

CENTRAL PARK BIRD WALKS, SPRING 2011

Mike Morrell, 14 November 2015

At the suggestion of Annie Corddry of DCA's Central Park Committee, I led a series of weekly bird walks in Central Park, Denman Island in spring of 2011. Dennis Forsyth, an experienced Denman birder, and Mike Super, a wildlife biologist with extremely sensitive and educated ears, were present on nearly every excursion. In addition, we were joined by a total of 15 volunteer observers, each attending from one to several walks.

Beginning at 8AM, we followed the same 2.5km route on each walk. Starting at the corner of Denman Rd and North Central Rd, we followed North Central Rd north to the beginning of the Swale Trail. We took the Swale Trail to the Boardwalk and continued along the Boardwalk Path to the Beaufort View Path, which we walked south to the junction with the Alder Trail. We followed the Alder Trail southeast and returned to our starting point via the new cemetery, which was in its early stages in 2011. We proceeded slowly, stopping frequently to listen and look. On average the walks lasted about 3 hours (2.2 - 4.5hr). We identified and counted every bird we detected by eye or ear.

After an initial reconnaissance on 23 March to establish the route, we walked the route every Friday morning from 25 March through 17 June, for a total of 14 walks. Viewing conditions were good on nearly every count; we encountered light rain only on 1 April and 27 May. I have an electronic record (Excel spreadsheet) of the details of sightings on every survey as well as copies of all my field notes. I have provided a data summary in PDF format to DCA and will be happy to provide more detail as and when DCA may need them.

On all the counts combined, we identified a total of 64 species with certainty and 3 more with some uncertainty. On individual surveys we encountered from 23 to 48 species (23 Mar and 13 May respectively). We found between 54 and 159 individual birds per count and had 100 or more on 10 of the 14 outings.

We identified 4 species on every count: Chestnut-backed Chickadee, American Robin, Spotted Towhee and Song Sparrow. We encountered an additional 24 species on 7 or more outings. Seven species appeared on only a single occasion.

I'm confident that our list includes all the common spring species to be found in Central Park, as well as several uncommon ones. A complete spring list would be longer, and a year-round list would include many more species. I've identified a total of 95 bird species in 20 years residence on my property immediately south of Central Park, and a complete list for Denman Island and adjacent waters would total around 200.

Our spring bird list is a fair beginning on a species list for Central Park. As a step toward a year-round list for the park, I will review my personal notes and consult with other birders to add species that are not already on this spring list.