

Highlights from October 16 Bird Walk to Bear Creek Lake Park

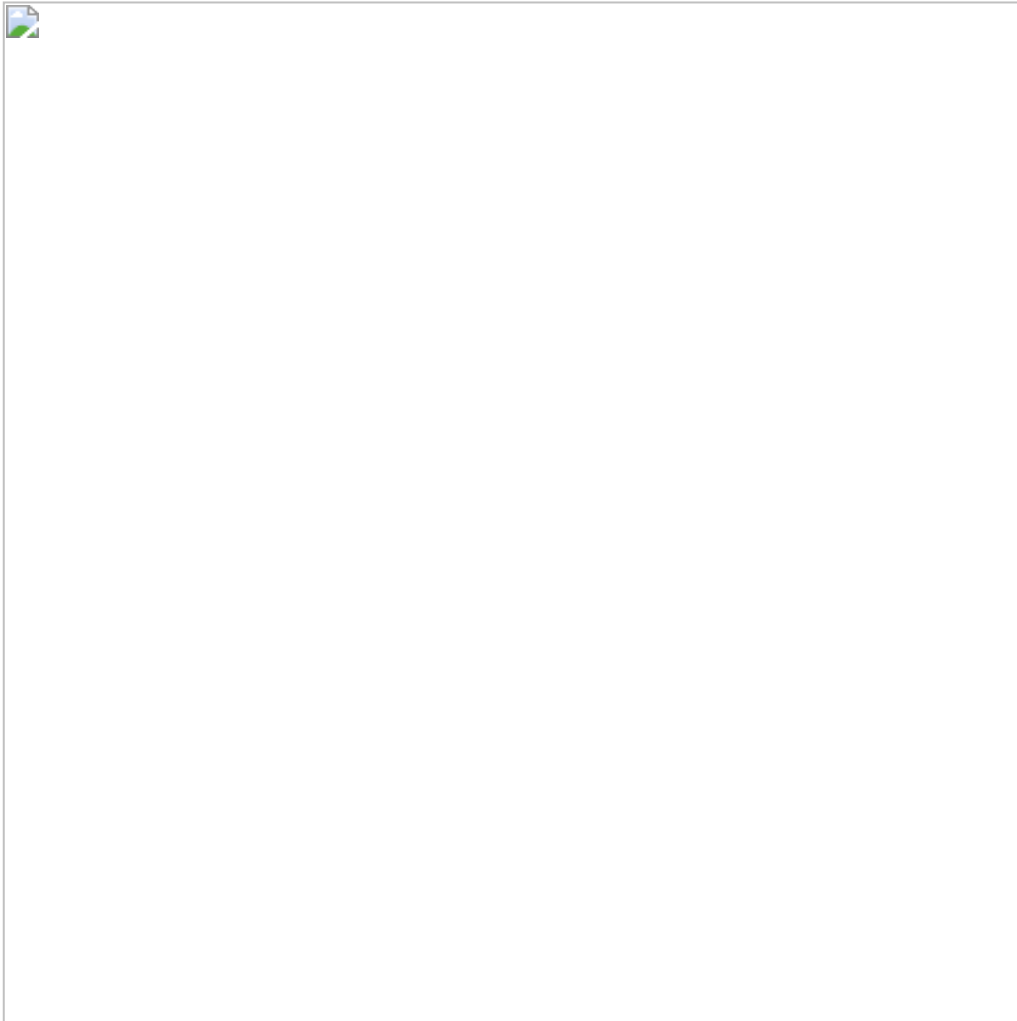
Chuck Aid. October 19, 2021 :



Bear Creek at Bear Creek Lake Park (c) Chuck Aid

'Twas a beautiful fall morning at Bear Creek Lake Park! The plains cottonwoods (*Populus sargentii*) and peachleaf willows (*Salix amygdaloides*) along with a slew of other smaller trees and shrubs were in glorious

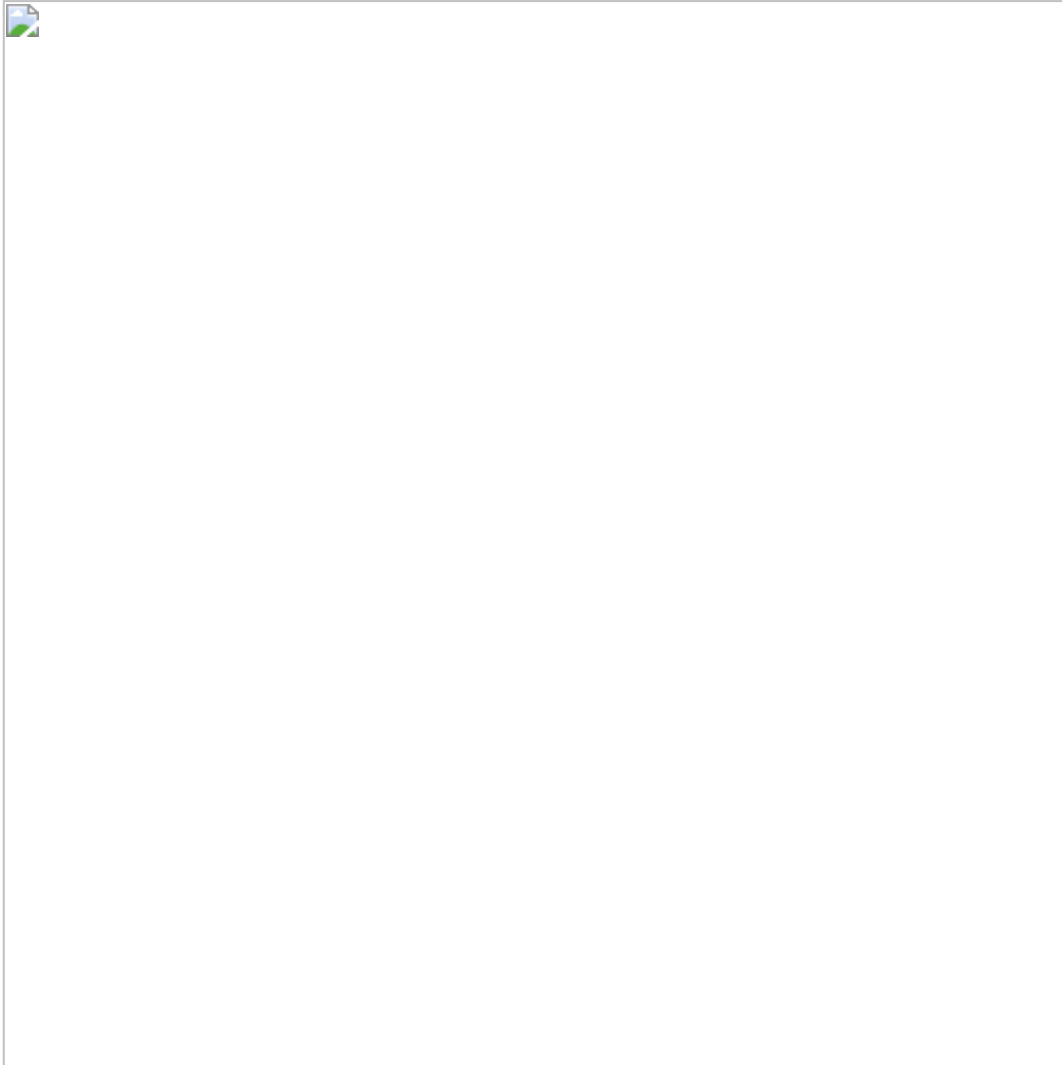
fall plumage/foliage. Fall migration is in full swing, and while some birds have “flown the coop,” others are still in the process of doing so, and still others, who will spend the winter here, have yet to arrive. It’s a great time of year to be a bird detective and go snoop out who’s doing what. For those species that have already left e.g., American Avocet, Western Kingbird, Tree Swallow, and Wilson’s Warbler, we never know exactly when they have left until we wake up one morning and say to ourselves, “Hey, I haven’t seen a Whatchamacallit in over two weeks.” For those birds in transition and moving through still e.g., Osprey, Western Bluebird, Orange-crowned Warbler, and Yellow-rumped Warbler, there still seem to be a few around on a regular basis. Finally, for those birds that breed far to the north of us but spend their winters here e.g., Ring-Necked Duck, Rough-legged Hawk, Northern Shrike, and American Tree Sparrow, they could be showing up anytime in the coming weeks and the anticipation of seeing these new arrivals impels us to try and get out almost every day to see who’s arrived overnight.



Common Goldeneye female – breeding plumage (c) Dorian Anderson

Among our Saturday highlights were two species that fall into this last group – recently arrived birds that will spend the winter here. We found a female Bufflehead and a female Common Goldeneye hanging out together. The Bufflehead was readily identified by its white oval cheek-patch. However, the Goldeneye was a bit trickier as it was transitioning from juvenile plumage (dark gray-brown body, dark brown head and neck, dark eye, dark gray bill) to adult plumage (slaty gray body, dark chestnut head and upper neck, white lower

neck, “golden” eye, black bill with outer third yellow-orange). Our bird had the yellow eye, but the bill was still dark; the breast and flanks were streaky gray.



Red-breasted Merganser (c) Mick Thompson

One other thought with regard to our local Anatidae members. The Anatidae is the family of waterfowl that includes swans, geese, and ducks. During breeding season the main species we see here are Canada Goose, Green-winged Teal, Mallard, and Blue-winged Teal. Maybe occasionally we'll see Northern Pintail, Cinnamon Teal, Redhead, Common Merganser, or Ruddy Ducks, and that's about it. There are some other possibilities, but they are few and far between. Winter is when we get the great Anatidae show around here, and it is a special show because all these guys are getting their beautiful breeding plumage right now and will keep it through the winter. Furthermore, possible birds that we might see include 2 species of swans, 6 species of geese, and 23 species of ducks. Admittedly, some of these are a bit of a longshot, but it gives us a heck of a lot of variety to shoot for. Maybe set yourself a goal of trying to see 20 of these 31 species this winter. Here's the list:

Tundra Swan

Trumpeter Swan

Greater White-fronted Goose

Snow Goose

Ross's Goose

Brant

Canada Goose

Cackling Goose

Wood Duck

Green-winged Teal

Mallard

Northern Pintail

Northern Shoveler

Gadwall

American Wigeon

Canvasback

Redhead

Ring-necked Duck

Greater Scaup

Lesser Scaup

Long-tailed Duck

Black Scoter

Surf Scoter

White-winged Scoter

Common Goldeneye

Barrow's Goldeneye

Bufflehead

Hooded Merganser

Common Merganser

Red-breasted Merganser

Ruddy Duck

Have fun!

Chuck

Bear Creek Lake Park, Jefferson, Colorado, US

Oct 16, 2021

26 species

12 participants

Canada Goose 40

Green-winged Teal 5

Redhead 2

Bufflehead 1

Common Goldeneye 1

Ruddy Duck 25

Western Grebe 7

Killdeer 2

Ring-billed Gull 8

Bald Eagle 1

Red-tailed Hawk 8

Northern Flicker 5

Blue Jay 2

Black-billed Magpie 12

Common Raven 3

Black-capped Chickadee 8

White-breasted Nuthatch 2

European Starling 7

American Robin 9

Cedar Waxwing 1

House Finch 14

Lesser Goldfinch 1

American Goldfinch 6

White-crowned Sparrow 18

Song Sparrow 2

Yellow-rumped Warbler 2