

# Utah County Birders Newsletter

June 2014



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## JUNE MEETING:

**Thursday, June 12th, 2014**

Meet at 7pm at the **Monte L. Bean Museum** on BYU Campus in Provo, UT. We will be meeting in the museum lobby for a quick club meeting, and then we will tour the new bird exhibits and the rest of the newly remodeled Bean Museum.

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## FIELD TRIPS:

**7 June, 2014 (Saturday): Duchesne and Uintah Counties** - 6am- late evening. Led by Keeli Marvel. Meet at the 800 North Orem park and ride at the mouth of Provo Canyon. We will be birding Duchesne and Uintah Counties for our club challenge. If we get both done early we may choose to try for Daggett County as well.

**13-14 June, 2014 (Fri-Sat): Grand and San Juan Counties.** Led by Keeli Marvel. We will be heading out early on the morning of the 13th and driving straight down to bird Grand County. If we get Grand County done early we may head down to San Juan County on Friday. I will be staying at the KOA in Moab but everyone should make their own lodging arrangements. If we complete both Grand and San Juan Counties on Friday then we will bird Carbon and Emery Counties on our way back on Saturday. Please email me (Keeli Marvel) at keeli.marvel@gmail.com if you are interested in joining us and I will email you meeting times and locations.

We are actively recruiting people to lead local half-day field trips, any time, any place. If you would like to lead a field trip or if you have any ideas for this year's field trips, please contact Bryan Shirley at - [bt\\_shirley@hotmail.com](mailto:bt_shirley@hotmail.com)

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## Captain's Log

by Keeli Marvel

### June Captain's Log: Birding styles

I was thinking a lot this month about the different types of birders, different ways to bird, and how so many people get so many different things out of it. This year's challenge is a fun one, and it focuses on a whole different type of birding – what I think of as quantity rather than quality. Some years our challenge has focused on seeing as many individual species as possible, and I would consider that a quality rather than quantity type of birding. I've really enjoyed trying to get birds in each county in Utah, but because of my lack of free time, it means that I look for the first 29 species I can in each county (and generally about half of them end up being the most common species), and then once I have them, I'm out of there and on to the next county. It's really made me reflect on what birding is to me and how there are so many different ways to approach it. The Orchard Oriole sighting this weekend has also made me reflect on my own style of birding. Unfortunately I had prior commitments and a car full of plants and mulch on my way home from a trip to the hardware store when the call came in, and while I could have dropped everything and run up to Sandy, I wasn't willing to talk myself into making that sacrifice to see a really good rare bird. At some later point in my life I believe that my birding style may change and I may be more willing to make the time to chase rare birds. Many folks love to chase and are willing to leave at the drop of a hat and travel many miles to check off another bird on their list. Other folks, maybe by choice, maybe by circumstances in their life, are content to watch their feeders or bird their local patches. Some folks keep a life list or trip lists. Some don't. I love the fact that birding can provide so many different ways to participate to such a diverse group of people around the world and here at home in our little community of birders.

Happy Birding! Keeli Marvel

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## Bird of the Month

### Short-eared Owl

*Asio Flammeus*

by Mabelle Johnson

#### The Mothlike Owl

Owls are so intriguing. In general, we don't see them very often, and when we do it's usually by accident. Maybe that's why I like the Short-eared Owl so much, they are one of the owls most likely to be encountered hunting in daylight.

According to Pete Dunne's Essential Field Guide companion, during the breeding season they are active at all hours of the day. In the winter they are more crepuscular, (I learned that word a couple of years ago, it means mostly active at dawn and at dusk, or twilight). In researching this owl, I'm wondering how many Short-eared Owls I've seen and called them Female Northern Harriers. No. Harriers and Short-eared Owls both hunt by coursing low over marshes, prairies, meadows, and tundra, and often perch in the open, usually low to the ground and often on the ground. These two commonly engage in aerial dogfights, harriers trying to steal food from the owl. Pete Dunne says the Short-eared will be the bird flying above the harrier, due to its superior maneuverability and buoyancy.

I have only seen a Short-eared owl 3 times, I saw it flying once, the other 2 times it was perched, so I don't have much firsthand experience, I'll use my resources for the description and flight information. (Pete Dunne's Essential Field Guide Companion, Field Guide to Owls of California and the West, by Hans Peeters, The Owl Pages, [theowlpages.com](http://theowlpages.com))



photo by Paul Higgins

**Description:** L 15" A medium-sized owl with relatively long wings, and tiny, often concealed ear-tufts set near the center of the forehead. Males are overall pale and streaky, females are buffy-cinnamon brown and streaky. The streaking is particularly prominent on the throat and chest that sets off the pale oval face. Yellow eyes are flanked by dark bags, making the bird look tired or haggard, or like they are wearing an exuberant amount of mascara.

**Flight:** The head is heavy and blunt, the tail short and rounded, and the wings broad, long, somewhat tapered, and blunt (the bird seems to be wearing mittens). In active flight the wings are stiff and straight. When gliding, wings jut up along the short arm and flatten or droop along the very long hand, so there is no acute dihedral, as with the Northern Harrier. Flight is buoyant, floating, nimble, and aptly described as mothlike. On both males and females, the underwings are distinctly pale. This is usually what draws the eye of an observer scanning in low light conditions. The movements of Short-eared are quicker, more abrupt, and overall more nimble than a harrier.

They eat mainly small mammals. Meadow voles are the primary prey, they are considered 'nomadic vole-specialists'. They sometimes take birds as well as deer mice, shrews, ground squirrels, pocket gophers, pocket mice, moles, rats, bats, rabbits, and muskrats.

This owl has also been called Marsh Owl, Prairie Owl, Evening Owl, Swamp Owl, Meadow Owl and Mouse-hawk.

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## Backyard Bird of the Month

May 2014

Jack Binch - Sandy

On May 5th I had a **Broad-tailed Hummingbird**.

Yvonne Carter - American Fork

I was sure slow this year getting my hummingbird feeder out. But within an hour, the **hummers** were there! But it is strange, no Lazuli Buntings this year.

Jeff Cooper - Pleasant Grove

I enjoyed seeing a male **Bullock's Oriole** trying to get some sugar water out of my hummingbird feeder. The male **Black-headed Grosbeak** feeding at the backyard feeder was fun to see as well. Orange and black seem to be some of my favorite spring colors in terms of bird sightings.

Oliver Hansen - Grantsville

I had a **Lark Sparrow** in my yard in Grantsville, Ut last week (if you could call my weedy pile of rocks a yard).

Eric Huish - Pleasant Grove

I woke one morning to a **Western Wood-Pewee** singing outside my bedroom window. I don't often get them in my yard.

Keeli Marvel - Saratoga Springs

My backyard bird of the month has been a **Yellow-headed blackbird** that has been coming in to my feeder. It's so big it can barely perch on the sides of the feeder, which is pretty funny, and it chases the house sparrows away. I also had a fly-over Common Nighthawk last Sunday evening when I was out in my front yard watering plants.

Milt Moody - Provo

I saw a female **Cassin's Finch** that should be up in the mountains these days.

Tuula Rose, Provo

Since moving to the west side of town a couple of years ago I have had nothing exiting to report in my yard, till the other day. A **Green-tailed Towhee** totally surprised me. A nice change from flocks of red-winged blackbirds and collared doves.

Alton Thygerson - Provo

**Black-chinned Hummingbirds** - After placing two hummingbird feeders, two appeared within 30 minutes.

Report your favorite backyard bird each month to Eric Huish at 801-360-8777 or [erichuish@gmail.com](mailto:erichuish@gmail.com)

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## The Utah County Birders Newsletter is now online only/mostly.

We've decided to stop the regular paper mail version of the UCB Newsletter. This will save our club on Printing, Postage and Paper. If you would like an email notice each month when the Newsletter is posted online please send an email to Eric Huish at [erichuish@gmail.com](mailto:erichuish@gmail.com) or subscribe to the ucenet mailing list. To subscribe to ucenet just send an e-mail to [ucenet-subscribe@utahbirds.org](mailto:ucenet-subscribe@utahbirds.org)

We are willing to print the online version of the newsletter and mail it out to anyone who still wants a paper copy or who doesn't have internet access. If you know of anyone who enjoys the UCB Newsletter but doesn't have internet access please let Eric Huish or Keeli Marvel know and we will make sure they get a copy.