

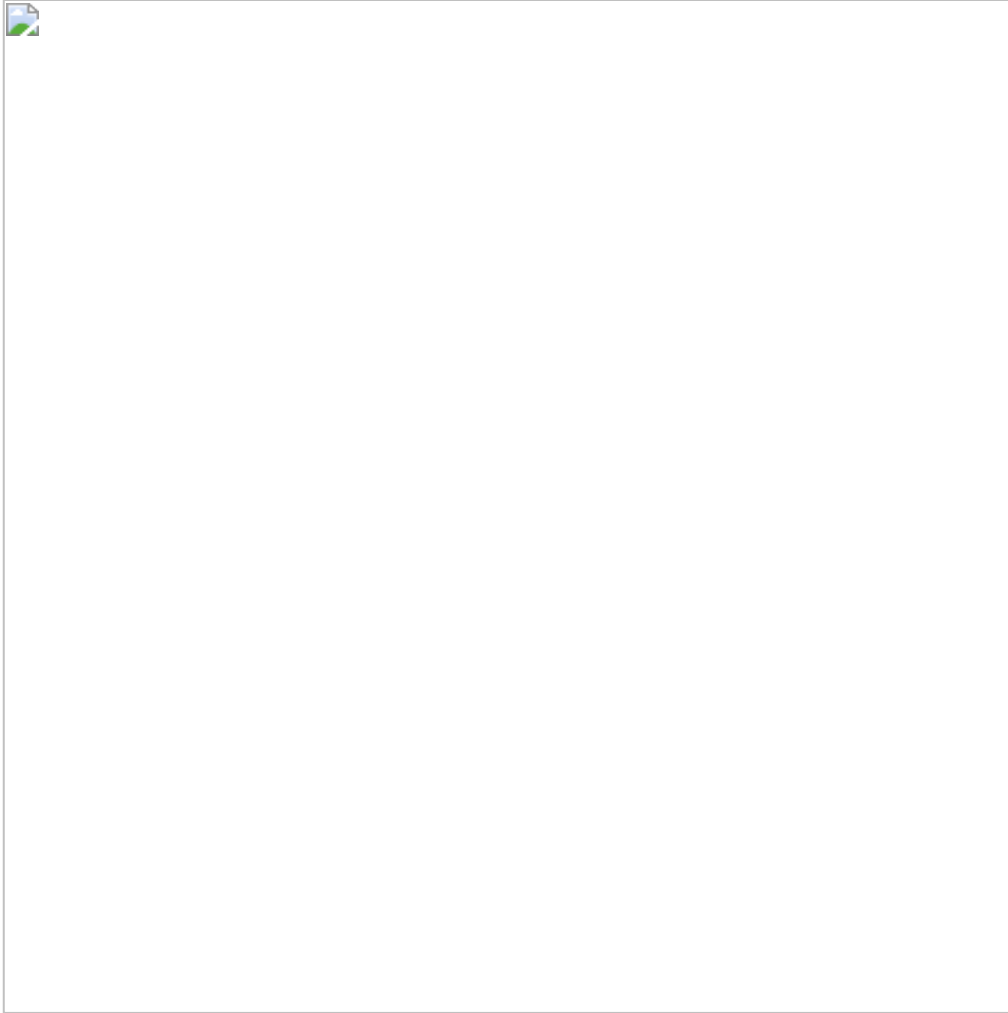
Highlights of July 17 Bird Walk to Wigwam Creek

Chuck Aid. July 18, 2021 :



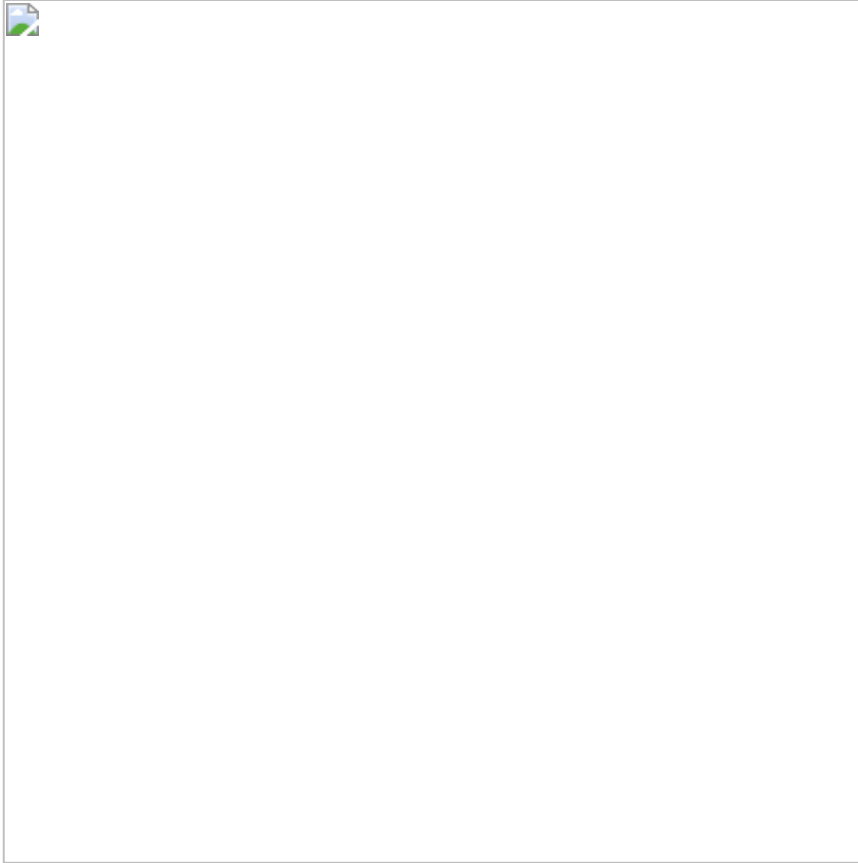
Lazuli Bunting (c) Anne Craig

Wigwam Creek flows east out of the Kenosha Mountains in the Lost Creek Wilderness Area and joins the South Platte River just upstream from Deckers. For almost all of its twenty-two mile length it flows through part of the huge area decimated by the Hayman Fire in 2002 – Colorado’s fourth largest forest fire at 138,114 acres (before last year it was the largest). There are islands of original montane forest habitat that the fire jumped, but much of the area is very much a moonscape of huge granite outcroppings and burned snags. Willows have returned along the creek and the hillsides have some healthy shrubs such as currant and gooseberry. However, the newly emergent conifers are now only about 6-8 feet high, and their regeneration has been slow and only in random patches.



Lewis's Woodpecker (c) Mick Thompson

The attraction to visiting this area with its multitude of large, burned snags is that the openness can attract, at least historically, a good variety of swallows, bluebirds, and sparrows, as well as two woodpecker species that are uncommon in our part of Colorado. Lewis's Woodpecker, found more often in southern and western Colorado, tends to prefer ponderosa and piñon-juniper woodlands, and is often associated with burn areas. Red-headed Woodpecker is an eastern species and Wigwam Creek is about as far west as it gets in Colorado. It, too, prefers open habitat – primarily deciduous woodlands, but can also be found in old burn areas. As I have mentioned in prior reports, bird numbers are down this year, and we only saw one species of swallow, NO BLUEBIRDS, and only a handful of sparrows.



Red-headed Woodpecker (c) Jennifer Bowman

We were fortunate, however, to see several Lewis's Woodpeckers, and even saw a pair repeatedly bringing hugemongous insects to a large branch on a snag where they would beat them into submission. They would then take the insect to their cavity immediately below the branch, where they were presumably feeding nestlings. Lewis's seldom if ever excavate for wood-boring insects; instead, they catch insects by fly-catching and gleaning. A return to this area in another week would likely give us good views of fledglings being fed my mom and dad.

We also got great views of Red-headed Woodpeckers! These have to be one of the easiest birds to identify in all of North America. They are quite an eyeful! Another interesting highlight was the number of Olive-sided Flycatchers we recorded. This species has been designated as a species of concern by the USFWS as they have been steadily declining for the past fifty years. In the Evergreen area I record them only a few times each summer. Overall, they breed about seventy percent of the time in mature coniferous forest having an open canopy and/or good edge habitat. However, about five percent of the time they choose areas that have been dramatically altered by logging, fire, or beetle-kill. In the northern Rockies they are one of the most abundant birds in early post-fire communities and they use clearcuts where loggers have left snags.



Evening Grosbeak (c) Anne Craig

Good birding! Chuck

Cheesman Canyon Trailhead (1) and Wigwam Creek (2), July 17, 2021

43 Species

3 Mourning Dove — (2)

2 Black-chinned Hummingbird — (2)

17 Broad-tailed Hummingbird — (1),(2)

1 Rufous Hummingbird — (2)

5 Turkey Vulture — (1),(2)
6 Lewis's Woodpecker — (2)
3 Red-headed Woodpecker — (2)
1 Hairy Woodpecker (Rocky Mts.) — (2)
7 Northern Flicker (Red-shafted) — (2)
1 American Kestrel — (2)
8 Olive-sided Flycatcher — (1),(2)
17 Western Wood-Pewee — (1),(2)
1 Cordilleran Flycatcher — (1)
1 Plumbeous Vireo — (2)
5 Warbling Vireo — (1)
1 Steller's Jay (Interior) — (1)
4 Black-billed Magpie — (2)
3 Common Raven — (1),(2)
4 Mountain Chickadee — (1)
24 Violet-green Swallow — (1),(2)
3 White-breasted Nuthatch — (1),(2)
15 Pygmy Nuthatch — (1),(2)
1 House Wren — (2)
1 Gray Catbird — (1)
1 Townsend's Solitaire — (2)
15 American Robin — (1),(2)
1 Evening Grosbeak — (2)
1 Cassin's Finch — (2)
8 Pine Siskin — (2)
2 Lesser Goldfinch — (1)
2 American Goldfinch — (1)
4 Chipping Sparrow — (2)
6 Lark Sparrow — (2)
5 Green-tailed Towhee — (2)
1 Western Meadowlark — (2)
1 Red-winged Blackbird — (2)
1 Brewer's Blackbird — (1)
3 MacGillivray's Warbler — (1)
5 Yellow Warbler — (1),(2)
1 Yellow-rumped Warbler — (1)
7 Western Tanager — (1),(2)
2 Black-headed Grosbeak — (1),(2)
5 Lazuli Bunting — (2)