

Bird Walk at Carkeek Park

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By Douglas Resnick

Our stalwart band of birders met on a very rainy morning at the Eddie McAbee entrance of Carkeek Park in Seattle. The rain became lighter as we descended the trail and had stopped by the time that we reached the floor of the gulch-like park. As the rain became lighter, we began to hear some birds: American Robin, Black-capped Chickadee, and Golden-crowned Kinglet. Not long after, we spotted a flock of Pine Siskins flying as a group from one tree to another.

During the first part of our outing, we followed Piper's Creek Trail. Aside from the birds, we couldn't help but notice the creek itself, which was turbulent with the rush of rainwater pouring off the street and hillside to the south. At one point, someone noticed a smell of petroleum; the location was noted for later reporting. As we proceeded, we discovered that quite a few visitors, as determined as ourselves, had assembled in the park for a running event.

We stopped several times along the way to look for any salmon in the stream, but had no luck until we reached the wetland east of the railroad tracks. Part of the trail was flooded, apparently due to the combined effects of a beaver's dam and the earlier, heavy downpour, but we were able to go around this section by making use of the paved roadway just north of the trail. On returning to the trail, one of us spotted the back and a fin of a salmon heading toward, but not getting past the somewhat ineffective dam. In the wetland, we had our first view of Mallards and American Wigeons in the park.

We continued on the trail to the walkway over the tracks. On the walkway, we discovered another group of birders, with whom we occasionally mingled, as we birded along the beach. Glaucous-winged Gulls were present here, along with American Crows, and Double-crested Cormorants offshore. As we made our way back to the walkway, we encountered a group of volunteers who look after the state of the park. Dressed in seriously waterproof clothing, they were sounding the waters that surrounded the outflow of the creek. We shared the location of the petroleum smell with one of them, so that they could investigate further. A salmon kicked up the waters, as it made its way to the creek.

The rain resumed, soon accompanied by lightning and thunder, as we made our way onto South Ridge Trail. For a while, our minds were more on getting through the heavy rainfall than on looking for birds; then, we started to encounter the runners in motion. Eventually both these flows lightened, and we added Pacific Wren and Chestnut-backed Chickadee to our checklist.

We finished our walk close to 11:30 AM, having recorded 18 species on our eBird checklist.