

Luther Goldman Birding Trail

Birding Site Guide

by Dave Mozurkewich

Stop 1 - (as lake comes into view): Lake Artemesia spreads out ahead and to your right. Search, particularly in the aquatic vegetation for Wood Duck, Mallard and Pied-billed Grebe (except summer). Check also for Great Blue Herons (year round), Green Herons (warmer months) and Great Egrets (late summer). This is the shallow end of the lake where the other puddle ducks can sometimes be found in migration. Coots, Ring-necked and Ruddy Ducks appear on the open water in winter along with gulls, particularly in the afternoon when ice is present. Spotted and Solitary sandpipers can sometimes be found anywhere along the edge of the lake; other shorebirds can appear when water levels are low enough to expose mud. Listen for the rattle of a Kingfisher flying over the lake looking for a meal.

Stop 2 - (part way toward bridge): Your walk along this side of the pond will be dominated by Red-winged Blackbirds who nest here during early spring and summer. Equally common but less vocal are the many Song Sparrows that inhabit the wet thickets year round along the edge of the lake. Swamp Sparrows join them during migration and sometimes remain for the winter. The trees to your left host most of the common woodland birds: Cardinals, Chickadees, Titmice, White-breasted Nuthatches, Carolina Wrens, Flickers, Downy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, all three mimids, American Goldfinch, etc. They are joined by White-throated Sparrows in winter and House Wrens in summer. The Yellow-rumped Warblers that are common here during migration can sometimes winter and are often joined by other migrant warblers during late April, early May and mid-September. In some years a pair of Prothonotary warblers will nest somewhere between the path and Indian Creek to your left.

Stop 3 - (bridge to peninsula): Phoebes are often easy to see here as they nest under the bridge. In spring, Cowbirds are usually perched on exposed dead branches toward the tops of the trees. There is often a large White-throated Sparrow flock here in winter.

Stop 4 - (North side of peninsula): This location provides a good view over the lake to the north. Chimney Swifts, Purple Martins, Tree and Barn Swallows nest in the area and are present all summer. All the other swallows occur during migration. To the south of the path are two open areas with tall grass and scattered trees and bushes. Look for Indigo Buntings, both orioles and Eastern Kingbirds in summer and Brown Thrashers year-round. Willow Flycatchers are found most every year in late May or early June and Palm Warblers are regular in April and October. This is the best spot along the trail to find a White-crowned Sparrow (early November).

Stop 5 - (butterfly/wild flower garden): In the fall, be sure to explore the dirt path to your right through the wild flower garden. This is a good place to find migrant sparrows in the fall and often a Bobolink will be present.

Stop 6 - (at the building): Being the deep end of the lake, this is the best spot to find loons and Horned Grebes as well as most of the diving ducks. As the lake freezes, the waterfowl concentration can be remarkable as this is the last area to remain open.

Stop 7 - (southwest side of park): As you walk off the peninsula then left along the west side of the lake you pass through an open, short-grass area that usually has few birds. Nevertheless, this is a fairly reliable place to find Savannah Sparrows in fall. Year-round, keep an eye out for the Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows that nest in the boxes along the fence. When looking for birds, don't forget to look up. Rock Pigeons and Mourning Doves are often flying across the lake. A large flock of Starlings is usually around the railroad tracks and there is at least one Mockingbird on one of the utility poles. It is not uncommon to see Common Loons and Blue Jays flying north in early May or Broad-winged Hawks heading south in the middle of September.

Stop 8 - (SW corner of park): If you have not yet seen Green Herons or Spotted Sandpipers, it is worth taking a brief detour down the trail to your right to Paint Branch Creek. Warbling Vireos have also nested over here. Continuing around the lake, look for Yellow Warblers in the willows along the south side of the lake.

Stop 9 - (near the first exit heading south to Paint Branch Trail): The brushy area here can hide Indigo Buntings and Yellow-breasted Chat and is a favored stopover site for migrants.

Stop 10 - (Just before bridge over creek): Before crossing the bridge over Indian Creek, it may be worthwhile taking the paved spur to your left. Since this short, dead-end trail is not as busy as the rest of the park, it often provides quiet views of the local wildlife. When you finally cross the bridge, be sure stop and look along the creek. A Black-crowned Night Heron often fishes from the cement thingy in the creek to the south. If the heron is not here, it may be hiding anywhere along the creek.

Stop 11 - (walking up bike path, returning to Berwyn Road): To your right are the most extensive woods you will see along this walk. As you walk past them, you should be able to add more woodland species to those already seen. Nesting species include Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Red-eyed Vireo, Eastern Wood-pewee, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Wood Thrush, Pileated and Hairy Woodpeckers, Barred Owl, and Louisiana Waterthrush. The owls will often call during broad daylight, especially from July through October. During migration, move slowly and carefully study all the flocks of birds. Migrant warblers occur in good numbers along the stream. They often tag along with flocks of chickadees and titmice. The migrants follow the resident birds to find concentrations of insects on which they all feed.

Stop 12 - (opening on west side of path right where the woods to the east end; just before path reaches the ball field on Berwyn Road): The opening to your left provides access to the creek. This is the best spot in the park to find a nesting White-eyed Vireo. The creek has a sandbar here that might host a Spotted Sandpiper but from here north to Berwyn Road is the best stretch for migrants. Early morning is the best time to be here as bird activity tends to die down an hour or two after sunrise, especially on warm days.

Stop 13 - (Bridge on Berwyn Road): It is always a good idea to spend ten minutes or so standing on the bridge looking up or down stream or overhead. Phoebes nest here and it is a good vantage point for seeing migrants in the tree tops.

Continue west on Berwyn Road to steps leading down into parking lot.