

Highlights from June 15 Bird Walk to Beaver Meadows

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Chuck Aid

June 17, 2019

Beaver Meadows lies at 9450 feet along a rather small tributary of Bear Creek. It is in a part of Arapaho National Forest between the western boundary of the Elk Management Area and the eastern boundary of the Mount Evans Wilderness. The hike in starts at 9000 ft at Camp Rock Campground and is a delightful saunter through a wonderful mix of habitats – huge Engelmann Spruce in the riparian areas, and a great mix of aspen, Douglas fir, ponderosa, lodgepole, limber, and bristlecone pines on the slopes – with Calypso (Fairy Slipper) Orchids occasionally lining the path.

As for Beaver Meadows itself, it is about a half-mile long. Along the little stream there is a series of active and abandoned beaver ponds interspersed with thick stands of willows. These are flanked by open

meadows rimmed by forest. Birds recorded in the area historically have included Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal, Northern Goshawk, Spotted Sandpiper, Wilson's Snipe, Williamson's and Red-naped Sapsucker, American Three-toed Woodpecker, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Wilson's Warbler, Pine Grosbeak, and a slew of others. The Bear Creek Atlas has recorded 59 species in this area. It is a real gem, and we are very lucky to have this great place so close at hand.

One of the interesting aspects of our time there this past Saturday was that the aspen and willows are leafing out so late this year that it may have delayed breeding bird activity. Our numbers of birds were down from what might be expected, especially the Wilson's Warblers and Lincoln's Sparrows that breed in the willow stands. Also down were some of the common forest birds such as Mountain Chickadee, Red-breasted and Pygmy Nuthatch. We witnessed no signs of breeding bird behavior other than the presence of singing males. This is all so interesting because many birds at lower elevations are already fledging young while the birds at the higher elevations are apparently just getting things rolling.



Yellow-rumped Warbler – Audubon's race
(c) Mick Thompson

One of the highlights on Saturday was getting to see a couple of the elusive Golden-crowned Kinglets. These tiny insectivores are found year-round in Colorado, but only recently have we come to better know their abundance and elevational range. During the winter they tend to be found in the valleys and mesas of western Colorado as well as in the foothills of the eastern mountains, such as the Front Range. With the advent of warmer weather and longer days of April here in the Southern Rockies they begin to move upslope to the spruce-fir forest, or possibly some may go all the way to the boreal forest of northern Canada. Then, generally, by early June they are engaged in nest building. They are always a treat, and we were fortunate to get good looks.

Hoping to see you on another outing.

Chuck

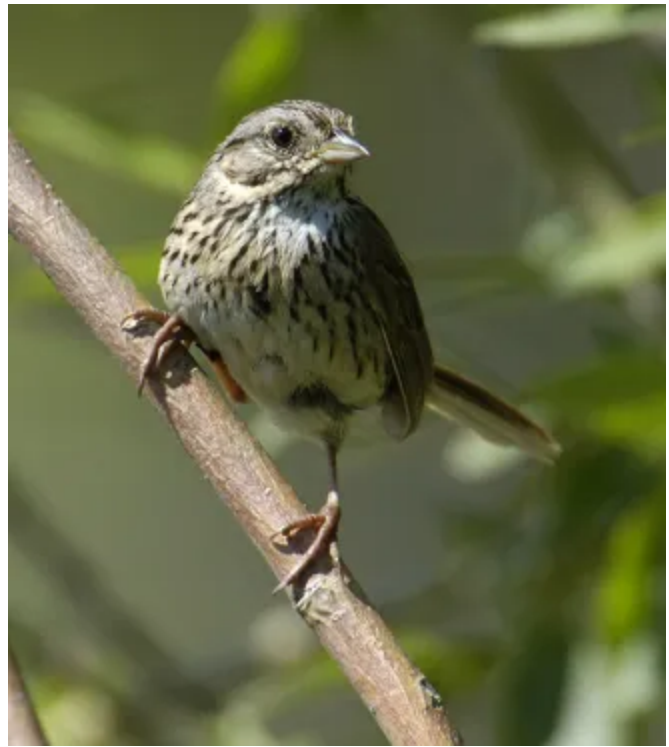
Beaver Meadows Jun 15, 2019
27 species

Broad-tailed Hummingbird 3
Red-tailed Hawk 1
Red-naped Sapsucker 1
American Three-toed Woodpecker 1
Downy Woodpecker 1
Cordilleran Flycatcher 3
Warbling Vireo 5
Steller's Jay (Interior) 3
Common Raven 3
Black-capped Chickadee 1
Mountain Chickadee 5
Red-breasted Nuthatch 4
White-breasted Nuthatch 2
Pygmy Nuthatch 1
Golden-crowned Kinglet 4
Ruby-crowned Kinglet 13
Hermit Thrush 7

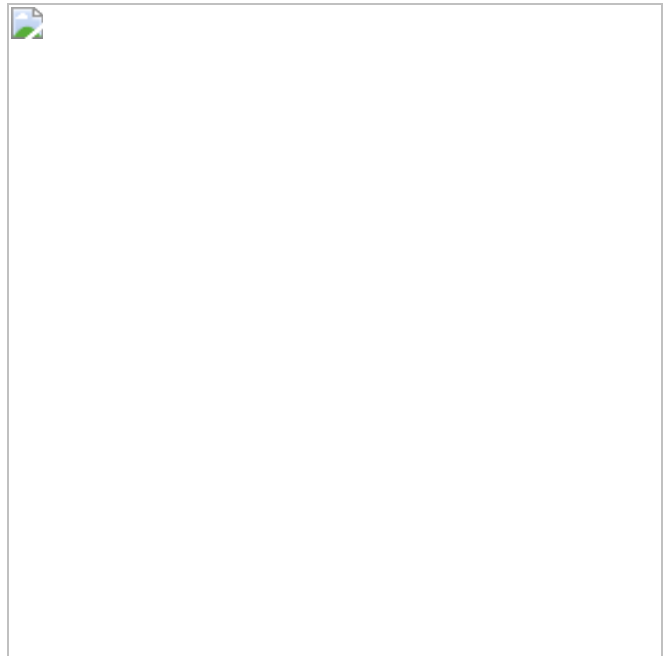


Calypso Orchid (c) Chuck Aid

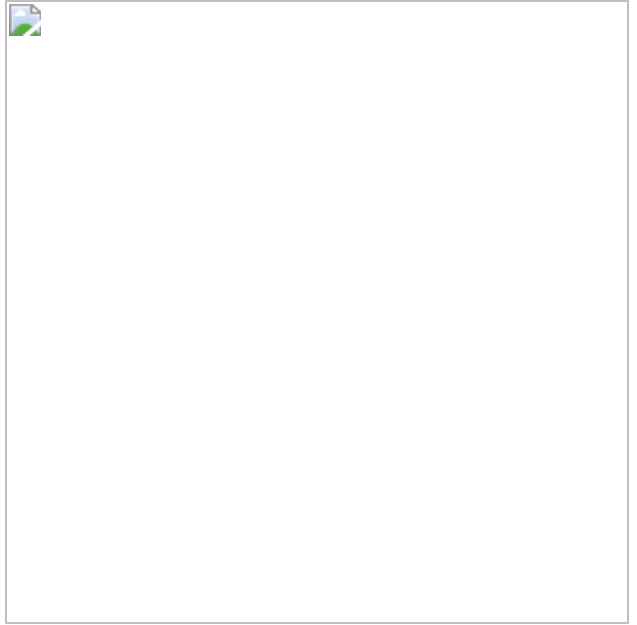
- American Robin 8
- Pine Grosbeak 1
- Pine Siskin 3
- Dark-eyed Junco (Gray-headed) 9
- White-crowned Sparrow (oriantha) 1
- Song Sparrow 2
- Lincoln's Sparrow 2
- Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's) 5
- Wilson's Warbler 4
- Western Tanager 1



Lincoln's Sparrow (c) Bill Schmoker



Golden-crowned Kinglet (c) Mick Thompson



Red-naped Sapsucker (c) Bill Schmoker