



## Natural Resource Management Department Memorandum

TO: Benjamin Haberthur, Executive Director  
FROM: Patrick Chess, Director of Natural Resources  
RE: Monthly Department Report – April, 2026

### NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

#### ***Restoration***

##### Earth Day Special Event

This year's volunteer tree planting event took place on Saturday, April 18th at Fabyan Forest Preserve. This event was very well attended and volunteers helped plant 500 trees and shrubs in just over an hour. Those shrubs will help create a diverse canopy and midstory as the District works to restore native habitat to a former soccer field.

##### Chemical Weed Management

Invasive weeds have begun to sprout and our crew has been working hard to combat a whole suite of pernicious pests including wild chervil, reed canary grass, and fig buttercup, among others. Widespread selective herbicide applications were conducted across the county at over 30 preserves.

#### ***Wildlife***

##### Avian Surveys

Wildlife staff began migratory bird surveys mid-April at Big Rock FP and Fabyan FP. This will be the fifth consecutive season surveying for bird species within preserves pre and post tree/brush clearing efforts. Due to colder temperatures, the migration season seems to be slightly slower and delayed this season for several species.

Staff led a birding tour at Muirhead Springs on April 19<sup>th</sup> for members of Wild Ones. This was a follow up tour from the Muirhead presentation given to this group in March.

Data for the Urban Eastern Screech owl was collected and Autonomous Recording Units (ARUs) were removed from the field. Audio data will be used in a larger study to identify



*Top: 500 trees and shrubs wait to be planted at Earth Day  
Bottom: Restoration Technician Jacqueline Reed demonstrates how to plant a tree*

occupancy and presence of screech owls across a gradient of natural to urban habitat types in the Chicago region.

American Kestrels are actively nesting, volunteers and staff are continuing to check on nests and their progress. Kestrel banding will begin in May.

Last, staff has occasionally been surveying fluddles for the University of Illinois Fluddle Project. The project will use audio data, trail camera photos, and eBird survey data to study productive fluddles on District-owned agriculture fields.



*Left: American avocet within a fluddle, Right: Kestrel nest box with four eggs*

#### Amphibian and Reptile Surveys

Staff have started initial wildlife surveys at recently acquired parcels in Rutland township. Live-traps were placed to sample salamander diversity. Two species were documented: the Eastern tiger salamander and the Eastern newt. Several other properties were evaluated for sampling but the ephemeral wetlands were dry at the time.

Snake surveys were conducted by checking artificial cover objects that were placed in March and April. Seven locations are being surveyed by staff.

Long-term turtle population monitoring efforts began again in April. Staff sample turtle populations to monitor demographic changes over time. When encountered, state-endangered Blanding's turtles are marked for future identification. These markings were used to identify and rescue a turtle that was saved from Randall Road traffic by a passing motorist. The turtle was turned over to IDNR and its unique identification was used to determine where the turtle came from and allowed for its safe return back to the appropriate location.



*Top: Eastern tiger salamander  
Bottom: Eastern newt*