

Byway Fact Sheet

Nature Conservancy's Cheyenne Bottoms Preserve

Between 1955 and 1978, about 40 percent of the wetlands in Kansas disappeared. The loss of those wetlands and others throughout the world caused populations of some shorebird species — starved for water, food and nesting sites — to shrink by 60 to 80 percent. The Nature Conservancy's Cheyenne Bottoms Preserve is a step toward reversing these trends.

Population: Nearly one-half of all North American shorebirds migrating east of the Rocky Mountains and up to one-quarter million waterfowl stop at Cheyenne Bottoms to rest and feed during seasonal migrations. The shallow marshes — averaging less than one foot deep — are ideal habitats for wading shorebirds.

If it is true that the early bird gets the worm, Cheyenne Bottoms is the place to be. Bloodworms, the larvae form of the midge and the main food source for migrating shorebirds at Cheyenne Bottoms occur here in amazing numbers – 50 to 100 insects per square inch in mucky areas across the marsh. The worms are loaded with fat and nutrients which fortify the birds for their long flights ahead. Some birds will fly as far as the Arctic Circle without another significant stop.

Things To See and Do



- Bird Watching
- Photography
- Cycling
- Hiking



The public is welcome at The Nature Conservancy's preserve.

An observation tower is available for public use, located south of K- 4 between the two large marshes to offer an elevated view of the wetlands.

“Without this important nesting area, many of our migrant shorebirds would be in more trouble. Ninety percent of North America's population of Long-billed Dowitchers, Baird's Sandpipers, Wilson's Phalaropes, and White-rumped Sandpipers go through this outstanding and beautiful oasis of marshes on the journey from South America back to the Arctic.”

--Nancy Leo, President, Kansas Ornithological Society.