85-14

August 29, 1985

Carl Becker
Natural Heritage Section
Illinois Department of Conservation
600 North Grand Avenue, West, Suite 2
Springfield, Illinois 62706

Dear Mr. Becker:

Enclosed please find my Final Report detailing the full results of an Avian Survey of Four Western Will County Preserves that I conducted this past summer. This breeding season survey was funded via the Illinois Department of Conservation's Nongame Wildlife Conservation Fund and conducted on behalf of the Illinois Audubon Society. I have also included a billing for the completion of this survey and report.

As I mentioned in my letter of July 25, I was extremely pleased to have had the opportunity to conduct this particular survey. Ever since finding Illinois' first Canada Warbler nest in 1980, I have been "hooked" on summer birding. The nesting season has, subsequently, always been "my season" of the year and, fortunately, the summer of '85 was no different. In addition to completing thorough surveys of four local preserves, several nest-young records of statewide significance were established. But even more importantly, this survey gathered timely data which will be used by the Will County Forest Preserve System in site management considerations and in application for land acquisition funds for Messenger Woods - home to the state-endangered Cooper's and Red-Shouldered Hawks, as well as the state-threatened Veery. Interest in the Homer Township preserve and its surrounding countryside has also been expressed to me by planners from nearby Orland Park (southwestern Cook County), who are attempting to maintain open spaces in this rapidly developing two-county area.

I am very pleased with this report and the data gathered therein. I hope, likewise, that it meets with your approval.

Thank you so much.

Sincerely,

Joe B. Milosevich

Joe B. Milosevich
16308 S. Peerless Ct.
Plainfield, IL 60544

AVIAN SURVEY

OF

FOUR WESTERN WILL COUNTY PRESERVES

Pilcher Park, Joliet

Messenger Woods, Lockport

McKinley Woods, Channahon

Braidwood Dunes and Savanna Nature Preserve, Braidwood

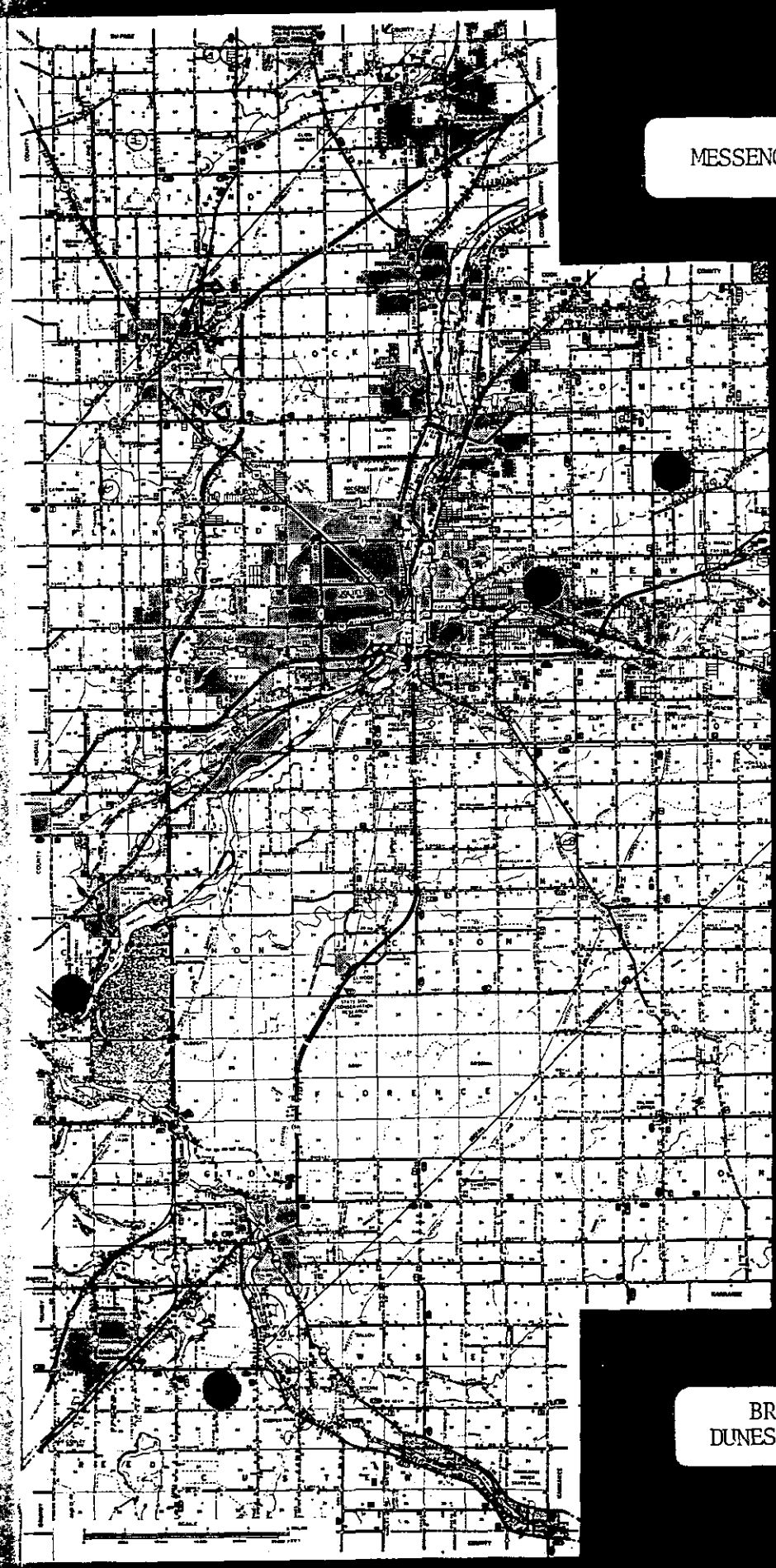
Text and Photographs

by

Joe B. Milosevich

August, 1985

This avian survey was funded via the Illinois Department of Conservation's Nongame Wildlife Conservation Fund and was conducted on behalf of the Illinois Audubon Society. This breeding season survey focused around compiling species inventories and documenting evidence of breeding.



MESSENGER WOODS

PILCHER PARK

MCKINLEY WOODS

BRAIDWOOD
DUNES & SAVANNA

TABULATION SHEET KEY

I. ESTIMATED POPULATION (as outlined by IDOC Avian Investigations)

A. Breeding species within preserves:

1 - 5 PAIRS
6 - 15 PAIRS
16 - 50 PAIRS
50+ PAIRS

B. Breeding and nonbreeding species from nearby areas utilizing preserves: VISITOR

C. Breeding and nonbreeding species from nearby areas observed passing over preserves: FLY-BY

D. Species which do not breed within the preserves or at nearby areas: MIGRANT

II. DEGREES OF BREEDING EVIDENCE (as outlined by IDOC Mid-June Birding Challenge)

A. The following are examples of CONFIRMED EVIDENCE OF BREEDING. Please note the use of a two-letter code.

DD = Distraction Display of Feigning an injury
NB = Nest building by any species other than wrens or woodpeckers
UN = Used Nest found
FL = Recently fledged young observed
FS = Adult carrying Faecal-Sac
FY = Adult(s) with Food for Young
ON = Adult(s) entering or leaving nest-site in circumstances indicating occupied nest
NE = Nest and eggs or bird setting and not disturbed or egg shells found away from nest
NY = Nest with young, or downy young of precocial species

(Note: the presence of 3 or more territorial males does not constitute confirmed evidence of breeding; this category correctly belongs in the Probable Evidence).

B. The following are examples of PROBABLE EVIDENCE OF BREEDING. Please note the use of a one-letter code.

T = Bird (or pair) apparently holding Territory or singing male present (or breeding calls heard) on more than one date in the same place
D = Courtship and Display; or agitated behavior or anxiety calls from adults, suggesting probable presence of young nearby; broodpatch on trapped female or cloacal protruberance on trapped male
N = Visiting probable nest-site
B = Nest building by wrens or woodpeckers
3+= Three or more territorial males present in Area

C. The following letter will be used for POSSIBLE EVIDENCE OF BREEDING.

P = Species present, but no evidence of breeding observed

AVIAN SURVEY OF FOUR WESTERN WILL COUNTY PRESERVES

TABULATION SHEET #1

	Pilcher Park	Messenger Woods	McKinley Woods (Upper I & M Canal, Des Plaines River)	Braidwood Dunes & Savanna Nature Preserve
Double-cr. Cormorant			(Visitor)	
Great Blue Heron		Fly-by	Visitor	
Great Egret	Visitor	Fly-by	(Visitor)	
Green-backed Heron	1 - 5 P		1 - 5 T	Visitor
Black-cr. Night-Heron			Visitor	
Canada Goose	1 - 5 T	Fly-by	(1 - 5) (FL)	Fly-by
Wood Duck	1 - 5 D	1 - 5 FL	1 - 5 FL	
Mallard		Visitor	1 - 5 FL	Visitor
Hooded Merganser			(1 - 5) (FL)	
Turkey Vulture			(1 - 5) (T)	
Cooper's Hawk		1 - 5 T		
Red-shouldered Hawk		1 - 5 FL		
Broad-winged Hawk	1 - 5 T	1 - 5 NY	1 - 5 T	
Red-tailed Hawk	1 - 5 NY		1 - 5 FL	1 - 5 NE
Ring-neck. Pheasant				1 - 5 T
Northern Bobwhite				6 - 15 3+
Killdeer		Fly-by	Fly-by	Fly-by
Spotted Sandpiper			1 - 5 P	
American Woodcock	Visitor		1 - 5 T	1 - 5 FL
Ring-billed Gull			(Visitor)	
Herring Gull		Fly-by	(Visitor)	

AVIAN SURVEY OF FOUR WESTERN WILL COUNTY PRESERVES

TABULATION SHEET #2

	Pilcher Park		Messenger Woods		McKinley Woods (Upper I & M Canal Des Plaines River)		Braidwood Dunes & Savanna Nature Preserve	
Mourning Dove	1 - 5	P	1 - 5	P	1 - 5	P	6 - 15	NE
Black-billed Cuckoo							1 - 5	T
Yellow-billed Cuckoo			1 - 5	P	1 - 5	T	1 - 5	T
Eastern Screech-Owl					6 - 15	3+		
Great Horned Owl					1 - 5	P	1 - 5	T
Whip-poor-will							1 - 5	3+
Chimney Swift	Visitor		Visitor				Visitor	
Ruby-thr. Hummingbird			1 - 5	T	1 - 5	T		
Belted Kingfisher	1 - 5	P			1 - 5	T		
Red-headed Woodpecker	1 - 5	T	1 - 5	FL	1 - 5	T	1 - 5	T
Red-bellied Woodpecker	1 - 5	T	1 - 5	T	1 - 5	3+	1 - 5	T
Downy Woodpecker	1 - 5	FL	1 - 5	3+	1 - 5	3+	1 - 5	FL
Hairy Woodpecker	6 - 15	3+	1 - 5	D	1 - 5	3+	1 - 5	FL
Northern Flicker	6 - 15	FL	1 - 5	FL	6 - 15	ON	1 - 5	FL
Olive-sided Flycatcher							Migrant	
Eastern Wood-Pewee	16 - 50	3+	6 - 15	3+	16 - 50	3+	6 - 15	NE
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher							Migrant	
Acadian Flycatcher			1 - 5	T				
Alder Flycatcher							Migrant	
Willow Flycatcher							1 - 5	3+
Least Flycatcher							Migrant	

AVIAN SURVEY OF FOUR WESTERN WILL COUNTY PRESERVES

TABULATION SHEET #3	Pilcher Park		Messenger Woods		McKinley Woods (Upper I & M Canal Des Plaines River)		Braidwood Dunes & Savanna Nature Preserve	
Eastern Phoebe	1 - 5	T						
Great Crested Flycatcher	16 - 50	3+	6 - 15	D	16 - 50	D	6 - 15	3+
Eastern Kingbird	1 - 5	T					1 - 5	T
Purple Martin			Visitor		Visitor			
Tree Swallow			Visitor				1 - 5	ON
No. Rough-winged Swallow							1 - 5	ON
Bank Swallow							Visitor	
Barn Swallow			Visitor		Visitor		Visitor	
Blue Jay	1 - 5	NE	1 - 5	FL	6 - 15	P	6 - 15	FL
American Crow			1 - 5	FL	1 - 5	P	1 - 5	P
Black-capped Chickadee	6 - 15	FL	1 - 5	FL	1 - 5	FL	1 - 5	FL
Tufted Titmouse			1 - 5	FL	1 - 5	FL		
White-br. Nuthatch	1 - 5	T	1 - 5	FL	1 - 5	T	1 - 5	D
House Wren	6 - 15	3+	6 - 15	3+	6 - 15	FL	6 - 15	3+
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	1 - 5	D						
Eastern Bluebird							1 - 5	FL
Veery	1 - 5	NY	1 - 5	D			Migrant	
Swainson's Thrush					Migrant			
Wood Thrush	6 - 15	NE	6 - 15	3+	16 - 50	3+	1 - 5	3+
American Robin	16 - 50	FL	6 - 15	P	6 - 15	NE	6 - 15	FL
Gray Catbird	1 - 5	D	1 - 5	ON	6 - 15	D	6 - 15	D

AVIAN SURVEY OF FOUR WESTERN WILL COUNTY PRESERVES

TABULATION SHEET #4	Pilcher Park		Messenger Woods		McKinley Woods (Upper I & M Canal Des Plaines River)		Braidwood Dunes & Savanna Nature Preserve	
Brown Thrasher	1 - 5	T			1 - 5	D	6 - 15	D
Cedar Waxwing	1 - 5	P	1 - 5	P	1 - 5	P	6 - 15	P
European Starling	1 - 5	P	1 - 5	ON	1 - 5	P	1 - 5	ON
White-eyed Vireo					1 - 5	T	1 - 5	FL
Bell's Vireo							1 - 5	D
Yellow-throated Vireo	1 - 5	D	1 - 5	T	1 - 5	T	1 - 5	D
Warbling Vireo							1 - 5	P
Red-eyed Vireo	16 - 50	3+	6 - 15	3+	16 - 50	3+	1 - 5	T
Blue-winged Warbler	1 - 5	T						
Nashville Warbler							Migrant	
Yellow Warbler							1 - 5	FY
Ovenbird	1 - 5	T	1 - 5	FL	1 - 5	T	Migrant	
Louisiana Waterthrush	1 - 5	D	1 - 5	NE	1 - 5	FY		
Kentucky Warbler	1 - 5	NY	1 - 5	T	(1 - 5)	(T)		
Mourning Warbler							Migrant	
Common Yellowthroat	1 - 5	T	1 - 5	T	1 - 5	T	16 - 50	FY
Canada Warbler	1 - 5	T						
Yellow-breasted Chat							6 - 15	UN
Scarlet Tanager	1 - 5	3+	1 - 5	3+	1 - 5	D		
Summer Tanager							1 - 5	NE
Northern Cardinal	6 - 15	FL	1 - 5	3+	6 - 15	3+	6 - 15	3+

AVIAN SURVEY OF FOUR WESTERN WILL COUNTY PRESERVES

TABULATION SHEET #5	Pilcher Park		Messenger Woods		McKinley Woods (Upper I & M Canal, Des Plaines River)		Braidwood Dunes & Savanna Nature Pseserve	
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	1 - 5	T	1 - 5	T	1 - 5	3+	6 - 15	3+
Indigo Bunting	6 - 15	D	6 - 15	FL	6 - 15	D	6 - 15	D
Rufous-sided Towhee	1 - 5	3+	1 - 5	3+	6 - 15	3+	6 - 15	FL
Chipping Sparrow							1 - 5	FL
Field Sparrow			1 - 5	FL	1 - 5	FY	16 - 50	FL
Lark Sparrow							1 - 5	FL
Henslow's Sparrow							1 - 5	FL
Song Sparrow	6 - 15	3+	1 - 5	T	1 - 5	FY	1 - 5	P
Swamp Sparrow							1 - 5	T
Red-winged Blackbird	1 - 5	FL	Fly-by		1 - 5	D	6 - 15	NB
Eastern Meadowlark			Visitor				1 - 5	FL
Common Crackle	6 - 15	FL	1 - 5	P	6 - 15	P	6 - 15	FL
Brown-headed Cowbird	6 - 15	NE	1 - 5	D	1 - 5	P	6 - 15	D
Northern Oriole			1 - 5	FL	1 - 5	D	1 - 5	FL
American Goldfinch*	1 - 5	P	1 - 5	P	1 - 5	P	6 - 15	P
*Late Nesting								

Illinois Department of Conservation
life and land together

ENDANGERED AND THREATENED WILDLIFE

DEFINITIONS

Federally Endangered Species — Any species which is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. (Denoted by two asterisks (**) on adopted list).

Federally Threatened Species — Any species which is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range. (Denoted by a single asterisk (*) on adopted list).

State Endangered Species — Any species which is in danger of extinction as a breeding species in Illinois.

State Threatened Species — Any breeding species which is likely to become a state endangered species within the foreseeable future in Illinois.

Birds

Endangered

Double-crested Cormorant	Phalacrocorax auritus
Snowy Egret	Egretta thula
Great Egret	Casmerodius albus
Little Blue Heron	Florida caerulea
American Bittern	Botaurus lentiginosus
Black-crowned Night Heron	Nycticorax nycticorax
Mississippi Kite	Ictinia mississippiensis
Cooper's Hawk	Accipiter cooperii
Red-shouldered Hawk	Buteo lineatus
Swainson's Hawk	Buteo swainsoni
Bald Eagle**	Haliaeetus leucocephalus
Osprey	Pandion haliaetus
Marsh Hawk	Circus cyaneus
Peregrine Falcon**	Falco peregrinus
Greater Prairie Chicken	Tympanuchus cupido
Yellow Rail	Coturnicops noveboracensis
Black Rail	Laterallus jamaicensis
Purple Gallinule	Porphyrula martinica
Piping Plover	Charadrius melodus
Eskimo Curlew**	Numenius borealis
Upland Sandpiper	Bartramia longicauda
Wilson's Phalarope	Steganopus tricolor
Forster's Tern	Sterna forsteri
Common Tern	Sterna hirundo
Least Tern	Sterna albifrons
Black Tern	Chlidonias niger
Barn Owl	Tyto alba
Long-eared Owl	Asio otus
Short-eared Owl	Asio flammeus
Brown Creeper	Certhia familiaris
Bachman's Warbler**	Vermivora bachmanii
Yellow-headed Blackbird	Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus
Bachman's Sparrow	Aimophila aestivalis

Threatened

Common Gallinule	Gallinula chloropus
Bewick's Wren	Thryomanes bewickii
Veery	Catharus fuscescens
Loggerhead Shrike	Lanius ludovicianus
Swainson's Warbler	Limnothlypis swainsonii
Brewer's Blackbird	Euphagus cyanocephalus
Henslow's Sparrow	Ammodramus henslowii

Great Egret, Messenger Marsh

Young Great Blue Heron,
Des Plaines Conservation Area

SPECIES SUMMARIES

Double-crested Cormorant (State Endangered)

One immature bird was observed on 28 June perching in dead trees at the southern tip of Crane Island. This island is located in the Des Plaines River northeast of McKinley Woods. It is interesting to note that two immatures summered at Lake Renwick in Plainfield, 25 miles to the north. My only other summer record for this area was two birds on 5 June 1982 flying over the backwaters of the Des Plaines Conservation Area. Oddly enough, I monitored the presence of one cormorant at Lake Renwick that same summer through 20 June.

While the only known cormorant colony in Illinois is located along the Mississippi River in Carroll County, a new colony of three nests was discovered this past summer on the Illinois River near Peoria (Vernon Kleen, personal communication). Despite this species' historically low breeding population, its plight has improved slightly in recent years to the point where the presence of summering birds may indicate possible breeding. The presence of a newly-fledged Great Blue Heron on 1 June in the adjacent backwaters of the Des Plaines Conservation Area (young not yet fledged at the Lake Renwick Heronry) may indicate the availability of appropriate habitat - large rivers and lakes for fishing and dead trees for nesting (Bowles et al. 1981)

Great Blue Heron

With a large nesting population of great blues at Lake Renwick, it is not surprising that this heron was noted at two of the preserves surveyed. The Great Blue Heron, as well as the other herons nesting at Lake Renwick (Great Egret and Black-crowned Night-Heron), will travel to foraging areas up to 15-20 miles from the rookery (Vernon Kleen, personal communication). The one fly-by bird observed at Messenger Woods was undoubtedly headed to just such a feeding area (Messenger Marsh). In contrast, the three Great Blue Herons noted at McKinley Woods were regular visitors to the large "lagoon" formed by the I & M Canal west of the wooden bridge.

There is, however, evidence that this species has nested along the Des Plaines River. I know of at least one reliable record of a small colony of three nests near Romeoville (Ken Klick, personal communication). Also, my observation of a very young bird on 1 June at the Des Plaines Conservation Area is an indication of non-Lake Renwick nesting (see "Double-crested Cormorant"). The dramatic increse in the Great Blue Heron population at the Lake Renwick Heronry in recent years (66 nests/1985, 53 nests/1984, 38 nests/1983) is saturating the available nesting habitat there and will ultimately force this species to seek additional nesting sites elsewhere.

The contiguous complex of McKinley Woods - Des Plaines Conservation Area - I & M Canal Corridor has great potential for affording protected nesting - foraging habitat for state-endangered herons and cormorants, as well as for very rare breeders like the Hooded Merganser. However, with the Joliet Arsenal added to this "Des Plaines River Complex", an even grander, more diverse "collage" of contiguous habitats - protected and semi-protected - is available for utilization by avian species such as the state-endangered Upland Sandpiper and Northern Harrier. A cooperative management plan devised by local, state, and federal agencies could go a long way towards ensuring the preservation of the rich avian communities occupying this massive land tract.

Ultimately, this area may well represent one of the few remaining open spaces in Will County where certain size-critical species will occur with any regularity in the future. Whereas many 200-300 acre preserves are slowly becoming "island zoos" due to the change in surrounding land use patterns, this "West-Central Will County Preserve Complex" may better survive such a fate simply due to its sheer size - if managed properly. (see discussion of Messenger Woods under "Red-shouldered Hawk").

Great Egret (State Endangered)

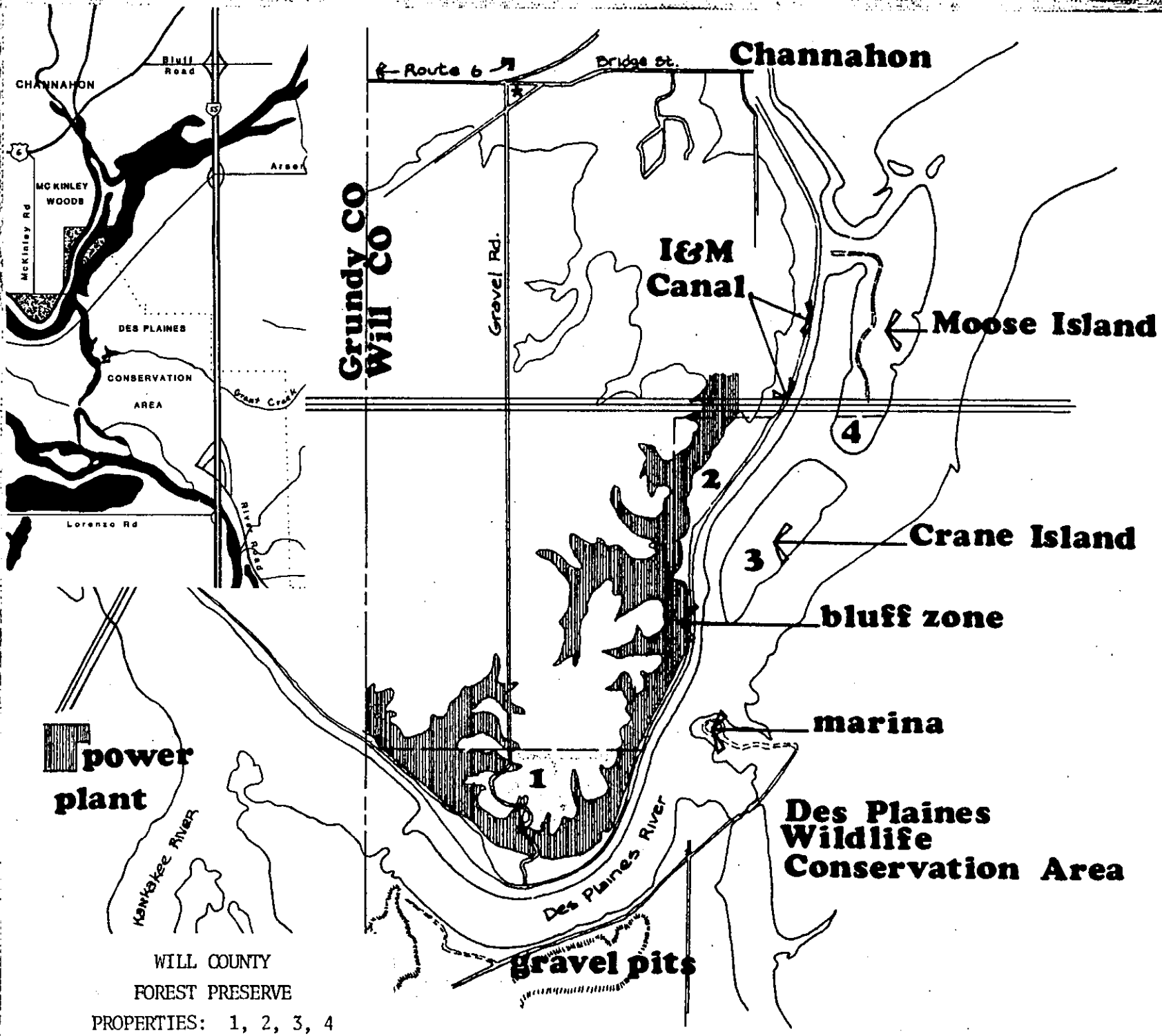
While observed only as fly-by species at Messenger Woods (see "Great Blue Heron"), this heron species was observed feeding in Hickory Creek at Pilcher Park and along the Des Plaines River in the vicinity of McKinley Woods. Unlike the Great Blue Heron and Black-crowned Night-Heron, the Great Egret did not utilize the I & M Canal, but instead exhibited a decided preference for the shallows of the Des Plaines Riverbanks opposite McKinley Woods. High water levels in the canal this summer provided for less than optimum foraging conditions for all heron species.

Green-backed Heron

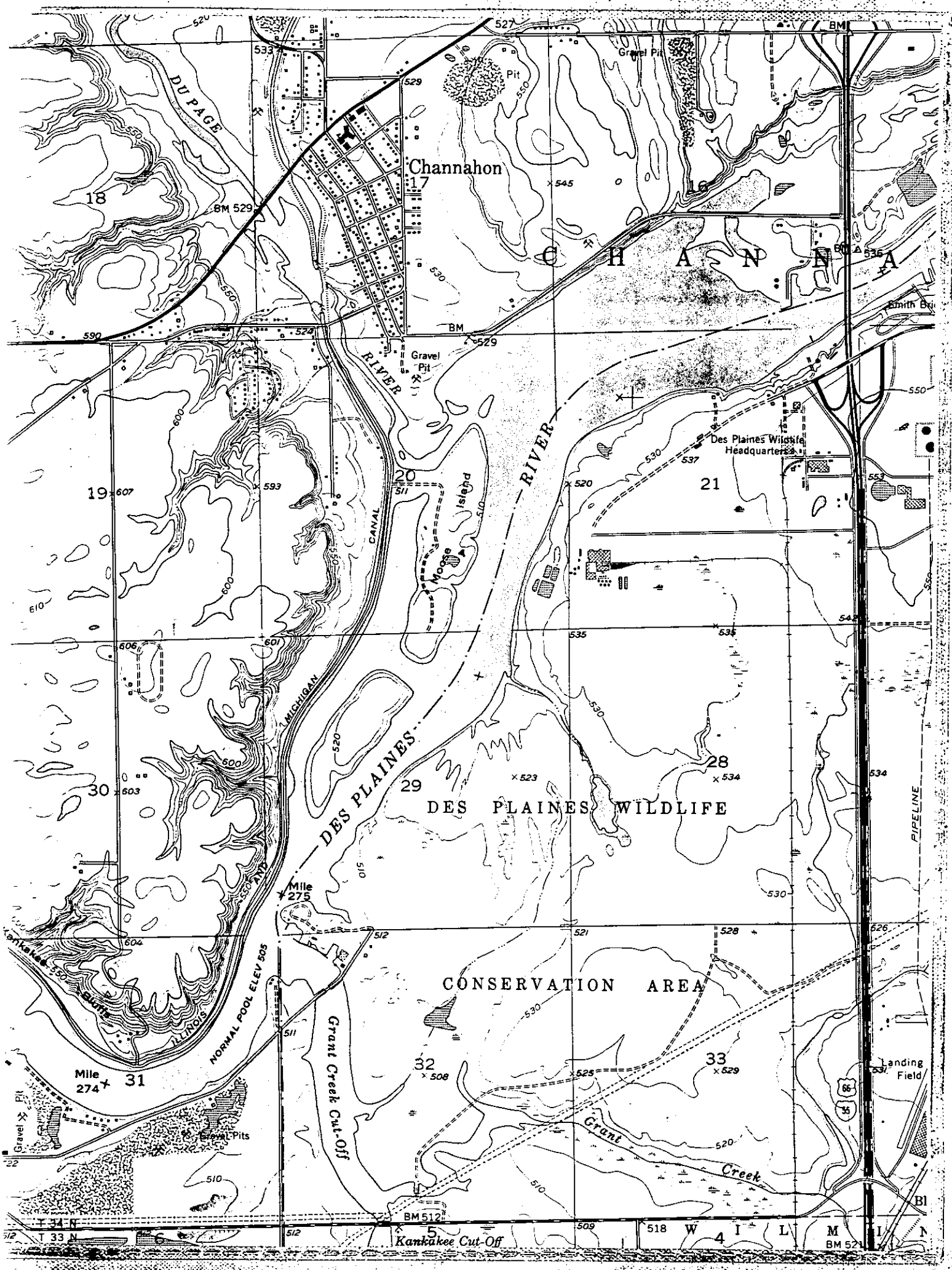
This more solitary heron was observed at three of four preserves. While no birds were noted utilizing Spring Creek within Messenger Woods, one adult was observed (on one date only) at Pilcher Park feeding in a dried-up pond near Hickory Creek. This species was much more evident along the I & M Canal at McKinley Woods, where repeated sightings suggested that at least 2 pairs could be nesting in the immediate area.

At the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna, this species was observed as a visitor to the marsh, but only as long as this area remained suitably wet. The sighting of a single bird on 3 June was never repeated within the preserve. This absence was explained in part by the loss of standing water in the marsh and

regional analysis



WILL COUNTY
FOREST PRESERVE
PROPERTIES: 1, 2, 3, 4


Channahon
C H A N N A
DU PAGE R.
RIVER
DES PLAINES
RIVER
MICHIGAN AND ILLINOIS CANAL
Moose Island
Des Plaines Wildlife Headquarters
DES PLAINES WILDLIFE
CONSERVATION AREA
Grant Creek Cut-Off
Grant Creek
Kankakee Cut-Off
NORMAL POOL ELEV 505
Kankakee Bluffs
Mile 275
Mile 274
Gravel Pit
Gravel Pits
Pit
Landing Field
PIPELINE
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sedge meadow areas (very dry June), but also by the presence of better adjacent feeding-nesting habitat at the strip mine area (private club) immediately to the north and at the Commonwealth Edison cooling lake to the south. Birds were noted in several instances flying high over the preserve headed in the direction of these two locations.

Black-crowned Night-Heron (State Endangered)

This nocturnal heron, which also nests in large numbers at the Lake Renwick Heronry, was found only at McKinley Woods, where it was a regular visitor to the secluded banks of the I & M Canal. One to three birds were active in the immediate area of McKinley Woods, but as many as eight were observed on 28 June during a towpath survey from McKinley Woods to Crane Island.

Because this area - now part of the National Heritage Corridor - will undoubtedly experience increased useage in future years, it will be increasingly important to consider the needs of wildlife in any management plans for the Corridor. For example, there should be a water level maintained in the canal that will be both beneficial to canoeing and to foraging aquatic species (herons, ducks, etc.). Also, the uncontrolled removal of fallen trees and branches from the canal will destroy feeding-resting sites for these species. Finally, one has to wonder what the long-term effect of heavy barge traffic will be on the thin strip of land comprising the towpath. Without the towpath, there is no I & M Canal.

It is interesting to note that early in this century, collectors for the Field Museum (Meinke,Dewey, and Swarth) listed this species as breeding in Pilcher Park and the adjacent Higinbotham Woods (Joliet Park District 1926). Although not noted this summer, the Black-crowned Night-Heron is still an occasional visitor to the area in the summer months. The Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, which also formerly bred in the area, has exhibited breeding behavior as recently as May-June 1983.

Canada Goose

Although a locally common breeder in western Will County, this goose was found utilizing only one preserve area. One pair was on territory in Pilcher Park from mid-April through mid-May. There was, however, no confirmed evidence of breeding. Fly-by formations of 9 and 13 were observed at Messenger Woods and Braidwood heading to nearby feeding-nesting areas (nest located at Messenger Marsh on 3 April and 76 adults/young present at the Braidwood Station on 10 July).

The 21 adults and 12 young (three broods) noted 1 June along the riverbank area opposite McKinley Woods never gave any

indication of feeding or nesting along the I & M Canal side of the river. I have consistently observed the Canada Goose in this particular location year round. This species also nests in the Waterfowl Refuge of the Des Plaines Conservation Area (25 adults and 28 young present on 1 June).

Wood Duck

It was surprising to find such little evidence of this woodland duck in the preserves surveyed, particularly since three of the four sites had waterways running through or immediately adjacent to them. The strongest evidence of breeding was a group of four flying low over Messenger Woods (a pair on Spring Creek was observed earlier in spring) and a female with five young on the I & M Canal at McKinley Woods. A female on the ground at Pilcher Park was suspicious. While there is adequate nesting habitat at these three woodlands, the presence of suitable feeding areas within these preserves is somewhat in question and may be limited. Any nesting birds would undoubtedly utilize adjacent ponds and marshes for feeding.

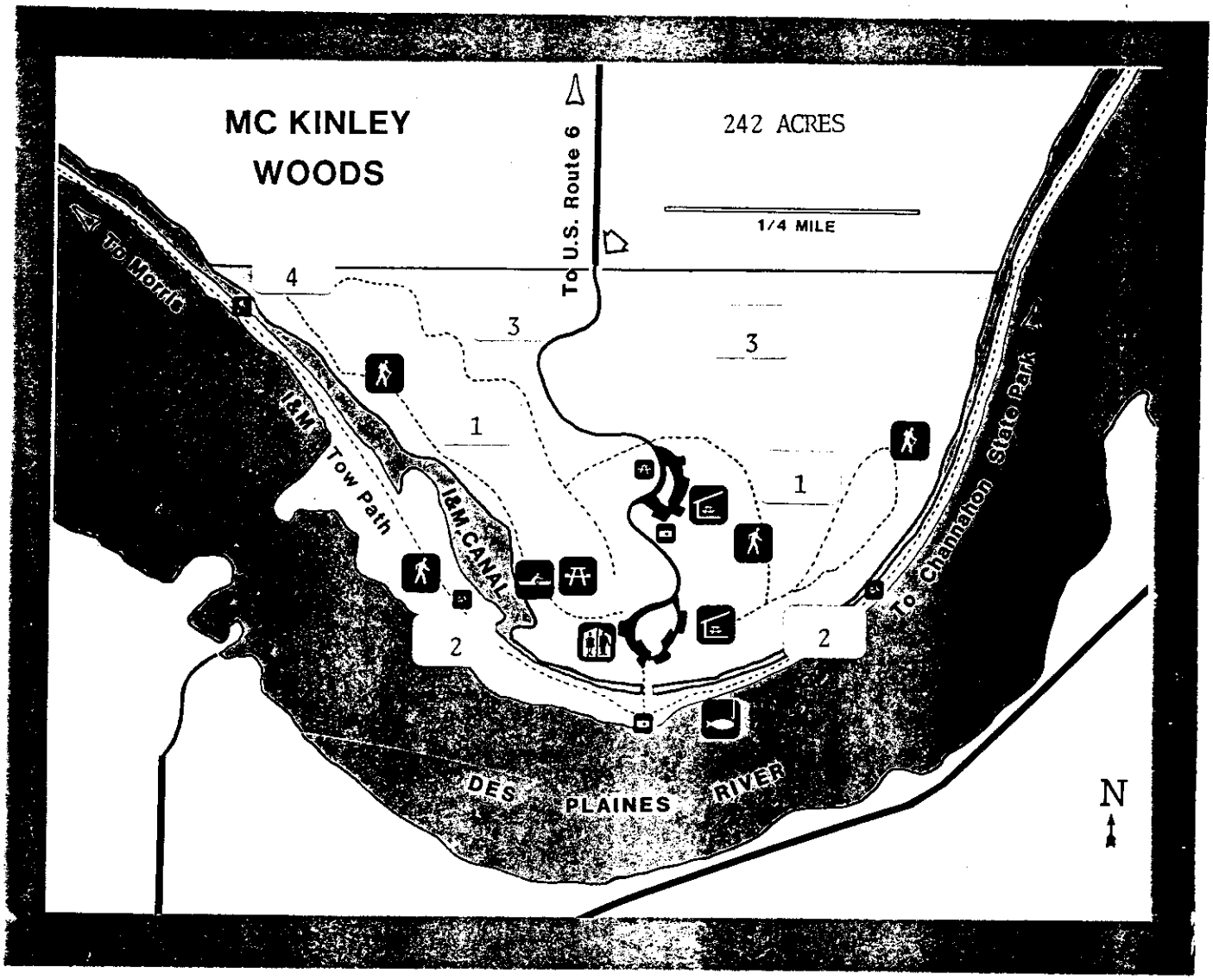
Mallard

Like the Wood Duck, this duck species was noted in very low numbers. Confirmed evidence of breeding was evident at only one site. One 1 June, a drake exhibited agitated behavior in the I & M Canal at the western end of McKinley Woods. In this same area on 28 June, 16 immatures were found in the Des Plaines River near the I & M spillway. It is possible that these young birds could have come from the nearby marina (11 young present 19 May) or the Des Plaines Conservation Area.

This species, like the Green-backed Heron, was tallied in the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna only once. A pair was flushed from the same wet thicket on 3 June and, likewise, the lack of subsequent sightings was probably due to inadequate water retention in the preserve's low areas. Similarly, a pair of mallards was present in a kettle pond along the eastern border of Messenger Woods earlier in May, but was observed only as fly-bys in June after this spot had dried up. Clearly, this marsh dabbler requires shallow pools of water with aquatic vegetation in which "to dabble." Strangely enough, most of the mallard duck nests that I have found were located in dry upland fields some distance from water.

Hooded Merganser

To find an avian species classified as a "rare summer resident" throughout the state (Bohlen 1978) in one's own county is always exciting. While not actually tallied within the boundaries of McKinley Woods itself, this species was observed



MCKINLEY WOODS

1. Oak-Hickory Terrace
2. Maple-Hackberry-Ash Lowland
3. Old Field Succession
4. Ravine

from the towpath trail; thus, making it a legitimate species of the immediate river area. This species has also been included in this report (like the Double-crested Cormorant) because of its statewide rare summer status.

On 28 June, two female-plumaged Hooded Mergansers were perched on a log which was marooned along an exposed strip of shoreline just north of the marina. One of the birds - an apparent immature - was fluttering about in the water near the log where a slightly larger bird sat (an apparent female). An adult pair had been observed at the marina on 19 May and a probable female on 1 June in the Waterfowl Refuge of the Des Plaines Conservation Area. A female - plumaged bird was also present on 11 June 1984 in the vicinity of the marina. This is the only area in Will County in which the Hooded Merganser in known to breed.

Turkey Vulture

The vast majority of my personal summer records for this species in western Will County are of single birds sighted during the period 31 May - 8 June. I have only one summer record - one bird on 22 June 1983 at the Des Plaines Conservation Area. No Turkey Vultures were observed there during an avian investigation conducted by Milosevich and Olson (unpublished manuscript) the year before on behalf of the Illinois Department of Conservation. I personally think that this species is much more locally common or uncommon in Will County that recent literature would suggest. Mlodinow (1984) classifies the Turkey Vulture a "common in the southernmost counties"of the Chicago Area.

With this background in mind, it is easy to understand why I was surprised to see six Turkey Vultures flying out of an apparent riverbottom roost on 28 June. The roost site was located on state property north of the marina. I also observed what were undoubtedly the same six Turkey Vultures on 19 May over the backwaters of the Des Plaines Conservation Area. Since this species is a bird of river bluffs (very prominent along the McKinley Woods side of the Des Plaines River) and was observed from the I & M Towpath, it (like the Double-crested Cormorant and Hooded Merganser) has been included in this survey report.

Cooper's Hawk (State Endangered)

This species once had a common statewide distribution, especially in areas of deciduous forest with meadows or clearings (Bowles et al. 1981). Bohlen (1978) notes that this woodland or semi-woodland species appears to be declining. More recently, Mlodinow (1984) states that the species' population decline appears to have ended. Both authors, however, still classify the

Cooper's Hawk as a "rare summer resident" for this area of the state.

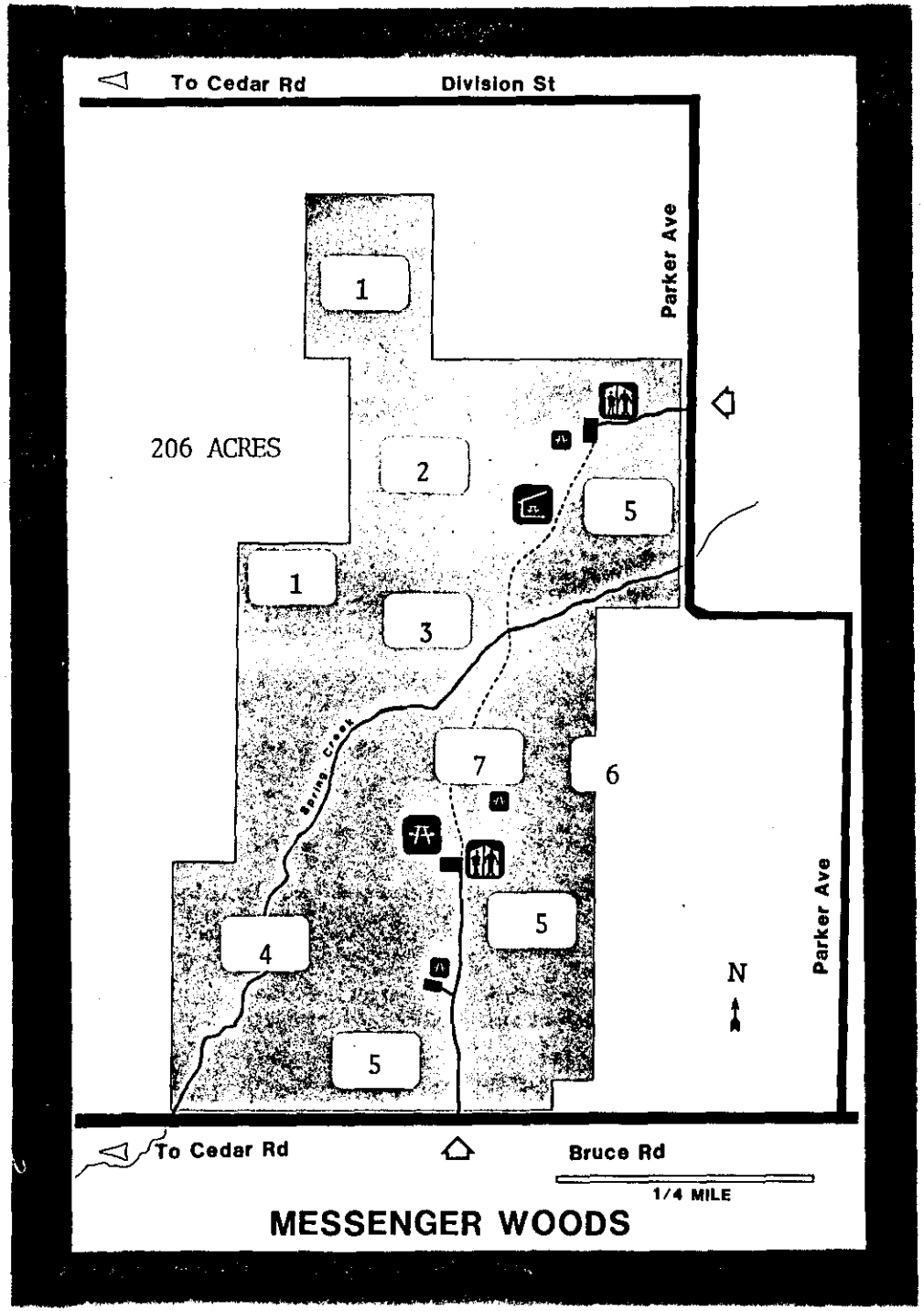
The Cooper's Hawk has been noted as breeding in the Pilcher Park area early in the century (Joliet Park District 1926). More recent observations by Jerry Olson (personal communication) in late May and early June of 1985 indicate that this species is still a possible nester. I have heard what I believe to be the "cackling" of a Cooper's Hawk at the north end of Pilcher Park once each June for three consecutive years (1983-85), but have yet to actually see a hawk.

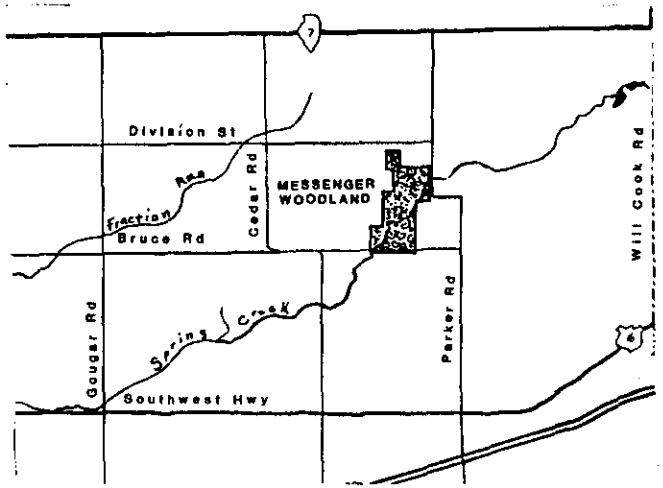
Although a nest or fledged young have yet to be discovered at Messenger Woods, there is no doubt in my mind that this species is, in fact, nesting there. In 1983, a very vocal pair engaged in the early stages of courtship was noted 8-12 April. An adult pair was present 14 - 24 May 1984 and adults were also noted 3 May - 3 July 1985. Perhaps the most graphic evidence of nesting behavior was noted on 24 May 1984. On this date, I was astonished to see individual adult Cooper's Hawks simultaneously attack single adult Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks which were soaring over the south end of the preserve. This year's sightings, though not as visually exciting, were much more consistent. Single adults were sighted on five dates and a probable pair was observed flying in and out of the north end on 27 June.

Tentative plans to close the north half of Messenger Woods to car traffic and dedicate it as an Illinois Nature Preserve reflects very admirable, farsighted planning. The setting aside of the north half, however, may coincide with the development of the south half - trails through the lowland woods and ball diamonds in the grassy clearing. This proposed "trade-off" will undoubtedly result in increased visitor useage of areas presently not utilized to any significent degree. This increased human enchroachment may result in the loss of vital undisturbed foraging-nesting habitat within the preserve. To quote Call (1976): "The general disturbance caused by many of man's activities may also be sufficient to discourage many species from nesting in an area, even though other key factors are suitable." It must be remembered at all times, that Messenger Woods (as well as adjacent lands) is Endangered Species Habitat. There may currently be no other Will County woodland area that consistently supports the raptors that this unique Homer Township complex does (see "Red-shouldered Hawk").

Red-shouldered Hawk (State Endangered)

While the Cooper's Hawk has fallen victim to pesticides, the Red-shouldered Hawk's severe decline has been attributed to the loss of its preferred lowland forest where standing water is present (Bowles et al. 1981). Mlodinow (1984) notes that this hawk prefers lowland woods in the vicinity of open fields.





MESSENGER WOODS

1. Oak-Hickory Upland
2. Maple Terrace
3. Maple-Walnut-Ash Ravines
4. Hawthorn Lowland
5. Maple-Oak Upland
6. Advanced Field Succession
7. Grassy Clearing

Formerly, the Red-shouldered Hawk was much more common in northern and central Illinois, but is presently only a common (permanent) resident in southern Illinois (Bohlen 1978).

The Red-shouldered Hawk is well-known for its habit of returning to the same nesting area on an annual basis. Bent (1937) notes returning birds to the same Massachusetts site for 26 years. Messenger Woods appears to have a similar history, for I have noted birds there three consecutive breeding seasons (1983-85).

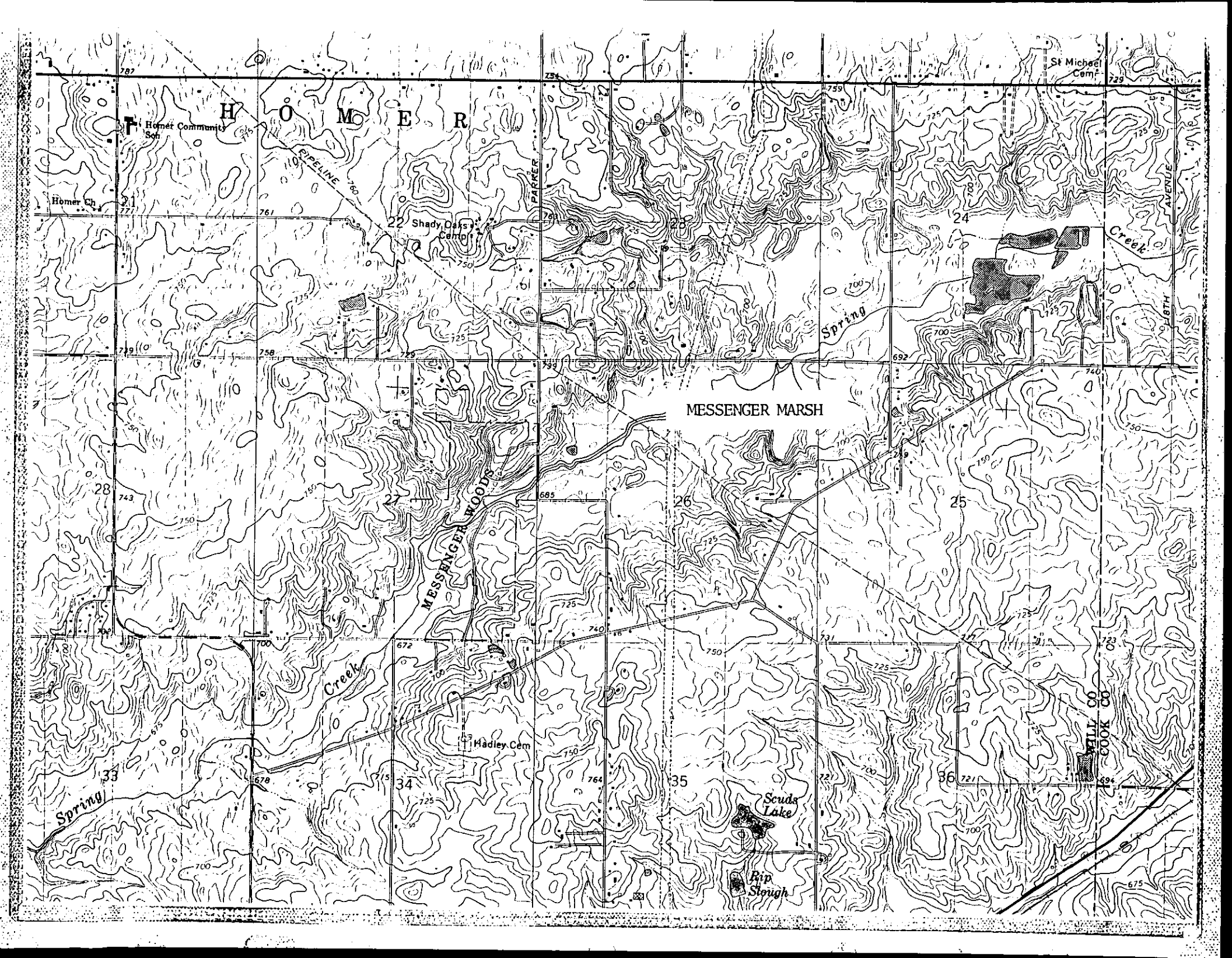
The only other location in western Will County at which I have observed this species breeding is Theodore Marsh (Crest Hill Treatment Plant) near Joliet. On 1 September 1981, I noted an immature bird in the company of a adult flying in and out of an oak grove overlooking the marsh. Unfortunately, I have made no subsequent sightings there. Formerly, this species was a probable breeder in the Pilcher Park area earlier in the century (Joliet Park District 1926).

While I had witnessed an adult pair engaged in aerial courtship over the open woodland east of Messenger Woods in 1984, it was not until this year that more definitive evidence of breeding was documented. In 1985, adults were observed carrying food on 3 and 13 April from the southwestern corner of Messenger Woods to an undetermined area due east of the preserve (this same flight path was also observed in 1984). Adults were observed also utilizing the private pond area immediately adjacent to the eastern border (this hawk species feeds on snakes, frogs, and small mammals.) Finally, on 3 May an immature bird in the company of an adult was observed. These two birds were flushed from the northern edge of the large, grassy clearing present in the center of the preserve.

Additional sightings of this family unit were made in the north end of the preserve through 21 June. On one occasion, adult and immature Red-shouldered Hawks were observed at 5:00 a.m. flying over Division Street - right in front of my car! The birds, calling to each other, flew in a northwesterly direction.

It is quite obvious from the results of this survey and other data provided herein, that the Messenger Woods area is the finest raptor habitat still remaining in western Will County - if not in the entire County - and, therefore, needs to be preserved as such. I use the terminology "Messenger Woods area" because it is essential to view the quality of this general area in terms of the total "collage" of habitats present, rather than focusing too heavily on anyone parcel of it. It is pure fallacy to think that the meager 206 acres comprising Messenger Woods itself is large or diverse enough an area to hold nesting Cooper's, Red-shouldered, and Broad-winged Hawks.

It is a proven fact that certain avian species are "size critical", in that they require a certain acreage of appropriate habitat to occur in a given area (Huffstodt 1985). While a small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songbird such as the Ovenbird requires a minimum of 250 acres (Huffstodt 1985), the average territorial requirements of the Cooper's Hawk is 1 - 3 square miles and that of the Red-shouldered Hawk is 1.5 - 3.5 square miles (Call 1976). Undoubtedly, the privately-owned, "unprotected" lands adjacent to Messenger Woods are crucial to the existence of these state-endangered raptors.

Acquisition of woodlands immediately east and west of the preserve is a logical first step towards providing much needed buffer. While these adjacent lands are high priority areas for acquisition by the Forest Preserve District of Will County, they have not been purchased and are under constant threat of being lost to development. The excellent wildlife habitat present at nearby Messenger Marsh should also be considered a significant part of the Messenger Woods complex (a fourth, more common raptor, the Red-tailed Hawk, nests there annually). Local or state ordinances which would encourage preservation of woodlots, ponds, and open fields on private lands in the immediate Homer Township area would be extremely beneficial to maintaining the general quality of the entire area. By preventing fragmentation of the general area, Messenger Woods itself will not become an "island habitat" too small to maintain any real diversity of wildlife, avian or otherwise (see "Veery").

Broad-winged Hawk

It was very encouraging to find this uncommon summer resident present at three of the four woodlands surveyed. Since this raptor utilizes heavily wooded areas (Bohlen 1978), it was not surprising to find it absent from the open woodlands of the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna.

The Broad-winged Hawk's presence at Pilcher Park was limited this year to sightings of one or two adults in May and June. However, two pairs were observed on 21 June 1983 and two nests were located one-half mile apart in the upland end of the park on 12 and 14 May 1984. This hawk's tameness, of which Bent (1937) speaks, may have been reflected in the 1984 nest-site locations. Both nests were built in close proximity to paved bicycle paths. While there appeared to be only one pair in the park this summer (in their traditional upland haunt above the Nature Center), a second pair was observed by Jerry Olson (personal communication) utilizing the area of Higinbotham Woods immediately east of Pilcher Park. These two Joliet Park District forests form a contiguous woodland expanse of approximately 600 acres. Apparently this area, a combination of upland and lowland forests, is large enough to maintain at least two pairs of broad-wings. Past history would also indicate that Pilcher Park itself is large enough a woodland tract to support two pairs.

Broad-winged Hawks also have a history of nesting at Messenger Woods. A nest was located there in June 1980 and an

Young Broad-winged Hawk at Nest

Messenger Woods

Adjacent Residential Development

immature was observed flying with an adult on 9 July 1984. This year, I was again fortunate to find confirmed evidence of breeding when a nest with downy young was discovered on 3 July. Three fledged young were flushed from the nest's edge on 8 July. This particular nest, like those at Pilcher Park, was located surprisingly close to man-made right of ways. All these breeding records were documented in the northern half of Messenger Woods (north of Spring Creek). It is amazing that this small woodland and the surrounding countryside are home to such an array of raptors - Cooper's, Red-shouldered, Broad-winged, and Red-tailed Hawks (see "Cooper's Hawk", "Red-shouldered Hawk", and "Red-tailed Hawk").

There appeared, likewise, to be one pair utilizing McKinley Woods. Birds were seen and heard at upland locations near the top of the eastern bluffs. This species was also noted at McKinley Woods in June 1984.

Red-tailed Hawk

Confirmed evidence of breeding by this raptor was noted at three of the four woodland preserves. Nests were found at the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna 17 April and at Pilcher Park 26 June. Both of these nests were built in trees located in close proximity to upland forest edge. An immature red-tail was flushed from the northeastern upland edge of McKinley Woods on 20 June. Strangely enough, this species - the most common nesting raptor in the state - was not observed at Messenger Woods. This hawk has, however, nested annually at nearby Messenger Marsh on a powerline platform (since 1982).

Ring-necked Pheasant

This introduced gamebird is found primarily in cultivated fields with appropriate cover (Bohlen 1984) and, therefore, was absent from the forests of Pilcher Park, Messenger Woods, and McKinley Woods. This species was almost totally absent from the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna as well. Single cocks were heard calling on only two dates at this preserve. Apparently, the marsh-sedge meadow-sand prairie and savanna ecosystem favors the native Northern Bobwhite, which was present in greater numbers. Mlodinow (1984) states that the Ring-necked Pheasant is less often found in drier marshy habitat.

Northern Bobwhite

This species is completely absent from most parts of Will County. It is, however, a locally common permanent resident in the southwestern portion of the county. The presence of open

Messenger Marsh

Red-tail Hawk Nests

Pilcher Park

woodlands and adjacent prairie areas is undoubtedly the significant factor contributing to this gamebird's healthy population (6 - 15 pairs) in the Braidwood Preserve (see "Ring-necked Pheasant").

Killdeer

There did exist marginal foraging habitat for this species at the three heavily forested preserves, but the absence of legitimate sightings (only fly-bys) strongly indicated that preferred habitat was outside these areas. Even the more open habitat present in the Braidwood Dunes appeared to be undesirable to this species, which chose instead to frequent adjacent cultivated fields. This shorebird was particularly common along the Braidwood Station Cooling Lake, a quarter of a mile southwest of the Dunes Preserve.

Spotted Sandpiper

Only one bird was observed during this entire survey. A bird on 28 June was flushed from the banks of the I & M Canal at McKinley Woods. The absence of additional sightings in this area suggests that foraging and nesting habitat may have been quite marginal. This bird may have simply been any occasional visitor to the canalway rather than a resident of it. Like the killdeer, this sandpiper was especially common along the rocky and sandy shoreline of the Braidwood Cooling Lake (17 tallied there 10 July).

American Woodcock

This species - an early nester - is much more conspicuous in early spring and can be rather difficult to locate during the months of June and July. While somewhat expected in the savannas of the Braidwood Dunes, the single birds sighted at McKinley Woods and Pilcher Park were definitely unexpected. The McKinley Woods bird was "beeping" over a fallow field adjacent to the northwest boundary of the preserve. The Pilcher Park woodcock was flushed from a seep area near the edge of the woods. This particular bird may have only been a visitor to Pilcher Park due to the lack of open areas for courtship (such habitat exists in the adjacent Higinbotham Woods).

In contrast to Pilcher Park, the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna affords the woodcock excellent habitat: open woodlands for nesting, sedge meadow thickets for feeding, and prairies for courtship. The sightings made at this preserve comprised four birds on two dates. The group of three flushed on 1 June included an apparent feeble-flying young bird.

Ringed-billed Gull and Herring Gull

The presence of these two gull species in western Will County during June and July might be explained in three ways. First, these gulls could originate from the Lake Calumet Colony (the only nesting site in Illinois for both gulls). Second, they could be nonbreeding summer residents or wanderers. Third, these gulls could represent migrant birds. It is my best educated guess that the small number of adult birds seen in late May and the month of June are late migrants or nonbreeding summer residents - wanderers. the arrival of notable numbers of immatures - often as early as mid-July - would indicate early migrants in the form of fledged young dispersing from the Lake Calumet Colony.

Fly-by gulls were noted again this summer above Messenger Woods, which seems to be part of a well-defined overland "gull corridor" to the Des Plaines River. At McKinley Woods, both gull species were observed heading downriver to possibly Dresden Lock and Dam or the Collins Station Cooling Lake (both in eastern Grundy County). These installations attract large concentrations of gulls in the winter months.

Mourning Dove

Daily tallies of this open field species were quite low in the denser woodlands of Pilcher Park, Messenger Woods, and McKinley Woods. As might be expected, this bird was much more common in the savannas and prairies of the Braidwood Preserve, where two nests were found. One flimsy, "see-thru" nest was located in a sassafrass savanna near the north end of the preserve on 19 June. A female dove was flushed from this nest. The second nest found in the Bohemian Cemetery was empty.

Black-billed Cuckoo

In spite of the fact that cuckoo populations may fluctuate from year to year, the Black-billed Cuckoo is always a rather difficult species to find during the nesting season. This season was no different because only one male was tallied during the entire survey of four sites. This male was noted on two dates in the northern half of the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna. The 1 July sighting was made in a black oak savanna.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo

Although always much more common than the Black-billed Cuckoo, the Yellow-billed Cuckoo was, with one exception, only sparsely encountered at three of four preserves. Being a bird of

forest edges, successional fields, and hedgerows, it is perhaps not surprising that only low numbers were detected. The one exception to this general trend was the seven birds heard along both sides of the Des Plaines River at McKinley Woods on 1 June. The lack of similar tallies in the area indicated that many of these birds were, in reality, migrants. In the final analysis, however, it was my personal impression from the sum total of my summer birding in Will and Du Page Counties, that this species was not tallied in greater numbers because it was simply not a good year for cuckoos in general.

Eastern Screech-Owl

The majority of the time and effort was focused on predawn and daylight surveys. Early morning owling was done only at McKinley Woods. This riverside forest was selected because it appeared to be the best location for detecting the presence of the Barred Owl. While I have never seen this particular owl species in Will County, there does appear to be appropriate habitat along the Des Plaines and Kankakee Rivers in western Will County. This owl is present along the Illinois River in the general vicinity of Morris (Vince Mattews, personal communication). Unfortunately, the single "bark" emitted in response to a taped screech-owl call was inconclusive evidence to include the Barred Owl in the species inventory of McKinley Woods.

The Channahon-Morris area is supposed to be a good area for this species as well as the Red-shouldered Hawk (Mlodinow 1984). This state-endangered hawk was also apparently absent in the immediate area of McKinley Woods. Bent (1937) considers the Red-shouldered Hawk and the Barred Owl as "tolerant, complementary species, frequenting similar hunts and living on similar food, one hunting the territory by day and the other by night." These two species have even been found using the same nests alternately, occasionally both laying eggs in the same nest, resulting in mixed sets of eggs incubated by one or both species (Bent, 1937). One might conclude from Bent's notes that the presence or absence of one of this two species "might" indicate the presence or absence of the other (this, however, was not the case at Messenger Woods.).

The Eastern Screech-Owl was, however, found in excellent numbers at McKinley Woods. As many as ten birds were "called in" from along the central drive and the immediate towpath. One red phase bird (my first) was detected with the aid of a flashlight.

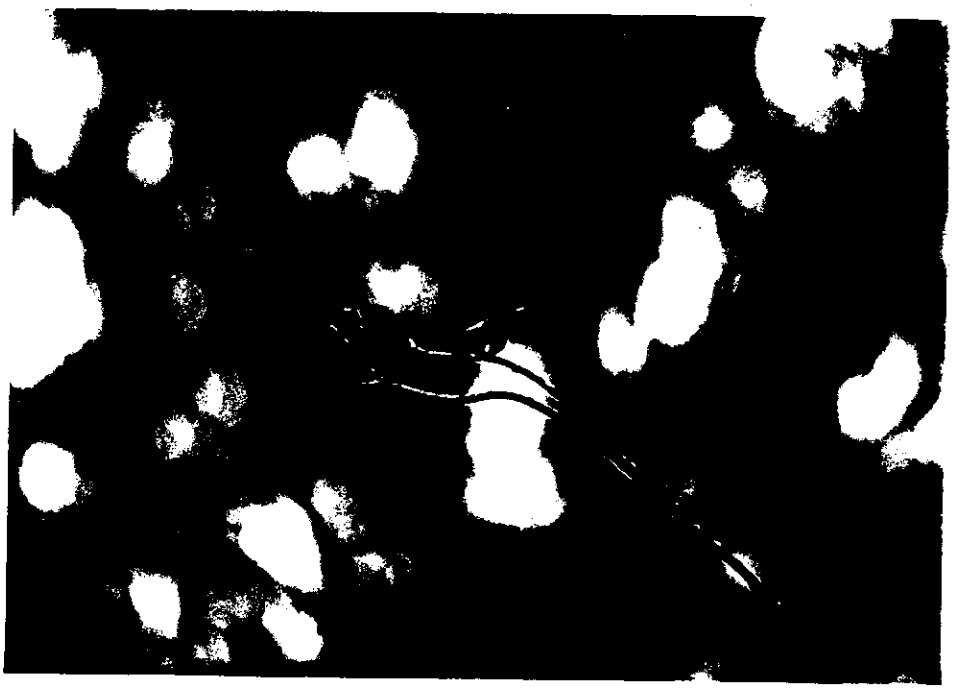
Great Horned Owl

This large owl was detected in small numbers and, with the exception of the Braidwood sightings, was very inconspicuous in

McKinley Woods

Male Ruby-throated Hummingbirds

Messenger Woods



the woodlands surveyed. Clearly, this common Illinois owl has larger territorial demands than its diminutive relative the Eastern Screech-Owl. At Braidwood, the predawn presence of two "hooters" on 3 June suggested the possibility of 2 pairs. Owls were repeatedly observed in the southwest portion of this preserve, where two newly-fledged young were photographed in 1983.

Whip-poor-will

As was the case with the previously discussed Northern Bobwhite and American Woodcock, the open woodlots and adjacent fields present within the Braidwood Preserve provided excellent nesting-foraging habitat for the Whip-poor-will. This nocturnal species is a locally common summer resident in the Braidwood - Custer Park area, where sandy soil and oak savannas form the dominant habitat. Although this species' presence was indicated only by calling males in the vicinity of the Bohemian Cemetery, a nest with two eggs was found in 1981 by Ken Klick (personal communication) in this same portion of the preserve. Whip-poor-wills were absent at the north end of this preserve, but were calling out of the wooded strip mine area (private club) directly across Route 113.

Chimney Swift

This is very likely one of the few native birds that has benefited from man's presence (Harrison 1975). The swift's heavy dependency on chimneys for nesting makes is an unlikely nesting species in woodlands even where hollow trees exist. The birds noted overhead at three preserves were undoubtedly visitors from adjacent residential areas.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird

In four previous years of summer birding in western Will County, I had chanced upon this tiny woodland-edge species only once (Pilcher Park). To find territorial males at two of the preserves surveyed this year was, indeed, an unexpected delight. Both males were discovered in woodland clearings with shrubby growth and were conspicuously perched on the extreme tips of exposed branches. Unfortunately, time did not permit a thorough search of these clearings for a nest or the presence of a female. I was lucky enough, however, to obtain photographs of both males. These males were observed on 20 June at McKinley Woods and on 27 June - 8 July at Messenger Woods.

Belted Kingfisher

The sighting of both male and female birds at Pilcher Park and McKinley Woods suggested that these woodlands support at least one pair each. The ravines of McKinley Woods with the adjacent quiet waters of the I & M Canal seemed particularly well-suited for this burrow-digging fisheater. The tally of 12 birds on 26 July 1962 (Mlodinow 1984) in the Channahon area would certainly give credence to this statement.

Red-headed Woodpecker

The rather modest estimated population of 1 - 5 pairs at each of the four preserves was not unexpected in light of recent data collected. The Grabers and Kirk (1977) classify the red-head as a savanna or forest-edge species with typically low populations in forests without openings or clearings. While all four woodlands possessed open areas (thus creating forest edge), the lack of suitable nesting sites - standing dead trees - may have been the deciding factor in determining the species' population (Graber, Graber & Kirk 1977).

McKinley Woods with its riverbottom edge and canalway possessed the largest population of red-heads (4-5 pairs). Standing dead trees were very conspicuous at this site and the European Starling (a cavity-nesting competitor) population was almost non-existant. In contrast, the savannas of the Braidwood Preserve were surprisingly devoid on many days of this woodpecker, which suggested the presence of only a marginal population (2-3 pairs). Although the starling population was, likewise, very small at this woodland, one of the few standing dead trees in the preserve was occupied by this introduced species (see "Tree Swallow").

Red-heads at Pilcher Park were tallied in lowland areas along Hickory Creek or in isolated clearings such as picnic grounds. At Messenger Woods this woodpecker was also primarily observed in picnicing and parking areas, where it was observed to be competing with starlings for the available dead trees.

While dead trees and branches are considered by some individuals to be an unsafe eye-sore, they should be viewed as an invaluable resource for red-heads and other woodpecker species, as well as for other cavity-nesting species like the Eastern Screech-Owl, Wood Duck, Great Crested Flycatcher, and Eastern Bluebird.

Red-bellied Woodpecker

This bird of the forest interior is still apparently much

Male Downy Woodpecker

McKinley Woods

Woodpecker Excavations

more common in central and southern Illinois, despite its northward expansion along major rivers (Graber, Graber & Kirk 1977). With this information in mind, it is understandable why the dense riverbluff woods of McKinley Woods hosted the largest population of red-bellies (4-5 pairs). The smaller forest areas of Messenger Woods and the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna supported noticeably smaller numbers. These upland woodlands are not adjacent to large waterways. Pilcher Park, with Hickory Creek flowing through its lowland areas, provided suitable habitat for an estimated 3 - 4 pairs of red-bellies.

Downy Woodpecker

During the breeding season this small woodpecker is primarily a resident of the forest interior and is especially common in lowland woods where medium sized trees and dead trees are present for foraging - nesting (Graber, Graber & Kirk 1977). This preference for bottomland woods over upland woods was reflected in the average of 3.75 adult downies tallied per visit at McKinley Woods as opposed to the 3.0 per visit at the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna. Overall, this species was the second most common woodpecker species encountered during the entire survey.

Hairy Woodpecker

This larger edition of the Downy Woodpecker is found almost exclusively in forest habitat in historically low summer populations throughout Illinois (Graber, Graber & Kirk 1977). This survey indicated a strong preference for preserves adjacent to large waterways or for those containing lowland woods (much smaller numbers were present in upland woods). Specific population estimates for the four preserves are as follows: Pilcher Park, 7 - 8 pairs; McKinley Woods, 4 - 5 pairs; Messenger Woods, 2 - 3 pairs; and Braidwood Dunes and Savanna, 1 - 2 pairs. A particularly large tally of 12 hairies was taken in Pilcher Park on 6 June.

Northern Flicker

The most common woodpecker in Illinois was, likewise, the most common woodpecker encountered during this survey. While this species, like the Red-headed Woodpecker, is more a bird of open habitats and forest edge (Graber, Graber & Kirk 1977), the largest populations were noted at the two most heavily timbered forests, Pilcher Park and McKinley Woods. One possible explanation for this apparent incongruity is the presence of man-made right of ways. Pilcher Park's paved roads cut an extensive network of artificial linear clearings (forest edge) through an

otherwise dense, contiguous forest tract. At McKinley Woods, the forest edge created by the I & M Canal and Towpath might well be responsible for the higher counts taken there.

Olive-sided Flycatcher

It was exciting and totally unexpected on 3 June to find this late migrant singing and flycatching from an exposed dead branch at the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna. This flycatcher's spring migration is one of the latest in the state with a 18 June departure record for northeastern Illinois (Graber, Graber & Kirk 1974).

Eastern Wood-Pewee

Many of the maximum species counts for a single day were taken during the first week in June, when singing appeared to be at a peak. It was during this time, that the high tallies of the Eastern Wood-Pewee and Great Crested Flycatcher showed a remarkable similarity.

	Eastern Wood-Pewee	Great Crested Flycatcher
Braidwood Dunes	8	11
Pilcher Park	17	17
Messenger Woods	7	6
McKinley Woods	11	11

The pewee and great crested counts demonstrate a similarity in territory size; yet, there is little competition between the two flycatcher species. The great crested, a cavity-nester, utilizes the upper forest canopy; while the pewee, a nest-builder, occupies the lower canopy.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that Red-eyed Vireo tallies for Pilcher Park and Messenger Woods were about double the Eastern Wood-Pewee and Great Crested Flycatcher counts: 34 at Pilcher Park and 17 at Messenger Woods. The Red-eyed Vireo is a nest-building species of the upper canopy (see "Red-eyed Vireo").

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher

Late migrants were singing at two Braidwood Dunes and Savanna locations on 3 June. Evidence of this flycatcher's migration has been noted as late as 6 June in southern Illinois and 12 June in northern Illinois (Graber, Graber & Kirk 1974).

Acadian Flycatcher

The only bird found during the survey was that of a male on 21 June at Messenger Woods. This bird was singing in a floodplain area of Spring Creek located in the southwest corner of the preserve. Although this more southern flycatcher does nest regularly in northeastern Illinois, past experiene indicates that it is a rare summer resident in western Will County (as also demonstrated by this survey). When this rare status is considered in light of this species' typically late migration, it forces one to be highly suspect of singing males during the first two weeks of June. The peak of the Acadian Flycatcher's spring migration is 26 - 28 May in northern Illinois (Graber, Graber & Kirk 1974). I have, however, noted a singing Acadian on its nesting territory at Saganaskee Slough in southwestern Cook County as early as 18 May.

Alder Flycatcher

This flycatcher species, the migrant species of the Traills flycatcher complex, exhibited stronger than expected "territorial behavior" at the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna. The survey tallies of singing males in shrubby sedge meadow and willow thicket were as follows: (3) June 3, (2) June 19, (1) June 26, (0) July 1. The male singing on 26 June was also present and apparently "holding territory" on 19 June in the same small area where Willow Flycatchers were consistently absent. This male exhibited anxiety at the playing of a tape recording. This bird's absence on 1 July removed any doubt that it was, in fact, a late migrant. It is interesting to note that while late June records are rare in Illinois, the spring migration of the Alder Flycatcher does continue into July (Graber, Graber & Kirk 1974). One bird was observed at Lake Calumet in southern Cook County 16 June and 7 July 1984 (Kleen 1985).

Willow Flycatcher

This common summer resident was found only in the northern half of the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna where appropriate habitat - shrubby sedge meadows and willow thickets - was available to support 3 - 4 pairs. As previously noted, this species was "interestingly absent" from the territorial plot of an Alder Flycatcher that was present as late as 26 June.

Least Flycatcher

This forest-edge species is always a potential breeder in northern Illinois, where it is an "uncommon summer resident" (Bohlen 1978). The single male heard at the Braidwood Dunes and

Savanna was, however, undoubtedly part of the "flycatcher fallout" present at Braidwood on 3 June. In spite of the fact that the Least Flycatcher's spring migration is generally concluded by late May (Bohlen 1978), I located an apparent migrant male near the preserve on 21 June 1984. This bird was heard only once, singing out of a willow thicket next to a cultivated field. This species is a very questionable breeder because it is a northern flycatcher at the southern edge of its range in the Will County area.

Eastern Phoebe

An "unmated" male sang constantly during the period of late April through early June in the vicinity of the Flowing Well at Pilcher Park. This male was holding territory at a building housing the men and women's restrooms. It was amusing to hear this bird's call echoing from inside the women's facilities.

Great Crested Flycatcher

This large flycatcher of the upper canopy was found to be a common to very common resident of all the preserve areas surveyed (see "Eastern Wood-Pewee"). Even the drier woodlots of the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna supported an appropriate population. This species was present in good numbers in both upland and bottomland areas. Its need for mature, but not necessarily extensive, tree growth (Mlodinow 1984) is due to the 6 inch diameter cavity required for nesting (Graber, Graber & Kirk 1974).

Eastern Kingbird

Only three birds were noted during this survey. One was observed on territory near the entrance to Pilcher Park where there is an open area and adjacent water (Hickory Creek). Of the two birds noted at Braidwood, only one was sighted a second time. This particular adult was holding territory along Smiley Road in the southeastern corner of the preserve where two drainage ditches with water were present.

The absence of permanent water areas may have been the reason for this savanna species' almost total absence from the Braidwood Preserve. Similarly, the drying up of standing water in the sedge meadow and marshy areas within the preserve resulted in the absence of the Green-backed Heron and Mallard (see "Green-backed Heron" and "Mallard"). Even the very common - but perhaps "water dependent" - Song Sparrow was present in "near-absent numbers" (see "Song Sparrow"). Mlodinow (1984) notes that while the kingbird occurs in semi-open and open areas, it favors

Rough-winged Swallow at Burrow,
Braidwood Dunes and Savanna

Male Eastern Phoebe,
Pilcher Park

areas where trees are standing in water (ponds, marshes, etc.). I tallied 11 kingbirds on 10 July in a survey of the nearby Braidwood Cooling Lake.

Purple Martin

The few birds noted overhead at Messenger Woods and McKinley Woods gave no indication of cavity-nesting within these preserves and were, therefore, classified as foraging visitors from nearby residential areas where martin houses were being maintained.

Tree Swallow

Noted only as a visitor at Messenger Woods (several nesting pairs at nearby Messenger Marsh), this swallow was found nesting at the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna in a shrubby marsh area. In this large wet area standing dead trees and stumps with woodpecker cavities were present. At least 2 pairs of Tree Swallows were utilizing the taller trees, while a pair of Eastern Bluebirds nested in a shorter willow stump. This is the second such bluebird nest that I have found over the years at this preserve. I have to wonder if there might be competition between these two cavity-nesting species for the few apparent wet area nest-sites (see "Eastern Bluebird").

Northern Rough-winged Swallow

This speices, like the Bank Swallow, nests annually in good numbers at a sand quarry about one-half mile west of the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna. Both swallows are regular visitors to the preserve, but this year one pair (possibly two) of rough-wings attempted to nest in an exposed sandy embankment along Smiley Road that was located in the extreme southwestern corner of the preserve. An adult bird was observed perched outside the burrow on 17 May. This very exposed site was later abondoned, probably in favor of a less accessible location. It appeared that someone had collected sand at this spot and may have disturbed the nesting birds. This same sandy roadside area was used by nesting Lark Sparrows in 1984 and 1985 (see "Lark Sparrow"). It would be a good management plan to install "Roadsides for Wildlife" signs to prevent mowing and inhibit sand pilfering along this particular stretch of Smiley Road.

Bank Swallow

This locally common swallow was observed at the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna as a visitor (see "Rough-winged Swallow").

Barn Swallow

This species was a visitor to the air space of the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna, McKinley Woods, and Messenger Woods. All three preserves are located in close proximity to barn and stable structures, which are particularly favored as nest-sites by this swallow.

Blue Jay

This conspicuous bird was heard imitating the call of the Red-shouldered Hawk (also present) at Messenger Woods. Fledged young in the company of adults were observed at two preserves.

American Crow

The only strong evidence of breeding by this species was the presence of calling young at Messenger Woods. While seemingly more common and conspicuous in winter, only modest numbers were encountered during this summer survey. A roost area exists in the Des Plaines River Valley at Lockport.

Black-capped Chickadee

This common woodland bird was the only species having fledged young noted at all four preserves.

Tufted Titmouse

One of the first bird songs I learned in Pilcher Park five years ago was that of the Tufted Titmouse. To find this cheery song totally absent in this prime 300 acre tract was both disappointing and perplexing. There appears, however, to be historical evidence that the titmouse was not present at Pilcher Park early in this century when specimens were being collected by the Chicago Field Museum and may have been present only in the winter during subsequent years (Joliet Park District 1926).

This species was noted at Messenger Woods and McKinley Woods, but in very low numbers (probably 2 pairs at each

preserve). It was exciting, however, to discover brood groups of fledged young at these two woodlands: three young at Messenger Woods on 21 June and two young at McKinley Woods on 28 June. The titmouse was also noted in very small numbers (only three birds) at the Des Plaines Conservation Area during a survey conducted in 1982 by Milosevich and Olson (unpublished manuscript). In terms of western Will County, the Tufted Titmouse presently (and formerly?) is not the "common resident" of the Chicago Region described by Ford (1956), but rather Bohlen's (1978) "uncommon permanent resident"of northern Illinois.

White-breasted Nuthatch

While certainly not as scarce as the Tufted Titmouse, this nuthatch species was still not as commonly encountered as the Black-capped Chickadee. Other than the fledged young noted at Messenger Woods, this species was generally inconspicuous as a breeding bird at all four woodland preserves.

The state-endangered Brown Creeper, a close relative of the nuthatch, was not located at any of the preserves surveyed this summer. Recent summer records would, however, suggest that this tiny woodland bird may be breeding in western Will County. In mid-June of 1980, I located a singing male at Pilcher Park foraging in an oak-hickory upland area where the Canada Warbler nested that same summer (see "Veery"). I have also located a singing male at McKinley Woods. This male was foraging in the lower terraced woods of the Heritage Trail on 16 June 1984. Apparently, little is known about the small breeding population in Illinois, except that preservation of this species' preferred habitat - floodplain woods - is extremely important (Bowles et al. 1981).

House Wren

This very common Illinois resident was present at each woodland surveyed in an estimated population of 6 - 15 pairs. This species was especially common at McKinley Woods along the brushy I & M Canal Towpath, where the Gray Catbird was also present in similarly good numbers (at least 15 pairs). Conversely, the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna supported a relatively low population of wrens (5-6 pairs) despite the fact that the shrubby areas of the preserves supported a large population of catbirds (at least 15 pairs). While this species favors brushy areas in more open woodlands, it does require cavities for nesting. This habitat preference probably accounted for the fact that this species was three times more common in lowland woods than upland woods at Pilcher Park. Similarly the 5 - 6 singing males at Messenger Woods were located primarily in lowland succession along Spring Creek and in the advanced

successional field habitat bordering the preserve's large, grassy clearing.

The House Wren was, disappointingly, the only wren species found at these woodlands. The Carolina Wren has still not recovered from the severe winters of the late - 1970's, when prior to this time this species was an "uncommon permanent resident" in the Chicago Region (Mlodinow 1984). I have, however, found this wren on one occasion - 12 July 1982 - singing in a black oak savanna at the Braidwood Preserve. I have more recently heard this species singing along a stream in nearby Custer Park on 28 April 1985. My personal records for the Joliet Area are limited to one male that was present at Joliet Junior College 22 April - 5 May 1983.

There is always a rare chance that the Bewick's Wren will find its favored habitat - dry, scrubby areas - within the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna. It is interesting to note that this wren has occured in a similar ecosystem at Sand Ridge State Forest in Mason County (Birkenholz & Marquardt 1976). This state-threatened species, once common in southern Illinois, has been largely displaced by its aggressive relative the House Wren (Bohlen 1978). This species last nested in the Chicago Region in 1976 (Mlodinow 1984).

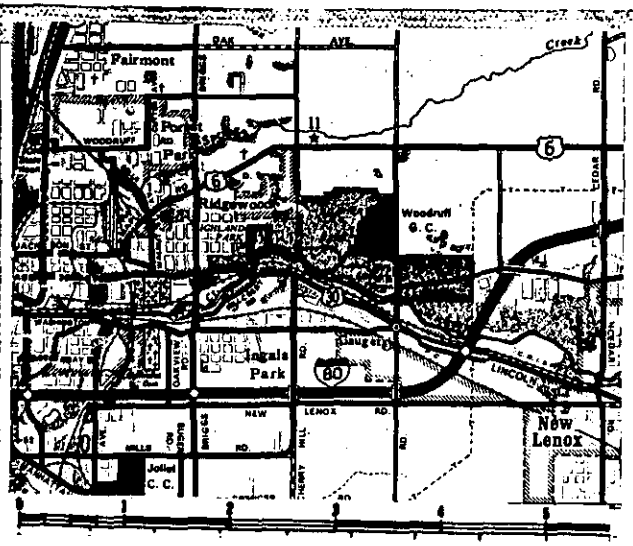
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

The nesting habitat of this woodland mite is essentially that of riparian woods, where it occurs at the first level above the floodplain (Graber, Graber & Kirk 1979). The single birds noted in Pilcher Park on 26 June near the Flowing Well and in the seep area exhibited similar habitat preferences. I have also noted this species in more open situations at the Des Plaines Conservation Area, where pairs were on territory in mature groves of roadside oaks and cottonwoods with adjacent wet areas (creek, marsh).

Eastern Bluebird

This is another species whose population has been severely reduced by the harsh winters of the late 1970's (Mlodinow 1984). It may be, however, locally common in the Braidwood area of southwestern Will County, as evidenced by the three nesting pairs located within the preserve itself and a fourth pair "across the road" at Mt. Olivet Cemetery. Apparently, the open woodlands of the sand savannas provide excellent nesting - foraging habitat for the bluebird, as well as for the also locally common Northern Bobwhite, American Woodcock, and Whip-poor-will.

The general absence of starlings and the availability of tree cavities within the preserve may have made utilization of



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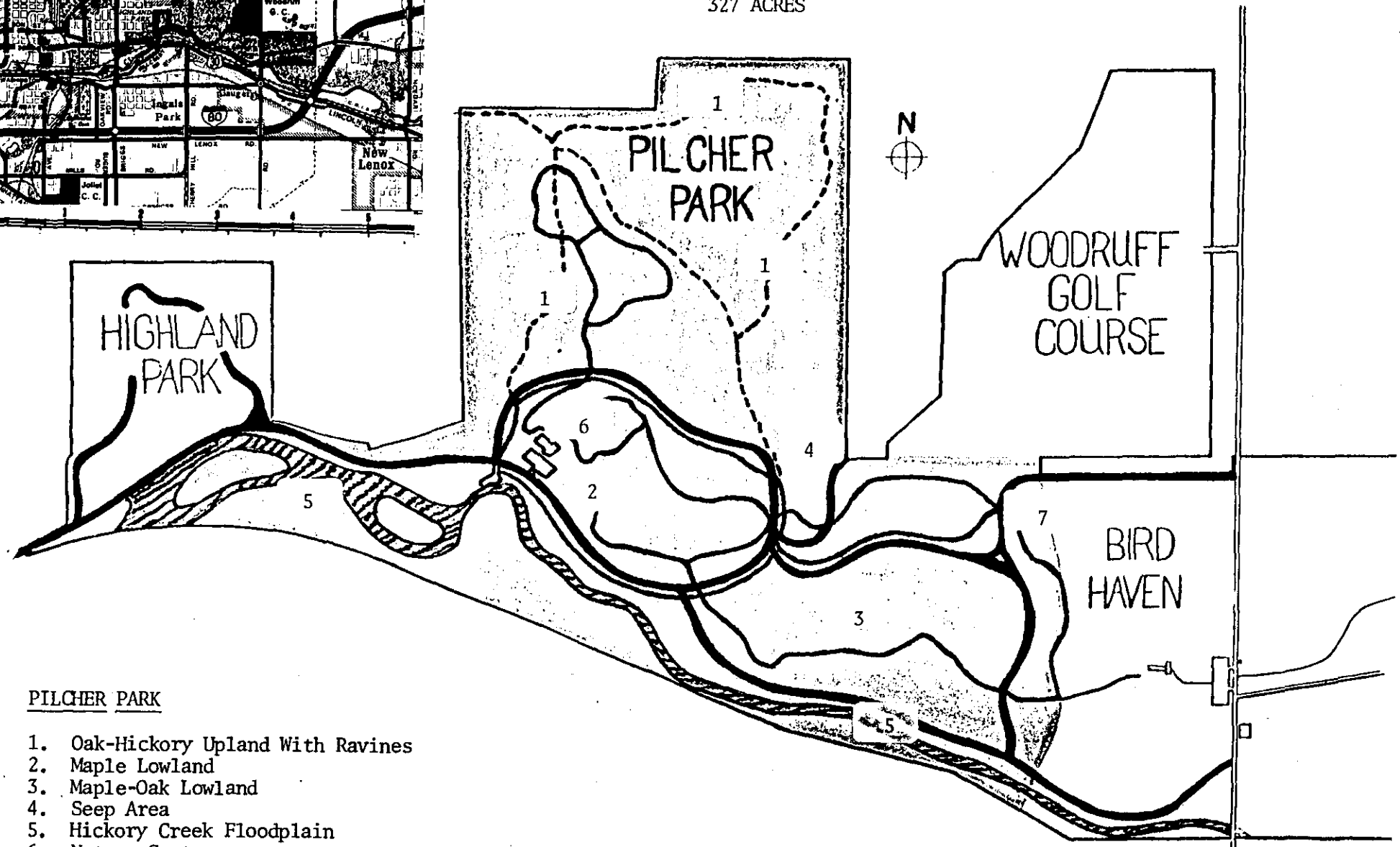
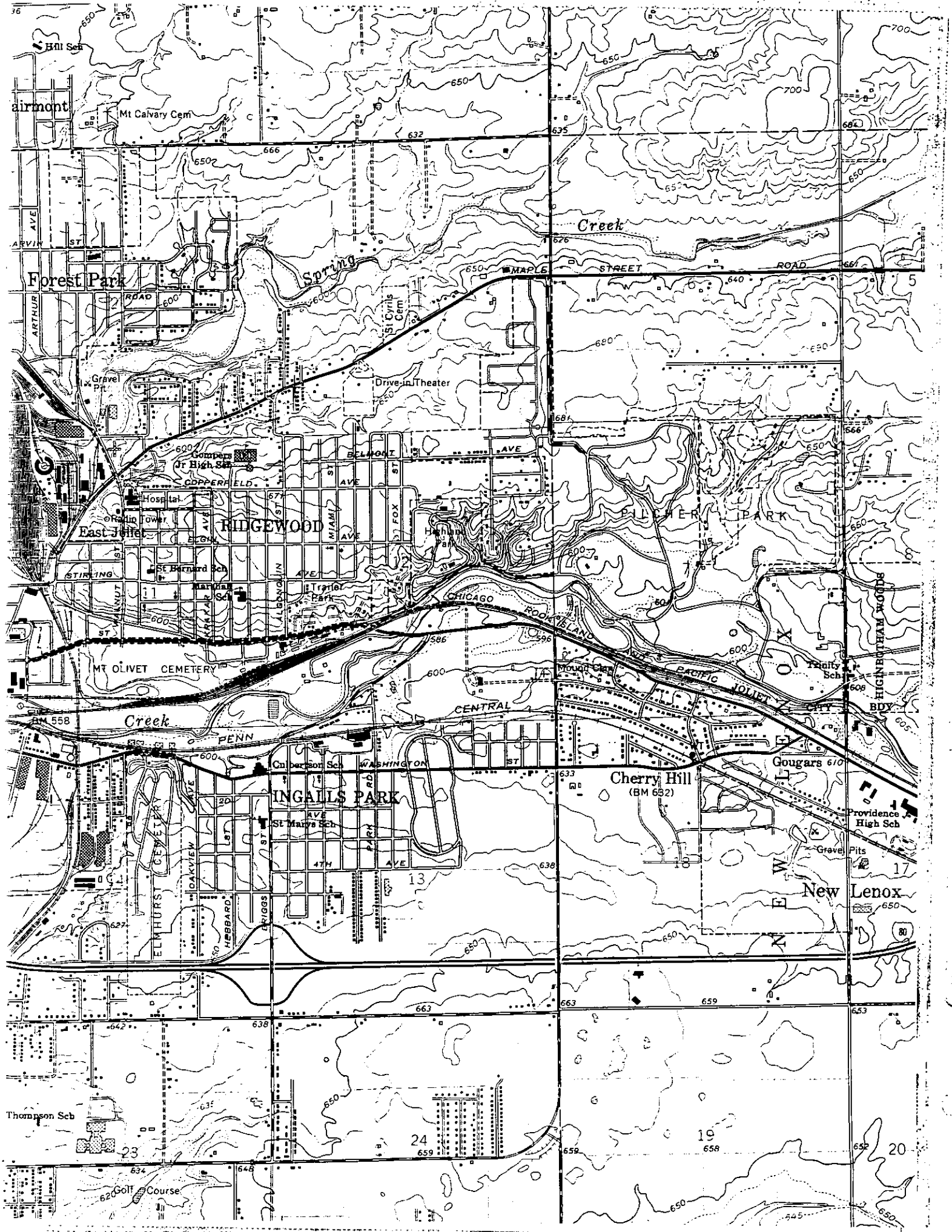


PILCHER PARK

1. Oak-Hickory Upland With Ravines
2. Maple Lowland
3. Maple-Oak Lowland
4. Seep Area
5. Hickory Creek Floodplain
6. Nature Center
7. Flowing Well
8. Trails: Paved Road ▬, Paved Trail - - - -, Unpaved Trail ▬


Hill Sch
airmont
Mt Calvary Cem
Forest Park
Spring
Creek
MAPLE
STREET
ROAD
St Cyrils Cem
Drive-in Theater
Gravel Pit
Gompers Jr High Sch
BELMONT
AVE
COPPERFIELD
Hospital
Radio Tower
East Joliet
RIDGEWOOD
ELGIN
MIAMI
FOX
Highland Park
DILCHER PARK
STIRLING
St Bernard Sch
Marshall Sch
Trailer Park
CHICAGO
ROCK ISLAND
MT OLIVET CEMETERY
Mound Cem
PACIFIC
JOLIET
Trinity Sch
CITY
BDY
HIGINBOTHAM WOODS
BM 558
Creek
PENN
CENTRAL
Cinderson Sch
WASHINGTON
Gougars
Cherry Hill
(BM 682)
INGALLS PARK
St Marys Sch
Providence High Sch
Gravel Pits
New Lenox
ELMHURST CEMETERY
OAKVIEW
HEBBARD
BRIGGS
Thompson Sch
Golf Course

bluebird houses necessary only on a rare occasion. Four nesting boxes were installed in the black oak savannas present at the southern end of the preserve in 1981. I have observed bluebird activity at only one box since their installation. In 1981 and 1985, I located nesting pairs using woodpecker holes in willow stumps standing in marshy areas (see "Tree Swallow"). This year, two broods of fledged young were noted in the area of the Bohemian Cemetery on 26 June and 1 July.

The bluebird has also nested in Messenger Marsh near Lockport (one pair). A well-established bluebird trail is maintained by the Thorn Creek Audubon Society at the Goodenow Grove Preserve in eastern Will County. This thrush is also nesting in the vicinity of the Hickory Creek Preserve near Mokena (Alan Libby, personal communication). The sum total of this nesting data suggests that this stunning thrush is, indeed, making a comeback in Will County - a comeback which might be further encouraged with the establishment of bluebird trails.

Veery (State Threatened)

With Pilcher Park the only known summering location for the Veery in western Will County, it was very unexpected to find this species singing at three of four preserves in early June. While most migrating Veeries leave northern Illinois by 30 May, a small number does remain to nest (Graber, Graber & Kirk 1971). For this reason, June males in appropriate habitat should be highly suspect and monitored for breeding activity.

Two males were present on 3 June at Braidwood. The birds were singing out of a black oak savanna immediately adjacent to the west edge of the Bohemian Cemetery. Unlike most of the woods at this preserve, the two woodlands immediately west and south of the cemetery possess moderately developed understories (locust, cherry, oak) and heavier ground cover. No doubt these features were responsible in part for the diversity of avian migrants and residents noted there and in the adjacent cemetery (see "Yellow-bellied Flycatcher", "Least Flycatcher", "Ovenbird", and "Summer Tanager"). Even though these Veeries were absent on subsequent visits beginning 13 June, it is important to note that Veeries have been found summering in similar habitat at Sand Ridge State Forest in Mason County (Birkenholz 1978) and at the Indiana Dunes in northwestern Indiana (Keller, Keller & Keller 1979).

The Veery summered at Messenger Woods for the first time this year. This species established a "colony" of 5 singing males along the floodplain of Spring Creek (see "Wood Thrush"). This area is dominated by sugar maples, but basswood, black walnut, and ash are also present. One adult pair was identified ("called out") by imitating the call of the Eastern Screech-Owl. Adult birds could be heard singing and uttering their distinctive "hē-urd" (Milosevich) note call as late as 8 July. This new colony was first located on 7 June.

This state-threatened species is an exciting addition to the line-up of state-endangered species - the Cooper's Hawk and Red-shouldered Hawk - already established in the Messenger Woods area. This preserve and its surrounding area are uniquely rich in birdlife. There may well be no other woodland area in all of Will County quite this area's equal. However, in light of continuing development in the immediate area, it is clear that the present status of this area's unique nesting birdlife can no longer be taken for granted (see "Cooper's Hawk" and "Red-shouldered Hawk").

I have heard singing Veeries at Pilcher Park every summer since I was first introduced to this woodland in 1980. At this preserve, the Veery occupies primarily oak-hickory upland woods cut by ravines (see "Wood Thrush"). This upland area consists of an open canopy of mature trees with well-developed understory and ground cover. Over the years, this "upland magnet" has attracted some unique summer associates: Brown Creeper (1980), Kentucky Warbler (nesting annually), Canada Warbler (nested 1980, present most summers). Some of the more common associates include Broad-winged Hawk, Wood Thrush, Ovenbird, and Scarlet Tanager. There is a consistent population of 5 - 6 male Veeries that is generally present each summer at this park location.

On 7 June, I discovered a nest a few feet from a secondary, unpaved hiking trail in this northern end of the park. The nest was built a few inches above ground in the main crotch of a young European buckthorn. The nest, located near a shaded ravine, contained one ready-to-fledge Veery and one cowbird (which jumped from the nest before it was photographed). A second fledged cowbird was found nearby in a small tree. The adult pair present was observed carrying food and exhibiting great anxiety. According to Harrison (1975), the Veery is a common victim of the parasitic cowbird and unknowingly raises young cowbirds as its own. It appears that based on available literature (Graber, Graber & Kirk 1971) this nest with young represents one of the very few nest-young records for the entire state and a first such record for Will County.

Swainson's Thrush

A late migrant was heard singing on 1 June in the northwestern end of McKinley Woods. It is not uncommon for a few of these thrushes to linger in northern and central Illinois into early June (Graber, Graber & Kirk 1971).

Wood Thrush

While following a territorial male Canada Warbler on 20 May in the northern upland end of Pilcher Park, I chanced upon two

Pilcher Park

Adult Veery

Young Veery in Nest

Fledged Cowbird from
Veery Nest

Wood Thrush nests that were conspicuously placed 5 - 10 feet above ground in understory vegetation. The nests were located in close proximity to each other and had incubating females sitting on them. The lower of the two nests had one thrush egg and two cowbird eggs in it. There is an extremely high rate of cowbird parasitism in Wood Thrush nests - as high as 48 - 50 percent in Illinois nests (Graber, Graber & Kirk 1971).

At Messenger Woods, the Wood Thrush and Veery populations appeared to be very similar (5-6 singing males). However, while the Wood Thrush population was sprinkled throughout the preserve's upland and floodplain areas, the Veery colony was concentrationed in one general floodplain area where no Wood Thrushes were present (see "Veery"). The upland Veery territories at Pilcher Park were not so highly concentrated, but were instead intermixed with Wood Thrush territories. There did appear, however, to be a similar equalizing of Wood Thrush and Veery populations at this particular upland area (5-6 singing males). In the moister areas of Pilcher Park, Veeries were absent this year and Wood Thrushes were present in only very low numbers.

Overall, about 40 singing males were tallied in June at all four preserves. A one day maximum count of 17 males was taken in the terraced riverbluff woodlands of McKinley Woods on 28 June.

American Robin

This thrush of residential areas and open woodlands was present at all four preserves in good numbers. This species was especially numerous in Pilcher Park and in the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna. At Pilcher Park robins were not only present in the expected open, brushy lowland areas, but were found utilizing the forest edge crea ted by a network of paved and unpaved trails. I have no doubt that this "opening up" via man-made right of ways was also beneficial to the flicker and cowbird, species which tend to shun densely wooded areas. At Braidwood, the abundance of berries in the savanna woodlots may have made this preserve's open woods even more attractive to this thrush.

Gray Catbird and Brown Thrasher

Both the catbird and thrasher are edge species, with the catbird associated with more wooded areas and the thrasher more open areas with appropriate cover (Graber, Graber & Kirk 1970). Milosevich and Olson (unpublished manuscript) noted that the catbird was found not only in prime thrasher habitat - prairie and successional field - but also in upland, floodplain, and flatwood forests where the thrasher was virtually absent.

The highest population of catbirds was noted at McKinley Woods and the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna. The grape-covered shrubby habitat particularly plentiful along the waters of the I & M Canal Towpath provided for a very dense population of catbirds, but only an extremely sparse population of thrashers. The Grabers and Kirk (1970) found the catbird population highest in swampy habitats in southern Illinois. Similarly, the wet thickets and shrubby woodland edge of the Braidwood Preserve supported a healthy population of catbirds (15-16 pairs). In contrast to McKinley Woods, however, this dunes and savanna area also supported the highest population of thrashers found at any of the four preserves surveyed (7-8 pairs).

It was interesting to observe catbirds at Messenger Woods nesting in small "islands" of successional field habitat present in the preserve's large, grassy clearing. Field Sparrows were also noted utilizing these "mini" edge environments.

Cedar Waxwing

Although pairs and small groups were noted at all four woodland preserves, no st rong evidence of breeding was noted. The open woodlots and prairies of the Braidwood Preserve possessed the largest population of this species. The Cedar Waxwing avoids dense forests (Harrison, 1975) and, therefore, was observed in very small numbers at the other three more heavily wooded preserves.

European Starling

In spite of the fact that residential areas existed in close proximity to all four preserves, very few of this introduced species was present at any of these woodlands. When birds were sighted, they were present in open areas and often perched in a standing dead tree with woodpecker holes. Strangely enough, the savannas of the Braidwood preserve were amazingly devoid of this cavity-nesting species - much to the benefit of the Eastern Bluebird. The savanna blackbird niche was instead filled by the Brown-headed Cowbird, which I have always found to be particularly common in the Braidwood area.

White-eyed Vireo

It has been my personal experience, that while it is not so extraordinary to find summering White-eyed Vireos in northeastern Illinois, it is very rare ("unheard of") when any substantial evidence of breeding is found. Normally, one is lucky to even catch a glimpse of a singing male, typically well-hiden in dense cover. For this reason, the discovery of an immature (near an

"invisible" singing male) on 1 July at the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna provided for a most exciting find. This particular bird was observed in a shrubby thicket at the northern end of the preserve where a singing male was heard on 3 June and 1 July. Single males were also heard at two other northern locations on 19 and 26 June. In general, this species' singing was very sparse and inconsistent. Likewise, the male observed on 20 June along the northwestern upland edge of McKinley Woods was noted only once.

Mlodinow (1984) considers the White-eyed Vireo an "uncommon summer resident" of the Chicago Area (particularly the southern section) and the Bell's Vireo a "very local summer resident in the southern section" only. It has been my observation that in western Will County, at least, the White-eyed Vireo is much less common, as evidence by the data below.

	White-eyed Vireo	Bell's Vireo
1982	3 males	15 adults
1983	2 males	10 adults + 2 young
1984	1 male	13 adults + 2 nests

Bell's Vireo

Like the northward-expanding White-eyed Vireo, this eastward-expanding vireo was found in the same shrubby thickets present in the northern half of the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna (see "White-eyed Vireo"). The unusual song of the Bell's Vireo was also heard very little - only on two occasions, 3 June and 1 July. Both vireo species' population were estimated at 2 - 3 pairs. Additional Bell's Vireos were, however, on territory at three traditional thicket locations west of Cemetery Road in the vicinity of Smiley Road (outside the preserve).

Yellow-throated Vireo

This vireo species was noted at each preserve in an estimated population of 1 - 5 pairs, with Pilcher Park and the Braidwood Savanna possessing the largest populations. Mlodinow (1984) notes this vireo's preference for mature woods along rivers and streams. The Pilcher Park population demonstrated just such a lowland preference, with 3 out of 4 territories present in lowland forest. In contrast, the 4 - 5 territories detected at Braidwood were located in the much drier and open woodlands of the preserve's sand savannas. Harrison (1975) describes the habitat of the Yellow-throated Vireo as that of open hardwood woodlands, groves, and roadside trees. This colorful vireo was, interestingly, the most common vireo species at the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna.

Warbling Vireo

I have consistently found this vireo in open roadside cottonwoods near water. While this favored habitat was not particularly prominent in this woodland survey, I am still at a loss to explain why this species was detected at only one preserve and not until 26 June.

Red-eyed Vireo

This robin-like songster of the upper canopy was found in good numbers at the three more heavily wooded preserves of Pilcher Park, Messenger Woods, and McKinley Woods. A very meager population of 3 singing males was present 3 June at the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna, while as many as 32 males were singing at Pilcher Park on 6 June. (see "Eastern Wood-Pewee" and "Yellow-throated Vireo")

Blue-winged Warbler

The only evidence of this wood warbler was that of a singing male at Pilcher Park on 6 June. This bird was located in a grassy clearing (horse pasture) where appropriate brushy woodland edge was present. Although this is the only summer sighting that I have made at Pilcher Park, this warbler was noted as breeding in the immediate area earlier in this century (Joliet Park District 1926). The Grabers and Kirk (1983) consider the nesting population of the Blue-winged Warbler to be basically low and very uneven in its statewide distribution.

Nashville Warbler

As previously noted in the flycatcher species summaries of this report, there was a noticeable flycatcher migration on 3 June at the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna. On this same date, there was also an unexpected "tail end" migration of warblers (see "Ovenbird" and "Mourning Warbler"). This warbler species was the most unexpected of the late-departing warblers present.

Formerly, the Nashville Warbler bred in Fulton County, where a sizeable population did exist in the 1870's (Graber, Graber & Kirk 1983). Historically, this ground-nesting warbler has also nested in Lake County and may still be breeding there, as evidenced by a singing male present during the summer of 1962 (Mlodinow 1984). The particular bird I noted on 3 June is the latest such bird that I have observed. It was flushed from the ground cover of a black locust invasion area present in the extreme northeastern corner of the preserve. A singing Chestnut-

Female Yellow Warbler

Braidwood Dunes and Savanna

Male Yellow-breasted Chat

sided Warbler was observed by John Stofan (personal communication) in this same area during June - July 1984.

Yellow Warbler

This warbler was found only at the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna, where a small "colony" of 3 - 4 pairs was established in shrubby willow thickets. Associates in this sedge meadow - marsh - sand savanna area were Willow Flycatcher, Gray Catbird, White-eyed Vireo, and Yellow-breasted Chat. As much nests were actively searched for, none were located. The only strong evidence of confirmed breeding was that of a female carrying food on 1 July. Next to the Common Yellowthroat, the Yellow Warbler is the most common nesting warbler in western Will County. 16+ pairs were observed at the Des Plaines Conservation Area in 1982 by Milosevich and Olson (unpublished manuscript).

Ovenbird

Although this dweller of the forest floor was found at all four preserves during June, only the two males on territory at the same McKinley Woods locations since 4 May provided any reliable pattern of this species' presence. The McKinley Woods birds were singing in upland oak-hickory terrace and advanced old field succession present in the western half of the preserve. In 1984, a male was also present in the western terrace, but a Kentucky Warbler was on territory in the area of secondary growth (a few large oaks, but mostly smaller trees and heavy underbrush).

One or two male Ovenbirds are usually present at Messenger Woods in very traditional upland locations. This summer, one of these locations went unused while the other was occupied by a male Kentucky Warbler. It was not until 21 June that the Ovenbird's presence was even detected. On this date, a male and female with at least two young were found along the western upland edge of the preserve in an area of heavy maple understory.

At Pilcher Park the Ovenbird's presence was most confusing. While this species is always present in the upland forest areas of the park during June, it was found this year only in lower, moister woods above the Hickory Creek floodplain, where the Blue-winged Warbler and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher occured. Two males were heard here on 6 June. One of these birds may have been an immature male due to the unusual, un-Ovenbird quality of its song. While this "strange bird" was noted subsequently by Jerry Olson (personal communication), it was absent during my lengthy search of 24 June. The second male, which sang extremely little on 6 June, was never noted by either observers after its initial detection. Were these males engaged in competitive singing because of the presence or absence of a mated female? Or were they simply late migrants?

The male at Braidwood on 3 June was undoubtedly a late migrant. Not only were subsequent sightings lacking, but the rather small savanna woodlot in which it was singing seemed rather out-of-habitat for a nesting bird of larger, moister woodlands. It has been determined that this species requiires a minimum of 250 acres of appropriate habitat to occur in a given area. (Huffstodt 1985). Interestingly enough, this migrant had selected to sing from one of two adjacent cemetery woods (private) where heavier ground cover and a developed understory existed (see "Veery"). These two sand savammas provide excellent habitat for many avian species - as noted in this report - and need to be acquired for this preserve.

Louisiana Waterthrush

It was a pleasant surprise to find single paris at the three more heavily wooded preserves, where intermittent streams with rocky bottoms formed wet ravines. While these three pairs totaled only a small population, they had occupied all appropriate areas within the preserves. The Grabers and Kirk (1983) note that the Louisiana Waterthrush's preference for upland forest with permanently wet areas - not dry branches - naturally results in a thinly spread population. The results of this survey tend to support Mlodinow's (1984) "locally fairly common during the summer" classification rather than Bohlen's (1978) "uncommon summer resident in central and north" status. Simply stated, the Louisiana Waterthrush is a locally expected species during the summer in western Will County.

As in 1984, this species was located in the rocky, deeply-cut ravine ("gorge") present in the far western end of McKinley Woods. This ravine with its intermittent stream emptied in the sluggish waters of the I & M Canal. Adults were observed foraging in this area even though it was very dry by the end of May. Similarly, the pair at Messenger Woods was found in a large, dried-up streambed that flowed into Spring Creek (which was also very dry). On 16 June, I was thrilled to locate a nest with four eggs in a dry, rocky branch of this larger intermittent stream. Based on available literature (Ford 1956, Bohlen 1978, Graber et al. 1983, Mlodinow 1984), this particular nest represents only the second nest-young record for this species in northeastern Illinois.

Pilcher Park with its rich upland forest and numerous shaded ravines has always been a good location at which to find this species in May and June. Typically, most of these lush ravines dry up by early June, as does active singing by this early-nesting warbler. One larger intermittent stream does, however, remain wet most summers. To no surprise, the Pilcher Park pair was observed in this particular rocky streambed.

Red-eyed Vireo, Pilcher Park

Louisiana Waterthrush Nest
with Four Eggs, Messenger Woods

Male Kentucky Warbler

Pilcher Park

Kentucky Warbler Nest with Five Young

Kentucky Warbler

One of the most interesting results of this survey was that this southern warbler was found to be as common a summer resident of western Will County as the more northern Ovenbird. This conclusion is rather surprising in light of the fact that both Bohlen (1978) and Mlodinow (1984) classify the Kentucky Warbler as a "rare summer resident" of this portion of the state. The Grabers and Kirk (1983) summarize data which indicates this species has spread more into northwestern than northeastern Illinois. Bohlen's (1978) classification of the Ovenbird as a "locally uncommon summer resident" on a statewide basis differs from Mlodinow's (1984) Chicago Area status of "locally common."

I have heard as many as three singing males on territory in June at Pilcher Park (1980), but generally one male or a pair is noted (1982-84). This year a male was noted at the traditional upland location as early as 13 May. One fledged young was observed at this location on 24 June in the company of an adult pair. At another nearby upland location, a second pair was observed carrying food to a nest with five young on 6 June. This nest, like the Veery's nest discovered in the same area that day, was located only a few feet from a trail - in this instance, a paved bicycle path. These adults and nest were totally unexpected because no singing had been noted during several May visits to this area. This particular nesting location was in close proximity to the 1980 nest-site of the Canada Warbler. Based on available literature (Ford 1956, Bohlen 1978, Graber et al. 1983, Mlodinow 1984), these two breeding records represent only the second and third nest-young records for northeastern Illinois.

This northern upland area of the park has played host in recent years to several unusual summer residents (see "Veery"). Interestingly, the Ovenbird, which had been singing in late May, was absent from its usual location within this upland tract. Because these two species appear to occupy the same woodland niche, I have to wonder if this year's high tally of Kentucky Warblers may have had any negative impact on the Ovenbird (see "Ovenbird").

Single males were also present along the upper I & M Canal northeast of McKinley Woods on 28 June and at Messenger Woods on 7 - 27 June. Furthermore, this species was present in June at a fourth western Will County woodland, Higinbotham Woods. A male Kentucky - and Ovenbird - were heard singing at this woodland by Jerry Olson (personal communication). Higinbotham Woods lies immediately to the east of Pilcher Park.

Mourning Warbler

One late migrant was heard on 3 June singing out of a marshy thicket near the center of the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna.

While a thin breeding population does exist in northern Illinois (most notably in Lake, Cook, and McHenry Counties), this species migrates throughout June (Graber, Graber & Kirk 1983).

Common Yellowthroat

This warbler species demonstrated a decided preference for what the Grabers and Kirk (1983) describe as the "prairie marsh ecotone" - prairies, marsh prairies, meadows, and shrub areas. It was, therefore, no surprise that very low numbers (1-5 pairs) of this warbler were encountered at each of the more heavily wooded preserves (Pilcher Park, Messenger Woods, and McKinley Woods). On the other hand, the Braidwood Preserve with its remnant marsh, sedge meadows, and sand prairies provided excellent habitat for a much larger population (16+ pairs).

Canada Warbler

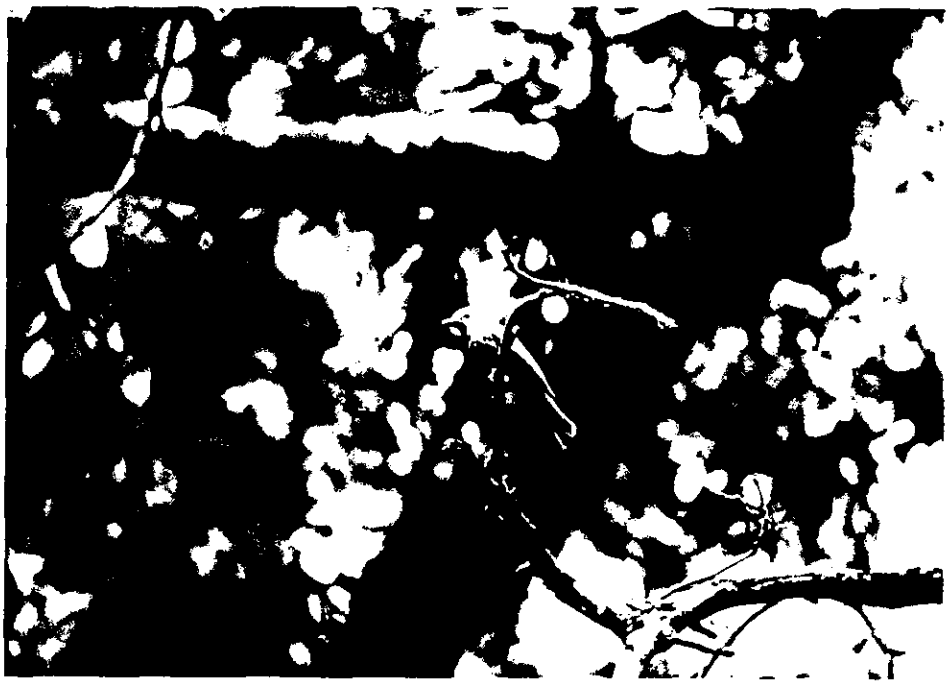
Jerry Olson and I (1981) found Illinois' first confirmed evidence of nesting by this species - a nest with five young - on 26 June 1980 in Pilcher Park. Ever since that most momentous June of 1980, I have treated every May-June sighting of a Canada Warbler in this park with great interest. While I have found the Canada not to be particularly common in migration, it still cannot be categorized as rare. It is quite unusual, nevertheless, to note that my only sightings of this species in May-June 1985 were of territorial males at Pilcher Park. One of these two males was on territory beginning 13 May.

The 1980 nest-site of this species was located in an upland oak-hickory clearing. A singing male was on territory in this exact same location in May-June 1981, but no female or young were observed. Beginning 13 May of this year, a very vocal male was on territory in an adjacent upland area of similar composition (see "Veery"). Like the males of 1980 and 1981, this bird sang at mid-height along both sides of a paved bicycle path. This male was still singing on 6 June when I located a second singing male.

This second male was singing in a seep area about a quarter of a mile from the aforementioned upland locations. This seep area was present in a lower, moister portion of the park where American Woodcock and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher were associates. The heavy undergrowth comprising this wet area included grassy tussocks, skunk cabbage, and moss-covered fallen trees. Based on Harrison's (1975) description of the nesting habitat of the Canada Warbler, this seep area seemed much more suitable than the upland sites which had been selected. This suitability may have, in fact, been realized when a pair carrying food was noted by Jerry Olson (personal communication) in this location on 20 June 1983. The adults were observed in this same spot by both of us

Male Canada Warblers,

Pilcher Park



Male Summer Tanager,
Braidwood Dunes and Savanna

Male Scarlet Tanager,
McKinley Woods

on 21 June. This year's male was subsequently observed by Jerry Olson (personal communication) after its initial discovery on 6 June, but had apparently "disappeared" by mid-June, as did its upland competitor. No females or young were noted in 1985 at either territory. What will 1986 produce in the way of Pilcher Park Canadas?

Yellow-breasted Chat

As many as six singing males were identified throughout the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna. In addition, an apparent fledged young near an adult chat was glimpsed on 18 June and a used nest was located on 26 June (two locations). This large warbler is locally common in southwestern Will County. 16+ pairs were tallied during a survey of the Des Plaines Conservation Area in 1982 (Milosevich and Olson, unpublished manuscript).

Scarlet Tanager

This brilliantly-colored canopy dweller was on territory at three preserves in the following numbers: Messenger Woods (3-4 pairs), Pilcher Park (4-5 pairs), and McKinley Woods (5-6 pairs). Singing males were noted only in upland locations in spite of an apparent preference for bottomland woods (Mlodinow 1984). This tanager was, however, not found in the black oak sand savannas of the Braidwood Preserve. These drier woodlands were occupied exclusively by the Summer Tanager (see "Summer Tanager").

Summer Tanager

On 26 June "Summer Tanger history" was made at the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna. On this date, six birds and two nests were located in the vicinity of the Bohemian Cemetery. According to Mlodinow (1984), there is only one confirmed nest record for the Chicago Area (Newton County, Indiana). The two nests discovered at Braidwood represent only the second and third nesting records for the Chicago Area, as well as the first and second such records for northeastern Illinois. The six Summer Tanagers tallied on 26 June also surpass the previous high count of four individuals summarized by Mlodinow (1984).

The first nest discovered was being built by a female in a small black locust at a height of about 12 feet. The nest was built in an outer fork of a down-hanging branch. The nesting tree was present at the edge of a black oak sand savanna (privately owned) that formed the western boundary of the cemetery. The female present did not have the expected yellow and green coloration, but was strongly tinged with red (as noted on page 430 of Field Guide to the Birds of North America). A stunning rosy male was in attendance during the female's nest-

building. In 1983, I located four Summer Tanagers on 27 May and monitored an adult male 25 May - 14 July in this same area.

This nesting pair was, however, apparently not the same pair found in the cemetery on 3 June. The 3 June pair consisted of adult birds in typical plumage, similar to the second pair found on 28 June. This second pair was engaged in the same activities as the cemetery pair. The female was observed carrying nesting materials to a well-hidden nest about 40 feet above the ground in a black oak. The nest was placed in a clump of leaves on a horizontal branch that was far out from the main trunk. The nesting tree was located near the edge of a smaller black oak sand savanna (forest preserve property) about 300 yards from the cemetery nest-site. A third female and probable (unseen, but heard) male were present on this same day in similar habitat near Smiley Road.

A repeat visit on 1 July to these three Summer Tanager locations found adult pairs still present at the two confirmed nesting locations. At the first (cemetery) location, the female was on the nest, while at the second location, the female was observed begging-displaying in the presence of the male. My visit to the cemetery in mid-July found the first nest intact and abandoned. Time did not permit checking the second nest. During my final trip to the area on 27 August, I found an adult pair still present at the second nest-site and the female carrying food (successful nest).

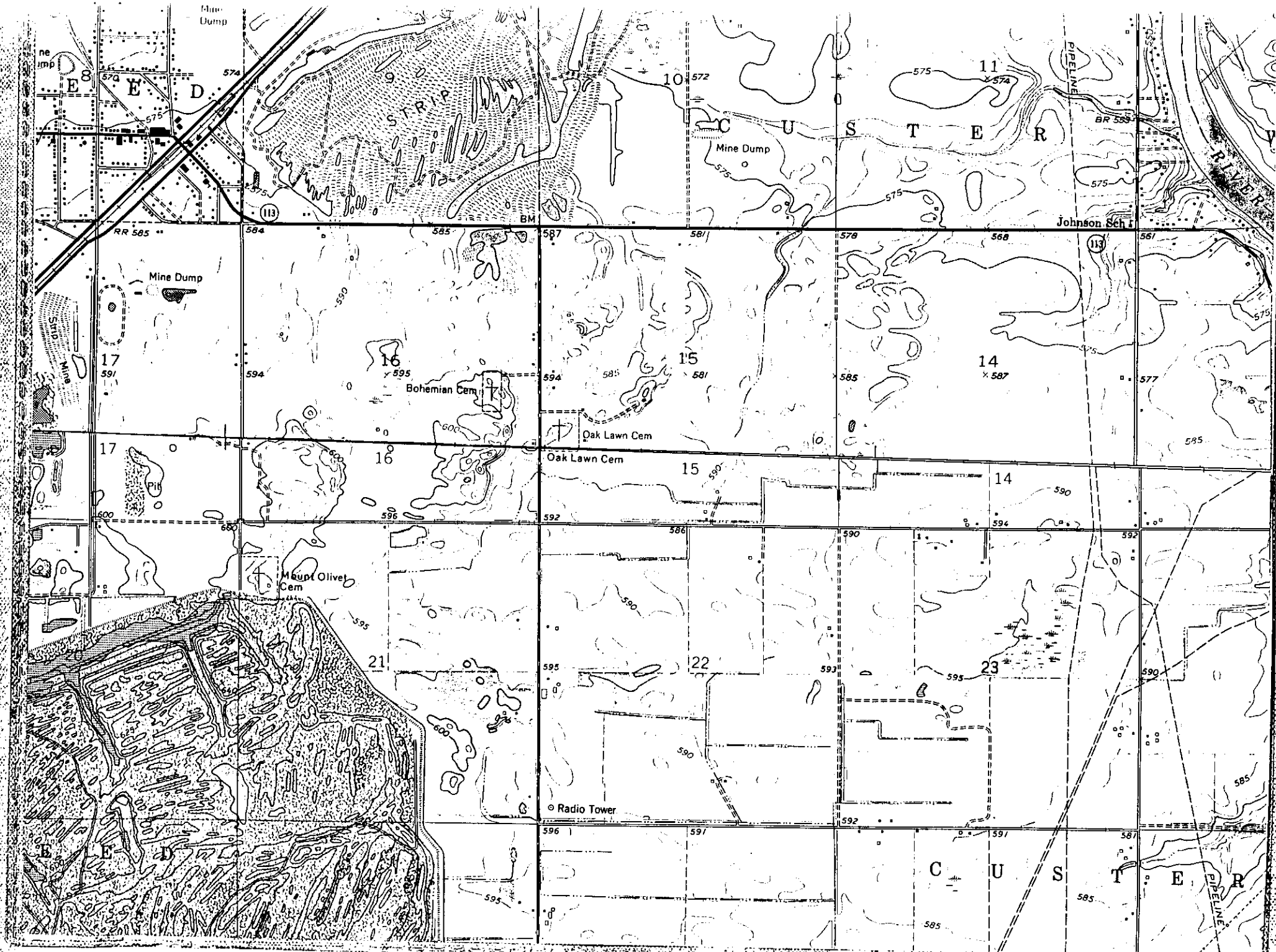
There is much to learn about the Summer Tanager's presence in extreme southwestern Will County. I have no doubt, however, that the sandy composition of the soil and the open woodlands that flourish in it are largely responsible for this tanager species being a breeding bird of Will County. The Braidwood-Custer Park region is the only location where the Kankakee Sand Area Section of the Grand Prairie Division occurs in Will County.

While a local population of Lark Sparrows (see "Lark Sparrow") has historically bred in this area (Ford 1956), the northward-expanding Blue Grosbeak is apparently a more recent addition to the sandy ecosystem of this region. A grosbeak pair was first observed by John Stofan (personal communication) in 1982 at the Mt. Olivet Cemetery, which is located just south of the Braidwood Preserve. I observed pairs there in 1983 and 1984, but only a singing male in 1985. Apparently, the Summer Tanager may be, likewise, a more recent arrival to this area, for there is no historical data (Ford 1956, Bohlen 1978, Mlodinow 1984) to indicate any previous presence. These three species and the state-threatened Bewick's Wren - all species of southern and western environs - have occured in similar habitat at Sand Ridge State Forest (Birkenholz & Marquardt 1976). Obviously, there is still much to be learned about the birdlife of the unique Will County region. Hopefully, additional tracts of land which are contiguous and non-contiguous to the present Nature Preserve will be acquired to ensure the preservation of this unique sand ecosystem and its unusual avian inhabitants.

Female Summer Tanager Building Nest

Braidwood Dunes and Savanna

Female Summer Tanager on Nest


Mine Dump
E E D
8
9
STRIP
10
C U S T E R
11
PIPELINE
BR 589
RIVER
Mine Dump
Johnson Sch
RR 585
BM
113
Mine Dump
Strip Mine
17
16
Bohemian Cem
15
14
Oak Lawn Cem
Oak Lawn Cem
Pit
Mount Olivet Cem
21
22
23
Radio Tower
E E D
C U S T E R
PIPELINE

Northern Cardinal

This species, the State Bird of Illinois, was found in the brushy, more open sections of all four preserves in appropriate numbers. It is hard to believe that early in this century, only two pairs of cardinals were found in the Pilcher Park - Higinbotham Woods area (Joliet Park District 1926). This southern species has certainly come a long way to become a common permanent resident of the area. At Pilcher Park, this species was observed feeding a fledged young at an upland location and a fledged cowbird in a seep area.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak

Mlodinow (1984) describes the preferred habitat of this grosbeak as wooded areas with mature growth that are not far from bushes or thickets. Due to the more open, shrubby composition of the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna, it was not unexpected that this preserve supported the highest population of this species. The only nest that I have ever found of this species was located in a roadside mulberry tree with willow thickets beneath it (at the Des Plaines Conservation Area in 1984).

Indigo Bunting

This abundant summer resident of Will County's roadsides and woodland edges was present at each preserve in an estimated population of 6 - 15 pairs, with Pilcher Park and the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna supporting the highest populations.

Rufous-sided Towhee

This species, rather than the Wood Thrush, was the common ground songster of the black oak sand savannas at Braidwood. While no nests were found (as in 1982), a juvenile in the company of adults was observed in the Bohemian Cemetery. The Braidwood Preserve supported about 8 - 10 pairs of towhees, while the brushy undergrowth of the I & M Canal and upland field succession at McKinley Woods supported about 6 - 8 pairs.

Chipping Sparrow

The only pair noted during the entire survey was in the Bohemian Cemetery at Braidwood. Chippies are, however, locally very common to locally abundant at two adjacent cemeteries that are not surrounded by woods. This species is much more a bird of

residential and other lawn-like areas where conifer plantings exist (Mlodinow 1984). This species could occur as a visitor to the more open areas of the other three preserves, which also border residential or farmyard areas.

Field Sparrow

This was the common field bird of Braidwood's sand prairies and savanna edge (16+ pairs). This species was also found at Messenger Woods (2-3 pairs) and McKinley Woods (4-5 pairs). At these two woodlands the Field Sparrow was observed in upland clearings with advanced old field successional growth (see "Gray Catbird"). Fledged young were noted at all three of these preserves.

Lark Sparrow

This handsome sparrow was the reason for my first visit to the Braidwood area in 1981. Although this species has historically nested in the Custer Park area (Ford 1956), it may have formerly occured in larger numbers. In the early 20th Century, this western sparrow staged a massive invasion of several eastern states where it presently breeds in much smaller numbers (Harrison 1975). Bohlen (1978) notes that this species is much more common in the western half of the state, especially in the sand regions of Mason, Cass, Tazewell, and Henderson Counties. I personally have never encountered large numbers of this sparrow in the Braidwood area; yet, my surveying of the sand region that exists in extreme southwestern Will County (see "Summer Tanager") has been restricted primarily to the vicinity of the Dunes and Savanna Preserve.

It was disappointing not to find more lark Sparrows within the preserve. Only one pair was noted this summer. These adult birds were on territory in the southwestern corner of the preserve, which was the location of the 1984 nest-site (see "Rough-winged Swallow"). These adults and two juveniles were present in a cultivated field immediately south of Smiley Road on 1 July.

The 1984 nest (with three young) was located on 21 June in an open sand area that was only a few feet from the road's edge. I have also found nests with three eggs on 10 July 1981 and with three young on 8 June 1982. These two nests were built up against gravestones in Mt. Olivet Cemetery.

Henslow's Sparrow (State Threatened)

It was very exciting to hear three males of this

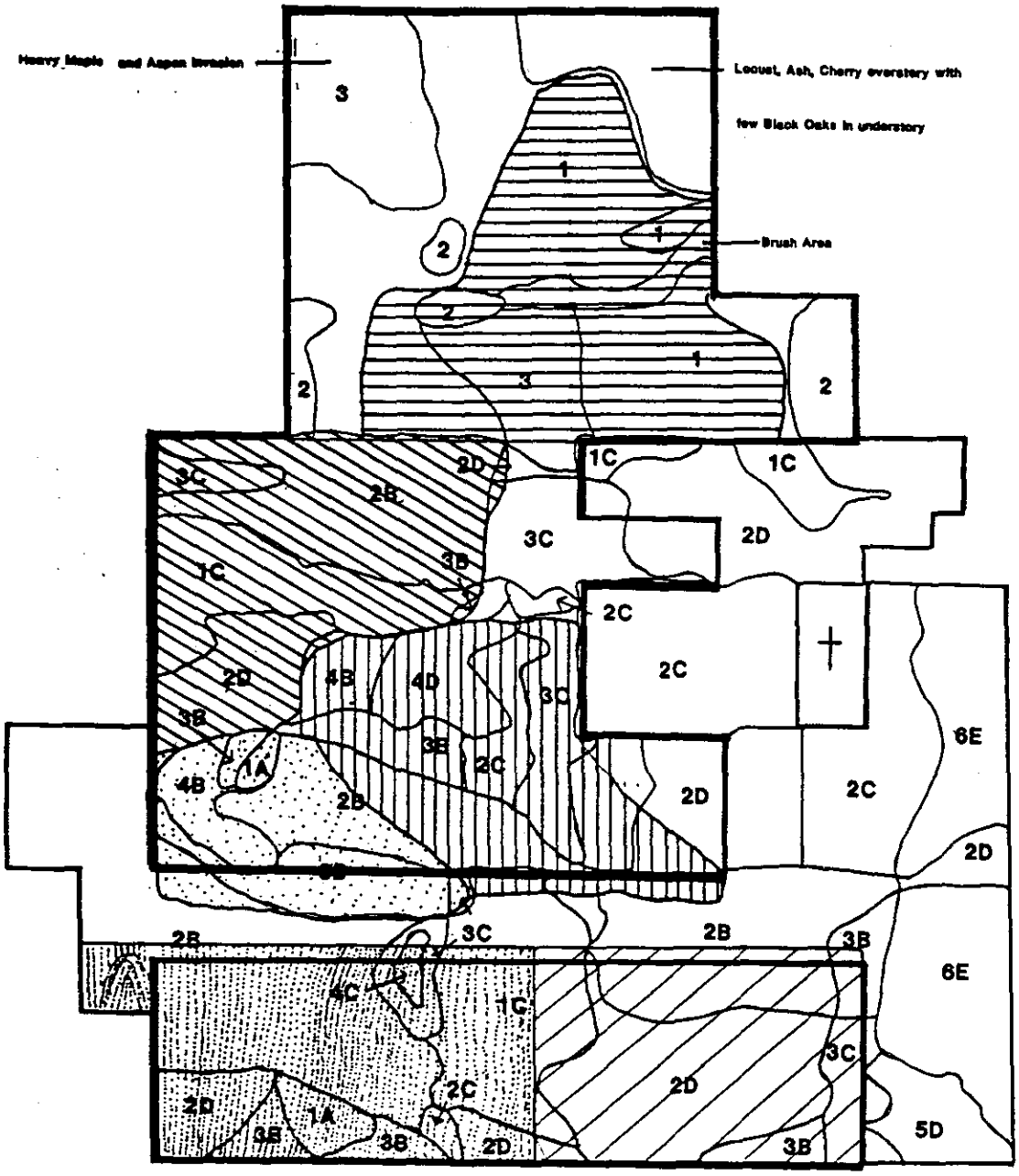
Adult Lark Sparrows

Braidwood Dunes and Savanna

Juvenile Henslow's Sparrow

BRAIDWOOD DUNES AND SAVANNA NATURE PRESERVE

PLANT COMMUNITIES AND NATURAL QUALITY



303 ACRES

Boundaries

Plant Communities:
1) Mesic to wet-mesic prairie
2) Dry-mesic sand savannah
3) Sedge Meadow
4) Marsh
5) Swamp
6) Cropland

Natural Quality:
A. Stable or Undisturbed
B. Late successional or lightly disturbed
C. Mid successional or severely disturbed
D. Early successional or severely disturbed
E. Severely disturbed

Preserve Boundaries

Natural Area Inventory Site

Plant Community

BOHEMIAN CEMETERY

Spring 1982

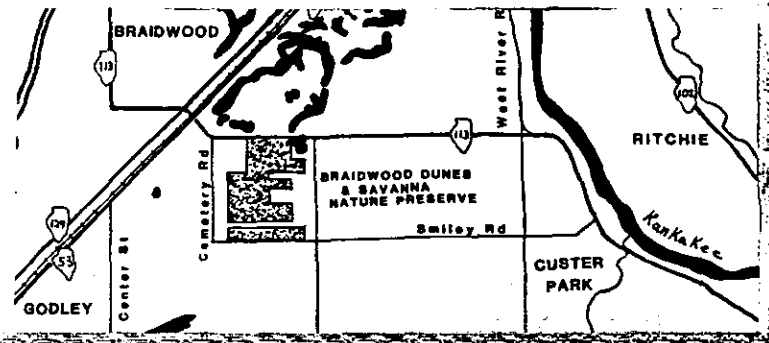
Fall 1982

Spring 1983

Spring 1984

Fall 1984

Spring 1985



inconspicuous species singing at the north end of the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna on 3 June. It was even more rewarding to photograph a juvenile Henslow's Sparrow in the company of a singing male on 1 July and establish a rare breeding record for this state-threatened species. This loose colony of males was present in an area of sand prairie where broomsedge was dominant. Originally the Henslow's Sparrow was thought to nest in prairie, but this species currently also nests in fallow fields and hayfields (Bowles et al. 1981). Singing males have also been observed in Hungarian brome at the Des Plaines Conservation Area (Milosevich & Olson, unpublished manuscript). It would be interesting to know with what frequency this species utilizes drier habitats like the Braidwood Dunes.

Song Sparrow

I have always associated this sparrow with open brushy areas near water (see "Eastern Kingbird"). I was not, therefore, surprised to find that the more watered woodlands of Pilcher Park and McKinley Woods possessed the highest tallies of this species. A nest with two eggs was found along the I & M Canal Towpath on 28 June.

Swamp Sparrow

Two males were on territory in the immediate vicinity of the cattail marsh at the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna. Harrison (1975) found the Swamp Sparrow to be a common victim of the Brown-headed Cowbird, a parasitic species which demonstrated a healthy presence at Braidwood.

Red-winged Blackbird

The presence of this abundant blackbird of fields and marshes was marginal, at best, in the three heavily wooded preserves. At Messenger Woods, this blackbird was noted only as a fly-by species. Pairs were nesting in floodplain ponds with cattail borders at Pilcher Park. A small patch of cattails at the McKinley Woods lagoon also supported a few pairs. Only in the shrubby prairies and cattail marsh of the Braidwood Preserve did this species exhibit any noticeable presence (about 15 pairs).

Eastern Meadowlark

This species was observed at Messenger Woods perched at the edge of the large, grassy clearing. This bird was noted only once and was, therefore, classified as a visitor from nearby field areas. A small population (about 5 pairs) did, however, exist at the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna. One might have expected to hear the song of the Western Meadowlark in this drier habitat.

Common Grackle

Although a common fly-by species at all four sites, Pilcher Park's brushy floodplain and Braidwood's shrubby open areas attracted the highest numbers of this native blackbird.

Brown-headed Cowbird

While only small numbers were sighted at Messenger Woods and McKinley Woods, the cowbird was the common blackbird species of the black oak savannas at Braidwood.

The cowbird as a parasitic nester was noted exclusively at Pilcher Park (see "Veery", "Wood Thrush", and "Northern Cardinal"). The extensive network of paved trails at the park may have assisted the cowbird in its penetration of this otherwise dense woodland. It is for this very reason, that future development of Pilcher Park -especially the northern upland end- must be considered with extreme caution. The widening of present trails or the creation of additional trails further subdivides contiguous areas into "islands" with "exposed" forest edge. As previously noted, this additional forest edge is beneficial to many common species such as the Northern Flicker and American Robin, but such an ecotone diminishes the density of a woods and forces size-critical species to nest in less protected habitat.

While Pilcher Park's "upland magnet" (see "Veery") has attracted several unusual birds, it is interesting to note that some of these species (see "Broad-winged Hawk", "Veery", "Kentucky Warbler") are nesting in perilous edge situations. Furthermore, in looking at the cowbird parasitism in the area (as noted above), one wonders how detrimental this species truly is to thrush and warbler populations.

Pilcher Park is, undoubtedly, the finest warbler woodland in western Will County - and very possibly in the entire county. Every effort must be made to preserve this public park from further development and disturbance. While the north end is presently closed to motorized vehicles and is informally recognized as a "nature preserve", this area needs absolute

protection and should be dedicated as an Illinois Nature Preserve.

Northern Oriole

At the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna, it was strange not to see a single Orchard Oriole and, at the same time, compile the highest tally of Northern Orioles. It is possible that some of these orioles were nesting outside the preserve in the strip mines to the north and in water areas (pond, cooling lake) to the south. This species, which favors cottonwoods near water, was less prominent than expected along the I & M Canal at McKinley Woods and was totally absent from Pilcher Park's lowland areas. As expected, one pair utilized the grassy clearing at Messenger Woods.

American Goldfinch

Typically a late nester, this finch would be expected to occur as a breeding species in very open habitat, such as that present at the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna. Harrison (1975) notes that the goldfinch's nesting cycle is correlated with the maturing of thistle, which provides food and nest material for this species. Even though it was too early to accurately estimate breeding populations, this species was tallied in the highest numbers at the Braidwood Preserve.

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July 25, 1985

Carl Becker
Natural Heritage Section
Illinois Department of Conservation
600 North Grand Avenue West, Suite 2
Springfield, Illinois 62706

Dear Mr. Becker:

Enclosed please find a preliminary report detailing some of the results of an Avian Survey of Four Western Will County Preserves which I conducted this past summer. This survey was focused around compiling species inventories and documenting evidence of breeding. This survey was funded via the Illinois Department of Conservation's Nongame Wildlife Conservation Fund and was conducted on behalf of the Illinois Audubon Society.

I was very pleased to have the opportunity to conduct so thorough a study of some of my home county's woodlands. I feel that the data gathered will present a much clearer picture of the current breeding status of several nongame avian species, as well as, indicate a need for protecting/managing habitat for state endangered species.

I look forward to providing you with the final report at the end of August. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Joe B. Milosevich

Joe B. Milosevich
16308 S. Peerless Ct.
Plainfield, IL. 60544

Preliminary Report

Avian Survey of Four Western Will County Preserves

Field Data Highlights in Brief

Joe B. Milosevich

July, 1985

Double-crested Cormorant (state endangered)

An immature bird was observed along the Des Plaines River near McKinley Woods on 28 June. It is interesting to note that two immatures summered at Lake Renwick in Plainfield, 20 miles to the North.

Black-crowned Night-Heron (state endangered)

Several adults were observed during this survey utilizing the secluded waters of the I & M Canal in the immediate vicinity of McKinley Woods. This summer's high water levels in the canal may provide for less than optimum feeding conditions for this short-legged heron, as well as for two other deep waders, the Great Blue Heron and Great Egret (state endangered).

Hooded Merganser

A rare breeding record was established by the presence of two female plumaged birds along the Des Plaines River near McKinley Woods (apparently, a female with a smaller immature bird). An adult pair was noted in the immediate area on 19 May.

Cooper's Hawk (state endangered)

For the third consecutive year, an adult pair was present at Messenger Woods beginning in early May. Residential development in adjacent woodlots and open areas poses an immediate threat to this species and the Red-shouldered Hawk.

Red-shouldered Hawk (state endangered)

An immature bird was observed in the company of adults on more than one occasion at McKinley Woods during this survey. Adults were present as early as 3 April. Other than Thorn Creek Woods in eastern Will County, Messenger Woods appears to be the only known breeding location for this species (as well as the Cooper's Hawk) in Will County.

Broad-winged Hawk

Adults were present at three of the four woodlands surveyed. A nest with three young was photographed at Messenger Woods on 8 July.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird

In five years of summer birding in western Will County, I have chanced upon this species only once. To find territorial males at two of the preserves surveyed was indeed an unexpected pleasure.

Alder Flycatcher

A rather late male was "on territory" in a shrubby sedge meadow at the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna 16 and 25 June.

Tufted Titmouse

One of the first bird songs I learned in Pilcher Park five years ago was that of the Tufted Titmouse. To find this cheery song totally absent in this prime 300 acre tract was both disappointing and perplexing. This species was noted in very small numbers at Messenger Woods and McKinley Woods. Single broods of young were also observed at these woodlands.

Veery

This southward expanding thrush was found in good numbers, not only at the traditional Pilcher Park locations, but also at Messenger Woods for the first time. A nest with one young and one cowbird was discovered at Pilcher Park (a rare breeding record for northeastern Illinois).

White-eyed Vireo

While it is not so extraordinary to find summering White-eyeds in northeastern Illinois, it is very rare that any evidence of breeding is documented. For this reason, the presence of an immature (near a well-hidden male) at the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna on 1 July provided for a most exciting find.

Louisiana Waterthrush

Pairs were observed at three woodlands where wet ravines were present. A nest with four eggs was photographed at Messenger Woods. This nest constitutes perhaps only the second nest/young record for northeastern Illinois (Graber, Graber, and Kirk, 1983).

Kentucky Warbler

Strangely enough, this southern warbler was found to be as common a summer resident in western Will County as the more northern Ovenbird. A nest with five young was found at Pilcher Park and one fledged young was being fed by adults at a second location. These breeding records are apparently only the second and third such records for northeastern Illinois (Graber, Graber, and Kirk, 1983).

Canada Warbler

Nesting by this species has been confirmed at only one Illinois location, Pilcher Park (Milosevich and Olson, 1981). For this reason, the presence and location of any males or females of this warbler species in May or June is of special interest. This year, singing males were on territory at two locations within the park where evidence of breeding had been noted in previous summers. Unfortunately, both males had "disappeared" by mid-June and no females were sighted. One male had been singing at the same upland spot since 13 May.

Summer Tanager

On 26 June, Summer Tanager history was made at the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna. On this date, six birds and two nests were located in a small area of sand prairie and black oak savanna. The nests found represent only the second and third breeding records for the Chicago area and the first such record for northeastern Illinois (Mlodinow, 1984). The six birds tallied on 26 June represent a new Chicago area high count for this species (Mlodinow, 1984).

Henslow's Sparrow (state threatened)

On 3 June, a colony of three singing males was identified at the Braidwood Dunes and Savanna. A juvenile bird was photographed on 1 July, providing a rare summer breeding record.

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