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**WILDLIFE PRESERVATION FUND GRANT # 04-019W
"BIRD SURVEY OF WAUKEGAN BEACH AND DUNAL AREA"**

FINAL REPORT

This study was the second undertaken on birds of this area; the initial survey was done in the summer of 2000.

Dr. Joel Greenberg made five visits to the site. One was a summer visit (6-14) to survey nesting birds. Follow-up visits on 8-31, 9-15, 9-23 and 10-5 were to monitor use of the area by migrating species.

In addition to the data collected on these visits (see accompanying report,) Dr. Greenberg made four special trips in late June and early July to monitor use by sandpipers, which are early migrants.

From his studies, Dr. Greenberg had a number of comments as to the continued importance of this habitat, and also some suggestions for restricting use during times of peak migration. It is his opinion that the northern portion of the beach should be "off limits" to people in order to maximize the opportunities for piping plover to nest during the breeding season. This is a federally-listed species and its habitat around the Great Lakes continues to shrink.

It is hoped that this study will lead to discussions of habitat protection and result in some kind of policy implementation to preserve this critical habitat for use by nesting and migrating birds.

Dr. Greenberg's full report is attached.

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BIRD SURVEY OF WAUKEGAN BEACH: JUNE –OCTOBER 2003

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As planning activities continue for the future of the Waukegan beach area (public beach on south to Midwest Generation on the north), it is important that ongoing monitoring of the biological resources be undertaken. This study is an update of the earlier more comprehensive one made in 2000. Authorization to begin this survey was not received in time to cover spring migration or the first part of the breeding season. One excursion was made in mid-June to sample nesting species, but the emphasis (four field surveys) was on fall migration. Please see the full results beginning on page three. In addition to the full inventories presented in this report, four special trips were made from late June to early July to record any use by sandpipers.

This section of beach and foredunes remains of great significance to birds for four principal reasons. First, most of the lakefront from Waukegan beach to North Point Marina has been declared by the US Fish and Wildlife Service to be critical breeding habitat for the federally endangered Great Lakes population of piping plover. (In fact the last place in Illinois where the species nested was at the north end of the beach on what would now be property owned by Midwest Generation.) As lake levels within the Great Lakes basin recede and protective measures are implemented in Michigan (where almost all of the plover now nest), the species is increasing, which gives hope that they may soon recolonize their former Illinois haunts. Having closely examined all stretches of critical habitat in Lake County, I believe that the beach structure at Waukegan may be the most favorable of all to nesting plover. The greatest impediment to the bird's use of this area is the foot traffic, particularly that of one individual who walks the entire beach every morning with a pack of large dogs that are allowed to wander without restraint.

Second, the wetlands that exist, mostly inland from the first foredune, provide breeding habitat for rails, marsh wrens, and swamp sparrows. The more extensive study conducted in 2000 also yielded two species of bitterns, both state- endangered. This rich assemblage of wetland obligate species deserves to be protected.

Third, and this is really a subset of two, one wetland area supports an extensive colony of the state listed black-crowned night-heron, with smaller numbers of great egrets and great-blue herons. On June 14, 56 night-herons, 1 great egret, and 6 great-blue herons were observed, but because of heavy foliage a more accurate count was that made in early May by Paul Sweet as part of the Spring Bird Count. He recorded 134 night-herons, which would probably make this colony one of the three largest for the species in northeastern Illinois. .

Forth, the Waukegan Beach area is heavily used by migrant birds of almost all kinds. Perhaps most significant, because of the rarity of open beach in this region, is the habitat

provided to sandpipers. Their presence is affected by the quantity of vegetable matter that washes ashore. The strand line attracts numerous insects, which provide forage for the sandpipers and gulls. During the four mid-summer sandpiper surveys, least sandpipers were seen on three days in numbers ranging from 2 to 25 birds. Eight sanderlings were also seen on one day. A much greater variety was detected over the course of the August and September visits. Western and Baird's sandpipers are somewhat uncommon in this area, but the most noteworthy sighting was that of the red knot which is suffering precipitous declines throughout its range.

The inland strip of woods, marsh, and shrubs are very attractive to passerine and other land migrants. There is not the concentration of birds that one finds, say, in the Chicago lakefront parks because those are isolated oases and these are not. There is extensive habitat inland and to the north at Illinois Beach State Park. But for birds coming off the lake or those gathered along the shore due to westerly winds, this habitat is very important, particularly during early spring or late fall when the lake's moderating effects provide insects not available inland. Raptors such as merlins, peregrine falcons, and sharp-shinned hawks use the lakefront as a flyway, and the presence of birds allows them to tarry before moving over less hospitable urban landscapes.

My primary recommendation would be to minimize development of any kind. If some sort of board walk were constructed it should be kept away from the wetlands behind the foredunes, particularly the site harboring the herons. But the lower beach is also important for shorebirds, and should be respected.

One proactive step that should be taken is for the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Midwest Generation, and other landowners to formulate a plan to restrict foot traffic on the northern third or so of the beach during the period when piping plovers might be nesting. If this is not done, I fear that an otherwise excellent portion of potential plover habitat might remain unsuitable. Let us maximize the opportunities for plover to once again nest in our midst.

SPECIES	6-14	8-31	9-15	9-23	10-5
D-c cormorant	9	52	290	12	389
Gr-blue heron	6	1		1	1
Great egret	1				
Green heron	2				
Bl-cr night-heron	56				1
Canada goose	5	11	5	13	50
Wood duck				1	
Am wigeon				3	2
Mallard		20	28	47	15
Bl-winged teal		12			
N shoveler				1	
Pintail			3		
Gr-winged teal		5			
Osprey				1	1
Peregrine falcon					1
Sora	1				
Virginia rail	1				
Black-bel plover			4	2	1
Killdeer	4		1		1
Spott sandpiper	2				
Semipal plover		5			
Semipal sandpiper		22	3		
Red knot		1			
Sanderling		30	19	4	7
Western sandpiper		1			
Baird's sandpiper		3			
Ring-billed gull	137	275	197	213	290
Herring gull	6	8	46	55	45
Great bl-ba gull			1	1	1
Franklin's gull			1		
Caspian tern	3	2			
Common tern	2				
Mourning dove	7				
Chimney swift	2	9	55	25	
Belted kingfisher			1	1	1
Ye-be sapsucker				2	
Downy woodpecker		1		2	1

N. flicker	1				
E. wood-pewee	3				
Willow flycatcher	2				
Eastern kingbird	1				
Warbling vireo	4				
Red-eyed vireo			1		
American crow		5		9	
Blue jay	2		1		
Purple martin					
Tree swallow	2				
Barn swallow		20			
Bank swallow	18				
Bl.-cap. Chickadee			2		2
Brown creeper					1
Marsh wren	3				
House wren	1		1		
Ru-cr kinglet				4	
Bl-gr. gnatcatcher	2				
Swainson's thrush		1	1		
Hermit thrush				5	
American robin	7	3			
Gray catbird	6		2		
Cedar waxwing		2			
Tennessee warbler			2		
Yellow warbler	3				
Chest-sid warbler		2			
Magnolia warbler			1	1	
Yel-rump warbler			28	27	10
Bl-thr green warbler		3			
Palm warbler			15	2	3
Blackpoll warbler				1	
Bl and whi warbler			2		
American redstart		2	2		2
Ovenbird			1		
N waterthrush			1		1
Com. yellowthroat	5	1	1		1
Northern cardinal	2				3
Indigo bunting	4				

Ruf-sided towhee					
Chipping sparrow	1				
Lincoln's sparrow			1		
Song sparrow	3	1	2		4
Wh-thr sparrow		2	5		
Dark-eyed junco					3
Swamp sparrow	4				2
Red-wing. blackbird	12				
Common grackle		3			
Br-head. cowbird	2				
Amer. goldfinch		5			11
House sparrow			7		

Waukegan, Illinois - lakefront - looking north from the federal channel

Aerial View of Waukegan Harbor

