



# CHICAGO FALL MIGRATION & ARCHITECTURE

SEPTEMBER 20-24, 2018

**GUIDE: JOSH ENGEL**

**[NEXT TRIP: 19-23 SEPTEMBER 2019](#)**

Not only was this our inaugural Chicago Birds & Architecture Tour, but it was the first commercial birding tour ever in Chicago. We hope it's the first of many! We had a wonderful time exploring many of the beautiful, bird-filled natural areas in Chicago region during the peak of fall migration, from the Chicago lakefront to the Indiana Dunes. The group also embarked on two architectural tours, the world-famous river cruise by the Chicago Architecture Center (CAC) as well as a private walking tour of downtown led by an expert guide—who also happens to be a birder! Many of the sites we visited over the course of the trip included both birds and interesting Chicago history and architecture, the best of all worlds. All this while staying in a lovely small hotel in a vibrant part of the city and taking advantage of that neighborhood's delicious dinner options.



*Yellow-bellied Sapsucker with freshly drilled sap wells.*

**Day 1, Sep 20, arrival and birding in Lincoln Park**

The group met in our hotel in the city's bustling northside neighborhood of Lakeview. We had some time for afternoon birding so we headed to nearby North and South Ponds. It was hot and muggy, feeling more like summer than fall. There weren't many migrants about, but we got nice views of Cape May Warbler and an early Brown Creeper, and we had excellent views of Green Heron and Black-crowned Night-Heron. We also got to experience the historic landscape design of Alfred Caldwell and the modern landscape design of Jeanne Gang, a nice introduction to Chicago architecture. We ate dinner in one of the many excellent restaurants within walking distance of the hotel.

**Day 2, Sep 21, North Side lakefront and Architectural River Cruise**

We awoke to wind and warmth and headed for Montrose Point Bird Sanctuary, one of the Midwest's top birding spots. It was a bit slow, but we did find a couple of nice warbler flocks that included Bay-breasted and Blackpoll Warblers. In the large flock of Sanderlings on the beach we found Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers. Our next stop was slightly to the south, Jarvis Bird Sanctuary. We had great views of Ruby-throated Hummingbird and found a nice warbler flock that included Black-throated Blue Warbler and a very tame Magnolia Warbler.



*Ruby-throated Hummingbird at Jarvis Bird Sanctuary.*

We continued working some of the local urban birding spots, getting nice views of Red-breasted Nuthatch, Bay-breasted Warbler, and seeing a distantly migrating Osprey after the winds has switched from south to west.

In the afternoon, the group took the Chicago Architecture Center's River Cruise on the Chicago River, seeing and learning about the city's world-famous architecture. This trip is always a

highlight of anyone's visit to Chicago. We wrapped up the day with a Turkish dinner at yet another of the wonderful restaurants within walking distance of the hotel.

### **Day 3, Sep 22, South Side and Downtown Architectural Walking Tour**

We woke up to much cooler temperatures and northeast winds, and headed out, this time to one of the South Side's best migrant traps, Jackson Park, originally designed to host the 1893 World's Fair by Frederick Law Olmstead. Once we got around the half-marathon street closures, we took a walk through the restored habitat. East winds seemed to have pushed migrants away from the lake (and thus, away from us), but we did find a few small groups of migrants including Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Indigo Bunting. We also enjoyed watching American Kestrel and Belted Kingfisher here.

We continued south to Eggers Grove, which had a few more migrants, including Blue-headed and Warbling Vireos and Nashville Warbler. Burnham Prairie, in the industrial Lake Calumet area of Chicago held a Pectoral Sandpiper. We finished our morning's birding at Hegewisch Marsh, which had a large number of Green-winged Teal, a few Lesser Yellowlegs, and a couple of Mute Swans on the pond. The woods held an Olive-sided Flycatcher, Hairy Woodpecker, Red-tailed Hawk, and a good number of warblers, including a Blackpoll Warbler beating a huge caterpillar against a branch.

Lunch was at a café in the city's historic Pullman Neighborhood, a National Monument, where the Pullman Palace Car Company once built its luxury train cars and where its employees lived. We took a scenic route through south side neighborhoods to get back to downtown, where we met Amanda Zeigler to give the group a private walking tour of some of downtown Chicago's most important and historic architectural landmarks.



*Marquette Park in Miller Beach, Indiana, on a beautiful fall afternoon. Photo by Amanda Zeigler.*



**Day 4, Sep 23, Indiana Dunes**

We set off for the day making our way around the bottom of Lake Michigan to Indiana Dunes State Park. This beautiful lakefront park has high-quality deciduous forest that is good for migrant and resident birds alike. We were surprised to see three American White Pelicans sitting on Wolf Lake as we passed by on our way to the Dunes. While waiting for the state park's nature center and feeder setup to open, we birded the surrounding area, finding a flock of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, a Yellow-billed Cuckoo, a male Purple Finch, Eastern Towhee, Wood Thrush, and Veery. A highlight was hearing a Pileated Woodpecker and have it make two passes right over our heads. The feeders were excellent as well, getting us close views of Tufted Titmouse, many immature Purple Finches, Nashville Warbler, and Hairy Woodpecker.

We moved on to other areas of the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore and the surrounding area. We watched a pair of Sandhill Cranes at close range, had scope views of a perched Red-shouldered Hawk, and found foraging Red-headed Woodpeckers. We found scattered migrants throughout the day, including Blackpoll, Nashville, Black-throated Green, and Tennessee Warblers.

We made one final stop, at Calumet Park, just on the Illinois side of the state line. We were there specifically to look for a recently reported Snow Goose, and sure enough, there it was, on the ballfields with the large group of Canada Geese.

**Day 5, Sep 24, Lake County**

We had one final morning of birding, so we headed north along the lakefront, taking the beautiful Sheridan Road to Fort Sheridan Forest Preserve. This is a beautiful natural area on a former military site, where many of the historic buildings have landmark status. It was a beautiful morning and the birds were active. We had tremendous views of adult and young Red-headed Woodpecker, and added Field, Lincoln's, and Savannah Sparrow to our growing list. We had nice views of Bay-breasted and Orange-crowned Warblers and excellent views of a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker next to some freshly drilled sap wells. The winds were not right for raptor migration here—a famous place to watch raptors migrate when the winds are right—but we got lucky with a Peregrine Falcon migrating swiftly south overhead.

After Fort Sheridan, we headed to Rollins Savannah, hoping to add to our waterfowl list. The waterfowl were there, but too far away and in poor light. The highlight here was more raptors, with two Sharp-shinned Hawks darting over us, one after the other, as well as a family of Sandhill Cranes. Our last stop was Ryerson Woods, where before the mosquitoes chased us out we found a nice little flock of warblers that included Black-and-white and Nashville Warblers and Red-breasted Nuthatch. We also saw another new migrant raptor, an immature Bald Eagle making its way south.

We ended the trip back in Chicago and said our farewells. It was a great trip exploring some of the best birding spots the Chicago area has to offer, witnessing the wonders of fall migration, experiencing some of the world's great architecture, and eating delicious food in one of the country's great food cities.



*Sandhill Crane, one of a pair.*

**BIRD LIST.** 102 species. Taxonomy follows the Clements/eBird Checklist, 2018 update. (H) denoted heard only. IUCN Red List status listed for threatened and near-threatened species: CR=Critically Endangered, EN=Endangered, VU=Vulnerable, NT=Near-threatened. The **FAMILY NAME** precedes the list of birds observed in each family.

**ANSERIFORMES: Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)**

Snow Goose - *Anser caerulescens*  
 Canada Goose - *Branta canadensis*  
 Mute Swan - *Cygnus olor*  
 Wood Duck - *Aix sponsa*  
 Blue-winged Teal - *Spatula discors*  
 Mallard - *Anas platyrhynchos*  
 Green-winged Teal - *Anas crecca*

Hooded Merganser - *Lophodytes cucullatus*

**PODICIPEDIFORMES: Podicipedidae (Grebes)**

Pied-billed Grebe - *Podilymbus podiceps*

**COLUMBIFORMES: Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)**

Rock Pigeon - *Columba livia*

Mourning Dove - *Zenaida macroura*

**CUCULIFORMES: Cuculidae (Cuckoos)**

Yellow-billed Cuckoo - *Coccyzus americanus*

**CAPRIMULGIFORMES: Apodidae (Swifts)**

Chimney Swift (NT)- *Chaetura pelagica*

**CAPRIMULGIFORMES: Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)**

Ruby-throated Hummingbird - *Archilochus colubris*

**GRUIFORMES: Gruidae (Cranes)**

Sandhill Crane - *Antigone canadensis*

**CHARADRIIFORMES: Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)**

Killdeer - *Charadrius vociferus*

**CHARADRIIFORMES: Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)**

Sanderling - *Calidris alba*

Least Sandpiper - *Calidris minutilla*

Pectoral Sandpiper - *Calidris melanotos*

Semipalmated Sandpiper (NT) - *Calidris pusilla*

Lesser Yellowlegs - *Tringa flavipes*

**CHARADRIIFORMES: Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)**

Ring-billed Gull - *Larus delawarensis*

Herring Gull - *Larus argentatus*

**SULIFORMES: Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)**

Double-crested Cormorant - *Phalacrocorax auritus*

**PELECANIFORMES: Pelecanidae (Pelicans)**

American White Pelican - *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*

**PELECANIFORMES: Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)**

Great Blue Heron - *Ardea herodias*

Great Egret - *Ardea alba*

Green Heron - *Butorides virescens*

Black-crowned Night-Heron - *Nycticorax nycticorax*

**CATHARTIFORMES: Cathartidae (New World Vultures)**

Turkey Vulture - *Cathartes aura*

**ACCIPITRIFORMES: Pandionidae (Osprey)**

Osprey - *Pandion haliaetus*

**ACCIPITRIFORMES: Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)**

Sharp-shinned Hawk - *Accipiter striatus*

Cooper's Hawk - *Accipiter cooperii*

Bald Eagle - *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*

Red-shouldered Hawk - *Buteo lineatus*

Red-tailed Hawk - *Buteo jamaicensis*

**CORACIIFORMES: Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)**

Belted Kingfisher - *Megaceryle alcyon*

**PICIFORMES: Picidae (Woodpeckers)**

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker - *Sphyrapicus varius*

Red-headed Woodpecker (NT) - *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*

Red-bellied Woodpecker - *Melanerpes carolinus*

Downy Woodpecker - *Dryobates pubescens*

Hairy Woodpecker - *Dryobates villosus*

Pileated Woodpecker - *Dryocopus pileatus*

Northern Flicker - *Colaptes auratus*

**FALCONIFORMES: Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)**

American Kestrel - *Falco sparverius*

Peregrine Falcon - *Falco peregrinus*

**PSITTACIFORMES: Psittacidae (New World and African Parrots)**

Monk Parakeet - *Myiopsitta monachus*

**PASSERIFORMES: Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)**

Olive-sided Flycatcher (NT) - *Contopus cooperi*

Eastern Wood-Pewee - *Contopus virens*

Least Flycatcher - *Empidonax minimus*

Eastern Phoebe - *Sayornis phoebe*

**PASSERIFORMES: Vireonidae (Vireos, Shrike-Babblers, and Erpornis)**

Blue-headed Vireo - *Vireo solitarius*

Warbling Vireo - *Vireo gilvus*

**PASSERIFORMES: Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)**

Blue Jay - *Cyanocitta cristata*

American Crow - *Corvus brachyrhynchos*

**PASSERIFORMES: Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)**

Black-capped Chickadee - *Poecile atricapillus*

Tufted Titmouse - *Baeolophus bicolor*

**PASSERIFORMES: Sittidae (Nuthatches)**

Red-breasted Nuthatch - *Sitta canadensis*

White-breasted Nuthatch - *Sitta carolinensis*

**PASSERIFORMES: Certhiidae (Treecreepers)**

Brown Creeper - *Certhia americana*

**PASSERIFORMES: Troglodytidae (Wrens)**

House Wren - *Troglodytes aedon*

Carolina Wren (H) - *Thryothorus ludovicianus*

**PASSERIFORMES: Regulidae (Kinglets)**

Ruby-crowned Kinglet - *Regulus calendula*

**PASSERIFORMES: Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)**

Eastern Bluebird - *Sialia sialis*

Veery - *Catharus fuscescens*

Swainson's Thrush - *Catharus ustulatus*

Wood Thrush (NT) - *Hylocichla mustelina*

American Robin - *Turdus migratorius*

**PASSERIFORMES: Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)**

Gray Catbird - *Dumetella carolinensis*

**PASSERIFORMES: Sturnidae (Starlings)**

European Starling - *Sturnus vulgaris*

**PASSERIFORMES: Bombycillidae (Waxwings)**

Cedar Waxwing - *Bombycilla cedrorum*

**PASSERIFORMES: Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)**

House Finch - *Haemorhous mexicanus*

Purple Finch - *Haemorhous purpureus*

Pine Siskin - *Spinus pinus*

American Goldfinch - *Spinus tristis*

**PASSERIFORMES: Passerellidae (New World Sparrows)**

Chipping Sparrow - *Spizella passerina*

Field Sparrow - *Spizella pusilla*

White-throated Sparrow - *Zonotrichia albicollis*

Savannah Sparrow - *Passerculus sandwichensis*

Song Sparrow - *Melospiza melodia*

Lincoln's Sparrow - *Melospiza lincolnii*

Eastern Towhee - *Pipilo erythrophthalmus*

**PASSERIFORMES: Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)**

Red-winged Blackbird - *Agelaius phoeniceus*

Common Grackle - *Quiscalus quiscula*

**PASSERIFORMES: Parulidae (New World Warblers)**

Black-and-white Warbler - *Mniotilta varia*

Tennessee Warbler - *Oreothlypis peregrina*

Orange-crowned Warbler - *Oreothlypis celata*

Nashville Warbler - *Oreothlypis ruficapilla*

Common Yellowthroat - *Geothlypis trichas*

American Redstart - *Setophaga ruticilla*

Cape May Warbler - *Setophaga tigrina*

Magnolia Warbler - *Setophaga magnolia*

Bay-breasted Warbler - *Setophaga castanea*

Blackpoll Warbler - *Setophaga striata*

Black-throated Blue Warbler - *Setophaga caerulescens*

Palm Warbler - *Setophaga palmarum*



Yellow-rumped Warbler - *Setophaga coronata*

Black-throated Green Warbler - *Setophaga virens*

**PASSERIFORMES: Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)**

Northern Cardinal - *Cardinalis cardinalis*

Rose-breasted Grosbeak - *Pheucticus ludovicianus*

Indigo Bunting - *Passerina cyanea*

**PASSERIFORMES: Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)**

House Sparrow - *Passer domesticus*

**MAMMAL LIST.** 4 species.

Eastern Gray Squirrel - *Sciurus carolinensis*

Eastern Chipmunk - *Tamias striatus*

American red squirrel - *Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*

White-tailed Deer - *Odocoileus virginianus*



*Semipalmated Sandpiper with Sanderlings on Montrose Beach.*



*The Tiffany Dome at the Chicago Cultural Center, set up for a wedding, during the private architectural walking tour of downtown Chicago. This secret spot is a must-see.*