



Clark Street Beach Bird Sanctuary

Clark Street and Sheridan Road
Evanston, IL 60201

clarkstreetbeachbirdsanctuary.org

Fall 2021

From the Sanctuary Stewards

In this, our sixth year, we finished “Round 1” of caring for our newly developed habitat to support birds, insects, and a huge variety of plants. We have now addressed each of 8 target areas in our efforts to manage invasive weeds, add native Great Lakes plants, and lovingly tend to our new plants with water and mulch. Because of this year’s drought, we had to place an emphasis on watering, especially our most recent plantings. This year we added 31 shrubs, 184 flowering plants, and 64 members of a new grass species. We made a special push to add 278 sedges, a monocot in the same plant order as grasses and rushes (Graminoids) and not well represented previously. But capping this list was the planting of a Black Oak tree which a very generous donor gave in honor of Mayor Biss’s birthday. Of course, none of this could have been accomplished without the continuous support of our loyal



Mayor Biss and a generous donor

volunteers, whether they came week in and week out or for just a few times when they were available. We also wanted to thank our mentor Libby Hill for all her guidance. As volunteers have been vaccinated against Covid-19, more groups have felt comfortable coming back to help weed, plant, mulch, and water. We were delighted that friends who had come for past workdays were able to rejoin our effort: NU Athletics Dept., NU Kellogg students, Vineyard Christian Church Youth Group, and the Rotary International Green Team. New groups this year included the

“First Hands” from the First United Methodist Church of Evanston, ZS Cares, the Unitarian Church of Evanston, the Highland Garden Club, and the NU Wildlife Club. Wow, can they ever tackle weeds!



Northwestern University Wildlife Club

Many hands make light work, and it’s great to spend time with folks from many parts of our community. If your group would like to help with habitat restoration or bird monitoring along Evanston’s lakefront, please reach out to us at our website: www.clarkstreetbeachbirdsanctuary.org ~ Julie Dorfman and Jerry Herst

Bird Sightings

Sometimes it seems like we focus entirely on plants, but “Bird Sanctuary” is in our name and we certainly care about birds too. All of us at the Clark Street Beach Bird Sanctuary offer our sincere thanks to members of the Evanston North Shore Bird Club who consistently monitored birds in the sanctuary this fall: John Bates, Suzanne Checchia, Josh Engel, Gerald Ginsburg, Mary Hotson, Scott Judd, Heidi Levin, and Sarah Miller. Without their dedication and skill we would be woefully uninformed about the wide variety of birds visiting the Sanctuary and the surrounding areas – the adjoining water and parkland and the sky overhead.

During the Fall 2021 migration period from August 23 through October 9, approximately 80 species were reported. These include the White-crowned



and White-throated Sparrows in this photo from John Bates. The White-crowned variety has bolder head stripes and lacks yellow

markings near its eyes, and the bill colors differ too. The species are easily confused, though, and we're lucky to have experts who can distinguish them from a distance. Bird monitors enter their observations into the eBird database; see CSBBS data at <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L3615041>.

Two Welcome Additions

Bird sanctuary regulars wondered about some little evergreen trees that sprang up in the northern section of our area. We checked reference guides, but couldn't figure it out. What were they? Would they grow well? Should we dig them out? Glenn Adelson, an Evanston resident and environmental studies professor at Lake Forest College, identified these trees as **Eastern Red Cedars**, a fascinating North American native. Young trees like ours typically have prickly needles, but older trees usually have smooth ones. Some trees have both types of needles at the same time!



Eastern Red Cedars are, we learned, good residents for a bird sanctuary. Their berries are an excellent food source for several bird species, including Cedar Waxwing, Downy Woodpecker, and Eastern Bluebird, and they provide shelter and nesting material too. They can grow to be very large, and it's possible that ours may eventually crowd out other plants that we want to favor. For now, we feel lucky to have them.

Fun fact: Eastern Red Cedars are actually juniper trees, not cedars. People still, though, use their wood to line cedar closets!

Another plant we enjoyed finding is **Winged Pigweed**, also known as Illinois Tumbleweed. This odd-looking plant was among the first beach natives that we identified in 2016. An annual that thrives on dry sandy sites, it is a scrawny grayish green ball during spring and summer, going red and brown in the fall. It breaks away from its roots to blow in the wind, much like the tumbleweed of western cowboy songs, and likes open windy spots where it can scatter its seed widely.



After the first sighting, we've seen Pigweed each year, but there seemed to be less and less over time. We worried that as other grasses and forbs got established, we had disturbed the habitat of this fairly rare plant. And then, in 2021, we had a Pigweed explosion! Were this spring's dry conditions just what it likes? Did last year's floods help it set more seed? We were delighted to have this peculiar plant reemerge to grace Clark Street Beach and will keep an eye on it in the future.

Watering crew to the rescue!

Kudos and thanks to the CSBBS watering crew. In this season of little rain, each crew member promised one day a week to monitor and water. Their commitment helped both our established and newly planted shrubs, grasses, and trees survive some unusually dry weeks this summer and fall. One regular waterer wrote, after spotting a blooming sunflower near our fence, "When I came on it . . . I felt as if I had walked into, for lack of a better word, Hope Itself. A confirmation that one can work changes locally." His joy and optimism reflect what many of us feel when we work at the beach, look around us, and think back on what we've done.