

Highlights from August 15 Bird Walk to Lost Creek

Chuck Aid 08/18/2020 :

Beeplant (c) Chuck Aid

Even though it was a Saturday in August, we were pleasantly surprised to have the Lost Creek area almost entirely to ourselves, and we only ran into a couple of groups on our way back out. Both Bear Creek and Lost Creek were low, flowing at about twenty percent of average, and due to the drought conditions, many flowers were already on their way out – going to seed and drying out.



Cooper's Hawk (c) Bill Schmoker

Overall, bird numbers were low, but we had a good variety and saw a few species that are not found there on a regular basis. These included Canada Goose, Cooper's Hawk, Red-naped Sapsucker, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Canada Jay, Clark's Nutcracker, MacGillivray's Warbler, and Wilson's Warbler. In looking at the Cooper's Hawk high overhead we noted first of all that it had a very long, banded tail; the wing beats were stiff, shallow, strong, and snappy, interspersed with periods of gliding; and the front edge of the wings formed a fairly straight line with the head projecting well out in front. Frequently our path to identifying a bird requires that we use a process of elimination. With this bird we knew that it wasn't a Northern Harrier, which has a different style of flight and very long, narrow wings. With Sharp-shinned Hawks, the front of the wings do not form a straight line and the head is recessed into a bit of an alcove; also, the flight is not as powerful – more flapping with less speed. Finally, a Northern Goshawk is a more robust bird, and flies similarly to the Buteos (the soaring hawks like the Red-tailed Hawk) with deep fluid strokes. Really, it is the style of flight that is maybe the best way to distinguish these long-tailed raptors from one another, but the more clues you can gather the better off you'll be.



Red-naped Sapsucker (c) Rob Raker

Our real highlight for the day was getting to see and hear an adult female (presumably mom) and juvenile Red-naped Sapsucker visiting their sap wells in a thick stand of roughly 15 ft tall willows. The sap, and the insects attracted to it, are the main foods that sapsuckers eat. In the course of obtaining sap they also work to keep the sap flowing and chasing off other animals, primarily insects and hummingbirds, who try to take advantage of the wells. Our birds were largely undisturbed by our presence, quietly “churring” to one another, and we got to watch them for an extended period of time, methodically visiting their wells which were concentrated at about 6 ft above the ground. These wells can be quite numerous and appear to come close to girdling the tree, but sapsuckers seem to “know” how to not injure the tree that is providing their food.

Hope that you’re enjoying some juvenile bird activity at your place!

Chuck

Lost Creek, Aug 15, 2020

25 species (+1 other taxa)

Canada Goose 1

Broad-tailed Hummingbird 15

Turkey Vulture 1

Cooper’s Hawk 1

Red-naped Sapsucker 2

Northern Flicker (Red-shafted) 3
Olive-sided Flycatcher 2
Western Wood-Pewee 3
Canada Jay 1
Steller's Jay (Interior) 12
Clark's Nutcracker 3
American Crow 1
Black-capped Chickadee 1
Mountain Chickadee 26
Ruby-crowned Kinglet 1
Red-breasted Nuthatch 8
Pygmy Nuthatch 3
House Wren 1
Townsend's Solitaire 1
American Robin 6
Pine Siskin 32
Chipping Sparrow 2
Dark-eyed Junco (Gray-headed) 10
MacGillivray's Warbler 1
Wilson's Warbler 2
warbler sp. (Parulidae sp.) 1