

A special treat at Shaw are the Marsh Wrens found in the sedges and cattails near the center trail of the prairie. If you want to see the wrens, go some late summer morning when the dew mixes with the sunrise and the song of the wren breaks the quiet of the day as you approach the sedges.

There are no shortage of hawks, including Red-shouldered and Northern Goshawk, which have been seen flying over the property, not to mention migrating kettles of Broad-winged Hawks and the Red-tailed Hawks that commonly soar over the prairie.

In late 1991, a wetland area was added to Shaw just east of the river on the prairie and it has yielded, among others, Blue-winged Teal and Gadwall. The only drawback is that the marsh is close to a trail where people walk their dogs and frequently the ducks are scared off.

Shaw also hosts various thrushes and sparrows. Seen on the property have been Chipping, Field, Fox, Song, Lincoln's, Swamp, White-throated, and White-crowned Sparrows, and Rufous-sided Towhees. There are also Veery, Gray-cheeked (rarely), Swainson's, Hermit, and Wood Thrush in the woods and along the river.

Shaw has its summer residents including Eastern Bluebirds, which nest in two places: the northeast part of the prairie and in the northern part of the meadow at the oak woodland opening. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, House Wrens, and Common Yellowthroats also nest here. Red-headed Woodpeckers return to nest in the northeastern part of the prairie. You can see their young in the fall before they all leave for the winter. It should be noted that Shaw yielded the second highest species count of any place in Lake Forest on the 1992 Christmas Bird Count. Two of rarer birds seen on the count include Cedar Waxwing and Carolina Wren.

As a place to bird, West Skokie has both less area and less variety of habitat. Still, in the same one year period that I birded Shaw, I saw 62 species at West Skokie, several of which were different from Shaw. In the old growth oaks on the east side, I have seen Black-billed Cuckoo and Warbling Vireo in the same tree. American Tree Sparrows can be found along the river at Skokie and I have never seen them at Shaw. A Great-

birders could do much worse than visit these two properties. If nothing else, a walk through the prairie, especially July through September, when the wildflowers burst into their full magnificence, will console any soul. If, as Aldo Leopold once said, solitude is a natural resource, the Lake Forest Open Lands is a good place to find it...and not an inconsequential variety of birds, either. 🦅



*A Red-tailed Hawk soars over the Shaw Prairie in Lake Forest, Lake County, on 13 July 1993. Photo by Rob Dicker. Courtesy of Pioneer Press.*

horned Owl nested in an old Red-tailed Hawk's nest this winter on the eastern most part of the property.

A special effort has been made on both properties to bring back bluebirds. Last spring, 14 bluebird boxes were placed at various spots at West Skokie and at least two pair of bluebirds were seen nesting, although they had to fight off the Tree Swallows that wanted to use the boxes themselves. There are about a half dozen such boxes at Shaw.

While the Lake Forest Open Lands do not rank with the great locales for birding Chicagoland,

*Editor's Note: To get to the West Skokie River Nature Preserve, take the 294 Illinois tollway to the Route 60 exit. Go east to Route 41, then south to Westleigh Road. Then back-track west toward Waukegan Road (Route 43). Note the clearly marked parking area on Westleigh Road, just east of Waukegan Road.*

*To get to Shaw from Route 60 and 41, go north to Deerpath Ave., east to Green Bay Road, north to Laurel Ave., then back west to the end of Laurel. The entrance will be straight ahead.*