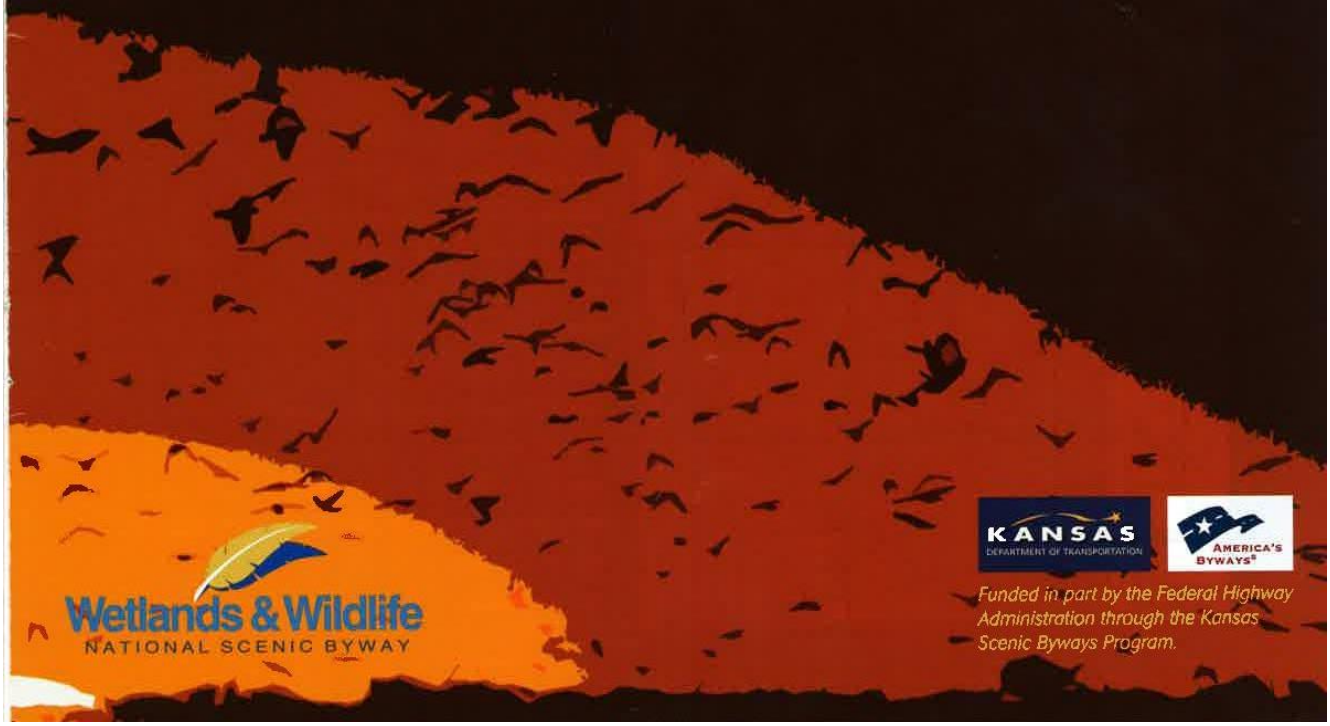
Wetlands & Wildlife

National Scenic Byway

Exploring remarkable sites in three Kansas counties



Wetlands & Wildlife
NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY

KANSAS
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

AMERICA'S BYWAYS®

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Wetlands & Wildlife

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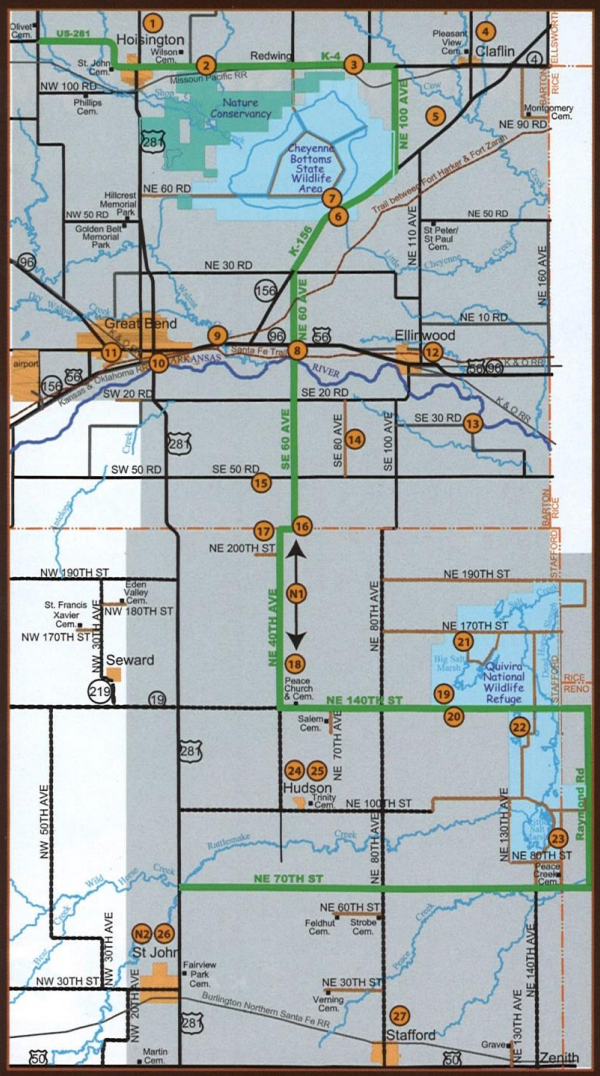

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Wilson's Phalarope/Ted Lee Eubanks

Welcome to the Byway

Motion and Change

Along the Byway, you'll encounter landscapes and communities shaped by the powerful forces of motion and change. You're entering a region formed by ancient and ongoing geological movements, a land of stunning bird migrations, of wild winds and weather, and of richly layered human history. Everywhere you look, you'll see evidence of motion and change—from rippling wheat fields to the grand spectacle of a hundred thousand shorebirds alighting in the Byway wetlands.

American White Pelicans at Cheyenne Bottoms/Ted Lee Eubanks

Santa Fe Trail/Kansas State Historical Society

Welcome to the Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway. This 77-mile Byway showcases two of the world's most important wetlands—Cheyenne Bottoms and the Quivira National Wildlife Refuge. Here, more than 60,000 acres of wetlands host millions of migrating birds each year. Sandhill cranes, pelicans, bald eagles, whooping cranes, plovers, sandpipers, avocets, ducks, geese, and more fill these wetlands with a living spectacle of color, motion, and sound. No wonder this region has been named one of the Eight Wonders of Kansas!

But the Byway offers far more than beautiful wetlands and birds. Along your trek, you'll see native limestone buildings, underground tunnels, beautifully crafted metal street banners, WPA art and bridges, one of the nation's last independent flour mills, historic sites along the Santa Fe Trail, a raptor rehabilitation center, and much more.

This Byway Guidebook will help you explore our extraordinary corner of the planet. The guidebook begins at the Byway's north end, in Hoisington, and follows it through to Stafford in the south. The guidebook will lead you to more than 27 great places to explore along the way.

Using the Guidebook

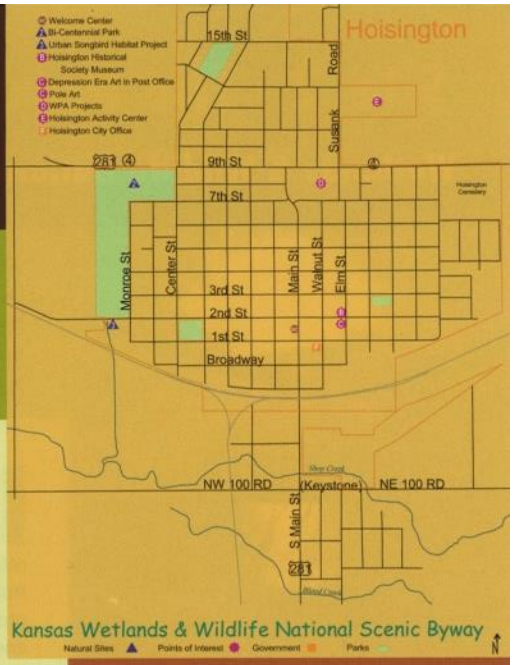
For each numbered site, you'll find GPS coordinates and directions for getting to the site. If you need additional information or directions to other sites mentioned in the guidebook, don't hesitate to ask—you'll find the Byway contact information on page 35 of the guidebook.

Below are visitor service icons noting available services in each Byway community.

Site 1 - Hoisington

Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway

Site Description: Hoisington Welcome Center; 115 North Main
Location: N38.52149 W-98.77814
Interpretive Panels: WWNSB Welcome, The Wrath of Nature



With its brick streets and leafy neighborhoods located in the geographical center of Kansas, Hoisington truly is the Crossroads of Kansas. Hoisington began as a railroad terminal for the Missouri Pacific Railroad in 1888. Lake Barton was constructed nearby to provide water to the steam locomotives. The railroad, oil production, and agriculture have sustained Hoisington ever since.

Though a devastating tornado in 2001 tore through the town, Hoisington has emerged from the destruction, rebuilt, and reinvigorated. Begin your explorations with a stroll along Main Street, where award-winning, locally crafted metal art banners hang from streetlight poles, depicting local wildlife and history.

Visitor Highlights

- **Hoisington Historical Society Museum.** Located at the corner of East 2nd and Walnut Streets, Historical Museum exhibits tell the story of Hoisington history.
- **Post Office WPA Art.** At the post office, you'll find a beautiful example of Work Projects Administration-funded artwork, the mural "Wheat Center."
- **WPA Projects.** The WPA also constructed several projects in Hoisington, including the Hoisington High School and football stadium, which were built from locally quarried limestone.
- **Urban Songbird Habitat Project.** Hoisington High School's Environmental Science class is developing songbird habitat—with bird feeders, pond, walking trail, and more—on the south end of Bicentennial Park.
- **Hoisington History Mural.** Look for this colorful mural on the Knights of Columbus building on Main Street.

Visitor Services

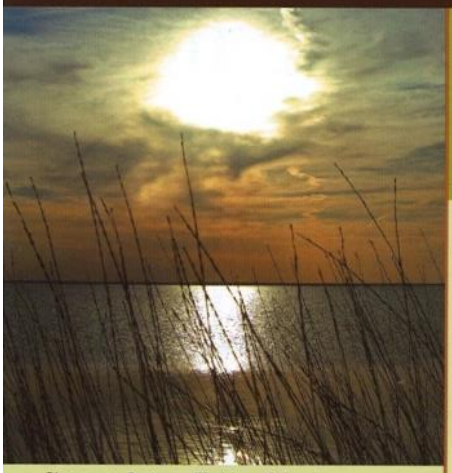
G ATM $ H

Wild Prairie Weather

Powerful storms are a natural, and sometimes devastating, part of prairie life. Located in "Tornado Alley" (a tornado-prone area encompassing parts of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Nebraska), the Byway region has experienced the phenomenally destructive force of tornados. On April 21, 2001, a F4 tornado with winds approaching 260 mph tore through Hoisington. The tornado killed two people, injured 27, and damaged more than one-quarter of the town's homes and businesses.

Site 2 - The Nature Conservancy Cheyenne Bottoms Preserve

Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway



Cheyenne Bottoms/Ted Lee Eubanks

Site Description: Turnoff to TNC lands; pull-off with kiosk
Location: N38.52098 W-98.73808
Directions: Drive approximately 2 miles east along the Byway (K-4 Highway). Turn right onto NE 20 Avenue. Kiosk will be on the left.
Interpretive Panels: WWNSB Welcome, Birds of the Woods & Prairie

It's impossible to overstate the ecological importance of Cheyenne Bottoms. The country's largest interior marsh, Cheyenne Bottoms is the top shorebird staging area in the continental United States, a resting and refueling area for more than half of all shorebirds that migrate east of the Rockies. That includes 90% of North America's population of Wilson's phalarope, long-billed dowitcher, white-rumped sandpiper, Baird's sandpiper, and stilt sandpiper. This 41,000-acre lowland area hosts 330 species of birds, 23 species of mammals, 19 species of reptiles, and 9 species of amphibians.

You're entering the 7,700-acre portion of Cheyenne Bottoms that is managed by The Nature Conservancy. TNC's management goal for this land is to protect its native wildlife diversity by restoring and protecting the natural marshes, mud flats, and adjoining grasslands. This preserve safeguards not only diverse habitat but also a rare and historic natural feature—bison wallows. Bison roll on the ground to shed hair and insect pests, and their wallows formed depressions as wide as 30 feet. Though hunting eliminated bison from central Kansas in the late 1800s, some of the wallows remain. Watch for them as you explore the preserve.

Conserving Upland Habitat

Conservancy lands are located at slightly higher elevations within the Cheyenne Bottoms basin than those in the adjacent State Wildlife Area. Ephemeral (those that last a very short time), seasonal, and semi-permanent wetlands are the most common wetland types on The Nature Conservancy's Cheyenne Bottoms Preserve. These shallow marshes—averaging less than one foot deep—provide ideal habitat for wading shorebirds.

Wetlands of International Importance

TNC's Cheyenne Bottoms Preserve is one of three wetlands along the Byway designated as a Wetland of International Importance by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. The state-managed portion of Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge also received this distinction. Of the fifty states, only Kansas and Florida have more than two Ramsar-designated wetlands.

Site 3 - Cheyenne Bottoms Scenic Overlook

Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway

Site Description: Pull-off with KDOT Byway kiosk
Location: N38.52220 W-98.62353
Directions: Turn right back onto Byway. Drive 6 miles east, and turn right into Overlook.
Interpretive Panels: Wings Over the Water, Prey and Play

You're now at the northern edge of the Cheyenne Bottoms basin, overlooking the Cheyenne Bottoms State Wildlife Area. From this spectacular vista, it's easy to see that Cheyenne Bottoms is a giant, 64-square-mile depression in the prairie landscape. Geologists debate the origins of this basin. One geological force that helped create the basin was the flow of ground water through the salt formations that underlie the area. As these salt beds gradually dissolved, the ground level dropped, forming a wide sinkhole.

From this bluff, you can see the mudflats, grasslands, and large pools of water that draw so much wildlife to the Bottoms. In the State Wildlife Area, managers have created a series of holding cells in which they trap water and redirect it as needed across the management area. The water levels in the Bottoms can vary dramatically from year to year, depending on rainfall.

Waterfowl/Jerry Segraves

Lifeline for Migratory Birds

In the late 1800s, there were twelve large marshes in Kansas. Three remain today, and two are here along the Byway. Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge are critical stopover sites for migratory birds. Many arrive with little fat for continuing migration. Once here, they may double their body weight. These wetlands, and others along the Central Flyway migration corridor, are like stepping stones across a stream, allowing birds to complete their long migration journeys.

Bombing Practice

During World War II, the US military trained pilots to fly the B-29 bomber plane here at Cheyenne Bottoms. Crews flew the B-29s from four regional airfields—including one in Great Bend—over the Bottoms and dropped 10-pound sacks of flour for bombing target practice. Spotters with binoculars sat here at the overlook to check bombing accuracy.

Wildlife along the Byway

Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway

Black-tailed Jackrabbit

Behold the black-tailed jackrabbit, supremely adapted to prairie life. In scorching summer heat, the jackrabbit's long ears act like radiators to keep it cool. When threatened by its many formidable predators—including coyotes, eagles, owls, hawks, rattlesnakes, and, at one time, wolves—it attempts to escape notice by sitting motionless. When it needs to, it can leap 25 feet in a single bound and reach speeds of 40 mph.

Black-tailed Jackrabbit/USFWS

Bald Eagle/Jerry Segraves

Bald Eagle

Bald eagles winter along the Byway at both Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge—watch for them between early November and late March. While adults are easy to recognize, with their distinctive white heads and tails, juveniles sport dark plumage for their first five years. Their featherless legs and white mottling on wings and body help distinguish them from the Golden Eagle, an uncommon Byway species.

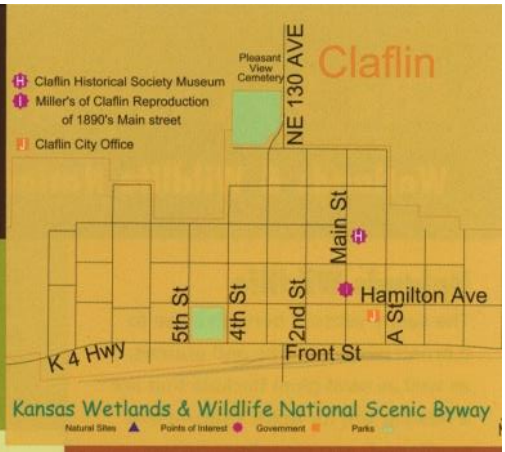
Birding Tally

Keep track of Byway birds with a pocket bird list for Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, available on the Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway website, www.KansasWetlandsandWildlifeScenicByway.com or at refuge visitor centers.

Site 4 - Claflin

Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway

Site Description: Claflin City Park on K-4 Highway (Front Street)
Location: N38.52244 W-98.53572
Directions: Turn right back onto Byway, and drive 5 miles east.
Interpretive Panels: WWNSB Welcome, Settling the Great American Desert



Claflin began as a depot on the Missouri Pacific Railroad in 1885. Settlers began arriving soon after, and the town took shape. Just 25 years later, Claflin was described this way in the *Biographical Sketch of Barton County:* "Claflin has today two as modern stores as any city of its size could ask for, two banks that are substantial, two hardware stores, two hotels that offer the best of accommodations to the traveling public, three lumber yards, five elevators and two mills, also all of the various other businesses that make up a city of its size."

As in many small Kansas towns, a grain elevator dominates Claflin's skyline. Farming is central to Claflin's economy, and the grain elevator is the hub of grain commerce. Farmers haul their grain to the elevator, where it is stored and shipped by train to market.

Visitor Highlights

- **Reproduction of 1890s Main Street.** Stroll down Main Street, where renovated storefront façades give a sense of what Claflin looked like in the late 1800s.
- **Claflin Historical Society Museum.** Contact the Claflin town office (111 E. Hamilton St.) for details about visiting this museum of local history.
- **WPA Historic Bridges.** Just north of Claflin, you'll find seven historic bridges, constructed of locally quarried limestone in the 1930s and early '40s by the Work Projects Administration.

Visitor Services

G ATM $

Pioneer Irises

As you travel along the Byway, watch for irises blooming in springtime. Settlers often carried iris roots with them and planted them around their new homesteads for a beautiful reminder of home. A number of these homesteads were abandoned, and the pioneer homes have long since disappeared from the landscape. But the irises remain—a tribute to the pioneers who settled here.

Iris/Ted Lee Eubanks

Site 5 - Camp Aldrich

Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway

Uplands Wildlife

The sandy subsoils here give rise to a broad range of forbs and grasses, as well as sand plum thickets that are a nesting site for Bell's Vireo—a bird you'll rarely see elsewhere on the Byway. This mix of prairie habitats also draws many other upland prairie bird species, like scissor-tailed flycatchers and loggerhead shrikes.

Loggerhead Shrike/Ted Lee Eubanks

Site Description: Conference Center Grounds; 884 NE 110 Avenue
Location: N38.49226 W-98.56813
Directions: Turn south onto NE 130 Avenue. Drive 1.5 miles south. Turn right onto K-156 Highway. Drive about 3 miles, then turn right onto NE 110 Avenue. Go north about 1 mile. Camp will be on the right.

Camp Aldrich Conference Center is a campus of Barton County Community College, situated between Claflin and the Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area. The Camp hosts summer camps, receptions, conferences, and recreational events, and they also welcome visitors to explore their beautiful campus.

The camp includes 290 acres of rolling sand hills, with an additional 40 acres that the camp sets aside as wilderness. Here, you can find at least 70 species of wild flowers and grasses, 57 species of birds, and many other animals.

When you enter the campus, please check in with the ranger at the camp office. Visitors are welcome to walk the grounds or hiking trails. Please note that the roads through the camp can be very sandy.

Bell's Vireo

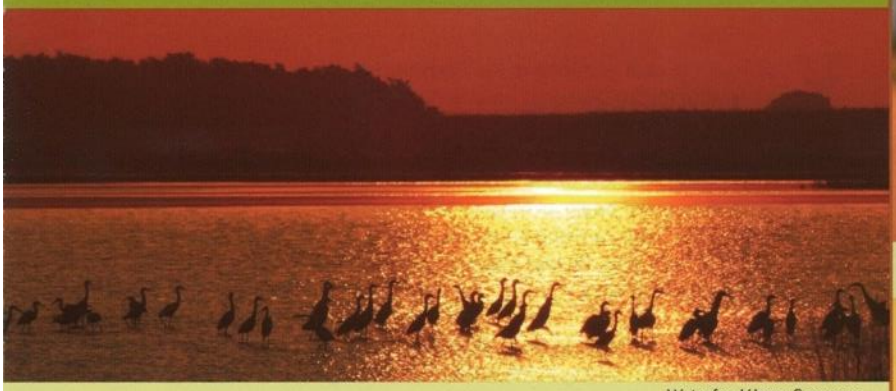
This small, insectivorous bird frequents low, dense vegetation, particularly along rivers and streams. Listen for its song, *"Cheedle-cheedle-cheedle-chee, cheedle-cheedle-cheedle-chew,"* coming from scrubby woodlands, thickets, and the edges of old fields. A summer visitor to this area, the Bell's vireo suspends its sac-like grass nest, decorated with spider egg cases, from the fork of two low branches.

Bell's Vireo/Steve Maslowski, USFWS

Site 6 - Kansas Wetlands Education Center

Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway

Site Description: Kansas Wetlands Education Center; 592 NE K-156 Highway
Location: N38.44076 W-98.62969
Directions: Turn right back onto K-156 Highway. Drive 4 miles, and turn left into Center.
Interpretive Panels: WWNSB Welcome



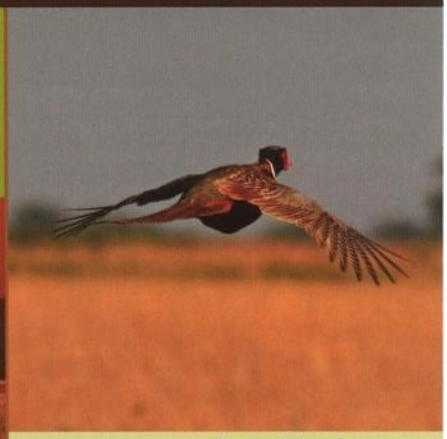
Waterfowl/Jerry Segraves

Newly opened in 2009, the Kansas Wetlands Education Center is a branch of Fort Hays State University's Sternberg Museum of Natural History. The crescent-shaped museum building curves around a constructed marsh, offering great wildlife viewing right from the museum deck or from the observation tower in the marsh itself. Staffed by naturalists, the Center offers guided tours and education programs. The museum's interpretive displays tell the story of Cheyenne Bottoms—from the geological processes that shaped the area to the stunning spectacle of bird migration that takes place here each year. Staff can answer any questions you may have about this phenomenal wetlands region.

The Center offers traveler information, observation decks, handicapped-accessible nature trail, restrooms, coffee bar, and gift shop. The Center building is fully handicapped-accessible.

Visitor Information

Center staff can tell you about the many ways to experience Cheyenne Bottoms and help you plan your visit. At the Center, you can pick up a birding checklist and a copy of the Cheyenne Bottoms Driving Tour booklet and learn about opportunities for hiking, biking, camping, boating, hunting, fishing, and more.



Pheasant/Jerry Segraves

Hunting the Bottoms

Cheyenne Bottoms is a hunter's paradise. Wetlands, grasslands, and grain crops entice many game species, including ducks, geese, pheasant, quail, turkey, and deer. Hunting fees help pay for management of the State Wildlife Area. For hunting information, talk with Center staff or call the Cheyenne Bottoms office at (620) 793-3066.

Site 7 - Cheyenne Bottoms - East Entrance Overlook

Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway

Greyhound Coursing

Imagine the rustle of silk dresses and the cheering of crowds mingling with the sounds of nature at Cheyenne Bottoms. In 1886, the Bottoms hosted the first national greyhound coursing match. Unlike modern-day greyhound racing, coursing was a competition in which two dogs chased a live jackrabbit, either in an enclosed field or out on the open range. Cheyenne Bottoms boasted a fine grandstand for viewing and taking refreshments.

Coursing Greyhounds (Dickinson County)/ Kansas State Historical Society

Site Description: North side, K-156 rest stop, across from Kansas Wetlands Education Center
Location: N38.44875 W-98.63745
Directions: Turn left onto K-156 Highway, then turn right into the Bottoms. Tower will be on the right approximately ½ mile down the road.
Interpretive Panels: Cheyenne Bottoms, Magic Muck

You're at the east entrance to the Cheyenne Bottoms State Wildlife Area, a nearly 20,000-acre portion of the Bottoms managed by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. If you drive a short way down this entrance road, you'll reach the observation tower, which gives a fabulous, up-close overview of the wetlands and wildlife. In spring, waterfowl and sandhill cranes can begin arriving as early as February. Wading birds, like herons and egrets, begin arriving in late March and April. Most shorebirds arrive in late April and early May. By late May, the birds that are still present in the area will tend to remain and nest.

Autumn migration can begin as early as July for shorebirds and last into November. Peak duck viewing in the fall occurs in early to mid-October, with as many as 150,000 waterfowl congregating here at a time, a magnet for hunters and wildlife watchers alike. Whooping cranes are most likely to stop at Cheyenne Bottoms in late October into early November.

Exploring Cheyenne Bottoms

From this entrance, you can follow the gravel loop road through State-administered lands in the Cheyenne Bottoms basin. Be sure to pick up a Driving Tour brochure at the Education Center. The Preserve's unpaved roads can be muddy and rough at times, so drive slowly. Please remember that vehicles are permitted only on established roads that are not gated.

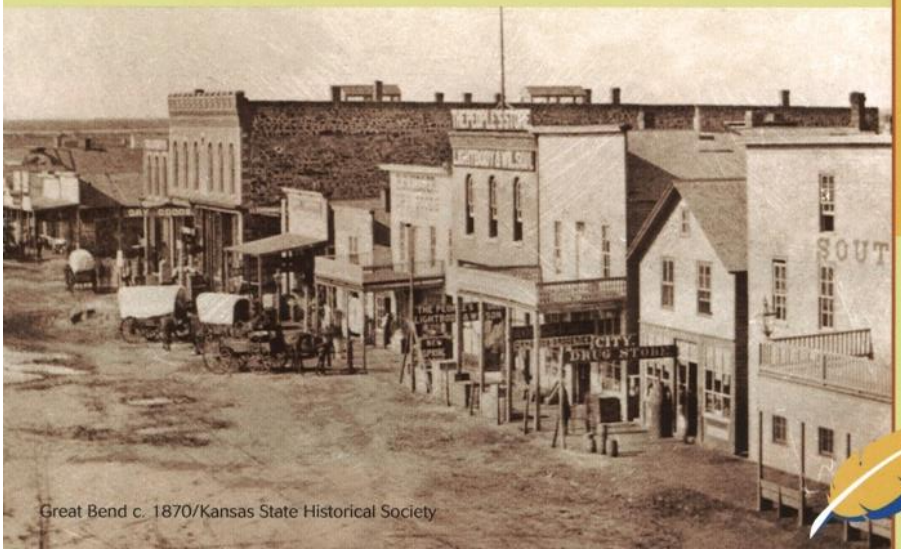
Site 8 - Santa Fe Trail Region

Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway

Site Description: Stop sign at intersection of NE 60 Avenue and US-56 Highway
Location: N38.36503 W-98.66457
Directions: Turn right back onto Byway (K-156 Highway). Drive 3 miles. Following the Byway signs, turn left, then right onto NE 60 Avenue. Go almost 3 miles south to US 56 Highway.

If you had been here in the mid - 1800s you'd likely have seen lines of Conestoga wagons crossing the prairie. You've reached the junction of K-56, which roughly follows the Santa Fe Trail's route. In this region, the Santa Fe Trail route lay between the present-day railroad and the Arkansas River. In the 1800s, the Santa Fe Trail was the Interstate-70 of the American West, and Conestoga wagons were its freight-hauling tractor trailers. Between 1822 and 1879, the trail was a commercial thoroughfare between Kansas City, Missouri, and Santa Fe, New Mexico, guiding wagons, stagecoaches, and military men to and from the southwestern frontier. During the 1860s and 70s, thousands of wagons rolled over the trail. In 1880, the railroad reached Santa Fe, and the days of the Santa Fe Trail came to an abrupt end.

An enormously important part of both local and national history, the Santa Fe Trail brought the first white settlers to this region. Trading posts sprang up along the route. Military posts dotted the route as well, protecting mail and freight wagons from American Indian raids.



Great Bend c. 1870/Kansas State Historical Society

Wild West Superhighway

"It was nothing uncommon to see 100 wagons in a double line, moving across our 'Great American Desert,' and it was almost a daily occurrence to see from 30 to 100 'Prairie Schooners' at once. These wagons, when under a full load, would contain from 4 to 6 thousand pounds, and were hauled by six yoke of oxen or six mules."

–Homer Kidder, Great Bend pioneer, from *Biographical History of Barton County, Kansas,* 1912.

Experiencing Santa Fe Trail History

You'll encounter plenty of Santa Fe Trail history right here on the Byway at Sites 9 and 10. Staff at the Barton County Historical Museum and Village can direct you to even more local Santa Fe Trail sites, including Fort Larned and Pawnee Rock.

Site 9 - Fort Zarah Historical Marker & Park

Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway

Site Description: North side of US-56, near Walnut Creek; 330 E US 56 Highway
Location: N38.36519 W-98.71385
Directions: Turn right onto US-56 Highway. Drive 2.5 miles west, turn right into Park.

Digging up the Past

Known by the various names of the men who owned it between 1855 and 1868, the Walnut Creek Trading Post came back into the public eye a century after it burned to the ground. In 1969, archeologists excavated the building's foundations. Within the 20' x 80' foundation, they found a treasure trove of pioneer artifacts, from a wood-burning stove and pieces of furniture to gun parts and farm tools.

News from Fort Zarah

"One house [at Fort Zarah] is occupied by a fellow called Charley Rath, a notorious desperado, who has contributed not a little to the Indian disturbances which have occasionally broken out in this vicinity. He has sold revolvers, knives, and powder to the Kiowa...and yesterday he was warned off the Indian Reserve by Inspector General Davidson for selling whisky to soldiers and Indians."

–Henry M. Stanley, newspaper correspondent, 1867

The area surrounding this little park was an action-packed way station for Santa Fe Trail travelers in the late 1800s. In 1855, William Allison and Francis Boothe built a trading post nearby at Walnut Creek Crossing, trading with American Indians and Santa Fe Trail travelers. When Walnut Creek flooded, wagon trains often had to make camp here for days, waiting to cross. In 1863, the trading post's new owner, Charles Rath, helped build a toll bridge over Walnut Creek. A party of Cheyenne and Arapahos burned the trading post in 1868, and today, only the foundations remain.

As American Indian raids on wagon trains increased, the U.S. military established the rustic outpost of Camp Dunlap (soon renamed Fort Zarah) here in 1864. In 1866, buildings of locally quarried sandstone replaced the fort's canvas tents and dugouts. Fort Zarah was abandoned just three years later, in 1869, as military operations shifted to nearby Fort Larned.

Fort Zarah/Barton County Historical Museum

Site 10 - Barton County Historical Museum

Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway

Site Description: Historical Society Village; 85 S US 281 Highway
Location: N38.34946 W-98.76511
Directions: Turn right onto US-56 Highway. Drive 3 miles west. Turn left onto US-281 Highway. Go south 1 mile (across bridge). Turn right into Village.
Interpretive Panels: Arkansas River's Great Bend, People of the Plains

The Barton County Historical Museum and Village features a variety of displays that bring Barton County history to life—from its Native American roots to its rich World War II history. The Museum sits among rescued and restored buildings from the past—an 1873 Pioneer Home, 1898 church, 1910 train depot, 1915 one-room school house, and a post World War II prefab Lustron home. Visitors can use the Ray Schulz Research Library to trace historical events or family history.

The Museum is also an official Santa Fe Trail interpretive site. Collections and displays maintained by the Historical Society tell the regional story of the Santa Fe Trail, including Native Americans, trail development and use, the trading posts, local military forts, and European settlement. Group tours are available. Admission fee. For information, call (620) 793-5125 or visit www.bartoncountymuseum.org.

Crossing the Arkansas/
Kansas State Historical Society

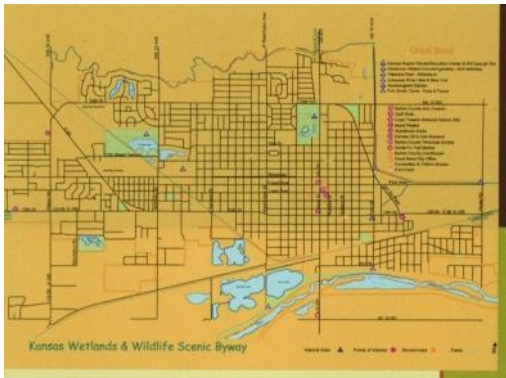
Captured Cheyenne Indians/Kansas State Historical Society

B-29 Bombers and the Great Bend Army Airfield

During World War II, the Great Bend Army Air Field trained many of the pilots and crew members who flew the B-26 and B-29 planes used during that war. By January, 1945, more than 6,000 personnel were stationed there. The Historical Society maintains a collection of memorabilia, memoirs, and artifacts telling the story of a defining era in United States history.

How Horses Changed Prairie Life

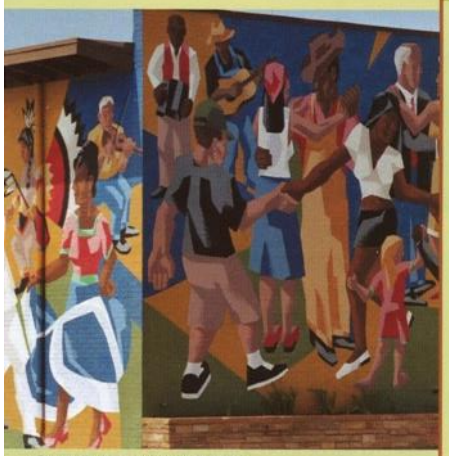
For more than 10,000 years, people have lived here along the great bend of the Arkansas River. Until the 1600s, the Indian tribes of this region survived by gathering wild plants, growing crops, and hunting animals on foot. Then horses, brought to this country by the Spaniards, transformed prairie life. On horseback, Plains Indian tribes could pursue bison herds, expand their areas of food gathering, conduct raids on other tribes, and quickly flee danger.



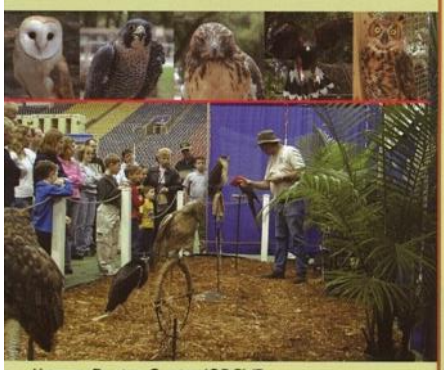
Site 11 - Great Bend

Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway

Site Description: Courthouse Square, 1400 Main Street; Zoo, 2201 Main Street
Location: N38.36136 W-98.76511
Directions: Turn left back onto US-281 Highway. Drive north 1.5 miles. Square will be on the right. One-half mile farther north, the Zoo will be on the left.
Interpretive Panels: WWNSB Welcome, Wild West Superhighway



Great Bend Murals/GBCVB



Kansas Raptor Center/GBCVB

Until 1870, most pioneers who arrived in this part of Kansas were continuing southwest on the Santa Fe Trail, which passed right through what is now downtown Great Bend. In 1872, settlers erected a handful of buildings here and named the fledgling town for the sweeping bend the Arkansas River makes through this region. That summer, railroad lines reached Great Bend, and the town burst into life. Cowboys driving longhorn cattle from Texas came to Great Bend to ship their cattle by rail to eastern markets. Though the cowtown era passed, Great Bend remained a hub of regional commerce and community life, its economy powered by nature though oil and agriculture.

Visitor Highlights

Great Bend is chock-full of sites to explore. Contact the Great Bend Convention and Visitors Bureau, www.visitgreatbend.com or call them at (620) 792-2750 for more information on planning a visit here.

- **Kansas Raptor Center.** Located at the Brit Spaugh Zoo, the Center specializes in the medical rehabilitation of eagles, hawks, owls, falcons, and vultures.
- **Quilt Walk & Mural Walk.** You don't have to visit a museum to see art in Great Bend. Along the Kansas Quilt Walk, historic quilt patterns are built right into the sidewalks surrounding the Courthouse Square. Murals celebrating Great Bend culture and history decorate the walls of many buildings in the downtown area. Stop by the Barton Arts Council or the Great Bend Convention and Visitors Bureau to pick up walking tour maps (see contact info above).
- **Kansas Oil and Gas Hall of Fame and Museum.** In 1886, a group of Great Bend speculators financed the region's first oil exploration. Museum exhibits explore the history of this key area industry. For more information call (620) 793-8301.
- **Arkansas River Hike and Bike Trail.** This six-mile trail along the Arkansas River offers good opportunities for birding and wildlife watching.
- **WPA Projects.** The WPA constructed the city auditorium, the city swimming pool, and the aquarium building at the zoo.

Visitor Services

Pawnee Rock/Ted Lee Eubanks

Pawnee Rock State Historic Site

Pawnee Rock rises above the flat prairie along the Santa Fe Trail, 10 miles southwest of Great Bend. For centuries, it served as an important landmark, vantage point, and trail marker for American Indians, pioneers, traders, and the military. Kit Carson shot his mule here, mistaking it for an Indian. Indians captured Buffalo Bill Cody near the "Rock," and Robert E. Lee passed by during the Mexican War of 1848. For information, visit the Kansas State Historic Society website, www.kshs.org.

Birds of Prey

The Byway region is home to many spectacular birds of prey, from bald eagles and prairie falcons to Mississippi kites and burrowing owls. In Great Bend, you can see them up close at the Kansas Raptor Center in the Brit Spaugh Zoo. Here, visitors can watch rehab work through one-way mirrors and see live bird presentations by Center staff.

Mississippi Kite

Watch for this elegant, graceful, medium-sized hawk soaring over Great Bend. The Mississippi kite spends much of its time in the air, using its talons to catch large insects, mostly dragonflies, as well as reptiles, amphibians, and mammals. Unlike many other raptors, Mississippi kite populations are on the rise and are increasing their range. Here along the Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway, they're benefited from extensive tree planting in local communities.

Mississippi Kite/Ted Lee Eubanks

Note to Travelers - Arkansas River

Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway

Cut Alfalfa/Ted Lee Eubanks

A View from the Past

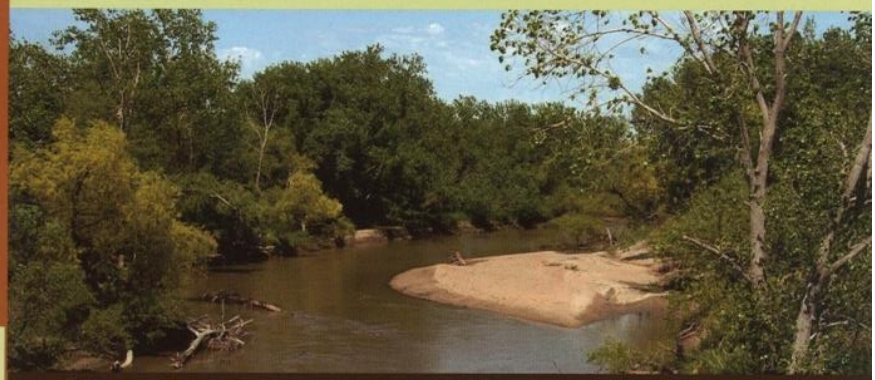
"After resuming our march we came in sight of the Arkansas. It presented a broad and rapid stream bordered by a beach of fine sand, overgrown with willows and cottonwood trees. Beyond the river the eye wandered over a beautiful campaign country of flowery plains and sloping uplands... the whole wearing the aspect of complete and even ornamental cultivation, instead of native wilderness."

–Washington Irving, describing his visit to this region in 1832.

Note: As you drive between Sites 11 and 12, take a short detour down the Byway to see the Arkansas River, an enormously important natural feature that has helped shape the ecology and economy of this region.

The Arkansas River is one of America's iconic rivers, coursing 1,469 miles before merging with the Mississippi River. Here in central Kansas, its steady east-southeast flow is interrupted by a wide northward sweep called the "great bend." The city of Great Bend lies at this meander's northernmost point.

A wild mountain stream as it surges from the Rockies, the Arkansas transforms in the Great Plains into a braided river, much like the Platte and Canadian Rivers. In a braided river, several small channels wander within a broad, shallow river bed. Indeed, the Arkansas River flood plain widens to nearly eight miles in eastern Barton County! The Arkansas River carries sediment from the Rockies, which drops out as the river slows along the great bend. Dispersed by floods, these sediments build fertile soils.



Arkansas River/Ted Lee Eubanks

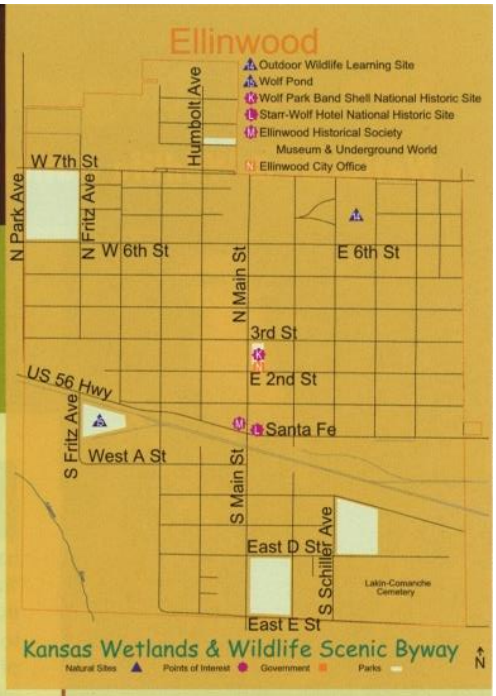
"Ar-Kansas"

Here in Kansas, we pronounce the river's name, "Ar-Kansas." Ask Kansans why, and they might tell you, "Because we don't live in "Kan-saw!" Our pronunciation sensibly combines the state's name with the river's most prominent feature—the sweeping "arc" it makes through this region.

Site 12 - Ellinwood

Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway

Site Description: Ellinwood Band Shell, City Park; 200 block of N. Main Street
Location: N38.35365 W-98.58123
Directions: Back on US-56 Highway (10th Street), drive 10 miles east. Turn left onto N. Main Street, and go north two blocks. Band Shell will be on the right.
Interpretive Panels: WWNSB Welcome, Post Rock & Black Gold



With the arrival of the Santa Fe Railroad in 1872, the pioneer settlement of Ellinwood quickly grew. By 1878, 400 people lived here, mostly of German and Austrian descent. These hard-working people built a unique, two-level town—one at the regular street level, the other below ground. The tunnels of Ellinwood at one time ran beneath the entire business district.

Located on the Santa Fe Trail, the town was a social and cultural center in the late 1800s. Large flour mills and the county's only brewery—highly successful until Prohibition—put the town on the map. Nicknamed "Little Germany," Ellinwood reflects Old World culture and heritage in both architecture and traditions.

Visitor Highlights

- **Wolf Park Band Shell.** Built in 1930, the band shell is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- **Ellinwood Museum.** The Museum is housed in the 1887 Dick Building, which is listed on the Kansas State Historical Register. In addition to displays of regional history, the Museum offers tours, by appointment only, of the underground tunnels beneath the building, which preserve such features as Jung's Barber Shop with its original flooring, wallpaper, and barber's mirror. For information call 620-564-2400.
- **St. Joseph Catholic Church.** Topped by a 150-foot-high steeple, this church was built in 1902 of native limestone, quarried near Odin, Kansas. Inside, you'll see frescoes and a 1928 pipe organ, still in use. (across from Wolf Park Band Shell)

Visitor Services

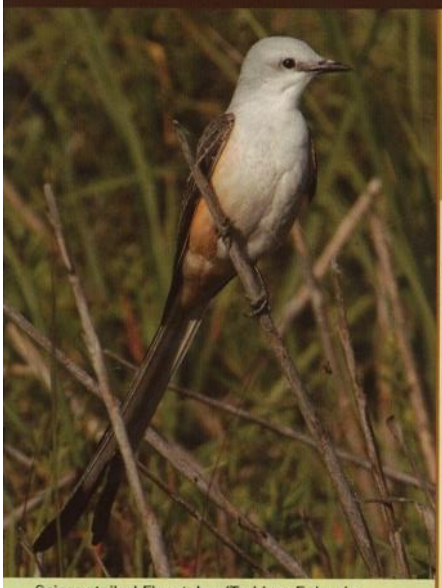
G ATM $ H ?

Ellinwood's Tunnels

Built in the late 1800s, the tunnels of Ellinwood have over the years, served many purposes, including underground storefronts, mud-free passageway across Main Street for ladies, out-of-the-way gathering place during Prohibition, and safe refuge during tornadoes. After the Second World War, separation walls were built to block access from one building to another. Then, in the summer of 1982, most of the remaining tunnels were filled with sand. The tunnels beneath the Dick Building are open for tours.

Site 13 - Ringering Campground and Nature Walk

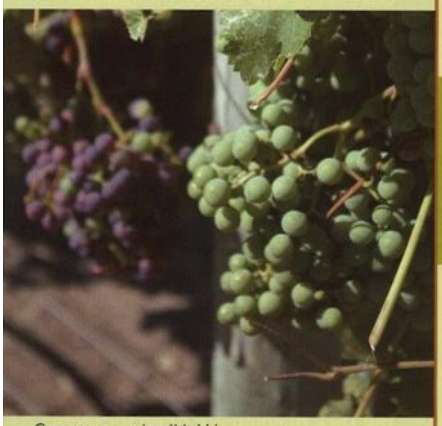
Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher/Ted Lee Eubanks

Site Description: Riparian Habitat; 312 SE 130 Avenue
Location: N38.31920 W-98.53538
Directions: Turn left onto S. Main Street, and drive 1.5 miles south. Turn right onto SE 20 Road. Go ½ mile west, and turn left onto SE 100 Avenue. Go south 1 mile, and turn left onto SE 30 Road. Drive 3 miles east, turn corner, and then turn left into the farmstead. Please stop by the farmhouse as you enter.

Far more than just a place to pitch your tent, Ringering Campground offers wonderful wildlife viewing opportunities. Located along the Arkansas River, Ringering encompasses beautiful and extensive riparian habitat. Before proceeding to the campground, please stop by the farmhouse. Trails lead visitors through woodlands of mulberry, hackberry, elm, and ash that rise above prairie grasses and wildflowers. Don't miss the opportunity to bird here—it's a perfect companion site to the wetland and prairie habitats of Quivira National Wildlife Refuge and Cheyenne Bottoms. Visitors are welcome to walk the trails even if they're not camping here. But don't miss the opportunity to camp here if you can. You won't find camper electricity or hookups, but you will find a delightful, peaceful getaway spot, equipped with restrooms and playground equipment.



Grapes on a vine/Makki

Site 14 - Dozier Winery

Site Description: Vineyards & Winery; 323 SE 80 Avenue
Location: N38.31920 W-98.62731
Directions: Turn right, then drive around corner back onto SE 30 Road. Drive 5 miles west, and turn left onto SE 80 Avenue. Winery will be on the right 1/4 mile south.

Bruce Dozier began making wine in his basement as a hobby in 1987. Eleven years later, it became a way of life, when he and his wife, Nina, planted a four-acre vineyard on their newly purchased property, and Dozier Winery was born. The Doziers grow eight varieties of grapes and bottle several wines, including Mystery River Red, Golden Melanie, and Kansas Sand Hill Plum Wine. The Doziers note that they're rekindling a Kansas tradition—before Prohibition, Kansas was among the top five wine-producing states in the country. Every afternoon from 1-6 pm, or by appointment, visitors can sample wines in a renovated Santa Fe train depot. What's more, their 48-acre property includes woods with foot paths and areas for picnicking, which the Doziers welcome visitors to explore. (620) 564-0195. www.dozier-winery.com.

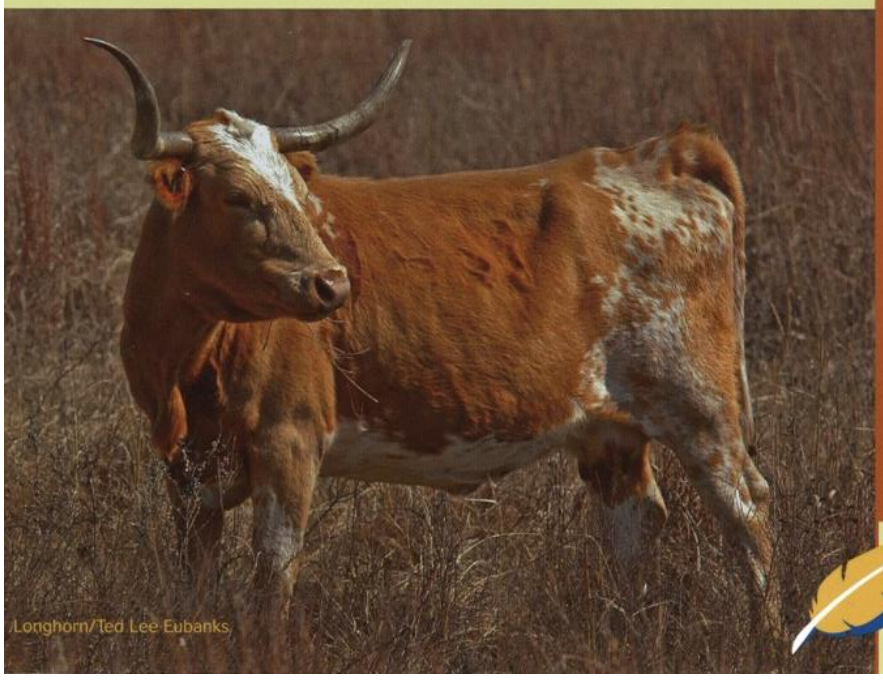
Site 15 - Miller Ranch Longhorn Cattle

Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway

Site Description: Cattle Grazing; 536 SE 50 Road
Location: N38.29004 W-98.67559
Directions: Turn left onto NE 80 Avenue. Turn left onto NE 30 Road. Drive 2 miles to the Byway. Turn left onto SE 60 Avenue. Drive 2 miles south. Turn right onto SE 50 Road. Miller Ranch will be on the right ½ mile west.

The Miller Ranch raises longhorns, a distinctive breed of cattle known, as their name suggests, for their impressive horns. Both bulls and cows sport the long, gracefully curving horns, which can measure six feet or more from tip to tip. Though the ranch is not open for general touring, as you look out over the pastures by the road, you may be treated to the sight of the longhorns grazing.

Longhorns figure prominently in Byway area history. Francisco Vasquez de Coronado, who explored this region in 1541, brought the first cattle to Texas. Some escaped to the wilds, and over generations, these hardy cattle developed into the longhorn, the only breed to evolve without human management. After the Civil War, cowboys drove millions of longhorns from Texas to Kansas rail yards, including Great Bend, for shipment to eastern markets.



Longhorn/Ted Lee Eubanks

Land of Plenty

"The province of Quivira is 950 leagues from Mexico. ... The country itself is the best I have ever seen... I found prunes like those of Spain, and nuts, and very good sweet grapes and mulberries. ..."

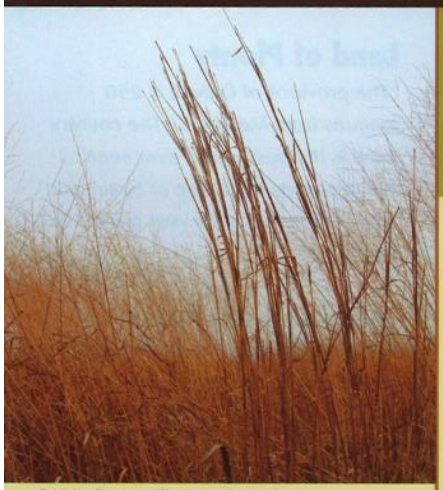
–Francisco Vasquez de Coronado, describing central Kansas in a letter to the King of Spain, 1541

Coronado's Search for Quivira

Francisco Vasquez de Coronado figures prominently in local history for far more than his introduction of cattle to Texas. In 1541, Coronado led an expedition from New Spain (Mexico) in search of North America's mythical golden city of Quivira. Coming up empty-handed in Texas and New Mexico, he continued north. Here in central Kansas, he reached his destination, though not his heart's desire. He found no gold, only fertile land and the thatched villages of the nomadic Wichita tribe, which he named "Quivira."

Site 16 - Prairie Shelterbelts

Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway



Prairie Grasses/Ted Lee Eubanks

Site Description: Correction Line Triangle
Location: N38.26203 W-98.66399
Directions: Turn left onto SE 50 Road. Turn right back onto Byway. Drive 2 miles south to county line.

The shelterbelts before you represent soil conservation in action. During the 1930s, prolonged drought and high winds ushered in the Dust Bowl era, also known as the Dirty Thirties. During this period, phenomenal soil erosion reduced soil fertility, polluted waterways, and damaged crops. Under President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the United States Department of Agriculture established the Soil Conservation Service and the Great Plains Shelterbelt Project to help farmers tackle soil erosion. One of their conservation tactics was to establish shelterbelts. They worked with farmers, Civilian Conservation Corps recruits, and Work Projects Administration crews to plant a variety of tree species in long rows like the ones you see here. Shelterbelts slowed the winds that dried and eroded soil and provided much needed work for local residents.

Prairie Ecology

Why, for thousands of years, have grasslands blanketed Kansas, and not trees? The prairie ecosystem has adapted to conditions that spell doom for most woody plants—low moisture, fire, and periods of intensive grazing. Unlike trees, prairie grasses and other non-woody plants maintain half their biomass below ground, in deep root systems. In the past, when fire or a herd of hungry bison swept through, prairie grassland species could quickly send up new shoots.

Shelterbelt/Diana Watson

The Dirty Thirties

Combine major drought, high summer temperatures, too much land under cultivation, and strong prairie winds. Throw in rock-bottom wheat prices and the Great Depression, and you have the recipe for the Dirty Thirties. In the 1930s, winds whipped Kansas topsoil into sun-darkening clouds. President Roosevelt's New Deal programs, like the WPA and CCC, helped local communities weather these hard times.

Site 17 - Mount Pleasant Church

Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway

Site Description: Historic Church and Wetlands; 2004 NE 30th Avenue
Location: N38.24620 W-98.69217
Directions: Turn right, and drive ½ mile west. Turn left, go 1 mile south, then turn Right. The church will be on the right 1 mile west.

This charming rural church is well worth a visit. In 1899, members of the United Brethren in Christ built the original church building for $900. In 1909, they added the church bell, and in 1916, the west wing and basement. Old silver maples grace the front church yard, and a small mixed grove of osage orange, northern catalpa, and black walnut stands behind the church, a draw for birds.

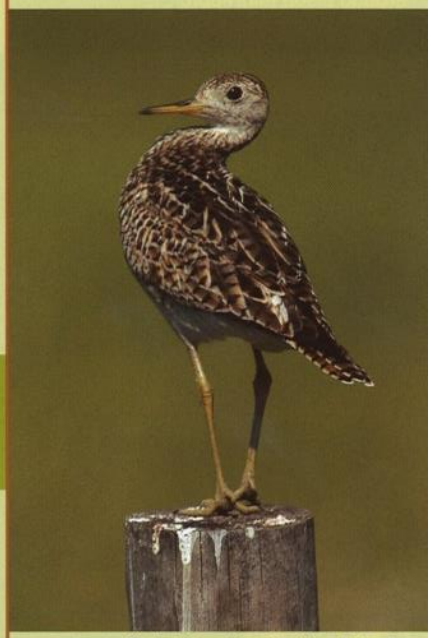
A short walk east of the church parking area, you'll find a small pond and creek. Though birds are perhaps the most eye-catching inhabitants of water habitats like this one, they're just part of the wetlands community. At least eight species of amphibians inhabit Byway wetlands, including barred tiger salamander, Plains spadefoot, northern cricket frog, western chorus frog, Plains leopard frog, Great Plains toad, Woodhouse's toad, and bullfrog.

Woodhouse Toad/Gary Stolz

Note to Travelers: CRP Grasslands

Location: N38.16405 W-98.67492
Directions: Turn right back onto the Byway (NE 40th Avenue). CRP grasslands are visible over next 6 miles.

The shelterbelts you saw at Site 16 are just one way to combat erosion and maintain soil health. Another way is to convert lands with highly erosive soil from crops to native grasses. The federal Conservation Reserve Program helps fund this process. Farmers receive an annual rental payment in exchange for converting environmentally sensitive cropland to vegetative cover, like native grasses. Not only does this process reduce erosion—it also establishes important wildlife habitat. CRP grasslands revegetation is a critical conservation practice for grassland birds like upland sandpiper, lark bunting, greater prairie-chicken, scissor-tailed flycatcher, Mississippi kite, and Harris's sparrow, as well as northern bobwhite (quail), ring-necked pheasant, and wild turkey. As you travel south along NE 40th Ave, watch for fields of native prairie grasslands (particularly on the east side of the road), planted through the Conservation Reserve Program.



Upland Sandpiper/Ted Lee Eubanks

Note to Travelers - Home on the Range

Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway

Native People of the Prairie

For thousands of years, the prairie's abundant plants and animals sustained the native people of this region. Bison, which roamed the Great Plains in immense herds, were a mainstay. Plains Indians made use of every part of the bison—for food, clothing, shelter, tools, ceremonial objects, and more, and organized their community life around bison migration.

As you drive south to site #18, you're passing through rolling prairie country. Sprinkled among the agricultural fields, you'll see patches of prairie grasslands, which give a sense of what the larger landscape looked like before Euro-American settlement. Native, mixed-grass prairie once overspread this region. Here, the tallgrass species of the eastern Great Plains intermix with shortgrass species of the drier western Great Plains. From spring until autumn, there are hundreds of prairie wildflower species that brighten this mixed-grass prairie, like prickly poppy, butterfly milkweed, blue wild indigo, and showy partridge pea. Along the way, you may spot some of the many birds that inhabit these grasslands, from upland sandpipers and lark buntings to scissor-tailed flycatchers and Harris's sparrows.

Osage Indian Boys/
Kansas State Historical Society

Butterfly Milkweed/USDA-NRCS

Medicinal Herbs and Wildflowers

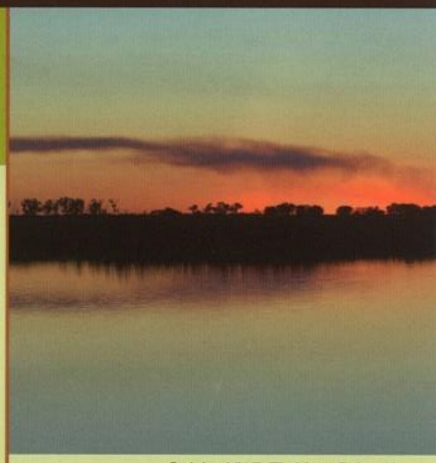
Plains Indians used many prairie plants for medicinal purposes. A poultice of common cattail root help heal wounds and burns. Cocklebur leaf tea counteracts kidney disease. Fleabane tea helps with stomach disorders. You'll find these medicinal plants, and dozens of others, along the Byway. You can pick up a brochure on Byway wildflowers at the Great Bend Convention and Visitors Bureau or download it from the Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway website.

Site 18 - Peace Church and Rural Cemeteries

Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway

Site Description: Historic Church and Cemetery; 492 NE 140th Street
Location: N38.15884 W-98.65792
Directions: Following the Byway signs, turn left onto NE 140th Street. The church will be on the left about 1 mile east.

In 1885, German settlers from Missouri and Illinois, newly settled in their Kansas homesteads, founded the Peace United Church of Christ. In 1886, they built the original church building, which was replaced with the current building in 1900. Originally, the current building had a tall steeple, but the tower was struck by lightning and burned in the 1920s, and was replaced with the current low-profile tower. For nearly 60 years, church services were held in German, a practice that ended after World War II, due to the difficulty of finding a bilingual pastor. The lovely Peace Church Cemetery, which dates from 1887, is just one of more than a dozen historic cemeteries along the Byway corridor. You'll find them marked on the Byway map.



Quivira NWR/Ted Lee Eubanks

Site 19 - Quivira Scenic Overlook

Site Description: Pull-off on north side of NE 140th Street
Location: N38.15846 W-98.56179
Directions: Turn left onto Byway. Drive 5 miles east, and turn left into Overlook.
Interpretive Panels: Quivira NWR, Birds of the Wetlands & Water, No Trees Allowed, Illusive Cities of Gold

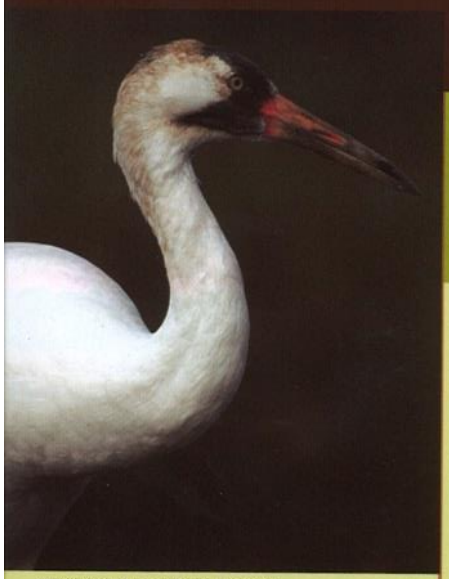
Quivira National Wildlife Refuge is one of those rare spots on Earth that displays a vast and timeless landscape—one that likely looks much as it did hundreds of years ago. Named a "Wetland of International Importance" by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, Quivira encompasses 22,000 acres of salt marshes, freshwater wetlands, woodlands, and prairie. Here, you can experience a landscape little changed from when Francisco Vasquez de Coronado camped here in 1541.

Quivira National Wildlife Refuge conserves land that sustains an astounding abundance of wildlife. Unlike nearby Cheyenne Bottoms, some of the marshes here are salty, since underground salt deposits leach into Rattlesnake Creek and nearby springs. Evaporation can make the marshes far saltier than the ocean. The salt flats around these marshes are the preferred breeding habitat for increasingly rare birds like the least tern and snowy plover. The Refuge is open daily from dawn until dusk.

Mourning Dove/Ted Lee Eubanks

Site 20 - Sleeper Artesian Well

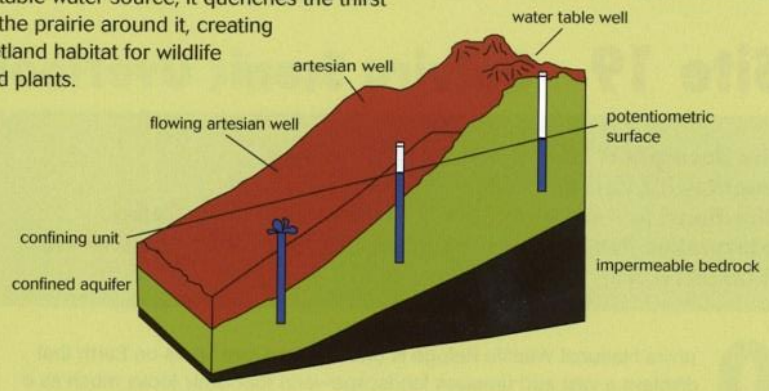
Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway



Whooping Crane/Ryan Hagerty

Site Description: Pull-off on south side of NE 140th Street
Location: N38.15826 W98.54441
Directions: Turn left onto Byway. Well will be on the right about 1 mile east.

This flowing artesian well spills a steady supply of water onto the lowland in which it sits, recharging the wetland around it. Artesian wells form when underground water, topped with a waterproof layer of silt or clay, releases its water to the surface at an elevation that is lower than the source of that groundwater. When this well was drilled, the drill penetrated the impermeable layer and released the water below. In 1942, the flow from this well was measured at six gallons per minute. In 2005, the flow was recorded at one gallon per minute. Though the Sleeper Well is no longer considered a potable water source, it quenches the thirst of the prairie around it, creating wetland habitat for wildlife and plants.



Whooping Crane

More than 300 bird species visit Quivira each year, including endangered whooping cranes. Your best chance of seeing them is between mid-October and late November, as they head south along their migration route. The whooping cranes may make a return visit in mid-March through mid-April on their way north to nesting areas.

Managing for Wildlife

Quivira NWR is managed primarily to provide migratory waterfowl with food, water, and shelter. Other migratory birds, endangered species, and resident wildlife, such as deer and pheasant, also benefit from these habitat management programs, which include cooperative farming, rotational grazing, prescribed burning, and water control.

Site 21 - Big Salt Marsh - Quivira Wildlife Drive

Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway

Site Description: Quivira Big Salt Marsh Loop Drive; south of NE 170th Street
Location: N38.20188 W-98.53924
Directions: Turn right onto Byway, and drive 3 miles east. Turn left, and go 3 miles north. Turn left, and drive about 2.5 west. Turn left onto drive.

This four-mile loop drive offers spectacular wildlife viewing around Big Salt Marsh. Try to schedule your explorations for early morning or late afternoon, when wildlife is most active. You can download a driving guide from the Refuge website (www.fws.gov/quivira) or pick one up at the Visitor Center. Along the route, you'll find an accessible spotting scope mounted on a viewing platform. In summer, you're likely to see nesting species like snowy plovers, American avocets, black-necked stilts, and white-faced ibis. What's more, a colony of endangered least terns nests on the salt flats along Big Salt Marsh. In any season, this loop drive is rewarding—visitors who return in each season witness a constantly changing palette of plants and wildlife.

There are no facilities along the driving loop.

Quivira NWR/Ted Lee Eubanks

Snowy Plover

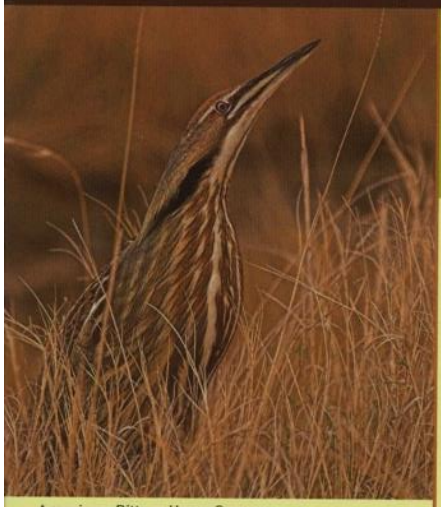
Quivira National Wildlife Refuge offers great opportunities to see this uncommon shorebird. Unlike many of the shorebirds that migrate through Byway wetlands, snowy plovers remain here to nest along the salt flats of Big Salt Marsh. Though the snowy plover blends well with its surroundings, you'll see it darting across the salt flats as it forages for invertebrates.

Maintaining Big Salt Marsh

Twenty-one miles of canals and numerous water control structures divert water to more than 34 Refuge wetlands, including Big Salt Marsh. With these canals and water control structures, Refuge staff can influence the types of plants that grow in the wetlands. For example, by manipulating the water levels, large stands of cattails that have limited value to wildlife can be replaced by waterfowl food plants.

Site 22 - Quivira Environmental Education Classroom

Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway



American Bittern/Jerry Segraves

Site Description: Quivira NWR, near Park Smith Lake
Location: N38.14590 W-98.49176
Directions: Turn right off Drive. Go east about 2 miles. Turn right, and drive 4 miles south (across the Byway). Classroom will be on the right.

The diverse wildlands surrounding this Environmental Education Classroom building offer superb wildlife viewing. Here, you'll find cattail marshes, an old cottonwood grove, widespread grasslands, and more. Though Quivira is understandably famous for its wetlands, the largest habitat type on the Refuge is actually grasslands, which cover 13,000 acres. These areas provide excellent cover, nesting, and feeding habitat for ground-nesting bird species such as quail and meadowlarks. They're also hunting grounds for coyotes and numerous species of raptors such as red-tailed, Cooper's, and sharp-shinned hawks. Watch for white-tailed deer and other upland mammals.

You'll find fully accessible restrooms (7:30 am to 4:00 pm M-F) just outside the Environmental Classroom building. South of the Education building, you'll find an accessible photography blind near the Migrants Mile Interpretive Walking Trail.

Migrants Mile Interpretive Walking Trail

Just south of the Environmental Education Classroom is the 1.2-mile nature trail known as Migrants Mile. The trail loops through shaded woodlands, along marshy edges, and through native grasslands. A boardwalk crosses a large marsh, where you'll have the chance to see plenty of shorebirds and waterfowl. The trail forms a double loop, one of which is wheelchair-accessible.

Prairie Coyote/Jerry Segraves

Note to Travelers

To reach Site 23 (the Quivira Visitor Center), you can either return to the Byway by driving north to NE 140th St. or continue south on the refuge's dirt road. When you travel the Byway between sites 22 and 23, you'll cross over Peace Creek at the east end of NE 70th Street. Beavers frequent this stretch of the creek. Watch for signs of their activity—chiseled stumps, chewed logs, and dams.

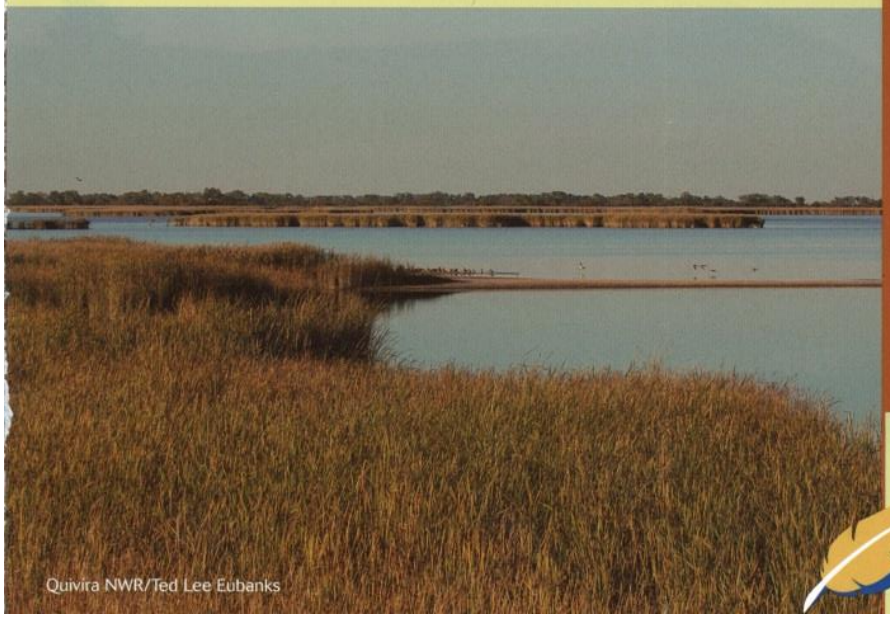
Site 23 - Quivira Visitor Center & Little Salt Marsh

Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway

Site Description: Headquarters and Visitor Center; 1434 NE 80th Street
Location: N38.07097 W-98.49081
Directions: Turn right and follow the signs through the Refuge about 8 miles. Turn left to the Visitor Center.
Interpretive Panels: WWNSB Welcome

Located in the Refuge Headquarters building, the Visitor Center is full of hands-on displays for children and adults. Interpretive exhibits focus on Refuge wildlife and habitats. At the west side of the Visitor Center, you'll find the 1,000-foot Birdhouse Boulevard, a fully accessible walking trail lined with a variety of birdhouses. Nearby, children ages 14 and under can fish at the Kids Fishing Pond, which is equipped with an accessible pier.

Situated on the south end of Little Salt Marsh, the Visitor Center area affords fantastic birding. From the accessible observation tower, you'll gain a sweeping view of the marsh and its wildlife. The Visitor Center is open from 7:30 am to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday. Here, you can talk with staff about wildlife sightings and pick up refuge brochures, including bird lists, hunting and fishing information, and more. Restrooms available.



Quivira NWR/Ted Lee Eubanks

American White Pelican

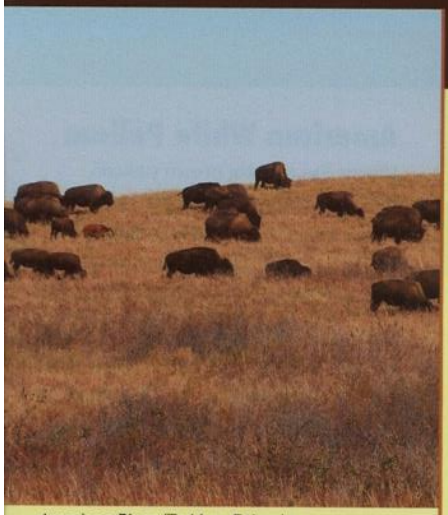
Unlike the coastal brown pelican, the American white pelican does not dive for fish. Rather, it dips its head underwater to scoop up fish in its long bill, which is equipped with an extendible pouch. Watch for pelicans fishing cooperatively—they move into a circle to concentrate fish, and then dip their heads under simultaneously to catch them.

Quivira's Hunting History

Shortly after the turn of the century, commercial hunting at Quivira provided wagon loads of waterfowl to restaurants in eastern cities. As commercial hunting declined, local hunting clubs became established here. These clubs bought portions of Quivira's marshlands, protecting waterfowl habitat from further development. In 1955, the federal government purchased these lands to create Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, conserving both wildlife habitat and the hunting tradition.

Note to Travelers - Prairie Dunes

Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway



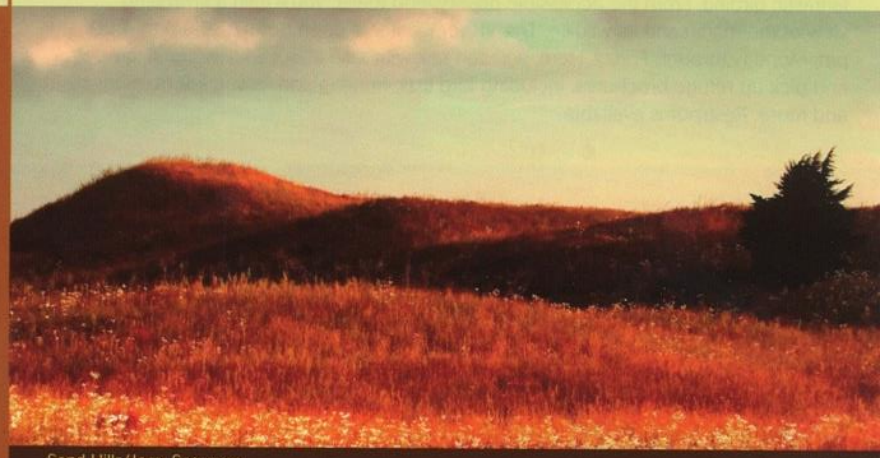
American Bison/Ted Lee Eubanks

The rolling sandhills you're driving through as you explore this section of the Byway are part of what's known as the Great Bend Prairie, which stretches from Dodge City to Wichita. Formed relatively recently (during the past 1,000 years) from the sand, silt, and clay deposits of the Arkansas River, these prairie dunes have been sculpted by the wind, creating a topography of dunes and depressions.

Historically, tallgrass prairie covered the wetter, eastern third of Kansas. Short-grass prairie covered the dry, western third. Here in central Kansas, the two prairie communities mix. Although most native prairie has been converted to agriculture, you can still see mixed-grass prairie at several sites along the Byway. In these grasslands, you have the rare chance to see "sibling" bird species—closely related species like eastern and western meadowlarks and eastern and western kingbirds—which overlap only in a narrow sliver of the Great Plains.

American Bison

This prairie landscape was home to some of America's iconic wildlife species, the American bison. American bison migrated through this part of Kansas by the millions. In 1871, one herd reported from southwest of Dodge City included an estimated four million individuals. Unsustainable hunting in the 1800s wiped out these immense herds. By 1900, roughly 1,000 wild bison remained in this country. Today, thanks to the work of conservationists, ranchers, and wildlife managers, bison populations have rebounded.



Sand Hills/Jerry Segraves

Rattlesnake Creek

On your way to Hudson, you'll cross over Rattlesnake Creek on NE 80th Ave. This spring-fed stream meanders east into Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, where it empties into Little Salt Marsh. This year-round water source is the lifeblood of Quivira's wetlands.

Site 24 - Hudson

Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway

Site Description: City Park
Location: N38.10066 W-98.65997
Directions: Turn left out of Center. Go about 1 mile south, and turn right onto Byway (NE 70th Street). Drive 6 miles west, and turn right onto NE 80th Avenue. Go 3 miles north, and turn left onto NE 100th Street. Drive 3 miles, turn right onto Main Street., and go north two blocks.
Interpretive Panels: WWNSB Welcome, Cultivating America's Bread Basket

When Daniel Updegraff homesteaded here in 1886, he built a sod house on a hill nearby and set to work platting a new town site. In 1887, he incorporated the new town, naming it Hudson after the Hudson Bay Company, with which he had been associated back east. The following year, the Denver, Memphis & Atlantic Railroad laid tracks through the fledgling town, spurring settlement. In 1904, Gustav Krug and Otto Sonderregger created the Hudson Milling Company, building a small mill that could produce 75 barrels of flour a day. Renamed Stafford County Flour Mills Company in 1909, the mill remains a vital community industry, producing millions of pounds of flour annually.

Visitor Highlights

- **Hudson City Park.** Take a break from your travels at the city park. Children's play equipment and picnic gazebo available.
- **Stafford County Flour Mills Co.** With an appointment, you can tour Hudson's dominant industry and learn how local wheat becomes top-quality flour. See Site #25 for detailed information.

Visitor Services

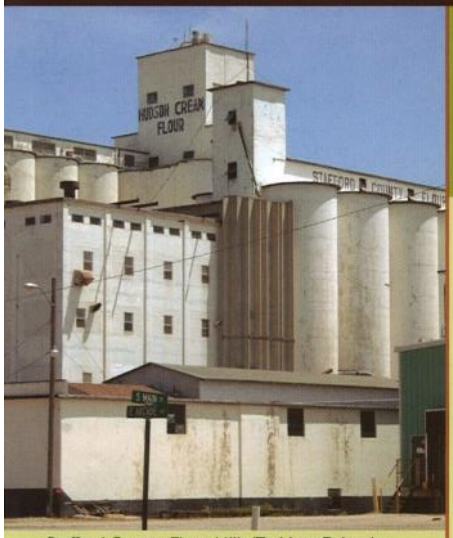
America's Bread Basket

When settlers came to the prairie in the 1870s, they learned from the land that grasses grew better than any other crop here. In 1874, Russian Mennonite immigrants brought seeds of Turkey Red winter wheat from the Russian steppes. Well suited to this climate, Turkey Red and its varieties soon dominated Kansas wheat production and still make up half the state's wheat crop.

Wheat and silo/Ted Lee Eubanks

Site 25 - Stafford County Flour Mills Co.

Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway



Stafford County Flour Mills/Ted Lee Eubanks

Site Description: Flour Mill; 108 S. Church Street, Hudson
Location: N38.10291 W-98.65970
Directions: Drive east one block.

One of the last independent flour mills in the United States has made its home in Hudson for almost 100 years. Using a "short patent" milling process common a century ago, the mill produces a smooth flour that produces light, fluffy baked goods. The mill's products are recognized for the distinctive cow logo on their Hudson Cream Flour packaging. The mill's founder chose a Jersey cow and the word "cream" to symbolize the white richness, smooth texture, and high quality of his mill's flour. Tours are available. (620) 458-4121. You can also visit their web site at www.hudsoncream.com.

Black-tailed Prairie Dog/Ted Lee Eubanks

Note to Travelers: McCandless Prairie Dog Town

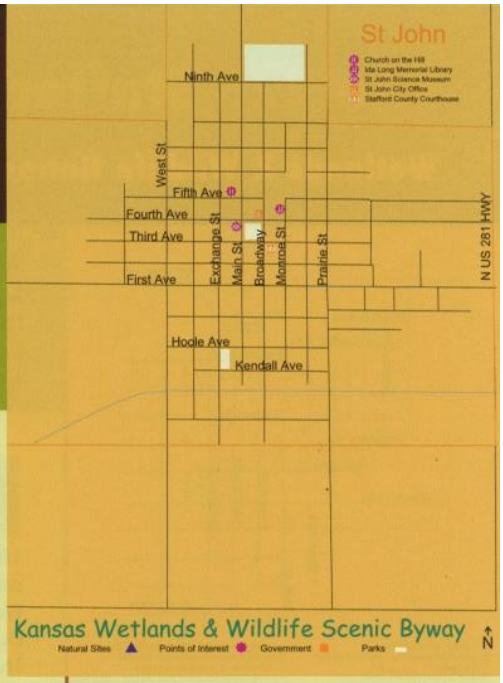
Location: N38.04303 W-98.74753

As you drive south on US 281 to St. John, watch for the McCandless prairie dog town to your west. Home to scores of black-tailed prairie dogs, the "town" stands out on the landscape, a wide area of bare ground pocked with mounded holes that mark burrow entrances. Prairie dogs live socially, working together to raise young, construct burrows, and defend their territory. Many animals utilize their interconnected burrows, including snakes and burrowing owls. A key species in prairie ecology, prairie dogs are eaten by badgers, coyotes, snakes, foxes, bobcats, golden eagles, and various hawks. Sites like this one are increasingly rare—today, prairie dogs inhabit less than five percent of their former range, displaced by agriculture and development.

Site 26 - St. John

Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway

Site Description: The Stafford County Courthouse grounds; 209 N. Broadway
Location: N38.00240 W-98.74731
Directions: Turn right onto NE 100th Street, and drive 4.5 miles west. Turn left onto US-281 Highway. Go 7 miles south, and turn right onto First Avenue. Drive west to Main Street or Broadway. Turn right, and go 2 blocks north.
Interpretive Panels: WWNSB Welcome, Surviving the Dirty Thirties



In 1875, William Bickerton of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints brought 35-40 Mormon families here and founded a religious community named Zion Valley. By 1879, Zion Valley had grown into a small town, and the residents renamed it St. John, after then-governor John P. St. John, in the hopes of gaining the county seat of Stafford County. Their bid was successful, and St. John became the permanent county seat in 1882. St. John's economy centers around cattle ranching, farming, and oil production.

Visitor Highlights

- **St. John Science Museum.** Created by retired St. John High School teacher, James Hood (in the Kansas Teachers' Hall of Fame), this wonderful museum is chock-full of hands-on displays that bring science to life for children and adults alike.
- **Ida Long Goodman Memorial Library.** Built and dedicated in 1969, this library was the first in Kansas to combine the public school and community libraries, a fruitful collaboration that yields extensive library services.
- **Church on the Hill.** The first building erected in St. John was a small Mormon church, known as the "Church on the Hill." A church elder blessed St. John and said that as long as a member of the Mormon faith lived here, the town would never be destroyed by a cyclone. This historic building now serves as an office for the Mormon Church.
- **WPA Project.** The WPA constructed the St. John High School.

Visitor Services

G ATM $?

Note to Travelers

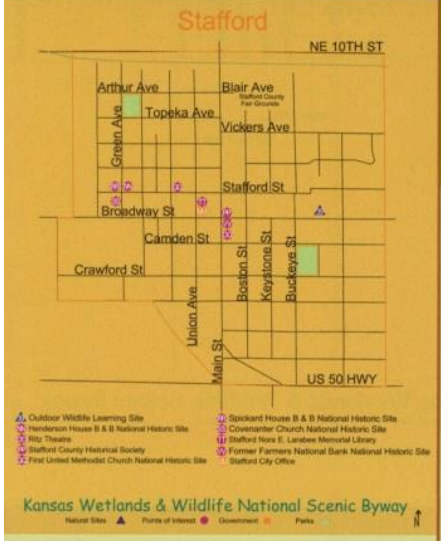
On US-50, between St. John and Stafford, you'll find a rest area adjacent to an RV park.

Martin Cemetery

After the Civil War, St. John offered the chance for a new life to hundreds of African Americans seeking freedom from persecution. In 1868, the first African American settlers arrived in Stafford County, and by 1914, between 300 and 400 African Americans lived here. Though very few of the descendents of those early families remain in the area, the African American Martin Cemetery holds the memory of their pioneering spirit.

Site 27 - Stafford

Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway



Site Description: Stafford County Historical Society; 100 N. Main Street, Stafford
Location: N37.95493 W-98.60024
Directions: Turn right onto US-281 Highway. Drive 3 miles south, and turn left onto US-50 Highway. Go 8 miles east, and turn left onto Main Street. Go 7 blocks north
Interpretive Panels: WWNSB Welcome, Home on the Range

First known as Sod Town, Stafford was, like most prairie settlements, initially built from sod. Frame buildings soon joined the sod homes, and in 1885, with a population of 300, the town incorporated. The winter of 1886 brought one of the worst blizzards on record, devastating the regional cattle industry. But spring brought renewed hope, as the Chicago, Kansas & Western Railroad line reached Stafford, sparking community-wide celebrations. During the oil boom of the 1930s, Stafford's population swelled to 3,500. Though the population diminished when oil production slowed, oil remains a central part of the local economy.

Visitor Highlights

- **Stafford County Historical Museum.** This 21-room museum holds one of the largest collections of glass negatives in the country.
- **Nora E. Larabee Memorial Library.** Even if you don't want to check out a book, be sure to visit the Nora E. Larabee Memorial Library at 108 N. Union. This red brick building sports gargoyle rain spouts, ornate 20-foot tin ceilings, and a gorgeous stained-glass window.
- **National Historic Sites.** Stroll down Stafford Street to see the town's many beautiful historic buildings, including Henderson House, First United Methodist Church (Frank Lloyd Wright Design), Spickard House, the former Farmers National Bank Building, and Covenanter Church.

Visitor Services

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Kansas Crude

The industrial heartbeat of this part of Kansas is the "ka-thump ka-thump" of pumping units sucking crude oil out of the ground. Pumps dot the landscape along much of the Byway. Oil production began in this part of Kansas around 1930, peaking in the 1950s. Oil and gas production remains important to the regional economy; in 2006, more than 3,200 oil wells and 177 gas wells operated in Barton and Stafford Counties.

Who We Are

The Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway traverses Barton, Reno, and Stafford counties, connecting the communities of Claflin, Ellinwood, Great Bend, Hoisington, Hudson, St. John, and Stafford. Partners include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, the Kansas Department of Transportation, and The Nature Conservancy.

Kansas Scenic Byway System

The Kansas Scenic Byways Program was formed to identify and designate scenic roadways in Kansas that possess outstanding natural, social, cultural and/or economic values. The program is a cooperative effort among private citizens, local groups, local governments and state government agencies. Some Kansas Scenic Byways, like the Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway, receive additional recognition as National Scenic Byways, as described below.

The National Scenic Byway System

Established in 1991, the National Scenic Byway Program recognizes certain roads as National Scenic Byways based on their archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities. National Scenic Byways are special routes offering travelers access to the beautiful scenery and cultural and natural riches of our country.

For more information about the Byway and surrounding communities contact:

Great Bend Convention and Visitors Bureau
3007 10th St.
Great Bend, KS 67530
www.visitgreatbend.com
620-792-2750
toll free 877-427-9299

Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway Committee
Barton County Courthouse
1400 Main Street, Room 107
Great Bend, Kansas 67530
www.KansasWetlandsandWildlifeScenicByway.com
620-793-1800
Toll free 877-419-7171

Quivira NWR/Jerry Segraves

KANSAS
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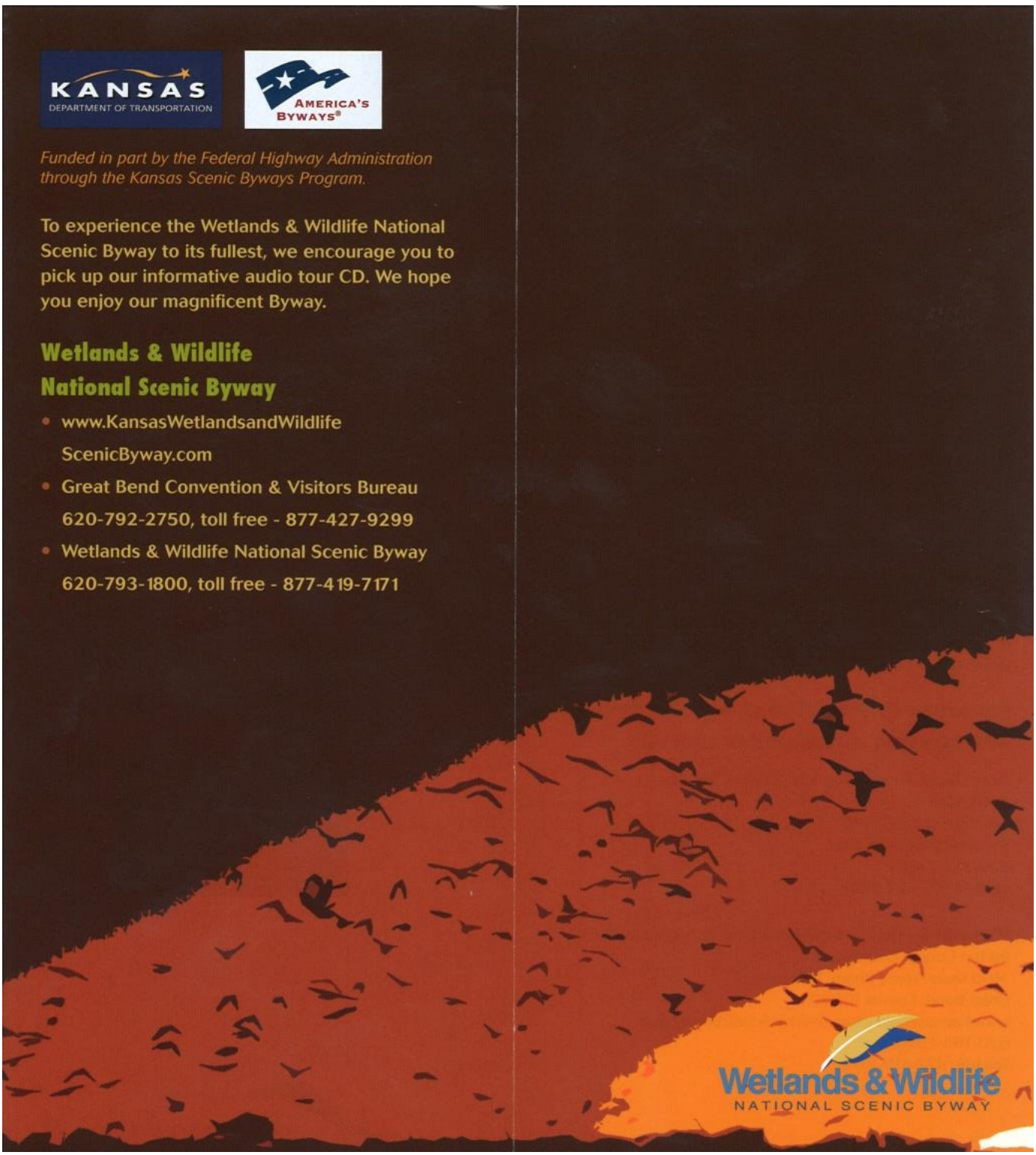
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