

their young from insects caught over the pond called 'Lake Leaky' because of its tendency to go dry in the summer months. Green Herons frequent the area but we have been unable to confirm nesting. We often see Black-crowned Night-Herons from Baker's Lake teaching their young to fish in the shallow areas. An American Bittern was seen in this area in 1991.

If the area dries up early in the year, a totally different type of population is attracted here. In 1994, the flats supported a nesting Bell's Vireo and migrating sparrows, including Sharp-tailed. Huge flocks of migrating White-crowned and White-throated sparrows also use this area if it is dry. Sedge Wrens will nest here rather than in the grasslands during a dry season.

Whether the season is wet or dry, the western fringe of the area attracts a nesting Orchard Oriole. A very disheveled male was seen at the end of the season in 1991 and a nesting pair has been present every year since then. In 1995, nesting Warbling Vireos chose this same area along with Cedar Waxwings. Swamp Sparrows have nested for the last two years here also.

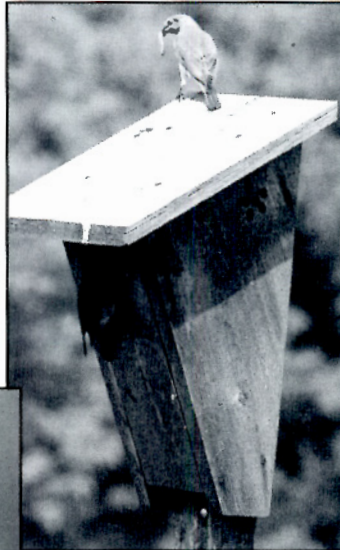
#### GRASSLANDS:

The grassland areas show some of our most concentrated restoration efforts and our most consistent results. The site supports large numbers of grassland nesters and a few spectacular migrants. The Short-eared Owl has been a spring and fall visitor for the last three years. The area is probably too public to support its nesting, but we have not yet explored some large grassy tracts within the 4,200 acre site where the owls

might find better conditions. Turkey Vultures that nest at the Max McGraw Nature Center in Elgin hunt over the site all summer. We have confirmed nesting Bobolinks every year except for 1993. We had singing males all summer but the females never arrived. This same situation happened at the Crabtree Nature Center in Barrington (pers. comm. Chuck Westcott) but nesting pairs were



*Bobolink at Poplar Creek, July 1995. Photo by Anton Szabados.*



*Eastern Bluebird female tending to nestlings in box at Poplar Creek, June 1992. Photo by Dale Shields.*

back in large numbers the next year. The population seems unaffected by the frequent burns in the main nesting area at the foot of Shoe Factory Road and, in 1995, the Bobolinks moved back into an area where they were inadvertently mowed out in 1992. Common Yellowthroats are present in almost all habitats throughout the site but seem to prefer the grasslands. Sedge Wrens appear and nest almost every season and may arrive in May or not until July. Their nesting has been confirmed as late as August 15. Several pairs of Savanna and Grasshopper sparrows showed up for the first time in 1994 although nesting has not been confirmed. Large numbers of Willow Flycatchers spend their summers here and have been confirmed nesters for the last five years.

The great Dickcissel invasion of 1994 brought 13 singing males to Poplar Creek but all they did all summer was sing. No females were spotted. Eastern Meadowlarks nest each year but their numbers are lower than would be expected on a site of this size. In winter, we have documented the presence of a Northern Shrike. The bird has been seen several times but, more frequently, we see signs of the cached prey while we are clearing brush.

#### COVERING THE AREA:

The walk as outlined here covers about three miles and will take about three hours. There are no groomed trails; walking is difficult. The only facilities on site are Forest Preserve-issue outhouses in the parking area. During spring migration, this route should yield 65+ species and nesting season can bring 40 or more. In winter you can expect 20 species. The Poplar Creek Forest Preserve can be reached from any of the main east-west roads in Chicago's northwest suburbs. From Interstate 90, take Rt. 59 south to the entrance or take Rt. 59 north from Interstate 80. The preserve is open daily from sunrise to sunset.

Workdays are held alternate Saturdays and Sundays from 9 a.m. until 12:30 p.m., weather permitting. For volunteer opportunities, contact Rick McAndless at (847)843-0849. For further information on birding the area, contact Judy Mellin at (847)255-6548.

—Mellin  
1202 Woodbury Lane  
Palatine, IL 60067