

Bird Lovers Find Dunes State Park Ideal Place to Study Many Species

*Interesting Account of Four-Hour Bird Hike Given by Roy E. Hawkinson—
Ninety Different Birds Heard or Seen During Trip*

WHILE Indiana Dunes State Park, bordering Lake Michigan, is best known for its perfect three-mile bathing beach, ornithologists have discovered that the park's combination of lake, woods, swamp, small meadows, open fields and climate forms an ideal area for birds.

A majority of the species of birds found in the United States inhabit or pass through this area, giving it an attraction that is drawing thousands of nature lovers to the Dunes from all parts of the country. In addition the presence of hundreds of varieties of wildflowers, plants, shrubs and trees create an inviting atmosphere for students of botany and wildlife.

An interesting account of the bird life of the Dunes Park has been written by Roy E. Hawkinson, one of the many bird and nature students who knows and enjoys this area. He writes:

"To the bird lover this community is very inviting, especially so during spring and fall migrations. Here one may explore undisturbed the haunts of thousands of birds, observing their lives and activities in proper setting. An hour or two of early morning exploration would reveal, even to the casual observer, fifty or more different birds, while the discerning observer could record more than a hundred at the peak of the season.

"It would take too much space to describe and enumerate the fascination existing in the study of birds in the Dunes area. As an example I record the following from my notebook during a few hours of one day.

"At 4:30 o'clock one May morning I left my cottage, spending four hours in woods, swamp, field and meadows. Including a few hawks, crows, owls and gulls, my notes record ninety species of birds heard and seen. For the first time in my life I witnessed the courting loop-the-loop, dashes and tippings of the beautiful swallow-tailed-kite, now very rare in this locality. A more wonderful sight would be hard to find. Almost at the same time the beautiful marsh hawk was sweeping in graceful circles over the swamp, and in a nearby meadow the lovely little sparrow hawk hung as from a wire—suddenly dashing to earth and coming up with a mouse in his claws.

"In the early morning hours I noticed the robin warming her young with her breast and wings. Across the way the ruby-throated hummingbird was sipping from neighboring flowers. Hundreds of these gorgeous creatures stay here throughout the sum-

mer. It is rather difficult to locate their beautiful nests. I hunted for several weeks before accidentally throwing my glass upon one, but it was worth it. It is also hard to find the bobolink's nest. For three years I've hunted in a Duneland meadow and the joy of finding one is still to be fulfilled.

"The robins, bluebirds, crows, woodcocks and owls have young or are hatching these days. Not over 10 minutes walk from where I write this, a large barred owl watches silently over her young while not far away a ghostly head draws back into the darkness of a hallow tree only to reappear at the first sign of dusk.

"Most fascinating is birdlife's awakening in the early morning. A sparrow appears to be the first to wash his eyes in the dew, followed by the ovenbird, towhee, house wren, and phoebe while the wood thrush is no laggard. The robins seem to flit about for several minutes before opening up. Finally, perhaps three quarters of an hour after the sparrow's song, the great crested flycatcher blows the whistle and they're off! A grand chorus of over thirty voices.

"Coming home I looked in for the hundreth time, upon my bluebird on her eggs in a hollow post in a fence corner. (Here last year I saw a flicker raise a family.) Today the bluebird permitted me to stroke her head and run my finger down her back. I wouldn't have done it only I remembered reading John Burrough's account of touching a bluebird and that she didn't seem to mind it. The next day the bluebird had hatched out five young ones, it being exactly twenty-five days since the first egg was laid.

"A few hours walk before and after sunrise pays high dividends. With the birds you get the clear air, lovely colors in the sky and another appreciation and enjoyment of the landscape. If practiced often this early rising will create a new and powerful understanding of the great outdoors."

The following list of ninety birds includes those seen and heard by the writer during the above described four-hour bird walk: robin, bluebird, towhee, phoebe, pewee, chebec, kingbird, great crested flycatcher, catbird, cardinal, scarlet tanager, indigo bunting, dickcissel, rosebreasted grosbeak, kingfisher, meadowlark, purple martin, ovenbird, bobolink, brown thrasher, tufted titmouse, white-breasted nuthatch, mourning dove, bluejay, bob white.

Cowbird, blackbird, redwing blackbird, purple grackle, hummingbird, Baltimore oriole, brown creeper, wood thrush, hermit (Continued on Page 30)

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thrush, olive-backed thrush, veery, water thrush, gray-cheeked thrush, house wren, marsh wren, flicker, red-headed woodpecker, hairy woodpecker, downy woodpecker, tree swallow, barn swallow, black and white creeper, Maryland yellow-throat, goldfinch, magnolia warbler, prairie warbler, yellow warbler, chestnut sided warbler, myrtle warbler, black-throated blue warbler.

Black-throated green warbler, blackburnian warbler, black poll, pine siskin, yellow-throated vireo, red-eyed vireo, warbling vireo, white-eyed vireo, Henslow's sparrow, Lincoln's sparrow, song sparrow, field sparrow, white-crowned sparrow, chipping sparrow, white-throated sparrow, vesper sparrow, chickadee, junco, American redstart, crow, marsh hawk, swallowtailed kite, sparrow hawk, bittern, green heron, tern, night hawk, whip-poor-will, herring gull, Bonaparte gull, kildeer, wagtail, barred owl, and sandpiper.