

The Morton Arboretum, Lisle

The Morton Arboretum is a destination in itself, featuring a world-class plant collection, extensive education programs, social events—and excellent birding! It is located just west of Interstate 355 and north of I-88 on Illinois Route 53. There are 33 designated parking spots and you can find birds starting at any of them. Founded in 1922, the Arboretum is 1,700 acres, and is open 365 days a year.



Habitat type/site overview

The grounds include 500 acres of plant collections and gardens and 900 acres of woodlands, prairie, meadows, lakes and streams. Specific habitats include oak savannah, marsh, prairie and conifer. The site is divided into East and West sides, and both are good for birding. For detailed trail maps of the East and West sides, see <https://www.mortonarb.org/visit-explore/plan-visit/maps-and-directions>.

Topography

There are 9 miles of paved roads and 16 miles of trails through the tree collections and a variety of natural areas. The trails are

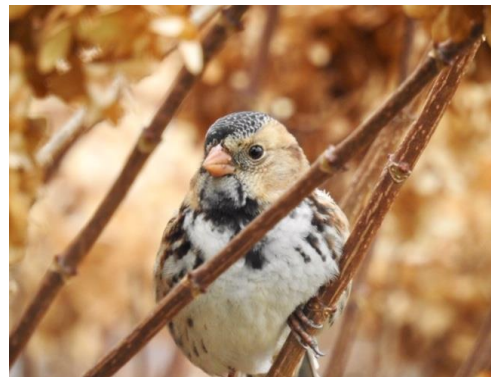
mulched, well-tended and pedestrian only. Bicycling is permitted on the paved roads. There are some accessible paved trails as well.



Birds

More than 200 species of birds use the Arboretum throughout the year, making it a good destination for bird sightings year-round. Like most of Chicagoland, highlights include both spring and fall migration and nesting season.

Fall can bring large numbers of thrushes and waxwings to the many berry bushes in the collections. In certain winters the many seed-bearing conifers attract irruptive species like Red and White-winged Crossbills, winter finches and the occasional Northern Saw-whet Owl. The forests and marshes can be excellent for warblers—especially forests near water like Bur-Reed Marsh and Sterling Pond. Grassland birds like Bobolink and Dickcissel are found in some of the fields. Unexpected rarities have shown up like Varied Thrush, Townsend’s Solitaire, Hermit Warbler and Harris’s Sparrow.



DBC Hotspot



Natural Areas Restoration has encouraged diversity and more recent nesters have included Summer Tanagers, Acadian Flycatcher, Yellow-throated and Northern Parula warblers, Pileated Woodpecker and Blue Grosbeak. The monitored Bluebird Trail has produced a large population of Eastern Bluebirds and some stay year-round.

Best time to go

Any time can be very birdy in the Arboretum. Spring (April/May) and fall (September/October) migrations bring a lot of migrants, especially warblers, and winter can bring specialties already

mentioned. Nesting season (late May, June and early July) is always interesting. Early morning and later in the day are more productive.

Amenities

The Visitor Center has informational displays, a restaurant with a scenic view over Meadow Lake, and restrooms. The store carries many bird books. Picnicking is also available near the Visitor Center.

The Morton Arboretum education programs are available year-round and provide learning experiences on a variety of birding topics. Many of the adult classes include hands-on workshops, hikes and field trips.



Access

Enter the Arboretum through the main entrance. There is a fee for entrance unless you hold an Arboretum membership. You can choose to visit either the much larger east side or the smaller, more historic west side. For a current East Side Map, West Side Map and a Hiking Trail Map visit:

<https://www.mortonarb.org/visit-explore/plan-visit/maps-and-directions>

Site contributors

Content and photography by Jerry and Jody Zamirowski, Founders, Bird Monitoring Program at the Arboretum.