As the Byway moves through glistening wetlands exploding with wildlife, endless blue skies and the changing color of prairie grasses and trees, you’ll also find the charm and vibrancy of the rural communities shaped by nature and the entrepreneurial spirit. Along the Byway you’ll discover Great Bend and the Central Kansas Raptor Rehab Education Facility, the railroad town of Hoisington, and the underground tunnels at Ellinwood. Travel the Byway and be amazed at the wonder and variety of Kansas’ natural landscape.

For more information about the Wetlands and Wildlife Scenic Byway contact:
Great Bend Convention and Visitors Bureau 1-877-427-9299 or www.visitgreatbend.com
Kansas Scenic Byways Clearinghouse 1-800-684-6966 or ksbyways.org

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The long-billed curlew is the largest shorebird in North America.

A flock of sandhill cranes in flight as sunset comes to the wetlands.

Travel the Wetlands and Wildlife Scenic Byway brings you face-to-bill with North America’s grandest collection of avian species. Stretching some 77 miles from beginning to end, the Wetlands and Wildlife Scenic Byway reveals a natural experience that is second to none.

“A Birds of Prey” demonstration during National Wildlife Refuge Week in October.

A Birdwatcher’s Paradise Awaits

The Byway is anchored by two of the largest wetland ecosystems in the world – Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge. These giant marshes draw clouds of sandhill cranes, squadrons of pelicans, fierce and majestic bald and golden eagles, scurrying shorebirds, elegant whooping cranes and many more waterbirds.

Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area

Each year, Cheyenne Bottoms attracts 45% to 90% of North America’s shorebirds. In fact, in the words of a Byway area naturalist, “There are 650 bird species in the United States, 417 in Kansas and 320 in Cheyenne Bottoms.” Many naturalists believe that Cheyenne Bottoms is the most important migration stopover point in the Western hemisphere.

Besides birds, the Bottoms is also home to 23 species of mammals, 19 species of reptiles and 9 species of amphibians sharing the 41,000 acre wetland basin.

Quivira National Wildlife Refuge

Quivira National Wildlife Refuge is 22,135 acres of prairie grass, salt marshes, sand dunes, canals, dikes and timber. Little Salt Marsh and Big Salt Marsh are ancient basins that play host to over 500,000 birds during spring migration. The marsh waters teem with crabs, crayfish and frogs while prairie dogs scatter in the face of the Refuge’s population of predators including raptors, coyotes, red foxes, bobcats and badgers.

The Refuge has an educational Visitors Center, as well as several hiking trails including the wheelchair accessible Migrant’s Mile Nature Trail and the gentle and scenic Birdhouse Boulevard to bring you closer to nature.

The Nature Conservancy Cheyenne Bottoms Preserve

The Nature Conservancy Cheyenne Bottoms Preserve located in the Cheyenne Bottoms basin northwest of the Wildlife Area, encompasses 7,200 acres. Like the Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, it is a jewel in nature’s crown. These wetlands have received designation as Ramsar Convention Wetlands of International Importance.

The wildlife areas which anchor this byway provide an ideal habitat for coyotes.