



## Bird Monitoring at Effigy Mounds National Monument

### Importance: *An important component of the park ecosystem*

Birds intrigue and excite visitors, having become an important part of park interpretive programs. Bird watching has grown into a popular recreational activity at Effigy Mounds NM. Beyond the pleasure that birds provide, they are an important component of park ecosystems. Their high metabolism and position in the food web make them indicators of change in an ecosystem – the canary in the mine, so to speak. Preserving habitat for the wellbeing of bird populations preserves entire ecosystems for the benefit of all species.



Sedge Wren – NPS photo

### Long Term Monitoring: *Assessing change*<sup>1</sup>

The Heartland Network Inventory and Monitoring Program monitors change in bird community composition and bird abundance to determine the health of bird communities. They accomplish this by surveying seasonal and year round resident birds in the monument during breeding season. These data and an evaluation of habitat structure and composition contribute to assessing responses of bird communities to changes in their habitat, and contribute to assessing habitat integrity. Changes in populations of certain species in decline across the continent (*species of continental importance*) contribute to assessing the influence of habitat management on the bird community. The 2009 and 2010 surveys provide data on populations and breeding habitat of birds in the monument.

### Status and Trends: *Baseline data give reference point for evaluating management actions*

The survey identified 71 bird species during 2009 and 2010. The field crew reported Eastern Wood-pewee (*Contopus virens*) as widely distributed in the monument. Scientists also found:

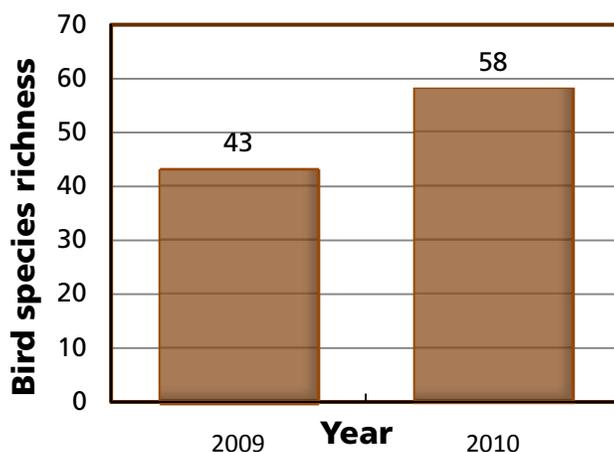


Figure 1. Total species richness values for the bird communities at Effigy Mound National Monument, Iowa during the breeding seasons of 2009 and 2010.

1. Northern Parula (*Parula americana*), White-eyed Vireo (*Vireo griseus*) and Worm-eating Warbler (*Helmitheros vermivorum*) do not usually reside in the area, but the field crew found all three species.
2. Fifteen breeding *species of continental importance* appeared during the survey, indicating the importance of the monument to continental bird diversity. Experts list Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and White-eyed Vireo as species of continental importance as well, although staff did not record these birds as species breeding within the monument.

Heartland Inventory and Monitoring Network, National Park Service, <http://science.nature.nps.gov/im/units/hln/index.cfm>

... protecting the habitat  
of our heritage



<sup>1</sup> Peitz, D. G. 2010. Bird Community Monitoring at Effigy Mounds National Monument, Iowa: 2009 - 2010 status report. Natural Resource Data Series NPS/HTLN/NRDS—2010/111. National Park Service, Fort Collins, Colorado.