

DeKalb County Forest Preserve Wildlife Highlights

Prepared by Patrick McCrea 4/5/19

This winter was packed with invasive brush removal. Non-native bush honeysuckle, autumn olive, and multiflora rose were all on the removal list. The removal of these shrubs and restoration of the areas will help to improve habitat for many species of wildlife. Cardinals were a common sight while we removed invasive brush at Merritt Prairie FP. Native shrubs like, smooth sumac, elderberry, and American plum will be planted in place of some of the removed invasive shrubs. These native plants will help contribute to the diet of Northern Cardinals.



Photo By Thomas J. Robbins



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At Sannauk FP Volunteers and Forest Preserve staff removed invasive brush around ephemeral wetlands and along the bank of Somonauk Creek. A winter wren was spotted fluttering along the banks of the creek. Winter wrens feed primarily on insects and probe decaying wood with the hope of finding a meal.

A small herd of 12 White-tailed deer past by us as we worked on removing invasive Buckthorn at County Farm Woods FP. Although this preserve is only 9 acres the mature oaks provide a bounty of acorns each year which helps support white-tailed deer, wood ducks, wood peckers, and many other wildlife species.



Horned Larks could be spotted this year at and around Afton FP. These birds typically forage in flocks. Many times they can be spotted along road sides foraging near the ditch. These birds nest on the ground creating a slight depression and building the nest out of mostly plant material. "One side of the nest often has a flat "doorstep" made of pebbles."

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Photo By Thomas J. Robbins

Tiger salamanders breed really early in the spring. Many times they begin moving long before all the snow and ice is melted completely. While removing invasive honeysuckle we came across this Tiger salamander at Wilkinson-Renwick FP. These salamanders typically hibernate in burrows where they spend



most of their life. They commonly live between 10 and 16 years in the wild. This one was on a mission to breed near the end of February this year. A cold snap froze it in place. Some amphibians like wood frogs can freeze solid and then thaw out unharmed but the outcome for this salamander is unclear.



Blue birds are beginning to find nesting locations for this year. The Eastern Bluebird is a year round resident in DeKalb County. Flocks of 8 to 10 birds were spotted this winter at Sannauk FP and Potawatomi Woods FP.

Photo By Thomas J. Robbins



With all the brush clearing this winter we were left with a lot of debris. The Forest Preserve used some of this debris to create habitat piles. These piles will provide refuge, feeding, nesting, and hibernation opportunities for many species of wildlife.

American Woodcocks are interesting looking birds to say the least. These birds use their long bills to probe for earthworms.

During spring and summer breeding season males will perform a sky dance to attract females. This Woodcock was spotted at Potawatomi Woods a couple years ago.

Photo By Terry Hannan



This year at the end of March these Woodcock eggs were spotted at Potawatomi Woods. These birds nest on the ground and typically lay 4 eggs. The well camouflaged bird sits and waits till the last minute to fly away if threatened.