

THE ARNOLD ARBORETUM AS A BIRDING AREA

by Miriam E. Dickey, Boston

The Arnold Arboretum as a good birding area year round. Only four miles from downtown Boston, it is easily reached either by car or by public transportation. The Arboretum is situated in the Jamaica Plain section of Boston, at the intersection of Routes 1 (to Providence) and 203 (to the South Shore). There is very limited parking at each of the entrances, but cars also park along Centre Street (Route 1) and along the Arborway (Route 203).

To reach the Arboretum by public transportation, take the Orange Line to the Forest Hills Station, and then walk west a short distance along the Arborway. (Start out from the station by walking underneath the railroad overpass.) One can also reach the Arboretum via the Green Line. Take an Arborway via Huntington Avenue car from Park Street and get off at the corner of Eliot and Centre Streets. Then walk farther west on Centre Street to the main entrance of the Arboretum. (It is safest to turn left when one first reaches the Arborway and walk the short distance to the traffic lights that are at the Arboretum entrance.)

The Arnold Arboretum consists of 265 acres of varied habitats. There are small ponds, a meadow, a brook, cliffs of conglomerate, hills and a Hemlock Woods. The three largest and most permanent ponds are near the Forest Hills gate. The meadow lies immediately to the west, across from the Administration Building. Bussey Brook runs through the group of conifers near the Walter Street gate. It was at one time an Indian camp site, and in 1692 there was a sawmill on it. The two largest hills are Bussey Hill (behind the ponds) and Peter's Hill (across Bussey Street). Both are drumlins, hills formed by the glacier. Bussey Hill was probably virgin forest 300 years ago.

This land was originally given by the Massachusetts Bay Colony to Captain Joseph Weld, who bequeathed it to his son Jonathan. It was home for seven generations of Welds until 1806, when it was bought by Benjamin Bussey. Mr. Bussey constructed walks around his farm and woods and opened them to the public. Later, in 1842, he gave the land to Harvard. James Arnold of New Bedford in 1868 gave Harvard College a large sum of money for the purpose of establishing an arboretum. Frederick Law Olmstead, the designer of Boston's extensive park system, suggested incorporating the area into the city's "emerald belt." This was done, and the Arboretum opened in 1870, with Professor Charles Sprague Sargent as its first director.

Today, the Arboretum is a museum of living trees and shrubs. The land has been leased to Harvard for 1000 years, and the University supervises the botanical research. The trees and shrubs have been planted in groups by families: the maples are near the meadow and ponds; the birches are between the greenhouses and Bussey Hill; the beeches are near the South Street gate. There are also three natural woods, good for warblers during migration.

The City of Boston maintains and polices the roads. The Arboretum is surrounded by a stone wall and a chain link fence, but the gates are open daily from sunrise to sunset. The following rules apply: no picking or collecting of plant material, no fires, no pick-nicking, no bicycling, dogs only on leash, and no automobiles within the gates. (It is possible on weekdays to obtain an automobile pass at the Administration Building.)

I have birded here quite regularly and have been keeping records since 1939. Over most of this time span there have been regular birding walks each Saturday morning, from 8 to 10 a.m. These walks still continue, and visitors including children are welcome. (It is well to telephone 325-1483 to check on schedules.) Many of the boys and girls from the Children's Museum, which originally sponsored these walks, have spent many additional hours here, and each year we have done a Christmas Census. We have found that we can reach several good habitats by following the itinerary below:

Start by checking the feeder at the back of the Administration Building. This has often been a good spot for Red-breasted Nuthatches, and Ring-necked Pheasants feed on the ground under the feeder. In the spring, grackles and Blue Jays are common here; and Red-winged Blackbirds, Yellow Warblers, Common Yellowthroats and Savannah Sparrows are to be seen in the meadow across the road.

From the Administration Building we walk along the road toward the ponds. In the winter, Dark-eyed Juncos and White-throated and Tree Sparrows feed on the ground on both sides of the roadway, while American Goldfinches and Pine Siskins can usually be found in the tree tops. During the spring and summer, this area is good for both orioles, vireos, American

Robins, Common Flickers, Gray Catbirds and Brown Thrashers. The pond area frequently provides Green Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron, Mallard, Black Duck, Wood Duck, Spotted and Solitary Sandpipers during the spring migration.

At the ponds we turn left and go up the hill at the bubbler with the forsythias on our right. Mockingbirds and Cardinals reside year-round in this area, and Cedar Waxwings are frequently seen here. At the top of Bussey Hill turn to the left and then after a short distance to the right again. There are compost piles here that seem to attract sparrows year round. Bussey Hill is a superb location from which to see warblers during the spring migration. Not only will it attract a wide variety of species, but the hill also provides an excellent line of sight. The warblers will be found in the shrubbery and in the oaks to the right of the path down by the azaleas. Since these trees are downhill, you, on the path, will be more on a level with the upper branches in which the warblers will be feeding. This area is also good for Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Scarlet Tanager, Rufous-sided Towhee and Indigo Bunting.

From the top of Bussey Hill, our route goes down by the Chinese Path Area and then to the right toward the beeches. Chickadees, woodpeckers and nuthatches work the trees in this area, while sparrows and juncos go over the ground. When we reach the brook, we follow it (or the nearby road) toward the Walter Street gate. The rhododendron and mountain laurel areas along the brook are excellent in the spring for migrant warblers, and in the winter Boreal Chickadees can often be found quite near the gate itself. In the spring, if you have time, climb Hemlock Hill. This area is good for warblers, vireos, thrushes and Scarlet Tanagers.

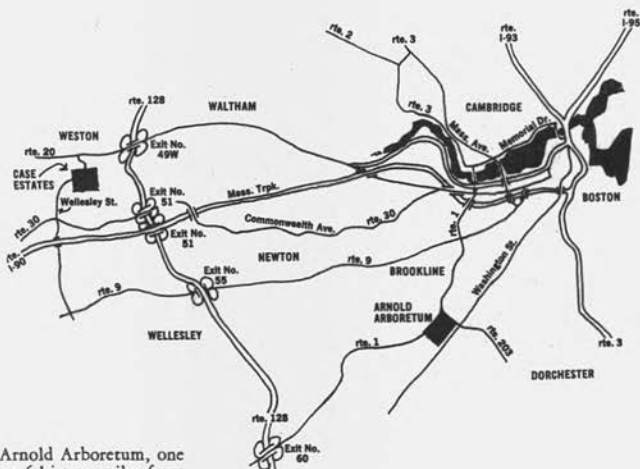
For the last section of our route, we cross Bussey Street to get to Peter's Hill. There are many crab apple trees here which are good for American Robins and Cedar Waxwings. The conifers are also good for Boreal Chickadee during influx years.

In the years since 1939, my group has seen close to 150 species of birds in the Arnold Arboretum. Some were easy; others took a good deal of sleuthing. Our composite list follows. Species marked with an asterisk have been seen occasionally; all others have been seen fairly regularly. Those species that have been seen on a nest with eggs or young are marked with a plus sign.

Double-crested Cormorant*	Rock-Dove+
Great Blue Heron	Mourning Dove+
Green Heron	Yellow-billed Cuckoo*
Black-crowned Night Heron	Black-billed Cuckoo*
American Bittern*	Barn Owl*
Canada Goose*	Screech Owl+
Mallard+	Great Horned Owl
Black Duck+	Snowy Owl*
Wood Duck+	Barred Owl*
Common Merganser*	Long-eared Owl*
Goshawk*	Saw-whet Owl*
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Common Nighthawk
Cooper's Hawk	Chimney Swift+
Red-tailed Hawk	Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Red-shouldered Hawk	Belted Kingfisher
Broad-winged Hawk*	Common Flicker+
Rough-legged Hawk*	Pileated Woodpecker*
Osprey*	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Peregrine Falcon*	Hairy Woodpecker
Merlin*	Downy Woodpecker
American Kestrel	Arctic Three-toed Woodpecker*
Ruffed Grouse*	Eastern Kingbird+
Bobwhite*	Great Crested Flycatcher+
Ring-necked Pheasant+	Eastern Phoebe+
Semipalmated Plover*	Eastern Wood Pewee
Killdeer*	Tree Swallow
American Woodcock*	Bank Swallow*
Spotted Sandpiper	Rough-winged Swallow
Solitary Sandpiper	Barn Swallow
Lesser Yellowlegs*	Cliff Swallow
Semipalmated Sandpiper*	Purple Martin*
Great Black-backed Gull	Blue Jay+
Herring Gull	Common Crow+
Ring-billed Gull	Fish Crow

Black-capped Chickadee+
 Boreal Chickadee
 Tufted Titmouse
 White-breasted Nuthatch+
 Red-breasted Nuthatch
 Brown Creeper
 House Wren+
 Mockingbird+
 Gray Catbird+
 Brown Thrasher+
 American Robin+
 Wood Thrush+
 Hermit Thrush
 Swainson's Thrush
 Gray-cheeked Thrush
 Eastern Bluebird*
 Golden-crowned Kinglet
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet
 Cedar Waxwing+
 Northern Shrike*
 Starling+
 White-eyed Vireo
 Solitary Vireo
 Red-eyed Vireo+
 Philadelphia Vireo*
 Warbling Vireo+
 Black-and-white Warbler
 Golden-winged Warbler*
 Orange-crowned Warbler*
 Nashville Warbler
 Northern Parula
 Yellow Warbler+
 Magnolia Warbler
 Cape May Warbler
 Black-throated Blue Warbler
 Yellow-rumped Warbler
 Black-throated Green Warbler
 Blackburnian Warbler
 Yellow-throated Warbler*
 Chestnut-sided Warbler
 Bay-breasted Warbler
 Blackpoll
 Pine Warbler
 Prairie Warbler+
 Palm Warbler
 Ovenbird+
 Northern Waterthrush*
 Louisiana Waterthrush*
 Common Yellowthroat+
 Yellow-breasted Chat*
 Wilson's Warbler
 Hooded Warbler*
 Canada Warbler
 American Redstart
 House Sparrow+
 Bobolink*
 Eastern Meadowlark

Red-winged Blackbird+
 Orchard Oriole*
 Northern Oriole+
 Rusty Blackbird
 Common Grackle+
 Brown-headed Cowbird
 Western Tanager*
 Scarlet Tanager+
 Cardinal+
 Rose-breasted Grosbeak+
 Indigo Bunting+
 Evening Grosbeak
 Purple Finch
 House Finch
 Pine Grosbeak*
 Common Redpoll*
 Pine Siskin
 American Goldfinch+
 Red Crossbill*
 White-winged Crossbill*
 Rufous-sided Towhee+
 Savannah Sparrow
 Vesper Sparrow
 Lark Sparrow*
 Dark-eyed Junco
 Tree Sparrow
 Chipping Sparrow+
 Field Sparrow
 White-crowned Sparrow
 White-throated Sparrow
 Fox Sparrow
 Swamp Sparrow
 Song Sparrow+
 Snow Bunting*



THE CASE ESTATES of the Arnold Arboretum, one hundred twelve acres in Weston (thirteen miles from Jamaica Plain), serve as the nursery and experimental planting area of the Arboretum. Also included are ground cover and flower displays, small and ornamental trees, and shrubs.