

Earth Sanctuary

Breeding Bird Survey May 5-July 15, 2004

Compiled by Yvonne Palka and Frances Wood

Birds Identified as Breeding (using criteria established by the Audubon Society)

Canada Goose	Cedar Waxwing
Wood Duck	Orange-crowned Warbler
Green-winged Teal	Yellow Warbler
Mallard	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Cinnamon Teal	Common Yellowthroat
Gadwall	Wilson's Warbler
Hooded Merganser	Western Tanager
Osprey	Spotted Towhee
Band-tailed Pigeon	Song Sparrow
Great Horned Owl	White-crowned Sparrow
Barred Owl	Dark-eyed Junco
Rufous Hummingbird	Black-headed Grosbeak
Downy Woodpecker	Red-winged Blackbird
Hairy Woodpecker	Brown-headed Cowbird
Red-breasted Sapsucker	House Finch
Northern Flicker	Red Crossbill
Pileated Woodpecker	Pine Siskin
Olive-sided Flycatcher	American Goldfinch
Western Wood Pewee	Birds Probably Breeding (we'll look
Willow flycatcher	for these next year)
Pacific Slope Flycatcher	Pied-billed Grebe
Stellars Jay	Virginia Rail
Tree Swallow	Sora
Violet Green Swallow	Mourning Dove
Barn Swallow	Hutton's Vireo
Black-capped Chickadee	Warbling Vireo
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	Bushtit
Brown Creeper	Birds Seen on the Property but
Red-breasted Nuthatch	Nesting Elsewhere
Bewick's Wren	Great Blue Heron
Winter Wren	Bald Eagle
Marsh Wren	Belted Kingfisher
Golden-crowned Kinglet	American Crow
Swainson's Thrush	Common Raven
American Robin	Rough-winged Swallow
European Starling	

Breeding Activity on the Ponds

Breeding activity on the ponds continued to be very active this year. In late April and early May there was a lot of courtship going on and the species noted were the same as last year, namely

- Wood Duck
- Mallard
- Hooded Merganser
- Green-winged Teal
- Cinnamon Teal
- Gadwall

Babies began appearing as of May 15th (Hooded Mergansers, Wood Ducks, Mallards). I don't have very specific dates for hatching since I observed the birds once a week but all the ducklings that were present were hatched by May 15th. In general there were fewer babies hatched in '04 as compared to '03. And because I didn't spend as much time observing the birds this year I did not see the females and babies of the Green-winged Teal and Cinnamon Teal but feel very confident that they were there since I observed very active courtship between pairs of both species. The Cinnamon Teal pair was still courting at the end of May which explains why we saw the female with newly hatched ducklings at the end of June in '03 (incubation time is about 28 days). Apparently they are later nesters than the other duck species.

The other species that uses the ponds for courtship, but apparently not for nesting, is the Gadwall. Ring-necked Ducks (5 pair and relatively rare on Whidbey Island) frequent the ponds in March and April and are courting during this time and then apparently fly further north to breed. And large numbers of Buffleheads winter on the ponds and are courting in February, March and April and leave in late April and early May to breed further north.

The following is a table of each species and the dates and numbers of broods and young at hatching comparing 2003 and 2004. All the young hatched in 2004 were present by May 15th.

Duck Species	Number of Broods	Dates Hatched 2003	Approx. # Young Hatched
Mallard	('03) 2 ('04) 1	May 5 th , June 10 th	('03)14 ('04) 3
Hooded Merganser*	('03)3-4 ('04) 3-4	May 21 st , June 27 th	('03)14 ('04) 14
Wood Duck	('03) 3 ('04) 3	May 21 st , June 9 th , June 27 th	('03) 21 ('04) 10
Green-winged Teal	('03) 1 ('04) x	June 28 th	('03) 5 ('04) x
Cinnamon Teal	('03)1 ('04) x	July 19 th	('03) 4 ('04) x

*Hooded Mergansers tend to group their babies in creches with several females watching over the whole group so it's difficult to tell exactly how many were hatched when).

X Green-winged Teal and Cinnamon Teal females and babies were not observed directly in '04

Overall there were fewer ducklings in 2004 (27) as compared to 2003 (49 plus 9 teals) and I don't have a good idea of the survival rate. At the end of June there were still a large number of juvenile mergansers, wood ducks and a few mallards on the ponds. We had an unseasonably warm dry spring and this may have influenced nesting. Or 2003 may have been a bumper year. I noted the first bullfrog (which are predators of baby ducks but not as serious a predator as river otters) calling on May 18th almost 5 weeks ahead of when I heard them in 2003.

Other Birds:

We directly observed most of the birds that we had seen in 2003. We were able to move 4 species from the "Probably Breeding" category into the "Definitely Breeding" category this year, i.e. the Pileated Woodpecker, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Red Crossbill and Marsh Wren. Others that we saw last year but not this year (various warblers, etc) simply reflect the fact that we weren't surveying at the time when they were most active (i.e. singing). We feel it is safe to say that they are still actively breeding in the woods of Earth Sanctuary.

As of this date (July 15, 2004) the osprey are still on the nest and the young have definitely not fledged. The parents are very sensitive to the presence of humans on the trail below and it is good that the trail is closed until the end of July.

Hérons continue to actively fish in the ponds .Various kinds of swallows, cedar waxwings and other birds actively hunt insects over the ponds.

Recommendations for Trails, Closures, etc.

The trail closures and guidelines for numbers of people, group size and times that we established this year seem to be working well. The osprey clearly benefit from having the Wetland Trail closed April through July. An added benefit of this trail closure is that various ducks also have a protected and undisturbed shoreline in which to breed and rest. The birds in this area continue to be quite shy and easily disturbed during the couple of times when we have gone in to observe.

The rope and signs requesting people to stay back from the shore in the area by the labyrinth and to be quiet in general have contributed to a good ambience in the most frequented areas of Earth Sanctuary. People seem to be respecting the guidelines that we have posted – which is terrific for the birds!