

# Lake Helena IBA

*Important Bird Areas are key sites that provide essential habitat for threatened, unique, or particularly abundant species, during breeding, migration, or winter seasons*



**Clay-colored Sparrows** and **Bobolink** rely on habitats within this IBA.

Lake Helena Important Bird Area (2,072 hectares) is a shallow back-water created in 1906 by the development of Hauser Dam. Lake Helena is the largest under-developed marsh and wetland site in the Helena Valley. The site's open water is surrounded by riparian cottonwood and willow vegetation, native prairie, marshland, hay meadows and pasture.

These features, in addition to its location on the boundary between the Central and Pacific migratory flyway, make the area important for both migratory and breeding birds. Where Ten Mile Creek empties into the lake, a unique delta with gravel and sandbar features attracts migratory shorebirds. Over 170 species have been recorded using the habitat, including species of concern like

Long-billed Curlew, Bobolink, and Great Blue Heron that choose the site for nesting. A pair of Bald Eagles also regularly nest there. A Wildlife Management Area lying just northwest of the lake provides hunting and recreation access, though there are some seasonal closures to protect waterfowl. Urbanization, non-native carp, and water pollution are the greatest local threats to the area.





# Lake Helena

## Important Bird Area



Photo by Janice Miller



### Notable bird species associated with the IBA

- > American White Pelican
- > Bald Eagle
- > Bobolink
- > Clay-colored Sparrow
- > Forster's Tern
- > Franklin's Gull
- > Long-billed Curlew
- > Willow Flycatcher
- > Wilson's Phalarope
- > Yellow-headed Blackbird

Coordinated by BirdLife International, the Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program is a global initiative aimed at identifying and conserving the most important places for birds. The IBA Program's foundation is an emphasis on science-based identification, assessment, and conservation of birds and the habitats needed to survive. IBAs rely on local stewardship and focus on engaging individuals, private landowners, local communities, businesses, partner organizations, and government agencies in site conservation. Important Bird Area designation does not confer legal or regulatory status to a site. Instead, participation in conservation is voluntary on the part of landowners and land managers. IBA boundaries serve as an initial spatial guide and help identify areas that warrant prioritization for protection and conservation actions. You can help with the conservation of this IBA by submitting your bird observations through Montana Natural Heritage Program or at [ebird.org](http://ebird.org), an online bird sighting database.



For more information contact Montana Audubon Conservation  
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