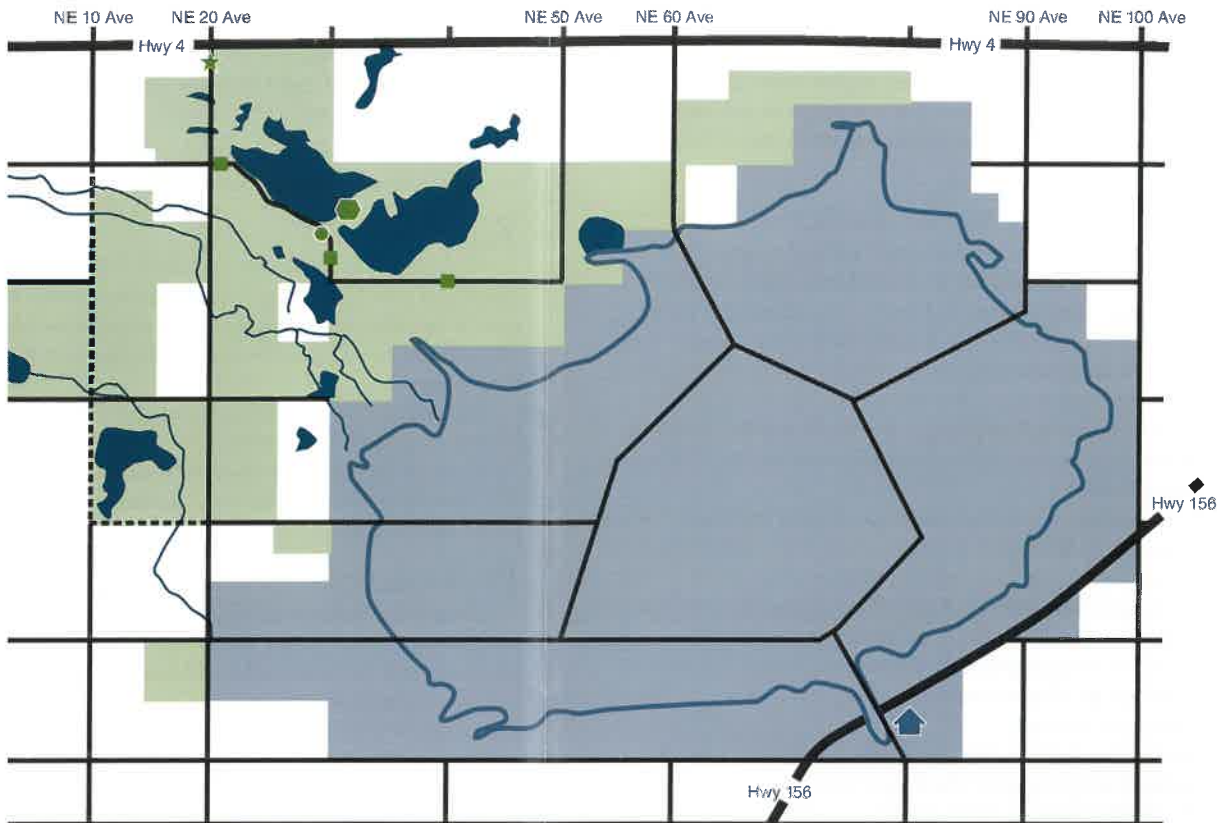


# Cheyenne Bottoms



**The Nature Conservancy's Cheyenne Bottoms Preserve**      **Kansas Department of Wildlife & Parks Wildlife Area**

**Legend**

Highway	Parking	Cattle Guards
Gravel Roads	Nature Conservancy Kiosk	Kansas Wetlands Education Center
Primitive Road (Drive with Caution)	Observation Tower	

## The Nature Conservancy's Mission

Founded in 1951, The Nature Conservancy is the largest private conservation organization in the world with approximately one million members. The Conservancy's mission is to preserve the plants, animals, and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. We have protected more than 117 million acres of land and 5,000 miles of rivers worldwide, and we operate more than 100 marine conservation projects globally. We work in all 50 states and more than 30 countries using a science-based approach — aided by our more than 700 staff scientists. We pursue non-confrontational, pragmatic solutions to conservation challenges and value partnerships with indigenous communities, businesses, governments, multilateral institutions, and other non-profits.

The Kansas Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, established in 1989, has made great strides in two decades. With more than 6,500 members and active supporters, it is considered the largest conservation organization in the state of Kansas. Thus far, we have protected nearly 90,000 acres across the state. To learn more about the Conservancy's work in Kansas, please visit [nature.org/kansas](http://nature.org/kansas).



Photo by Dave Bryan

*You can support The Nature Conservancy Kansas Chapter's work by becoming a member. Donations are tax deductible. For more information call (785) 233-4400 or email [kansas@tnc.org](mailto:kansas@tnc.org).*

Photo by Chad Jackson



Protecting nature. Preserving life.<sup>™</sup>  
Kansas Chapter

Photo by Judd Patterson



Welcome to  
**Cheyenne Bottoms**  
PRESERVE

# come to Cheyenne Bottoms

Cheyenne Bottoms is a complex of marshy basins in a lowland area containing the largest system of wetlands in Kansas. The water is centered in a natural basin-fringed on three sides by limestone, sandstone, and shale. Large pools of water and mud flats are alive with birds during the seasonal migrations, when thousands of birds time stop to rest and feed. This makes Cheyenne Bottoms one of the top shorebird spring migration staging areas in the contiguous United States. A large portion of North America's shorebirds migrating east of the Rocky Mountains pass through Cheyenne Bottoms each year, along with up to one-quarter of the world's shorebirds.

Cheyenne Bottoms is one of the richest wetland feeding grounds in the central United States. Cheyenne Bottoms is critical to the survival of many species of birds. One of the 335 species of birds frequent Cheyenne Bottoms, the bald eagle, whooping crane, peregrine falcon, least tern, and plover.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service reports the disappearance of 95 percent of the wetlands in Kansas between 1955 and 1995, and losses throughout the nation, and internationally, of 90 percent of some shorebird species — starved for food and nesting sites — to shrink by 60 to 80 percent. The Nature Conservancy's preserve at Cheyenne Bottoms is reversing these trends by safeguarding and restoring wetland habitat.

## Nature Conservancy Preserve

The Nature Conservancy owns and manages nearly 7,700 acres of wetlands in the midst of this world-class natural area. These shallow marshes — averaging less than one foot deep — are ideal habitats for wading shorebirds.

The Nature Conservancy's goal at Cheyenne Bottoms is to restore the natural marshes, ephemeral wetlands, mud flats, and grasslands. The Conservancy seeks to help maintain these vital wetlands and grasslands so that the thousands of migrating birds, which have relied on Cheyenne Bottoms for thousands of years, may continue to find

Photo by Dave Bryan



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Photo by Dave Bryan

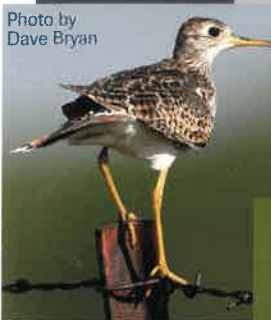


Photo by Dave Bryan



Photo by Bob Gress



Photo by Bob Gress



Photo by Dave Bryan



Photo by Dave Bryan

## The wetlands system

Adjacent to the Conservancy's preserve is the Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area, managed by the Kansas Department of Wildlife & Parks. The State Wildlife Area, containing nearly 20,000 acres that were established primarily for waterfowl, is characterized by deeper pools and managed water levels. On the Conservancy's preserve, the goal is to restore the wetlands to their original state. These two programs represent different wildlife management techniques that not only complement each other, but also preserve more of the Bottom's wetland habitat.

## Grazing at Cheyenne Bottoms Preserve

Migratory shorebirds use habitats of different water depth, vegetation height, and density. Habitats for foraging shorebirds range from dry mud to seven inches of water. Shorebirds prefer short vegetation, generally less than half of the bird's height. Some species, such as yellowlegs and snipe, will forage in taller vegetation. A range of wetland habitat conditions, from sparsely vegetated mud flats to moderately vegetated open shallow water, provides shorebirds with the required habitats they need during their stay at Cheyenne Bottoms.

Shorebirds also use upland habitats associated with the wetlands by foraging in shallow flooded pastures with short, sparse vegetation maintained by grazing. Controlled livestock grazing can be an effective and inexpensive management tool for altering the plants and soils of wetlands. Livestock can be used to decrease undesirable dense stands of vegetation, compact and seal wetland soils, disturb the soil for shorebird use, accelerate nutrient recycling, and increase interspersed and vegetation diversity.

Grazing management at Cheyenne Bottoms uses a random rotational grazing system in which some pastures are grazed fairly heavily for short periods, other pastures may be grazed lightly for long periods, and some pastures may not be grazed at all during the year. This system provides the various ranges of vegetation height and density that are required by the shorebirds and waterfowl that visit Cheyenne Bottoms.

## What to see

Grassland species:

Horned Lark • Lark Sparrow • Lark Bunting  
Grasshopper Sparrow • Upland Sandpiper  
Dickcissel • Western Meadowlark

Shorebirds:

American Avocet • Lesser Yellowlegs • Pectoral Sandpiper  
Semipalmated Sandpiper • White-rumped Sandpiper  
Long-billed Dowitcher • Wilson's Phalarope

Other Species:

Blue-winged Teal • Northern Pintail • Northern Shoveler  
Green-winged Teal • Northern Harrier • Red-tailed Hawk  
Short-eared Owl

Whooping cranes occasionally visit the Bottoms. They are more frequently seen in the fall, but occasionally in the spring.

## When to visit

Migrating ducks and cranes reach their peak numbers in late March and early April; the peak for migrating shorebirds is late April to late May, although some start arriving in late March. Some of the waterfowl and shorebirds stay at the Bottoms throughout the summer.

The autumn migration is less dramatic. The autumn movement of birds is not as concentrated in time or route.

A visit to Cheyenne Bottoms can be interesting any time of the year. As long as there is water in the marshes, many birds can be seen at the Bottoms.

## Public access

The public is welcome at The Nature Conservancy's preserve at Cheyenne Bottoms. Information about the Bottoms, driving directions, and the location of a public observation area are available at two information kiosks. From the intersection of U.S. Highways 56 and 281 in Great Bend, travel 8 miles north on U.S. 281, the kiosk is located at the intersection of Highway 281 and NE 80 Road. The other kiosk is located 2 miles east of Hoisington on Kansas Highway 4. Please stay on the public roads; off-road hiking is prohibited. No dogs or other pets are allowed outside of your vehicle.

## Facilities

There are no facilities on The Nature Conservancy's property. The adjacent Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks headquarters has printed information about their facilities. To learn more about Cheyenne Bottoms and other Kansas wetlands, please visit the Kansas Wetlands Education Center located at 592 NE K-156 Highway. Or visit their website at <http://wetlandscenter.fhsu.edu/>