

downtown Chicago. The bottom of Lake Michigan tends to concentrate birds on their way north, before they choose the east or west side of the lake as a spring migration guideline. Providing a more attractive flyway along the Chicago metro lakefront from the Indiana border northward may encourage even more birds to choose our western shore.

The fate of the hotly contested Migrant Trap in Hammond, Indiana, will be decided this year. This 16-acre site with a grove of trees and good understory, can be wonderful for land bird migration. Located at the end of Calumet Ave. in Ham-

mond, the Migrant Trap has attracted 70 plus species on May spring count days and 27 species of warblers on a single day.

Local birder and staunch Migrant Trap activist, Carolyn Marsh, saw a Barn Owl at close range in October 1995, believed to be the first seen on the Indiana lakefront since the 1960s. Short-eared Owls and Northern Harriers frequent the area during migration and resident Peregrine Falcons hunt in the Trap. Marsh has seen American Bitterns and Yellow-crowned Night Herons in the 16 acres. Rarer warblers have appeared, including Mourning, Connecticut,

and Prairie warblers. The Migrant Trap also attracts Henslow's, Grasshopper, and Clay-colored sparrows.

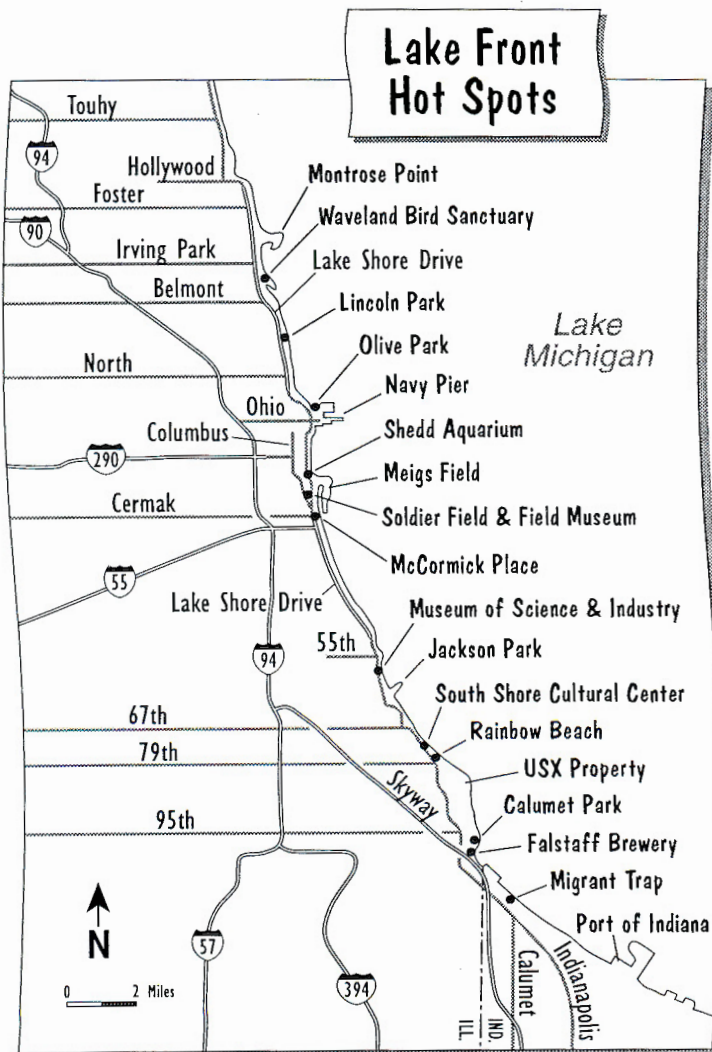
The Northern Indiana Public Service Company which owns the property hopes to sell it to a gambling company, Lake Michigan Charters, Ltd. The company awaits an Indiana State Gaming Commission gaming license and hopes to build a casino boat facility at Hammond Harbor, just south of the Migrant Trap. The casino company said it is willing to deed the Migrant Trap to the City of Hammond as a nature preserve. Habitat and parking lot improvements will make the feeding possibilities for birds even better and the site more accessible to humans.

However, the City of Hammond is skirmishing with birders and environmentalists on the use of the Migrant Trap. Rather than dedicate all 16 acres as a preserve, Hammond officials are suggesting now a roughly even split of the site into what it calls open space and nature preserve.

In other less sensitive or already intensively developed areas, the term "open space" might be an acceptable compromise for birds and humans. But open space in this case, on a degraded, but undeveloped remnant of a Lake Michigan dunal community, connotes a conversion to bluegrass parkland, ball fields, perhaps a band shell, and other land uses which would destroy the wild habitat.

The Migrant Trap is still in jeopardy. Optimistically, dedicated protection of the entire 16 acres will preserve and enhance an area under-visited by Illinois and Indiana birders.

Moving up the coast toward Chicago, several lakefront parks regularly, if warily, frequented by birders are the subject of evaluation by the South LakeFront Coalition. The coalition, made up of civic, environmental, and community action groups, is developing a master plan with improvements for proper-



Map by Matt Kania.