

Lakefront Bird Habitat Guidelines Taskforce

*Blackpoll
Warbler*



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Lesser Yellowlegs

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Chicago Park District Lakefront Bird Habitat Guidelines



Great Egret



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Cooper's Hawk



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Chicago's Lakefront: Important Bird Habitat

The Chicago lakefront, on the southwest shore of Lake Michigan, plays a major role in providing habitat for millions of migratory birds. In the last century and a half, the conversion of much of the adjoining land to agriculture and urban uses has only increased the importance of the lakefront open space with its canopy of trees and shrubs. For a copy of the Chicago Lakefront Birding Trail brochure, call (312) 742-PLAY.

The City of Chicago recognized these facts with the signing of the "Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds" with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on March 25, 2000. This treaty commits USFWS to a long-term partnership with the City of Chicago and its conservation partners, including the Chicago Park District (CPD) and citizen conservation groups, for the benefit of migratory birds.

Chicago Park District Adopts Bird Habitat Guidelines

The Chicago Park District worked with Friends of the Parks, other open space and conservation organizations and park advisory councils to develop guidelines for the lakefront as a crucial stopover point for migratory birds. The Chicago Park District Board of Commissioners adopted the "Lakefront Bird Habitat Guidelines" in 2001. The following guidelines are being used by the District, its contractors and subcontractors, to protect and promote bird habitat in Chicago's lakefront parks.

Dunlin



Inventory & Planning of Bird Habitat Areas

- Identify and map existing significant bird habitat areas and designate them for special management. *
- Identify other bird habitat areas and designate them for appropriate management.
- Identify sites within recreational areas that can provide bird habitat, e.g. "rough" areas in golf courses, landscaped edges.
- Identify other possible areas for habitat expansion or enhancement, e.g. shoreline beach areas, wetlands, prairies, savannas, and woodlands.
- Establish a forum for ongoing discussion of habitat issues and best practices.
- Coordinate with other governments' and non-governmental organizations' planning efforts and projects to promote bird habitat.
- Review existing buildings for hazards to migratory and nesting birds, such as large expanses of glass.

Design of Bird Habitat Areas

- Examine existing and proposed landscaping in terms of promoting bird habitat.
- Design landscapes with plant species that are bird-friendly, e.g. provide shelter, nesting material, food sources (berries, seeds and nectar).
- Design with low maintenance and drought-resistant native species of plants.
- Design more diverse habitats, e.g. open savannas, woodlands, dunes and prairies.
- Design multi-layered landscapes containing perennials, shrubs, under-story trees and canopy trees.
- Use a variety of plants, especially native species and those that leaf out and flower across a wide range of dates.
- Design water edges with aquatic and riparian species, and naturalistic wetland and upland plantings.
- Design plantings for year-round seasonal value for bird habitat.
- Design water supply for landscape maintenance and necessary sources of water for birds.
- Work with golf course managers to introduce native landscape in the "rough" & along the edges.
- Design new facilities to eliminate or minimize hazards to migratory and nesting birds.
- Design landscape construction to avoid or mitigate bird-adverse techniques, such as erosion netting.
- Mitigate bird-adverse conditions in structures through landscape design and other appropriate means.

Management & Maintenance of Bird Habitat Areas

- Develop holistic and seasonal management plan for bird habitat areas according to inventory delineation.
- Develop and disseminate maps of significant habitat areas, surrounding buffer zones, and "no-mow" areas.
- Integrate habitat guidelines into land use rules and requirements, e.g. park use permits, construction permits.
- Coordinate with other governments' and non-governmental organizations' planning efforts and projects to promote bird habitat.
- Adopt sequenced schedule to protect bird habitat during landscape renovation.
- Develop interpretive system of signage.
- Develop a public information/education program about habitat management.
- Develop a cooperative program of public involvement and stewardship, including volunteer stewards.
- Coordinate garbage and litter collection to reduce habitat disturbances.
- Use Integrated Pest Management Program under CPD Landscape Management Plan, according to designated inventory level.
- Develop maintenance program according to inventory level for all bird habitat areas.
- Conduct less intense natural debris clean-up of natural areas and retain fallen trees for habitat, where appropriate.
- Devise best-management mowing and pruning practices and schedules that preserve and enhance habitat.
- Design appropriate "no-mow" areas.
- Delay first mowing in and adjacent to habitat areas, whenever possible, to June 1.
- Set mower blades at minimum of 3" high.
- Use grass-cutting & pruning equipment with special care to avoid damage to trees.
- Prune trees and shrubs to emphasize natural form and use as habitat.

*Chestnut-sided
Warbler*



*Downy
Woodpecker*



* "Significant bird habitat areas" are defined as those areas of Chicago's lakefront that large numbers of migratory birds use for food and shelter.