

sessions were gone. The artwork installed in December is still attached to the wall, but "Tragic Beauty" is fast disappearing. The hut blew over and collapsed a few days after it was put up; some pieces of it were still there last week. The "shipwreck" survived nearly three weeks before it vanished. There are still remnants of the wall collages on Milwaukee and on North, where a wooden bird on a pole is perched atop an unused billboard structure.

"Even though you approach it with detachment, when it's gone, you're like, 'Well, there it goes,'" says Genovese. "What happened to it? Who's got it? Who took it? It creates a mystery, a story, a fourth dimension of time. It'd be interesting if it pops up somewhere, if it didn't wind up in the dump." ■

Field & Street

The Magic in the Magic Hedge

Birders seeking birds and men seeking men cross paths in a springtime ritual at Montrose Point.

By Robert Dolgan

It's spring, and birds, birders, and naked men are once again appearing amid the shrubbery at Montrose Point. The Magic Hedge sanctuary at the east end, a 15-acre expanse of fields, hedgerows, scattered trees, and thickets that was once home to a U.S. military installation, provides a haven for migrating birds—and for men looking to hook up.

More than 300 species have been seen at Montrose Point, including vagrants such as the groove-billed ani, reddish egret, and Say's phoebe. Elusive treetop dwellers like the Blackburnian warbler sometimes appear at eye level, and marsh



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inhabitants such as the sora scurry through dry bushes.

Like the birds, the people scurrying through the bushes have identifying marks. Binoculars, probably a birder. Fishing rod, an angler headed for the pier. Guy with no binoculars or fishing pole, probably a cruiser.

Saturday morning, March 19. I see only one nonbirder today. I'm on a main path on the south side of the Point when a pallid guy in a white T-shirt and jeans approaches from about a hundred yards away, pushing through the brush. I move out to the big field in the middle of the Point, and he turns and goes in another direction. He keeps up the laps around the Point, and I pass him at least three more times. Later I see him near the entrance to the Magic Hedge. Someone has abandoned a half-dozen domestic rabbits there, and he and a few birders are trying to corral them for the Anti-Cruelty Society, which is en route.

Thursday afternoon, March 24. I circle the Point on the narrow path that runs along the construction

fence on the south side. I haven't walked this way often since encountering a couple in flagrante delicto here last year. I'd noticed a couple of guys disappear into the undergrowth down the trail, but I kept scanning for birds. Then I saw a swath of skin through my 'nocs. One of the men had his pants pulled down. I didn't see much of the other guy, but he was crouched in front of the pantsless guy. I hurried back to the open field.

Tuesday afternoon, March 29. It may be 70 degrees inland, but it's probably 45 here because of the southeast breeze. I spot my first fox sparrow of 2005 scratching under a bush. Also at least a half-dozen men circulating.

I head for the dunes, where there are lots of sparrows. A woodcock flushes a few feet away and twitters in an arc toward the Magic Hedge. I head back there.

The action has picked up. More than a dozen guys are circling in silence. A couple more stand sentry on the paths. In December the neighborhood weekly *Inside* ran a two-part article that described the

elaborate system of lookouts and “runners” the guys use. And the police stings.

Sunday morning, April 3. It's a mild, sunny day. Common grackles stake out territory. Men move in erratic patterns around the Point. A well-groomed gentleman wearing a blue turtleneck and white shorts saunters along a side trail carrying a grande coffee. He makes a foray into the bushes and emerges about 50 yards from me. He reverses direction when he sees a guy walking toward him, and they slip into the hedge together.

There are a few avian arrivals today too. First brown thrasher of the year, first field sparrow, first swamp sparrow, first eastern phoebe. A pair of house sparrows—the ubiq-

uitous “mice with wings”—are setting up a nest on the east end of the Point, and a brown-headed cowbird is hanging around a few feet from the nest. Cowbirds are parasitic nesters, laying their eggs in the nests of other birds. As I stand watching the drama, a bald man in his 50s in a blue cardigan peers at me through the grass from about 100 feet away.

I move in another direction and pass a man wearing a black baseball cap, black sunglasses, black sweatshirt, black pants, and black trainers. He dissolves into the thicket. I see a bird land beyond where he disappeared, and I'm scanning the ground for it when the view through my binoculars suddenly goes black. The guy has walked right through my line of vision a few

feet away. Startled, I mutter “Sorry.” He just keeps walking.

Tuesday afternoon, April 5. There isn't a cloud in the sky. I see a personal Montrose first—a Eurasian collared dove—and a few seasonal firsts: an eastern towhee, a hermit thrush, and a savannah sparrow.

Unaware that they're blocking one of the cruisers' main ports of entry to the shrubbery, three blue-collar guys are drinking beer along the construction fence. One would-be lover clad in a black T-shirt and a gold chain stands waiting forlornly in the hedges. A guy wearing a velour shirt suddenly emerges from the undergrowth. We make eye contact, and as I start walking along a trail, he follows. I maintain my pace and keep looking for birds. Soon he gets it.

Saturday morning, April 16. The winds are out of the south, driving the birds north. The birding is great. I tally a season high of 35 species, including eight species of sparrow, the most notable being a vesper sparrow. There are also about a dozen birders. It's only 60 degrees, but as I head to the dune area looking for an early-season shorebird, a solitary guy in a teal swimsuit wanders over the dune.

Later I see two guys standing about 100 feet apart in the Magic Hedge. Their eyes meet occasionally, but something's clearly preventing them from ducking into the undergrowth. I keep walking and see a man sitting in a lawn chair deep in the brush reading a newspaper.

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I move on and spot the guy in the swimsuit sitting cross-legged beside the construction fence, blocking a key cruiser trail. A pair of oblivious birders wander deep into the bushes nearby.

Sunday morning, April 17.
Everything's starting to leaf out. The foliage will provide better cover in a few weeks. I circle the hedges and spot a newcomer, a winter wren—a tiny ground-dwelling bird that roots for its meals.

There are no wandering men. At the guys' primary hangout I see only a couple of used condoms and a rabbit carcass. Maybe it's because there are so many birders today—a couple dozen. Maybe the guys know the Point will be crawling with people with binoculars for the next few weeks. Mid-May is the peak of spring migration, and birders flock in from across the midwest to circle the hedges. ■