

# Bird Survey at St Edward State Park

2014-2015 Report

With comparison with 2003-2004 Report



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## Bird Survey at Saint Edward State Park

### 2014-2015 Report

#### Summary

From February 2014 to January 2015 Eastside Audubon Society conducted its second survey of birds in Saint Edward State Park in Kenmore, WA. The new survey found a total of 72 species of birds showing an increase of 10 species over an earlier survey conducted from August 2003 to July 2004. This new survey comes 10 years after the first survey and allows for a comparison of bird life in the park. There were changes in the bird population in the park that reflect some changes in bird life in the Puget Trough area of Washington. Eight species of birds not seen in 2003-2004 are now commonly seen in the park. Two species common in the past are no longer seen in the park. Both surveys show a diversity of bird life that reflects the forested areas of the park and the Lake Washington shoreline.

#### Saint Edward State Park

Saint Edward State Park is located in Kenmore, WA and is the largest remaining undeveloped area on Lake Washington. It is primarily a multi-use day park with lawns, ball fields, forested trails, lakeshore, and Romanesque style brick buildings that once served as a Roman Catholic seminary. The gymnasium is used for youth basketball and some of the residence space is used by rangers. The large dormitory building with dining hall and library is not in use and Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission has been looking for a tenant that is willing to renovate the building, which has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places based on its architectural significance. Many groups use the park for sports, picnics, and a children's playground, and many individuals jog and walk the trails which include a 3,000 feet section along the Lake Washington shoreline.

#### Previous Bird Survey

Eastside Audubon Society conducted a year-long bird survey from August 2003 to July 2004 with a total of 62 bird species seen during the course of that 12-month period. A similar pattern of bird sightings was seen during the 2014-2015 survey which found a total of 72 species. Comparison of the two surveys will be discussed below and spreadsheets showing the numbers and months of sightings of the bird species accompany this report.

### Survey Method for 2014-2015

The survey team included five members of Eastside Audubon Society: Andrew McCormick, Sharon Aagard, Carol Ray, Nancy Hubley, and Linda Phillips. Membership of the actual survey team changed somewhat from month to month, but a minimum of two people surveyed each month.

A walk-through survey method was used and the same route was followed on each survey outing. The survey route began at the North Parking Lot and the team followed a trail east by the storage sheds to about 50 yards past the intersection of the Entrance and Arrowhead Trails. The route then turned south along the park road past the seminary building, then east along the Water Tower trail for about 150 yards returning to the orchard area. From the orchard the route followed the right fork of the Orchard Loop and then west along the South Canyon Trail to the lakeshore. The route then turned north along the Beach Trail and up the North Trail returning to the North Parking Lot, finishing with a circuit of the central building grounds and the Grotto area.

A large section in the southeast corner of the park has no trails and was not surveyed, nor was the 51-acre parcel now owned by Bastyr University. The eastern section of the Tower Trail and the South Ridge Trail were also not surveyed.

Each survey outing began slightly before dawn between 5:30 and 7:00 a.m. depending on the season and lasted about five hours. Notes of all birds seen and heard were kept and totals were entered into the eBird database managed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. These data are available for anyone to review.

### Results

The 2014-2015 survey located a total of 72 species of birds in and flying over the park and within view from the park on Lake Washington resulting in an increase of 10 species over the 2003-2004 survey. Twenty-two species of birds were seen in the 2014-2015 survey that were not seen in the 2003-2004 survey, and 12 species were seen in 2003-2004 that were not seen in 2014-2015.

These changes are not so dramatic as a closer look at the data reveals that many of the changes were in species that were seen only once during their respective years. There were nine species seen only once in 2003-2004 and twelve species seen only once in the 2014-2015 survey. Adjusting the data by eliminating these uncommon sightings brings the 2003-2004 survey to 53 species compared to 60 species for the 2014-2015 survey, showing an increase of seven species over the ten year period. This is 13% increase in the number of regularly seen bird species.

These seven additional species deserve some review. Six of the bird species seen in 2014-2015 but not seen in 2003-2004 are: Common Goldeneye, Pied-billed Grebe, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Glaucous-winged Gull, Anna's Hummingbird, and Rock Pigeon. These were seen regularly in good numbers and appear to have become established in the park environment. These species are doing well in Western Washington and this trend is reflected in the park bird population. The seventh species is Red Crossbill. It is subject

to irruption in unpredictable years. It was seen in good numbers on two occasions during the 2014-2015 survey.

Two species seen with some regularity during the 2003-2004 survey are House Finch and Barn Swallow, but they were not seen in 2014-2015 and do not appear to be using the park any longer. It is not known why these two species were not seen in the park in the 2014-2015 survey.

The total number of birds seen in 2014-2015 was 2,999 individuals far surpassing the 2003-2004 total of 1,297 individual birds. A number of variables could account for this difference. The survey outings in 2013-2014 lasted about two hours longer than the 2003-2004 outings allowing for more time to see and hear birds. The 2014-2015 survey outings began at dawn in contrast to 2003-2004 survey outings which began between 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. Birds tend to be more active in the early morning hours and this activity would have been missed by the late starts in the earlier survey. In 2014-2015 all birds that could be identified by vocalization were counted. Identification of bird song is a specialized skill honed during many hours in the field listening to birds. The ability to identify birds by song has increased among birders in the intervening 10 years since the 2003-2004 survey as more people have worked to develop this skill. There is a high likelihood that the 2003-2004 survey team counted only birds seen by the surveyors leading to recording fewer birds. Numbers of birds varied with the seasons with higher numbers during the breeding season between April and August reflecting the value of the park as a breeding territory for many common Western Washington birds.

#### Recognition

Eastside Audubon Society appreciates the work of the survey team and those who supported the survey effort. Many park visitors stopped to talk to the survey team and were happy to know that there were many active bird species in the park. Many visitors are regulars and talked about the birds they have seen in the park. This state park is a special place on Lake Washington and Eastside Audubon hopes that this survey will contribute to continued conservation of vital habitat for Pacific Northwest breeding and migrating birds.

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