

Utah County Birders Newsletter

June 2017

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JUNE MEETING

No meeting in June. See field trip info below.

FIELD TRIPS:

Saturday, June 10: South Utah County Hot Spots

7am-early afternoon

Meet at the Payson Walmart at 7am to carpool. We will visit Goshen Canyon, Warm Springs, and the Tintic Mountains/ Eureka area. Led by Dennis Shirley/ Keeli Marvel

Saturday, June 24: Dimple Dell

7am- early afternoon.

Meet at the American Fork Park and Ride (on the North side of Pioneer Crossing and the West side of I-15 off the Main St. American Fork exit. Led by Steve Van Winkle.

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 Keeli at - keeli.marvel@gmail.com

Utah County Birders Captain's Log: June 2017

by Keeli Marvel

Howdy y'all! Just made it back from Oregon. I was hoping I would have news of epic life bird achievements, but unfortunately, the birds were not on my wavelength this trip. I drove up to the Portland area last week to spend some time with my brand new baby niece, but decided to make a side trip on the way up to check out Crater Lake National Park. With my destination in mind, I researched the birds (of course!), and came up with three target birds: Hermit Warbler, White-headed Woodpecker, and Black-backed Woodpecker. Crater Lake NP was still covered in snow and hadn't opened its campgrounds yet, so I camped out in Collier Memorial State Park, about

30 min away from the park. It was a very nice campground with hot showers and nice campground hosts, if anyone finds themselves in that area in the future looking for a place to pitch a tent or park an RV. That evening I went for a walk around the campground and picked up a semi-lifer Hermit Warbler. I say semi because I am undecided yet whether I'm actually going to count it. I could hear it calling, and it matched the call on my ebird app exactly, but in the fading light I couldn't ever get a great look. I realized something crucial on this trip. Birding the Pacific Northwest is HARD. The trees are huge and tall and all the really interesting birds are way up there singing their little hearts out, out of binocular reach. Well, that's not entirely true. But I'll come back to that. So I thought, great, my lifer Hermit Warbler! Surely I'll get a better look later on during the trip. WRONG. I was wrong. I heard a few throughout the trip, but never got a satisfying look. So that was kind of strike one. I'd read up on ebird about possible locations for the woodpeckers. I checked those locations. No dice. The Rim Rd. in the national park was still closed because it was covered in snow, but I hiked up a two mile portion they'd managed to plow and saw one Northern Flicker, some Cassin's Finches, Steller's Jays, and a Clark's Nutcracker (in the top of the tall tree in the photo below). Still no lifer woodpeckers. Sad day, but them's the breaks, especially when it comes to birding! On my way home I hiked a loop between Wahkeena and Multnomah waterfalls in Columbia River Gorge and had a very confiding Orange-crowned Warbler close enough I could actually see the orange crown! I also got great looks at a Pacific Wren. Turns out they love waterfalls and cascade-y areas (probably not a surprise to most of you), and I heard several along the hike.



Changing the topic a little bit, today I got to go out with the natural resources crew at Hill AFB and mist net a few birds. We caught and banded Black-throated Sparrows (see photo below), Brewer's Sparrows, a Sage Thrasher, and a female Western Tanager (see second photo below). Migration appears to be tapering off for the summer, and the resident birds are settling down for hopefully another successful breeding season. The Western Tanager was quite a fun bird to band but she was also very bitey (and really, can you blame her?).



Happy Birding!

Bird of the Month

Bobolink

Class: Aves

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Icteridae

Genus & species:

Dolichonyx oryzivorus

Article by Carol Nelson
(Originally published May
2008)

Any trip to the fields north of Goshen during breeding season is not complete unless a birder can tick off the Bobolink on his checklist. Its main territory is north and east of Utah, but we are more than happy to have a few patches of grassland near us where it also breeds.



photo by Paul Higgins

This black 7" wonder with the conical beak, has white patches on his shoulders and rump and a buff nape and back of head. (I think he needs the assistance of a personal shopper myself, or at least an honest friend who can help him get a cap a few sizes larger so it covers all his head and not just the back. I'll bet he bought that one at a garage sale.) The Bobolink has two complete molts each year. All the new feathers it produces on its wintering grounds have yellow tips making it look much like a non-breeding bird. But in time the tips wear off and the plumage is left with its dramatic breeding coloring. The Bobolink is dichromatic, meaning the male and female look distinctly different. The female looks more like a sparrow than it does its mate, but only during breeding season.

The male wins his mates in the usual blackbird fashion. He drops his head, ruffles his neck feathers, fans his tail, arches his wings displaying his prominent white shoulder patches, and the females fall at his feet, so to speak. Federal marshals do not interfere with this polygamous bird. Older Bobolinks may have as many as four nesting females in their territory, but most of their time and attention is devoted to the first family they produce, taking care of the others as time and resources permit. Excuse me! That is a lousy show of responsibility!! Aha, read on. They also engage in cooperative breeding, a seeming rarity among long distant migrants. This is where more than two adults participate in the feeding of the young at a single nest. The extra adults may be male or female, may be previous offspring from one of the adults, may actually be the birth parent of one or more of the young on the nest, or may have lost their own young and still be ruled by their biological urge to feed. The Bobolink's clutch size is four to six eggs and their nest is on the ground leaving it vulnerable to early field mowing.

The Bobolink's flight is strong and undulating. They migrate to southwestern Brazil, Paraguay and northern Argentina, with some stopping off in Peru and Chile, a round trip of up to 12,500 miles. They migrate at night in flocks called chains, guided by the earth's magnetic fields and the position of the stars. Before their overseas flight, they fatten up on food in the southeastern United States. When it was discovered that huge flocks, often at night, were descending on rice fields to increase their stores of fat, they were hated and killed. In one year there were 720,000 rice birds killed and sold as food. In this plumped state restaurants served them as butter birds, a more appetizing name than meadow wink, reed bird or skunk blackbird, which are other names they are known by. Despite their consumption of great quantities of rice, they are now considered a benefit to farmers. Their main staple is an assortment of insects, and the seeds they subsist on belong mostly to weeds.

The Bobolink's song has been described as "a bubbling delirium of ecstatic music that flows from the gifted throat of the bird like sparkling champagne," and as "a tinkle of fairy music, like the strains of an old Greek harp." Poets as popular as Emily Dickinson and William Cullen Bryant have used their talents to describe Bobolinks. We may also enjoy his song and attempt to describe him, but any description thus far produced weakens at the actual sight of one in breeding plumage sitting on a fence post with a swaying field of grass in the back ground. This is what bird watching is about and we feel a sense of gratitude for this kind of experience as we tick his name off on our checklists.

Reference: eNature.com Nature Guides, ConserveNature.Org, whatBird.com, Bobolink: Bird of the Month - Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, All About Birds: Bobolink.

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

Field Trip Report

Utah Lake North Shore Trail, June 3rd, 2017

By Keeli Marvel

Eight birders met this morning to walk the new trail along the North Shore of Utah Lake. We walked about 2/3 of a mile east on the trail through some nice wooded and open field habitat and tallied 31 species total. Our highlights included both Western and Eastern Kingbirds, good looks at a couple of Western Wood-Pewees, a House Wren, a Warbling Vireo, and several other species. We didn't see any sign of the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher or Little Gull, so I think it might be safe to say they've both moved on. Our complete checklist can be found [here](#). Thanks to all who joined us!
