

Highlights from August 17 Bird Walk to Lost Creek

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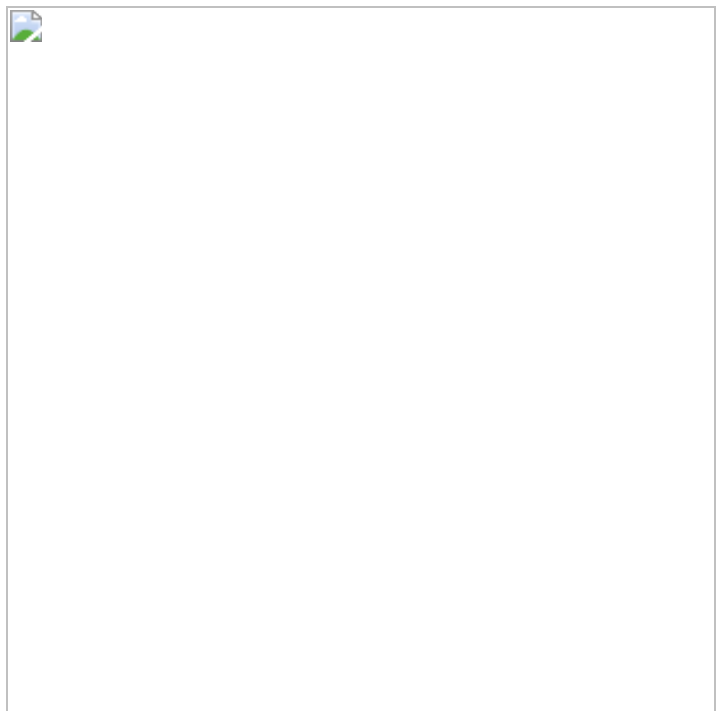
August 18, 2019

You may often hear members of Evergreen Audubon referring to the Bear Creek Watershed. Bear Creek runs approximately 35 miles from Summit Lake at 12,900 ft all the way to its confluence with the South Platte River at 5300 ft. It is the basin surrounding Bear Creek and all of its tributaries along this route that constitutes the Bear Creek Watershed. Looking more closely at a few of those tributaries that come into Bear Creek in the vicinity of Evergreen, we begin with Cub Creek. Then, continuing on to the west the main tributaries entering in order only from the south are: Buffalo Creek, Yankee Creek, Indian Creek, Grass Creek, Lost Creek, Truesdell Creek, and Beartrack Creek. Is it any wonder, with all of these creeks, that one of them happened to get “lost?”



Wilson's Warbler (c) Mick Thompson

Fortunately, this past Saturday we were able to find Lost Creek with all its flowers and butterflies, and enjoy its isolated, peaceful locale. As for the birds, we need to start by putting things in context. Breeding season is pretty much done, with only a few juveniles still chasing after their parents begging to be fed. Also, “fall” migration is definitely underway. These two factors mean that some birds are not as vociferous as they were at the peak of breeding season, so they are around but not as easily located. Also, other birds have moved out of their breeding territories, in what we call post-breeding dispersal, and other birds are beginning to move downslope and form



Brown Creeper (c) Bill Schmoker

flocks as they “stage” for migration, and finally, some birds have definitely left town – maybe not to head to Mesoamerica quite yet, but some of our mountain birds are beginning to show up out on the plains.

So, this is all by way of saying that there were a lot of species that we did not see – for whatever reason: no flycatchers, vireos, swallows, or tanagers for starters. We also whiffed on Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, Yellow-rumped Warbler, American Three-toed Woodpecker, Canada Jay, and Clark’s Nutcracker.

Nevertheless, we had some really good birds. Initial highlights came from a relatively small willow carr area where we had two species that could have bred there: Lincoln’s Sparrow and MacGillivray’s Warbler. We also had another willow breeder, Wilson’s Warbler, but it breeds in high-elevation willow carrs near timberline, and our bird was probably a post-breeding disperser. FYI – during fall migration Wilson’s Warblers can become fairly common down in Denver.



Golden-crowned Kinglet – female (c) Mick Thompson



Dark-eyed Junco – juvenile (c) Mick Thompson



Belted Kingfisher (c) Mick Thompson

Other good finds included juvenile Mountain Chickadee, Golden-crowned Kinglet, American Robin, and Dark-eyed (Gray-headed) Junco. However, the real find of the day was a Belted Kingfisher. Lost Creek is a tiny creek in a narrow, steep-walled valley with only occasional pools that open up to be roughly eight feet across, tall spruce shade much of the creek, and the only fish seem to be a few fingerling brook trout. Furthermore, we were about two miles from the confluence with Bear Creek. Very interesting to have a kingfisher in that location.

Hope to see you on next month's walk on September 21.

Chuck

Lost Creek, Aug 17, 2019

18 species

Broad-tailed Hummingbird 3
Belted Kingfisher 1
Hairy Woodpecker 1
Steller's Jay (Interior) 8
Common Raven 2
Mountain Chickadee 21
Golden-crowned Kinglet 3
Red-breasted Nuthatch 10
Pygmy Nuthatch 4
Brown Creeper 2
House Wren 1
American Robin 2
Red Crossbill 3
Pine Siskin 3
Dark-eyed Junco (Gray-headed) 11

Lincoln's Sparrow 1

MacGillivray's Warbler 1

Wilson's Warbler 2