

To the Friends of the Dorothea Dix Park:

This 23-acre, narrow parcel sloping from Rt. 1-A to the Penobscot River is characterized by beautiful large red oaks and white pines, and a sprinkling of white spruce, balsam fir, black cherry, and white ash. Once the erosion on the trail is stopped, and non-native black locust trees and Japanese barberry are cut out, this parcel will make a fine in-town park in which people can enjoy nature.

Nesting birds will be active from April 15 through August, so it's best not to do the logging at that time, for humane reasons. The birds that nest in that forest type (mixed, with white pine and red oak canopy and a sparse understory) in a plot of that size would likely host: downy woodpecker, 2 pairs; hairy woodpecker 1 pair; pileated woodpecker 1 pair; great crested flycatcher 1 pair; solitary vireo 1 pair; red-eyed vireo 2 pairs; crow 1 pair; blue jay 1 pair; black-capped chickadee, 2 pairs; red-breasted nuthatch 1 pair; white-breasted nuthatch 1 pair; brown creeper 1 pair; robin 2 pairs, hermit thrush, 1 pair; pine warbler, 2 pairs; black and white warbler, 1 pair; yellow-rumped warbler 1 pair; ovenbird, 1 pair; grackle 1 pair. The shrub swamp that bisects the parcel could host a pair of common yellowthroats, a species of warbler.

This estimate is based on a number of censuses I carried out in the 1980's and 1990's and published in Journal of Field Ornithology. Nesting songbird censuses can only be done in June, the time when bird territories are stable and can be delineated.

Birds that nest on the ground—hermit thrushes, black-and-white warblers, and ovenbirds—cannot raise their young if people bring their dogs along from May 15-July 30. Adult birds get scared off their nests; fledglings stay on the ground until they learn how to fly. Best to have signs: please leave dogs at home. Tell people the reason.

Your large oaks and pines are one of the highlights of the park; I would recommend taking out no more than 15% of the oaks and 25% of the pines for aesthetic reasons. I believe the migrant birds will return after that amount of tree removing.

I will be interested in what amphibians may be in the shrub swamp. I will look for them in late April and in May.

Yours truly,

Judy Kellogg Markowsky
Field Ornithologist
Field Herpetologist