

ceptible to predation and parasitism due to grassland fragmentation; their numbers are declining as well (Herkert 1993). Grassland species nesting at Ryerson have minimal habitat requirements. These include Red-winged Blackbird, Mourning Dove, Field Sparrow, and Song Sparrow. A single nesting pair of Savannah Sparrows was recorded at Ryerson Woods. This species is sensitive to habitat fragmentation (Herkert 1993). One Savannah Sparrow does not make a viable population; however, the area has just begun to be managed, so more of this species may nest there in coming years. The area is large enough to support Eastern Meadowlarks, none of which were seen on the property - and these are moderately sensitive to habitat fragmentation (Herkert 1993).

Shrub and secondary growth areas represent transitional zones between two ecosystems and are often filled with bird life. At Ryerson Woods, Baltimore Orioles, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and Gray Catbirds were the more common shrub and secondary growth nesters. Two rarer species, the Chestnut-sided Warbler (one pair) and Blue-winged Warbler (two pairs) were found at the preserve.

Finally, due to the efforts of Cliff Miller and Paul Baker, Ryerson Wood's Eastern Bluebird population is thriving. Baker and Miller placed bluebird boxes at Ryerson Woods seven years ago. Baker continues to monitor and clean them each year from early spring through late summer. Three pairs of Eastern Bluebirds successfully reared young at Ryerson in 1995; two of them reared two broods.

Ryerson Woods' forested areas combined with secondary growth



Ryerson Woods. Photo by Peggy Neuhaus.

shrub areas and newly planted prairies attracted a total of 59 potential breeding bird species between 1 June 1995 and 12 July 1995. These include two state-endangered (Red-shouldered Hawk and Cooper's Hawk) and one state-threatened (Veery) species. Declining forest interior songbirds which probably bred at Ryerson Woods during the study period include Veery, Red-eyed Vireo, Wood Thrush, Ovenbird, Yellow-throated Vireo, and Scarlet Tanager. Another highlight was the location of three separate territories of Black-throated Green Warblers, which has not been recorded as nesting in Illinois until last year when two nests were found at Lowden-Miller State Forest in northwestern Illinois (Robinson 1995). No confirmation of nesting was made at Ryerson, but the potential exists for this species to nest here.

While Ryerson Conservation Area is on the small side relative to the amount of habitat neotropical migrants need for breeding, it is nonetheless attractive to these species, and

since it is a Lake County Forest Preserve holding, it will hopefully continue to yield interesting summer birding provided the area is managed properly. Indeed, it may be one of the few places left in northern Illinois where these birds can find a place to nest in summer.

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