

27# More on Birds

The Class of 1918 Marsh is a birding hotspot. During summer, marsh-nesting birds can be found among emergent cattails and in the shrubby areas along the shoreline. The wetter edges provide habitat for birds such as, sora and Virginia rails, marsh wrens, swamp and song sparrows and red-winged blackbirds. Rails are secretive marsh birds that reside in dense vegetation. They are heard more often than seen. The sora rail has a distinctive descending whinny, while the Virginia rail has a descending series of grunts. Recently, a pair of nesting sandhill cranes has frequented the marsh area. Reintroduced Canada geese now nest in the marsh, while willow flycatchers, yellow warblers and common yellowthroats nest in the shrubby marsh fringes.

The marsh also provides resting and feeding habitat for a variety of migrating waterfowl. The largest variety and numbers of waterfowl visit the marsh in the fall. The very shallow open water of the Class of 1918 Marsh attracts mostly dabbling ducks, which feed at the surface rather than diving. Mallards are the most common ducks using the marsh. Other species that visit during migration include gadwalls, American wigeons, northern shovelers, green-winged teal, blue-winged teal, wood ducks and American coots. A greater variety and number of migratory waterfowl use nearby University Bay, which attracts many diving ducks.

Migrating swallows and resident tree and barn swallows are frequently seen hunting for flying insects over the marsh.