

Birding at Canal Shores

May 21, 2020

At Canal Shores, only about half of its 82 acres of green space is occupied by the actual golf course, allowing for complementary habitats that are attractive to birds, both migratory and residential. The property runs along the North Shore Sanitary Canal, which links the North Branch of the Chicago River to Lake Michigan at Gilson Park in Wilmette. Accordingly, we have many acres of wooded shoreline on the canal, in addition to small wetland and open meadow areas. Canal Shores runs somewhat parallel to the shore of Lake Michigan and, at its north end, is very close to the lake, making it a natural pathway for migratory birds. As of May 21, 2020, we have seen 180 species of birds on the property; a [List of Birds seen on Canal Shores](#) can be reached by clicking this link. Local birdwatchers frequently post their current sightings and counts on eBird, a site maintained by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology; <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L3780717>.

The property offers many vistas for bird watching and we have designated two Birding Loops on the property. Maps outlining them can be reached by clicking the following link. [Birding Loop Maps](#). For the North Loop, there is free parking on the south side of Maple Avenue in Wilmette for up to four hours. For the South Loop, there is free parking on the north side of Lincoln Street in Evanston also for up to 4 hours. Or, you can park in the golf course's parking lot (1030 Central Street) and come into the Pro Shop to get a parking permit and pick up a birding map. The North Loop is about 1¾ miles long and the South Loop about 1¼ miles long.

Canal Shores is dedicated to Golf, golf- and nature-related Youth programs, Ecology and Community. As part of our Ecology and Community outreach effort, we organize bird watching walks in the Spring and the Fall of each year. [The schedule can be found here](#). Moreover, we would be happy to provide a free Introduction to Birding tutorial at the course for interested groups. Birdwatchers also are encouraged to explore the course on their own as an interesting green space in an urban environment. We only ask that birders be sensitive to golfers and remember that golfers have the right of way. Birders should walk, as indicated on the Birding Loop Maps, in the opposite direction of play (the dashed line), so as to be visible to golfers and to only interfere with each group of golfers one time, instead of walking along with them.

In the Spring and Summer of 2019, in connection with Living Habitat and with the support of volunteers from our community, we conducted a bird monitoring survey during which the activities of 137 species were observed. [2019 Bird Monitoring Report](#). We noted the important habitats for both migratory and residential species in the northern portion of the course, in order to preserve them to the extent possible as we conduct course maintenance. The information will also provide valuable input for any course improvements or renovation work.

Additionally, our consultant provided helpful suggestions on course operations and management to maintain the course as a bird-friendly environment. We hope to also conduct similar studies in the future on other sections of the course.

Please consult ebird.org, mentioned above, for recent sightings and an up-to-date list of birds seen on Canal Shores, which is listed as a birding hot spot. We also ask that you add your sightings there to help us track of bird activity on the course.

Should you wish additional information about birding at Canal Shores, please reach out to Matt Rooney at matthewaroonney@gmail.com.