

# Highlights from June 16 bird walk to Beaver Meadows

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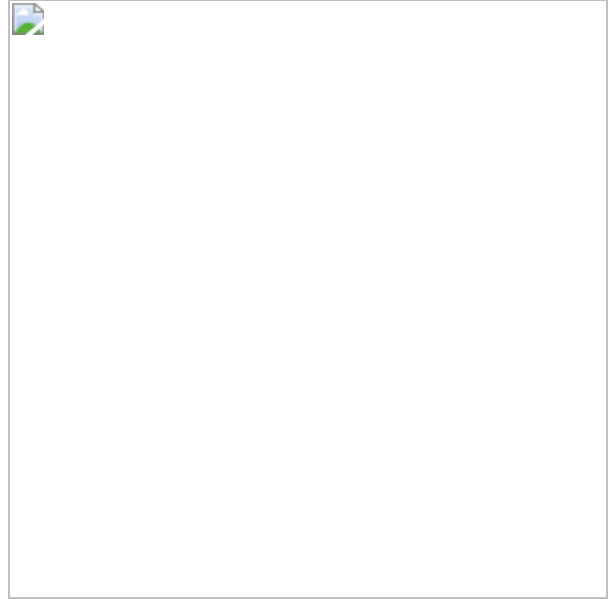
Chuck Aid

June 19, 2018

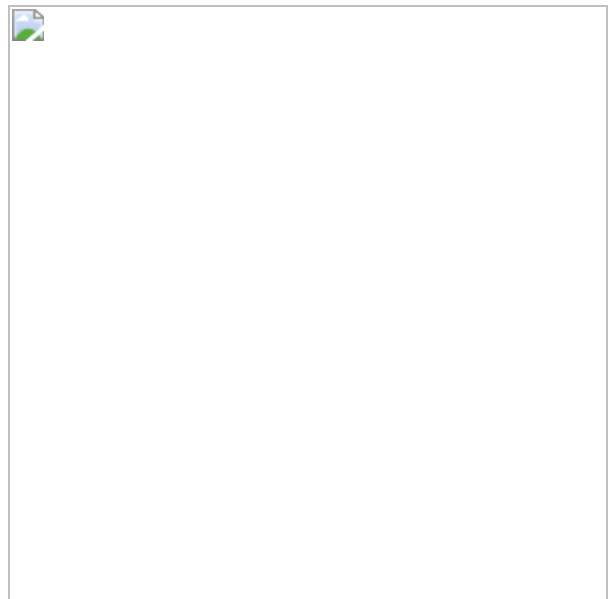
Beaver Meadows sits along a minor creek at 9400 ft up in Arapaho National Forest. For almost half-a-mile the valley bottom opens up to an extensive willow carr area punctuated by a series of beaver ponds, some active, and some well on their way to being filled with sediment and eventually becoming little montane meadows or additional willow stands. Access is obtained by an easy hike across a portion of the Mount Evans State Wildlife Area starting at Camp Rock Campground.

Evergreen Audubon has had a love affair with this area for many decades, and rightfully so. The birding, the flowers, and the occasional moose are stupendous. This past Saturday, June 16, four of us spent the morning hiking in and exploring the forest enroute and the eventual meadows. Highlights included a female Mallard with three little ducklings. We also flushed a female Blue-winged Teal from deep in some grasses, and her furtive behavior led us to think that she may have had a nest nearby.

From deep in the forest we heard the drumming of an American Three-toed Woodpecker, and also at a distance we heard the calls of Clark's Nutcrackers. Closer to hand we had great looks at Canada Jays – this is the new name for Gray Jays, but I'm not sure I'll ever be able to adjust to this one. Here's what happened, though. Historically, from at least 1831 to 1947, this species was known as the Canada Jay, but then those crazy ornithologists had to throw their hat in the ring. They decided that all subspecies should have common names also. This resulted in two subspecies called the Alaska Canada Jay and the Oregon Canada Jay. So, then, in their wisdom, to make these names a little less confusing, they



Not Beaver Meadows, but a nearby valley (c)  
Chuck Aid



Mallard and ducklings (c) Rachel Hutchison

decided to change the species name from Canada Jay to Gray Jay. Are you with me? Then, in 1954 the ornithologists changed their minds and decided that they didn't like the idea of common names for subspecies, BUT they didn't change Gray Jay back to Canada Jay until sixty years later. So, we've come full circle, and Canadians can quit shaking their heads over the fact that folks in the United States don't know how to spell "grey."

Hiking through the forest we heard numerous Cordilleran Flycatchers, Warbling Vireos, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Hermit Thrushes, American Robins, Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warblers, and Gray-headed Juncos. For some reason, the numbers for Mountain Chickadees were low, but they seem pretty engaged in feeding nestlings right now, which could explain their quieter behavior.

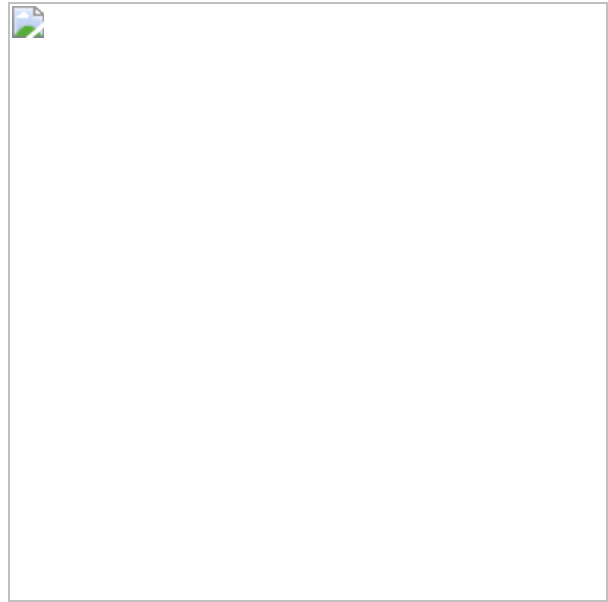
Out amongst the willows we found a few Lincoln's Sparrows, but they were mostly doing their sharp little chip note, and we heard little singing from them. As is often the case the biggest stories, as far as I am concerned, have to do with what we did not see or hear – Wilson's Warblers. Historically, we almost always have them in the willows at Beaver Meadows. Sometimes only a few, and other times ten or more, but we struck out on Saturday. I'm hopeful that this will change in the coming weeks. My best day ever at Beaver Meadows for the willow birds, the Lincoln's Sparrows and Wilson's Warblers, was on July 6 a couple of years ago, with 17 and 13 individuals, respectively. Saturday it was kind of like the bad western movie, a little too quiet.

Breeding season is going on all around us, and you should be seeing some fledglings in your neighborhood. Enjoy!

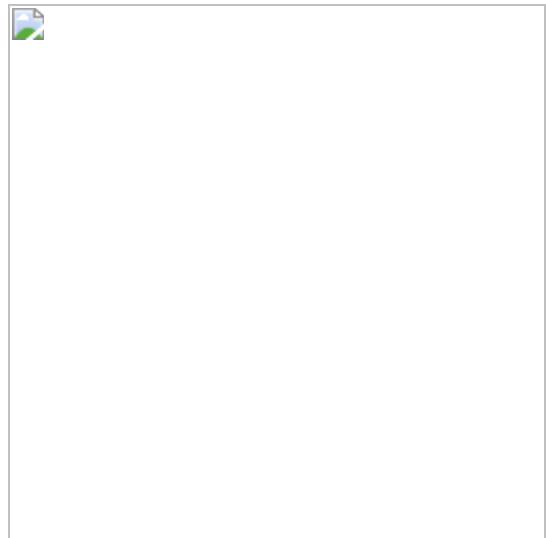
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Beaver Meadows, Jun 16, 2018

25 species

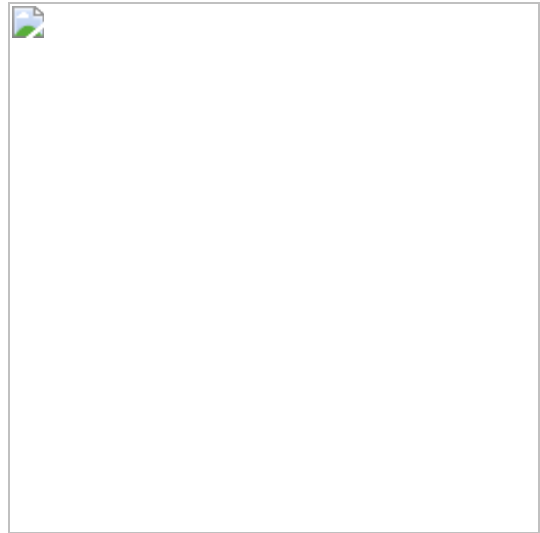


Canada Jay (c) Rachel Hutchison



Cordilleran Flycatcher (c) Bill Schmoker

Blue-winged Teal 1  
Mallard 4  
Broad-tailed Hummingbird 5  
Hairy Woodpecker (Rocky Mts.) 1  
American Three-toed Woodpecker 1  
Northern Flicker (Red-shafted) 2  
Cordilleran Flycatcher 5  
Warbling Vireo 5  
Gray Jay 4  
Steller's Jay (Interior) 2  
Clark's Nutcracker 2  
Common Raven 1  
Mountain Chickadee 3  
Red-breasted Nuthatch 11  
Pygmy Nuthatch 4  
Brown Creeper 1  
House Wren 2  
Golden-crowned Kinglet 6  
Ruby-crowned Kinglet 14  
Hermit Thrush 9  
American Robin 7  
Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's) 6  
Dark-eyed Junco (Gray-headed) 6  
Lincoln's Sparrow 7  
Pine Siskin 2



Lincoln's Sparrow (c) Bill Schmoker