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Highlights from August 19 Bird Walk to Groundhog Flats – Evergreen Audubon

4-5 minutes



Pine Siskin (c) Bill Schmoker

Having gotten a relatively early start seven of us appeared to be the first cars up into the Elk Management Area this past Saturday. Parking at the first parking area past the ranger's house, we set off up the old road that climbs over a little shoulder and drops down to Bear Creek and Groundhog Flats. It quickly became evident that our early start was paying off because we had to immediately focus on a barrage of birds. The rest of the morning proved to be not so active, but that first hour was incredible, and by the time we returned to our cars we had tallied

a respectable 24 species (see list below).

So, we're on that cusp of the year where there are juvenile birds still begging to be fed and at that same time there are mixed-species flocks forming up and appearing a bit restless.



MacGillivray's Warbler (c) Bill Schmoker

One of the big highlights, which invited us to exercise all of our bird detective capabilities, was an adult Red-tailed Hawk with two attendant juveniles. It was the juveniles that took a bit of work, because we had to determine that a raptorial begging call we were hearing was a juvenile Red-tail, then, we got a distant, though clear view of the bird, and then we heard a second one off in a different direction. We had gotten a clear view of the adult earlier, so that one was in the bag. A most gratifying sleuthing!

Warbling Vireos can be difficult to track amidst their favorite habitat, leafy aspen branches, but we had a few give us ample opportunity to get it all straight, and good views were had by all. A huge flock of Chipping Sparrows gave us plenty to look at, as they were almost all juveniles, which definitely puts them in the

LBB category (“little brown bird”). Mixed in with the Chippers were some Pine Siskins and Cordilleran Flycatchers, so it was a fun assemblage.



Townsend's Warbler (1st winter) (c) Bill Schmoker

The highlight of the morning was getting to see three species of warblers. Our most common forest warbler is Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler, and we saw one of them. Of the other two, MacGillivray's Warbler breeds locally from 5000 to 10,000 feet in a variety of shrub habitats, so we would like to think we would see them a bit more often, but they're one of the skulkiest of the skulky bird species. Fortunately, our bird moved into a tree giving us an opportunity for a brief view. Finally, the real prize of the morning was getting to see two Townsend's Warblers. This species breeds from the northern Rockies and Pacific Northwest up into southeastern Alaska, and occurs in Colorado only as an uncommon fall migrant on its way south to Mexico and Central America. AND, it's so pretty it knocks your socks off!

So, good birds and a great group of birders made for a doubly enjoyable morning!

Hope to see you next time!

Chuck Aid, Director of Bird Monitoring

Groundhog Flats, Aug 19, 2017

24 species

Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) 3Broad-tailed Hummingbird (*Selasphorus platycercus*) 9Hairy Woodpecker (Rocky Mts.) (*Picoides villosus orius/icastus*)
1Northern Flicker (Red-shafted) (*Colaptes auratus* [cafer Group])
10Western Wood-Pewee (*Contopus sordidulus*) 1Cordilleran Flycatcher (*Empidonax occidentalis*) 3Warbling Vireo (*Vireo gilvus*) 4Gray Jay (*Perisoreus canadensis*) 2Steller's Jay (*Cyanocitta stelleri*) 7Clark's Nutcracker (*Nucifraga columbiana*) 2Common Raven (*Corvus corax*) 2Mountain Chickadee (*Poecile gambeli*) 13Red-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta canadensis*) 9White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*) 5Pygmy Nuthatch (*Sitta pygmaea*) 25House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*) 5Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus calendula*) 1American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) 33MacGillivray's Warbler (*Geothlypis tolmiei*) 1Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's) (*Setophaga coronata*
auduboni) 1Townsend's Warbler (*Setophaga townsendi*) 2Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*) 40Dark-eyed Junco (Gray-headed) (*Junco hyemalis caniceps*) 12

Pine Siskin (*Spinus pinus*) 19

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