**Como Woodlands Bird List report**

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Introduction

The Como Woodlands Outdoor Classroom (CWOC) is a 16-acre woodland in the southern part of Como Regional Park. It is a designated school forest and one of its main mission is to educate the public about nature. With a more specific goal of promoting elementary and high school use of the woodlands as an outdoor classroom for nature, artistic and historical studies, the Como Woodland Advisory committee and St. Paul’s Parks and Recreation (SPPR) provide educational material to facilitate teachers’ activities in the CWOC. One such educational material deemed important was a bird list to aid teachers in any ornithological study in the woodlands, so they would know what species to look for. A bird list can also provide information about abundance and breeding that can be useful for conservation purposes.

In 2006, the District 10 Environmental Committee conducted a bird survey in several areas in the park during each month of the year. One particular route had been conducted through the Como Woodlands, so birds recorded there provided a baseline. Since 2008, Como Park High School students participated in a Field Day in late May which commenced with an early morning bird count. These data were compiled with the District 10 data to improve a basic bird list. A birding trip with Tim Chase’s Environmental Science class at Murray High School in February 2013 provided information on winter birds. Comprehensive data was missing for summer and fall and so further surveys were needed. In addition, very little information had been collected on breeding status of bird species in CWOC.

Methods

Sixteen bird surveys were conducted between 15 May 2013 to 25 Oct 2013 for a total of 26 hours of survey (Table 1). The surveys in May were timed to document spring migration as were those in September and October to observe fall migration. Summer surveys were focused in June to help determine breeding status of species.

Table 1. Number of surveys and durations for the three seasons surveyed.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Month (Season) | No. of surveys | Total no. hours |
| May (Spring) | 4 | 7.4 |
| June (Summer) | 7 | 10.5 |
| Sept/Oct (Fall) | 5 | 8.1 |
| **Total** | **16** | **26** |

Surveys were conducted by following the same route early in the morning. Routes were started as early as 0655 (CDT) and as late as 0840 (CDT). Weather was typically no or light winds, but cloud cover varied between clear and overcast. Temperatures also varied between 30°F-69°F. The route traveled around the Kilmer Fireplace in the oak savanna, through the transitional woodlands, and then the oak woodland, westward to the coniferous area and then returning on Como Ave through the Floodplain Woodland area. This route covered all major habitats.

Each species and the number of individuals observed were recorded. On some routes when birds were thought to be breeding and defending territories, locations of observations were marked on a map. If the sex of the bird was distinguishable, it was recorded. The average survey lasted 1.6 hrs. On all routes, a single observer collected data.

On two occasions, extra time was spent looking for evidence of breeding, such as nests or adults feeding young. On one of those occasions, SPPR offered the assistance of one of their Youth Conservation Corps groups whose job was to roam around and try to follow singing birds. During these observation periods, some adults were observed feeding young, but any nests found were abandoned and could not be attributed to a particular species. Most confirmed breeding records were discovered by serendipity during a bird survey. Probable records are derived from the fact that singing males were observed on many occasions in the proper habitat during the breeding season.

After a preliminary list was compiled, it was sent to some local birders to include their observations. One birder, Val Cunningham, responded with some additions.

Results

The compilation of data from surveys conducted in 2013, the previous surveys from District 10 and Como High Field Day and observations from one other birder produced a Como Woodland Bird List (found in a separate document) with 80 species of birds. Additional observations documented confirmed or probable breeding of 18 species of birds. Eight species were found to be abundant in at least one season. The American Robin was abundant in spring, summer and fall and White-throated Sparrows in spring and fall. The Indigo Bunting may be the most common breeding species in the Como Woodlands.

The appended Como Bird List will be made available on the Como Woodlands website: [www.comowoodland.org](http://www.comowoodland.org).

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