

Building better baselines: leveraging citizen science initiatives to document biodiversity at an urban lake

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Changes to biodiversity from urbanization are occurring worldwide, and baseline data is vital to document the magnitude and direction of these alterations. We set out to document the biodiversity of an urban lake in Eastern Iowa that was devoid of rigorous baseline data prior to a major renovation project to convert the site into a recreation hub. Throughout the course of one year, we studied the biodiversity at Cedar Lake utilizing the citizen-science application iNaturalist coupled with structured BioBlitz events, which we compared to previous opportunistic observations at the site. Our diversity analyses revealed that a structured approach to document species with citizen science achieved more robust community metrics over a short period compared to more than a decade of prior observations.

1 **Building better baselines: Leveraging citizen science initiatives to document**
2 **biodiversity at an urban lake**

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8 **Abstract**

9 Changes to biodiversity from urbanization are occurring worldwide, and baseline data is vital to
10 document the magnitude and direction of these alterations. We set out to document the biodiversity
11 of an urban lake in Eastern Iowa that was devoid of rigorous baseline data prior to a major
12 renovation project to convert the site into a recreation hub. Throughout the course of one year, we
13 studied the biodiversity at Cedar Lake utilizing the citizen-science application iNaturalist coupled
14 with structured BioBlitz events, which we compared to previous opportunistic observations at the
15 site. Our diversity analyses revealed that a structured approach to document species with citizen
16 science achieved more robust community metrics over a short period compared to more than a
17 decade of prior observations.

18 **Introduction**

19 We are currently experiencing changes to global biodiversity that will impact the future makeup
20 of the planet (Sala et al., 2000). For example, the extinction rate of biodiversity now greatly
21 exceeds baseline levels (Pimm et al., 2014), which has been attributed to the increasing
22 fragmentation of natural habitats, continued pollution of the environment, and unsustainable
23 consumption of natural resources (Butchart et al., 2010). One of the main drivers of these impacts
24 to biodiversity is urbanization (Piano et al., 2020), and while cities account for just 3% of the total
25 land use of the planet, the changes wrought from the construction of buildings, roads, and other
26 infrastructure extends far beyond land use (Chapman, 2003; Faeth et al., 2011). Aquatic habitats
27 in cities are particularly vulnerable as they are often hotspots for local biodiversity (Hill et al.,
28 2017), yet also centers for human use, recreation, and waste disposal (Hassall, 2014).
29 Improvements to enhance the value of urban waterbodies and increase their recreational appeal
30 can have both positive and negative impacts on biodiversity. For example, aesthetic changes to an
31 urban lake can provide new habitat features for some species, thereby increasing their abundance
32 and diversity, which can in turn help to raise local awareness of the importance of conserving the
33 waterbody and its surrounding habitat (Savard et al., 2000; Qiu et al., 2013). However, urban
34 improvements can also have negative impacts on biodiversity. For example, wetland management
35 practices, even if intended to aid conservation, can unintentionally impact other species, and
36 potentially public health by providing habitat for organisms that may vector diseases (e.g., Hanford
37 et al., 2020). Furthermore, urban improvements may lead to increased human disturbances, noise
38 and light pollution, and removal of key habitat elements, which can disrupt the behavior,
39 reproduction, and migration of wildlife (Ewing et al., 2004). To minimize the negative impacts of

40 urban sprawl on biodiversity, it is important for urban planners to consider the resident ecological
41 communities when designing and implementing these projects (i.e., Smart Growth: Daniels, 2001).

42 Establishing a baseline of the organismal diversity that exists at a site prior to change
43 provides a point of reference against which future observations can be compared (Mihoub et al.,
44 2017). Without a robust baseline to compare to, it is an insurmountable challenge to accurately
45 track changes in biodiversity (Magurran et al., 2010). By comparing current data with such a
46 baseline dataset, we can identify species that are declining, expanding, or shifting their distribution,
47 as well as changes in community processes and ecosystem functions (Gullison et al., 2015).
48 Landscape changes in urban areas often decrease the amount of habitable land available to local
49 biodiversity, and many such initiatives are implemented without any knowledge of the organisms
50 who resided in a habitat prior to changes (Bobrowiec and Tavares, 2017). Temporal baselines are
51 also needed to establish targets for biodiversity conservation and progress to conservation goals to
52 be evaluated. Performing studies to document the biodiversity in habitats before projects take place
53 is important to be able to verify how much of the diversity found its way back to the habitat once
54 the project was completed. Having reliable baseline data is needed to reconstruct the impacts of
55 human activities, climate change, and other factors on biodiversity, and for developing effective
56 strategies to protect and conserve natural ecosystems. Such standard biodiversity monitoring is
57 also needed to identify meaningful benchmarks for biodiversity (Feest, 2006).

58 Large ecological datasets are critical to track changes in biodiversity but are logistically
59 challenging to cover the spatial and temporal scales needed for understanding the magnitude of an
60 impact (Costello and Wieczorek, 2014). Citizen science is a cost-effective, rapid, and efficient way
61 to gather data on biodiversity over large areas and long intervals, which can be leveraged for
62 documenting changes in biodiversity (Theobald et al., 2015). In recent years, the use of citizen

63 science has become increasingly popular for monitoring and recording changes in the natural world
64 (Chandler et al., 2017). Online applications such as iNaturalist allows citizens to engage with
65 nature by taking photos of organisms they encounter and upload them to a site for other members
66 of the community to identify. However, there are some limitations to the use of citizen science for
67 documenting changes in biodiversity as the quality of the data may be unreliable, or there may be
68 biases due to the locations where people choose to collect data, or certain species may be
69 considered more interesting to document (Tweddle et al., 2012). Regardless, such biodiversity
70 platforms are the increasingly becoming the sources of data for understanding changes in
71 ecological communities over time, informing conservation efforts, and documenting impacts on
72 biodiversity (e.g., Kirchhoff et al., 2021).

73 Our study focused on Cedar Lake in Cedar Rapids of eastern Iowa, which is a small, urban
74 lake that is frequently used by people and has a documented history of pollution. The City of Cedar
75 Rapids enacted a 5-year improvement plan to bolster the flood wall and increase the recreational-
76 use of the lake, with construction starting in 2022. Consequently, in 2021, we set out to create a
77 spatially explicit, temporal baseline of biodiversity data at Cedar Lake through the use of structured
78 citizen-science initiatives. We evaluated the resulting dataset by comparing common community
79 diversity metrics in our work to a dataset containing all past observations from Cedar Lake posted
80 by citizen scientists. Our study provides a robust baseline for documenting the impact on
81 biodiversity derived from the physical changes to the habitat of Cedar Lake and is relevant to urban
82 studies around the globe that aim to document biodiversity changes over time.

83 **Methods**

84 **Study site**

85 The study was conducted at Cedar Lake, Cedar Rapids, Linn County, Iowa (Fig. 1). Cedar Lake is
86 a 120-acre urban lake in the center of the city and currently serves as a drainage for most of the
87 city's waterways, a flood barrier for the nearby Cedar River, and as a recreational space for fishing,
88 biking, and kayaking. The climate in Cedar Rapids is characterized by hot summers and cold
89 winters, with monthly average temperatures ranging from -5 °C in January to 28 °C in July. The
90 lake's water temperature typically ranges from about 4°C in the winter to 27 °C in the summer.
91 The shoreline is dominated by a mix of vegetation types and urban features, including trees,
92 marshes, buildings, rocks, and paved walkways. The lake supports a variety of plant species,
93 including emergent species such as cattails and bulrushes, submergent species like pondweed and
94 coontail, and floating species such as duckweed. The biodiversity of Cedar Lake has never been
95 formally assessed because no systematic surveys have ever been conducted there. Available
96 information concerning almost any aspect of Cedar Lake's resident biota is scant to nonexistent in
97 the literature.

98

99 **History of Cedar Lake**

100 Cedar Lake was created in the late 1800s as a reservoir to provide drinking water for the city of
101 Cedar Rapids. In the 1900s, the lake experienced significant environmental degradation, with
102 pollution and sedimentation reducing water quality and harming aquatic life to the point that the
103 health department had a yearly task of clearing dead fish from the lake. In 1909, the northern part
104 of the lake was purchased by an electric company who boasted that they would make the lake
105 beautiful (Gazette, 2013a). In 1912, a railroad company filled part of the lake and added a roadway

106 with multiple rail tracks on top of it. This addition of highly used rail tracks seemed to have the
107 effect of killing many fish, thereby creating a foul smell that citizens thought polluted the water
108 supply. In 1939, work began on a 10-year project to clean up the lake and eliminate the foul odor,
109 which included covering the surface with cinder and ashes, as well as treating the water with a
110 nitrate compound. In 1979, a community committee allocated funds to renovate the lake, and three
111 years later a power company that owned the majority of the lake, which is actively used to cool
112 equipment, agreed to lease the lake and its shoreline to the city. Shortly after, 15.3 acres of the
113 shore was purchased in order to build a walking path around the lake. In 1986, the Iowa
114 Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) issued a fish-consumption advisory because of the high
115 number of pollutants found in tissues of fish from Cedar Lake, and the city government
116 discouraged swimming in the lake due to this proclamation. In 1990, chromium was found to have
117 leaked into the lake, so fishing was banned (Gazette, 2013b). In 2015, IDNR removed Cedar Lake
118 from its Impaired Waters List, however, swimming remained discouraged. In 2019, the city of
119 Cedar Rapids purchased the North Cell of Cedar Lake from a power company with the intention
120 of converting the lake into recreational space (Morelli, 2019). Proposed transformations to
121 improve the lake included mitigation of stormwater runoff via local drainages and dredging the
122 extensive silt buildup. These renovations began at the end 2021 and are expected to be finished by
123 2025 (Payne, 2021).

124

125 **Citizen science initiatives**

126 To document the biodiversity of Cedar Lake, we used iNaturalist (www.inaturalist.org), which is
127 a global citizen science initiative created by the California Academy of Sciences and the National
128 Geographic Society, with over 89 million observations around the world as of 1 February 2022.

129 We created a project on iNaturalist ([https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/the-biodiversity-of-cedar-](https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/the-biodiversity-of-cedar-lake)
130 [lake](https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/the-biodiversity-of-cedar-lake)) with parameters to include observations (i.e., photo-vouchered observations) of all organisms
131 in Linn County, Iowa, by individuals who joined the project (i.e., observers) during the active
132 season of 2021. We ran the project for a full calendar year 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 to allow
133 time for community identifications of our observations, at which point we downloaded our
134 project's data. On iNaturalist, observers upload photos of organisms and users attempt to identify
135 the organism to the lowest possible taxonomic level. Community members of iNaturalist can
136 confirm or deny identifications of observations, resulting in three levels of confirmation: 1)
137 "Research Grade", which has been confirmed by at least two different individuals; 2) "needs ID",
138 which includes observations not yet identified by two individuals; 3) and "casual", which includes
139 observations that are of low quality or lack specificity.

140 To engage the local community, we held 12 BioBlitz events at Cedar Lake bi-weekly from
141 April through October of 2021. Each event lasted for four hours for a total of 48 hours of structured
142 community surveys. At these events, community members were debriefed during which they were
143 encouraged to take photos of all plants and animals (alive, dead, or animal signs), and upload these
144 observations to our project on iNaturalist (The Biodiversity of Cedar Lake). We started each event
145 with brief instructions on how to take biodiversity observations, how to upload them to iNaturalist,
146 and how to join our project on the website. We also explicitly told individuals who attended the
147 initial introductions that we were interested in photos of all animals and plants. We created a
148 website (<https://www.thebiodiversityofcedarlake.com/>) that included tutorials on how to use
149 iNaturalist, dates and times of our BioBlitz events, and links to the project page on iNaturalist. We
150 also promoted our BioBlitz events with a Facebook page
151 (<https://www.facebook.com/TheBiodiversityofCedarLake>).

152 To understand the impact of citizen-science initiatives on the documentation of biodiversity
153 at Cedar Lake, we used standard biodiversity metrics to compare our data to all previous iNaturalist
154 observations recorded at Cedar Lake from the inception of iNaturalist in 2008 to the start of our
155 project in 2021.

156

157 **Spatial analyses**

158 We used ArcGIS v. 10.1 to map the spatial distribution of iNaturalist observations in both the prior
159 dataset and our study. We created buffers in ArcGIS around Cedar Lake to pool samples for
160 comparison between time periods using distances: 0 m, ≤ 10 m, ≤ 50 m, and ≤ 100 m intervals. We
161 excluded observations from the following statistical analyses that were > 100 m from the lake's
162 shoreline.

163

164 **Statistical analyses**

165 We used Microsoft Excel 2016 (Redmond, WA) to organize data and R (R Core Team 2022) with
166 the RStudio interface (Posit Team 2022) for statistical analyses. We used only Research Grade
167 observations recorded within a 100 m buffer from the lake's shore to compare our study to all
168 previous observations on iNaturalist recorded at Cedar Lake. We used a variety of commonly used
169 species diversity metrics to compare the biological community between our dataset and prior data
170 recorded at the site. We used the R package Codyn (Hallett et al., 2016) to calculate the community
171 metrics Shannon Diversity Index and Simpson's Evenness for both datasets. We also used the R
172 package codyn to generate rank-frequency curves for each dataset to assess how the species
173 distribution rank differed between time periods (Avolio et al., 2019). The rank frequency curves
174 were analyzed with codyn to compare various aspects of the curves between time periods such as

175 differences in species richness, evenness, rank, composition, and overall curve difference. We used
176 the R package iNEXT (Hsieh et al., 2016) to calculate species rarefaction curves with extrapolation
177 using 1,000 bootstrap replicates for both datasets. We used rarefaction curves to compare the rate
178 of increase in the number of species between the two datasets relative to the number of individuals
179 observed (Roswell et al., 2021). We also used the R package iNEXT to estimate species richness
180 for each dataset using the Chao richness method which is based on the number of times each
181 species has been observed at a site (Chao and Chiu, 2016).

182 **Results**

183 Our iNaturalist project (The Biodiversity of Cedar Lake) went online 1 April 2021, and the first
184 observation was uploaded on 4 April 2021 and the last on 18 October 2021, which corresponds to
185 the active growing season in eastern Iowa. During this period, we recorded a total of 1,345
186 biodiversity observations with 787 of these becoming Research Grade observations from 60
187 different observers by 31 March 2022 when we downloaded the data for analysis (Table 1). For
188 these observations, 232 species were detected, 200 of which were classified as Research Grade. In
189 the prior dataset from this site, the first observation was uploaded on 6 July 2011 and the last on
190 25 March 2021. During this period, a total of 257 biodiversity observations were uploaded with
191 168 of these becoming Research Grade observations from 22 observers. For these observations,
192 182 species were detected, 86 of which were classified as Research Grade. We found that most
193 Research Grade observations (> 90%) were recorded from within 100 m of the lake's shore in both
194 datasets (Fig. 1; Table 2). Only 41 species were shared between the two time periods, with 51
195 species unique to the prior dataset (mostly birds) and 159 to our work (mostly insects and plants).

196 The estimated species richness using the Chao method for our study was more than double
197 that of the prior work at the site (374 species versus 174 species), with an upper bound of nearly
198 500 species in our work compared to an upper bound of just about 275 in the prior work (Table 1).
199 Similarly, rarefaction curves indicated that our work not only detected more species with more
200 individuals than the prior work, but extrapolations suggested that continued efforts using our
201 approach may result in a much higher amount of species diversity detected at the site overall (Fig.
202 2). Nevertheless, the Shannon Diversity Indices between these two time periods were both > 4,
203 with our work being slightly higher than 4.5, indicating that we detected more species from a wider
204 range of abundances than the past data. Simpson's Evenness values showed that the past data

205 detected a more even community (0.3 versus 0.22). Our work demonstrated a much more balanced
206 distribution of observations among major groups of biodiversity—vertebrates (56%), invertebrates
207 (30%), and plants (12%)—whereas the prior work was less balanced because it was dominated by
208 vertebrate observations (> 75%).

209 An assessment of community composition metrics, as determined by the number of
210 Research Grade observations, between time periods revealed that only the top two species were
211 present in both data sets out of the top 10 most frequently observed species (Table 3). Among the
212 top 10 most frequently observed species in the past time period, all were vertebrates, and included
213 nine species of bird and one mammal. In comparison, the top 10 most frequently observed species
214 in our study included four bird species, three invertebrates, two plants, and one fish. The rank
215 frequency of observations curves between the time periods revealed that many more species in our
216 data were detected more frequently (> 10 observations) compared to the past data, which only had
217 a single species detected > 10 times (Fig. 3). For example, the top two species in the past data
218 represented 20.2% of all observations in that dataset, whereas the same top two species made up
219 14.6% of all observations in our data. Quantitative differences between the rank frequency curves
220 for the two time periods detected increases in our data relative to the past data for species richness
221 (0.465), species rank (0.279), species composition (0.367), and overall curve difference (508.6),
222 with only a single decrease which was detected for evenness (-0.245).

223 **Discussion**

224 At a single site, we compared opportunistic citizen-science observations posted on iNaturalist
225 (2008–2021) to semi-structured observations (i.e., BioBlitz events) posted over the course of a
226 single active season (April–October 2021), equating to 48 hours of directed surveys. Our semi-
227 structured approach to conduct citizen science not only engaged more community members, but,
228 importantly, also revealed higher biodiversity metrics than was found throughout a decade of
229 opportunistic observations recorded at Cedar Lake. Our findings showed that adding structure to
230 citizen-science activities, coupled with digital biodiversity tools, can generate more robust data
231 than opportunistic approaches, even over short timescales (Kelling et al., 2019). Almost all
232 diversity metrics in our dataset were higher than in the prior work, indicating that significantly
233 more diversity is present in the area than could have ever been realized with the past data. We
234 found that using citizen-science approaches that include semi-structured initiatives can generate
235 biodiversity assessments that are more likely to be accurate representations of the community at a
236 site. Overall, these results suggest that adding structured components to citizen-science studies can
237 build better baseline data for biodiversity compared to exclusively opportunistic approaches
238 because it can capture more diversity at a site. We note that because the past data were not collected
239 systematically, it is unclear if the diversity metrics we found in our data could be attributed to
240 annual variation in species occupancy, or cyclical fluctuations in abundance. Nevertheless,
241 building more robust baseline citizen-science datasets will be key to understanding how global
242 environmental changes, especially urbanization, will impact biodiversity worldwide.

243 The past opportunistic data from Cedar Lake on iNaturalist did exhibit a more even
244 community than our dataset, however, all other diversity metrics were greater in our work.
245 Regardless, several aspects of the community composition captured in the past data suggested that

246 opportunistic approaches to biodiversity monitoring are plagued with biases that may render such
247 datasets difficult to use (Courter et al., 2013; Kamp et al., 2016; Callaghan et al., 2020). For
248 example, nearly 70% of the Research Grade observations in the past dataset were of birds, whereas
249 birds represented about 49% of the observations in our data. Birds are often the most conspicuous
250 vertebrates in many habitats and these results suggest that unstructured citizen-science
251 observations tend to be biased towards such taxonomic groups (Horns et al., 2018; Callaghan et
252 al., 2021). Less conspicuous vertebrate groups, such as herpetofauna, tend to receive much less
253 attention unless surveyors are explicitly targeting these taxa (Troudet et al., 2017), an observation
254 that is borne out in our data. Less than 2.5% of observations in the past data were of reptiles and
255 amphibians, which included by just three species, whereas these groups represented more than 5%
256 of the observations in our data and included nine species. Despite the popularity of fishing at Cedar
257 Lake, only a single observation of one fish species was recorded in the past data compared to 57
258 observations of 14 species in our data. The largest increases in biodiversity representation for
259 animals derived from our structured citizen-science activities were found among the invertebrates,
260 especially mollusks and insects. For example, not a single mollusk observation was recorded in
261 the past data, compared to 10 in our work. Similarly, insect observations were just 10% of the past
262 observations compared to this group representing nearly 30% of our observations. Plants, however,
263 were similarly represented in terms of proportion of overall observations in both datasets (Table
264 1). Nevertheless, only 16 species of plants were detected in the past data compared to 41 in our
265 data. Overall, directed activities incorporated into citizen-science surveys appear to facilitate more
266 robust biodiversity datasets as they may help reduce some of the biases inherent to citizen science,
267 especially related to the tendency of individuals to overemphasize observations of conspicuous
268 taxonomic groups (Mair and Ruete, 2016; Troudet et al., 2017).

269 The city of Cedar Rapids and ConnectCR, in 2019, articulated master plans
270 (<https://connectcr.org/cedar-lake-master-plan>) to convert Cedar Lake into a recreational hub
271 through improvements to address water quality, including mitigating stormwater runoff,
272 addressing sediment buildup, installing flood control features, and adding new trails and bridges
273 (Morelli, 2019). Other suggested improvements for Cedar Lake included trail bridge upgrades,
274 accessible boat launches, fishing piers, an obstacle course, enhanced fishing amenities, a
275 boardwalk over the lake, and an enhanced wetland area (White, 2021). None of these plans appear
276 to have been made with any consideration to the impacts they may have on the resident biodiversity
277 (Underwood et al., 2011), nor does it appear that any studies were planned before construction to
278 establish baseline data to monitor changes over time (Rojas et al., 2022). The groundbreaking
279 ceremony for this renovation occurred on 7 October 2021 and obvious physical changes to the
280 habitats contiguous with the lake were evident in satellite imagery by 1 September 2022 (Fig. 4).
281 In particular, construction activities in the northwest corner of Cedar Lake resulted in the removal
282 all woody vegetation in the area, the production of a 2,200 ft levee, and a complete alteration the
283 lake's outflow through McLoud Run, a creek that serves as drainage for the lake (Fig. 4, inset). It
284 remains unknown what biodiversity impacts these significant structural changes will have, but
285 such urban land-use changes generally decrease non-avian vertebrate diversity while increasing
286 plant diversity from the importation of non-native species (McKinney, 2008). For birds and
287 arthropods, urban modifications often reduce richness and diversity, but increase abundance due
288 to the dominance of synanthropic species (McKinney, 2008; Faeth et al., 2011). At the moment,
289 we do not know the resilience of the local species we documented, nor how they will respond to
290 changes such as a new hydrological regime, and we know nothing about their ability to migrate to
291 other areas or even recolonize the lake while its habitats regenerate. However, we can leverage the

292 baseline data herein to predict what changes may occur to the biodiversity of Cedar Lake and then
293 conduct follow-up studies at different time intervals post construction to test whether survey data
294 support or reject such predictions. Nevertheless, without reliable baseline data collected before
295 major disturbances it could never be possible to understand such impacts, let alone test predictions
296 about what could happen to biodiversity in the future.

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Figure 1

Map of study site and observations

Figure 1. Map of study area at Cedar Lake, Linn County, Iowa. Comparison of Research Grade observations between time periods with pink dots representing prior work (2008–2021) and yellow dots our study (2021–2022). Colored lines are lake boundaries with blue representing the lake edge (0 m), green ≤ 10 m from lake edge, red ≤ 50 m from lake edge, and pink ≤ 100 m from lake edge. Observations recorded beyond 100 m from the lake's shore were excluded from analysis.

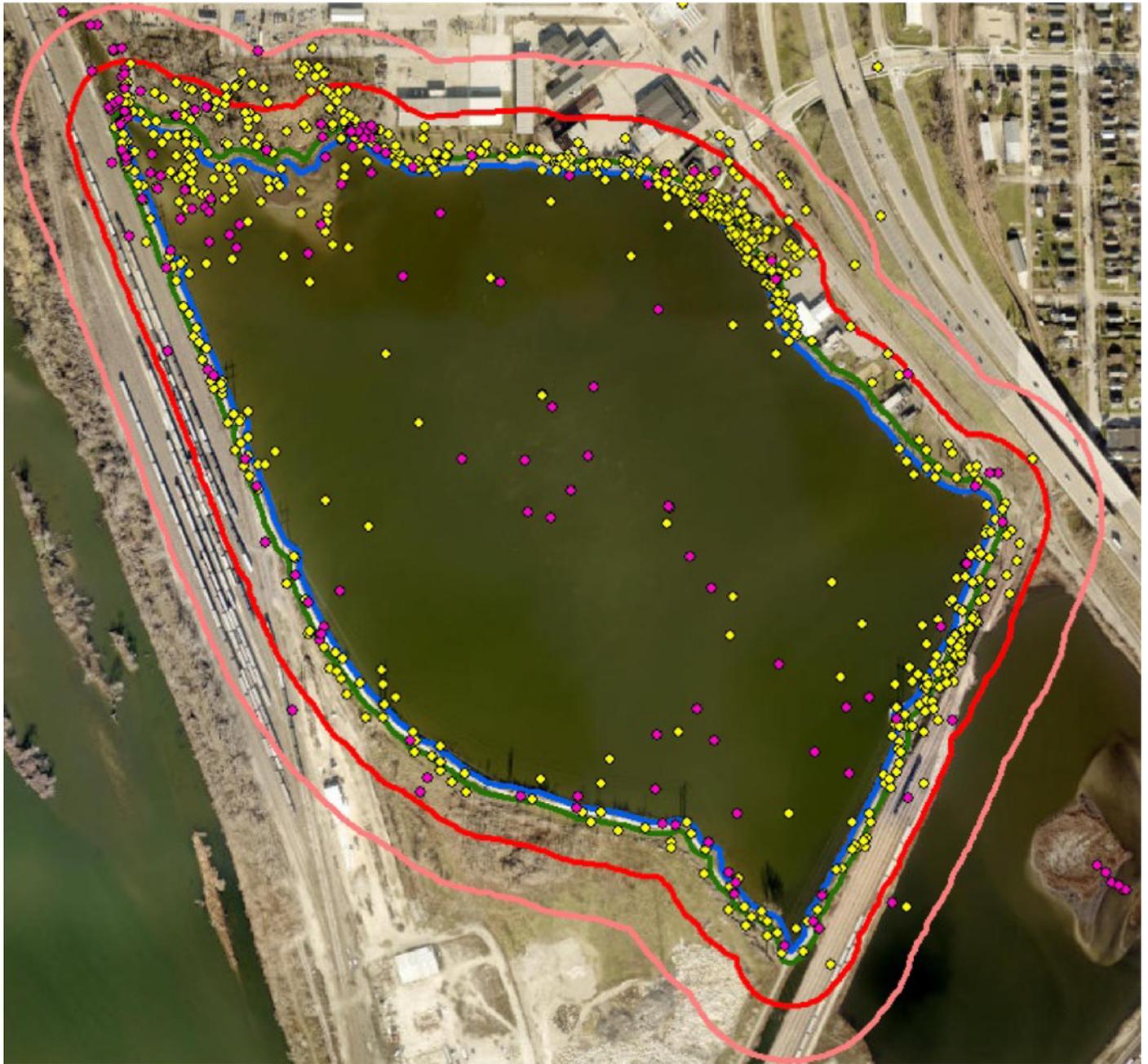


Figure 2

Species accumulation curve

Figure 2. Rarefaction species accumulation curves with extrapolation and 95% confidence intervals for Research Grade observations at Cedar Lake, Linn County, Iowa. Red circle represents prior work (2008–2021) and blue triangle our study (2021–2022).

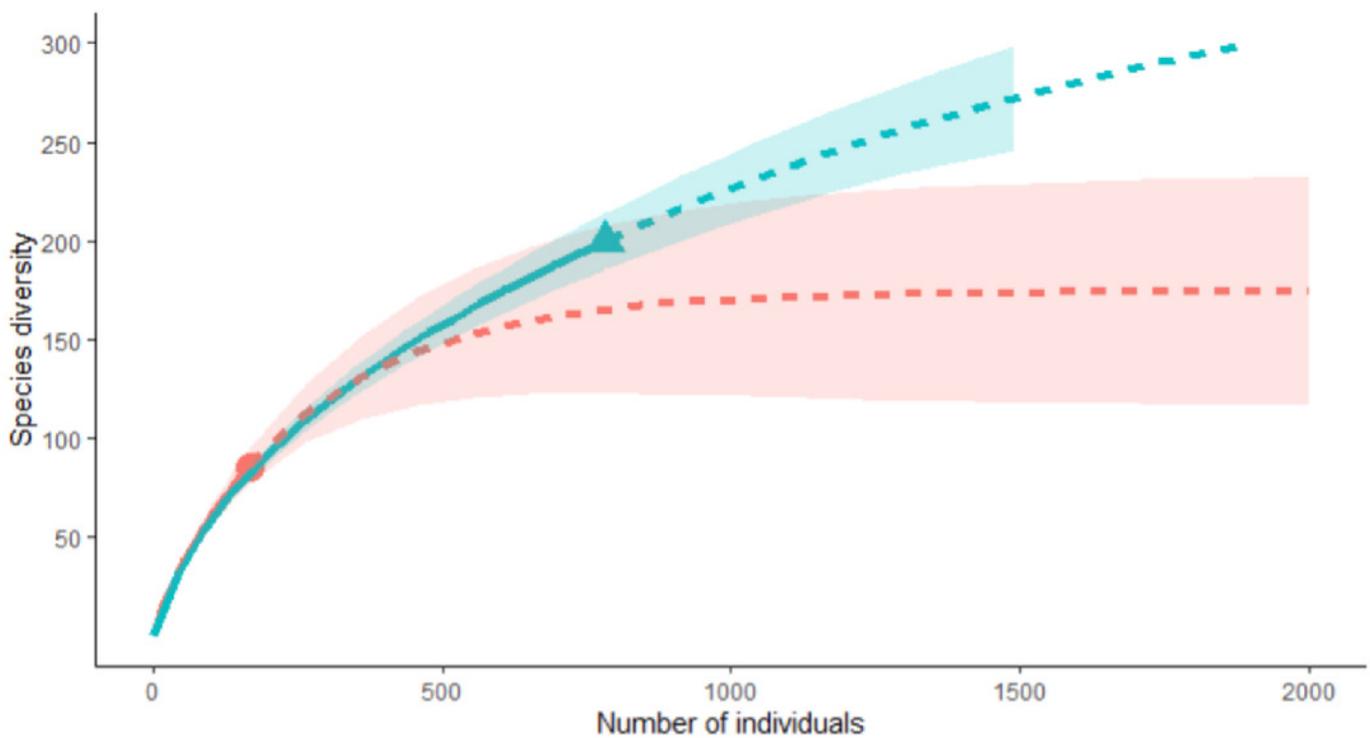


Figure 3

Rank curves

Figure 3. Rank frequency of observation curves for Research Grade observations at Cedar Lake, Linn County, Iowa. Red line (Zipf) represents prior work (2008–2021) and orange line (Mandelbrot) our study (2021–2022) with the top three species indicated for both.

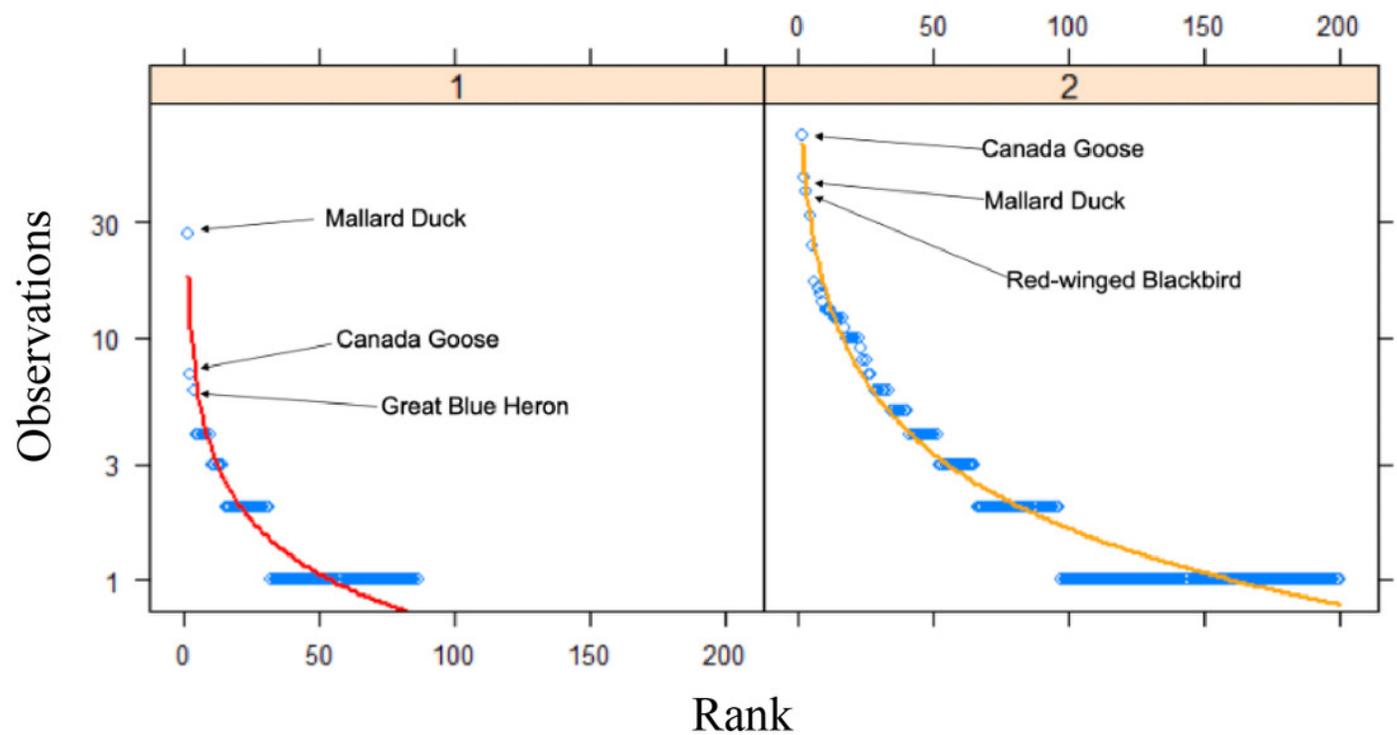


Figure 4

Before and after map

Figure 4. Overhead satellite images of the study site at Cedar Lake, Linn County, Iowa, taken before (2020) and after (2022) major structural changes began in an effort to renovate the site for flood prevention and improvement of recreational services. Our surveys took place in 2021 before habitat alterations were underway, thus serving as a critical baseline for biodiversity at this site. Images modified from Google Earth.



Table 1 (on next page)

Tables

1 **Tables**

2

3 **Table 1.** Comparison of iNaturalist datasets between two time periods at Cedar Lake, Linn County,
 4 Iowa, by number of Research Grade observations and species with the total number of observations
 5 and species in parentheses. Only Research Grade observations were used to estimate species
 6 richness, Shannon Diversity Index, Simpson's Evenness, and number of observations by major
 7 group. Chao species richness estimate is presented with ± 1 standard error followed by 95%
 8 confidence interval in parentheses.

9

	Prior work (2008–2021)	Our study (2021–2022)
Observations	168 (257)	787 (1345)
Species	86 (182)	200 (232)
<i>Community metrics</i>		
Species Richness	174.4 \pm 33.4 (129.2–267.0)	374.2 \pm 48.2 (302.4–496.6)
Shannon Index	4.012793	4.510965
Evenness	0.304439	0.219352
<i>Observations by major group (% of total)</i>		
Vertebrate	132 (78.6%)	439 (55.7%)
Invertebrate	17 (10.1%)	253 (29.9%)
Plant	19 (11.3%)	95 (12.1%)
Other	-	18 (2.3%)

10

11

12 **Table 2.** Comparison of Research Grade observations between time periods within four boundaries
13 of Cedar Lake, Linn County, Iowa. Percentage of the total Research Grade observations presented
14 in parentheses.

15

	Prior work (2008–2021)	Our study (2021–2022)
Within lake bounds	57 (33.9%)	181 (22.9%)
≤ 10 m of lake edge	100 (59.5%)	465 (59.1%)
≤ 50 m of lake edge	145 (86.3%)	748 (95.0%)
≤ 100 m of lake edge	154 (91.6%)	780 (99.1%)

16

17

18 **Table 3.** Ten most frequently observed species represented in both datasets from Cedar Lake, Linn
 19 County, Iowa, presented with the number of Research Grade observations per species. Species in
 20 bold are shared between top 10 lists.
 21

	Prior work (2008–2021)	Our study (2021–2022)
1	Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>) = 27	Canada Goose (<i>Branta canadensis</i>) = 69
2	Canada Goose (<i>Branta canadensis</i>) = 7	Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>) = 46
3	Great Blue Heron (<i>Ardea herodias</i>) = 6	Red-winged Blackbird (<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>) = 40
4	Ruddy Duck (<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>) = 4	American Robin (<i>Turdus migratorius</i>) = 32
5	White-tailed Deer (<i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>) = 4	Great Mullein (<i>Verbascum thapsus</i>) = 24
6	Lesser Scaup (<i>Aythya affinis</i>) = 4	Common Eastern Bumblebee (<i>Bombus impatiens</i>) = 17
7	Green-Winged Teal (<i>Anas carolinensis</i>) = 4	Differential Grasshopper (<i>Melanoplus differentialis</i>) = 16
8	Ring-billed Gull (<i>Larus delawarensis</i>) = 4	Bluegill (<i>Lepomis macrochirus</i>) = 15
9	American White Pelican (<i>Pelecanus erythrorhynchos</i>) = 4	Cabbage White (<i>Pieris rapae</i>) = 14
10	American Kestrel (<i>Falco sparverius</i>) = 3	Purple Crownvetch (<i>Securigera varia</i>) = 13

22