

crowned Night-Heron, Green Heron, American Bittern, Double-crested Cormorant, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Common Moorhen, Virginia Rail and several species of swallows. The wetland provides a natural setting for viewing Great Blue Heron and Great Egrets as they interact and feed.

March is a good time to look for a variety of ducks such as Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, Blue-winged Teal, Mallard, American Black Duck, Ring-necked Duck, American Wigeon, Wood Duck, and Ruddy Duck. Canada Geese also nest here.

On a foggy mid-March day in 2003, at 8 a.m. I began observing birds at the wetlands until 1:40 p.m. This was the first day for a relatively ice-free wetland and the birds were taking advantage of it, but, be advised that it can be quite windy out here this time of year, so dress appropriately. On that day I observed Canvasbacks, Green-winged Teal, Bufflehead, Northern Shoveler, Ring-necked Duck, American Coot, American Wigeon and Mallard along with a copious amount of Red-winged Blackbirds and American Robins and other more common species. Plus, I saw a Northern Shrike, a rare and irruptive northern Illinois visitor. This bird is often found in winter at Paul Douglas, and it was probably almost time for it to head back north with the ducks.

Keep birding here in late spring and summer to find some of the state's rarest wetland breeders including Yellow-headed Blackbird and Pied-billed Grebe. You may also find Ruddy Ducks, American Coots and Soras breeding here, as well as Great Blue Herons, which fledged 19 young in 2002.

A footpath at the preserve runs north through open grasslands for about 1.5 miles. During the breeding season, to the west of the path and just north of the soccer field you should see and hear the state-listed endangered Henslow's Sparrow along with Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, Savannah Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Sedge Wren, and other grassland species. Please do stay on the trails so you won't disturb these ground nesters, as well as other grassland birds. During migration here, you may find a Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow in the grasslands, and with luck, a Rough-legged Hawk, Short-eared Owl, or Northern Harrier in winter.

As you approach the northern border of the wetland, the path veers west around a small woodland then goes east and then continues north. Here's a good spot for many species of migrating birds as well as breeding Wood Thrush and Eastern Wood-Pewee.

Continue north and look and listen for more grassland species. The path gently rises as you go north until you are high enough to see a spectacular view of forests, shrub land and wetlands in the valley below. Here is another good place to see the Northern Shrike in fall and winter. Yellow-breasted Chats have probably nested in the shrubs in this area. The path then drops into a small valley and winds north until you see a rusting farm implement for disking the soil. Here the path splits and runs

east and west. Listen for Willow Flycatchers in the shrubs and more grassland birds in the fields during spring and summer.

The central trail will take you from the parking lot to the north end without having to enter a woodland area and will provide the opportunity for viewing numbers of species, many not mentioned above. In spring, watch for migrating Sandhill Cranes. More than 800 Sandhills were seen in several groups one year. In summer look and listen for Indigo Bunting, Eastern Phoebe, Least Flycatcher, and Eastern Kingbird. Winter brings the American Tree Sparrow, Cedar Waxwings, and sometimes Snow Bunting. Year-round, you'll find Red-tailed and Cooper's Hawks.

Bring a spotting scope if you have one and expect to spend over an hour doing a slow walk in each direction.



*Bobolinks nest at Paul Douglas Forest Preserve. This male was photographed by Kanae Hirabayashi in Lake Forest in May 2002.*

Don't forget to bring water and wear a brimmed hat for the sun because there is nothing to provide shade.

The Paul Douglas Forest Preserve is in Hoffman Estates and is bordered by Algonquin Road on the north, Ela Road on the east, Freeman Road on the west and Central Road to the south. Park at the entrance off Central Road where you will see a large open soccer area and parking lot. The preserve is open daily between 8 a.m. and sunset.

There are no marked trails, no sources of drinking water, and no toilet facilities except for outhouses near the soccer fields. A few picnic tables are available.

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