**2011 Sheboygan AOC Point Count Surveys**

**Narrative report: *Jeff Baughman***

My summer of 2011 breeding bird point count surveys on the Sheboygan AOC project began on June 11th and concluded on June 25th. I spent a total of eight mornings surveying the assigned areas totaling 37 separate survey points. The Sheboygan project was split into three priority areas along the Sheboygan River east of Sheboygan Falls; areas west and north of the Blackwolf Run Golf course (priority #1: Kohler company property), areas northeast of the golf course (priority #2: City of Sheboygan) and finally the river corridor mostly east of the golf course (priority #3: River Wildlife – Kohler company property).

The first morning, June 11th at priority site #1, started well but, unfortunately rain and wind prevented me from surveying more than 2 points. I continued to walk the area for awhile to get a feel for habitat and survey conditions. I discovered that there were several maintained trails that crisscrossed the survey area and each trail was named. With that, I knew that there must be detailed property maps of the area and they could benefit my work here. After one very interesting phone call (with the number I was provided), I was directed to the River Wildlife managers office. I met with Max (the manager) and he provided me with a pretty good trail system map (for nearly the entire survey area), as well as the appropriate credentials to access restricted areas and parking on the property.

Surveying the 37 points, in these three priority areas, resulted in a total 808 individuals of 70 species, plus 8 additional species I encountered either enroot to a point or hiking back to my vehicle. I didn’t encounter anything real unusual, but did record 10 “Species of Greatest Conservation Need”; **Bald Eagle** *(Haliaeetus leucocephalus),* **American Woodcock** *(Scolopax minor),* **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** (*Coccyzus americanus*), **Willow Flycatcher** (*Empidonax traillii*), **Wood Thrush** (*Hylocichla mustelina*), **Brown Thrasher** (*Toxostoma rufum*), **Field Sparrow** (*Spizella pusilla*), **Dickcissel** *(Spiza americana),* **Bobolink** *(Dolichonyx oryzivorus),* and **Eastern Meadowlark** (*Sturnella magna*). Other notable species were; **Spotted Sandpiper** (*Actitis macularia*), **Yellow-throated Vireo** (*Vireo flavifrons*), **Mourning Warbler** (*Oporornis philadelphia*), **Clay-colored Sparrow** (*Spizella pallida*), and **Orchard Oriole** (*(Icterus spurius).*

The entire forested areas are fragmented by various elements including; a manicured golf course, maintained hiking trails, and the Sheboygan River. The forest types in themselves are of mixed types and ages. The deciduous forests have some conifers and the conifer stand north of the golf course is very dense with little habitat diversity. For the most part, species that were encountered were those I would consider “fragmented habitat” species; those species that don’t require large sections of contiguous habitats. Consider the most observed species; **House Wren** (*Troglodytes aedon*) - 55 individuals from 29 of 37 points, **American Robin** (*Turdus migratorius*) - 50 individuals from 31 of 37 points, **Song Sparrow** (*Melospiza melodia*) - 50 individuals from 31 of 37 points, **Red-winged Blackbird** (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) - 77 individuals from 25 of 37 points, and **American Goldfinch** (*Carduelis tristis*) - 35 individuals from 24 of 37 points. Of the 808 individuals recorded, 267 were of these 5 species (33%). There were very few habitat specialists observed from the survey area.

I did spend one day, June 25th, surveying only grassland habitats within the survey area. The two areas I focused on were priority site #1, the open grassland west of the golf course and site #2, the fallow fields around the Kohler landfill. Site #2 had the most species diversity but was also the larger of the two sites. Here the notable species were; **Dickcissel** *(Spiza americana),* **Bobolink** *(Dolichonyx oryzivorus),* **Eastern Meadowlark** (*Sturnella magna*) and **Orchard Oriole** (*(Icterus spurius)*. At Site #1 also observed **Dickcissel** *(Spiza americana),* **Bobolink** *(Dolichonyx oryzivorus),* **Eastern Meadowlark** (*Sturnella magna*) and **Orchard Oriole** (*(Icterus spurius)*, but also had my only **Willow Flycatchers** *(Empidonax traillii)* for the AOC project.

Finally, I did try to note breeding evidence for all species while at each point, but it was not a priority. As far as I’m concerned there is quite a bit of luck necessary to have species display some type of breeding evidence when you are standing/sitting in one spot. I did enjoy working on Wisconsin’s breeding bird atlas in the late 1990’s, but that type of birding is different than these point counts. Where you are able to pursue singing/calling birds and confirm breeding. Yet, I was able to confirm breeding of 11 species during the point count; **Belted Kingfisher** *(Ceryle alcyon)*, **Great Crested Flycatcher** *(Myiarchus crinitus)*, **Red-eyed Vireo** *(Vireo olivaceus)*, **Blue Jay** *(Cyanocitta cristata),* **American Robin** *(Turdus migratorius)*, **Clay-colored Sparrow** *(Spizella pallida)*, **Song Sparrow** *(Melospiza melodia)*, **Northern Cardinal** *(Cardinalis cardinalis)*, **Red-winged Blackbird** *(Agelaius phoeniceus)*, **Common Grackle** *(Quiscalus quiscula)*, and **Brown-headed Cowbird** *(Molothrus ater)*. I suspect that a large percentage of the species I encountered were breeders in the area though.

Respectfully submitted,

***Jeff Baughman***