

Bird Blitz Report
Grass River Natural Area
Antrim County, Michigan
June 30, 2011

Purpose

The primary purpose of Bird Blitz is to survey the nesting birds and establish a baseline of bird populations in the Grass River Natural Area (GRNA). The Bird Blitz will also serve as a tool for monitoring the change or lack of change in populations of bird species over time. Whether these changes are due to man-made or endemic natural variation in climate or habitat will be studied, evaluated and if possible, determined by additional scientific studies. Results of these bird population assessments will provide the scientific basis for management decisions for habitat enhancement in the future. Monitoring populations of nesting bird species will be an indicator of the success of management practices.

Project Description

The first Bird Blitz at Grass River Natural Area was considered a success, because 23 volunteers observed 62 of 157 bird species that have been observed in the natural area. Despite two inches of rainfall on the morning of June 11, 2011, this was the beginning of what is hoped to become an annual event at Grass River Natural Area.

Birds (550 individuals) were counted in all seven of the management areas, which were divided into seventeen smaller Bird Blitz Areas. Eleven of the seventeen Bird Blitz Areas were surveyed: five of the six upland areas (most of the acreage) and six of the fourteen wetland areas (nearly half of the wetland acreage). These counts were conducted between June 4 and June 19, 2011.

Method Summary

Birders were assigned to survey Bird Blitz Areas ranging from 15 to 135 acres: six upland areas (#1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8) and eleven wetland areas (#6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17). Five of the six upland areas were counted, and they comprised 93.62% of the combined upland acreage. Six of the eleven wetland areas were counted, and they comprised 48.67% of the wetland acreage. The eleven areas counted comprised 58.26% of the total 1273.98 acres in the Grass River Natural Area. See GRNA Bird Blitz Areas Map.

For this project two to three people were assigned to each area as a group with at least one of the group being an experienced “birder” Participants walked or took a boat

through their assigned areas and to the best of their ability traveled along designated transects of their area as marked on the map provided.

Twenty-three volunteers participated. See GRNA Bird Blitz Volunteers List.

Birders recorded the birds they heard or sighted in their area. For the most part, the counts were taken between 6:00 am. and 10.00 am., but in some instances the counts were conducted up to noon. The water count was conducted on June 4, 2011 and the land counts were conducted within the time window of June 11 to June 19, 2011.

Results Summary

GRNA Volunteers:	23
GRNA Bird Blitz Areas surveyed:	11 of 17
GRNA Upland Acres surveyed:	254.49 of 271.81
GRNA Wetland Acres surveyed:	487.77 of 1002.17
Bird Species observed:	62 of 157

Over the past thirty years, GRNA naturalists and volunteers have compiled a list of sightings of 155 different bird species. Two previously unreported species were added this year during the Bird Blitz. The two new species were the Tennessee warbler, found in area 14 and 15, and the White-crowned sparrow, found in area 16. The new total of bird species is 157.

During the first GRNA Bird Blitz, there were 550 individual birds counted and 62 species represented. There were 139 birds (in 37 species) found in the Upland Areas, and 411 birds (in 48 species) found in the Wetland Areas. The five most common birds found in the Upland Areas were: Blue Jay (18), Red-Eyed Vireo (18), Ovenbird (12), Black-Capped Chickadee (10) and American Robin (7). The five most common birds found in the Wetland Areas were: Red Winged Blackbird (51), Common Yellow-throat Warbler (43), Black-Capped Chickadee (37), Mourning Dove (32), and Common Grackle (23).

Michigan Species of Special Concern: Common Loon, 1- heard outside area #2, 2- sighted on Lake Bellaire and 2- fly-over in area #15, 1- fly-over area #16.

Report prepared by Jim Kelderhouse, GRNA Conservation Intern and student at NMC Water Studies Institute.

Report reviewed by GRNA Conservation Committee members: Rich Hannan and Peg Comfort.

Species Numbers

Name	Total	Name	Total	Name	Total
Blackbird, Red-winged	51	Oriole, Baltimore	3	Sparrow, Chipping	4
Catbird, Gray	4	Ovenbird	14	Sparrow, Field	1
Cedar Waxwing	8	Pewee, Eastern Wood	4	Sparrow, Song	6
Chickadee, Black-capped	47	Phoebe, Eastern	11	Sparrow, White-throated	16
Crane, Sandhill	4	Robin, American	18	Warbler, Black-and-white	7
Creepers, Brown	2	Sapsucker, Yellow-bellied	6	Warbler, Black-throated Blue	3
Crow, American	12	Starling, European	2	Warbler, Black-throated Green	1
Dove, Mourning	36	Swallow, Tree	5	Warbler, Chestnut-sided	1
Flicker, Northern	6	Tanager, Scarlet	1	Warbler, Common Yellowthroat	44
Flycatcher, Great-crested	17	Thrush, Hermit	5	Warbler, Nashville	1
Flycatcher, Olive-sided	1	Thrush, Wood	2	Warbler, Northern Parula	1
Goldfinch, American	6	Titmouse, Tufted	3	Warbler, Yellow	2
Grackle, Common	23	Turkey	4	Duck, American Black	2
Grosbeak, Rose-breasted	4	Veery	9	Duck, Mallard	14
Grouse, Ruffed	3	Vireo, Red-eyed	22	Goose, Canada	6
Hummingbird, Ruby-throated	2	Vireo, Warbling	1	Heron, Great Blue	2
Jay, Blue	34	Vireo, Yellow-throated	2	Heron, Green	1
Kingbird, Eastern	18	Woodpecker, Downy	4	Loon, Common (T)	4
Kinglet, Golden-crowned	1	Woodpecker, Hairy	10	Warbler, Tennessee *	6
Nuthatch, Red-breasted	10	Woodpecker, Pileated	6	Sparrow, White Crowned *	4
Nuthatch, White-breasted	2	Wren, House	1		
				Grand Total = 550 birds	