



Clark Street Beach Bird Sanctuary

Clark Street and Sheridan Road
Evanston, IL 60201

clarkstreetbeachbirdsanctuary.org

Fall 2020

Welcome from the Sanctuary Stewards

Welcome to the first edition of the Clark Street Beach Bird Sanctuary Newsletter. This fall we are celebrating five years since the first planting of native plants to attract and support migrating birds along Lake Michigan in Evanston. The original design by Kettelkamp and Kettelkamp was installed in October 2015. Since spring of 2016, dedicated volunteers— 62 during the past year—have nurtured those plants, removed invasive weeds, identified and cared for native plants that came in spontaneously, and added a diverse collection of Lake Michigan beach plants. We offer this newsletter to share what's happening at the beach with the broader Evanston community.

~ Julie Dorfman and Jerry Herst

Discovering New Plants

Since plants grow best in communities, we have strived to learn which plants are natural neighbors. We have introduced native plants that will augment our original plantings and have welcomed others that arrived on their own. Fostering this plant biodiversity supports a wide variety of insects which, in turn, both pollinate our plants and support the nutritional needs of our migrating and resident bird populations.



One of the many pleasures of working at the Clark Street Beach Bird Sanctuary is noticing plants that have spread well beyond where we planted them, like the bright purple Liatris, also called Blazing Star shown here. Even more exciting is finding native plants brought to our site by wind, water, visiting birds, other animals or insects.

For example, in 2017, we found a few Trailing Wild Bean plants in the northern section of the sanctuary. By this year, we found them in lots of places, even south of the beach house. In late summer, we had dozens of bean plants with healthy- looking beans. However, the beach is full of surprises. By fall, our lush growth of beans had disappeared, probably into the tummies of cottontail rabbits!



This year we were lucky to have the opportunity to work with Dr. Glenn Adelson, Associate Professor of Environmental Studies at Lake Forest College. An Evanston resident, he generously helped us identify more of our spontaneous plants. Some are highly prized and welcome natives, and some are opportunistic Eurasian “invasives” that need to be pulled. He has been most helpful with difficult to identify grasses and sedges. Thank you, Dr. Adelson.

Bird Sightings

Bird Sanctuary volunteers often focus on plants—but a key reason is to create a welcoming place for birds. Members of the Evanston North Shore Bird Club regularly visit the area and record observations on eBird at <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L3615041>. As of November 2020, 193 bird species had been sighted within the Bird Sanctuary itself, nearby, or flying overhead!

The picture below, taken by a Bird Club monitor, shows a Northern Mockingbird she spotted flying from the bird sanctuary into the nearby park on May 28, 2020. This find is noteworthy because this bird is currently rare for our area; only 5 other sightings of this bird at Clark Street Beach have been recorded on eBird. Interestingly, looking at various bird guidebooks with different publication dates and at the citizen scientist sightings entered on eBird, it seems that this bird's range is moving north. Perhaps more of them will visit us next year.



Northern Mockingbird. Photo by Tamima Itani.

Storms and High Waters

Last winter the rising lake waters and storms took out our eastern boundary fence, which had been at least 50 feet from the water line when first installed in 2015. With the fence gone, our Bird Sanctuary was more exposed to “invasives” of a different sort. Rather than weeds, these “invasives” are mammals! We are not sure if the downed fence was the reason we now have a population of rabbits (see the story on New Plants), but we do know that the beavers living on the Northwestern campus were delighted to find our cottonwood trees.



Beaver damage

Adjusting to COVID-19

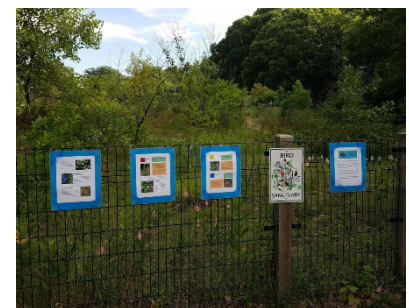


Workdays in 2020 changed in several ways due to COVID-19 restrictions. Following guidance from the City of Evanston, we limited the number of people at the Bird Sanctuary. We also

asked volunteers to sign up in advance for workdays. Volunteers were encouraged to bring their own tools and gloves and not share with others. Face masks were required. We felt lucky to be able to contribute to the community and the environment while working outdoors in such a special spot!

Educating our Community

“What are all the flags for?” That’s a question we get a lot from people walking by the Bird Sanctuary. This year, after putting in new flowering plants near the northern boundary of the sanctuary, we added some signs. These told passersby that we use flags to identify new plants so that we can give them special monitoring and care. The signs explained what plant each flag color indicated and gave a bit more information about each of these plants.



Other newly installed signs mark bird sanctuary borders. They explain that we are trying to create a natural habitat and ask that people—and dogs—help us by staying out. We look forward to restarting public tours when COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

Social and Environmental Justice

Events across the country during the summer prompted discussions among the CSBBS Steering Committee about the interrelationships among environmental and social issues. We are exploring ways to involve a wider range of community members in volunteer and educational activities at the Bird Sanctuary and have also endorsed the Citizens’ Greener Evanston (CGE) [statement on injustice and inequity](#).