

AUDUBON PARK BIRD COUNTS APRIL, 2014

April is often one of the most important months of the year with the bulk of the spring migration taking place during the last two weeks of the month. That was certainly the case this year there being three significant fronts. In fine weather this passage goes on above our heads and we see very little of it. A front stops this passage dead and the birds land to eat and rest before going on their way. The first two fronts comprised narrow bands of torrential rain but they occurred during the middle of the day and the number of birds was small. The third was a very weak event but it occurred at day break and that made all the difference. This event occurred on the 26th and I will detail it later.

One advantage this park has over some other sites is water. Firstly there is the marsh and most of the warblers were along the eastern side of the marsh. The waterthrushes with only one exception were along the eastern “shore” of the marsh. The line of trees along the eastern side of the impoundments also held an array of warblers. The wood to the south of the impoundments was also productive but excepting the Worm-eating Warbler few warblers could be found along the bike trail. For the record I treat the park as extending to the 2.5 mile marker.

Up to the end of March Wild Turkeys were a major attraction but they are now nesting and the White-tailed Deer have taken over. I often see five a day in the impoundment area, they are not very wary allowing at times a quite close approach. The other attraction is still the Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks they come in at first light and settle down to roost. The Sandhill Cranes have a chick and the male crane does not like these ducks (not sure why) so many of the ducks leave for less disturbed neighborhoods; however some normally stay to roost all day now.

Now to the birds, a Short-tailed Hawk was first seen on the 1st and later I realized that there was a pair to the west nesting perhaps near the bike trail the park side of Providence Road. Just to confuse me there was a Broad-winged Hawk on the 3rd. To my surprise a flock of seven Brown Pelicans flew to the south on the 7th. The first front on the 10th brought single Yellow-throated Vireo, Black-throated Blue Warbler and an American Redstart. During the month small parties of Double-crested Cormorants flew to the north but 182 on the 14th was by far the highest count.

Chuck-will's-widows peaked at 16 on the 19th and the Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks peaked at 87 on the 16th. There was a Kentucky Warbler on the 16th and 17th. On the latter date a Caspian Tern flew to the east, a Bank Swallow flew to the north and a Worm-eating Warbler was in the area; this stayed to the 22nd. Now we come to the second front as on the 20th there were three Blackpoll and single Cerulean, Hooded and Tennessee Warblers. There was also a

Louisiana Waterthrush, two Indigo Buntings and a Painted Bunting. To round out the day a total of 51 Eastern Kingbirds flew to the north.

On the 22nd a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron flew over; it or another did so again on the 26th. Also on the 22nd a Cliff Swallow and 211 Barn Swallows flew to the north. On the 24th there were five Blackpoll Warblers (one was a female) and a Cape May Warbler put in an appearance. This brings us the 26th and the main front. There were eight Solitary Sandpipers, a Veery, 12 Black-throated Blue Warblers, 18 American Redstarts, three Cape May Warblers, six Black-and-white Warblers and two Blackpoll Warblers.

In all during the month I saw 129 species and the overall list stands at 163. May will still be a good month but the number of species will be much lower. June is the slowest month before counts start building to another peak in October. As you can see this 60 acre site is proving to be of exceptional interest for the variety of birds that visit or fly over the area.

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