

A place with a past

A prairie, a creek, & their people

10,000 years ago The last glacier leaves rolling hills of sand and gravel. The Fox River changes course, moving from the curving path of Jelke Creek to its current channel. The high ridge directly to the east of the sanctuary is the Gilberts Moraine.

"We reached a beautiful, but small prairie...and upon this prairie we discovered a number of mounds which appear to have been arranged with a certain degree of regularity."
- Stephen Harriman Long, U.S. government surveyor, 1823.



1272 - 1451 An upper Mississippian village serves as a seasonal home for about 170 ancient people.



Dundee Township map (circa 1840)

1832 - 1925 The bird sanctuary we enjoy today was historically used for "agricultural purposes." Jelke Creek was named for John F. Jelke, because it was part of his estate prior to 1920.

1977 - 1990
Elmhurst
Chicago Stone mines 140 acres of sand and gravel for construction.



2000-2001 Dundee Township uses Open Space money to match grants from Illinois Management-Habitat-Recreation.

A makeover with a mission

Management-Habitat-Recreation

In 2009, Dundee Township received grants from Illinois EPA and OSLAD to create a natural area that could retain a 100-year flood, replenish local groundwater supplies, provide wildlife habitat, and offer passive recreation opportunities.

Working with Living Waters Consultants, Inc. and G.A. Blocker, Inc., Dundee Township orchestrated a makeover that moved 260,000 cubic yards of dirt to create

- 3,250 linear feet (lf) of bioswales
- 5,000+ lf of terraced bioretention swales
- 15 acres of restored wetlands
- 6 wetland filtration basins

Along the way

Water flows under and over the ground to Jelke Creek – traveling from terraced swale to swale at the top of the hill to the ponds below, absorbed and filtered by deep-rooted native plants.



Our wild beneficiaries

It's for the birds (and more)

Jelke Bird Sanctuary provides critical habitat for native aquatic, prairie, and woodland wildlife.

Green frog



In the wetlands

Watch for great blue herons, great egrets, killdeers, sandpipers, short-billed dowitchers, and eastern kingbirds. Look for painted turtles on logs. Listen for frogs on a summer day or sandhill

cranes circling overhead in late winter or early fall.

Red-tailed hawk



In the prairie

Look for turkey vultures and red-tailed hawks soaring above the wet to mesic prairie. Touch towering autumn grasses. See if you can find meadow vole tunnels in the snow.

In the woods

Common yellowthroat, indigo bunting, downy woodpecker, black-capped chickadee, and cedar waxwing populate the woodlands. Listen to the sound of a waterfall produced by rustling cottonwood leaves, and a woodpecker tapping into a tree for a larval treat.

Indigo bunting

