GUIDE TO LAKE COUNTY BIRDS

Learn the best times and places to see different bird groups in Lake County.

DUCKS
Northern migration: February–May; Southern migration: October–November. Some ducks are winter visitors to Lake County.

ALMOND MARSH
CUBA MARSH
DES PLAINES RIVER*
FORT SHERIDAN
ROLLINS SAVANNA*
VAN PATTEN WOODS
(STERLING LAKE)

NEOTROPICAL MIGRANTS
Spring is a great time to look for members of this group including warblers, vireos, hummingbirds, wrens, thrushes and more.

DES PLAINES RIVER*
GRANT WOODS
MACARTHUR WOODS*
RYERSON WOODS*
WRIGHT WOODS*

SPARRROWS
The first to arrive (late March) are song sparrows and white-throated sparrows passing through on their journeys farther north.

Sparrows can be seen countywide.
Nesting sparrows: MIDDLEFORK SAVANNA*
ROLLINS SAVANNA*

BLACKBIRDS
Male red-winged blackbirds are true harbingers of spring. Other members of this group, such as grackles and cowbirds, follow in April.

Red-winged blackbirds are found near marshy areas.
Look on the edge of wooded areas for cowbirds.
Yellow-headed blackbirds: MIDDLEFORK SAVANNA*
ROLLINS SAVANNA*

SHOREBIRDS
Kildeer: early March; other shorebirds return April–May. Many visiting shorebirds pass by on their trips farther north. This group is hard to spot during dry seasons.

ALMOND MARSH
CUBA MARSH
DES PLAINES RIVER*
FORT SHERIDAN
MIDDLEFORK SAVANNA*
ROLLINS SAVANNA*
VAN PATTEN WOODS
(STERLING LAKE)

WOODPECKERS
Year-round: northern flickers and downy, hairy, red-bellied and red-headed; spring: pileated (rare); spring & fall: yellow-bellied sapsuckers.

Look in wooded preserves:
FORT SHERIDAN
MACARTHUR WOODS*
RYERSON WOODS*

BLUEBIRDS
May be seen year-round, although March–November yields the most sightings.
Bluebirds are found on the edge of wooded areas:

ALMOND MARSH
BUFFALO CREEK
GRASSY LAKE
INDEPENDENCE GROVE
OLD SCHOOL
RYERSON WOODS*
SINGING HILLS

CRANES, HERONS, EGrets
Can be seen in wetlands countywide March–November.

MIDDLEFORK SAVANNA*
NIPPERNSINK
ROLLINS SAVANNA*
SEDE MEADOW
SINGING HILLS
VAN PATTEN WOODS
WRIGHT WOODS*

OWLS

Great-horned and eastern screech owls seek wooded preserves.
Barred owls are found in floodplains.
MACARTHUR WOODS
RYERSON WOODS*

OSPREYS, HARRIERS, HAWKS, EAGLES
Southern migration: September–October yields the most variety, especially along Lake Michigan—watch for bald eagle, broad-winged hawk, Cooper’s hawk, northern harrier, osprey, red-shouldered hawk and red-tailed hawk.

Southeastern migration: Hawks are seen countywide.

FORT SHERIDAN
Northern harrier:
ROLLINS SAVANNA*

* Rollins Savanna Forest Preserve, and the upper Des Plaines River Corridor (including Cahokia Flatwoods, Captain Daniel Wright Woods, southern portions of the Des Plaines River Trail and Greenway, Granger Woods Conservation Preserve, Half Day, MacArthur Woods, and Ryerson Conservation Area) have been designated as Important Bird Areas by National Audubon for providing critical bird habitat.

**Please limit birding at this site to the closed road that goes through the preserve. Parking can be found 1/4 mile east at North Point Marina.
Most people think of migration as a spring and fall phenomenon. In actuality, birds are migrating year-round, some in every season, some for long distances and others for short stretches. Migration is traveling to the right habitat for survival with food being the primary motivation. Photoperiod, the interval in a 24-hour period during which a plant or animal is exposed to light, is the biggest trigger for migration of birds. Since a bird cannot predict the weather hundreds of miles away, the consistent input of photoperiod ensures that seasonal events such as migration happen at the right time. Day-length, and the resulting knowledge of the season, is significant to most animals. In birds, photoperiod not only predicts migration but can provoke changes in feather color, molting, nesting, and even a bird’s song repertoire.

Some birds have specific habitat requirements for breeding and nesting. We take note of these birds because they are good indicators of an ecosystem’s overall health. Red-headed woodpeckers, for example, are very choosy and only nest when tree spacing meets their nesting needs. This species is considered in critical decline and in greatest need of conservation. Restoration efforts such as the Woodland Habitat Restoration Project will benefit this species by providing proper nesting habitat. To learn more, visit LCFPD.org/woodland.

Literally millions of birds migrate through our region in the spring and fall along the Mississippi Flyway, which is part of a larger migration route called the Mackenzie Valley-Great Lakes-Mississippi River Valley. The Lake Michigan shoreline is acknowledged as one of the most important migration routes in the United States for songbirds, but it is simply one section of the greater Mississippi Flyway. Flyways are historic migration routes that provide food, shelter, and a visual north-south orientation. In Lake County, nearly 200 inland lakes and the Des Plaines River Greenway also provide important migratory stops.

Chances are, there is a fantastic birding spot in a forest preserve near you. For the biggest bang for your birding buck, we recommend Wright Woods (Mettawa), Des Plaines River Trail and Greenway (countywide), Ryerson Woods (Riverwoods), Fort Sheridan (Lake Forest), Independence Grove (Libertyville), Lyons Woods (Waukegan), Middlefork Savanna (Lake Forest), and Rollins Savanna (Grayslake). The chart (facing, left) is a good starting point for birding your forest preserves.

FOR THE BIRDS
Providing food for wild birds can be an enjoyable way to welcome wildlife into your yard. Regularly cleaning your feeders will prevent the spread of disease and keep unwanted visitors such as coyotes away. Place hawk silhouettes in nearby windows to deter birds from colliding with reflective glass (download a silhouette at LCFPD.org/hawkshadow). Planting native species of trees, shrubs and wildflowers provides natural food sources best suited to native birds. Visit our annual Native Plant Sale this May to get started—see page 13 for details.

MISSISSIPPI FLYWAY

Key:
- a) red-eyed vireo
- b) belted kingfisher
- c) red-winged blackbird
- d) blue-winged teal
- e) dark-eyed junco
- f) eastern screech owl
- g) tree swallow
- h) black-burned warbler
- i) great blue heron
- j) kildeer
- k) green heron
- l) American woodcock
- m) ruby-throated hummingbird
- n) American goldfinch
- o) cardinal