

crowned Night-Herons in Illinois. Smaller numbers of Great Egrets, also endangered in Illinois, nest alongside the night-herons at Indian Ridge Marsh. State high counts of Common Moorhens (both broods and individuals) are also regularly reported from Lake Calumet's Indian Ridge Marsh. This single location supports what is likely the largest concentration of nesting moorhens remaining in the state. Yellow-headed Blackbirds have decreased in numbers in recent years at Lake Calumet, dropping from an estimated 35 nesting pairs in 1991 to only nine pairs in 1992 (J. Landing- pers. comm.). Their decline appears to be closely linked to the spread of purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), which does not provide a suitable nesting substrate. Nesting Pied-billed Grebes are scattered throughout the area, with largest concentrations located at the Big Marsh.

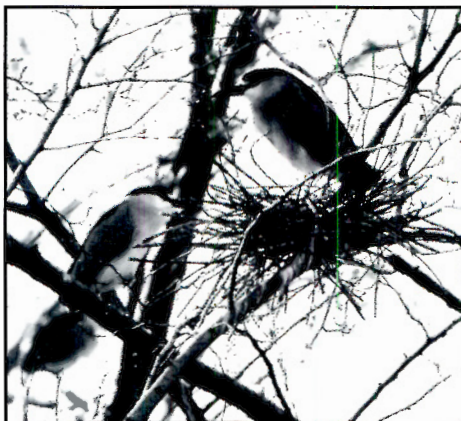
The Areas

The entries which follow will provide a brief tour of some of the best Lake Calumet birding areas. But before we go on, a few notes of caution are necessary.

Late fall (mid-September through mid-December) can be a dangerous time to bird Lake Calumet because of the numerous hunters who utilize the area. Always wear conspicuous clothing when birding at this time. Also, as a direct consequence of hunters' activities, significant numbers of some of the larger species (e.g. waterfowl) are undoubtedly driven from the area, making for generally poorer overall birding during the hunting season.

Due to private ownership of many of the local land parcels, both habitat quality and access to birding areas can often change dramatically within a relatively short time. In some cases, large tracts of habitat are completely obliterated during the course of a year. As an example, excellent longspur habitat (including a Chestnut-collared Longspur in 1993) at the

north end of the lake was recently destroyed during the construction of a golf course (D. Mandell, pers. comm.). On the plus side, many of the best privately owned birding areas (e.g. Big Marsh, Deadstick Pond, Indian Ridge) can be easily birded from roadsides without actually entering private property.



Black-crowned Night-Herons, endangered in Illinois, nest at Indian Ridge Marsh. Photo by Joe Nowak.

To reach any of the areas listed below, take Interstate 94 to Chicago's far south side, exit at the 130th St. east ramp, then follow local roads to specific birding sites (see map).

Thomas J. O'Brien Lock & Dam. On the west bank of Calumet River. To enter, turn south from 130th St. onto entrance road immediately west of bridge over Calumet River. This is one of the best spots in the Calumet region for wintering gulls. Look for Thayer's, Lesser Black-backed, and Glaucous Gulls on landfill west of entrance road, and also on the Calumet River and grassy lawns east. Iceland and Great Black-backed Gulls are also possible in winter. Franklin's Gulls are occasional in fall (July - November). A California Gull was noted here in December 1991, and a Glaucous-winged Gull was present November through December 1992.

Hegewisch Marsh. On west side of Torrence Ave., 0.1 mile south of 130th St. Variable for summering/ nesting wetland birds, but can be excellent in some years. In 1991, Red-heads and Ruddy Ducks nested, along with Pied-billed Grebes, Blue-winged Teal, Common Moorhens, and numerous American Coots. Yellow-headed Blackbirds nest sporadically, when cattail cover is sufficient. Bell's Vireo, unusual for the area, summered in 1992. The area is also excellent for migrant shorebirds if water levels come down in late July and August. If these conditions are present, hundreds of birds can be noted in a single day. A Ruff was observed here in July 1992.

116th Street Marsh. On south side of unimproved 116th St., immediately west of Torrence Ave. (marsh is best viewed from 116th St.). In recent years, this has become one of the few reliable locations to find spring migrant shorebirds in the Chicago area. White-rumped Sandpiper, Dunlin, Stilt Sandpiper, and Wilson's Phalarope were all noted here in May of 1992 and 1993 (white-rumps and Dunlins arrive late in the month). A Willet was seen here in June 1989. The area is also good for fall migrant shorebirds, with many of the commoner species present. Virginia Rails and Sora nested here in 1993.

Indian Ridge Marsh. On north and south sides of 122nd St. between Torrence Ave. and Norfolk & Western railroad tracks. From Torrence Ave., drive west on 122nd. St. for 0.25 mile, park on roadside just east of tracks. After parking, look north at marsh and cottonwood grove. From mid-April through July, nesting Black-crowned Night-Herons and Great Egrets in cottonwood grove should be obvious. Nesting night-herons/egrets are most easily observed in late April before foliage becomes thick (maximum counts: 330 active Black-crowned Night-Heron