

# Utah County Birders Newsletter

March 2016



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## MARCH MEETING:

**Thursday, March 10th, 2016 - 7:00 pm.**

Our topic for our March meeting will be **how to maximize your use of eBird**, both for those who already use it, and for those who haven't taken that step yet. **Keeli Marvel will do an eBird demo**. If you don't yet have a free eBird account, but would like one, she'll get you set up with one and show you what you need to do to get started. If you have any photos of birds you would like help identifying, any questions about birding or identification, or any lists you would like to enter in eBird, bring those as well and we will discuss them!

Meet at 7:00 pm at the Monte L. Bean Museum. 645 East 1430 North, Provo, UT <http://mlbean.byu.edu/>

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## FIELD TRIPS:

**Saturday March 12, 2016:** 8am - 2pm - Meet at the Provo East Bay Sam's Club Parking lot. We will bird **South Utah County**. We'll plan to bird around the Goshen Valley and Goshen Canyon area and possibly the Tintic Mountains up around Eureka, weather and road condition dependent.

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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## Utah County Birders Captain's Log: March 2016

by Keeli Marvel

It feels like spring is in the air. I'm not sure if I'm ready yet, but the sunshine sure feels good! I look forward to the next couple of months as the migrants all return. In spite of the nasty inversion fog (which we hopefully have seen the last of this season) we had a successful field trip up to Antelope Is. a couple weeks ago where we saw the Varied Thrush, Northern Shrike, and both Burrowing and Great Horned Owls. It was fun to see the Tundra Swans along the causeway.

A couple of interesting sightings from my neck of the woods:

There's been a pair of American White Pelicans hanging out in the Saratoga Springs gated harbor just south of Inlet Park. The Great Horned Owls in my neighborhood put on a nice show for me this week calling back and forth to each other in the dark. Less notable, but still interesting, I spotted a Say's Phoebe on my way in the gate at work last week, and I've been hearing one from the parking lot calling – assuming what I'm hearing is actually a phoebe, and not the starlings doing a really good mimic.

My sister and I got to experience the mimicking power of Steller's Jays a couple weekends ago. We went up to Summit Park near Park City in search of the White-throated Sparrow. We did not locate the sparrow, but instead, watched a Steller's Jay doing a very convincing Red-tailed Hawk impression. In spite of dipping on the sparrow, we spent an enjoyable morning with our nephew checking out the House Finches and chickadees, and we even spotted a couple of moose on our way back through Parley's Canyon.

Not much else to report from the front line. Nesting season for raptors like Golden Eagles and Red-tailed Hawks and for Great Horned Owls has officially begun, and I'd like to remind everyone that as birders, we should be especially careful of our behavior in regards to nesting birds during this sensitive period in their life cycle. That means maybe not sharing the location of a known active nest or keeping our distance and maybe refraining from playing call backs during this sensitive time. Ultimately, we want to have as little impact as possible so that they can carry on the business of being birds and having bird offspring for future generations to enjoy.

Hope to see you all out birding, where I will be enjoying the warm weather while it lasts. If you have any suggestions/requests/desire to volunteer to lead field trips, you know how to get in touch with me!

Happy Birding!

Keeli

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## **Bird of the Month**

### **Savannah Sparrow**

*Passerculus sandwichensis*

by Bryan Shirley

Two days ago I was birding in Japan and was on a stakeout for a very rare bird. According to the locals, this bird had been around for a few weeks. This was the second of this species in Japan this year, but typically it is only recorded about every 3rd year. I didn't know the exact spot, but once we got close it was obvious due to the crowd of photographers with their cameras pointing into a small row of weeds surrounded by rice fields. We joined the crowd and waited. And waited. Finally, after over 2 hours I saw a small bird scamper across an opening. Then it popped out. A beautiful Savannah Sparrow!

Savannah Sparrows are a lot more common here. They are common breeders in Utah in grassy or brushy habitat. (they breed across most the USA and Canada). After the breeding season they head south into warmer areas. Most move out of northern Utah, but some years we find a straggler on our Christmas Bird Count.

They have a streaked breast and a yellow eyestripe (can be very variable). They can also easily be identified by their call - a couple of notes followed by a long buzz.

They should be showing up in Utah County soon. Next time you see one take an extra minute to enjoy it – there are a lot of places in the world where it would attract a pretty good crowd!



**Savannah Sparrow.**  
photo by Paul Higgins



**Savannah Sparrow Stakeout in Japan.**  
photo by Bryan Shirley

If you would like to write an article for the Bird of the Month, please contact Machele - [machele13johnson@yahoo.com](mailto:machele13johnson@yahoo.com)

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## Field Trip Report

**Antelope Island** - February 13th, 2016

by Keeli Marvel

Sixteen Utah County Birders met for a field trip to Antelope Island on Saturday, Feb. 13th. The weather was still pretty hazy, but visibility at the causeway and around the island wasn't too bad. We got pretty much all of our target species for the field trip, plus a bonus or two. Highlights included Tundra Swans and a female Barrow's Goldeneye at the bridge closest to the island, a Northern Shrike along the road to Garr Ranch, the Varied Thrush and a pair of Great Horned Owls continuing at Garr Ranch, Great Horned Owls at the Bison Corral Barn, a Burrowing Owl west of the visitor center, and Chukars in the rocky area just north of the visitor center. Rumor is the Barn Owls were/are also nesting at the corral, but they must have been too far back in the nest box for us to get a peek. Links to the ebird checklists are below. Thanks to all who braved the fog and joined us!

Happy Birding!

Keeli Marvel

Antelope Is. Causeway: <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S27478376>

Road to Garr Ranch: <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S27559063>

Garr Ranch: <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S27558982>

Visitor Center and Loop Road: <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S27559200>

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## Backyard Bird of the Month

February 2016

Jack Binch - Sandy

Nothing new here, still enjoy the **Yellow-rumps**.

Jeff Cooper - Pleasant Grove

It was nice to see **Pink-sided Dark-eyed Juncos** at the feeders. It was interesting to see them adapt to circumstances and feed from the sock feeder when the ground had no food for them. As in other years when we've had heavy snow cover the Red-winged Blackbirds showed up at the feeders as well.

Eric Huish - Pleasant Grove

**Cooper's Hawk** - A regular visitor every winter.

Milt Moody - Provo

A **Hermit Thrush** showed up at my bird bath to drink a little water from the melted snow.

Leena Rogers - Provo

A **Spotted Towhee** has visited our yard. It was right out in the open under our feeder near the patio. No other birds around so it was quite brave. Fun to watch as it foraged for seeds on the ground!

Kay Stone - Lehi

We have had **Spotted Towhees** in our yard this past month, also **Mountain Chickadees**.

Alton Thygerson - Provo

**Brown Creeper** - Appeared briefly on the last day of the month.

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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