

This photo taken 25 August 1925 by T. H. Frison and A.S. Beardsley shows the foredune at Illinois Beach State Park with trailing or Waukegan juniper (*Juniperus horizontalis*) which the state-endangered Brewer's Blackbird has nested within. Black oak sand savanna is seen in the background.

Photo courtesy of the Illinois Natural History Survey archives.



High-quality sand prairie, often formerly referred to as sand or Waukegan flats, along the Dead River looking west from the Lake Michigan shoreline. This photo taken by James S. Ayars August 13, 1937 typifies what the habitat looked like at Illinois Beach State Park before the Douglas and Sons Nursery planted thousands of trees. Some of this high-quality sand prairie remains today.

Photo courtesy of the Illinois Natural History Survey archives.

of which is locally known as Dead Lake. This swamp drains into Lake Michigan through Dead River on the north and Little Dead River, which has now been dredged out to form a large harbor (Waukegan Harbor), on the south."

Keep in mind that some of Illinois' earliest historic accounts of birds to be found within the state begin with Robert Kennicott's (1854) "Catalogue of animals observed in Cook County," although E.W. Nelson was also active at least as early as the late 1840s. Per Ferry (1907), "between the years 1853 and 1873 it (the Beach area) was thoroughly explored by Robert Kennicott, E.W. Nelson, and F.T. Jencks, as well as by resident ornithologists, and it has furnished many an interesting bird note for northern Illinois."

Here it is interesting to note Ferry's (1907) perspective concerning the nature of this area, and modifications made to it, which have a distinct effect on some of the more uncommon to rare species often seen in this area yearly yet today.

Ferry describes the popular sentiment of the area at the time, although luckily a large percentage was saved

as present-day Illinois Beach State Park: Beach "remains today essentially in its primitive condition. The cause is obvious; the land is practically worthless save for one purpose, that of manufacturing sites. In all probability many years will elapse before the thriving industries of Waukegan... will occupy the whole region."

Ferry goes on to give a brief history of the "experiment" which was initiated at Beach by a local family of nurserymen, the Douglasses, who were also active birders! (The "profits" of their labor are still occasionally being reaped by today's birding community.)

"The propagation of many varieties of forest trees was carried on by some local nurserymen on such an extensive scale and in so intelligent a manner that it created a wide interest generally and among those who had the problem to solve of beautifying or reclaiming from practical worthlessness large areas of barren, sandy, or otherwise sterile regions." So much for Ferry's aesthetic appreciation for what many today feel is the beauty of Illinois Beach State Park.

The Douglas nurserymen

The nurserymen to which Ferry referred were Robert J. Douglas and his sons, including Charles W. Douglas, John Douglas, and Thomas H. Douglas, who was a bird collecting companion of E.W. Nelson. Ferry wrote that the sons of the proprietor of the R. Douglas Sons Nursery of Waukegan, then young men, were all active ornithologists. Coale (1912) mentions Thomas, Charles, and John made a "special study of our birds, in the 70s [1870s]" and also mentions that the Douglasses kept their own bird collection.

Robert J. Douglas was a pioneer nurseryman, moving from his native England to Waukegan in 1844. His nursery was the first attempt ever to raise conifers commercially (Bailey 1915). He was a United States authority on conifers and became known as the "apostle of tree-planting in the west" (Bailey 1915). Following in his father's footsteps, Thomas was also nationally known, and the Douglas pine (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*, also commonly called Douglas fir) bears his name.