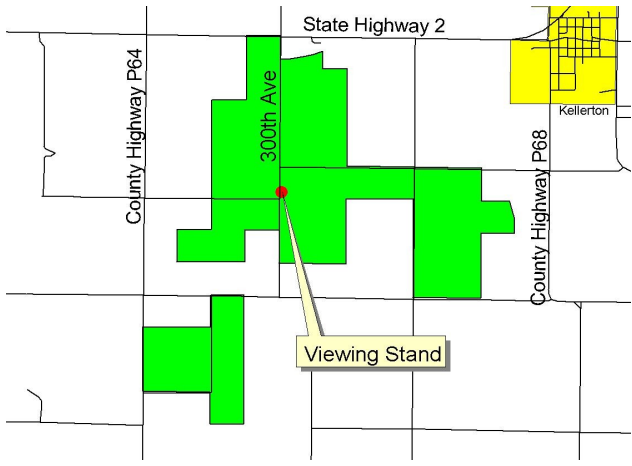
- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Greater White-fronted Goose | Eurasian Collared-Dove* |
| Snow Goose | Mourning Dove* |
| Cackling Goose | Yellow-billed Cuckoo* |
| Canada Goose* | Black-billed Cuckoo* |
| Trumpeter Swan | |
| Wood Duck* | Barn Owl* |
| Gadwall | Eastern Screech-Owl* |
| American Wigeon | Great Horned Owl* |
| Mallard* | Barred Owl* |
| Blue-winged Teal* | Long-eared Owl |
| Northern Shoveler | Short-eared Owl* |
| Northern Pintail | Northern Saw-whet Owl |
| Green-winged Teal | Common Nighthawk* |
| Redhead | Eastern Whip-poor-will* |
| Ring-necked Duck | Chimney Swift* |
| Lesser Scaup | Ruby-throated Hummingbird* |
| Bufflehead | Belted Kingfisher* |
| Hooded Merganser* | Red-headed Woodpecker* |
| Common Merganser | Red-bellied Woodpecker* |
| Ruddy Duck | Downy Woodpecker* |
| Northern Bobwhite* | Hairy Woodpecker* |
| Gray Partridge | Northern Flicker* |
| Ring-necked Pheasant* | Pileated Woodpecker* |
| Greater Prairie-Chicken* | American Kestrel* |
| Wild Turkey* | Merlin |
| Pied-billed Grebe* | Eastern Wood-Pewee* |
| Double-crested Cormorant | Alder Flycatcher |
| American Bittern | Willow Flycatcher* |
| Great Blue Heron* | Least Flycatcher |
| Great Egret | Eastern Phoebe* |
| Green Heron* | Great Crested Flycatcher* |
| Turkey Vulture* | Eastern Kingbird* |
| Osprey | Loggerhead Shrike* |
| Bald Eagle | White-eyed Vireo* |
| Northern Harrier* | Bell's Vireo* |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk | Yellow-throated Vireo* |
| Cooper's Hawk* | Blue-headed Vireo |
| Swainson's Hawk | Warbling Vireo* |
| Red-tailed Hawk* | Red-eyed Vireo* |
| Rough-legged Hawk | Blue Jay* |
| Sora | American Crow* |
| American Coot | Horned Lark* |
| Killdeer* | Purple Martin* |
| Spotted Sandpiper | Tree Swallow* |
| Solitary Sandpiper | Northern Rough-winged Swallow* |
| Greater Yellowlegs | Bank Swallow* |
| Lesser Yellowlegs | Cliff Swallow* |
| Upland Sandpiper* | Barn Swallow* |
| Semipalmated Sandpiper | Black-capped Chickadee* |
| Least Sandpiper | Tufted Titmouse* |
| Pectoral Sandpiper | White-breasted Nuthatch* |
| Wilson's Snipe | Brown Creeper |
| American Woodcock* | |
| Ring-billed Gull | |
| Rock Pigeon* | |

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Carolina Wren | American Tree Sparrow |
| House Wren* | Chipping Sparrow* |
| Sedge Wren* | Field Sparrow* |
| Blue-gray Gnatcatcher* | Vesper Sparrow* |
| Ruby-crowned Kinglet | Lark Sparrow* |
| Eastern Bluebird* | Savannah Sparrow* |
| Gray-cheeked Thrush | Grasshopper Sparrow* |
| Swainson's Thrush | Henslow's Sparrow* |
| Wood Thrush* | Le Conte's Sparrow |
| American Robin* | Fox Sparrow |
| Gray Catbird* | Song Sparrow* |
| Northern Mockingbird* | Swamp Sparrow |
| Brown Thrasher* | White-throated Sparrow |
| European Starling* | Harris's Sparrow |
| Cedar Waxwing* | White-crowned Sparrow |
| Ovenbird* | Dark-eyed Junco |
| Louisiana Waterthrush | Summer Tanager* |
| Blue-winged Warbler | Scarlet Tanager* |
| Black-and-white Warbler* | Northern Cardinal* |
| Tennessee Warbler | Rose-breasted Grosbeak* |
| Kentucky Warbler | Blue Grosbeak |
| Common Yellowthroat* | Indigo Bunting* |
| Hooded Warbler | Dickcissel* |
| American Redstart* | Bobolink* |
| Northern Parula* | Red-winged Blackbird* |
| Yellow Warbler* | Eastern Meadowlark* |
| Chestnut-sided Warbler | Western Meadowlark* |
| Yellow-rumped Warbler | Common Grackle* |
| Yellow-throated Warbler | Brown-headed Cowbird* |
| Yellow-breasted Chat* | Orchard Oriole* |
| Spotted Towhee | Baltimore Oriole* |
| Eastern Towhee* | Purple Finch |
| | House Finch* |
| | American Goldfinch* |
| | House Sparrow* |

The Kellerton Grasslands Bird Conservation Area was made possible due to a partnership between the Ringgold County Conservation Board, The Nature Conservancy, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Iowa Audubon, and the Department of Natural Resources.



Early spring is the best time to come listen to the booming and view prairie-chickens while they are displaying. The peak booming time is from late March through mid-April. There is a commercial spotting scope available for public use at this time. There is also a very good possibility of seeing other prairie wildlife, so you may want to bring your binoculars, spotting scope and a camera as well, to take full advantage of your trip.



The public viewing platform is located two miles west of Kellerton on Hwy 2 and one mile south on 300th Ave. This is the only all-weather access.



Short-eared Owl
Photo by Tarique Sani

THE BOOMING SOUNDS OF IOWA

A History of the Greater Prairie-Chicken (*Tympanuchus cupido*) in Iowa

— AND —

the Kellerton Grasslands Bird Conservation Area



Male Greater Prairie-Chicken booming on lek
Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

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Kellerton, IA 50133
641-464-2220 (Biologist)
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Kellerton Grasslands Bird Conservation Area

The Kellerton Grasslands Bird Conservation Area (BCA) was created in 1999 in a joint effort by the Iowa DNR, Pheasants Forever and Partners in Flight. The goal of this project is to provide a publicly owned, high quality core grassland area which is surrounded by privately owned and managed grasslands. As of 2014, about 4,300 acres of public land exist in this BCA, and most of this is being restored to tallgrass prairie. The area also has a handicapped accessible viewing platform from which to observe prairie chickens. It is possible to see chickens on a nice morning from October through May. The best time to view them, however, is within an hour of sunrise or sunset during their mating season from late March to early May. A commercial spotting scope is available at the viewing platform during this time in order to allow a closer look without disturbing the birds.



This first in the nation grassland bird conservation area not only boasts the largest prairie chicken booming ground in Iowa but is home for many other grassland bird species as well. Some species of note observed here are the Northern Harrier, Henslow's Sparrow, Upland Sandpiper and Short-Eared Owl.



The Greater Prairie-Chicken (*Tympanuchus cupido*)

Greater Prairie-Chickens were once Iowa's most abundant game bird. They were a very important food source for both Native Americans and early settlers. Prairie chicken numbers began to decline in the late 1800's because of market hunting and habitat loss. The Iowa legislature restricted hunting in 1878 and closed the season in 1915. However, because of the continued conversion of tallgrass prairie to row crops the prairie chicken was extirpated from Iowa in the 1950's. The last known nesting sites were located in Appanoose, Wayne, and Ringgold counties. The last verified nesting occurred in 1952 in Appanoose County.

In the early 1980's the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) made an unsuccessful attempt to reintroduce prairie chickens to the Loess Hills by releasing one hundred birds near Onawa in Monona County. A second attempt was made in 1987 with the release site being changed to the Ringgold Wildlife Area located near the Missouri border in south central Iowa. This area was one of the last to have prairie chickens in Iowa and was thought to have some of the best potential habitat for a successful reintroduction. From 1987-89, 247 birds were released. Another 295 birds were trapped and released in Ringgold and Adair counties from 1992-94. These stockings have proven successful and Iowa once again has a naturally reproducing prairie chicken population.



Photo by Bruce Sprague

Young prairie-chicken
Bruce Sprague

Prairie Chicken Habitat

“Walk through, See out, and Hide in”

Prairie chickens prefer a diverse habitat of native grasses and forbs (wildflowers), which vary in height and density. The birds look for wide open spaces with few trees. The male chicken attracts females by booming and displaying in the spring time. This is done on booming grounds (leks), which are elevated areas of bare ground



Roger Hill

Management

Since little of the original prairie landscape remains in Iowa, the Kellerton BCA land is being converted back to the diverse grassland habitat that the prairie chickens prefer. Some of the management practices include: planting natives, tree removal, burning, and light farming. Native grasses and forbs are being planted to return prairie to the area. These grasslands are being managed with fire, as well as with light grazing and mowing to create height diversity that the chickens prefer. Planting crops also provides the birds a winter food source and helps prepare the ground for native grass and forb planting.



Doug Harr

Booming Grounds



Roger Hill

The booming grounds (leks) are where male prairie chickens gather to establish dominance and display to attract females. The males display by raising the pinnae feathers on their head, spreading their fan-like tails, drooping their wings, stomping their feet, and inflating the air sacs on their necks. While doing these displays the males also create a booming sound that can be heard from up to a mile away.

Males display on leks where their visibility to females is maximized. This visibility can come at a cost— so it is essential for their survival to be able to see approaching predators while displaying for potential mates.



Male prairie chickens fighting
Pat Gaines