

Birds Observed at the University of Michigan Botanical Gardens
Max Adler [Date-stamped as "1962" in digital files]

Permanent Residents

These are birds which may be seen at the Botanical Gardens throughout the year. The numbers present and distribution may vary seasonally and with the years.

Great Blue Heron – An uncommon winter resident in this area. However, two birds were often flushed from open areas of Fleming Creek throughout the winter of 1961-62. The huge tracks can sometimes be seen in the snow on the stream bank or gootbridges. Most commonly observed in spring and fall.

Mallard – Often flushed singly or in pairs with Black Ducks in spring, fall and winter when Creek is open. May nest in area.

Black Duck - See above.

Cooper's Hawk – A secretive bird, occasionally seen along woodland borders, particularly when trees are leafless. Probably only one or two hawks of each species use the Gardens at any one time, except when rodents are unusually abundant (see Red-tailed Hawk).

Red-tailed Hawk – The most easily observed bird of prey in the area. In summer, often seen circling in the sky, and in winter perched high in isolated trees. In winter of 1960-61 muskrats were very abundant in the area. They would climb the stream banks to feed upon greenery under the snow on the Creek roads. One or two Red-tails could usually be found somewhere along the stream with the muskrats as their prey.

Marsh Hawk – May be seen at any season gliding low over the fields and marshes of the area.

Sparrow Hawk – Should be looked for along power lines near Dixboro Road, or around isolated trees in fields. Cavity nester.

Bob-white – Coveys may be flushed where heavy undergrowth is present. In summer pairs will venture into the open. Readily attracted to feeding stations.

Ring-necked Pheasant – Similar behavior to Bob-white. An especially heavy concentration of wintering birds may be found in dogwood swales south of the Botanical Gardens.

Mourning Dove – Pairs scattered over Gardens in summer, but in winter are most apt to be seen near the dense conifer stand along Sinclair Road. Much less abundant in winter, when they may form flocks.

Screech Owl – Will probably only be seen on very dark afternoons or just before dark when trees are leafless. Cavity nester.

Great-horned Owl – None have been seen in the area, but the deep resonant hoots may sometime be heard at dusk near the south side of the woodland.

Belted Kingfisher – One bird regularly patrols Fleming Creek in winter, where it is most often observed near the north bridge. At dusk it may be flushed from under the bridge where it roosts. In other seasons it may frequent the small ponds.

Yellow-shafted Flicker – The most conspicuous Woodpecker in summer, with noisy habits. Varying numbers winter in north section of Clements Woods. Cavity nester.

Hairy Woodpecker – Seen only rarely in summer, and in winter never more often than two per tour of Clements Woods. Cavity nester.

Downy Woodpecker – This bird is most often seen in winter. Both downy and hairy woodpeckers will feed on suet tied to tree trunks. Well distributed in the woodlands. Cavity nester.

Horned Lark – May be seen at all seasons, except when snow covers all barren, gravelly areas along roads where birds nest and feed. May be heard in song in early January. Though Horned Larks are present in all seasons, those in winter may be of a different sub-species than those found in summer. May be found on the gravelly area east of the greenhouses.

Blue Jay – In wooded areas and fencerows at all seasons.

American Crow – As for Blue Jay. Perhaps most often seen in spring and fall.

Black-capped Chickadee – Much more abundant in winter. Cavity nester. See “Winter Resident” section.

Tufted Titmouse – As above, but as abundant in summer as in winter. Cavity nester.

White-breasted Nuthatch – Cavity nester. Unlike the above two birds, large numbers are not usually found together in winter.

Cedar Waxwing – In summer, usually found near Humane Society buildings. In winter, wanderings may take it anywhere where fruiting shrubs are found. May not be found on the Gardens every winter, but when present it is likely to be seen in large flocks.

Starling – Some nest in cavities in large trees throughout the Gardens, undoubtedly causing nest scarcity for other species. A few may usually be found in the winter.

House Sparrow – Cavity nester, well distributed.

Cardinal – Nests in shrubbery throughout the Gardens. In winter flocks may be found along the Creek.

American Goldfinch – Well distributed in shrubby, overgrown areas near marshes or wet areas in summer. May sing in tall trees and feed in uplands. In winter look for it in shrubby areas around the tamarack stands, where scattered small flocks can be found.

Song Sparrow – in summer wherever shrubs are present, throughout the gardens. In winter in undergrowth around the flowing tributary streams along Flemin Creek May begin singing in early February. Much more abundant in summer. Seed eater.

SUMMER RESIDENTS

These are birds present at the Botanical Gardens during the summer breeding season, but do not normally winter here. The bulk of these birds arrive from the south in April and early May, and depart in September and October. However, such early arrivals as Red-winged Blackbirds may appear as early as mid-February (February 13 in 1961) or as late as mid-March, and may linger to late November. The Yellow Warbler which arrives in late April disappears by August 1. Normally, the breeding birds establish nesting territories at some point in the Gardens, and will probably return to these areas year after year as long as the vegetation remains unchanged. After nesting, most are secretive and hard to see during the late summer molt. Some of the following may not nest on the grounds, but use the Gardens in their daily food gathering.

Green Heron – Most abundant summer Heron. From May 1 into August, single birds may be flushed from shrubs and low trees overhanging Fleming Creek throughout the Gardens. Probably nest in the Cummings Marsh area at the north end of the Gardens.

Black-crowned Night Heron- observed July through September. In 1962, one immature bird was sometimes flushed from lowland elms near the Laboratory Building.

Blue-winged Teal – One was flushed from island in pool near the Laboratory Building in late summer 1962. With completion of ponds and barring disturbance, birds may nest in this area in coming years. Small flocks frequent all ponds in April and September.

Wood Duck – Observed in late April and May and from late July to October on Fleming creek. Male is one of the most beautiful birds to be seen in the area.

Turkey Vulture – May sometimes be seen flying over the area from spring till October. Probably will not nest in the Gardens area, however, due to lack of large decaying tree stubs.

Killdeer – Birds nest on roadside gravel on main entrance road, near superintendent's residence, and near Dix Pond. Watch for chick-like young running along road. Birds may

appear around March 1 and stay till late November, depending on weather. Noisy when disturbed.

American Woodcock – From late March to early May, males present courtship flights at dusk. At least six males perform spectacular aerial maneuvers from selected spots in field borders the length of the east side of Gardens.

Upland Plover – In early June 1960 one was observed on a utility pole at the southwest corner of Gardens. Calls from same area were heard in early July, 1962. This spectacular shorebird should be looked for in pastures east of the Gardens also.

Spotted Sandpiper – May be seen from early May to September around pond borders and also on mud flats in Fleming Creek in south part of Gardens.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo – Will probably be heard more than seen. Look for it in brushy tangles over entire Gardens, but chiefly near Fleming Creek. May to September.

Black-billed Cuckoo – Similar to Yellow-billed Cuckoo in habit.

Chimney Swift – Occasionally seen flying over grounds from April on .

Ruby-throated Hummingbird – Attracted to tubular flowers. Most often seen in north part of Gardens. May to September.

Kingbird – About ponds and open spaces over entire Gardens, usually near woodland borders. Nests in ornamental trees near Laboratory Building occasionally. May to August.

Crested Flycatcher – Nests in hollow branches in Clements Woods. Most frequently found west of Fleming Creek, early May to September.

Eastern Phoebe – Arrives in late March, remains into October. Birds usually seen on trees overhanging Fleming Creek at extreme northeast part of Gardens. Nests under bridge on Cherry Hill Road.

Traill's Flycatcher – Look for it May to September around Kirk Bog and Sinclair Bog in north section of Gardens.

Eastern Wood Pewee – Widely distributed throughout wooded areas of Gardens, especially where trees are large. May to September.

Tree Swallow – Only occasionally seen, feeding over all ponds, in summer. Earliest arrival of all our Swallows in spring. Could easily be attracted to nesting boxes around ponds.

Bank Swallow – Small groups feed in evening over all ponds late April to September.

Rough-winged Swallow – Solitary birds often feed in evening over all ponds.

Barn Swallow – Small colony nests under Cherry Hill Road bridge at northeast corner of Gardens. Birds often fly over ponds near Laboratory Building to feed in evening, as well as over Dix Pond.

Purple Martin – Several pairs now nest in nesting box by Matteson Road. Look for late summer gatherings on power wires by Service Entrance.

House Wren – Birds can be heard singing at several points along Fleming Creek the length of the woodland, late April to September. Cavity nester.

Catbird – Found in dogwoods and elder thickets bordering all woodland trails in the Gardens. May also be seen in fence rows around Sanford Field. May to October.

Brown Thrasher – Look for nesting pair in fencerow at bend in Sanford Road approaching Dix Road. Sometimes seen in lowland shrubbery as well, and in scattered pines bordering Dix Pond, April to October.

American Robin – Nests where shade trees are scattered in lowland grassy areas. In July and August look for flocks of young birds and molting adults in area of Cathedral Elms.

Wood Thrush – Usually heard at dusk in June and July in tamarack stand west of Cathedral Elms.

Red-eyed Vireo Singing birds have been heard occasionally in Osgood Woods. Should be found in Kirk Woods area also, May to September.

Warbling Vireo – Sings from tree tops around Humane Society Building fence, in early summer. Seldom seen out of tree tops.

Yellow Warbler – In willow and dogwood thickets in marshy areas of north section of Gardens, late April to July. Also in similar habitats along field borders of Clements and Osgood Woods.

Common Yellowthroat – Found in similar places as Yellow Warbler. Frequently seen around Parker Brook also. Remains into late September.

Bobolink – Nests in fields just south of Botanical Gardens. Sometimes feeds and sings in and over Botanical Gardens fields. May to July.

Eastern Meadowlark – Like Bobolink, but may be seen mid-March to October. Mowing discourages nesting in Botanical Gardens.

Red-winged Blackbird – From early spring (February 13 to March 15) through early July, these birds are abundant in all marshy areas of Gardens, and also nest in hayfields south of Service Building. Later, flocks are usually seen in marshy spots and wet meadows.

Orchard Oriole – Observed late May through late June, 1962 in shade trees near Humane Residence. Perhaps not a regular summer resident.

Baltimore Oriole – Look for nests in large elms where Parker Brook enters Marsh Hawk Woods. Also found around woodland borders along Osgood and Sinclair Roads, May to September.

Common Grackle – In early spring, large flocks roost in the conifer stand along Sinclair Road. Later birds frequent Sinclair Bog and Parker Brook area. March to late October, November.

Brown-headed Cowbird – Small groups of this “parasitic” species usually seen on ground or in trees in woodland borders. In spring, found with Grackles roosting in Sinclair Road conifer stand.

Scarlet Tanager – Birds present in Osgood Woods, early May to September. Often hard to see because they are usually not found near major trails.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak – Found in Kirk Woods and Marsh Hawk Woods, May to September, males sing near trails.

Indigo Bunting – Most abundant nesting fringillid. Males sing from taller trees around all woodland borders and in clearings along Fleming Creek, wherever shrub borders are present, May to September.

Savannah Sparrow – Several birds can be found in Sanford Field, April to October.

Vesper Sparrow – A few birds frequent roadsides on west side of Gardens and Sanford Road. Several birds may be heard singing at dusk in Dix Field. Look for nests in red clover clumps. April to October.

Chipping Sparrow – At least one pair frequents area behind Greenhouse Service Corridor and others can be seen in park-like area bordering Humane Society.

Field Sparrow – Listen for calls from pines and shrubs in Dix Field borders, and Sanford Field border. Early April to October.

Swamp Sparrow – Seen in Sinclair Bog, April to October and may be heard at times.

WINTER RESIDENTS

These birds are usually found at the Gardens in the winter months. Some, such as the Tree Sparrow and Junco arrive in September or October and depart for the north in April or May every year. Others, such as the Red-breasted Nuthatch, Myrtle Warbler and Winter Wren may be found for a similar length of time only in some years, although they are seen in abundance during the months of April and October when they migrate through the area (see migrant section).

In the woodlands, some species present in the Gardens are found in mixed flocks. Chickadees, Titmice, Nuthatches, Woodpeckers, etc. may be found covering fixed feeding routes together from December to March. In the marshy swales mixed Junco and tree Sparrow flocks may be found. Because of this tendency to travel in flocks, it is possible to walk the entire Gardens without seeing a single bird, and then to see ten species in one isolated copse. To be successful, feeding stations should be established before the birds have established their feeding routes. In 1960-61 three feeding stations at strategic points drew a large number of birds of 17 species.

I have not included the Evening Grosbeak, Pine Siskin, Shrike, etc. which are often found in Washtenaw County in winter, as they have yet to be seen at the Gardens. The new ponds may attract more water birds so this list will undoubtedly grow through the years.

Common Goldeneye – One or two individuals may be flushed anywhere along the Creek, especially in later winter. The “whistling” of the wings may be heard a considerable distance.

Red-breasted Nuthatch – Look for this bird in the conifer stands along Sinclair Road. Several were seen in 1961-62, but none the previous winter.

Brown Creeper – Usually found in the conifer stand or in company with Chickadee and Titmouse flocks in lowland woods. Have not seen more than one per trip. Best located by sound.

Winter Wren – To find this bird one should walk as close to Fleming Creek as possible, especially where cave-ins have exposed root tangles. Sometimes the birds will make no noise whatever, and can be seen as they dart from one root tangle to another.

Golden-crowned Kinglet – Similar in habitat to Brown Creeper, but flocks of 6 have been observed in company with other winter birds. Suet feeder.

Myrtle Warbler – Irregular winter resident. In 1960-61, a flock of 12 was present late November to early March, inhabiting lowland woods on both sides of Fleming Creek from the Laboratory Building area north to conifer stand. Feeds extensively on poison ivy fruits where were extremely abundant that year. None were seen in 1961-62.

Purple Finch – May be seen singly or in small groups in dogwood thickets, chiefly near the tamarack stands. Numbers vary year to year. Most abundant in April and October migrations.

Slate-colored Junco – From mid-September to May (roughly), flocks of 6 to 50 or more may be found anywhere on the area near woody growth. Seedeater at feeders. Juncos and Tree Sparrows are undoubtedly the most abundant birds at the Gardens in winter.

American Tree Sparrow – From late September to late April, flocks may be found with Juncos, or singly. Tends more to feed in grassy slopes away from deep woods than Juncos do. Seed eaters at feeders.

TRANSIENTS

These birds are normally found at the Gardens for relatively short periods of time, usually not exceeding two to three weeks in each visit. Most are species that nest north of this area but winter in the southern states or tropical America. However, included here are such birds as the Pied-billed Grebe and Ring-billed Gull which nest or winter in southern Michigan but are seen only occasionally in the Gardens.

The bulk of the warblers, thrushes, and sparrows pass through the gardens from late April to mid-May in spring, but weather conditions result in variations of several weeks in migration dates of many species. Most return in September and early October, but the first “warbler wave” should be looked for in mid-August. Most species will be seen in shrubs and trees bordering Fleming Creek.

Pied-billed Grebe – Apt to be on all ponds mid-April and late October.

Ring-necked Duck – All ponds, early and mid-April, late October and early November.

Scaup Duck – As above. Usually seen in small flocks in company with other ducks.

Bufflehead – Observed on Dix Pond in April, 1961. Only occasionally expected.

Hooded Merganser – One flushed from Fleming Creek in Marsh Hawk Woods, March, 1962.

American Coot – In all ponds, late April, October.

Wilson’s Snipe – Early April and early October, chiefly. At dusk birds “whinny” repeatedly over the marsh east of the Humane Society buildings and at the southeast corner of Gardens in early April. One lone bird was flushed frequently from bank of Fleming Creek north east of Gardens in November and early December, 1961.

Solitary Sandpiper – Look for this bird in May and September chiefly around the ponds. Other species of sandpipers, plovers, etc. should frequent pond area near the Laboratory Building when water levels are low.

Ring-billed Gull – Look for small flocks on ponds near Laboratory Building in April and perhaps in fall. Presence cannot be predicted.

Red-headed Woodpecker – One immature bird observed in mid-August, 1962 in Cathedral Elms. Probably a straggler from outside the Gardens.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker – In large trees near Fleming Creek. April and October. Most abundant non-resident woodpecker.

Red-breasted Nuthatch – Irregular in April and October. See “winter residents.”

Winter Wren – Often observed in April and October along root-grown banks of Fleming Creek and tributary streams. See “winter residents.”

Hermit Thrush Most abundant of the migrant Thrushes, usually seen in April and October along woodland trails. Has been known to winter in habitats similar to those at the Botanical Gardens.

Veery – Usually seen in early May and September. Often heard singing at dusk along Fleming Creek in mid-May.

Olive-backed Thrush – As above.

Gray-cheeked Thrush – As above.

Eastern Bluebird – In hardwood plantations, late March and early April. In September small flocks sometimes frequent power lines near Gardens. Would readily nest in properly placed nesting boxes.

Golden-crowned Kinglet – Abundant in lowland hardwoods in April and October. See “winter residents.”

Brown Creeper – Frequents lowland elms especially. April and October, but see “winter residents.”

Black and White Warbler* – One of the earliest spring migrants. Look for it especially near tamarack stands along Fleming Creek in late April, and in first fall “wave” in mid-August.

Myrtle Warbler* – Earliest spring warbler (mid-late April) and latest fall migrant (October). Flocks travel woodland borders especially and Fleming Creek area. See “winter residents.”

Palm Warbler* – Chiefly along Fleming Creek in late April, late September and early October. Usually found close to ground in wet areas.

Look for other warbler species listed below in trees and shrubs about Fleming Creek. Usually several species will be seen together, and will pass through the Gardens area in three or four major “waves” in late April, May, and September.

Tennessee Warbler	Bay-breasted Warbler*
Nashville Warbler	Blackpoll Warbler
Parula Warbler	Ovenbird – nests in Ann Arbor area woodlands
Magnolia Warbler*	Northern Waterthrush
Cape May Warbler	Mourning Warbler
Black-throated Blue Warbler	Wilson’s Warbler
Black-throated Green Warbler*	Canada Warbler
Blakburnian Warbler*	American Redstart*
Chestnut-sided Warbler	

Rusty Blackbird – In early April and late March large flocks frequent tamarack swamps. Cowbirds, Red-winged Blackbirds and Grackles associate with these birds. Look for them in evening or early morning especially.

Purple Finch – In early April males sing frequently from tamarack stands and shrubby marshes along Fleming Creek. See “winter residents.”

White-crowned Sparrow – Most apt to be found in brush in lowland areas in early and mid-May and again in first part of October. Not as abundant as following species.

White-throated Sparrow – Small flocks frequent brushy tangles over entire Gardens in late April and early May and again in October. A few linger to late November.

Fox Sparrow – In mid-April and October these birds can be flushed in dense tangles of grape and dogwood in east side of Clements and Osgood Woods.

*Most abundant birds observed in 1960-61.