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Winged Expressions at Horn's Ferry

Communities throughout Iowa and the Midwest continue to celebrate the successful conservation efforts resulting in the return of a healthy nesting population of Bald Eagles, along with osprey, trumpeter swans and many other species of wildlife. In our area, these successes are linked to better water quality, respect for wildlife, habitat conservation and education along the Des Moines River corridor.

The historic Horn's Ferry Bridge located down river from the Lake Red Rock Dam is managed by the Marion County Conservation Board. Thousands of people visit Horn's Ferry and the scenic offerings surrounding the Des Moines River annually. Horn's Ferry Bridge was Marion County's first wagon bridge over the Des Moines River. The bridge was built in 1881 and became a pivotal link in the county's commercial and transportation network development. In 1992, 300 feet of the bridge folded into the river. What remains of the bridge has continued to serve as an observation vantage point noted in birding and local tourism guides.

The Gladys Black Eagle Refuge, located across the river from the bridge, is noted for the diversity of bird species and historic roost sites of the eagles. Spring migration brings many unique species that breed and nest along the corridor, but live the other half of the year around the Gulf of Mexico and South/Central America. Photographers, birders, hikers, tour busses, school events and many others visit this bridge as a birding observation destination.

Conservation board staff applied for the Marion County Community Foundation Grant in Spring 2013 for an opportunity to connect the historic bridge and observation vantage point to a higher "destination" level. The Marion County Conservation Board was awarded \$2,500 from this grant and proceeded to work on artistic design with James Washington of Knoxville Manufacturing. The sculpture adds a nice setting for families and youth visiting the bridge area, creating conversation and interaction. The "expressions" and characteristics of the birds that can be viewed on the river or flying above are truly captured in the sculpture. A new interpretive sign has also been placed on the bridge noting conservation efforts and the importance of the river corridor and its communities.





Waters a common thread to Life

Importance of the River Corridor
Just as our rivers and streams intertwine with humans and wildlife, our waters lead to our planet's global connectivity. The many roles of river and stream corridors are some of our nation's most valuable resources.

Conservation Efforts

Conservation efforts for the 36-year-old Upper Meritt Lake Dam have been underway since 2010. The dam is being replaced with a new, more environmentally friendly structure. This project will improve habitat for fish and wildlife, reduce sediment in the river, and provide a more scenic view of the river.

While you may not see all the wildlife during your visit to Meritt Lake Dam, there is always a chance to see some that you may not see in a typical day.

Golden Sparrow
Pileated Woodpecker
Indiana Bat
Paddlefish

American White Pelican

Blue Jay
Osprey

Bald Eagle

Trumpeter Swan
River Otter

Trumpeter Swan

Trumpeter Swan

Trumpeter Swan

- ✓ Aquatic: 100% Species
- ✓ Birds: 20% Species
- ✓ Fish: 25% Species
- ✓ Plants: 15% Species
- ✓ Reptiles: 10% Species
- ✓ Amphibians: 10% Species
- ✓ Mammals: 10% Species

Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

