

2011 Spring Creek Blitz Report

For the blitz, we divided Spring Creek Forest Preserve into 40 units, sub-divided into 270 single habitat sub-units. The total acreage of the preserve is slightly over 3900 acres. Approximately 1250 acres of this are forest (i.e., reforestation and unassociated woody growth); 475 acres are oak woodland (mostly overgrown); 775 acres are shrubland (almost exclusively buckthorn, honeysuckle and gray dogwood); 850 acres is grassland (including large restored and managed areas); and 550 acres are wetlands (lakes, marshes, sedge meadows). The first teams went out on surveys on June 5, the last on June 24.

Some general observations:

The returns on nesting birds of concern (BOC) seem to indicate that shrublands were the most productive and wetlands the least productive. The only BOC not found in the shrublands was Bell's vireo, a species quite rare in our area. Vesper sparrow, found by only one team, doesn't have good nesting habitat at Spring Creek. A single yellow-breasted chat was a disappointment because this species does nest in our area in small numbers. The numbers of black-billed cuckoos (with confirmed nesting behavior), willow flycatchers and blue-winged warblers met or exceeded expectations.

Similarly, the numbers of forest BOCs were encouraging, especially yellow-billed cuckoos. Those not encountered – whip-poor-will, cerulean warbler and prothonotary warbler – were probably not to be expected. The habitat for red-headed woodpecker, once fairly common in Spring Creek, has since disappeared except in one small area on the edge of the preserve; during the blitz period one red-headed woodpecker was seen at a feeder on private property near this area.

Grassland returns of BOCs, especially in managed areas, were very good, though this is not a surprise to those who bird Spring Creek regularly. Those that weren't reported weren't to be expected. The preserve lacks habitat for western meadowlark; nesting harriers, Swainson's hawks and short-eared owls are found only in isolated spots in our area. Sedge wrens are probably more abundant in the preserve than our numbers show because this species increases here in late June and July – mostly after the blitz was completed.

The greatest disappointment, of course, was wetland birds. Spring Creek has abundant wetlands, and although these are overrun with cattails, common reed and reed canary grass, we had hoped to find more than we did. Serious attempts to find rails produced nothing. Numbers of black-crowned night-herons were surprisingly low. Marsh wrens, which like cattails, were present in decent numbers. And, of course, most satisfying was the evidence of nesting sandhill cranes (not strictly a wetland species).

Also satisfying was the dozen or so unexpected birds reported: red-shouldered hawk, broad-winged hawk, Acadian flycatcher, mourning warbler, Kentucky warbler, hooded warbler, northern parula, clay-colored sparrow, lark sparrow, summer tanager, blue grosbeak and others.

Units Reporting Birds Of Concern

Habitat units)	Species	Units reporting this species (of 40 total
Forest	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	9
	Eastern Whip-poor-will	
	Chimney Swift	16
	Red-headed Woodpecker	
	Northern Flicker	13
	Great Crested Flycatcher	27
	Veery	3
	Wood Thrush	9
	Cerulean Warbler	
	Prothonotary Warbler	
Shrubland	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	19
	Black-billed Cuckoo	7
	Willow Flycatcher	11
	Eastern Kingbird	19
	Bell's Vireo	
	Brown Thrasher	11
	Blue-winged Warbler	6
	Yellow-breasted Chat	1
	Field Sparrow	28
	Vesper Sparrow	1
Grassland	Orchard Oriole	7
	Northern Harrier	
	Swainson's Hawk	
	Short-eared Owl	
	Sedge Wren	1
	Grasshopper Sparrow	7
	Henslow's Sparrow	6
	Dickcissel	4
	Bobolink	8
	Eastern Meadowlark	6
Wetland	Western Meadowlark	
	American Bittern	
	Least Bittern	
	Snowy Egret	
	Little Blue Heron	
	Black-crowned Night-Heron	1
	Peregrine Falcon	

King Rail	
Common Moorhen	
Sandhill Crane	5
Marsh Wren	6
Yellow-headed Blackbird	

TOTALS OF SPECIES REPORTED (99 species)

Canada Goose	103	Warbling Vireo	17
Wood Duck	65	Red-eyed Vireo	87
Mallard	56	Blue Jay	252
Pied-billed Grebe	1	American Crow	54
Double-crested Cormorant	35	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	12
Great Blue Heron	34	Purple Martin	2
Great Egret	20	Tree Swallow	125
Green Heron	19	Bank Swallow	3
Black-crowned Night-Heron	1	Barn Swallow	114
Turkey Vulture	12	Cliff Swallow	1
Cooper's Hawk	3	Black-capped Chickadee	174
Red-shouldered Hawk	1	White-breasted Nuthatch	14
Broad-winged Hawk	1	House Wren	111
Red-tailed Hawk	18	Sedge Wren	2
Sandhill Crane	7	Marsh Wren	16
Killdeer	7	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	58
Ring-billed Gull	3	Eastern Bluebird	27
Rock Pigeon	2	Veery	5
Mourning Dove	12	Wood Thrush	17
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	25	American Robin	255
Black-billed Cuckoo	11	Gray Catbird	137
Great Horned Owl	2	Brown Thrasher	21
Chimney Swift	43	European Starling	73
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	2	Cedar Waxwing	182
Belted Kingfisher	5	Ovenbird	4
Red-bellied Woodpecker	51	Blue-winged Warbler	9
Downy Woodpecker	56	Mourning Warbler	1
Hairy Woodpecker	18	Kentucky Warbler	1
Northern Flicker	19	Common Yellowthroat	240
Eastern Wood-Pewee	86	Hooded Warbler	1
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	1	American Redstart	5
Acadian Flycatcher	1	Northern Parula	1
Alder Flycatcher	1	Yellow Warbler	66
Willow Flycatcher	43	Yellow-breasted Chat	1
Eastern Phoebe	7	Eastern Towhee	90
Great Crested Flycatcher	67	Chipping Sparrow	11
Eastern Kingbird	58	Clay-colored Sparrow	1
Yellow-throated Vireo	6	Field Sparrow	191

Vesper Sparrow	1	Indigo Bunting	260
Lark Sparrow	1	Dickcissel	75
Savannah Sparrow	78	Bobolink	100
Grasshopper Sparrow	56	Red-winged Blackbird	1107
Henslow's Sparrow	33	Eastern Meadowlark	35
Song Sparrow	299	Common Grackle	76
Swamp Sparrow	71	Brown-headed Cowbird	241
Summer Tanager	1	Orchard Oriole	11
Scarlet Tanager	32	Baltimore Oriole	75
Northern Cardinal	172	House Finch	6
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	54	American Goldfinch	233
Blue Grosbeak	1		

Invasive Plants

Habitat	Invasive plant	Units reporting this species (of 32)	
Grassland	Pastinaca sativa (Wild Parsnip)	24	
	Coronilla varia (Crown Vetch)		7
	Euphorbia esula (Leafy Spurge)	2	
	Melilotus sp. (Sweet Clover)		16
	Dipsacus sp. (Teasel)	6	
Forest	Celastrus orbiculatus (Oriental Bittersweet)	19	
	Allaria petiolata (Garlic Mustard)	17	
	Berberis thunbergii (Japanese Barberry)	11	
Forest or wetland	Phalaris arundinacea (Reed Canary Grass)	25	
Wetland	Lythrum salicaris (Purple Loosestrife)	1	
	Phragmites australis (Common Reed)	9	
	Typhas sp. (Cattail)	17	

Teams in units B8 and E1 said the Oriental Bittersweet in their areas needed immediate attention. This is true in other areas as well. The E13 team called for immediately attacking Crown Vetch there. It has also spread widely in unit E12 but has received some attention there since June.

Additional flora reports

Among the invasives, two teams (E8 & D3) reported Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*) and two others (A1 & D1) reported Dame's Rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*). The team in unit A1 also reported Canada Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*); the C3 team noted extensive stands of bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*) and brome (*Bromus* sp.); the C2 team found stands of Motherwort (*Leonurus cardiaca*); and the D4 team reported Field Hawkweed (*Hieracium caespitoeum*), Tartarian Honeysuckle (*Lonicera tatarica*) and Musk Thistle (*Carduus nutans*). Several teams noted stands of Black Locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*); other problem trees reported were Wild Cherry (*Prunus serotina*) in B8, Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*) in C5, Balsam Poplar (*Populus balsamifera*) in D4, and European Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) well established in E7. Many of these exist in other units as well though not reported. An example of this is European Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*), which only a few teams reported but which forms dense thickets in almost every Spring Creek unit.

On a more positive note, two teams reported stands of Great Angelica (*Angelica atropurpurea*). The canoe team in A2 reported several desirable species, including White Water Lily (*Nymphaea odorata*), Spatterdock (*Nuphar polysepala*), and (possibly) a native Phragmites.

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