

Birds of Palisades/Indian Canyon

By Jim Acton, Audubon Society

For individuals who have an interest in the natural world around them and who dwell on the mysteries of bird migrations, the sights and sounds that one can discover within the parklands are treasures to behold. The parklands have habitats that cover a vast spectrum of territory that birds find favorable during their migratory and breeding periods. Most attractive are berry producing deciduous shrubs near water along with all the Douglas firs and ponderosa pines that the birds investigate for food sources.

What follows is a record of all the species of birds that this birder has found within the boundaries of the parklands:

Great Blue Heron: A flyover that can occur throughout the year.

Tundra Swan: A spring flyover during February, March or early April.

Canada Goose: A flyover that can occur throughout the year.

Mallard: A flyover; however, breeding occurs at great distance from water and probably takes place within Palisades. Water and a marsh area are nearby.

Turkey Vulture: A spring and late summer visitant/migrant. Breeds in some areas of basalt cliff around Seven Mile/Nine Mile. Soars over the Greenwood area off and on. Southward migration starts in early September.

Osprey: A flyover during their hunting and migration period

Bald Eagle: A flyover during their winter and migratory period. They can be found anywhere during their late winter and early spring migratory period.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: A regular and possible breeder in good habitat.

Cooper's Hawk: A regular and breeder.

Northern Goshawk: A winter visitor. Look for it from November through March.

Broad-winged Hawk: The first Washington state record was documented within Indian Canyon Park in September of 1970.

Red-tailed Hawk: A regular and breeder.

Northern Harrier: Sometimes hunts in the fields adjacent to Indian Canyon.

American Kestrel: A regular and breeder if habitat is available. Uses old woodpecker nests, dead tree cavities or even nest boxes. Some winter in the area. Merlin: A Winter visitor from November through April. Look for this bird at the extreme top of a tree with a dead tip. It launches after targets from these sites.

Ring-necked Pheasant: A regular.

Ruffed Grouse: This bird has been found at the upper portions of Indian Canyon and quite probably occurs within the deciduous habitat of Palisades.

Wild Turkey: Recent records exist. Permanent roaming resident with breeding most likely.

Northern Bobwhite: This bird has been seen at the upper parts of Indian Canyon. It's an introduced species and has not survived very well.

California Quail: A regular.

Virginia Rail and Sora: Both birds have been seen at the ponds along Houston Road and could also be in the marsh in Palisades. (Marsh is westward where the small creek flows under the roadway in Palisades.)

Killdeer: A Spring and summer visitor to the pasturelands around the parks. Probably a breeder in suitable areas.

Long-billed Curlew: A single flyover record exists.

Ring-billed gull: Flyovers.

Rock Dove: Flyovers.

Band-tailed Pigeon: Record exists for the upper Indian Canyon. Rare eastside visitor.

Mourning Dove: a regular and sometimes winters in the area. A breeder in both parks.

Flammulated Owl: A record exists for the upper Indian Canyon area. This is a migratory insect eating small owl. The record is in September.

Great Horned Owl: A regular and a breeder. Permanent resident.

Pygmy-Owl Northern: A winter visitor.

Common Nighthawk: A summer resident and breeder.

Vaux's Swift: A September migrant passing over Indian Canyon at the tip. (Bonnie/Rimrock).

Black-chinned Hummingbird: A migrant both spring and late summer.

Rufous Hummingbird: A migrant both early spring and late summer.

Belted Kingfisher: A flyover to and from Latah creek/Spokane River.

Red-naped Sapsucker: A migrant that has breeding records. Numbers have decreased in recent years.

Downy Woodpecker: A permanent resident.

Hairy Woodpecker: A permanent resident although not as numerous as the Downy.

Northern Flicker: A regular throughout the year. (Breeder)

Olive-sided Flycatcher: A migrant during the spring and late summer; however, it has been recorded as breeding in some years in the lower portions of the Palisades. This year one singing bird was still in Indian Canyon in June which might relate to possible breeding. Most go farther north.

Western Wood-Pewee: A breeding summer resident.

Willow Flycatcher: This bird was a breeder in the past; however, the numbers have declined. A few can still be found in the Palisades.

Hammonds Flycatcher: A migrant both spring and late summer

Dusky Flycatcher: A migrant both spring and late summer; however, a breeding bird record does exist in the Greenwood area.

Gray Flycatcher: A migrant both spring and late summer. Breeds in the ORV area of Riverside State Park. Likes dry ponderosa pine habitat.

Pacific-slope Flycatcher: A breeding summer resident in the moist canyons of Indian Canyon. (Formerly known as the Western Flycatcher).

Say's Phoebe: A migrant on the outside perimeters. Breeds in areas of farm buildings.

Eastern Kingbird: A summer resident/breeder in suitable habitat. A September migrant.

Western Kingbird: A migrant in the open areas surrounding the park perimeters.

Tree Swallow: A summer resident and breeder if suitable natural or man-made nesting sites are available. Mostly found on the perimeters of the parks.

Violet-green Swallow: A summer resident and breeder. Uses natural and man-made structures for nesting. Also nests in openings along the basalt cliffs.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow: A summer breeder along the sand banks of the city dump area and along the basalt cliffs.

Bank Swallow: A migrant seen overflying the tip area of Indian Canyon during September.

Barn Swallow: A summer breeder around farm buildings surrounding the parks. Over flying the tip of Indian Canyon during September migration.

Clarks Nutcracker: A few records exist within the park areas. Non-resident.

Black-billed Magpie: A regular.

American Crow: A regular.

Common Raven: A regular.

Mountain Chickadee: A regular throughout the year.

White-breasted Nuthatch: Infrequently found throughout the year. Likes pines.

Brown Creeper: Fall and winter visiter. Found most frequently down through the center of Indian Canyon.

Rock Wren: Spring and summer resident along the basalt rock formations. The numbers have decreased in recent years. Some may winter.

Canyon Wren: Found and heard infrequently along the basalt cliffs in spring and late summer. May breed some years.

Bewick's Wren: This is a recent addition to Indian Canyon. Seen and heard during the spring and late summer. May winter. Breeding has been determined.

House Wren: A late fall and winter resident A great inspector for the garden.

Winter wren: A late fall and winter resident along the moist creek areas. Very secretive. Sometimes heard singing during early spring. Moves northward for breeding.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: A spring and late summer migrant. A very few might winter in deciduous areas.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: A spring and late summer migrant. A very few might winter in deciduous areas.

Western Bluebird: A migrant and local breeder. Can be seen overflying the tip of Indian Canyon during late September/early October.

Mountain Bluebird: A migrant overflying the tip of Indian Canyon in September and early October. Breeds in open areas close to the parks. Most go northward.

Townsend's Solitaire: A spring and early fall migrant. Winter resident . May breed around the dense tree stands within Palisades.

Veery: Formally a breeder in Indian Canyon. Vacated the area when activity increased. A singing bird was heard this June which may indicate a return. It was not heard or located the next two days. As the years go by, it may re-establish as the park returns to its original state.

Swainsons's Thrush: A very secretive late summer migrant. Small numbers are the rule as most overfly the region. Singing birds have been heard in Indian Canyon during their late May northward migration.

Hermit Thrush: A late summer migrant(September and into fall). Likes berries and is secretive. Breeder in areas above 5,000 feet into Canada/Alaska/Western US.

American Robin: Regular throughout the year. Winter birds are probably those from northern latitudes.

Varied Thrush: Winter visiter. Found in Indian Canyon sometimes next to the creek. Likes mountain ash berries, like the robins

Gray Catbird: Spring/summer migrant and breeder within the park.

Bohemian Waxwing: Winter visitor for the berries. Hawks insects in late summer.

Cedar Waxwing: Spring and summer visitor and breeder. Some winter and can be found in with the Bohemians or in groups all by themselves. Likes most all the berries.

Northern Shrike: Sometimes seen around the perimeter of the parks in winter.

European Starling: Regular/permanent resident that impacts survival of native birds such as bluebirds, woodpeckers and swallows.

Cassin's Vireo: Spring migrant, summer breeder and fall migrant. Builds nest in Douglas fir trees. (Formerly known as the solitary Vireo.)

Warbling Vireo: Spring migrant, summer breeder and fall migrant. Builds nest in deciduous shrubs.

Red-eyed Vireo: Summer migrant around mid-August. Likes the cottonwood trees around lakes and rivers northward.

Orange-crown Warbler: Spring migrant, summer breeder in deciduous areas within the parks and fall migrant.

Nashville Warbler: Spring migrant, summer breeder in certain areas near the Indian Canyon tip and late summer to early fall migrant.

Yellow Warbler: Spring migrant, summer breeder in the park and late summer migrant.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: Spring migrant, some breed in certain areas within the park and late summer and fall migrant.

Townsends's Warbler: Spring and late summer migrant. Breeds in mountain areas northward. Likes investigating fir trees.

Palm Warbler: Extremely rare Washington late summer migrant that has been discovered twice in Indian Canyon Park. Bobs tail while foraging

MacGillivray's Warbler: Spring and late summer/early fall migrant

Common Yellowthroat: Spring and late summer/early fall migrant. Very seldom seen in areas such as Indian Canyon; however, it has happened. (This is a bird of the marsh areas around water.)

Wilson's Warbler: A spring and late summer and fall migrant. Forages around deciduous shrubs. Breeds in the northern latitudes and higher altitudes. (Mount Spokane for one area.)

Yellow-breasted Chat: Spring migrant, a breeder within the park around the Greenwood area and a late summer migrant. Secretive in the fall migration. Very loud in its springtime song.

Western Tanager: Spring migrant, a breeder within the park and a late summer and early fall migrant. Likes the berries during the fall.

Black-headed Grosbeak: Spring migrant, a breeder in certain areas in and outside the park boundaries and a late summer migrant.

Lazuli Bunting: Spring migrant, a breeder in certain areas in and outside the park boundaries and a late summer migrant.

Spotted Towhee: Spring migrant, a breeder within the park area and a late summer and early fall migrant. (Formerly known as Ruffed Grouse.)

American Tree Sparrow: A rare late summer visitant within the park. Only a few discoveries have been made. (A winter bird of the open country with mixed shrubs.)

Chipping Sparrow: A spring migrant, a breeder within the park and a late summer and early fall migrant. One bird was found in winter in Palisades

Clay-colored Sparrow: In 1975, this sparrow was discovered singing in shrubs at the top of Indian Canyon. In Washington, it's a rare migrant. In 1994, the bird was discovered along the Centennial Trail by Dr. Roundy and I have monitored it since then. It failed to breed in 2000 and did not appear this year. It was present every year from 1994 up to the middle of June of 2000, then, they disappeared

Vesper Sparrow: An unusual visitant to the upper open areas of Indian Canyon during late summer. A sparrow of the open countryside.

Lark Sparrow: A spring migrant found along the roadway in Palisades, a possible breeder in the dry ponderosa areas of that park and a late summer migrant. (Very few seen.)

Savannah Sparrow: A sparrow of the open agricultural fields to the west; however, a few birds can be found in the grass areas around the upper areas of Indian Canyon during the fall migration.

Fox Sparrow: A regular spring and late summer and early fall migrant. Almost always located near water and at the upper end of Indian Canyon.

Song Sparrow: A regular yearlong resident.

Lincoln's Sparrow: A secretive spring migrant but a fairly regular late summer and early fall migrant to the upper parts of Indian Canyon near water and shrubs. Likes berries during the fall move. Breeds in grassy bogs north of our region.

White-throated Sparrow: One of the sparrows that makes the upper sections of Indian Canyon so attractive to the birding community. This sparrow is a rare but fairly regular late summer or early fall visitant to the area. It's a berry and seed eater during the fall migration and is usually found in association with the large concentration of White-crowned Sparrows that come through the area.

Golden-crowned Sparrow: The same is true for this sparrow. It is a rare spring migrant but a sparrow to always be on the lookout for during the late summer or early fall migration. It also will be found in association with the White-crowned Sparrow migration.

White-crowned Sparrow: A regular spring migrant as well as a late summer and early fall migrant in large numbers. This species is the most numerous bird found in the upper parts of Indian Canyon during late August and through September.

Harris's Sparrow: An extremely rare spring and late summer or early fall migrant through the upper parts of the park. Only about 3 birds have been observed during the fall migration and 1 singing bird during May.

Dark-eyed Junco: A spring migrant, a breeder in the park in small numbers, and a late summer or early fall migrant. A most numerous winter bird around feeders.

Red-winged Blackbird: Sometimes seen in the open fields around the upper areas of Indian Canyon. Most seen as flyovers on their southward migration.

Western Meadowlark: Sometimes seen and heard around the open areas adjacent to Indian Canyon. A migrant most often found in open grasslands and agricultural fields.

Brown-headed Cowbird: A spring migrant and a local breeder using other birds as hosts for its egg. Reproduction for the favorable host bird is lost. Most move out of our area by the middle of July. (They impact sparrows, vireos, buntings, warblers, juncos, grosbeaks and others..)

Bullocks's Oriole: A spring migrant with a few seen during the late summer period. A few breed in and around the park

Cassin's Finch: A late winter/early spring migrant; however, during recent times the numbers have been very small. Some winter around Palisades.

House Finch: A regular yearlong resident.

Red Crossbill: A regular yearlong resident especially in the Palisades; however, sometimes they go into decline and disappear for months.

Pine Siskin: Although this bird can be found within the parks on a yearlong basis, there are times when they also disappear for months. They are somewhat cyclic. A lesser migrant to some degree.

American Goldfinch: Also a lesser migrant as some birds are found yearlong. A breeding bird.

Evening Grosbeak: Somewhat cyclic. A spring and early fall migrant as well as a winter resident. Has nested in or around Indian Canyon.

House Sparrow: A regular unwanted breeder in areas around the outside areas of the parks. It takes over nesting areas established for swallows and bluebirds.

Some wandering thoughts: Live trees with dead top limbs are most beneficial to the Red-tail, the Merlin, the Kestrel, the Kingbirds and the Flycatchers. The higher the perch, the better it is to see the targets.

I never cease to marvel at the ability of the Olive-sided Flycatcher to strike out from an observation post, fly a couple of hundred feet, snatch a yellowjacket or hornet in midair and return to the post, pound it a couple of times then gulp it down.

Humming bird Information

1. The earliest date that I have ever experienced the return of a hummingbird was on April 3rd. It was a Calliope. The Rufous and the Calliope often are right behind one another and normally return between the 13th and 15th of April.

2. I put my feeders out about 3 days prior to the earliest date of arrival so that they will be on station when the birds return. (Only filled 1/4..) (1 once witnessed a Calliope roar up to a feeder platform and probe for a feeder that was not there ! Tell me they don't remember!)

3. The Black-chinned returns around d the second week of May.

4. The male Roufous starts his southward return migration during the 4th week of June. By mid July, most if not all males will have departed. The male Calliope has disappeared by them middle of July. The male Black-chin will start his migration during the second week of August.

5. What follows to your feeders are the females and juvenile/immature males and females. My last hummingbird has stayed around until the 20th of September. Prior to that time, you will experience hummingbird numbers that will fluctuate almost daily. Peaks should happen in late July and in mid August. Some are departing and some are arriving. (The extremely rare Anna's has wintered here--it's a west coast bird.)

6. Do not take your feeders down early. You are not encouraging migration. That timetable has already been instilled genetically. Keep them up until at least late September so that they will be available to those birds moving southward from extreme northern locations. (Alaska for the Roufous.)

7. And if anyone has ever heard the story about hummingbirds migrating of the backs of geese--forget it! They both move at different times and are headed for different destinations. Geese migrate in October and November into WA, OR, and CA.. Hummingbirds are headed for the Gulf Coast, Mexico, Central America and ever South America.

(Let me know if you hear of anybody having a bird at their feeder into October...that's an Anna's.

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