

Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, New York, USA, August 1st 2010



Southwestern corner of the East Pond.



Introduction

Any birder going to New York for a holiday during water-season should spare at least one half-day to visit the famous Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. It's easy accessible with the subway and consists of two different ponds. Especially at the East Pond the waders are numerous and most approachable, thus leaving good opportunities for the photographer or in my case "digi-scooper".

For the European birder it's a perfect place to have some training on the American waders possibly turning up as vagrants back home. There is lots of information about Jamaica Bay on the net, but still I hope I can inspire someone planning a day-trip with this short report. I would recommend going for a full-day since I believe it was way to stressful to cover both Ponds on 4 hours...

Literature and Internet Resources

- *Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America (Sibley 2003)
- *Brooklyn Bird Club homepage – <http://www.brooklynbirdclub.org/jamaica.htm>
(Solid information including good printable maps)
- *The New York Birding List – <http://birdingonthe.net/maillinglists/NYSB>
(Latest records and updates on water level in the ponds)
- *Tide tables – <http://www.saltwatertides.com/dynamic.dir/newyorksites.html>
(Be sure to visit East Pond the hours before and precisely at high tide)
- *Subway – map and time tables – <http://mta.info>
(Take A train from downtown to Far Rockaway and get off at Broad Channel)
- *U.S. National Park Service –
http://www.nps.gov/archive/gate/jbu/pdf_files/map_jamaica_bay_wildlife_refuge.pdf
(Nice over-view map of the refuge)

Log

After a few social days in the city it was time for my half-day at Jamaica Bay. We were staying in Jersey City so there was quite a ride with the subway before I reached Broad Channel. At downtown Manhattan there were works going on at some platforms, which meant I had to take the A train first north before I could hop on a south bound train. I didn't reach Broad Channel until 8 AM, so I missed the first morning hours. Knowing that high tide was at 12.57 PM I started by walking around the West Pond. In the nearby scrub I soon connected with a couple of **Willow Flycatchers**, **Yellow Warblers** and a few **Song Sparrows**. At the pool I couldn't find any Wood Duck but at least a few **Black Ducks** and the first waders, mostly **Least Sandpipers**. At the northern part of the pond a **Merlin** flew by. Around the Refuge center there are some nice woods which should attract migrating warblers later in the season.



Semi-palmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*

Short on time I quickly resumed on Crossway Boulevard north all the way to the northwestern corner of the East Pond, this was a hot walk, and I think it took at least 30 minutes. Note that the map of the East Pond from Brooklyn Bird Club is very out-of-scale. When reaching the corner I realized that it was clearly impossible to walk around the pond due to the muddy conditions. So I had to scan the northern part of the pond from the corner, I met a few local birders with good rubber boots continuing closer to the waders. This was noted in some of the earlier reports on the mailing list I had read prior to my visit so I wasn't completely unexpected. The East Pond was packed with waders. I soon found two close **Wilson's Phalaropes**, 800 **Short-billed Dowitchers**, 1000 **Semi-palmated Sandpipers**, 10 **Stilt Sandpipers**, 100 **Least Sandpipers**, 100 **Lesser Yellowlegs**, 7 **Greater Yellowlegs**, a few **Forster's Terns**, 2 **Royal Terns**, and two elusive **Northern Waterthrushes**. The star bird, however, was my 'jinx' bird: a distant **Hudsonian Godwit**, which had hanged around for at least one or two weeks by now. Unfortunately it was at the far side of the pond in bad light conditions, nevertheless I was able to clinch it. After having missed the two Swedish records and also having missed one at Anahuac NWR in Texas with ONE minute, I was more than happy finally connecting with one.



Willow Flycatcher Empidonax traillii, calling with an explosive high-pitched wit!

After an hour or so I had to start walk back, this time I didn't walk the Crossway Boulevard but instead walking on a paths going through the scrub all the way down to the southern parts of the pond. Along this track I had a **Great Crested Flycatcher**, a **Cedar Waxwing**, a **Common Yellowthroat** and a red male **House Finch**. The last stop of the day was at the southwestern corner of the East Pond, here it was drier and I could approach some waders, including some **Spotted Sandpipers** and a nice juvenile **Stilt Sandpiper**. I found three eclipse **Wood Ducks** but couldn't locate the reported Black Tern or American Pelican. More time and rubber boats would have added a few species including Western Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher, and Pectoral Sandpiper, I'm sure. By 12 PM I was on my way back to Jersey, with 6 new ticks in the bag.

Birdlist: Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, August 1st 2010

1. Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus*
2. Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias*
3. Great Egret *Ardea alba*
4. Snowy Egret *Egretta thula*
5. Little Blue Heron *Egretta caerulea*
6. Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*
7. Yellow-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax violacea*
8. Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*
9. Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*
10. Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*
11. Wood Duck *Aix sponsa*
12. Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*
13. American Black Duck *Anas rubripes*
14. Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*
15. Merlin *Falco columbarius*
16. Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus*
17. Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*
18. American Oystercatcher *Haematopus palliatus*
19. Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*
20. Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*
21. Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*
22. Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica*
23. Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*
24. Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*
25. Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*
26. Stilt Sandpiper *Calidris himantopus*
27. Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus*
28. Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*
29. Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla*
30. Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*
31. American Herring Gull *Larus smithsonianus*
32. Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*
33. Royal Tern *Sterna maxima*
34. Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri*
35. Least Tern *Sterna antillarum*
36. Willow Flycatcher *Empidonax traillii*
37. Great Crested Flycatcher *Myiarchus crinitus*
38. Fish Crow *Corvus ossifragus*
39. Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*
40. Northern Rough-winged Swallow *Stelgidopteryx serripennis*
41. Bank Swallow *Riparia riparia*
42. Carolina Wren *Thryothorus ludovicianus*
43. American Robin *Turdus migratorius*
44. Gray Catbird *Dumetella carolinensis*
45. Cedar Waxwing *Bombcilla cedrorum*
46. Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*
47. Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia*
48. Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas*
49. Northern Waterthrush *Seiurus noveboracensis*
50. Northern Cardinal *Cardinalis cardinalis*
51. Eastern Towhee *Pipilo erythrophthalmus*
52. Song Sparrow *Melospiza melodia*
53. Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*
54. Common Grackle *Quiscalus quiscula*
55. House Finch *Carpodacus mexicanus*

Additional shots



Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica*



Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*



Stilt Sandpiper *Calidris himantopus*



Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*

Contact

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