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Bird Business: Evergreen Yard Birds – Evergreen Audubon

8-11 minutes

Bird Business is a monthly summary of bird sightings in the Bear Creek Watershed area, compiled by Marilyn Rhodes. Here's what's been happening:

Upper Bear Creek

On January 17th, Sandy and Bud Madigan emailed Chuck Aid, “We get **Cassin’s Finch** and **Evening Grosbeaks** regularly at our feeder, as well as a **Black-headed Grosbeak** once in a while over Christmas. Had a surprise visit from a pair of **American Goldfinch** in early December.”

Since Black-headed Grosbeaks migrate south for the winter, Chuck suspected they may have seen a different species and requested photos.

Sandy responded, “Haven’t gotten pictures of the Black-headed (**Oregon?**) Grosbeak and haven’t seen him in quite a while... maybe even November! We’ve had a nesting pair for a couple of years now. I really should keep a notebook and a camera on the dining table! What else could it have been?”

Chuck deduced, “in the summer you could have nesting Black-

headed Grosbeaks, and, then, in the winter you could be visited by **Oregon Juncos**, which have a black hood. That all makes good sense.”

Sandy and her husband live on Skyline Drive on a south-facing slope on Upper Bear Creek. Since there are only a couple of mid-winter records for Black-headed Grosbeaks in Colorado, from 1980 and 1981(both in Larimer County), this sighting would be very unusual. I hope Sandy is able to document it with photos, if it shows again. It would be a wonderful rare find!



Photo by Marilyn Rhodes

Alderfer/Three Sisters Area

On January 24th, Melissa Leasia emailed in frustration, “We’ve never had anyone show any interest in niger. Should we keep offering it or just give up on it. I’ve tried a nice ceramic feeder with 2 roosts and we’ve tried the mesh tube/bag thing. Nothing. ”

I use nyger regularly. It has attracted a variety of finches to my yard, including Pine Siskins, House Finches, Cassin’s Finches,

American and Lesser Goldfinches, Common Redpoll. BUT, it has to be fresh. I buy it in smaller quantities than sunflower seeds. If the nyger isn't pretty fresh, the finches won't eat it (and they are subject to disease). They do love fresh, dry nyger, though. I use the narrow clear tube feeders with little slits for the nyger. Often, as my photo shows, every perch is occupied by either a **Pine Siskin** or an **American Goldfinch** or Lesser Goldfinch.

On Feb 13, Melissa reported proudly, "The new thistle feeder is completely covered in siskins this morning."

Genesee



Photo by Kathanne Lynch

Kathanne Lynch had a male **Williamson's Sapsucker** at her Genesee house drilling 100+ wells in one tree (a ponderosa pine at 7500'). "Seeing this species nesting and fledging in late June and early July is one of our local bird highlights at Genesee. But, having it here Jan 27-30 is out-of-season and it made the Colorado Rare Bird Alert. Its usual arrival date is in April or as

early as March 30. It left when a 12-inch snowstorm started, and it hopefully flew south of Colorado.”



Photo by MarkChavez

You may recall that last year, on March 30th, Kiki Widjaja and I saw and/or heard 4 male Williamson's Sapsuckers in Genesee Park drumming, churring and screeching loudly announcing and defending their territory. I think they exhausted their entire repertoire of vocalizations. So much fun to witness.

This handsome individual has all the markings — yellow belly, red throat patch, black back, and barred flanks.

Indian Hills

David Walker, had a visit from a male **American Robin** January 30th.





Photo by Marilyn Rhodes

El Pinal

Although February 2nd was Groundhog Day, Ruth and Jack Salter had a much more intriguing visitor that day. They got nice long looks at a **Northern Goshawk** perched on the fence below their window in El Pinal. Three **Eurasian Collared Doves** also stopped by. Since they've found piles of white feathers on their grounds, they assume the Goshawk dines there occasionally.

The Evergreen East Christmas Bird Count Team has recorded goshawks in El Pinal. Here's a photo of one I've seen next door in my neighborhood, Hiwan Hills. I'm always happy to hear they are still around.

Hiwan Country Club

Speaking of doves, Irma Wolf, made the following observation on September 13th.



Photo by Marilyn Rhodes

“A pair of **Eurasian Collared Doves** had taken up residence in our yard since early summer in the ponderosa trees close to our deck. Several times a day they drink from the water tray on our deck railing. Recently two younger “twin” doves have been seen with the female, fluttering their wings and tail indicating they want to be fed. Only the mother dove feeds them by regurgitating her food to their beaks. Their collars are not yet in full color and they are not quite adult size yet. Soon they should have learned to feed themselves, since the twins compete with each other for the female’s feeding and sometimes she just gives up.

“The female dove is also the guardian over the magpies, and chases them around the deck until the magpies give up and fly elsewhere. They are not allowed to drink from the tray as the smaller birds do. “Our” doves rule the roost and the behavior has been quite entertaining.”

I hope Irma’s doves steer clear of El Pinal...

Bear Creek Canyon

Kathanne has been away from her Genesee home for the last four years while she and Beth traveled in their motorhome. Now that she’s back for a while, she wants to monitor the Golden Eagle nest in Idledale.

On February 11th, she reported, “Happy news. I located the nest. I also saw two adults flying over that ridge. One of the adults came back five minutes later with sticks, but went into the ridge face about 40 feet to the right of the nest behind a rock. I

will revisit the nest soon, and keep you informed.”



Male Pine Grosbeak: Photo by Marilyn Rhodes

Second Saturday Bird Walk – Squaw Pass



Female Pine Grosbeak: Photo by Marilyn Rhodes

On January 17th, Chuck Aid reported, “Nine of us braved the single digit temps yesterday morning up near Squaw Pass in search of **Rosy Finches**. While we only ended up with fourteen species we had some quality looks at the birds we saw, and came away thoroughly pleased. Of course any day that you see a **Golden Eagle** is special. One just wonders what they are able

to track down in the blowing snow.

As far as the Rosy Finches, we were rewarded with three taxa, having an unusually high number of the **Hepburn's race of Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch** with their gray cheeks.

Unfortunately, we saw no Black Rosy-Finches, so we may have to go back on another day. Wonderful to watch flocks of 40-80+ birds swirling around.

We had a single, quite stunning, male **Cassin's Finch**. The real highlight of the morning for me was the incredible close looks we had of male and female **Pine Grosbeaks**. Stunning! Of course, not far behind them are the always exotic **Evening Grosbeaks**.

Northern Bobwhites at Chatfield

On January 17th, Susan Harper and Jeanette Strom spotted several **Northern Bobwhites** in the prairie dog colony near the back gate entrance to the park. "There are a few parking spots right there and your car can serve as a blind, if necessary. We needed the scope to find them. They were far back in the field hopping around among the snow, bushes, and weeds. We were hoping for some burrowing owls but no luck. The Bobwhites were a nice surprise though!

"A large flock of **Bushtits** also came by... The other regulars like **Green-winged Teal, Hooded Mergansers, American Coots, Gadwalls**, etc. were on the open river past the dam/dog park. They also had five different **Red-tailed Hawks** – all different shades!"

Guanella Pass

Larry White, Chris Pfaff and Chuck Aid went on a ski tour into the Mount Evans wilderness February 10th to look for wintering **White-tailed Ptarmigan**.

Larry posted, “The high winds, blowing snow, and boiler-plate snow made it seem a bit Arctic. But the birds were there!” Photo by Larry White. Chuck said they hiked/skied 7 miles into Guanella Pass and were rewarded with seeing a large flock of 28 ptarmigans take flight!



Le Conte's Sparrow: Photo by Marilyn Rhodes

Winter Birding in Oklahoma

In January, three birder friends and I traveled to my home state. Our mission? To rack up 100 birds in Oklahoma over a long weekend, including our nemesis bird, the **Smith's Longspur**, and the **Le Conte's Sparrow**. With the help of an Oklahoman knowledgeable about both species, we were able to see about 250 Smith's and 5-7 Le Conte's. Here's one of my better pictures of the Le Conte's. They don't sit still for long. Our total for the trip? 111 species!

On the way back to Colorado, we witnessed a flock of more than 7,000 **Lapland Longspurs** busily foraging and swirling in the air just outside of Cheyenne Bottoms in Kansas.

Share your comments on our winter sightings in the Comments area below!