

Highlights from July 11 bird walk to Mount Goliath area

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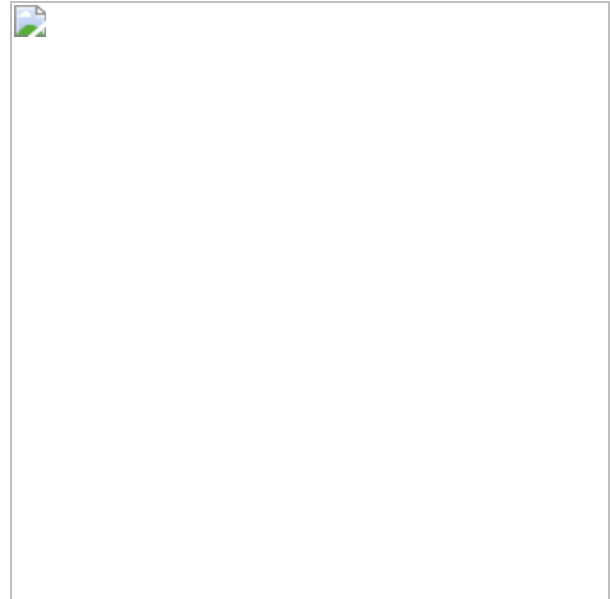
Chuck Aid

July 12, 2018

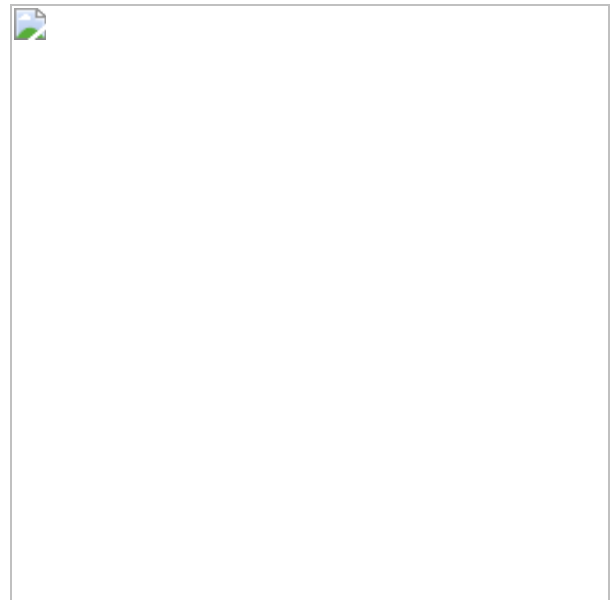
Six of us had a great morning sampling the avifauna in a variety of habitats in the vicinity of Mount Goliath. Starting at over 12,000 ft we quickly dropped down through the tundra and into a world of willows, krummholz, spruce-fir forest, montane meadows, and bristlecone pines; and each habitat provided its own somewhat unique assemblage of birds. There are always those species, e.g. Broad-tailed Hummingbird and American Robin, that seem to be found in multiple habitats, but it was interesting to see how with each couple of hundred feet we dropped we would lose some species and start to pick up others.

The American Pipits were skylarking dramatically above the tundra. The Wilson's Warblers and White-crowned Sparrows were in the uppermost, low-growing willows, and then as we got into slightly bigger willows with a few initial krummholz trees poking through we began to pick up Fox Sparrows and Lincoln's Sparrows.

Then, as the krummholz trees got a bit taller we started to get an occasional Audubon's Warbler and Pine Siskin, along with a single House Wren. Finally, as we dropped below 11,500 ft, and into the mosaic of forest with small patches of montane meadow, we found Hairy Woodpeckers, an American Three-toed Woodpecker, Gray Jays, Steller's Jays, Black-capped Chickadees, Mountain Chickadees, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Hermit Thrushes, Dark-eyed Juncos, and Pine Grosbeaks. Meanwhile, surveying all from above were a Golden Eagle, a Red-tailed Hawk, Clark's Nutcrackers, and Common Ravens. Everyone in their expected realm! What a treat!



American Pipit (c) Bill Schmoker



White-crowned Sparrow (c) Rachel Hutchison

So, as is to be expected during breeding season, we saw a few fledglings – Hairy Woodpecker, Steller’s Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, and Hermit Thrush, and we found one nest with eggs – Gray-headed Junco.

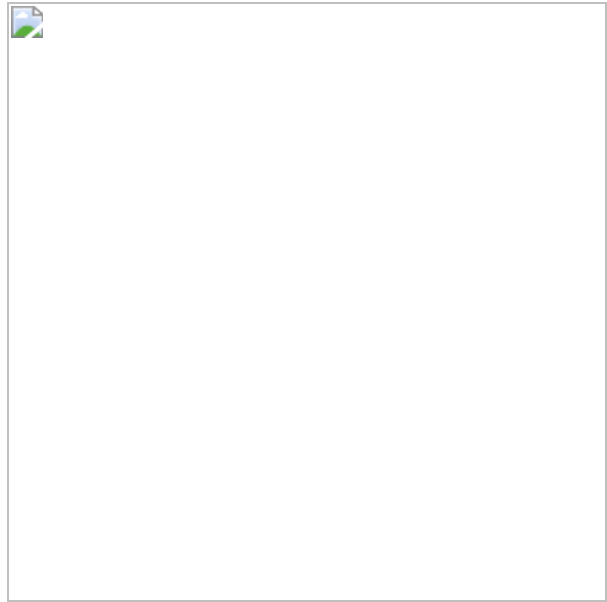
Highlights for the day included getting to see a Black-capped Chickadee feeding young in the spruce-fir forest at about 11,300 feet – I hadn’t expected to see them that high, and in that habitat. And, then, we had a great, long look at a singing Fox Sparrow – always special to get a really good look at this reclusive species, and such singing! Finally, the same goes for the Pine Grosbeak – it’s an uncommon bird to encounter, and we had good looks at both male and female, and had some great vocalizing going on!

I always like to think about what we did not see on our bird-walks, and clearly missing in action on this outing were the Mountain Bluebirds (we had one). This is a species that in most years readily uses the tundra-forest ecotone, feeding in the tundra and nesting in tree cavities. The Second Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas makes note of a decline in breeding in southeastern Colorado possibly due to “recent and prolonged drought.” Perhaps this year’s drought has led to fewer food resources in the tundra, including those for the insectivorous Mountain Bluebird.

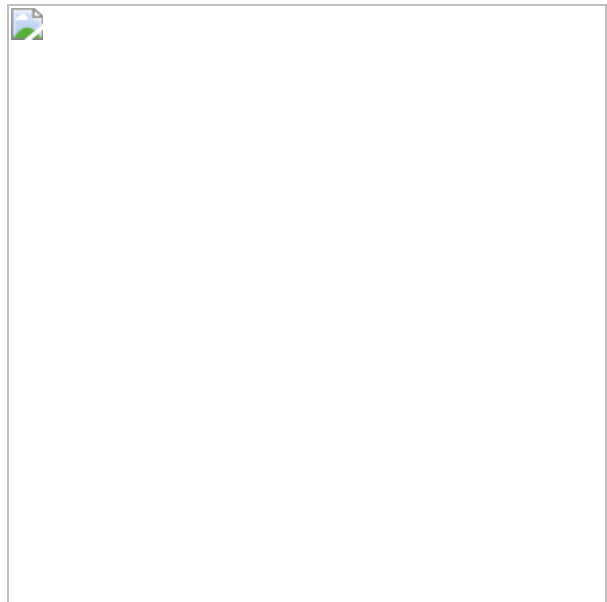
Cheers! Chuck

Mount Goliath, July 11, 2018
26 species

Golden Eagle 1
Red-tailed Hawk 1
Broad-tailed Hummingbird 4
Hairy Woodpecker 4
American Three-toed Woodpecker 1
Gray Jay 2
Steller’s Jay (Interior) 3



Fox Sparrow (c) Rachel Hutchison



Pine Grosbeak (c) Bill Schmoker

Clark's Nutcracker 2
Common Raven 23
Black-capped Chickadee 3
Mountain Chickadee 3
House Wren 1
Ruby-crowned Kinglet 8
Mountain Bluebird 1
Hermit Thrush 4
American Robin 11
American Pipit 7
Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's) 10
Wilson's Warbler 13
Fox Sparrow (Slate-colored) 4
Dark-eyed Junco (Gray-headed) 13
White-crowned Sparrow (oriantha) 33
Vesper Sparrow 2
Lincoln's Sparrow 10
Pine Grosbeak 4
Pine Siskin 12