



The Birds of Harrison Hill Park

1970-2014 By Paul Hess

Revised May 13, 2014

The following 187 species of birds have been found here by the author or other observers since 1970 when this Allegheny County Park opened.

Species marked with an asterisk are those that have been known to nest in the park. Some of these, such as the Red-shouldered Hawk and Broad-winged Hawk, no longer breed within the park's boundaries but may still nest in the Natrona Heights area.

Harrison Hills Park is part of an area extending northward into southeast Butler County and southwest Armstrong County which has been designated by Pennsylvania Audubon as the "Buffalo Creek Valley Important Bird Area (IBA)." The designation calls attention to the need for conservation of the diverse habitats used by many different species of birds to nest, to spend the winter, or to stop for rest and food during migration. The amazingly long list of species that have been found in the park is proof of how important the park is to our birds.

Codes used in the checklist are as follows.

Sp / found during spring migration:

These birds spend the winter to our south in the U.S., Mexico, the Caribbean, Central America, and even as far as South America. They stop to rest and feed in the park (or large birds can be seen flying over without stopping) during their migration to breeding areas north of us. Early morning is the best time to see these migrants as they actively feed in the trees.

Su / found during the summer:

Most of these birds nest in the park. A few, such as Turkey Vulture, Herring Gull, and Bald Eagle may nest a considerable distance away but are seen here regularly in the summer. In general, the summer breeding birds are most easily seen when they are most active, feeding and singing, early in the morning.

F / found during fall migration:

These birds breed in the northern U.S. and Canada. They stop in the park to rest and feed (or large birds can be seen flying over without stopping) during migration to their wintering areas to our south. As in the spring migration, all of these are best seen in the morning when they are actively feeding.

W / found during winter:

These birds breed north of us and travel south to our area for the winter. Some of these species come every year, but others come only in some winters when their food is scarce in the north.

Res / permanent resident:

These birds are found in the park all year. Most of them nest in the park or not far away.

Rare / not observed every year: Some of these species pass through every year, but in such small numbers that they are not always seen. Others may visit the park only infrequently, but they can be expected appear again in any year. Most of these are not rare birds in eastern North America, but are just rarely seen within the park.

Very rare / These birds have been observed only once or twice in the park's history and are not expected to appear again. The rarest bird on the list is a Western Tanager, which breeds and migrates in western North America and almost never wanders to the eastern United States. Another species, the Loggerhead Shrike was formerly widespread in the northeastern U. S. and southern Canada, but it no longer breeds in Pennsylvania and its populations to our north have also disappeared.

Canada Goose – Res*
 Tundra Swan – Sp/F (rare)
 Wood Duck - Sp/Su/F*
 American Wigeon - Sp/F (rare)
 American Black Duck - Sp/F (rare)
 Mallard – Res*
 Blue-winged Teal - Sp/F (rare)
 Green-winged Teal - Sp/F (rare)
 Ring-necked Duck - Sp/F (rare)
 Bufflehead - Sp/F (rare)
 Hooded Merganser – Sp/F (rare)
Common Merganser – F (rare)
 Ring-necked Pheasant – Res (rare)
 Ruffed Grouse – Res (rare)*
 Wild Turkey – Res*
 Common Loon - Sp/F (rare)
 Pied-billed Grebe - Sp/F (rare)
 American Bittern - Sp (rare)
 Great Blue Heron - Sp/Su/F
 Great Egret - Sp/Su/F (rare)
 Green Heron - Sp/Su/F (rare)
 Black-crowned Night-Heron - Sp/F (rare)
 Turkey Vulture - Sp/Su/F
 Osprey - Sp/F (rare)
 Bald Eagle - Res (rare)
 Northern Harrier - W (rare)
 Sharp-shinned Hawk – Res*
 Cooper's Hawk – Res*
 Northern Goshawk - Sp/F (rare)
 Red-shouldered Hawk - Sp/Su/F*
 Broad-winged Hawk - Sp/Su/F*
 Red-tailed Hawk – Res
 American Kestrel – Res
 Merlin - Sp/F/W (rare)
 Sora - Sp/F (rare)

Killdeer - Sp/Su/F*
 Greater Yellowlegs - Sp/Su/F (rare)
 Solitary Sandpiper - Sp/Su/F
 Spotted Sandpiper - Sp/Su/F
 Wilson's Snipe - Sp/F (rare)
 American Woodcock - Sp/F (rare)
 Ring-billed Gull - Sp/Su/F
 Herring Gull – Res (on river)
 Caspian Tern - Sp/F (rare on river)
 Rock Pigeon – Res*
 Mourning Dove – Res*
 Black-billed Cuckoo - Sp/Su/F*
 Yellow-billed Cuckoo - Sp/Su/F*
 Eastern Screech-Owl - Res *
 Great Horned Owl - Res *
 Barred Owl - Sp/F (rare)
 Common Nighthawk - Sp/Su/F*
 Chimney Swift - Sp/Su/F*
 Ruby-throated Hummingbird - Sp/Su/F*
 Belted Kingfisher - Sp/Su/F
 Red-headed Woodpecker - Sp/Su/F (rare)
 Red-bellied Woodpecker – Res*
 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker – Sp/F/W
 Downy Woodpecker – Res*
 Hairy Woodpecker – Res*
 Northern Flicker – Res*
 Pileated Woodpecker – Res*
 Olive-sided Flycatcher - Sp/F (rare)
 Eastern Wood-Pewee - Sp/Su/F*
 Yellow-bellied Flycatcher - Sp/F (rare)
 Acadian Flycatcher - Sp/Su/F*
 Alder Flycatcher - Sp/F (rare)
 Willow Flycatcher - Sp/F (rare)*
 Least Flycatcher - Sp/F
 Eastern Phoebe - Sp/Su/F*
 Great Crested Flycatcher - Sp/Su/F*
 Eastern Kingbird - Sp/F (rare)
 Loggerhead Shrike - Sp/F (very rare)
 Northern Shrike - W (very rare)
 White-eyed Vireo - Sp/Su/F*
 Yellow-throated Vireo - Sp/Su/F*
 Blue-headed Vireo - Sp/F
 Warbling Vireo - Sp/F
 Philadelphia Vireo - Sp/F
 Red-eyed Vireo - Sp/Su/F*
 Blue Jay – Res*
 American Crow – Res*

Fish Crow – Sp (very rare)
Common Raven – Sp (rare)
Purple Martin - Sp/Su*
Tree Swallow - Sp/Su/F*
Northern Rough-winged Swallow - Sp/Su/F
Bank Swallow - Sp/F (rare)
Barn Swallow - Sp/Su/F*
Black-capped Chickadee – Res*
Tufted Titmouse - Res*
Red-breasted Nuthatch - Sp/F/W
White-breasted Nuthatch – Res*
Brown Creeper – Sp/F/W
Carolina Wren – Res*
House Wren - Sp/Su/F*
Winter Wren - Sp/F
Sedge Wren – F (very rare)
Marsh Wren - Sp/F (rare)
Golden-crowned Kinglet - Sp/F/W
Ruby-crowned Kinglet - Sp/F
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher - Sp/Su/F*
Eastern Bluebird – Res*
Veery - Sp/F
Gray-cheeked Thrush - Sp/F
Swainson's Thrush - Sp/F
Hermit Thrush - Sp/F/W
Wood Thrush - Sp/Su/F*
American Robin – Res*
Gray Catbird - Sp/Su/F*
Northern Mockingbird - Sp/Su/F
Brown Thrasher - Sp/Su/F*
European Starling – Res*
American Pipit - F (rare)
Cedar Waxwing - Sp/Su/F*
Blue-winged Warbler - Sp/Su/F*
Golden-winged Warbler - Sp/F (rare)*
Tennessee Warbler - Sp/F
Orange-crowned Warbler - Sp/F (rare)
Nashville Warbler - Sp/F
Northern Parula - Sp/F
Yellow Warbler - Sp/Su/F*
Chestnut-sided Warbler - Sp/F
Magnolia Warbler - Sp/F
Cape May Warbler - Sp/F
Black-throated Blue Warbler - Sp/F
Yellow-rumped Warbler - Sp/F/W
Black-throated Green Warbler - Sp/F
Blackburnian Warbler - Sp/F

Yellow-throated Warbler - Sp/Su*
Pine Warbler - Sp/F
Prairie Warbler - Sp/F
Palm Warbler - Sp/F
Bay-breasted Warbler - Sp/F
Blackpoll Warbler - Sp/F
Cerulean Warbler - Sp/Su/F*
Black-and-white Warbler - Sp/Su/F*
American Redstart - Sp/Su/F*
Worm-eating Warbler - Sp/F*
Ovenbird - Sp/F
Northern Waterthrush - Sp/F (rare)
Louisiana Waterthrush - Sp/Su*
Kentucky Warbler - Sp/Su/F*
Connecticut Warbler - Sp/F (rare)
Mourning Warbler - Sp/F (rare)
Common Yellowthroat - Sp/Su/F*
Hooded Warbler - Sp/Su/F*
Wilson's Warbler - Sp/F
Canada Warbler - Sp/F
Yellow-breasted Chat - Sp/Su/F*
Summer Tanager - Sp/F (very rare)
Scarlet Tanager - Sp/Su/F*
Western Tanager - F (very rare)
Eastern Towhee - Sp/Su/F*
American Tree Sparrow - W
Chipping Sparrow - Sp/Su/F*
Clay-colored Sparrow - Sp/F (very rare)
Field Sparrow - Sp/Su/F*
Vesper Sparrow - Sp/F (rare)
Grasshopper Sparrow – Sp (rare)
Henslow's Sparrow - Sp/F (rare)
Fox Sparrow - Sp/F (rare)
Song Sparrow - Res*
Lincoln's Sparrow - Sp/F
Swamp Sparrow - Sp/F
White-throated Sparrow - Sp/F/W
White-crowned Sparrow - Sp/F
Dark-eyed Junco - Sp/F/W
Northern Cardinal - Res*
Rose-breasted Grosbeak - Sp/Su/F*
Indigo Bunting - Sp/Su/F*
Red-winged Blackbird - Sp/Su/F*
Eastern Meadowlark - Sp/F (rare)
Rusty Blackbird - Sp/F (rare)
Common Grackle - Sp/Su/F*
Brown-headed Cowbird - Sp/Su/F*

Orchard Oriole - Sp/Su*
Baltimore Oriole - Sp/Su/F*
Purple Finch - Sp/F/W
House Finch - Res*
Red Crossbill - Sp/F/W (rare)
White-winged Crossbill - Sp/F/W (rare)
Common Redpoll - W (rare)
Pine Siskin - W (rare)
American Goldfinch - Res*
Evening Grosbeak - W (rare)
House Sparrow - Res*

If you are interested in learning more about the birds of southwestern Pennsylvania, check these web sites:

Three Rivers Birding Club at www.3rbc.org

Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania at www.aswp.org

Acknowledgments to the Author:

Paul Hess has been a birder since about age 10 in southern California. We are lucky to have Paul residing in Natrona Heights, where he has studied birds at Harrison Hills Park intensively every year since before it formally opened in 1971 (His first visit was July 12, 1970).

We Friends of Harrison Hills Park sincerely thank Paul Hess for sharing this compilation of his bird sightings in Harrison Hills Park and for volunteering his time in maintaining this Bird List.

Among his many writing accomplishments in the field of birding Paul can claim:
*Former editor of bird reports for the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania.
*Former chairman of Pennsylvania Bird Records Committee (to evaluate rare bird reports in the state).
*Won top award from Pa. Society for Ornithology for "outstanding contributions to ornithology in Pennsylvania".

*Currently the editor of the The Peregrine, newsletter of Three Rivers Birding Club.
*He writes News and Notes column for the American Birding Association's magazine, Birding.
*Wrote two chapters in new National Geographic book published last year, "The Complete Birds of North America".
*Wrote new National Geographic Field Guide to Birds of Pennsylvania (for beginners) to be published in 2006.

And on many occasions you'll find Paul at Harrison Hills Park leading walks with the Three Rivers Birding Club or simply dedicating a morning to counting birds during migrations for the Audubon.

To visit **Harrison Hills Park** enter the following address into you favorite Web based mapping site: 5200 Freeport Rd., Natrona Heights, PA 15065

Or take Exit 16 off of Route 28 Expressway North, turn right on Rt. 908, go 0.6 mile, turn right again and go 0.6 mile, turn left into Park entrance off of Freeport Road.

Produced by Friends of Harrison Hills Park and the Allegheny County Parks Department

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