

# An Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Congaree National Park

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## **Introduction**

Congaree National Park is a Globally Important Bird Area and an International Biosphere Reserve situated on the north side of the Congaree River in southeastern Richland County, South Carolina, approximately 35 km from the city of Columbia. The park has approximately 9,000 ha (22,200 a), much of which is floodplain or bottomland hardwood forest. The park protects the largest contiguous tract of old-growth bottomland hardwood forest in the United States. In addition to the bottomland hardwood forest the park also contains a small area of upland mixed pine and hardwood forest and an even smaller area of old-growth Longleaf Pine forest. Congaree National Park was established as Congaree Swamp National Monument on 18 October 1976, and became Congaree National Park on 10 November 2003.

This article summarizes approximately 15,045 bird records of 191 species from Congaree National Park (or areas now included in Congaree National Park) from 5 June 1978 through 30 November 2004. These observations were made by about 103 birders on about 705 visits to the park.

These data are maintained in a text file, available from the author on request. Some of the observations in this database come from published sources, but most are from unpublished day lists provided by birders. No attempt has been made to maintain numbers of individuals in this database. The main value of the database is its large number of entries.

Some of the records included in this report are for birds in the park observed from Congaree Bluffs Heritage Preserve. This preserve has a high (30 m) bluff on the south side of the Congaree River in Calhoun County overlooking the national park. The observation platform at Congaree Bluffs is a great place to observe birds flying over the park.

## **Species Accounts**

### **Canada Goose**

Rare visitor at any season (8 records; 11 March–18 September). All of these records are probably from the locally common introduced population rather than from migrants. Because the local introduced population is mushrooming I expect more fly-over records for Canada Goose in Congaree National Park.

### **Wood Duck**

Common permanent resident (127 records). Breeds. The Wood Duck is the most likely species of waterfowl to be observed in the park. Wood Ducks

should be present all year long, even during August, the only month for which we have no records.

### **American Wigeon**

Rare visitor (1 record; 19 February 2001). John Cely found eight American Wigeons, the only wigeons so far recorded in the park, at the Old Dead River oxbow lake. Commenting on this location Cely says, "The Old Dead River in the center of the park but close to the river is probably the best habitat for waterfowl in winter – protected from hunting yet close to the river. ... I suspect that with more regular visits some new species might be added and the status of others would change".

### **American Black Duck**

Rare visitor (1 record; 29 December 1999). On a visit to the Old Dead River oxbow lake on 29 December 1999, John Cely found four American Black Ducks along with 30 to 40 Wood Ducks, 24 Mallards, and 15 to 20 Green-winged Teal.

### **Mallard**

Rare visitor (5 records; 22 December–3 April). Amazingly we have only five records for this common duck for the park. John Cely found 24 at the Old Dead River oxbow lake on 29 December 1999, 15 at the Old Dead River on 19 February 2001, and 15 to 20 at the same location on 22 December 2001.

### **Blue-winged Teal**

Rare visitor (1 record; 15 March 1992). The only record we have for the park is of a small flock seen by Roger Clark as it flew from a pond on lands of the Dry Branch Hunt Club into the park.

### **Northern Shoveler**

Rare visitor (1 record; 24 August 2003). Lloyd Moon, Caroline Eastman and the author watched a flock of about 10 shovelers from the Congaree Bluffs Heritage Preserve hawk watch as the birds flew upstream along the Congaree River. This was an unusually early date for this species in central South Carolina.

### **Green-winged Teal**

Rare visitor (4 records; 22 November–22 December). The first record we have for the park is of a small flock seen by Roger Clark as it flew from a pond on the Dry Branch Hunt Club land into the park on 22 November 1992. Other records of this species are a few found by John Grego along the western boundary on 14 December 2003 and eight found by John Cely at the Old Dead River oxbow lake on 22 December 2001. Cely found 15 to 20 at Old Dead River on 29 December 1999.

### **Ring-necked Duck**

Rare visitor (2 records; 22 November 1992, 19 February 2001). I have only two park records, the first that of a small flock seen by Roger Clark as it flew from a pond on the Dry Branch Hunt Club land into the park on 22

November 1992 and the other of one bird seen by John Cely at the Old Dead River oxbow lake. This species is a fairly common wintering bird on lakes and ponds just outside of the park, so I expect future records of Ring-necked Ducks flying over the park or at Old Dead River.

### **Hooded Merganser**

Uncommon winter resident (9 records; 18 December–20 May). Hooded Mergansers are likely to be seen along the Congaree River or any creek or slough in the park. The species is more common in the park than the small number of records that I have would indicate. John Cely (pers. comm.) reports that “based on extensive kayaking treks along the sloughs and guts, I would call this merganser an uncommon or localized species in winter.”

### **Wild Turkey**

Uncommon permanent resident (31 records). Breeds. We have only a handful of records for this species from the park, although it is almost certainly present in small numbers all the time. It is much more easily observed in farmlands and regenerating clear cuts just outside of the park.

### **Northern Bobwhite**

Uncommon permanent resident (26 records). Breeds. Like the Wild Turkey the Northern Bobwhite has fewer records than you might expect. Most records for this species are from the spring when it is most vocal. The most likely place to find Northern Bobwhite in the park is in the old-growth pine forest beyond the end of Garrick Road, but it might turn up anywhere, even in the floodplain, during dry periods.

### **Pied-billed Grebe**

Rare visitor (1 record; 13 April 1996). Jerry Griggs reported a Pied-billed Grebe from Weston Lake. It is surprising that this is the only record since this species is a common migrant and wintering bird on lakes and ponds throughout central South Carolina. I expect further records, especially in migration along the Congaree River.

### **Double-crested Cormorant**

Rare visitor at any season (9 records; 2 April–18 December). This species is usually seen flying over the park. In view of the fact that its numbers seem to be increasing, and that it has bred as close as Swan Lake Gardens in Sumter, SC, I expect more reports in the future, especially along the Congaree River. I have records for April, May, July, August, September, October, and December, but this species could occur on any day of the year.

### **Anhinga**

Uncommon permanent resident; probably breeds in small numbers in the park (39 records). Records of this species are mostly from lakes and sloughs, or flying over the park. It has been seen in every month except January. It is mostly likely in summer or during migration, but there are four winter (December–February) sightings. Like its relative the Double-crested Cormorant, the Anhinga seems to be increasing in numbers.

**American Bittern**

Rare migrant (2 records; 9 March 1990, 29 August 2001). Given the paucity of marshy habitat in the park it's not surprising that we have so few records of this secretive, marsh-dwelling species. Both records come from park employees who happened upon a bittern in the course of their work. The first bittern was seen by Catherine Brett at some unspecified location on 9 March 1990. Nathan Taylor found the other bittern along the Kingsnake Trail on 29 August 2001.

**Great Blue Heron**

Common permanent resident (113 records). Probably breeds. It is most often seen at sloughs, along the Congaree River, or flying overhead.

**Great Egret**

Uncommon summer visitor (28 records; 28 March–5 October). As with other water birds this species is most likely at lakes, sloughs, along the Congaree River or Cedar Creek, or flying overhead. We can expect records from every month of the year, since this egret is present year round just outside of the park.

**Snowy Egret**

Rare visitor (1 record; 8 September 1990). Surprisingly I have only one record of this common egret. Bob Wood found one at a slough along the western boundary. I expect further records for this species, most likely in August or September.

**Little Blue Heron**

Rare summer resident (7 records; 11 March–8 September). May breed.

**Cattle Egret**

Rare summer visitor (5 records; 18 April–25 August). This species is fairly common in summer in pastures just outside the park but is rarely seen flying over the park.

**Green Heron**

Uncommon summer resident (23 records; 23 February–4 November). Breeds. Rare in winter. With a bit of luck this common heron can be found on any body of water in the park during the warmer part of the year.

**Yellow-crowned Night-Heron**

Uncommon summer resident (20 records; 10 March–5 October). Breeds. Birders most commonly observe this species during the spring. As the name implies night-herons often hunt at night, and can be seen flying over the swamp at dusk, or heard flying overhead at night. Occasionally a quiet observer might come upon one in broad daylight, especially at a slough, hunting crayfish.

**White Ibis**

Rare summer visitor (7 records; 19 April–13 September). Because this is a fairly common species that sometimes breeds less than 100 km from the

park, and because this species wanders widely in late summer, I am surprised that it has not turned up more often in Congaree National Park.

### **Roseate Spoonbill**

Accidental visitor (1 record; 21 July 1996). During July 1996 Bobby Desportes and Randy Dunlap found a spoonbill associating with a small flock of Wood Storks on a pond on lands of the Dry Branch Hunt Club, immediately north of the park. A number of local birders visited this pond to see the spoonbill, which is rare anywhere in South Carolina. On the evening of 21 July 1996 Desportes and Dunlap, along with Phyllis and Jim Beasley, observed the spoonbill as it flew away from the hunt club and over the park.

### **Wood Stork**

Occasional summer visitor (16 records; 30 May–6 October). This species is almost always seen in flight over the park. The easiest place from which to observe Wood Storks over Congaree National Park is from the hawk watch site at Congaree Bluffs Heritage Preserve.

### **Black Vulture**

Common permanent resident (122 records). Breeds. Numbers of Black Vultures increase in fall and winter, when wintering birds arrive from the north. Often this species outnumbers the Turkey Vulture.

### **Turkey Vulture**

Common permanent resident (210 records). Breeds.

### **Osprey**

Uncommon migrant (29 records; 14 March–8 May, 28 July–14 October). About half of the records for Osprey are from the Congaree Bluffs hawk watch, which began in 2001. There is no evidence that this species breeds in the park, but this could change as it becomes more common locally.

### **Swallow-tailed Kite**

Rare migrant and summer visitor (3 records; 29 April–14 July). This species is locally common along the Wateree River in summer, so we should expect more records for the park.

### **Mississippi Kite**

Uncommon summer resident (68 records; 7 April–7 September). Breeds. While there are seven April records for Mississippi Kite we do not expect to see one until early May. Birders see this species most easily from the Congaree Bluffs hawk watch site. From here you might be treated to a flock of a dozen or more on a good day during the fall migration in August.

### **Bald Eagle**

Occasional visitor (11 records, 25 August–21 March). Our national symbol might be seen at any time of year over the park, especially from the Congaree Bluffs hawk watch site, but it is most commonly reported during the fall migration.

**Northern Harrier**

Uncommon migrant and winter visitor (22 records; 25 August–21 March). As with most species mainly seen flying over the park, the best place to spot a harrier is from the Congaree Bluffs hawk watch site. There is little or no appropriate feeding habitat for this species in the park, but it is a common winter resident of farmlands just outside of the park.

**Sharp-shinned Hawk**

Uncommon migrant and winter resident (48 records; 12 September–9 May). This is one of few hawks that are regularly seen feeding in the park. One winter day I was squeaking for birds along the Kingsnake Trail when suddenly a sharpie zipped out of the underbrush and flew right past my face. Had I been a chickadee I would probably have been a goner. During the 2001 fall hawk watch at Congaree Bluffs the highest day count for Sharp-shinned Hawk was 11 on 14 October, indicating a moderate flight of this species in mid-October.

**Cooper's Hawk**

Permanent resident, occasional in winter and uncommon in summer (18 records; 16 August–11 May). Probably breeds. Cooper's Hawks are most likely to be seen from the Congaree Bluffs hawk watch in October. The highest day count for this species during the 2001 fall season at Congaree Bluffs hawk watch was four on 26 October.

**Red-shouldered Hawk**

Abundant permanent resident (324 records). Breeds. The Red-shouldered Hawk is by far the most common hawk in the park. Its descending scream is one of the more common bird sounds of the park, and it is found easily at all times of the year.

**Broad-winged Hawk**

Occasional migrant (16 records; 23 March–10 May, 18 August–4 October). The high day count at the Congaree Bluffs hawk watch in 2001 was nine on 8 September. This species breeds near the park, but as yet we have no evidence of breeding in the park.

**Swainson's Hawk**

Accidental visitor (1 record; 3 August 2003). While conducting a hawk watch from Congaree Bluffs Heritage Preserve, John Grego and the author watched a hawk for several minutes as it flew over the park. The bird appeared to be a dark-phase Swainson's Hawk.

**Red-tailed Hawk**

Resident, uncommon in winter and occasional in summer (59 records). May breed. While the Red-tailed Hawk is a common permanent resident outside of the park, it is less often seen within the park. Most records are of birds flying over the park. Most sightings of Red-tailed Hawk have been from October through December, but the species is possible at any time of the year.

### **Golden Eagle**

Rare visitor (2 records; 22 November 2001, 9 March 2003). Lindsey Brettsneider observed a Golden Eagle from the boardwalk loop on 22 November 2001. Mike Turner saw one on 9 March 2003 from Congaree Bluffs Heritage Preserve. Both sightings were carefully documented.

### **American Kestrel**

Occasional winter resident (15 records; 13 September–5 April). As with most hawks this species is much more common in the farmlands just outside the park than in the park itself.

### **Peregrine Falcon**

Rare fall migrant (4 records; 23 August–28 October). All four records of Peregrine Falcon for the park are of birds seen from the Congaree Bluffs hawk watch.

### **rail (species unknown)**

Accidental visitor (1 record; 16 March 1993). An unidentified rail was seen along the boardwalk by an unknown visitor (*vide* Roger Clark). This was probably either a Virginia Rail or a King Rail. These two species, as well as Sora and Yellow Rail, are rare in winter in marshes just outside the park. Since there is little or no marsh habitat within the park I predict that rails of any species will be reported very rarely in the future.

### **Killdeer**

Rare visitor (7 records; 15 December–12 May). All current records for Killdeer are from winter or spring. Nevertheless, I expect a Killdeer as a fly-over or at the after-hours parking area at any time of year because this species is a common permanent resident of farmlands just outside of the park.

### **Lesser Yellowlegs**

Rare migrant (1 record; 26 April 1991). Roger Clark found a Lesser Yellowlegs along the Congaree River. Further records of this species or of Greater Yellowlegs are expected from the river during migrations.

### **Solitary Sandpiper**

Rare migrant (1 record; 8 September 1990). Bob Wood found one along the western boundary. Because Solitary Sandpipers sometimes frequent isolated pools and wet areas in wooded areas, I expect further records during either spring or fall migration.

### **Spotted Sandpiper**

Rare migrant (2 records; 28 May 1992, 28 April 1995). I have two records for this common shorebird. I found the first one along the Congaree River on 28 May 1992. Ruth and Judy Luden reported one from Wise Lake on 28 April 1995. With better coverage of the Congaree River we should find this species just about every year, either in spring or fall.

**Wilson's Snipe**

Rare visitor (1 record; 28 October 1990). The only record of this species (which used to be called Common Snipe) was of one seen by Caroline Eastman, Alistaire Smith and the author in the Tom's Creek area. Because this is a fairly common winter resident of marshes and wet grassy areas just outside the park we might expect further records any time from fall through spring. I predict that one will be found during a Christmas count along a power line right-of-way, or in the marsh next to the after-hours parking lot.

**American Woodcock**

Occasional permanent resident (19 records). Probably breeds. Most records are from late fall and winter, but there are two July records. I think there must be at least a few woodcocks in appropriate habitat in the park any time of year, but they are difficult to detect unless they are displaying.

**Bonaparte's Gull**

Rare migrant (1 record; 20 April 1992). Simon Thompson saw one flying over the park at some unspecified location.

**Ring-billed Gull**

Rare winter visitor (6 records; 13 November through 1 May). The first record is from Simon Thompson, from 20 April 1992 at some unspecified location (the same time as our only record for Bonaparte's Gull). I expect more records of gulls flying over the park, especially during the winter. The Congaree Bluffs hawk watch site would be an ideal place from which to look for gulls flying over the park.

**Caspian Tern**

Rare spring visitor (2 records; 13 April 2002, 18 April 2002). Tim Kalbach, Gary Sowell and Nancy Lyman saw one flying over the park entrance road. Another (or perhaps the same) Caspian Tern was reported for 18 April 2002.

**Rock Pigeon**

Rare visitor (3 records; May–August). In 1992 Roger Clark noted a small flock roosting under Bannister Bridge on Old Bluff Road at the very edge of the park. Rock Pigeons have also been seen flying over the mature pine grove at the end of Garrick Road and from the Congaree Bluffs hawk watch. I expect a few future records of Rock Pigeons flying over the park, but there is apparently no appropriate breeding habitat in the park.

**Eurasian Collared-Dove**

Rare visitor (2 records; 13 September 2003, 26 September 2001). Both records for this rapidly increasing species are for single birds that I saw flying over the park from the Congaree Bluffs hawk watch. This species is well established in the town of Saint Matthews, just 15 km from the park. Future sightings are quite likely, especially from the Congaree Bluffs hawk watch site.

### **Mourning Dove**

Common permanent resident (175 records). Breeds. While Mourning Doves are more common in the upland portions of the park than they are in the floodplain forest, it is quite possible to find a few anywhere in the park at any season of the year.

### **Black-billed Cuckoo**

Rare migrant (5 records; 2 May–11 May, 26 September–25 October). It's always a treat to find this species anywhere in South Carolina. It is probably a more common migrant in the park than the few records indicate, because this is one of the few migrating land birds that seem to be more common in the South Carolina Coastal Plain than above the Fall Line.

### **Yellow-billed Cuckoo**

Common summer resident (188 records; 8 April–1 November). Breeds. The calls of the Yellow-billed Cuckoo are a common part of the summer soundscape of the swamp. This species is more commonly heard than seen, but it is not particularly difficult to catch a glimpse of one flying from one tree to another.

### **Eastern Screech-Owl**

Uncommon permanent resident (34 records). Breeds. This common owl can be found at any time of year by whistling an imitation of its call at night in appropriate habitat. Sometimes, especially in late summer, you can hear it calling during the day. Birders seldom actually see this species in the park. It is mostly a species of thickets in the upland portions of the park, and is seldom recorded from the floodplain forest.

### **Great Horned Owl**

Uncommon permanent resident (20 records; 11 March–20 December). Probably breeds. The Great Horned Owl is probably present throughout the year, and may breed in the mature pinewoods at the end of Garrick Road or along the Bluff Trail.

### **Barred Owl**

Abundant permanent resident (287 records). Breeds. The Barred Owl is one of the signature birds of Congaree National Park. It is common in all parts of the park, though most of all in the mature floodplain forest, and is easily heard at any time of year. It is not unusual to see a Barred Owl in daylight or to hear one or more calling at high noon.

### **Common Nighthawk**

Rare migrant (1 record; 6 May 1995). It is amazing that we have only one record of a nighthawk in the park. Steve Dennis and Tammy Sutherland found one in the mature pinewoods beyond the end of Garrick Road. We are long overdue for additional records of nighthawks. I expect some to be seen in August or September from the Congaree Bluffs hawk watch site if not from elsewhere in the park.

**Chuck-will's-widow**

Uncommon summer resident (22 records; 3 May–24 August). Breeds. Typically this species is heard calling at dawn or dusk from pine woods in the upland parts of the park. We never hear it calling from the floodplain forest. It is probably more common than the number of records might indicate, but it appears to be significantly less likely to be heard than the Whip-poor-will.

**Whip-poor-will**

Uncommon summer resident (36 records; 11 March–20 September). Breeds. Like the Chuck-will's-widow, the Whip-poor-will is usually heard calling at dawn or dusk from somewhere in the upland part of the park, and does not occur in the floodplain forest. Whips almost always outnumber chucks, usually by two or three to one, based on what we hear at dawn during the breeding season.

**Chimney Swift**

Abundant summer resident (238 records; 19 March–25 October). Probably breeds. There is speculation that Chimney Swifts still breed in hollow trees in the Congaree Swamp, in the manner of their ancestors before the advent of humans into their range, but as far as I know there is no actual documentation of tree-breeding swifts in the park. This species is often present in huge numbers. It is very common during the breeding season, and often can be seen by the hundreds in September from the Congaree Bluffs hawk watch site.

**Ruby-throated Hummingbird**

Common summer resident (103 records; 28 March–28 September). Breeds. Because no national park allows hummingbird feeders, the way to see this species is to hike the trails and look for one. Any spring or summer day spent in the field will usually result in seeing at least one hummingbird. So far the Ruby-throated is the only hummingbird identified in the park.

**Belted Kingfisher**

Permanent resident, uncommon in winter and rare in summer (72 records). Probably breeds.

**Red-headed Woodpecker**

Common permanent resident (241 records). Breeds. The woodpeckers as a group are very well represented in Congaree National Park. On two or three occasions I have observed all eight of the park's woodpecker species along the elevated boardwalk in the course of a morning's walk. Woodpeckers abound in the park, and the Red-headed Woodpecker is no exception. This species does move around a lot, and a group of standing dead trees that might have a dozen Red-headed Woodpeckers on one visit might not have any at all two months later. Migrant Red-headed Woodpeckers are sometimes observed in fall from the Congaree Bluffs hawk watch site.

**Red-bellied Woodpecker**

Abundant permanent resident (446 records). Breeds. The Red-bellied Woodpecker is one of the most common birds in the park at any time of year.

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**

Common winter resident (160 records; 8 September–13 April). The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker is usually not seen until late October or early November, and is usually gone by the end of March.

**Downy Woodpecker**

Common permanent resident (369 records). Breeds.

**Hairy Woodpecker**

Common permanent resident (189 records). Breeds. This species is much more likely in Congaree National Park than in woodlands elsewhere in the Columbia area.

**Red-cockaded Woodpecker**

Extirpated. Formerly a rare permanent resident and breeder (28 records). This endangered species formerly bred in mature pines beyond the end of Garrick Road. Our last record for this species in the park is from 14 October 1997. John Cely discovered the Red-cockaded Woodpeckers in 1972. Yearly checks of the birds started in 1978, and offspring were banded by folks from South Carolina Department of Natural Resources and its predecessors starting in 1980. According to John Cely (pers. comm.) there were probably no more than four or five Red-cockaded Woodpeckers in the park at any time, hardly a viable population. Red-cockaded Woodpeckers still breed within a few kilometers of the park, in the Fort Jackson Military Reservation and also in Manchester State Forest, so it is possible that a wandering bird might turn up from time to time, especially in winter. In recent years good management of the park's pinewoods has increased the attractiveness of these areas to Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. Perhaps the species will be successfully reintroduced in the not too distant future.

**Northern Flicker**

Permanent resident, common in winter, occasional in summer (269 records). Breeds. All records pertain to the yellow-shafted form that is common in eastern North America, although the red-shafted form is remotely possible in migration. There are always some flickers in the park, but they are most common during the migrations and during the winter. Few flickers breed in the park.

**Pileated Woodpecker**

Abundant permanent resident (421 records). Breeds. Congaree National Park is one of the best places in the world to find Pileated Woodpeckers, so much so that the species is one of the signature species of the park. Pileated Woodpeckers are outnumbered by the Red-bellied Woodpeckers, but there are a lot of Pileated Woodpeckers in the park.

**Olive-sided Flycatcher**

Rare migrant (5 records; 4 May, 11 September–3 October). Olive-sided Flycatchers are rare migrants anywhere in South Carolina, and Congaree Swamp is no exception. The main migration routes are west of the state.

**Eastern Wood-Pewee**

Common summer resident (133 records; 18 April–31 October). Breeds. Eastern Wood-Pewees are more often encountered in the upland parts of the park than in the floodplain forest, but they may be seen or heard anywhere in the park.

**Acadian Flycatcher**

Common summer resident (178 records; 17 April–5 October). Breeds. Any birder walking a trail through the floodplain forest in summer is likely to hear the “pizza” call of the Acadian Flycatcher. With a bit of luck they will spy the singer, often in the mid-level branches of some giant tree. It’s not too hard to track down a nest of this species. During fall migration Acadian Flycatchers are often quite yellow below, and several reports of “Yellow-bellied” Flycatcher have probably been sightings of the much more common Acadian Flycatcher. I do not yet have an unambiguous record of Yellow-bellied Flycatcher from the park.

**Least Flycatcher**

Rare migrant (1 record; 2 May 1992). Roger Clark found a Least Flycatcher on the Kingsnake Trail. This species is a rare but regular spring and fall migrant in central South Carolina. We can expect another record sooner or later. I have three fall records of unidentified *Empidonax* flycatchers that may have been this species, a Willow or Alder Flycatcher, or perhaps something else other than the expected *Empidonax* (the Acadian Flycatcher).

**Eastern Phoebe**

Common winter resident; rare in summer (160 records; 4 October–5 April). Has bred at least once. During June 1988 John Cely found phoebes breeding at the old clubhouse site, near Cedar Creek (now on the Sims Trail). Aside from this record the Eastern Phoebe is known only as a migrant and winter resident. This species regularly breeds in the Piedmont in northern Richland County, about 50 km from the park, but is very rare as a breeder below the Fall Line.

**Great Crested Flycatcher**

Common summer resident (162 records; 24 March–21 September). Breeds. The Great Crested Flycatcher is easily found from the middle of April until early July, but becomes more difficult to find in late summer and fall. Any birder finding a flycatcher of the genus *Myiarchus* in late fall or winter should pay special attention to its field marks and calls. Eventually we should have a credible record from the park for Ash-throated Flycatcher, or even some less likely species.

### **Western Kingbird**

Accidental visitor (1 record; 30 September 1970). Our only record of Western Kingbird is of a bird found by Sid Gauthreaux at an unspecified location. This species is very rare anywhere in South Carolina, and is usually found in more open habitats than we have in most of the park. It is not to be expected in the park.

### **Eastern Kingbird**

Uncommon migrant (19 records; 18 April–29 May, 4 July–7 September). Possible breeder. The Eastern Kingbird is a fairly common summer resident in agricultural areas just outside of the park, but is not usually found in the park itself. When we do find this species in the park it is usually flying over or perching in the top of a tall tree.

### **Loggerhead Shrike**

Rare visitor (8 records). The Loggerhead Shrike is a good example of a species that is easily found just outside of the park in agricultural areas, but rarely occurs in the woods at any time of year. One site where shrikes were found was on land newly acquired and incorporated into the park, which was a young pine plantation at that time. It has since grown up and no longer is suitable habitat for shrikes.

### **White-eyed Vireo**

Permanent resident, abundant in summer, but only occasional in winter (332 records). Breeds. The White-eyed Vireo does not become common until mid-March, and numbers drop off dramatically after October. It is a good find in winter.

### **Yellow-throated Vireo**

Common summer resident (146 records; 18 March–4 October). Breeds. This species is readily found from early April through June, while the males are singing. It is not too hard to find through the end of September.

### **Blue-headed Vireo**

Common winter resident (104 records; 14 October–6 May). Although the Blue-headed Vireo occasionally breeds in the Piedmont portion of Richland County, it has not yet been found in summer in the park. The breeding habitat in the South Carolina Piedmont is mature pines, so we might yet find Blue-headed Vireos breeding in the park's pinewoods.

### **Warbling Vireo**

Rare migrant (3 records; 23 April 1995, 30 April 1988, and 4 June 1991). This species might be found breeding some day, perhaps in willows along the Congaree River. Its only known breeding station in South Carolina is at Santee National Wildlife Refuge in Clarendon County, about 100 km downstream from the park.

**Philadelphia Vireo**

Rare migrant (3 records; 2 May 1992, 4 September 1994, 22 September 1991). As with Warbling Vireo we have three records of Philadelphia Vireo from the park. In general in South Carolina the Philadelphia Vireo is recorded much more often in the fall than in the spring.

**Red-eyed Vireo**

Common summer resident (201 records; 26 March–15 October). Breeds. The caroling song of the Red-eyed Vireo is one of the more familiar sounds of the park from April until early August. Even in fall migration, when this species rarely sings, it is so common that it is easily found into October.

**Blue Jay**

Permanent resident, common in migration but only occasional in summer and uncommon in winter (177 records). Probably breeds. This common species is not typically a bird of the mature forest, but is more likely to be found in open areas and on the edge of the park. It can be anywhere during migrations, but is rarely encountered during the breeding season.

**American Crow**

Abundant permanent resident (333 records). Breeds. The caw of the crow is a familiar sound in the park, even deep in the forest. This species does well just about anywhere in the lower 48 states of the United States wherever there are trees, and Congaree National Park meets that requirement.

**Fish Crow**

Common summer resident (144 records; 23 February–30 November). Breeds. The whining nasal “uh-uh” of the Fish Crow is one of the first signs of spring in the park. This species does occur sparingly in winter nearby, so a winter record is not too unlikely, but it is much more likely near a large lake or where there is edible trash available. In fall migration the Fish Crow masses in flocks of up to 1000 birds near the Congaree River. Look for these large flocks from the Congaree Bluffs Heritage Preserve early in the morning.

**Purple Martin**

Uncommon summer visitor (48 records; 20 March–26 September). In the spring or early summer is it not too hard to spy one or more Purple Martins flying over the park. In eastern North America this species now breeds almost exclusively in martin houses or martin nesting gourds provided by people. I have no evidence of breeding in the park, but the Purple Martin is a common breeder nearby, such as in the village of Gadsden, 3 km from the park. In late summer a huge roost of Purple Martins forms on an island in Lake Murray, about 60 km from the park. Many summer records of Purple Martin doubtless belong to birds visiting from the Lake Murray roost.

**Tree Swallow**

Occasional migrant (18 records; 30 March–17 April, 16 August–15 October). As with all swallows other than Purple Martin, the Tree

Swallow is seen only during migration in the park. Most records are from birds observed from the Congaree Bluffs Heritage Preserve as they fly along the Congaree River.

**Northern Rough-winged Swallow**

Rare migrant (9 records; 8 April–11 May, 21 August–2 September). This species breeds nearby. There is a remote chance of finding this species breeding in the park.

**Barn Swallow**

Occasional migrant (13 records; 30 April–13 May, 18 August–2 September). This species breeds very near the park. In fact it breeds under highway bridges along the US 601 causeway over the Congaree River floodplain. This area is within the authorized boundary of the park, so it is possible that an expansion of the park will bring with it breeding Barn Swallows.

**Carolina Chickadee**

Abundant permanent resident (413 records). Breeds. It is difficult to spend an hour birding in the park at any season without finding at least a few Carolina Chickadees, usually in the company of Tufted Titmice and other species.

**Tufted Titmouse**

Abundant permanent resident (438 records). Breeds. The Tufted Titmouse is even more abundant than the Carolina Chickadee in the park. The abundance of woodpeckers, tits, nuthatches, and Great Crested Flycatcher is related to the abundance of standing dead trees, since all of these species are cavity nesters.

**Red-breasted Nuthatch**

Rare winter visitor (2 records; 22 January 1994, 7 November 2004). Amazingly there are only two records of this irruptive winter visitor for the park. Roger Clark reported one from some unspecified location on 22 January 1994, and I found four (one near the Visitors Center, three on the Oakridge Trail) on 7 November 2004. We should be able to find this species in pines during invasion years.

**White-breasted Nuthatch**

Common permanent resident (321 records). Breeds. This species is common wherever there are mature trees in the park. It may be found easily in old-growth hardwoods in the floodplain forest, and just as easily in areas of mature pines or mixed pines and hardwoods. This species is rather difficult to find in Richland County except in Congaree National Park, since it is largely absent from second-growth woods.

**Brown-headed Nuthatch**

Common permanent resident (195 records). Breeds. The Brown-headed Nuthatch is less common than the White-breasted Nuthatch and not as widely distributed in the park. It is usually found in pinewoods or mixed

pine-hardwood forests, often in the company of White-breasted Nuthatches, Carolina Chickadees, and Tufted Titmice. Outside of the park this species is much more common than White-breasted Nuthatch in Richland County.

### **Brown Creeper**

Uncommon winter resident (54 records; 6 October–2 April). Congaree National Park is a good place to look for Brown Creeper in winter in South Carolina. Nevertheless, finding one of these curious little birds is a notable event, even in Congaree National Park. The creeper usually is found as part of a mixed flock of chickadees, titmice, kinglets, and nuthatches. Usually there is at most one Brown Creeper in a mixed flock.

### **Carolina Wren**

Abundant permanent resident (437 records). Breeds. Our South Carolina state bird is abundant and conspicuous in all parts of the park.

### **House Wren**

Migrant, occasional in spring and uncommon in fall (25 records; 3 March–8 May, 15 September–15 December). The House Wren is usually found in scrubby or weedy areas, not in mature forests. Outside of the park it is a fairly common winter resident of such habitats. Better coverage of the few weedy habitats that we have in the park would probably turn up a few mid-winter records for this species.

### **Winter Wren**

Common winter resident (115 records; 15 October–17 April). Congaree National Park is one of best places in South Carolina to find the Winter Wren. This mouse-like species is usually easy to find in the floodplain forest and occasionally occurs in the upland forests as well. It is usually located by its call note, but may be heard singing rarely.

### **Golden-crowned Kinglet**

Common winter resident (136 records; 9 October–4 April). The Golden-crowned Kinglet, while common, is not so easily found as its ruby-crowned cousin. The species might be found as part of a mixed flock anywhere in the park, but it is most likely in pine forests.

### **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**

Abundant winter resident (245 records; 27 September–6 May). This species winters in tremendous numbers in South Carolina, and especially in Congaree National Park. It is not unusual for one Christmas Count party to report over 100 Ruby-crowned Kinglets.

### **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher**

Resident, common in summer but rare in winter (241 records). Breeds. I have records for this species for every month of the year except January. It is most abundant during spring and fall migrations, but is also a common breeder. It returns in good numbers in late March.

### **Eastern Bluebird**

Uncommon permanent resident (105 records). Breeds. Bluebirds are most often found in pinewoods or flying over the park. It is significantly more common in winter than in summer.

### **Veery**

Uncommon migrant (39 records; 21 April–13 May, 25 August–13 October). The Veery, like the other migrant thrushes, is most easily detected by its nocturnal flight call note. Nevertheless it is not too hard to find during the day in the old-growth forest.

### **Gray-cheeked Thrush**

Rare migrant (8 records; 26 April–13 May, 18 September–13 October). This species is usually detected by its nocturnal flight note, but it has been seen on a couple of occasions. On 13 May 2000 I made a sound recording of a singing Gray-cheeked Thrush along the boardwalk.

### **Bicknell's Thrush**

Rare migrant (2 records; 4 May 1996, 18 September 1999). This species is not only rare, it is difficult to separate from Gray-cheeked Thrush. Roger Clark and Kathleen O'Grady carefully described one found on 4 May 1996 along the boardwalk loop. On 18 September 1999 the author and Caroline Eastman identified a Bicknell's Thrush by its nocturnal flight call as it flew over Congaree Bluffs Heritage Preserve and into the park.

### **Swainson's Thrush**

Uncommon migrant (32 records; 26 April–15 May, 9 September–25 October). This species is fairly easy to detect by its nocturnal flight call and not too hard to see in the daytime in forest.

### **Hermit Thrush**

Common winter resident (201 records; 17 October–28 April). From November through March the Hermit Thrush is one of the most readily encountered bird species in the park, often occurring in good numbers. It is not too unusual to hear this species singing, especially in November or March.

### **Wood Thrush**

Common summer resident (124 records; 30 March–27 November). Breeds. The song of the Wood Thrush is still a fairly common sound in the park during the breeding season. This species is usually not found in the floodplain forest, but rather is much more likely up on the bluff, at the edge of the floodplain.

### **American Robin**

Resident, common in winter, but rare in summer (171 records). Robins are common year round in the suburbs of Columbia, with their well-watered lawns, but are essentially a winter resident in the park. Typically they arrive

in September and are gone by the middle of May. I have no June record, and one record each for July and August.

### **Gray Catbird**

Common migrant and uncommon winter resident (92 records; 14 August–26 May). The Gray Catbird is primarily known as a migrant in central South Carolina. A few over-winter and a few breed in favored locations. This pattern describes the occurrence of this species in the park. I would not be surprised to find a breeding pair or two somewhere in the brushier parts of the park, but in the old-growth forest it is strictly a migrant.

### **Northern Mockingbird**

Uncommon visitor (40 records; 14 August–9 May). The mockingbird is abundant in the farmlands and suburbs just outside the park, but is an unusual species in the park itself, since there is so little of the early successional habitat that this species prefers. I might someday find this species breeding in the park, but this would be unusual. It is most often found during spring and fall migration.

### **Brown Thrasher**

Resident, common in winter but rare in summer (124 records). Most Brown Thrashers are found from September through May. I have one July record, but no records for June or August. This species may be overlooked in the upland areas of the park and a breeding pair or two may be found at some point.

### **European Starling**

Rare visitor (5 records; 2 April–6 May). The starling is fairly common in the farmlands just outside of the park, but I have only a handful of records for the park itself, all from the spring migration.

### **American Pipit**

Rare visitor (1 record; 15 December 2002). Pipits are common in winter in farmlands just outside the park, but I have only a single record for the park itself. I found one flying over the after-hours parking area at dawn on 15 December 2002.

### **Cedar Waxwing**

Uncommon winter resident, rare in summer (39 records; 15 October–24 June). It is not too hard to find waxwings in the park in winter. They usually arrive in November and are gone by early May. I have one June record. Waxwings often associate with large flocks of American Robins.

### **Blue-winged Warbler**

Migrant, rare in spring and occasional in fall (23 records; 16 April–27 April, 18 August–11 October). This beautiful warbler is hard to find in the park, perhaps because it likes scrubby habitats.

**Golden-winged Warbler**

Rare fall migrant (2 records; 30 August 1992, 15 September 1985). The Golden-winged Warbler is a good find anywhere in South Carolina. Both reports for this species in the park come from George McCoy along the Kingsnake Trail.

**Tennessee Warbler**

Rare migrant (9 records; 17 April–3 May, 13 September–25 October). It is curious that we have so few records of Tennessee Warbler for the park.

**Orange-crowned Warbler**

Occasional winter resident (28 records; 22 October–10 April). Finding an Orange-crowned Warbler is often the highlight of a winter birding trip to the park. This species is much more common along the south coast of South Carolina.

**Nashville Warbler**

Rare fall migrant (1 record; 20 September 1997). On 20 September 1997 Caroline Eastman and the author found a Nashville Warbler along a service road (now the Sims Trail).

**Northern Parula**

Abundant summer resident (303 records; 20 February–10 November). Breeds. Congaree National Park is probably the best place in the world to find the Northern Parula in the breeding season. It is found throughout the park, but is especially common in the old growth forest areas. There is a December record for Richland County outside of the park, so this is a species that I expect to find on some future Christmas Bird Count.

**Yellow Warbler**

Rare spring migrant (2 records; 3 May 1992, 6 May 1995). It is surprising that we only have two records for this common species for the park. If there were more coverage of willows along the Congaree River we would certainly have more records.

**Chestnut-sided Warbler**

Migrant, rare in spring and uncommon in fall (23 records; 6 May, 26 August–14 October). The Chestnut-sided Warbler is not too hard to find in a flock of fall warblers, but we only have one record for the spring.

**Magnolia Warbler**

Migrant, rare in spring and uncommon in fall (40 records; 6 May, 7 September–22 October). Like the Chestnut-sided Warbler, the Magnolia Warbler is primarily a fall migrant in the park. I have only three spring records.

**Cape May Warbler**

Rare migrant (8 records; 17 April–12 May, 4 October). Seven of eight records for Cape May Warbler are for the spring migration. This species is

probably more common than the number of records indicates, but it is hard to observe in the tops of the tall trees where it is most likely to be found.

### **Black-throated Blue Warbler**

Migrant, common in spring, uncommon in fall (61 records; 26 March–15 May, 20 September–26 October). The Black-throated Blue Warbler can be very common in late April or early May in the park. It is less common as a fall migrant.

### **Yellow-rumped Warbler**

Abundant winter resident (242 records; 4 October–4 May). As in most of the southeastern United States, the most common wintering warbler in Congaree National Park is the Yellow-rumped Warbler. All records that we have so far are for the eastern population of this species (the “Myrtle” Warbler). “Audubon’s” Warblers almost certainly occur in small numbers, but most birders do not study “butter-butts” to pick out an odd one.

### **Black-throated Green Warbler**

Rare migrant (9 records; 30 March–6 May, 25 September–8 October). This common species is surprisingly difficult to find in the park, perhaps because it migrates earlier in the spring or later in the fall than when most birders are out looking for migrants.

### **Blackburnian Warbler**

Rare migrant (6 records; 30 April–10 May, 25 September–4 October). I wish this beautiful animal were more common than it is in the park.

### **Yellow-throated Warbler**

Abundant summer resident, rare in winter (206 records; 23 February–21 December). Breeds. One of the first signs of spring in the park comes on a warm day in late February or early March when we first hear the song of the Yellow-throated Warbler. This species is very easy to find in March or April, but then becomes less obvious as the breeding season goes on. It is present during the fall migration, but much less easily found. Most are gone by early October. I have one early winter record: 21 December 1993.

### **Pine Warbler**

Abundant permanent resident (276 records). Breeds. This species is easy to find in pinewoods, especially when it is singing, which is most of the year. In winter you might find one or two Pine Warblers in a mixed flock well into the floodplain forest. Perhaps these birds are winter visitors from farther north, since this species is partially migratory.

### **Prairie Warbler**

Occasional migrant, rare in winter (21 records; 11 April–21 December). This species breeds in young pine plantations just outside of the park, but is found in the park only as a migrant. I have one winter record. Usually this species has left Richland County by the end of October.

**Palm Warbler**

Rare winter and spring visitor (5 records; 7 December–20 April). This is another example of a species that is much more common in farmlands just outside of the park than in the park itself. The best place to look for a Palm Warbler in Congaree National Park is in the open pinewoods at the end of Garrick Road.

**Bay-breasted Warbler**

Rare migrant (2 records; 2 May 1991, 22 October 1989). I have only two records for this species in the park, perhaps because it is usually found in central South Carolina late in the fall migration in scrubby habitats, such as young pine plantations.

**Blackpoll Warbler**

Rare migrant (9 records; 4 May–14 May, 4 October–11 October). This is another species that is surprisingly hard to find in the park.

**Cerulean Warbler**

Rare migrant (3 records; 20 April–22 April, 3 September). This species has been found breeding in a floodplain forest in the Coastal Plain of North Carolina (the Roanoke River), but we do not find this situation along the Congaree.

**Black-and-white Warbler**

Visitor, common in migration, uncommon in winter, rare in summer (116 records). Although the Black-and-white Warbler has been found in the park during all 12 months of the year, there is as yet no convincing evidence that the species breeds in the park. It does breed on occasion nearby, in the sandhills of eastern Richland County.

**American Redstart**

Common migrant; possible breeder (116 records; 15 April–1 June, 2 August–26 October). Though I believe that the American Redstart breeds somewhere in the park (such as along the River Trail), there is no good evidence for this, since spring migrants of this species often are moving in early June.

**Prothonotary Warbler**

Common summer resident (183 records; 25 February–19 September). Breeds. This delightful species is common near any sort of water from late March through August. It is one of the signature species of the park – common and colorful.

**Worm-eating Warbler**

Uncommon migrant and rare summer resident (49 records; 7 April–10 October). Breeds.

**Swainson's Warbler**

Common summer resident (103 records; 8 April–15 September). Breeds. The Swainson's Warbler is one of the most sought-after birds in the park. It

is fairly easy to hear one or more singing (from mid April through early July), but actually seeing one requires a bit of luck or patience. Although it can be found in the floodplain forest the species is most common along the so-called bluff, the transition from the upland forest to the floodplain forest. It does not necessarily require a good canebrake, but some thick cover does seem to be needed.

### **Ovenbird**

Migrant, uncommon in spring, occasional in fall (51 records; 7 April–17 May, 26 August–22 October). Although the Ovenbird is a local breeder in Richland County (at Harbison State Forest and also in the sandhills in the eastern part of the county) this species is found in Congaree National Park only as a migrant. It would not be impossible to find an Ovenbird in early winter, since there are numerous early winter records for other locations in the Coastal Plain.

### **Northern Waterthrush**

Migrant, uncommon in spring, occasional in fall (47 records; 3 April–18 May, 26 August–3 October). We look for Northern Waterthrushes along sloughs in the floodplain. This is another species that might occur in early winter, since there are several early winter records for South Carolina.

### **Louisiana Waterthrush**

Uncommon summer resident (42 records; 25 February–8 August). Breeds. The Louisiana Waterthrush is primarily a summer resident of the Sandhills, Piedmont and Mountain regions of South Carolina, but a few breed in Congaree National Park, at least in some years. This is one of the earliest warblers to arrive in the spring and one of the first to leave in the summer. “Fall” migrants are possible as early as July.

### **Kentucky Warbler**

Common summer resident (104 records; 13 April–11 September). Breeds. Like the Swainson’s Warbler, the Kentucky Warbler is primarily a bird of the bluff, the transition from the uplands to the floodplain forest. Though difficult to see, once you learn how to tell its song from a very similar song of the Carolina Wren you should have little trouble finding a singing male during the breeding season.

### **Mourning Warbler**

Rare fall migrant (1 record; 20 September 1997). I found the only Mourning Warbler so far in the park on 20 September 1997 along a service road (now the Sims Trail).

### **Common Yellowthroat**

Resident, occasional in winter, uncommon in summer, common during migration (147 records). Breeds. During the spring and fall migrations you might find a yellowthroat just about anywhere. In winter and in summer they are more local, preferring scrubby thickets, canebrakes, and marshy areas, such as the small marsh near the after-hours parking area.

### **Hooded Warbler**

Common summer resident (204 records; 27 March–11 October). Breeds. During the breeding season it is not too hard to find a Hooded Warbler in woods with a thick understory anyplace in the park. In many years there is a singing male somewhere right around the Visitor Center.

### **Wilson's Warbler**

Rare winter visitor (1 record; 4 December 1987). George McCoy found the only Wilson's Warbler in the park along the western boundary. It is a bit surprising that this is the only record of Wilson's Warbler for the park since it is found somewhere in South Carolina just about every winter. It is possible during spring or fall migrations as well, but less likely.

### **Canada Warbler**

Rare migrant (11 records; 1 May–14 May, 9 September–20 September). I have so few records of this attractive warbler mostly because of the lack of appropriate scrubby habitat in the park.

### **Yellow-breasted Chat**

Uncommon summer resident (34 records, 9 April–14 September). Breeds. A chat might turn up anywhere in the park during migration, but during the breeding season it is partial to blackberry thickets and similar dense habitats. It is most often found at the edge of the pinewoods beyond the end of Garrick Road.

### **Summer Tanager**

Common summer resident (171 records; 19 March–3 October). Breeds. The caroling song and "titikup" call of the Summer Tanager are some of the more familiar sounds of the upland forests of the park in summer. This species rarely breeds in the floodplain forest, preferring woods that have at least a few pines.

### **Scarlet Tanager**

Uncommon migrant (32 records; 20 April–15 May, 13 September–22 October). The Scarlet Tanager breeds from time to time in the Piedmont of northern Richland County but is strictly a migrant in the park.

### **Eastern Towhee**

Common permanent resident (207 records). Breeds. The towhee is more common in winter than in summer. In winter you might find a few in the floodplain forest, but in summer this species is mostly found in the uplands. It is a common breeder in the pinewoods beyond the end of Garrick Road.

### **Bachman's Sparrow**

Rare visitor (3 records; 22 April–30 November). In the early 1980s there was good habitat for Bachman's Sparrow on private lands adjacent to the park. This is no longer the case, and we seem to have lost the Bachman's Sparrow as a breeding species in the park, despite good habitat in the pinewoods at the end of Garrick Road.

**Chipping Sparrow**

Occasional permanent resident (45 records; 11 November–31 July). Breeds. Despite the fact that we have no records for August through October, I am convinced that the Chipping Sparrow is in the park, at least in small numbers, year round. During the breeding season it is easy to find this species near the after-hours parking area and also in the pinewoods beyond the end of Garrick Road.

**Field Sparrow**

Occasional winter visitor, rare in summer (14 records; 10 November–21 July). The Field Sparrow is an uncommon breeder in young pine plantations just outside of the park, but there is no breeding habitat in the park for this species.

**Vesper Sparrow**

Rare winter visitor (1 record; 10 January 1991). Our only record for Vesper Sparrow is of one found by Roger Clark in the Tom's Creek area. This area was a young pine plantation on land that had just been added to the park. Even though the Vesper Sparrow is an occasional winter resident of farmlands just outside of the park, we do not anticipate very many future records for this species since there is little habitat for it in the park.

**Savannah Sparrow**

Rare winter visitor (3 records; 1 December–8 February). The story of the three records for Savannah Sparrow is similar to that of the Vesper Sparrow. All three records come from a young pine plantation in the Tom's Creek area. The Savannah Sparrow is a common winter resident of farmlands just outside of the park.

**Henslow's Sparrow**

Rare migrant (1 record, 13 April 2002). Our only record for Henslow's Sparrow is of one found near the Visitor Center by Tim Kalbach, Gary Sowell, and Nancy Lyman on 13 April 2002.

**Fox Sparrow**

Uncommon winter resident (38 records; 4 November–20 March). Sometimes on warm winter days in the park we hear the wonderful warbling song of the Fox Sparrow. This species is most common in pinewoods, such as those beyond the end of Garrick Road, but it can be found anywhere, even in the floodplain forest. All of the Fox Sparrows that I have seen in the park have been from the eastern (red) population, which is what you would expect. The Fox Sparrow may be split into three or more species in the near future, so it is important to notice what kind of Fox Sparrow you have found.

**Song Sparrow**

Uncommon winter resident, rare in summer (53 records; 21 October–11 April, 5 June). The Song Sparrow is not too hard to find in winter, especially near the small marsh that adjoins the after-hours parking area. On 5 June 1978 Paul Hamel found a Song Sparrow in an old field somewhere in

the park. This is a very unusual summer record for the South Carolina Coastal Plain. The closest breeding Song Sparrows are in the cities of Lancaster, Chester, and Union in the Piedmont about 120 km from the park.

### **Lincoln's Sparrow**

Rare winter visitor (4 records; 8 November–21 April). The Lincoln's Sparrow is an occasional winter visitor to brushy areas just outside of the park. The small number of records reflects both the retiring nature of this species and the lack of good habitat.

### **Swamp Sparrow**

Uncommon winter resident (66 records; 8 October–6 May). At last we come to a sparrow that you might actually find in the floodplain forest in winter. The Swamp Sparrow is found throughout the park in small numbers in winter.

### **White-throated Sparrow**

Common winter resident (199 records; 8 October–6 May). This species is far and away the most common sparrow in the park in winter. It is not always easy to find. You might hike a trail for a half hour or more in winter without noticing any, but if you find a slightly brushy area, such as near a fallen tree, you will find White-throated Sparrows.

### **Dark-eyed Junco**

Uncommon winter resident (73 records; 26 October–14 April). At some point on a winter hike in the park you are likely to flush a small flock of juncos. All the juncos that I have seen in the park belong to the eastern "Slate-colored Junco" population. If more people took notice we would probably find a small number of juncos that might be from one of the western populations.

### **Northern Cardinal**

Abundant permanent resident (433 records). Breeds. Every South Carolina school child knows the cardinal. This species is one of the most common in the park at any season of the year, which is not a surprise, since it is abundant through the southeastern United States.

### **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**

Occasional migrant (20 records; 17 April–10 May, 15 September–22 October). We are often alerted to the presence of a Rose-breasted Grosbeak by its "tennis shoe on a gym floor" squeak coming from the top of a tall tree. This species is slightly more likely to be found in fall than in spring, with the most records of any month coming from October.

### **Blue Grosbeak**

Occasional summer resident (22 records; 26 April–3 October). Breeds. This species is a common summer resident of farmlands just outside of the park, but is rare locally within the park, since it is a species of open areas and

scrubby thickets. The best places to find the Blue Grosbeak are near the after-hours parking area and the pinewoods beyond the end of Garrick Road.

### **Indigo Bunting**

Common summer resident (142 records; 17 April–31 October). Breeds. We usually think of the Indigo Bunting as a bird of hedgerows and other open areas. In fact it can be common in the floodplain forest, using even those rather small openings that result from a fallen tree. The Painted Bunting does not use such forested habitats, and as a result we have no record for that species for the park, even though it is an uncommon summer resident of farmlands just outside of the park.

### **Bobolink**

Rare migrant (4 records; 6 May–13 October). Almost all of our Bobolink records come from birds flying over the park. Since this species has a distinctive nocturnal flight call it should be possible to hear this species on a regular basis during the pre-dawn hours of migration times, especially during the fall.

### **Red-winged Blackbird**

Resident, uncommon in winter, rare in summer (42 records; 4 November–24 June). The Red-winged Blackbird may breed in the park, but as yet I have no good evidence that it does. Most records come from the winter, when flocks sometimes fly through the floodplain forest, or from early spring, when a male red-wing or two might set up territory at the small marsh next to the after-hours parking area. They do not seem to remain to breed, however.

### **Eastern Meadowlark**

Rare visitor in early winter and during spring migration (5 records; 4 November–13 May). This species is an uncommon winter resident and occasional breeder in farmlands just outside of the park. Records for the park itself are few and far between because there isn't much appropriate habitat for meadowlarks or any other grassland species in the park.

### **Rusty Blackbird**

Rare winter resident (6 records; 22 October–16 January). I am at a loss to explain why we have so few records of Rusty Blackbird for the park. One would think that it would be an uncommon winter resident of the floodplain forest, but we just don't find this species very often. We find it much more often just outside of the park, so perhaps it likes woodland edges more than deep woods. Rusty Blackbirds are less common throughout the southeastern United States than they were two decades ago. This is true of Congaree National Park as well.

### **Common Grackle**

Common permanent resident (267 records). Breeds. The Common Grackle is the common icterid of the park. It is fairly easy to find, even during the summer. Outside of the breeding season grackles often form flocks of hundreds of birds that forage through the floodplain forests.

### **Brown-headed Cowbird**

Uncommon summer resident (92 records; 10 March–7 July). Breeds. The fact that there are relatively few records of this brood parasite for the park underscores how good a place Congaree National Park is for breeding forest species of birds.

### **Orchard Oriole**

Rare spring migrant and summer visitor (8 records; 26 April–5 June). This species is a common breeding bird in farmlands just outside of the park, but does not usually venture into the deep woods. It is possible that the Orchard Oriole breeds on the edge of the park, such as near where the entrance road intersects with Old Bluff Road.

### **Baltimore Oriole**

Rare migrant and winter resident (9 records; 18 September–6 May). It is quite a treat to spy this beautiful species as part of a mixed flock, even in winter. This species is usually found in the floodplain forest, but may be anywhere in the park.

### **Purple Finch**

Occasional winter visitor (12 records; 28 November–29 March). Finding this species on a winter bird walk is a real treat. It is much less common in the South Carolina Coastal Plain than it is in the Piedmont.

### **House Finch**

Rare winter visitor (8 records; 21 September–11 April). For years I used to boast that the park had no records of either House Finch or House Sparrow, but finally, in 2001, this species was found in the park. It is a fairly common permanent resident in suburban areas just outside of the park.

### **Pine Siskin**

Rare winter visitor (9 records; 4 November–23 February). This species has been very hard to find in recent years in the park. Our latest record is for 1998.

### **American Goldfinch**

Resident, common in winter, uncommon in summer (184 records). Goldfinches are present in the park year round, but I am not sure that they actually breed here. I have not heard the characteristic song that the males sing when on territory. They probably breed in regenerating clear cuts near the park, but forage over the park. This species is very easy to find in winter. They are fond of sweet-gum seeds, which are abundant throughout the park.

### **Evening Grosbeak**

Occasional winter visitor (11 records; 28 November–25 March). During the late 1980s and early 1990s this species was not too hard to find in the park, but we have had no record since 1994. It is probably due to a downturn of numbers of Evening Grosbeaks breeding in the forests of eastern Canada. Some biologists speculate that this downturn is due to better control of forest

fires, which results in fewer wild cherries and other early successional plants that the Evening Grosbeak needs for successful breeding. Whatever the reason might be, this species is much less common in winter now anywhere in the southeastern United States than it was in the early 1990s.

### **House Sparrow**

Rare visitor (1 record; 3 April 2002). For years I boasted that the park had no record of House Sparrow, but then Craig Watson reported one from the Kingsnake Trail. This species is very uncommon from the areas just outside of the park, but it does sometimes breed in the village of Gadsden, in gourds put up for Purple Martins. Gadsden is about 3 km from the beginning of the Kingsnake Trail.

### **Observers**

The following birders (more than 100 in number) have made this checklist possible by providing day lists of birds they found in Congaree National Park:

Brusi Alexander, Ken Allen, Becky Armstrong, Donna Bailey, O'Neill Barrett, Rosemary Bascardo, Jim Beasley, Phyllis Beasley, Curt Beebe, Asenath Bernhardt, Charles Blake, Richard Blake, Molly Bonnell, Catherine Brett, Lindsey Brettschneider, Kevin Calhoon, Phillip L. Capps, Danny Carlson, Robin Carter, John Cely, Andrea Ceselski, Donna Clark, Roger Clark, Steve Compton, Tom Cotner, Steve Cox, R.D. Demarest, Steve Dennis, Bobby Desportes, Nathan Dias, Randy Dunlap, Caroline Eastman, Bob Ellis, Glenn Englehardt, Dennis Forsythe, Donna Forsythe, Sarah Fugo, Henry Fuseler, Sid Gauthreaux, Jason Giovannone, Lex Glover, Caroline Grego, John Grego, Jerry Griggs, Catherine Hall, Gene Hall, Joyce Hall, Paul Hamel, Tom Hankins, Andy Harrison, Julian Harrison, Marge Harrison, M. O. Hayes, Heidi Hoerman, Rusty Jeffers, Jerry Johnson, Melanie Kalbach, Tim Kalbach, Jim Kelly, Joseph Knapp, David Lovett, M. C. Luce, Judy Lundin, Ruth Lundin, Nancy Lyman, Dwayne Martin, Lori Martin, George McCoy, Kathy McKay, Jack McLain, B. McWilliams, J. Michel, Clarke Millette, Lloyd Moon, Allan J. Mueller, Chuck Nicholson, Kathleen O'Grady, Jill Patterson, Steve Patterson, Scott Pfaff, Tab Rasmussen, John Rich, Frances Ross, Mack Sharpe, Paula Sisson, Donna Slyce, Bruce Smart, Alistaire Smith, Glen Smith, Roger Smith, Gary Sowell, Jack Stewart, Tammy Sutherland, Dan Svingen, Ila Svingen, Nathan Taylor, Simon Thompson, Steve Tracey, Cindy Tufford, Dan Tufford, Mike Turner, Judy Walker, Wayne Washam, Craig Watson, Bob Wood, Peter Worthington.

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