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Highlights from March 18 Owl Expedition – Evergreen Audubon

3-4 minutes

Fourteen of us devoted an unseasonably warm Saturday afternoon and evening to exploring for owls and seeing a few other birds in the process (see list below).

We began at Bear Creek Lake Park and with the help of Rob Raker, who helps the park with wildlife inventories, we were able to see three female Great Horned Owls on their respective nests scattered along Bear Creek. Two of the owls were ensconced in cavities in mature cottonwoods, and the third was on a large stick nest. At least one of the nests already had owlets in it. Search as we might, we could find none of the attendant males, which may have been momentarily seeking out the shadiest locales possible, and thus even more difficult to find than usual.



Great Horned Owl (c) Rob Raker

An interesting anecdote from Rob was that when the level of Bear Creek Lake rose 52 feet during the May flood of 2015, the water came within just a few feet of the stick nest that we saw, and the lone owlet at that time fell in and was drowned.

As the evening began, we then moved up into the foothills, and after a thirty-minute hike found ourselves in a nice open meadow with a nearby mix of montane shrubs, aspen, and ponderosa pine. We grabbed a quick bite while enjoying a glorious sunset, and then set about our business of trying to find some of the small mountain owls.

Northern Pygmy Owls are often most active during the evening, but as we moved past that time without hearing any owl calls, we began to descend back to our cars in the dark. By the time we came to one of the last aspen groves, most of us had resorted to using our headlamps, and then we finally heard two Pygmy Owls calling from opposite directions.

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And then, quite close to us a Northern Saw-whet Owl, quite spontaneously, gave a little screech call a couple of times (recordings courtesy of Xeno-Canto.org)

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On the way back to the cars we contemplated Taurus charging into Orion.

Hope to see you on a walk soon!

Chuck Aid, Director of Bird Monitoring

Bear Creek Lake Park and Morrison Foothills, Mar 18, 2017

21 species

Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*) 9

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) 4

Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) 3

Northern Pygmy-Owl (*Glaucidium gnoma*) 2

Northern Saw-whet Owl (*Aegolius acadicus*) 1

Downy Woodpecker (*Picoides pubescens*) 3

American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) 1

Steller's Jay (Interior) (*Cyanocitta stelleri* [diademata Group]) 2

Black-billed Magpie (*Pica hudsonia*) 2

American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) 4

Black-capped Chickadee (*Poecile atricapillus*) 2

Mountain Chickadee (*Poecile gambeli*) 1

Red-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta canadensis*) 1

White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*) 1

American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) 9

European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) 2

Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) 1

Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*) 1

Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) 5

Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*) 1

House Finch (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) 2