



# Preserve!

FRIENDS OF THE LAKESHORE NATURE PRESERVE

FALL 2019

## Spring and Fall Migration at the Lakeshore Nature Preserve

Roma Lenehan



Arlene Koziol

Golden-winged warbler foraging

Did you notice the fantastic bird migration this past spring? You may have seen orioles, indigo buntings, rose-breasted grosbeaks, or even scarlet tanagers at your feeders. Due to the cold, wet weather and unfavorable winds, the Preserve and other migratory bird stopovers had birds for many days. The Lakeshore Nature Preserve, a Wisconsin Important Bird Area, is best known for its neotropical forest migrants, especially its more than thirty species of wood warblers. The University of Wisconsin field ornithology students practice their identification skills and take their final exam in the Preserve.

Why do migrants stage in the Preserve? Lake Mendota provides insects, such as early spring midges,

that are essential food for birds. Ideally the warblers migrate when the oaks and other trees are in full bloom, hosting abundant, nutritious insects. In recent years, the oaks have often finished blooming and have leafed out by the time most warblers arrived, so these migrants found fewer insects and stored less fat to use during breeding. In contrast, this year most of the trees had not started leafing out or blooming when warblers arrived, so again, there were fewer insects. Birds gleaned bugs in the few low bushes with leaves or hopped on the ground after insect hatches, like these warblers below and to the left, likely arriving from Central America.

Instead of replenishing their fat after a long migration, warblers were struggling to maintain their weight. Due to the lack of abundant food, most migrants delayed their breeding until late May, seldom singing and conserving their energy.

Normally, each group of spring migrants specializes. Ovenbirds, thrushes, and Connecticut warblers feed on the ground in the native forest understory. Canada and golden-winged warblers and small flycatchers flit through the shrubs. American redstart and chestnut-sided warblers hunt invertebrates in small trees at mid-level. Pine and Cape May warblers prefer evergreens. Blackpoll and Blackburnian warblers feed in

the tree tops. Swallows, swifts and nightjars catch insects on the wing.

In the fall, warblers and thrushes eat berries including hackberry, cherry, and dogwood. Palm, Nashville, and orange-crowned warblers spend much of their fall foraging in the Biocore Prairie. Other warblers forage in the same areas they frequent in the spring. The Preserve usually has many more fall migrants, with adults and juvenile birds, and they stay for longer periods. The Lakeshore Nature Preserve, with its varied species and diverse levels of native plants and trees, provides food for many species of migrants. Multiple habitats serve as a full-service forest migratory bird stopover, supplying food and shelter in a hostile regional landscape of monoculture agriculture and urban sprawl.



Susan Slapnick

A blur of motion: a hungry prothonotary warbler leaps toward an insect.



LEARNING FROM THE PAST

## The Life Story of Our Class of 1918 Marsh Part I: The Sedge Meadow, 1880 - 1910

MJ Morgan



A sedge meadow in transition. University Bay Drive in the background, 1915. Image courtesy of the UW-Madison Archives, #2017s00107.

For sources used by the author, please visit our website at <https://www.friendslakeshorepreserve.com/>

Written histories of the Class of 1918 Marsh usually mention that it was once a sedge meadow. What can this tell us about our modern marsh? Perhaps we can understand the challenges facing the marsh today by creating a word picture of its vital, earlier life. Sharpening the focus to include the role of insects, we can build an understanding of a sedge meadow undergoing transition even before drainage began in 1911. It will also matter what time of year we describe it, for the sedges, especially *Carex stricta*, tussock sedge, evolved to anchor soil through spring flooding, summer droughts, and the equinoctial rains of autumn. The very definition of a sedge meadow lies in its fluctuating water levels.

Before the creation of a roughly-graded University Bay Drive in 1894-1895, lake water often washed over a long sand bar into the sedge meadow. By 1910, some of the land may have been lying as much as three feet below Lake Mendota; however, eighty acres or so were at lake level. The meadow was functioning as a giant, spongy run-off basin. The lake waters and ground water fed it in season; and each season invited in particular life forms specializing in mucky soils or the drier tussock tops of late summer, rich mini-habitats. To the meadow came a wave motion of changing life throughout the year. In the photo above, a foreground of sedge meadow is visible as a mock WWI battle begins in summer, 1915.

The meadow looks inert and unremarkable...but in June and July, many larval mosquito species – once counted as 17 different kinds!

– hatched out to become food for the smallest dragonfly, the bluebell or elfin skimmer, hovering and whirring over a rising insect mist. No longer found in Dane County, elfin skimmers hunt in sedge meadows and in turn are food for larger dragonflies. All dragonflies roam in horizontal air corridors over the land, where, in their differing hunting levels, the sun catches their iridescence; a healthy sedge meadow could be filled with gleams of wings across many acres. Hiding below on their favored sedge mats, leopard, green, and spring peeper frogs waited for a tasty elfin skimmer. Many scouting swallows, including purple martins, dove eagerly across the acres, scooping up the delicate blue-tinged skimmers. Yet by dryer August and September, things had changed in the meadow. A 1912 observer wrote that insects seen in July could no longer be found in August.

The tussocks created by thriving sedges are specialized micro-environments where marsh plants select their own habitats. Some will grow only on the sides of a tussock, others only on top, or some in the water around it. In dry summer, the tops held blue-joint grass and typically, three blooming wildflowers: white swamp aster, yellow tufted loosestrife, and the pink-red of tearthumb arrowleaf. The meadow was a mosaic of tiny color spots; when a tussock dried out, blue vervain moved in. And over the spiky elevation of these plants, the air was filled with insects and birds. A listener likely caught soft plashes, buzzing, whirring, snapping, calls and songs, especially the dominant birds of a sedge meadow: sedge wren, common yellow throat, swamp sparrow, and of course, red-winged blackbirds. All of these species, but most especially the sedge wren and swamp sparrow, depend on wetland insects for food. Because insects, eggs, and larvae have many stems to cling to, a sedge meadow is a food bonanza. Birds gorged on spiders, beetles, moths and moth caterpillars, ants, flies, aphids, and mayflies; they scooped up spittlebugs and water skimmers appearing when flood waters created miniature flows and ponds around tussocks.

The seasonal movement of water was critical to our sedge meadow. Native rushes, sedges, reeds, and grasses had evolved to grow at differing heights in response to water. This height variance in turn invited in more nesting birds, who prefer diversity in their marshy vegetation. And yet...a clue from an untitled university document mentions farmers who, by 1910, were using ditch draining and windmills to eliminate "willow mats" near the meadow edges. This tells us that scrub willows had begun to change the nature of the sedge meadow towards that of a brushy bog forming over peat. Shifts were first visible in the 1890s, when

increasing algae and emergent aquatic plants began thickening the lake shallows. The wetland was likely already moving toward a natural succession, the shrub stage, at the time drainage plans proved irresistible to the Agricultural College.



*Calthus palustris*, or marsh marigold. This bright wetlands flower was verified blooming in the sedge meadow in 1910.

So our sedge meadow was leaving, albeit very slowly: 110 acres of transforming micro-habitats. And it had taken barely twenty years. Once the bay road circled the meadow, change accelerated. Willow, red osier dogwood, and elderberry gradually appeared in new soil and became larval hosts for many species of butterflies and especially, moths. As one specialist puts it, "Moth caterpillars are legion on willows." In 1910, perhaps in response to university intent to drain the meadow, a young botanist created a plant inventory there. Tussock sedge was still present, and bulrushes shared the deepest water with wild rice, perhaps where the marsh is today. Water lily and marsh marigold, the rare rein orchid, sensitive ladies' tresses and blue monkey flower – these wetland forbs bloomed beneath six-to-seven foot swamp milkweed, wool grass, marsh aster, sweet flag, and prairie dock. In this diverse plant world, undergraduate

John Heddle recorded no cattails. The seasonal drying of the sedge meadow kept them out. (By 1921, an Agricultural College bulletin did record cattails in the far eastern part of the meadow, near Willow Creek).

Drainage with submerged tiles soon began. And with the plowing of the land, many insect species vanished. Then the sedge wren left, disappearing from what was likely a last true haven in southern Wisconsin. By 1885, an ornithologist noted he had rarely heard a sedge wren here for 15 or 20 years. It was driven from wet prairie meadows mown for marsh hay. Thus, the lake shore meadow would have been a sedge wren sanctuary. In 2019, it is the marsh wren that nests here, males singing across the water of an evening. The shy sedge wren nests much farther north.



A healthy sedge meadow

Many thanks to Professor Tom Brock for his generous assistance.

# Fall/winter field trips

Glenda Denniston

## September

**8 More than Butterflies: Insects in the Preserve** (Sunday, 1:30–3:00 p.m.). Entomologist Tom Morgan will bring some insects and booklets to introduce the walk, and then we'll look for insects along trails in the woods and in the microhabitats of the Biocore Prairie. We hope to see dragonflies hawking for prey, soldier beetles and longhorned beetles on flower blossoms, and insect galls or emergence holes from seed pods. Meet at the entrance to Picnic Point next to the kiosk (2004 University Bay Drive). Leader: Tom Morgan (785-410-5825, morganmjt2@gmail.com).

**15 Eagle Heights Gardens: a hotbed for student-led teaching, research and outreach.** (Sunday, 1:00–3:00 p.m.). Learn from Tom Bryan about the GreenHouse Learning Community program he coordinates and student research into sustainable agriculture on the FH King and CALS lands. Meet at the entrance to Picnic Point next to the kiosk (2004 University Bay Drive). Leader: Tom Bryan and friends (608-738-5733, tbryan@wisc.edu).

### 4<sup>th</sup> SUNDAYS BIRD AND NATURE OUTINGS



Seth McGee

**4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month, 1:30–3:00 p.m.**—The Friends sponsor bird and nature outings in the Preserve with the Friends of Urban Nature (see our website for details). Meet at the entrance to Picnic Point. Contact: Paul Noeldner (608-698-0104, paul\_noeldner@hotmail.com).

**NOTE:** Lot 130, which has received paving and structural improvements, is scheduled to reopen in early September with increased parking capacity. Check the Preserve's website, [lakeshorepreserve.wisc.edu](http://lakeshorepreserve.wisc.edu), to learn about parking options and progress on the Lot 130 reconstruction.

**22 Bird and Nature Outing: ICF Crane Walk** (Sunday, 1:30–3:00 p.m.). Join International Crane Foundation staff as we explore the importance of crane conservation through a wetland walk. What does our world look like from the viewpoint of a Sandhill Crane? We may even see a pair of cranes! Leader: Hannah Jones. See box below.

## October

**6 Tree Diversity in the Preserve** (Sunday, 1:00–3:00 p.m.). Join Paul Quinlan, Conservation Resource Supervisor for Madison Parks, on a hike to explore the diversity of our trees and their habitats and to enjoy the beautiful colors of their foliage. Meet at the Picnic Point entrance next to the kiosk (2004 University Bay Drive). Leader: Paul Quinlan (608-267-4918, pquinlan@cityofmadison.com).

**13 Mushrooms and other Fungi of the Preserve** (Sunday, 9:00–11:00 a.m.). Led by mycologist Marie Trest, we will look for mushrooms and examples of fungi that are pathogens, ones that play a role in decomposition and recycling, and ones that form mutually beneficial partnerships with plants and algae. Meet at the Picnic Point entrance next to the kiosk (2004 University Bay Drive). Leader: Marie Trest (608-262-7475, marie.trest@wisc.edu).

**20 Class of 1918 Marsh — Problems and Solutions** (Sunday, 1:00–3:00 p.m.). On this easy walk, Tracy Hames, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Wetlands Association, will share his observations on the remarkable diversity still present in the Class of 1918

Marsh, its physical and biological challenges, and potential strategies for restoration and care. Mr. Hames has extensive experience in restoring and caring for wetlands efficiently and effectively. Meet at the entrance to the marsh from Parking Lot 130 (2003 University Bay Drive). Leader: Tracy Hames (608-250-9971, tracy.hames@wisconsinwetlands.org).

**27 Bird and Nature Outing: Owl Prowl** (Sunday, 1:30–3:00 p.m.). Walk through the Preserve to look for barred owls that hunt during the day while great horned owls are asleep in large conifers. From dissected pellets, see evidence of what owls eat. Leader: Chuck Henrikson. See box on left.

## November

**10 Geologic History of the Preserve and Madison Lakes** (Sunday, 1:00–3:00 p.m.). Back by popular demand, Geologist Dave Mickelson will picture for us the glaciers that were here 25,000 years ago and their effects on the landscape. Walk with him from the Lake Mendota shore at Raymer's Cove up to the vistas in Eagle Heights Woods. Meet at Raymer's Cove parking lot, 2900 Lake Mendota Drive. Leader: David Mickelson (608-262-7862, davem@geology.wisc.edu).

**24 Bird and Nature Outing:** (Sunday, 1:30–3:00 p.m.). Leader: Dane Gallagher. See box on left.

## December

**7 Birding Madison Lakes** (Saturday, 7:30–11:00 a.m.). As the smaller ponds and lakes in south-central Wisconsin freeze, migrating birds

become concentrated on Madison's large lakes, which remain open longer. We will look for waterfowl, gulls and winter birds, and the magnificent tundra swans! Dress warmly and bring a scope, if you have one. Meet at the UW Parking Lot 60, 800 Walnut Street. From there, we'll drive around Lakes Mendota and Monona. Leader: Quentin Yoerger (608-449-5261, harrierqman@gmail.com).

- 22 Bird and Nature Outing**  
(Sunday, 1:30–3:00 p.m.).  
See box on page 4.

## January

- 11 Climate Change in the Preserve**  
(Sunday, 1:30–3:00 p.m.). Climate change affects our everyday lives. From warming trout streams to decreasing snow pack, changing lake levels and extreme weather, the Wisconsin Initiative on Climate Change Impacts (WICCI, <https://www.wicci.wisc.edu>) helps people understand how climate change is affecting Wisconsin. One of the ways WICCI does this is through telling stories. Join Prof. Dan Vimont as he tells the "stories" of the Preserve. Meet at the Picnic Point entrance next to the kiosk (2004 University Bay Drive). Leader: Dan Vimont (608-263-3420, [dvimont@wisc.edu](mailto:dvimont@wisc.edu)).

- 26 Bird and Nature Outing**  
(Sunday, 1:30–3:00 p.m.).  
See box on page 4.

## February

- 23 Bird and Nature Outing**  
(Sunday, 1:30–3:00 p.m.).  
See box on page 4.

## March

- 22 Bird and Nature Outing**  
(Sunday, 1:30–3:00 p.m.).  
See box on page 4.

## In Gratitude for Volunteers

Our spring and summer projects, especially the May 5 Garlic Mustard Pull in Frautschi Point Woods and the May 18 Wildflower Planting, were completed with energy and joy – thanks to many committed volunteers who came to work hard. On May 18, trays of selected native flowers and grasses dotted the woods on either side of the New Trail to the University Community Gardens and Biocore Prairie. Under the direction of Bryn Scriver and Friends President Steve Sentoff, volunteers placed almost 600 plants before a fast-moving storm watered both wildflowers and gardeners! Prairie Partner Interns later completed the planting of the last remaining trays. Next spring and summer, take note of ephemerals along this gently winding, downhill trail: wild geranium, golden Alexander, Jacob's ladder, wild columbine, and downy wood mint. These and others will be a living testament to the gifts of time and labor from our volunteers.



A good morning's work: volunteer planters with trays of vigorous native wildflowers along the New Trail in the Preserve.

Save the  
thought!

We're planning **It's in Our Nature Open Mic Night** for a weekday evening in late February/early March. Bring your original nature-inspired poetry, prose, or a song to share, or listen to a variety of spoken word pieces with your friends. See the winter issue of the *Preserve!* for more details. Coordinator: Olympia Mathiapparanam (920-809-4248, [omathiapparan@wisc.edu](mailto:omathiapparan@wisc.edu)).



FROM A FUNDED STUDENT INTERN

# All on a Summer's Day: My 2019 Prairie Partners Internship

Rachel Mortensen

Growing up in Jefferson County, I knew woods and wetlands and cornfields. The first time I saw a prairie on an elementary school field trip, I was mesmerized. This summer, over fifteen years later, I work in prairies every day and I am still enthralled, bewitched by a hundred shades of green. There is a vibrancy in prairies that doesn't exist elsewhere, a *joie de vivre* that outshines any other ecosystem. I can't help but think how lucky I am: I get to spend every day in a prairie, where I am home.

There are few before-and-after images more striking than a prairie we are clearing of invasive species. Before, there are aggressive plants towering over or trying to hide among the rest. Afterward, I like to imagine the pale purple coneflower and wild white indigo stretching in relief. The sweat and blisters are worth it to see the difference. This internship has been such a gift! I am able to note in real time the effects of our work; I learn from a variety of land

managers about their different goals and techniques; and I get to work as part of a group of dedicated, like-minded individuals committed to the improvement of our ecosystems.

Today I saw purple prairie clover growing next to butterfly milkweed. There is something exhilarating about the vibrant orange and blazing purple together that makes other flowers seem restrained in comparison. But then I turned around and saw three yellow compass plant flowers nodding under wide blue sky, and I had to expand my definition of "perfect" to include that, too. Then I turned again to see bee balm's wild purple blooms nestled in with the cheery golden false sunflower and brown-eyed Susan; the beauty was overwhelming. Every day reveals something new and fascinating and wonderful.

In May 2020, I will finish my degree in Ecosystem Restoration and Management at UW Stevens Point. This internship has not only given me



Rachel Mortensen in a prairie, summer, 2019

a glimpse into a career in land management, but it has also thoroughly prepared me for it. I am so grateful to the organizations that made this internship possible. I will be forever thankful for the experiences of my first sight of a blooming compass plant, the opportunity to feed a mother kestrel and her three chicks, and for the popcorn-popping sound of ripe lupine seed pods bursting in the sun.



The Prairie Partner Interns have had a busy summer. In addition to removing garlic mustard from an area near Picnic Point, they worked in other Preserve locations to remove invasives and weeds. One of their more interesting tasks was a targeted vegetation survey conducted in both Bill's Woods and Eagle Point. They are pictured here, from left to right: Dane McKittrick, Tucker Sanborn, Calla Norris, Margaret Johnson, and Rachel Mortensen. Thanks to Friends vice-president Seth McGee and both Bryn Scriver and Adam Gundlach for their dedication in selecting and directing our amazing interns!

## Words with *the* Friends (of the Lakeshore Nature Preserve)!

Olympia Mathiaparanam

Welcome to the puzzle section for this edition of the *Preserve!* We encourage fellow naturalists and fans of crosswords alike to put their brains to the test with this Preserve-themed mini puzzle. **Good luck and hope you enjoy!**

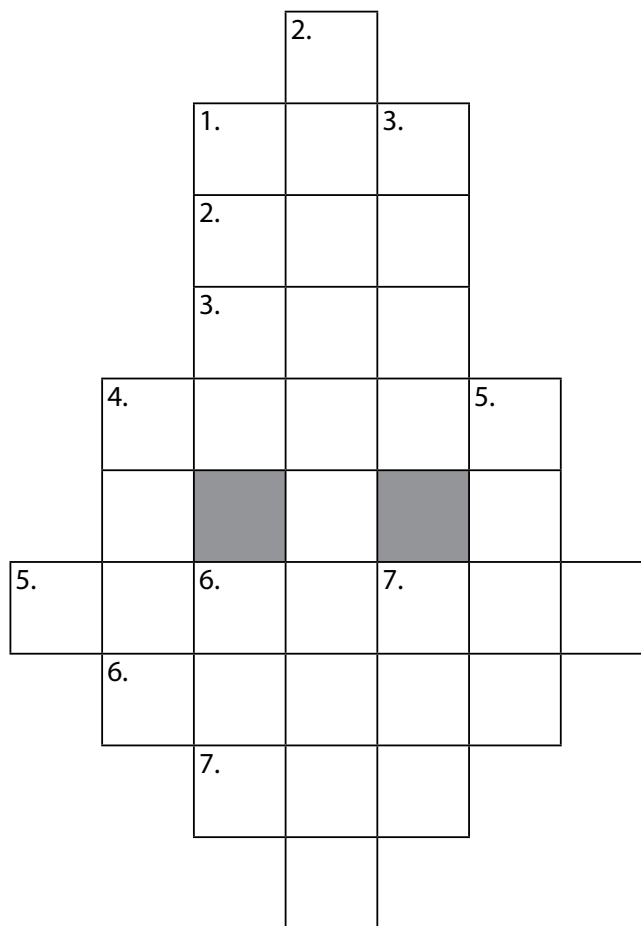
- Stumped? No problem! Our website holds all the hints –within the project and field trip summaries and blog photos— you require to crack this crossword.
- Any of these answers surprise you? Intrigue you? You can also visit our website to read up on any topic you'd like to learn more about!
- Feeling confident in your final answers? Check out the answer key posted at <https://www.friendslakeshorepreserve.com/>

### ACROSS

1. The shape of the stems of shooting stars—the first blooms in the Biocore Prairie
2. To read (in Brasilia)
3. This creature builds its home in underground nests in the prairie. Watch your step!
4. They could be a dog or wolf...but they are definitely poisonous.
5. Virginia \_\_\_\_
6. These birds can be found in the Class of 1918 Marsh
7. \_\_\_\_invasive. Our goal for the Preserve landscape

### DOWN

1. Tyto \_\_\_\_\_. These owls have a heart-shaped face
2. A logo, for example.
3. A broad group of First Nation people, some of whom lived in the Great Plains of Canada.
4. Pesky hitchhikers that allow invasive burdock to spread
5. All the bluebirds and PUMAS you'll see with grey plumage, hopefully in our bluebird boxes and houses
6. Specifically the Proterozoic. This timescale is when algae first appeared on earth. Now millions of years later, algae threatens the health of our lakes.
7. \_\_\_\_ continental, (but not Antarctica). Bats are found in all but the coldest climates, making them one of the most widespread species on earth and residents in our preserve! Check them out with the Madison Bat Brigade!



This puzzle was brought to you by Olympia Mathiaparanam. Board member of the Friends. Recent graduate of UW—Madison. Aspiring education psychology researcher. Lover of puzzles and the Preserve!



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 Heights Woods Fund  
 Paul and Coe Williams



Members at the Friends 2019 Annual Meeting listening to the presentation by Matt Reetz.

**I WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE** by joining or making an additional gift

## Friends of the Lakeshore Nature Preserve

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Street \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_  
 State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email \_\_\_\_\_

- I'd like to **VOLUNTEER**—please send me information by email.
- I'd like to **GO PAPERLESS** and receive my newsletter by email.

Please mail this completed form and your check payable to:

**Friends of the Lakeshore Nature Preserve**  
 P.O. Box 5534  
 Madison, WI 53705

Join    Renew    Gift

**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP**

- Student . . . . . \$10
- Individual . . . . . \$20
- Household . . . . . \$35
- Steward . . . . . \$50
- Patron . . . . . \$100
- Other . . . . . \$\_\_\_\_\_

**ADDITIONAL GIFT**  
*(For members—does not include membership)*

- Woodland . . . . . \$500
- Savanna . . . . . \$250
- Wetland . . . . . \$100
- Prairie . . . . . \$50
- Other . . . . . \$\_\_\_\_\_

Friends of the  
Lakeshore Nature Preserve

P.O. Box 5534  
Madison, WI 53705

Ideas and *Friends* announcements for our newsletter and website are welcome. If you'd prefer to go paperless and receive your newsletter electronically, please email us at [preserveFriends@gmail.com](mailto:preserveFriends@gmail.com)

- President:* Steve Sentoff
- Vice President:* Seth McGee
- Secretary:* Paul Quinlan
- Treasurer:* Steve Sellwood
- Field trips:* Doris Dubielzig, Paul Noeldner
- Newsletter:* Sarah Congdon, MJ Morgan
- Friends Volunteer Coordinator:*  
Galen Hasler, 608-206-5218

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*Friends of the Lakeshore Nature Preserve* is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Please visit our website: [www.FriendsLakeshorePreserve.com](http://www.FriendsLakeshorePreserve.com)

**SPRING FRESHET**

## Survey of Bill's Woods Identifies Many Lakeshore Preserve Birds

Did you know that the UW-Lakeshore Nature Preserve is designated an *Important Wisconsin Birding Area*? This past spring David Liebl (College of Engineering Emeritus) conducted a daily bird survey to identify migratory, breeding and other birds. The survey report, "The Birds of Bill's Woods - A Survey of Species, Spring

2019," identified 102 species, including 21 breeding in the woods. Visitors can obtain a checklist at the Bill's Woods kiosk and are encouraged to record and report their own observations. Happy birding! Please visit the Preserve website at <https://www.friendslakeshorepreserve.com/research.html> to read the full report.

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Golden-crowned kinglet



Hooded warbler



Ruby-throated hummingbird



Barred owl juvenile