

Utah County Birders Newsletter

September 2015



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SEPTEMBER MEETING:

Thursday, September 10th, 2015 - 7:00 pm

Get to know your fellow birders. If you're new to the group or have only been on a field trip or two, we would love to have you join us! If you've been coming for years we'd love to have you as well! We will play some games to help everyone get to know their fellow birders.

Meet at 7:00 pm at the Monte L. Bean Museum. 645 East 1430 North, Provo, UT

FIELD TRIPS:

Saturday, September 12th, 2015. River Lane - 7:30 to noon-ish. Meet in the Provo Sam's Club parking lot at 7:30am. We'll bird River Lane and Sandy Beach, looking for migrants!

Saturday, September 26th, 2015. Antelope Island - 7:00-all day. Meet at the Pioneer Crossing Park & Ride at 7:00am. If you have a State Parks Pass and are willing to, please bring it. There is a \$10 per vehicle fee as well as a Causeway fee, I don't recall how much that is, just a few dollars I think. Also bring food and water. I think we'll be out all day.

Utah County Birders Captain's Log: September 2015

by Keeli Marvel

Nothing much exciting to report from this past month. Aside from the field trip a week ago, I haven't been able to get out and do much birding. Seems like August has been a flurry of field work and birthdays and anniversaries and back-to-school preparation.

Despite the still warm temperatures I feel a touch of fall in the air. The colors have started changing up Provo Canyon. The Western Kingbird nest in my gutter fledged last month and suddenly one day they were gone. No more parents scolding from the top of the tree in my front yard. Large flocks of Canada geese and White-faced Ibis in the fields near my house have been exhibiting zugunruhe (migratory restlessness or anxiety) and seem to be spending a lot of time flying around my neighborhood between the lake and the neighboring corn fields calling back and forth to each other. I've been feeling a little migratory restlessness myself. Hoping to head northeast towards the end of the month to see some iconic national landmarks in South Dakota. Never been to South Dakota before so I spent some time the other day looking at bird sightings on eBird. I made myself a little list of birds I haven't seen before that could possibly be there this time of year so I have a goal for the trip. Now I can properly get excited – haha.

There's a pair of Swainson's Hawks that hunt in the fields along Redwood Road and I see them almost every day on my way home from work. I even saw one of them soaring over the grocery store parking lot one day. I wonder how much longer before it's time for them to head south. The Turkey Vultures are still roosting in Fairfield near the turnoff to Camp Floyd State Park. I see them on my way home from work most days, but I know one of these days soon I'll come around that corner and they'll be gone as well.

It's these little observations that make me thankful that I caught the birding bug. I'm not sure how I went through life before oblivious to the wide world of bird out there and the interconnectedness of it all, but I'm grateful for the added depth it gives my life now. I hope you all are well. I've missed seeing a lot of you at the field trips lately, but I know life is busy. Hopefully I'll have some more travel and birding tales to write about next month.

Until then, Happy Birding!

Keeli Marvel

Bird of the Month

Mountain Bluebird

Sialia currucoides

by Mabelle Johnson

A common species of open habitat across much of western North America. Pete Dunne describes the adult male as unmistakable - a pale blue shrouded bird. He didn't add that the blue looks like neon blue in the sunlight! Many show a trace of rufous on breast, then distinguished by long wings and tail, thin bill with little or no yellow at base, and a more upright posture, instead of the 'hunched' look of the Western Bluebird.

We often see these wonderful blue birds flitting across meadows of grass and sagebrush particularly in middle and higher elevations. The Strawberry River Valley is full of them, and about a hundred nest boxes.

They eat mostly insects during breeding season. Beetles, grasshoppers, and especially caterpillars. Spiders are also an important part of the adult diet, which makes me like them even more... Unlike other bluebird species, Mountain Bluebirds often hover while foraging; they also pounce on their insect prey from an elevated perch. In winter, the species often occurs in large flocks of 20-200, wandering the landscape eating berries and seeds.

I didn't find a lot of descriptive information about these lovely birds, I guess they're pretty ordinary, but watching Mountain Bluebirds flit around our campsite at Soldier Creek Reservoir one weekend was a treat. There were bright blue males and blue and gray females and juvie's all over the place. We even shared some breakfast with one curious male.

Resources:

http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Mountain_Bluebird/id

Pete Dunne's Essential Field Guide Companion

The Sibley Guide to Birds

<http://www.deseretnews.com/article/440229/AUDUBON-PROJECT-PLANNED-AT-STRAWBERRY.html?pg=all>

If you would like to write an article for the Bird of the Month, please contact Mabelle - mabelle13johnson@yahoo.com



Photo by Milt Moody



Photo by Mabelle Johnson

Field Trip Report

Silver Lake Boardwalk - August 22, 2015

by Keeli Marvel

Alona and I were the only ones who showed up for the field trip yesterday, so we hopped in her car and headed up to Silver Lake at the top of Big Cottonwood Canyon. It was chilly when we got up there, but it warmed up fast. We walked the boardwalk loop around Silver Lake and saw a number of fun birds including Lincoln Sparrows singing on the marsh, ratty looking Green-tailed Towhees (probably hatched this year), Clark's Nutcrackers and a Steller's Jay which flew in to drink at the lake, and 3 Red-tailed Hawks soaring and calling over the ridge, and a Northern Goshawk cruising around above the tree line on the far side of the lake. We also got to see a short-tailed weasel which darted across the trail a couple of times with breakfast in its mouth. We had a really nice morning of birding. A complete checklist from our field trip is below.

Happy Birding! - Keeli Marvel

Big Cottonwood Canyon -- Silver Lake
Aug 22, 2015 8:10 AM - 10:04 AM
Protocol: Traveling - 1.1 mile(s)
Comments: Walked the boardwalk loop.
Also saw a deer and a short-tailed weasel
and chipmunks and squirrels
24 species

Mallard 8
Great Blue Heron 1
Northern Goshawk 1 flying above the
trees.

Red-tailed Hawk 3
Broad-tailed Hummingbird 2
Northern Flicker 1
Steller's Jay 1
Clark's Nutcracker 2
Common Raven 1
Northern Rough-winged Swallow 1
Violet-green Swallow 1
Cliff Swallow 1
Mountain Chickadee 1
Red-breasted Nuthatch 1

Ruby-crowned Kinglet 2
American Robin 3
Yellow-rumped Warbler 1
Dark-eyed Junco 1 Heard only
White-crowned Sparrow 5
Lincoln's Sparrow 2
Green-tailed Towhee 2
Red-winged Blackbird 4
House Finch 1
Pine Siskin 2

Backyard Bird of the Month

August 2015

Jack Binch - Sandy

I don't usually pay much attention to flyovers, but I had a **Common Nighthawk** fly right over on the 31st. that was a year bird.

Lyle Bingham - Payson

Significant are the birds we lost this month from the hollow park in Payson. The yellow-breasted chats are no longer calling in the morning, during the day and all night. The lazuli buntings are also gone from our neck of the woods. Soon to leave will be the majority of the hummingbirds. Our choice for bird of the month is the female **Rufous Hummingbird** who guards our feeder from alien sippers.

Yvonne Carter - Highland

A **Rufous Hummingbird** has been busy for some time at the feeder, along with Western Scrub Jays fighting with Magpies, Black-capped Chickadees and House Finches.

Eric Huish - Pleasant Grove

Western Scrub-jays were extra lively this month, collecting nuts and seeds and squabbling over territories.

Milt Moody - Provo

Western Screech-Owls like my tree-covered yard in Provo. Young ones have been bathing in my bird baths and older ones have been singing morning and evening outside my window.

Bruce Robinson - West Jordan

Rufous Hummingbird - Protected "their" territory for a few days then moved on

Dennis Shirley - Shemya Island, Alaska

Hi from Shemya Island again - My Big Back Yard! Since getting here about a week ago my best birds have been - **Dark-sided Flycatcher** and **Crested Auklet** - both new ABA birds.

Alton Thygerson - Provo

Hummingbirds - Black-chinned, Broad-tailed, Rufous. During mid-August we had as many as 15 at a time. Suddenly, during the last week of August the numbers dropped of to only two or three at a time.