

Brookview Bird Survey
Winter Report 2026
By Harrison Shupe

Background and Site History

Brookview Reserve (2480 Periwinkle Drive) is just over 13 acres and was formerly the site of the private Brookview Swim Club. In 2019, the decision was made to close the pool and the Board of Directors of the private swim club felt it was in the best interest of the community to preserve the land. The Bellbrook Sugarcreek Park District was fortunate to receive a Clean Ohio grant to fund the acquisition and necessary activities to make the area accessible as public parkland. These funds are administered by the State of Ohio's Public Works Commission and can only be used to acquire and improve land for passive recreation. Following the existing topography and water flow of the area, a small vernal pond and prairie were established in the summer of 2021. This area of prairie is approximately 2.25 acres and is mostly surrounded by established woodlands. The 618 acre Sugarcreek Metropark is located directly south of Brookview Reserve and is primarily forested with scattered grasslands.



Aerial view of Brookview Reserve



Brookview Reserve Prairie

The Bellbrook Sugarcreek Park District is interested in how the restoration of Brookview Reserve has influenced local bird populations using the area. Prior to prairie planting and restoration, little-to-no grassland or prairie habitat existed on the property. Because of this, the Park District is particularly interested in the potential presence of grassland bird species using the planted prairie at Brookview. Grassland birds have suffered significant population declines throughout the US and continued preservation and restoration of their habitats is vital to reverse these losses. We are curious whether the restored Brookview prairie provides habitat and refuge for grassland birds, despite its small acreage.

Methodology

Beginning in the first week of January 2026, a bi-weekly bird survey has been conducted at Brookview Reserve lasting between 30 minutes and one hour. Surveys take place around sunrise at a predetermined time. A total of 26 surveys will be completed throughout 2026. This report covers the data collected from the first seven surveys.

For each survey date, a dedicated team of volunteers and Park District Staff met at Brookview Reserve and identified birds by both sight and sound that were found within the park, tallying the total count of each species per date. When applicable, breeding information is collected and logged as well. Environmental data including temperature, cloud cover, precipitation, and wind are also taken during each survey.

After each survey date, data is logged onto eBird as well as into a master Excel document. The avian survey data is summarized in brief quarterly documents published by the Bellbrook Sugarcreek Park District. A final, cumulative report will be published after the completion of the final survey date (Dec. 2026).

This quarterly report covers seven survey dates from Jan. 6th to Mar. 31st, 2026. This date range covers the non-breeding season (January-February) as well as a small portion of migration season (March) for a few of the detected species, namely waterfowl and blackbirds. The bulk of springtime bird migration, as well as a large portion of breeding, will take place in the following monitoring period from April through June.

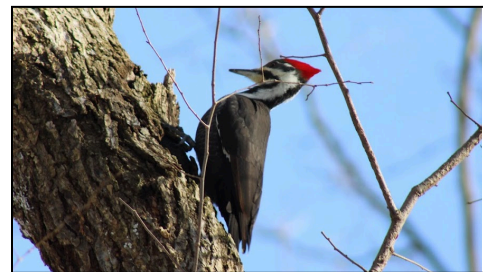
Results

During our seven monitoring dates, a total of 40 species were detected, with an average species count per survey of 20.1. March 31st had the highest species count, with 30 species detected. The lowest species count was on January 20th, with only 14 species detected. The highest individual count of any species was on February 17, where 131 Canada Geese were seen flying over the property. We saw high numbers of our more familiar birds. Across all survey dates, we tallied a total of 48 Northern Cardinals, 33 Carolina Chickadees, 28 American Crows, and 25 Tufted Titmice. The total number of individual birds detected throughout these seven monitoring dates was 569.

Interestingly, Brookview Reserve and the surrounding forests seem to support a high number and diversity of woodpeckers. Of the 7 species of woodpeckers that can regularly be found in Ohio, 6 of them have been found multiple times during the Brookview Bird Survey. Only the highly-localized Red-headed Woodpecker has not been detected, hopefully we will spot one later in the year!



Downy Woodpecker: our smallest woodpecker



The Crow-sized Pileated Woodpecker

Aside from Woodpeckers, many other interesting or uncommon species were detected during the seven monitoring dates included in this report. On the very first survey date, Jan. 6th, an adult Bald Eagle was seen flying over the property. In the 1970s, Bald Eagles were nearly extirpated from Ohio due to pesticide poisoning and habitat loss but have since rebounded after DDT was banned and river and lakeside habitats improved. In 2025, around 1,000 bald eagle nests were tallied across the state.

On Feb. 17th, two Coopers Hawks were seen, and allowed us all very good prolonged views. Coopers Hawks are an uncommon winter resident in Ohio and primarily feed upon songbirds such as robins, cardinals, and doves; sometimes they even hunt at backyard birdfeeders!



Cooper's Hawk seen on 2/17

The rarest find of the Brookview Bird Survey so far was a Purple Finch that was found singing in the bushes on March 17th. Purple Finches are rare winter residents and are only found on around one percent of all submitted birdwatching checklists in Greene County in March (eBird). These beautiful birds look like a House Finch was dipped in raspberry puree!



Male Purple Finch

Aside from these three species, other uncommon or otherwise noteworthy species we detected included Osprey (Mar. 31), Northern Pintail (Mar. 3), Belted Kingfisher (Mar. 31), Brown Creeper (Jan. 6, Mar. 3), and Golden-crowned Kinglet (Jan. 6, Mar. 3, Mar. 17, Mar. 31). Many more interesting species will surely be detected during the migration and breeding season!

In the first seven survey dates of the Brookview Bird Survey, we experienced a wide range of weather conditions. The coldest monitoring date was on January 20th, at only nine degrees!

The warmest survey was on March 31st, at a relatively balmy 62 degrees. Cloud cover varied from completely clouded to completely clear skies, with four of the seven survey dates being between 75-100% clouded. With data from more surveys, we can learn what effect, if any, the weather has on the number of detected species on each date.



White-throated Sparrow

Figure one shows the total number of species detected per survey date. As the migration of waterfowl, blackbirds, and other species began to ramp up in March, so did the species detected. We expect this pattern to continue into May as many species of songbird begin to migrate into our area.

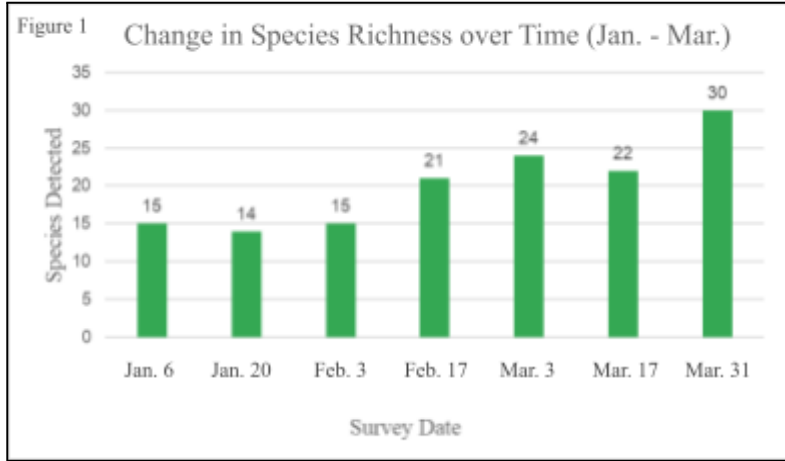


Figure two shows the total abundance of birds detected on each survey date. High outliers were removed and are denoted with an asterisk. These outliers refer to large flocks of birds (American Robin and Canada Goose respectively) counted during the survey.

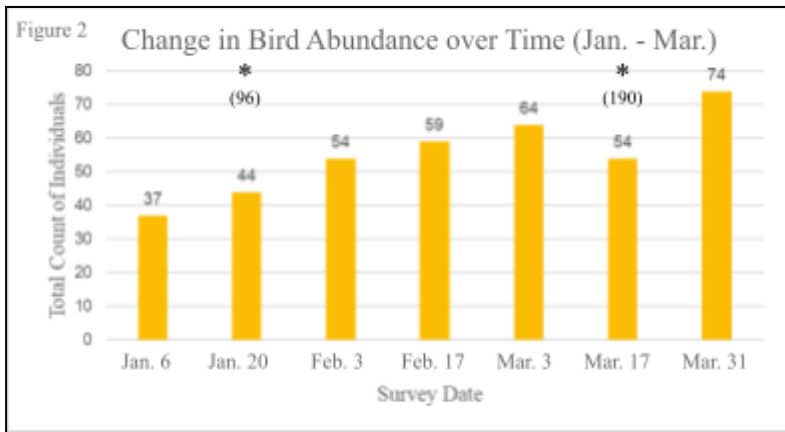
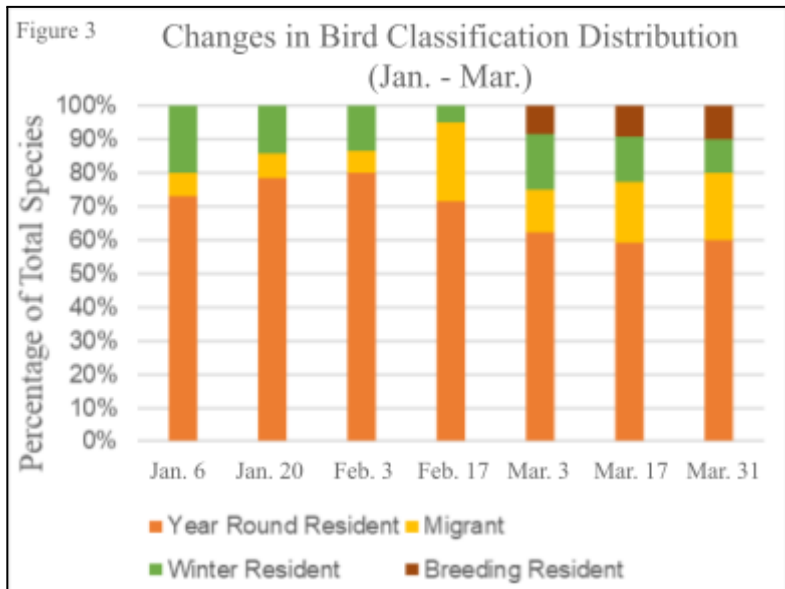


Figure three shows the changing distribution of “Year-round Residents”, “Winter Residents”, “Seasonal Migrants”, and “Breeding Residents” across the first quarter of the Survey. The proportion of year-round residents has slightly decreased from its peak on February 3 while the first breeding residents have begun to arrive in March. Strict winter residents were still present through March but have begun to migrate northward out of our area.



Discussion

Through the first quarter of this year-long survey, 40 species belonging to 20 families were detected, covering a wide range of bird groups present in the region. The data collected during the first seven survey dates of the Brookview Bird Survey show that the recently-created prairie pocket and surrounding woodlands at Brookview Reserve serve as valuable winter habitat for a variety of bird species. Despite its small size (2.25 ac.), the prairie at Brookview Reserve appears to function as a “habitat island” within a largely forested landscape. While this limits its ability to support breeding populations of area-sensitive grassland birds, it still provides valuable resources such as foraging habitat, shelter, and stopover space for a variety of species.

Although no true grassland obligate species were detected in the initial seven monitoring dates, many open-space associated species were found. The presence of species such as Field Sparrow, Eastern Towhee, and Brown-headed Cowbird suggests that the small prairie is already serving as early successional habitat, allowing open-space dependent species to use an area that did not contain any open habitat prior to its restoration. After more surveys are completed, it is highly likely that more grassland associated species will be found in the newly-restored habitat.

Aside from grassland species, the mature woodlands surrounding Brookview Reserve have been found to harbor a high diversity of our resident forest-adapted birds, particularly woodpeckers. Pileated Woodpeckers, which were detected a total of 14 times during the seven surveys, are strongly associated with large tracts of mature woods containing many dead standing trees. These conditions are not only critical for woodpeckers, but for many other cavity nesting species as well.

Seasonal changes in the bird community were also evident over the course of this first survey period. Increases in species such as Red-winged Blackbird and Turkey Vulture during March reflect the early stages of spring migration. This shift helps demonstrate Brookview Reserve's role as a stopover habitat for species on the way to and from their breeding grounds. We expect the presence of migratory species to increase dramatically through April and May, bringing species such as Indigo Bunting, Common Yellowthroat, Wood Thrush, and many species of wood-warbler to the property. We look forward to determining which of these species will be found breeding in the prairie and surrounding forest at Brookview Reserve.

From the first seven survey dates, it can be seen that Brookview Reserve is contributing meaningfully to local bird communities, supporting a diversity of species including uncommon species and others associated with more specialized habitats. Small protected areas, such as Brookview Reserve, play an important role in maintaining biodiversity in our increasingly fragmented and urbanized environment. As the Brookview Bird Survey continues throughout the year, it will continue to yield valuable insights into how bird communities have responded to small-scale habitat restoration over time.

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Common Name	6-Jan	20-Jan	3-Feb	17-Feb	3-Mar	17-Mar	31-Mar	Total
Carolina Wren	4	2		3	3	4	1	17
Tufted Titmouse	2	4	11	1	3	2	2	25
Carolina Chickadee	4	10	7	2	4	4	2	33
American Robin	4	52	1	2	2	3	5	69
Eastern Bluebird							1	1
Northern Cardinal	2	8	6	9	7	10	6	48
Brown-headed Cowbird				2			6	8
Red-winged Blackbird				1	2	3	1	7
Blue Jay			1	2	1		1	5
American Crow	10	2	4	3	5	2	2	28
White-Breasted Nuthatch	2	2	1	2	2	1		10
Downy Woodpecker	1	3	2	4	1	1	1	13
Hairy Woodpecker	1		1					2
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker		2	2				2	6
Red-bellied Woodpecker		2	2	5	2	1	1	13
Northern Flicker	1			3	1		1	6
Pileated Woodpecker		1	3	3	2	2	3	14
Golden-crowned Kinglet	1				2	2	2	7
Brown Creeper	1				1			2
House Finch						1	2	3
American Goldfinch	1	2		1	1	1	2	8

Common Name	6-Jan	20-Jan	3-Feb	17-Feb	3-Mar	17-Mar	31-Mar	Total
Purple Finch						1		1
Bald Eagle	1							1
Red-shouldered Hawk					2			2
Cooper's Hawk				2				2
Osprey							1	1
Black Vulture						1		1
Turkey Vulture							5	5
Song Sparrow				4	4	3	3	14
Eastern Towhee					4	2	1	7
White-throated Sparrow	2	5	3	4	2	2	6	24
Field Sparrow						1	2	3
Mourning Dove		1	2	4	2	5	1	15
European Starling			8				1	9
Ring-billed Gull				2			5	7
Canada Goose				131	6	2	6	145
Northern Pintail					1			1
Wood Duck					4			4
Mallard							1	1
Belted Kingfisher							1	1
Total Species	15	14	15	21	24	22	30	
Total Count	37	96	54	190	64	54	74	569

