

Irvine Prairie Ornithology Guide



Red-tailed hawk



Killdeer



Bald eagle



Upland Sandpiper



Grasshopper Sparrow



Eastern Meadowlark



Dickcissel



Northern Harrier



Horned lark



American Robin



Sedge Wren



Bobolink



Common Yellowthroat



Adult

Killdeer

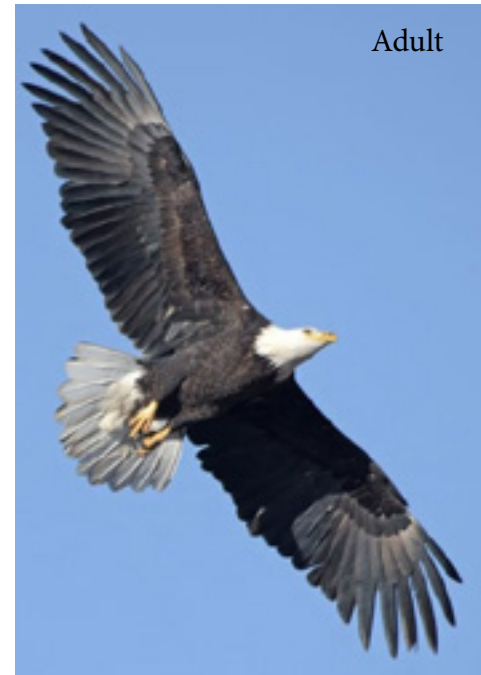
Scientific Name:
Charadrius vociferus

Habitat: Grasslands
Food: Insects
Nesting: Ground
Behavior: Ground forager
Conservation Status: Low concern

Fun Fact:
Named after their shrill wailing call that sounds like “kill-deer”.



Chick



Adult

Bald Eagle

Scientific Name:
Haliaeetus leucocephalus

Habitat: Forests
Food: Fish
Nesting: Trees
Behavior: Soaring
Conservation Status: Low concern

Fun Fact:
A spiritual symbol for indigenous peoples long before it was deemed an American national symbol in 1872.



Juvenile



Adult

Dickcissel

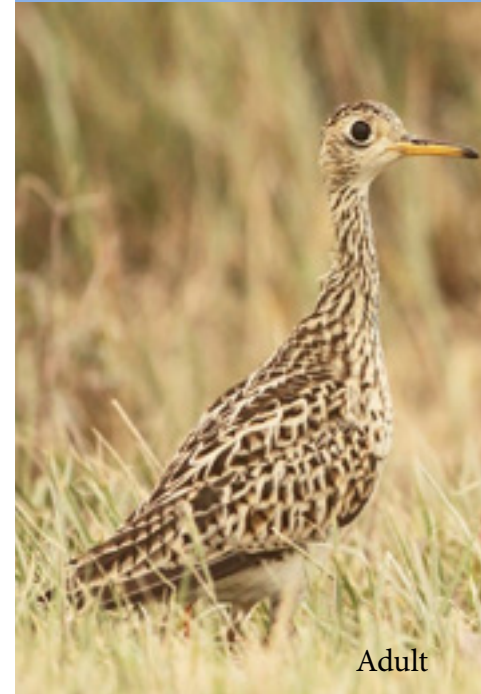
Scientific Name:
Spiza americana

Habitat: Grasslands
Food: Seeds
Nesting: Shrubs
Behavior: Ground forager
Conservation Status: Low concern

Fun Fact:
This chunky bunting migrates in flocks during the spring and summer. Flock size grows the further they fly.



Chick



Adult

Upland Sandpiper

Scientific Name:
Bartramia longicauda

Habitat: Grasslands
Food: Insects
Nesting: Ground
Behavior: Ground forager
Conservation Status: Low concern

Fun Fact:
A shorebird that avoids water and ground forages with family members.



Adult



Adult

Common Yellowthroat

Scientific Name:
Geothypis trichas

Habitat: Scrub
Food: Insects
Nesting: Shrubs
Behavior: Foliage gleaner
Conservation Status: Low concern

Fun Fact:
This warbler was one of the first birds to be catalogued by Linnaeus in the New World (1766).



Chick



Adult

Meadowlark

Scientific Name:
Sturnella magna

Habitat: Grasslands
Food: Insects
Nesting: Ground
Behavior: Ground forager
Conservation Status: Common bird in steep decline

Fun Fact:
The only way to tell the Eastern and Western Meadowlarks apart are their songs - even then it is difficult to differentiate!



Chick

Adult



American Robin

Scientific Name:
Turdus migratorius

Habitat: Open woodlands
Food: Insects
Nesting: Tree
Behavior: Ground forager
Conservation Status: Low concern

Fun Fact:
One of the first birds to return after winter. Also loves worms. The early bird really does get the worm!



Adult



Horned Lark

Scientific Name:
Eremophila alpestris

Habitat: Grasslands
Food: Seeds
Nesting: Ground
Behavior: Ground forager
Conservation Status:
Common bird in steep decline

Fun Fact:
Inhabits one of the most extensive elevation ranges for birds, from sea level to 13,000 feet.



Adult



Red-tailed Hawk

Scientific Name:
Buteo jamaicensis

Habitat: Open woodlands
Food: Small animals
Nesting: Tree
Behavior: Soaring
Conservation Status: Low concern

Fun Fact:
Its thrilling scream is often dubbed over bald eagles in movies.



Juvenile

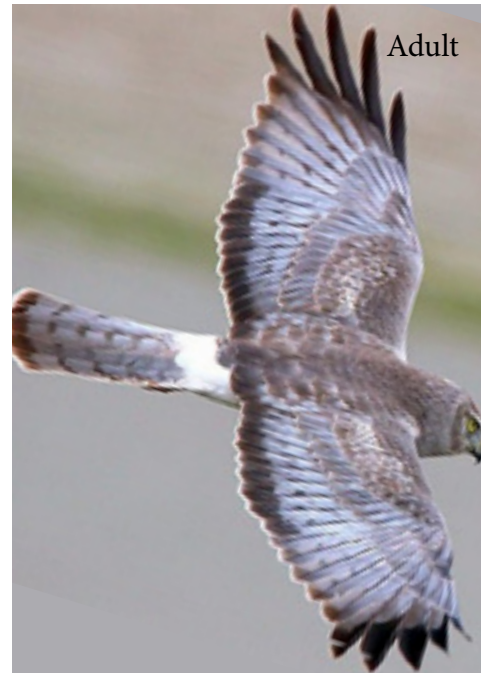


Chick

Chick



Adult



Northern Harrier

Scientific Name:
Circus hudsonius

Habitat: Grasslands
Food: Mammals
Nesting: Ground
Behavior: Aerial diver
Conservation Status: Low concern

Fun Fact:
Its owl-ish face helps it hear ground prey under thick grass.



Adult



Grasshopper Sparrow

Scientific Name:
Ammodramus savannarum

Habitat: Grasslands
Food: Insects
Nesting: Ground
Behavior: Ground forager
Conservation Status:
Common bird in steep decline

Fun Fact:
Unusual for birds, the males can sing two different songs.



Juvenile



Chick



Adult

Sedge Wren

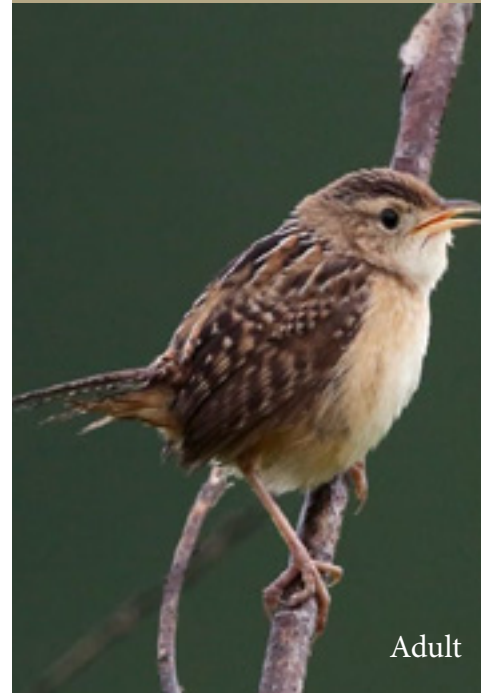
Scientific Name:
Cistothorus platensis

Habitat: Grasslands
Food: Insects
Nesting: Shrubs
Behavior: Ground forager
Conservation Status: Low concern

Fun Fact:
One of the most nomadic territorial birds in North America.



Adult



Male



Bobolink

Scientific Name:

Dolichonyx oryzivorus

Habitat: Grasslands

Food: Seeds

Nesting: Ground

Behavior: Ground forager

Conservation Status: Declining

Fun Fact:

No other North American bird is black and white, like wearing a tuxedo backwards. Both males and females navigate using the Earth's magnetic field.

Female



About Irvine Prairie

Irvine Prairie is a 292 acre prairie-in-progress on the farm of Cathy Irvine in memory of her husband David. In partnership with Cathy and the farm operator, we are restoring an ecologically diverse tallgrass prairie that engages current and future generations of students and community members in learning about Iowa's prairie heritage and appreciating the benefits provided by prairie.

The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation holds the conservation easement on the property, and the University of Northern Iowa Foundation Properties Corporation is the owner. The original 77 acres was dedicated on May 18, 2018. In January 2023, Cathy Irvine donated an additional 215 acres to complete the gift.

Since 2018, we have introduced over 100 species of native prairie plants, using the most genetically diverse and regionally appropriate seed sources available, and closely matching species with soil moisture conditions. Some hard-to-establish species are started in our greenhouse and introduced as plugs. The Tallgrass Prairie Center uses the best known approaches to controlling weeds and encouraging diverse, native wildlife. We are committed to documenting the work, and carefully monitoring the results, to guide future management decisions.

Find more information about Irvine Prairie at www.tallgrassprairiecenter.org/irvine-prairie/

Additional Resources

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology: <https://www.birds.cornell.edu/home/>

National Audubon Society: <https://www.audubon.org/birds>

North American Bird Conservation Initiative: <https://nabci-us.org/>

The Nature Conservancy: <https://www.nature.org/en-us/what-we-do/our-priorities/>

Bird Friendly Iowa: <https://birdfriendlyiowa.org/>

S.O.A.R.: <https://soarraptors.org/>

Iowa Young Birders: <https://iowayoungbirders.wildapricot.org/>

Iowa Ornithologists' Union: <https://iowabirds.org/>

Iowa Department of Natural Resources: <https://www.iowadnr.gov/Conservation/Iowas-Wildlife>