

Highlights from April 2 Beginners' Bird Walk at Hine Lake

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April 3, 2022

As our Front Range weather makes its stutter-step transition from winter to spring, bird life is on the move. The lakes and reservoirs scattered among the dense development that typifies our urban-suburban corridor are oases for waterfowl and other migratory birds. Hine Lake, a small reservoir in Ken Karyl area just east of C-470, is just such an oasis.



Participants in the April 2, 2022 Beginners' Bird Walk. Photo by Chris Marr and used with permission.

Located in Robert A. Easton Regional Park, Hine Lake plays host to a wide variety of waterfowl, attracted in part by a stable fish population. Eleven birders met at 8:30 am and proceeded to circumambulate Hine Lake, starting on the eastern edge where viewing was best. At 1.06 miles, the path is not long, but provides great views, in part because the reservoir is in remnant shortgrass prairie, with few shrubs or trees along the shore. The small size also means that many of the waterfowl present at the lake are easily studied with binoculars and thereby provides good side-by-side comparisons of similar species.

Canada Geese, Mallards, and Gadwalls were readily observable as we approached. Interestingly, diving ducks were more varied and abundant on Hine Lake than on many other Front Range lakes and reservoirs. Many pairs of Lesser Scaup were observed, and we had the opportunity to closely observe and compare them with the somewhat similar Ring-Necked Ducks also present.



Female Hooded Merganser. Photo by Holly Marr and used with permission.

Hooded Mergansers were widely dispersed across the water, with females and first-year birds significantly outnumbering the resplendent adult males with their black-edged white hammerhead crests and rich black, white, and auburn plumage. The much larger Common Mergansers congregated across from us in the Northwest corner of the lake, but the males were particularly easy to observe with their bright white bodies, dark heads and right red-orange bills standing out resplendently. Walking along the northern and western shores provided more views of the different waterfowl, along with an immature Bald Eagle, possibly hatched last year, that tried but failed to catch a fish.

Birds over the grasslands and houses surrounding Hine Lake were less abundant but we had a good look at a Say's Phoebe near the houses on the north side of the lake, and Tree Swallow pairs were starting to occupy nest boxes along the paths. A high-flying Cooper's Hawk made for a great closing addition to our checklist of 24 species.

Hine Lake, a small body of water with some big surprises, is readily reached from the W. Bowles exit of C-470. Head eastbound on Bowles and take the first right onto W. Coal Mine Avenue; you will wind around about 1.2 miles. Turning left at S. Ward brings you into the parking lot, and the opportunity to see some great birds at close range. Get out there if you have the chance!

Robert A Easton Regional Park, Jefferson, Colorado, US

Apr 2, 2022 8:49 AM – 10:52 AM



Tree Swallow in nestbox. Photo by Holly Marr and used with Permission

Protocol: Traveling

1.268 mile(s)

24 species

Canada Goose 141

Gadwall 20

Mallard 29

Redhead 6

Ring-necked Duck 6

Lesser Scaup 53

Bufflehead 30

Common Goldeneye 6

Hooded Merganser 29

Ruddy Duck 9

Eurasian Collared-Dove 1

Killdeer 1

Ring-billed Gull 43

Cooper's Hawk 1

Bald Eagle 1

Red-tailed Hawk 1

Northern Flicker 1

Say's Phoebe 1

American Crow 5

Common Raven 2

House Finch 5

Song Sparrow 1

Western Meadowlark 1

Red-winged Blackbird 32