

Governors Island

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

National Monument
New York



A Cedar Waxwing perched on a tree in Nolan Park. This bird prefers wooded areas and is probably just passing through.

October 4, 2009

9:30 am-6:30 pm with some breaks for other duties
Sunny, about 67-72 degrees

After last week's bumper crop of migrating birds, the island was relatively quiet today. Not even northern flickers were on the island in great numbers, something I've grown to expect during migration. Still, I did spot 16 altogether. Not bad at all for a "slow" day. Warblers, a female scarlet tanager, kinglets and a female Baltimore oriole were other notable migrants seen in the Historic District. But the big surprise came when I stepped out of the usual confines of the District and paid a visit to The Dig.

October 4, 2009 con't



Canada geese are common residents on the island. Photo credit naturespicsonline.com

Part of this summer's art programming, The Dig is a very clever temporary art installation just on the other side of the fence from the Historic District, on the south end of the island. It purports to be a long forgotten village discovered during construction work there. It is in reality a fake town filled with fake archaeological finds. It also happens to sit in the middle of a small grassland habitat. Stephen Kempa, a seasonal ranger, visited the site and told me he had seen many birds there. So I broke my "stay in the Historic District" rule and paid a visit myself. Stephen was right. There were lots of warblers, mourning doves, at least one phoebe, kinglets, starlings and white throated sparrows. And for me, a life bird. Two eastern meadowlarks, startled by my approach, popped out of the grass and perched on long reeds about 20 feet from where I stood. I've looked for meadowlarks in the grassy fields at Ft. Tilden in the Rockaways but never found them there. Today I never expected to see meadowlarks. But a chance visit to the other side of the Division Road fence, based on Stephen's tip, and there they were my meadowlarks.

These two birds remind me that I need to make a plan for incorporating the south end of Governors Island into my bird census activities and programs. Remaining in the Historic District has made sense so far because I have only had ready access to that part of the island. But more of the island is opening up, and I will need a strategy for expanding the scope of my work to include more acres and more habitats. Even now, before the park has been constructed on the south end of the island, a new habitat just over the fence holds birds that I have never seen within the Historic District, and many more that I have. It'll take a good deal of thought and planning, and will of course depend on how and when construction work is performed on the south end of the island.

Roll call of birds:

Double-crested cormorant	7
Canada Goose	28
Red-tailed hawk	1 male
Herring gull	2
Great black-backed gull	2
Ring-billed gull	4
Doves	29
Northern flickers (yellow-shafted)	16
Eastern phoebe	1
Crows	6
Brown creeper	1
Golden-crowned kinglet	3
Ruby-crowned kinglet	3
Robin	12
Catbird	1
Mockingbird	3
Starlings	8
Northern parula	1 first year female
Magnolia warbler	1 female
Yellow-rumped warbler	1 female
Black-throated green warbler	1 female
Pine warbler	1 female
Blackpoll warbler	2 female

October 4, 2009 con't

(Continued from page 1)

Common yellowthroat	2 adult females; 1 first year female
Ovenbird	1
Northern cardinal	2 female; 3 male
Scarlet tanager	1 female
White-throated sparrow	6
Eastern meadowlark	2
House sparrow	18

October 10, 2009

Overcast morning with some light rain and blustery wind. It was as sunnier afternoon, remaining blustery at 64 degrees.



Chipping Sparrow. Photo courtesy of naturepicsonline.com

This was the last weekend of the 2009 visiting season on Governors Island. Today was also day one of Open House New York (OHNY), an annual weekend-long event which invites folks to visit hundreds of locations in the 5 boroughs of New York City. In honor of OHNY, I held another bird census program. Just one person turned up this time, but together Lori and I worked hard and got some pretty good birding in, despite the often cloudy and always windy weather. Thank you, Lori, for once again contributing to the Governors Island bird count. This was a great season. I was disappointed that I never spotted the American kestrel pair that was here last year, and the barn owl I spotted just once last summer never showed itself at all this year. But I saw many wonderful birds, and I hope that next year more folks will come out and discover the joy of birding Governors Island. It truly is a wonderful place to experience birds and nature, smack in the middle of our wonderful New York Harbor.

Roll call of birds

Double-crested cormorant	7
Canada Goose	158
Herring gull	4
Great black-backed gull	2
Ring-billed gull	1
Mourning Dove	3
Northern flicker (yellow-shafted)	29
Eastern phoebe	14
Red-eyed vireo	1
Blue-headed vireo	1
Blue jay	16
Crows	1
House wren	1 (deceased)
Winter wren	1
Golden-crowned kinglet	5
Ruby-crowned kinglet	2
Wood thrush	3
Robin	4
Catbird	8
Mockingbird	2
Northern parula	1 male
Magnolia warbler	1 female; 1 male
Black-throated blue warbler	1 female; 2 male
Palm warbler	7
Prairie warbler	1
Blackpoll warbler	1 female
Common yellowthroat	2 female
Ovenbird	1
Northern cardinal	2 female; 3 male
Indigo bunting	1 female
Eastern towhee	3 female; 2 male
Chipping sparrow	4
Song sparrow	4
White-throated sparrow	11
Savannah sparrow	2

Thanks to the staff of the National Park Service, the seasonal rangers and my fellow volunteers for a wonderful season on Governors Island.