

On almost every weekend for the past four years, I (Wendy Wright) have walked my dog along the White Oak Bayou Greenway from the Sawyer/Taylor Street Bridge to the UH Downtown campus, greatly enjoying the slice of nature that exists in the “shadow” of Downtown Houston. Since May 2016, I have kept detailed records of the birds I have seen along the Greenway and have documented these sightings within the eBird database maintained by Cornell University’s Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. I have split these sightings between three “birding hotspots,” becoming very aware of how the habitats found along the Greenway influence bird populations. These hotspots include:

- The relatively “wild and scenic” area from the Hogan Street Bridge to UHD, which benefits from the wide, sloping natural banks of the bayou and the swath of trees and fields to the east. I have spotted 81 species along this section of the Greenway, including Bald Eagles, American Kestrels (the nation’s smallest falcon), Red-tailed Hawks (the region’s largest hawk), Ospreys (who dive for fish in the bayou), Eastern Meadowlarks (with their plaintive flutelike whistles), Anhinga (sporting their saber-like bills), and numerous songbirds. Detail regarding these sightings is available on various tabs at <http://ebird.org/ebird/hotspot/L4626006> - with the species also listed below and displayed in the posters of the birds I have photographed along this one section of the Greenway.
- The area around Hogg Park from the I-45 overpasses to the Hogan Street Bridge, where the banks of the bayou transition from concrete to debris-filled “natural” banks that are heavily impacted by construction on the southwest side of the bayou. Hogg Park draws relatively few birds due to the overpass and feeder lane construction, with the average number of birds spotted having dropped off significantly since construction began. (See detail at <http://ebird.org/ebird/hotspot/L2078038>)
- The area around White Oak Park from the Sawyer/Taylor Street Bridge to the I-45 overpasses, where the wooded areas of the park are juxtaposed with the concrete channel of the bayou. The park draws many birds due to the benefit of a swampy area adjacent to White Oak Drive, with 121 species recorded to date. (See detail at <http://ebird.org/ebird/hotspot/L521123>)

I consider the final section of the White Oak Bayou Greenway that connects to Downtown to be the most scenic due to the lush habitat and the vistas of downtown. Many dog-walkers, fitness-walkers, runners and bicyclists use this section of the Greenway on a weekly or daily basis, with visitors and newcomers to Houston often stopping to take photos of themselves against the banks of the bayou and the Downtown Skyline. It would be very unfortunate if this beautiful and habitat-rich 4,000 foot section of the White Oak Bayou Greenway was eliminated through the construction of numerous overpasses that would certainly have a profound impact on the birds and other animals that have to this point found a way to thrive next to the heart of our city. What follows is the list of the birds I have seen along this 4,000 foot stretch. With massive construction and habitat elimination, the majority of these species would no longer be seen along this section of the White Oak Bayou Greenway and I and many others would no longer enjoy this section of the trail or use it to walk, run or bike to Downtown.

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	Great Blue Heron	Turkey Vulture
Snow Goose	Great Egret	Osprey
Muscovy Duck	Snowy Egret	Cooper's Hawk
Mallard	Tricolored Heron	Bald Eagle
Northern Pintail	Green Heron	Red-shouldered Hawk
Pied-billed Grebe	Black-crowned Night-Heron	Broad-winged Hawk
Neotropic Cormorant	Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	Swainson's Hawk
Double-crested Cormorant	White Ibis	Red-tailed Hawk
Anhinga	White-faced Ibis	Killdeer
American White Pelican	Black Vulture	Spotted Sandpiper

Laughing Gull
Rock Pigeon
Eurasian Collared-Dove
White-winged Dove
Mourning Dove
Common Nighthawk
Chimney Swift
Belted Kingfisher
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Downy Woodpecker
American Kestrel
Peregrine Falcon
Monk Parakeet
Eastern Phoebe
Western Kingbird
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher

Loggerhead Shrike
Blue-headed Vireo
Blue Jay
American Crow
Purple Martin
Barn Swallow
Cliff Swallow
Cave Swallow
Carolina Chickadee
House Wren
Carolina Wren
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Red-vented Bulbul
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
American Robin
Brown Thrasher
Northern Mockingbird

European Starling
Cedar Waxwing
Orange-crowned Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Chipping Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow
Savannah Sparrow
Northern Cardinal
Blue Grosbeak
Indigo Bunting
Eastern Meadowlark
Orchard Oriole
Red-winged Blackbird
Common Grackle
Great-tailed Grackle
House Finch
House Sparrow