



*An Eared Grebe at Burnham Harbor. Photo taken 11 April 1994 by Robert Hughes.*

Wooded Isle and Bobolink Meadow, just south of the Museum. In fact, a short grass lawn in front of the Museum might very well attract thrushes, sparrows, meadowlarks, longspurs, and pipits.

Exciting plans are in the works for the Wooded Isle, also known as the Paul O. Douglas Nature Sanctuary, and Bobolink Meadow, a U.S. Army Nike missile site in the 1950s. The Chicago Park District has earmarked this site as a priority for ecological restoration, said Michaeline Brown, a CPD naturalist and ecological planner. A consulting firm specializing in ecological restoration will study Bobolink Meadow this year and create a master rehabilitation plan for the site. Two other designated lakefront bird sanctuaries at Montrose and Waveland, which are discussed later in this article, are also on the ecological priority list.

Bobolink Meadow was planted as a prairie after the missiles were removed in 1971, but the grasses and plants introduced are unsuitable for the thin soil of the area sandwiched between the driving range and the eastern shore of the East Lagoon. Brown said contractors may have to do extensive soil work before Bobolink Meadow has enough organic matter to sustain the kind of plant community which was probably present prior to settlement - oak savanna.

The Wooded Isle, with its Japanese Garden, also built during the 1893 Columbian Exposition, is not one of the CPD's special ecological priorities, but Brown intends to devote time this year to clear out much of the shrubbery-choked, weedy areas, such as the old Rose Garden. The size of some of the large burr oaks on the Wooded Isle and their wide-spread branches suggest an open oak savanna. New plantings will include grasses, forbs, and flowers typical of such a setting.

Brown maintains an attitude about urban natural areas that may be reassuring to birders who have been alarmed by the radical actions some restorationists have taken in other areas to abruptly change a particular area back to its "pure" pre-settlement character. "I want Wooded Island to be a healthier ecosystem, with better diversity of food and cover plants," said Brown. "The bottom line is that wildlife doesn't care if a plant is a native species or not, as long as they can eat it. They want diversity of plant life and they aren't purists."

The Wooded Isle and its immediate surroundings, the woody edges of the lagoons, and the shrub islands dotted around the park and its harbors, can be remarkably productive for migrant birds. The Wooded Isle seems to particularly attract southern warbler species such as Yellow-throated, Prairie, Kentucky and Worm-eating, said Mandell. Spring migration days with more than 25 warbler species counted in the area just south of the Museum of Science and Industry are not uncommon. A Yellow-crowned Night-Heron stayed for some time in 1995 and Black-crowned Night-Herons have tried to nest on a tiny island in the East Lagoon with Green Herons. Cooper's Hawks have nested on the island. A Northern Goshawk wintered on the island. Summer and Scarlet tanagers are fairly regular, flycatchers of

many species abound, and several species of swallows nest under the lagoon bridges. Jackson Park's lagoons and the connected La Rabida Harbor on Lake Michigan have attracted many duck species, including all three mergansers, most puddle ducks, Harlequin Duck, Brant, King Eider, and Barrow's Goldeneye. Interesting fly-overs include Anhinga, Magnificent Frigatebird, and Northern Gannett.

Of particular note are the suggestions of the South LakeFront Coalition to improve access along the Hyde Park lake-front. Several beaches, such as 63rd Street Beach, are difficult to get to because there is no car access to the narrow ribbon of park east of Lake Shore Drive. Birders and other users who want to get into the lakeside parks legally (there are some illegal ways), now have to park west of Lake Shore Drive, proceed to the infrequent pedestrian over-passes, and then walk or cycle to the beach they want to scan.

## **Middle Lakefront Changes**

The biggest news for the middle portion of the Chicago lakefront is the move of Lake Shore Drive's northbound lanes to the west of Soldier Field. The lanes will be moved from Balbo Drive to 12th Street, creating 10 new acres of parkland. Granted, much of the new park is now a sea of asphalt parking lots, but once funding is procured, the paving will be removed and the park added to the system north of McCormick Place. Plans for the areas south of McCormick Place as well as the rest of what is known as Burnham Park are not firm. Birders would love to see the area south of McCormick Place, which hosted an Ash-throated Flycatcher the fall of 1995 (see article in this issue), remain relatively untouched. Planting