UPPER MISSISSIPPI FORESTRY PARTNERSHIP
Project Portfolio

Expand Iowa's Important Bird Areas Program

BACKGROUND
In order to strengthen Iowa's fledgling Important Bird Areas program a standardized site monitoring protocol needs to be developed and implemented.

LOCATION
The Important Bird Area program covers the entire state of Iowa, focusing on those areas providing critical bird habitat.

ISSUES BEING ADDRESSED
Habitat fragmentation in the Upper Mississippi River Basin had led to a large decline in songbirds populations. The Important Bird Area (IBA) program identifies those sites that are important for bird habitat. A site can be officially recognized as an IBA if is supports some of the 37 high priority species for conservation. Of the 37 species, 18 depend on forested habitat and are a focus of this effort.

GOALS
- Establish quantitative base-line data used to determine important forested bird habitats.
- Inventory forested IBA in terms of bird populations and vegetation.
- Utilize this baseline data to develop best management practices for Iowa's forests relating to bird habitat.

RESULTS
Interest in bird conservation in Iowa and northeast Iowa continues to grow. The 5th Annual Rivers and Bluffs Fall Birding Festival was held November 10-12, 2006 in Lansing, Iowa. Participants enjoy the large concentrations of waterfowls on the Upper Mississippi River National Fish and Wildlife Refuge.

OUTCOMES/ACCOMPLISHMENTS
- Bird observation data collected on IBA program website is now seamlessly shared with IDNR Bird Conservation Initiative and the historical records of the Iowa Orinthologists' Union.
- A bird surveying protocol was developed.
- 45 forest sites were evaluated for inclusion in the Iowa IBA program.

PARTNERS
- **Iowa Audubon**
- **Iowa Department of Natural Resources**
- **County Conservation Boards**
- **US Fish and Wildlife Service**
- **National Park Service**
- **Iowa Orinthologists Union**
- **Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation**
- **Alliant Energy**
- **Mid-American Energy**
- **Eagle Optics**

FUTURE PLANS
The IBA work has three phases the first is identification and recognition of key areas which this project supported for forested habitats. Once key sites are identified for Iowa's IBA program, conservation plans will be developed and the sites will be a part of a long-term monitoring program. Additional sites will continue to be surveyed for inclusion in the Iowa IBA program.

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The USDA Forest Service, Northeastern Area State & Private Forestry and the Midwest State Foresters have joined in partnership to build a watershed-wide approach to forestry efforts in the Upper Mississippi watershed in order to improve water quality.