COMMON BIRDS SEEN AT DUKE POND

Mallard (20-28") The Mallard is the most common duck in the eastern U.S. Both the green-headed male and the brown female have bright blue, white, and black wing patches.

Great Blue Heron (39-52") The largest of the North American herons is a solitary hunter, wading and foraging for fish.

Belted Kingfisher (11-14") The Kingfisher uses its oversized, heron-like beak to aggressively dive for fish. Only the female has the rusty-colored breast band.

Eastern Bluebird (6.5-7") Once seriously threatened by pesticides and habitat loss, the Eastern Bluebird’s recovery is one of conservation’s great success stories.

Song Sparrow (6") One of the many small, brown sparrows found in shrubby or grassy wet areas, the Song Sparrow is an abundant year-round resident of Duke Pond.

Hooded Merganser (17-24") This small diving duck with a flamboyant crest—black and white on the male, cinnamon brown on the female—is a regular winter visitor at Duke Pond.

Duke University Wetland Center

A Checklist of the Birds of Duke Pond

A mother Mallard herds her brood across the pond during a springtime swim.

Photo by Mengchi Ho

Ever since the 1962 publication of Rachel Carson’s book Silent Spring, scientists have recognized that bird populations provide an easy-to-read barometer of the pressures that human activities bring to bear on the world’s biodiversity. Birds—whether in our backyards, our cities, or our parklands—are a familiar part of our daily lives. People who might not recognize other indicators of an environment in crisis will notice that the numbers and variety of birds are slipping away. Since the Duke University Facilities Management Department completed construction on the stormwater reclamation lake in 2015, birders have been keeping track of the birds seen in the area now known as Duke Pond.

Duke Pond is on Duke University’s West Campus near Erwin Road. It is listed as a birding hotspot on eBird.org.

The Duke University Wetland Center is part of the Nicholas School of the Environment.
ANSERIFORMES
Canada Goose
Mallard
Hooded Merganser

PODICIPEDIFORMES
Pied-billed Grebe

COLUMBIFORMES
Rock Pigeon
Mourning Dove

CUCULIFORMES
Yellow-billed Cuckoo

CAPRIMULGIIFORMES
Common Nighthawk
Chimney Swift
Ruby-throated Hummingbird

CHARADRIIFORMES
Killdeer
Spotted Sandpiper

SULIFORMES
Double-crested Cormorant

PELICANIFORMES
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Green Heron

ACCIPITRIFORMES
Black Vulture
Turkey Vulture
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Cooper’s Hawk
Red-shouldered Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk

CORACIIFORMES
Belted Kingfisher

PICIFORMES
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Downy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker

PASSERIFORMES
Eastern Wood Pewee
Eastern Phoebe
Great Crested Flycatcher
Eastern Kingbird
White-eyed Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
Blue Jay
American Crow
Fish Crow
Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Bank Swallow
Barn Swallow
Cliff Swallow
Carolina Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
White-breasted Nuthatch
Brown-headed Nuthatch
Brown Creeper
House Wren
Carolina Wren
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Golden-crowned Kinglet
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Eastern Bluebird
Wood Thrush
American Robin
Gray Catbird
Brown Thrasher
Northern Mockingbird
European Starling
Cedar Waxwing
House Finch
Pine Siskin
American Goldfinch
Chipping Sparrow
Field Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco
White-throated Sparrow
Song Sparrow

Swamp Sparrow
Eastern Towhee
Red-winged Blackbird
Brown-headed Cowbird
Common Grackle
Ovenbird
Common Yellowthroat
Northern Parula
Palm Warbler
Pine Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Yellow-throated Warbler
Prairie Warbler
Summer Tanager
Scarlet Tanager
Northern Cardinal
Blue Grosbeak
Indigo Bunting
House Sparrow

ABOUT DUKE POND
Duke Pond, a project of the Duke University Facilities Management Department, is a 5.5-acre water reclamation pond located near Erwin Road adjacent to Circuit Drive and Towerview Road. The $11.5 million project collects rainwater and storm runoff from 22% of the area around Duke’s West Campus. Water from the pond is used in the cooling towers at the nearby Chilled Water Plant #2, which pumps water across campus to cool buildings. The pond initiative, inspired by the record drought of 2007, is expected to save about 100 million gallons of potable water a year. A .6-mile walking loop surrounds the pond, and amenities include an observation deck, boardwalk, and covered pavilion. Duke Pond is part of the University-wide stormwater response that includes DUWC’s Stream and Wetland Assessment Management Park (SWAMP).

The Duke University Wetland Center is a permanent collaborator on the project with Duke Facilities Management. The Center monitors water quality in Duke Pond and continues to work with Facilities on the selection, maintenance, and monitoring of native wetland vegetation appropriate to the site.