



Clark Street Beach Bird Sanctuary

Clark Street and Sheridan Road
Evanston, IL 60201

clarkstreetbeachbirdsanctuary.org

Spring 2024

From the Sanctuary Stewards

Thanks to better rainfall than in 2023, the Clark Street Beach Bird Sanctuary has been carpeted this spring with yellow coreopsis, and the sand cherries, ninebark, and red osier dogwood have contributed white blossoms. The rainfall has also helped the invasives, so we are hard at work removing them.



We have also taken on the task of reworking a new area, described elsewhere in this newsletter. We have some other updates too.

Marcia Weflen, longtime CSSBS volunteer as well as past president of the Evanston NorthShore Bird Club (ENSBC), resigned from the CSBBS steering committee, but she remains active as a workday volunteer. As a parting gift, Marcia had new gate signs made for CSBBS. These feature a QR code for accessing our website to learn more about the area, including how to volunteer.

On April 20th, a cold and windy Saturday, CSBBS and the Evanston North Shore Bird Club participated in the Earth Day events at Ingraham Park organized by the Evanston Ecology Center. We had bird identification games for kids of different ages and provided information on CSBBS. Thanks especially to Chris Steel and Elizabeth Showalter for helping out!



In April, May, and June we were delighted to welcome 11 new volunteers to help at the bird sanctuary, supplementing the 37 community members who volunteered with us during the 2023 season. We have scheduled several groups of volunteers for special visits to our site in 2024, and staff members from Northwestern University athletics have already put in a very appreciated morning of hard work.

~ Libby Hill and Rob Linsenmeier, co-stewards

Some Notes on Bird Monitoring

Our volunteer group of bird monitors logged daily bird observations during the Spring migration season. The period was exciting as always with the arrival of the many varieties of sparrows, warblers, thrushes, and more. Our eBird site shows that 16 different species of warblers have been reported so far this year! In addition to sighting, identifying, and reporting on these birds, our monitors were also treated to some interesting interactions and behaviors of the migrants—and of resident birds too.



Brown creeper
© Callan Fromm, [CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/)

Here are a few of the observations made this Spring by bird monitor Joe Flanagan:

- **Spring's Arrival:** My inaugural visit to the sanctuary in April heralded the arrival of spring in a spectacular manner. The sighting of six brown creepers during this visit served as a

poignant symbol welcoming the season's renewal.

- **Warbler Haven:** The hawthorn tree in section one emerged as a bustling hub of activity. Five warbler species congregated in this single tree, all engaged in a lively feast of bugs.
- **Territorial Duel:** Witnessing the intense territorial battle between a red-tailed hawk and a crow was a captivating highlight of my monitoring. The clash within the sanctuary showcased the dynamic interactions between these two species, culminating in the hawk's victory and the crow's frenzied reaction to losing its meal.

You can find all our bird monitors' reports for the fall and spring migration seasons, in addition to some summary information and stunning photos, at ebird.org/hotspot/L3615041.

Leafcutter Bees

We continue to remove small green ash saplings within the bird sanctuary before they get too established. Ash are wonderful trees and are native to our area. However, as they grow larger they are attacked and killed by emerald ash borers. Removing ash saplings makes room for other native plants that will be more successful.

Interestingly, we have found that the young ashes are a favorite, but not critical, plant for leafcutter (or leafcutting) bees, which are important pollinators. These bees chew off circular pieces of leaves, which they do not eat. Instead, they use them to create cells in hollow branches or other kinds of tubes. In each cell they place a single egg along with pollen for the juvenile bee to eat when it emerges. We will be watching to see what plant these bees turn to as we eliminate the green ashes.



Evanston's Bird Map

Did you know that, last spring, the Audubon Council of Illinois recognized Evanston as a **Bird City Illinois**? This special designation "celebrates municipalities that demonstrate an active and ongoing commitment to the protection and conservation of bird

populations and their habitats" (description from www.birdcity.org/illinois).

As part of Evanston's bird-friendly efforts, the city website now includes a **City of Evanston Bird Watching Guide**. Go to maps.cityofevanston.org/portal/apps/sites/#/migratorybirdday to find a printable map showing eBird hotspots across Evanston, including CSBBS. The webpage also includes links to:

- an interactive version of the map with additional information on each location
- a list of online resources for bird watching
- a page on bird-friendly conservation efforts in Evanston—and what you can do to help.

Congratulations to our volunteers who worked with the Evanston North Shore Bird Club and the city to produce these new resources for Evanston residents and the wider birding community.

Cicadas?

Two separate cicada broods, one with a 13-year cycle and one with a 17-year cycle, were scheduled to emerge simultaneously in Illinois this spring. This led to some questions for us.

- Should we delay some spring planting? Only partly. Let's proceed with plans for our new garden, but not add new trees or bushes till after the cicadas have gone.
- Should we put netting over small trees and bushes? No, let's wait and see what happens.

And what happened? If you walked through North Evanston in late May or early June, you likely saw cicadas on the trees as well as live cicadas and cicada shells on the ground. The humming may have made it hard to hear walking companions. As of this writing, however, we've seen *no* cicadas at CSBBS—one of many ways in which nature has continued to surprise us as we work to create a naturalized environment along Evanston's lakefront.



Cicada-free sand cherry

Our New Beach House Garden

What do you do with a neglected section of your yard that doesn't look as good as you'd like? It's not uncommon for homeowners to face this challenge. Ever since the Clark Street Beach Bird Sanctuary was planted in 2015, volunteers have been working to enhance the main sections. However, we paid little attention to the area along the city path just north of the Clark Street Beach House—and it showed. This area, more visible to passersby than much of the area within our fences, had also been planted in 2015 but had become a messy embarrassment of overgrown and weedy young ash and hawthorn trees, Canada goldenrod, and our nemesis weed, the ever-persistent bouncing bet.

In summer 2023, volunteers decided to turn this plot into an attractive demonstration garden. We wanted to create a native perennial garden to showcase the beauty of native plants, increase biodiversity, support pollinators and other wildlife, and encourage homeowners to add native plants to their own gardens.

We were fortunate to find a partner! The **Lincolnwood Garden Club of Evanston** worked with us to create the garden design. They recommended 12 species of plants for color, bloom time, and size, and they also gave suggestions for grouping plants “in drifts”—that is, planting those of the same species together instead of spreading out all the different species across the available space.

Clark Street Beach Bird Sanctuary volunteers coordinated the project. Over the winter, while we worked with the Garden Club to choose the new



Elizabeth is a champion at digging out long bouncing bet roots!

plants, volunteers removed unwanted trees. When spring came, two volunteers, Al Gabor and Roger Hauge, took responsibility for translating the garden design to a planting plan and ordered the new plants. Volunteers continued to prepare the site, removing unwanted weedy plants while preserving some native

flowering plants such as milkweed, wild roses, Joe-Pye weed, and mountain mint.



April 2024:
Ash trees and
weeds now
removed.
Ready for
planting.

On planting day in mid-May, **Rotary International** provided volunteers. They put in over 400 plants and spread mulch around them in just 3 hours! Our new plants include wild geranium, wild petunia, butterfly weed, early sunflower, purple cornflower, showy goldenrod, Penn sedge, and more.

Labels have been added so that visitors know what we planted, and a simple rope fence provides some protection without interfering with viewing. Now, we are working to maintain and nurture our new garden by weeding and watering.

Come by to watch our new Beach House Garden grow!



May 2024:
Spring brought
green leaves—
and our new
garden has
been planted.

A goldenrod by any other name: Readers may have noticed that we considered goldenrod “an embarrassment”—but one of our new additions is goldenrod. Why? According to information from the Chicago Botanic Garden (see chicagobotanic.org/plantinfo/goldenrod), there are more than 100 species of goldenrod. Canada goldenrod, which we removed, tends to form dense colonies, spreading via rhizomes as well as seeds, and to crowd out other plants. Showy goldenrod, which we added, provides beautiful deep-yellow flowers in fall without taking over.