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Highlights from October 21 Bird Walk to the Wheat Ridge Greenbelt – Evergreen Audubon

4-5 minutes



Gadwall (c) Rick Leinen

The wind she did blow on Saturday morning, and the buffeting was plentiful, but twelve of us intrepid Evergreen Audubon birders persisted, and the results were most satisfactory (see bird list below)! Twelve waterfowl species (1 goose, 8 duck, 2 grebe, and 1 coot) gave us the opportunity for some easier identifications between wind gusts, the day being dominated by Gadwall.





Western Tanager (c) Bill Schmoker

One of the highlights was getting to see a late male Western Tanager. Note the slight bit of red-orange on the chin. These guys are mostly gone by the end of September, though a few stragglers, like ours, can be seen into early November.

Of course the real highlight was getting to see a true Colorado rarity, a Surf Scoter. This is a “sea duck” breeding in the boreal lakes of Alaska and Canada, and then returning to the sea where they occur almost exclusively, wintering off the coasts of North America – on the Pacific coast from southern British Columbia to Baja California. They occur each fall in Colorado as a rare migrant. Note the broad-based bill, the the white cheek patches, and that there are no white wing patches (which distinguishes it from it’s congener, the White-winged Scoter).



Surf Scoter (c) George Mayfield

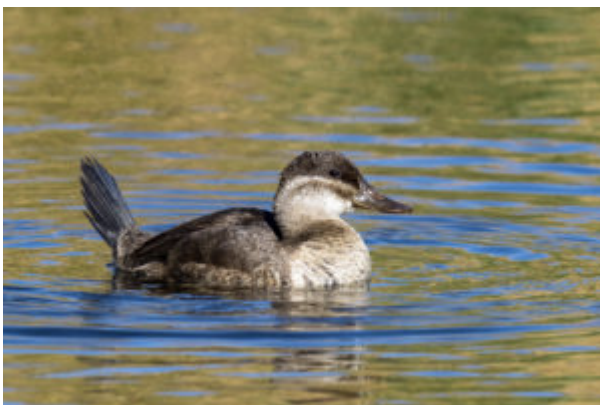
Historically it was thought that they were mostly on the eastern plains near the foothills (not a surprise that this is also where the majority of Colorado's birders are found), but as more birders investigate the intermountain parks we are seeing good numbers of migrant Surf Scoters there as well. Immature birds and females are very similar in plumage, though because our bird apparently lacked a whitish breast it was probably a female.

It was neat to see the Surf Scoter hanging out in a mixed-species group along with three Western grebes and several Ruddy Ducks. Note the white cheek on the male Ruddy and the striped cheek on the female.

Another great day of birding, and, oh yeah, the wind did finally start to abate some by late morning, and we found ourselves in the midst of another glorious fall day.



Ruddy Duck male (c) Mick Thompson



Ruddy Duck female (c) Mick Thompson

Good birding! Chuck

Wheat Ridge Greenbelt, Oct 21, 2017

30 species

Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*) 28

Northern Shoveler (*Spatula clypeata*) 52

Gadwall (*Mareca strepera*) 67

American Wigeon (*Mareca americana*) 1

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) 41

Surf Scoter (*Melanitta perspicillata*) 1

Bufflehead (*Bucephala albeola*) 3

Hooded Merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*) 9

Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) 12

Pied-billed Grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*) 2

Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) 3

Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) 1

Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) 1

American Coot (*Fulica americana*) 7

Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*) 28

Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon) (*Columba livia* (Feral Pigeon)) 8

Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*) 1

Belted Kingfisher (*Megaceryle alcyon*) 3

Downy Woodpecker (*Picoides pubescens*) 1

Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*) 5

Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*) 3

Black-billed Magpie (*Pica hudsonia*) 12

American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) 80

Black-capped Chickadee (*Poecile atricapillus*) 6

American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) 9
European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) 3
Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) 2
Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*) 1
Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) 11
House Finch (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) 8