

A survey of Birds of Forest Park in Everett, Washington

This report summarizes a survey of bird species found in Forest Park of Everett, Washington. The author is an intermediate-level, amateur birder who lives near the Park and has birded there frequently over the past decade. The primary reference used was *Birds of the Puget Sound Region* by Morse, Aversa, and Opperman, which the author considers an excellent (and perhaps under-rated) source of information for birds in this region.

The Survey

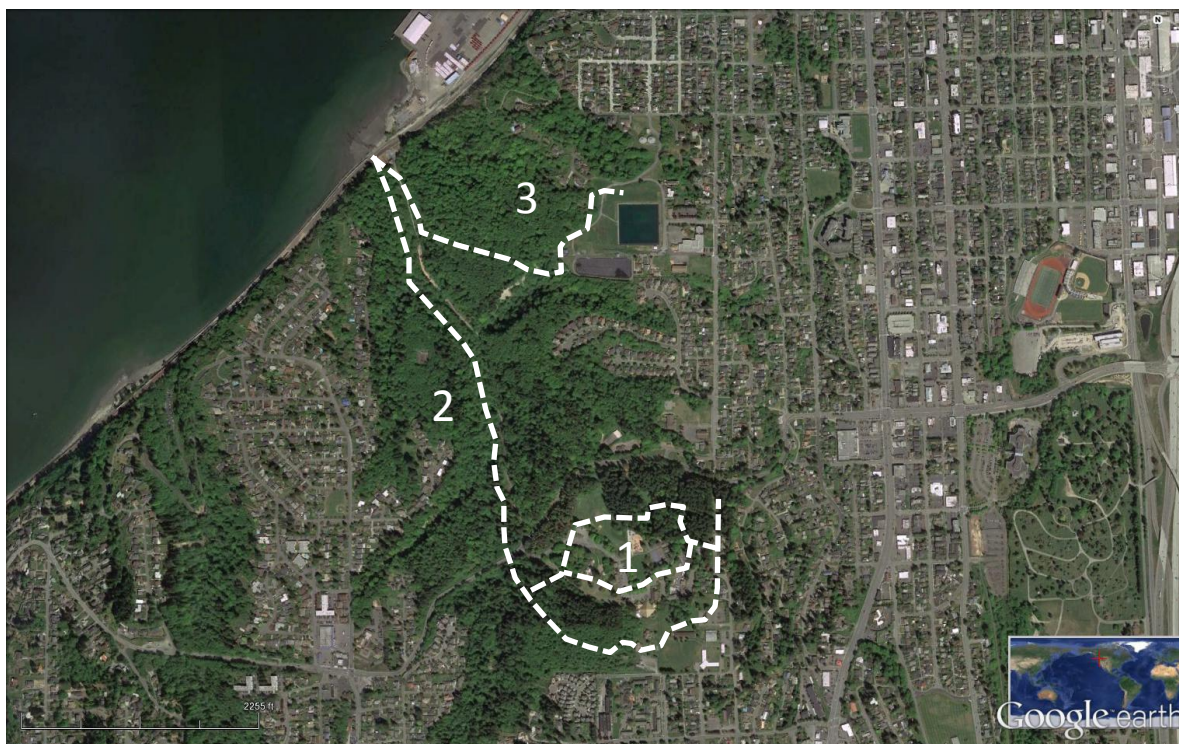
For the two-year period beginning January 2011, between two to four times each week, the author conducted surveys of the bird species, numbers and habitats in Forest Park and adjacent forested lands (e.g., the City of Everett Utility Department properties). Each survey consisted of a walking tour of the Park and Park edges between 1 and 3 miles and typically 2-3 hours. The routes (see Figure 1 below) typically followed:

1. various established social trails through the areas of the Park south of Mukilteo Boulevard,
2. the road down Pigeon Creek #1 north of Mukilteo Boulevard to the City of Everett Lift Station at the edge of Possession Sound, and
3. the poorly maintained trail between the Lift Station and the City of Everett Reservoir Number Four at the top of the hill with the radio tower.

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Figure 1 – Aerial View of Forest Park with Survey Routes



Introduction

The following summarizes the results of those surveys in terms of the species seen, their relative abundance, the typical times of year they were observed, and the habitats in which they were most commonly observed. Overall, 80 species were observed at least once. Of these about 10 were sightings of birds seen only once or twice that are likely atypical or accidental in Forest Park. However, 70 species were observed which could be characterized as at least occasional and probably typical for Forest Park. Note that the surveys did not include birds seen only in Possession Sound like waterfowl, shorebirds, most gull species, grebes, etc. The surveys did include a few species observed primarily on the turf areas adjacent to the Park near City of Everett Reservoir Number Four like Killdeer, Savanna Sparrows, and Northern Rough-Winged Swallows.

The 70 Typical Species for Forest Park

The 70 species considered typical for Forest Park based on this survey are shown in Figure 2 in alphabetical order and characterized in terms of relative abundance, seasonal pattern, and whether or not the species is believed to nest in the Park.

Figure 2 - The 70 Typical Species for Forest Park

	Species Name	Relative Abundance	Seasonal Grouping	Nesting in Park
1	American Crow	Abundant	Year Round	Yes
2	American Goldfinch	Common	Summer	Yes
3	American Robin	Abundant	Year Round	Yes
4	Anna's Hummingbird	Very Common	Year Round	Yes
5	Bald Eagle	Common	Year Round	Yes
6	Band-Tailed Pigeon	Occasional	Year Round	Maybe
7	Barn Swallow	Common	Summer	No
8	Barred Owl	Occasional	Year Round	Maybe
9	Belted Kingfisher	Common	Summer	Maybe
10	Bewick's Wren	Common	Year Round	Yes
11	Black Swift	Occasional	Migrant	No
12	Black-Capped Chickadee	Very Common	Year Round	Yes
13	Black-Headed Grosbeak	Common	Summer	Yes
14	Black-Throated Gray Warbler	Common	Summer	Yes
15	Brown Creeper	Common	Year Round	Yes
16	Brown-Headed Cowbird	Common	Summer	Yes
17	Bushtit	Common	Year Round	Yes
18	Cedar Waxwing	Common	Summer	Yes
19	Chestnut-Backed Chickadee	Very Common	Year Round	Yes
20	Cooper's Hawk	Occasional	Year Round	No
21	Dark-Eyed Junco	Very Common	Year Round	Yes
22	Downy Woodpecker	Occasional	Year Round	Yes
23	European Starling	Common	Year Round	Yes
24	Evening Grosbeak	Occasional	Migrant	No
25	Fox Sparrow	Occasional	Winter	No
26	Glaucous-Winged Gull	Occasional	Year Round	No
27	Golden-Crowned Kinglet	Common	Year Round	Yes
28	Golden-Crowned Sparrow	Common	Winter	No
29	Great Horned Owl	Occasional	Year Round	No
30	Hairy Woodpecker	Common	Year Round	Yes
31	Hermit Thrush	Occasional	Winter	No
32	House Finch	Common	Year Round	Yes
33	House Sparrow	Common	Year Round	Yes
34	Hutton's Vireo	Occasional	Year Round	Yes
35	Killdeer	Occasional	Migrant	No
36	Merlin	Occasional	Year Round	No

	Species Name	Relative Abundance	Seasonal Grouping	Nesting in Park
37	Mourning Dove	Occasional	Year Round	No
38	Northern Flicker	Very Common	Year Round	Yes
39	Northern Rough-Winged Swallow	Occasional	Migrant	No
40	Olive-Sided Flycatcher	Occasional	Migrant	No
41	Orange-Crowned Warbler	Common	Summer	Maybe
42	Pacific Wren	Very Common	Year Round	Yes
43	Pacific-Slope Flycatcher	Common	Summer	Yes
44	Pileated Woodpecker	Common	Year Round	Yes
45	Pine Siskin	Common	Winter	No
46	Red Crossbill	Occasional	Year Round	No
47	Red-Breasted Nuthatch	Common	Year Round	Yes
48	Red-Breasted Sapsucker	Occasional	Year Round	Maybe
49	Red-Tailed Hawk	Occasional	Year Round	No
50	Ruby-Crowned Kinglet	Very Common	Winter	No
51	Rufous Hummingbird	Common	Migrant	No
52	Savanna Sparrow	Occasional	Migrant	No
53	Sharp-Shinned Hawk	Occasional	Year Round	No
54	Song Sparrow	Abundant	Year Round	Yes
55	Spotted Towhee	Very Common	Year Round	Yes
56	Steller's Jay	Very Common	Year Round	Yes
57	Swainson's Thrush	Common	Summer	Yes
58	Townsend's Solitaire	Occasional	Migrant	No
59	Townsend's Warbler	Common	Migrant	No
60	Varied Thrush	Very Common	Winter	No
61	Vaux's Swift	Common	Summer	No
62	Violet-Green Swallow	Common	Summer	No
63	Warbling Vireo	Common	Migrant	No
64	Western Tanager	Common	Migrant	No
65	Western Wood Pewee	Common	Migrant	No
66	White-Crowned Sparrow	Common	Summer	Yes
67	Willow Flycatcher	Occasional	Migrant	No
68	Wilson's Warbler	Common	Summer	Yes
69	Yellow Warbler	Occasional	Migrant	No
70	Yellow-Rumped Warbler	Common	Migrant	No

Forest Park Habitats

For each bird sighting in the two-year survey, a notation was made of the location in terms of habitat type. Forest Park has a variety of different habitats but for the survey, they were grouped into eight categories as follows: Forest, Forest Overhead, Forest Edge Trees, Forest Edge Brush, Forest Edge Overhead, Forest Edge Turf/Ground, Forest Edge Bay and Forest Edge Developed Park.

Forest

South of Mukilteo Boulevard approximately ½ of the Park is forested, with conifers predominant. Most of the rest of the area south of the Boulevard is turf or asphalt. North of the Boulevard most of the Park is forested with hardwoods predominant. No distinction between hardwood and conifer forests was made in the notations.

Forest Overhead

Some of the sightings were birds flying above the forest canopy. Of these, the only ones “counted” were those which might reasonably be assumed to make some use of the forest habitat. Birds that were simply flying over were not. For example, though various species of waterfowl were seen flying over the Park like swans and geese, they are not included among the 70 species because they do not use the Park for feeding or resting. Swifts and swallows, on the other hand, were counted because they actively feed in the airspace above the forest canopy, and presumably are capturing insects that are flying out of the forest below.

Forest Edge

Many, if not most of the sightings occurred at the many edges of the forest. These edge habitats vary, depending on what the forest abuts.

Forest Edge Trees

Many birds were observed in trees at the edge of the forest. In some cases this is simply because they can be seen more easily, but in many cases, the birds use this edge environment, particularly for feeding.

Forest Edge Brush

In some cases the forest edge includes a strip of brush or Himalayan blackberry bramble that is preferred habitat for several species.

Forest Edge Overhead

Similar to the “Forest Overhead” habitat.

Forest Edge Turf/Ground

Several species like Robins, Varied thrushes, Golden-crowned sparrows are often seen feeding on the turf in areas close to the edge of the forest and flying back into the trees when a threat is perceived.

Forest Edge Bay

The Bald Eagles often sit in tall trees scanning the beach and the bay for feeding opportunities. The Belted Kingfishers often fly back into the trees to rest and may nest in one bank area in the Park at the edge of the bay.

Forest Edge Developed Park

South of Mukilteo Boulevard a portion of the Park is highly developed with buildings, a playground, tennis courts, etc. A few species were primarily observed in association with these developed areas like Glaucous-Winged Gulls and House Finches.

Birds Grouped by Abundance, Seasonal Patterns, and Typical Habitat

In the following sections, species are grouped by abundance (abundant, very common, common and occasional) and seasonal patterns (year-round, summer only, winter only, and migrants). The tables list species alphabetically and show the typical habitats used by the species. The narrative includes brief notes that may be of interest.

Abundant, Year-Round Species

American Crows, American Robins and Song Sparrows (Figure 3) are probably the most abundant birds in the Park. All three are nearly ubiquitous year round and nest in the Park. The populations of Robins may shift, and those that winter in the Park may not be the same birds that nest in the Park. The crows prey upon Robin and other nestlings in open nests, putting less abundant species like Pacific Slope Flycatchers at risk for successful breeding. Song Sparrows are found throughout brushy areas in the Park, even in forested areas beneath dense hardwood or conifer canopies.

Figure 3 - Abundant, Year-Round Species

Species Name	Forest	Forest Edge Trees	Forest Edge Brush	Forest Overhead	Forest Edge Overhead	Forest Edge Turf/Ground	Forest Edge Bay	Forest Edge Developed Park
American Crow	25	349	5	10	20	10	5	12
American Robin	287	83	2			12		10
Song Sparrow	191	25	55			5		

Very Common, Year-Round Species

Eight species were observed very commonly, in all seasons (Figure 4). These species can be considered successful breeders in Forest Park, even though few of them were actually observed engaged in nesting activities. There were a fair number of observations of adults of these species feeding recently fledged juveniles. One reason for the relative success of cavity nesters, like chickadees and flickers may be that they are less susceptible to predation by crows. While some Dark-Eyed Juncos nest in the Park, during the winter their population increases, presumably because mountain-nesting birds winter in the lowlands.

Figure 4 - Very Common, Year-Round Species

Species Name	Forest	Forest Edge Trees	Forest Edge Brush	Forest Overhead	Forest Edge Overhead	Forest Edge Turf/Ground	Forest Edge Bay	Forest Edge Developed Park
Anna's Hummingbird	5	4	8					
Black-Capped Chickadee	25	24	5					
Chestnut-Backed Chickadee	25	5	5					
Dark-Eyed Junco	25	25	8			25		
Northern Flicker	35	6				4		
Pacific Wren	25							
Spotted Towhee	25	5	15			5		
Steller's Jay	25	14			1			

Common, Year-Round Species

Eleven species were commonly observed throughout the year (Figure 5). All of these species have been observed either in nesting activities or feeding young, or are presumed to nest in the Park. A pair of Bald Eagles fledged young in 2012 but was not observed nesting in 2013 when one of the pair disappeared. The eagles often leave for extended periods in the winter, presumably to find better feeding areas like the Skagit River near Marblemount. The range of some species like Hairy and Pileated Woodpeckers, and Red-Breasted Nuthatches, extends beyond Forest Park. Hairy Woodpeckers have been observed at a nesting cavity in Forest Park. No nesting cavity has been observed for Pileated Woodpeckers, but a group of 4 recently-fledged juveniles was observed.

Figure 5 - Common, Year-Round Species

Species Name	Forest	Forest Edge Trees	Forest Edge Brush	Forest Overhead	Forest Edge Overhead	Forest Edge Turf/Ground	Forest Edge Bay	Forest Edge Developed Park
Bald Eagle	10	25		10			25	
Bewick's Wren	30	1	6					
Brown Creeper	40	1						
Bushtit	25	25						
European Starling	5	50			5	50		50
Golden-Crowned Kinglet	25	13						
Hairy Woodpecker	33	1						
House Finch	25	8	8			5		25
House Sparrow			15					25
Pileated Woodpecker	34	5						
Red-Breasted Nuthatch	5	3						

Winter Groupings of Year-Round Residents

During the spring and summer, most of the year-round species are dispersed widely across the Park, establishing and occupying nesting territories. During the fall and winter, however, many of them leave their nesting territories and are observed during the day feeding in flocks. In particular, “winter guilds” of small birds feed together in loose groups, moving from tree to tree through the forest and along the edges.

Figure 6 lists nine species often seen together during the winter. Bewick’s Wrens are often seen with these groups, but it is not very clear to the author if they are actually traveling with the groups, or just popping up out of “their” patch of brush when a group comes by.

Figure 6 – Common Winter Mixed Flocks, Small Birds

Species Name
Bewick's Wren
Black-Capped Chickadee
Brown Creeper
Chestnut-Backed Chickadee
Downy Woodpecker
Golden-Crowned Kinglet
Hutton's Vireo
Red-Breasted Nuthatch
Ruby-Crowned Kinglet

Figure 7 lists six species which were observed mainly in flocks of their own kind, some almost exclusively like Pine Siskins and Red Crossbills. Robins and Varied Thrushes were often observed together, but this may be more because they are sharing feeding areas, more so than actually traveling together. The

same can be said for Golden-Crowned Sparrows and Song sparrows. (Note that the Golden-Crowned Sparrow is not a year-round resident).

Figure 7 – Species Tending to Flock With Their Own Kind in Winter

Species Name
Bushtit
Dark-Eyed Junco
Golden-Crowned Sparrow
Pine Siskin
Red Crossbill
Varied Thrush

Figure 8 lists three species that are usually seen individually or in small groups and are presumed to stay in or near their nesting territories throughout the year.

Figure 8 – Birds Usually Seen Individually or in Small Groups in Winter

Species Name
Pacific Wren
Song Sparrow
Spotted Towhee

Common Migrants

Figure 9 lists six species which are common migrants, regularly stopping to feed and rest in Forest Park, in the spring, autumn or both. Some spend more time in the Park than others, but none of these species were seen regularly throughout the summer, suggesting that these species do not typically nest in the Park. Townsend's warblers were occasionally observed in the winter.

Figure 9 - Common Migrants

Species Name	Forest	Forest Edge Trees	Forest Edge Brush
Rufous Hummingbird	5	5	3
Townsend's Warbler	5	3	
Warbling Vireo	5	5	
Western Tanager	5	5	
Western Wood Pewee	5	2	
Yellow-Rumped Warbler	25	18	

Occasional Migrants

Figure 10 lists nine species which are occasional migrants in Forest Park. Black Swifts sometimes feed over the Park on their way to or from their nesting sites in the mountains. Killdeers, Northern Rough-Winged Swallows, and Savanna Sparrows were seen each spring for a few weeks in the turf areas around Reservoir Number Four. One Townsend’s Solitaire was seen each spring in the same spot for a couple of days.

Figure 10- Occasional Migrants

Species Name	Forest	Forest Edge Trees	Forest Edge Brush	Forest Overhead	Forest Edge Overhead	Forest Edge Turf/Ground
Black Swift				1	5	
Evening Grosbeak	5	5				
Killdeer						5
Northern Rough Wing Swallow					5	5
Olive-Sided Flycatcher	2	3				
Savanna Sparrow						5
Townsend's Solitaire		5				
Willow Flycatcher			1			
Yellow Warbler		1	5			

Common Species Seen Only in the Summer

Figure 11 shows 14 species primarily seen only during the summer. Most of them likely nest in the Park, except for the Vaux's Swift and the two swallow species. There was some evidence for successful nesting by Orange-Crowned Warblers and Belted Kingfishers. The populations of some of these species seem to vary from year to year with Swainson's Thrushes, Wilson's Warblers, Pacific Slope Flycatchers, and Cedar Waxwings being more common in the Park in some years.

Figure 11 - Common Species Seen Only in Summer

Species Name	Forest	Forest Edge Trees	Forest Edge Brush	Forest Overhead	Forest Edge Overhead	Forest Edge Turf/Ground	Nesting in Park?
American Goldfinch	24	19	5				Yes
Barn Swallow				5	5		No
Belted Kingfisher		5					Maybe
Black-Headed Grosbeak	7	3	2				Yes
Black-Throated Gray Warbler	8	5					Yes
Brown-Headed Cowbird		3				2	Yes
Cedar Waxwings	20	20					Yes
Orange-Crowned Warbler	5	5	5				Maybe
Pacific-Slope Flycatcher	5						Yes
Swainson's Thrush	24						Yes
Vaux's Swift				5	5		No
Violet-Green Swallow				25	19		No
White-Crowned Sparrow	5	5	3			25	Yes
Wilson's Warbler	20	3	5				Yes

Occasional Year-Round Species

Figure 12 lists 13 species that are seen occasionally in the Park at any time of the year. Barred Owls were observed nesting in 2011 in the Park north of the Boulevard but not in the following year. Pairs of Band-Tailed Pigeons and Red-Breasted Sapsuckers were observed once in possible nesting habitat during the nesting season. Note that Pigeon Creek in Forest Park is probably named for Band-Tailed Pigeons, not Rock Pigeons. Cooper's Hawks have been observed sitting on nests, but not for long-enough periods to suggest they actually nested. There was some evidence for Hutton's Vireos nesting in the Park and it seems likely that Downy Woodpeckers nest in the Park and were seen in pairs during the nesting season in 2011.

Figure 12 - Occasional Year-Round Species

Species Name	Forest	Forest Edge Trees	Forest Edge Brush	Forest Overhead	Forest Edge Overhead	Forest Edge Turf/Ground	Nesting in Park?
Band-Tailed Pigeon	26	8		30			Maybe
Barred Owl	9						Maybe
Cooper's Hawk	5			5	5		No
Downy Woodpecker	5	2	1				Yes
Glaucous-Winged Gull						1	No
Great Horned Owl	1						No
Hutton's Vireo	5	1					Yes
Merlin		3		5	1		No
Mourning Dove		1					No
Red Crossbill	5						No
Red-Breasted Sapsucker	5	2					Maybe
Red-Tailed Hawk	5	2		2	5		No
Sharp-Shinned Hawk	5	5		5	2		No

Winter-Only Residents

Table 13 lists six species that winter in the Park but nest elsewhere. The table also shows their relative abundance. Varied Thrushes and Ruby-Crowned Kinglets are very common in the Park during the late fall and winter months, returning to the mountains to nest when the snow melts. The populations of Pine Siskins vary from year to year. The winter of 2012-2013 they were especially abundant, but other winters their numbers can be quite low. Hermit Thrushes and Fox Sparrows occasionally winter in the Park. Other times they may be migrating through. Wintering Golden-Crowned Sparrows are less common in Forest Park than in many other lowland locations west of the Cascades but a small population is usually present in winter. Note that the wintering sparrows and thrushes often tend to stay in the same locations all winter.

Figure 13 - Winter-Only Residents

Species Name	Forest	Forest Edge Trees	Forest Edge Brush	Forest Overhead	Forest Edge Overhead	Forest Edge Turf/Ground	Relative Abundance
Fox Sparrow			3			5	Occasional
Golden-Crowned Sparrow			5			6	Common
Hermit Thrush	5						Occasional
Pine Siskin	312	348		25	25		Common
Ruby-Crowned Kinglet	25	7	2				Very Common
Varied Thrush	25					5	Very Common

Likely Species for Forest Park – Not Observed

Figure 14 lists four species which are common or occasional in the region but were not observed in Forest Park.

Figure 14 - Likely Species for Forest Park – Not Observed

Species Name
Cassin's Vireo
Hammond's Flycatcher
Northern Shrike
Western Screech Owl

Birds Observed in Forest Park but not Considered Typical

Figure 15 lists 10 species observed in Forest Park during the survey period that are not considered by the author to be typical for the Park. The Western Scrub Jay is known to be expanding its range and may become typical for the Park in a few years.

Figure 15 - Birds Observed in Forest Park but Not Considered Typical

Species Name
Canada Goose
Common Raven
Common Yellowthroat
Great Blue Heron
Lincoln Sparrow
Mallard
Rock Pigeon
Turkey Vulture
Western Scrub Jay
Wilson's Snipe

Conclusion

Based on a two-year survey, the author concluded that 70 species of birds could be considered "typical" for Forest Park.

In terms of relative abundance, the author characterized them as:

- Abundant – 3 species
- Very Common – 10 species
- Common - 33 species
- Occasional – 24 species

In terms of seasonal patterns the author characterized them as:

- Year round – 35 species
- Migrants (Spring and/or Fall) – 16 species
- Summer Only – 13 species
- Winter Only – 6 species

In terms of whether or not the species like nest successfully in Forest Park the author characterized them as:

- Yes – 33 species
- No – 32 species
- Maybe – 5 species

Written by John Davis, Everett WA, December 2013