

# Highlights from Sept 21 Bird Walk to Bear Creek Lake Park

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Chuck Aid

September 24, 2019



Golden-crowned Kinglet (c) Mick Thompson

As can happen, with some degree of frequency, our first bird of the day turned out to be “The Bird of the Day” – a Golden-crowned Kinglet. These guys breed almost exclusively in mature, dense spruce-fir forest from 8000 ft almost up to timberline where they can be uncommon to fairly common. In winter some may persist up high, but it seems that most withdraw to the lower mountains and foothills beginning in late September. A few can then be found rarely in the western valleys of Colorado and on the eastern plains adjacent to the foothills. Primary habitats in the winter are Douglas-fir and ponderosa forests. Secondly they may be found in piñon-juniper woodlands, foothill and lowland riparian forests, and in planted conifers in parks, cemeteries, and residential areas. Our find was a good one as we were in a lowland riparian area but within close proximity of the foothills. They are definitely on my top ten list when it comes to Colorado resident birds, and any day I see one of these guys is a good day!



Spotted Sandpiper – juvenile (c) Mick Thompson

So, after we recovered our breath, we continued on to see a great variety of birds. Fall migration is in full swing, which likely accounts for our seeing six Spotted Sandpipers and three species of warblers: Orange-crowned, Yellow-rumped, and Wilson's. None of these warblers breed close to Bear Creek Lake Park; Orange-crowned breeds in a variety of habitats mainly west of the Continental Divide, Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) breeds in a variety of high-elevation habitats, and Wilson's Warbler breeds in high-elevation willow carrs. All of our Saturday warblers were definitely migrants. Also, Chipping Sparrows nest in a variety of montane habitats, and then as part of their post-breeding dispersal they make it down to the eastern plains in July, finally migrating on south in late September into October. So, our Chippers were on the move also.



Orange-crowned Warbler (c Mick Thompson)

Again, I always like to think about what we didn't see. We don't have a huge variety of ducks around in the summer, but by mid-winter we may see up to twenty species on a single outing. Migrant ducks start pouring into the area in mid-September, and many will spend the winter. On September 7 I saw six species of ducks at Harriman Lake which is only about two miles southeast of Bear Creek Lake. The only duck species we saw on Saturday was Mallard. 'Tis a puzzlement (as the king says in *The King and I*). For some reason Harriman Lake always seems to have greater duck diversity than Bear Creek Lake. Is the nutrient base that's different? Are the fishermen and boaters that much of a distraction at Bear Creek Lake? I'm still looking for an explanation.

Hope that you're getting out and enjoying migration!

Chuck

Bear Creek Lake Park, Sep 21, 2019, 41 species (+1 other taxa)

Canada Goose 7

Mallard 10

Western Grebe 2

Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon) 2

Eurasian Collared-Dove 19

Mourning Dove 1

Broad-tailed Hummingbird 2

Killdeer 13

Spotted Sandpiper 6  
Ring-billed Gull 15  
Double-crested Cormorant 15  
Great Blue Heron 2  
Turkey Vulture 1  
Cooper's Hawk 1  
Sharp-shinned/Cooper's Hawk 1  
Red-tailed Hawk 3  
Belted Kingfisher 2  
Downy Woodpecker 1  
Northern Flicker 14  
American Kestrel 1  
Western Wood-Pewee 1  
Say's Phoebe 1  
Blue Jay 3  
Black-billed Magpie 18  
American Crow 1  
Black-capped Chickadee 10  
Golden-crowned Kinglet 1  
House Wren 1  
European Starling 32  
American Robin 11  
House Finch 7  
Lesser Goldfinch 3  
American Goldfinch 8  
Chipping Sparrow 3  
Vesper Sparrow 1  
Song Sparrow 6  
Spotted Towhee 4  
Western Meadowlark 1  
Brewer's Blackbird 2  
Orange-crowned Warbler 3  
Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's) 15  
Wilson's Warbler 1