

Bird Walk at Lakes & Ponds Near Mill Creek

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By Douglas Resnick

Terry, Joanie, Jerry, Lisa, and I met on a cool, partly cloudy morning at Ash Way Park and Ride. From there, we carpooled to Martha Lake, Buffalo Ponds, and Silver Lake. We reported observations of 38 species on eBird.

Our first stop was at Martha Lake Park, which is located at the south end of the lake. We began by checking out the trees and bushes along the edge of the lake, where we found plenty of kinglets, chickadees, bushtits, and siskins. Each time we came to a pier, we walked along it, in order better to view the lake and the sky above. We were rewarded by views of Common Merganser, Mallard, Pied-billed Grebe, and Bald Eagle. We completed this segment of the day's outing by walking on the paved trail closer to the street, finding starling, gull, and pigeon.

Our second stop was at Buffalo Ponds. This is not a park, but an undeveloped area that includes ponds, and through which passes a single, paved trail. We walked to one trailhead from a nearby shopping area, almost immediately discovering several Wood Ducks in a pond visible from the street. In ponds visible from the trail, we saw Hooded Mergansers and Green-winged Teals. Numerous Canada Goose flew overhead, as did several Red-winged Blackbirds. One Red-tailed Hawk looked out upon the scene from a tall snag. In the background, we heard a Killdeer call.

Jerry bid us adieu, then the remainder of the party set out for Silver Lake. We parked at Hauge Homestead Park, near the south end of the lake, then walked a mostly paved trail to Green Lantern Park near the east end. The trail was alternately close to the lake and close to the street, and several piers led from the trail to positions over the water. Near the start, we found a Belted Kingfisher in a tree; it had caught a fish and was battering it against the side of the tree, perhaps in the hope of stunning or killing it, as it was still wiggling. Other notable finds included an American Coot and a Cooper's Hawk.

We finished birding around 12:30 p.m., then walked a short distance from Green Lantern Park to L'Artisan French Bakery for lunch. Later, on our way back to the car, we saw a flock of Ring-billed Gull circling near the first pier. They finally set out in more of a line, apparently chasing the one that had food. On approaching closer to the pier, we found the food source: someone feeding the Mallards.