Kingfisher Pond

Bob Armstrong

As mentioned in the sign above the original meadow was once outstanding habitat for a variety of waterfowl, fish, invertebrates, and several mammals. Unfortunately, most of the meadow and wetland vegetation was removed in the 1970's and the gravel and sand was mined and used for construction throughout the Juneau area.

In an effort to restore a portion of these valuable wetlands lost to gravel mining Kingfisher Pond was created in 2002, in a corner of the old gravel pit. This was a cooperative project between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the City and Borough of Juneau.

This was a very successful project and the ponds progress is being monitored by students from Dzanitik'i Heeni Middle School.

Most of the photographs on the following pages were taken at Kingfisher Pond. This is meant to give you a visual indication of the variety of creatures that now use the area

Beavers moved into the pond and attached their lodge to the viewing platform making it one of the best places in Juneau to observe beavers.

They often bring their food, such as potamogeton (above), willow branches (left), and alder cones (lower left) and eat them next to the viewing platform.

Beavers are very important to Kingfisher Pond because their dams help hold in the clear water and prevent the turbid water from the adjacent gravel pit entering the pond. This helps maintain the area for aquatic insects and aquatic plants that provide food for the various birds attracted to the pond.

A variety of **Dragonflies** live in and around the pond including the bluet damselfly above and the Black Meadowhawk dragonfly to the right. The adults attract and provide food for certain birds such as Red-winged Blackbirds which frequent the area.

Other dragonflies that frequent the area are the Mosaic Darners. The adult on the left and the larva (above), which live in the pond, provide food for certain birds. The larvae are fascinating to watch in aquariums as they stalk and capture aquatic insects.

Other Aquatic Insects

These are just a few of many aquatic insects to be found in Kingfisher Pond. All of them are important food for birds and fish.

Predatious Diving Beetle Larva

Belted Kingfisher with Diving Beetle Larva

Water Strider feeding on damselfly

Dixid Midges

Whirligig Beetle

Mosquito Larva

Mosquito Pupa

One of the most fascinating insects living in Kingfisher Pond are the larvae of **caddisflies**. Most of their larva build cases out of material they find nearby such as bits of vegetation (left photo).

In these caddisflies the vulnerable abdomen is safely concealed inside these cases which have a rigid base. These cases are constructed piece by piece using silk that the caddisfly larva exudes from its mouth.

These caddisflies are slow moving and easy to catch by insect eating birds. However, the bird must figure out how to get the insect out of its case. Some birds do this by grabbing the insect by its head and vigorously shaking it until the case fall off.

In Kingfisher Pond I have found a lot of these **Three-spine Sticklebacks**, they are an important food for Great Blue Herons, mergansers, and River Otters. In the adjacent gravel pit pond I have seen adult coho salmon and suspect juvenile coho salmon may rear there.

Birds

the following photographs
were all taken at Kingfisher Pond

Hooded Merganser, female

American Coot

Mallards are the duck most frequently seen in the area.

Ring-necked Ducks

Brown-headed Cowbird, by Doug Jones

Western Wood-Pewee, by Doug Jones

Red-winged Blackbird

Northern Shrike

Song Sparrow

Yellow-rumped Warbler

Spotted Sandpiper, juvenile

Merlin, juvenile

Bald Eagles and Northwestern Crows are especially common in the areas around Kingfisher Pond.

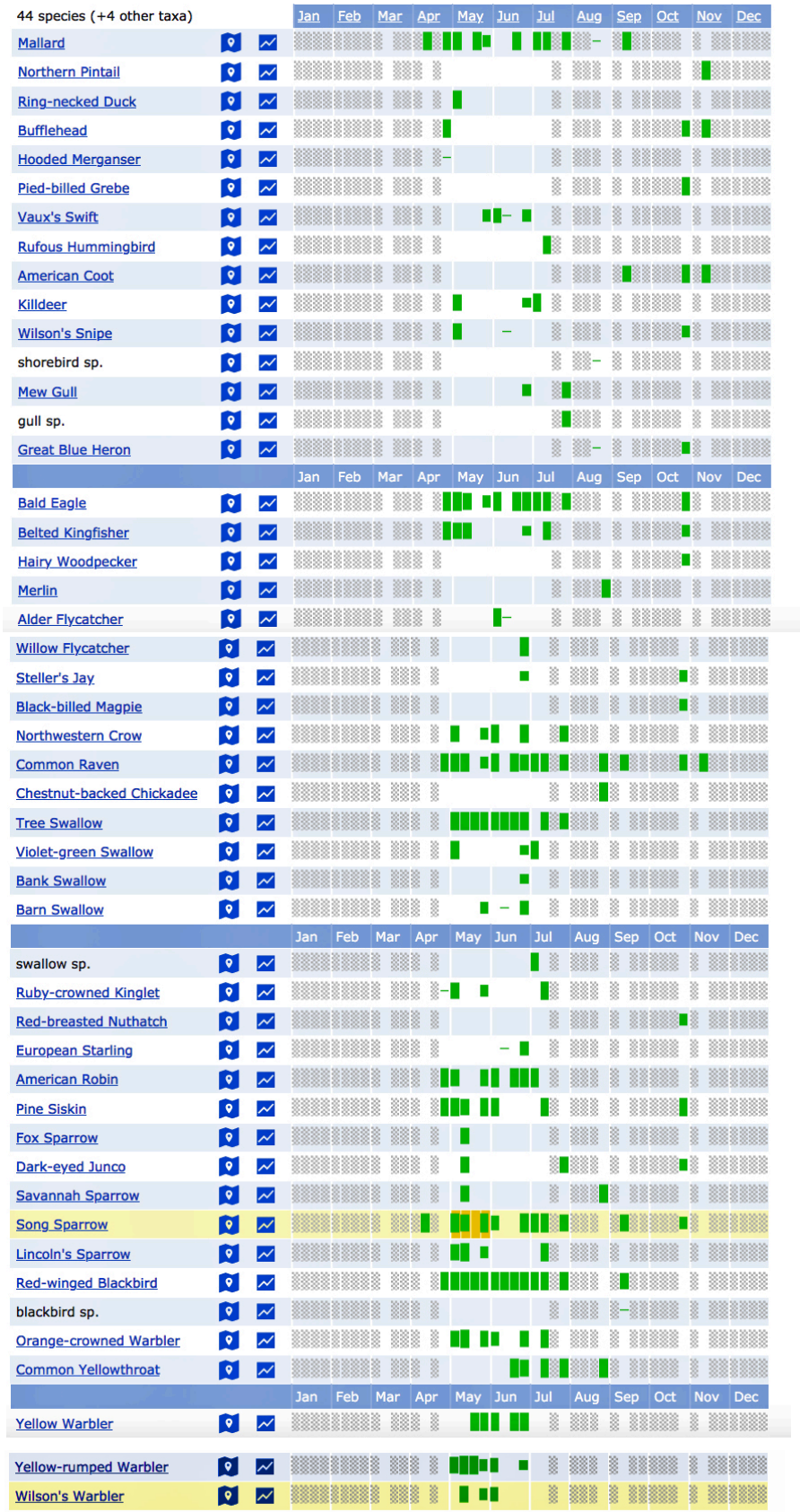
Belted Kingfisher, after visiting the area several times I could understand why it was named Kingfisher Pond. They seem to especially like the predacious diving beetle larvae which come near the surface of the pond to obtain oxygen.

Bird Observations

Date Range: Change Date
Jan-Dec, 1900-2020

Change Location **Kingfisher Pond**

Updated ~1 day(s) ago.



A total of 44 species of birds have been documented at Kingfisher Pond (special thanks to Gus vanVliet for providing this information).

The Juneau Audubon Society maintains some Tree Swallow Nesting Boxes at Kingfisher Pond. To see some of the swallow activity look at https://www.naturebob.com/tree-swallows The filming of the nesting box and after fledging was done at Kingfisher Pond.

Closing Thoughts

I have been amazed at the diversity of birds and aquatic insects in this small rehabilitated segment of the gravel pit. This is a wonderful example of what can be done to restore a once destroyed habitat.

Much of the success of this pond can probably be attributed to the beavers. Their maintenance of the dams helped keep the water level of the pond above the larger silt ridden water in the gravel pit.

The future of Kingfisher Pond probably depends on what happens to the adjacent gravel pit. If the pit is completely filled in and converted to a ball field, for example, the value of Kingfisher Pond for birds and other wildlife will be lost.

In my opinion the best approach would be to restore the gravel pit area to vegetated wetlands with possibly some interconnected ponds. Willows and possibly alders should be planted to help provide food for beavers and habitat for other creatures.

This entire area is adjacent to the Mendenhall Wetlands and once rehabilitated would provide an upland freshwater marsh transition area. Much of this type of habitat once associated with the wetlands has been destroyed.