



National and State Park Spontaneous Trip in the Birdmobile!

September 8th-11th

5 crazy lady birders and one tiny baby boy woke up to snow on the mountains and a temperature that seemed below zero by multiple digits. But let's get this show on the road!

We headed south to Nephi and got off on Hwy 89. First stop, Yuba Lake State Park-Painted Rocks. It was freezing and a light rain was falling. We managed 17 species of birds but decided it was close enough we could be done, so we headed down the road. We added some species to our Sevier County list on the way to Fremont Indian State Park. We stopped at the first pullout and Geniel saw a silhouette of a bird in a Cottonwood tree. As soon as I got my binos on it I screamed, "It's a Pygmy Owl!!!" It probably thought it was



winter because of the cold spell. We also saw a Northern Harrier and a pair of Golden Eagles. We were off to a great start!

We stopped at the Visitor's Center and bought a State Parks pass and walked through the museum. What a fun park.

We saw some neat petroglyphs and a White-throated Swift resting on a rock. It wasn't very birdy but did manage to get 11 species. We



saw the rock formation that looked like a Lady playing the Organ just before we came to Big Rock Candy Mountain. They didn't have any rock candy (one of our favorites!) so we headed down the road to Piute Reservoir State Park.

We found some good water birds like the Great



Egret, American White Pelican, DC Cormorant, Clark's and Western Grebes and lots of ducks. We drove over by the cottonwood trees and found Western Tanagers, Western Wood Pewee and down the road we saw lots of gulls, about 200 Canada Geese and a lone Spotted Towhee. We finished



with a total of 24 species!!

From there we stopped in Panguitch at Henrie's Drive-in for a hamburger and English Chips (yum!) and headed for Bryce Canyon NP.



It was still freezing, so we just went to the campground and got ready for bed. It was around 9p or so. It was a cold night but everyone seemed to sleep well and by 8a we were ready to start birding. The wind had picked up and it was still freezing, not



to mention, being in the coldest National Park in Utah.

Our first bird was Townsend's Warbler!! We also saw Chipping and White crowned Sparrows, Dark-eyed Junco and Western Bluebirds. At Sunset Point we were welcomed by a flock of



Pygmy Nuthatches! They are one of my favorites. We also saw Stellar Jay, White-breasted Nuthatch, Downy Woodpecker, and Mountain Chickadee. We tried to stop at Inspiration Point, but there wasn't any RV parking, but did have a drive-by viewing of a Green-tailed Towhee.



At the Visitor's Center we found Brewer's

Sparrows and saw a Common Raven, sadly, not everyone saw the raven, so had to spend another hour driving, at the end of our trip, until we did. But we got it! (Thanks Agua Canyon!) We decided to head to the south part of the park. At the first lookout we saw a Red-tailed Hawk and Mountain Bluebird. Next stop was Agua Canyon, finding Clark's Nutcrackers (and the other Common Raven!). Almost under the arch was a Townsend's Solitaire! We finished with 21



species and it took us til noon!!!

Next stop Kodachrome Basin SP. Have you ever been there? Not me! It was absolutely beautiful! But it is a desert and it was not very birdy! In the parking lot, we got lucky and had a bunch of Pinyon Jays flyover, then found some Western Tanagers, a Lincoln's, Vesper, and



Brewer's Sparrows, we also saw a Say's Phoebe and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. It was a little

discouraging at first. Driving down a small dirt road, we added a Western Meadowlark, Common Raven, and a House Wren, but finally found an area with a little stream, a couple puddles, and began to have success. We had

Warbling Vireo, Wilson's Warbler, Yellow-rumped

Warbler and Orange-crowned Warbler. We also saw a flock of Horned Larks and found a geocache. We had Mourning Doves and Western Wood Pewee too. Our total for Kodachrome SP was 24 species but it was already 4:00 pm!

We continued down Hwy 12 to Escalante Grand Staircase NM. It was hard to bird at 60 mph but we did manage a Mountain Bluebird and a Woodhouse's Scrub Jay!





Our next stop was Escalante Petrified Wood State Park. We got in around 6:30p and hoped to camp there, but it was full. We did find 13 species around the park and on the reservoir. We then headed out to find a spot to camp. We drove a dirt road but decided with just 5 women it wasn't a good idea and found a RV park in Escalante. A cute family had just bought it



last week and they were so sweet and obliging, we even had hookups! With the cold weather it was nice to try out our skills on the sewer, water, and power. We got set up and had dinner around 9p. Gourmet hot dogs and corn on the cob! We woke up around 8a and headed back to



the Petrified Forest to finish our count. We found 21

species that morning. Highlights were the Hermit Thrush in the parking lot and a Peregrine Falcon having breakfast on the beach. We also stopped by the trailhead to



check out the petrified garden and the petrified tree, and a flyover of Pinyon Jays! The petrified tree was HUGE and well worth the stop. If you haven't been there before GO!



Back on the road to Escalante Grand

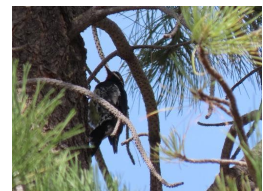
Staircase NM, we stopped at the lookout and the

360 degree views are spectacular. It wasn't birdy, but the view was worth it! Going over the spine was a little scary in the motorhome. We did find a Turkey Vulture and a Mountain Bluebird on one of the roads. About 4 miles down the road we stopped at a little farm and it



was a BIRD BUFFET!!!

We found a Williamon's Sapsucker!!! There were also Mourning and Eurasian Collared



Doves, Bushtits, Cooper Hawk, Turkey Vulture's, Red-tailed Hawks, White-throated Swifts, Spotted and Green-tailed Towhee, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Rufous Hummingbird, Black-headed Grosbeak, Western Bluebirds and many others. Our total was 24 species and it was in a National Forest (NF) to boot.

From there we headed for Boulder and the Burr Trail. WOW, a Red and White Sandstone slot canyon! We found a stream bed with a few puddles surrounded by Cottonwood trees, ate lunch, and saw a few birds. We saw Cordilleran, Hammond's and Dusky Flycatchers, Western Tanager, Western Wood Pewee, Vesper Sparrow, Yellow and Yellow-rumped Warblers, and a House Wren. Up the road we found White-throated Swifts. Common Raven, Say's Phoebe and more Flycatchers,





Bushtit's and Juniper Titmouse. It was a beautiful scenic route and I hated to leave! We finished with 21 species!

Last stop of the day was Capitol Reef NP. We got to the Ripple Rock Nature Center and found nine species and Jess even picked a few pears off the tree (courtesy of the park!). We had seen a



camping spot off the side of the road so if the campground in the park was full, we would have a spot. It was full, glad we found the earlier spot. We got the RV leveled and had "Tindins" for dinner about 9:30p. We woke up at 7a and headed back to the park to find 11 species. We found at least seven different sparrows and bought some apple and peach pies at the Gifford House. There were four beautiful bucks. One was still in velvet! Also saw a momma and her twins! We found Western Tanagers,



Violet Green and Cliff Swallows and lots of other good birds here

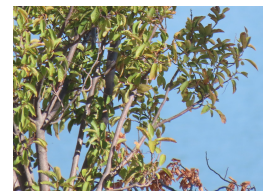
too. By 9:30a we had 30 species. I wish we could have stayed all day!! But we had to get on our way and finish Fremont Indian State Park and Yuba State Park.

At Fremont Indian State Park we stopped at a pullout and it was another BIRD BUFFET!!! We found Warbling Vireo,



Lesser Goldfinch, Wilson's, Yellow, Yellow-rumped and Orange-crowned Warblers and Western Wood Pewee, House Wren, Song Sparrow, and Turkey Vultures. Down the road we saw Red-tailed Hawk and American Dipper! We finished!!! We ate lunch at the Visitor's Center and tried to find my patriotic mask I lost a few days ago. No luck!

Last stop Yuba Lake State Park I-15 side! We needed three birds and we found White-faced Ibis, Brewer's Sparrow and Yellow Warbler, and an unidentified Hummingbird! We were done!! I am not sure on the total of all species for the trip but it was amazing and we did five State Parks, two National Parks, one National Monument. We also had two Reservoirs, two National Forests, two finished counties, with some finishing five counties! A whirlwind trip with many great memories and baby Tatum was a little angel the entire time! Amanda came up with this crazy trip idea, but thanks to Mom, Geniel, and Jessie for making it happen, it was amazing!!!



Suzi Holt
Birder/Guide Extraordinair ;)