

Cheyenne Bottoms Is For The Birds

In fact, it's for lots of birds. More than 340 species of birds have been seen at the Bottoms.

Just more than 100 species have nested here, more than 95 winter at the Bottoms, and more than 60 species are year-round residents.

The American Bird Conservancy and the National Audubon Society designated Cheyenne Bottoms a "Globally Important Bird Area" due to this tremendous species diversity and numbers of birds that use the basin. The Bottoms is one of the most significant places in North America for birds.

Cheyenne Bottoms' value is most evident during the spring and fall migratory periods when hundreds of thousands of birds, from least sandpipers to whooping cranes, stop here to "refuel." About half of the wetlands originally found in Kansas have been lost over the past 200 years, mostly because of cropland conversion and depletion of surface and ground water due to irrigation. While always a treasure, Cheyenne Bottoms becomes more critical with each passing year.

A wetland Serengeti



Great Blue Heron, KDWPT

Great Blue Heron

The 4-foot tall gray, long-necked birds standing motionless and staring down into the water are great blue herons, the largest and most widespread heron in North America. Herons feed mostly on fish, but sometimes can be seen hunting rodents in dry fields and croplands. The white versions of great blue herons are great egrets.



Cheyenne Bottoms, KDWPT

Motion and Change

In the fall of 1839, Frederick A. Wislizenus passed through Cheyenne Bottoms on his return from the Southwest. His description of what he saw is fascinating. "I saw a great swamp lying before me . . . The water was not very deep and the ground pretty firm. So I resolved to try at every risk to get through in an eastern direction . . . All sorts of water birds swarmed around from all sides. Never have I seen together such quantities of swans, cranes, pelicans, geese and ducks, as were here." It took him a full day to cross the basin, spending the night in the sand hills near Cow Creek on the eastern edge of the basin.



Birds at Cheyenne Bottoms
KDWPT Photo

