

Utah County Birders Newsletter

March 2023

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MARCH MEETING:

Wednesday Mar 8th **NOTE DIFFERENT NIGHT THAN USUAL**

7pm at BYU Bean Museum and online via Zoom

Birding in Antarctica

Presented by Bryan Shirley

Bryan Shirley is going to tell us about their amazing trip to the ends of the earth Birding in Antarctica!



FIELD TRIPS:

Saturday MAR 11th 8:00am to early afternoon:

[James Fitzgerald WMA, Rush Valley, Clover Springs Campground](#)

Meet at the Payson Walmart and we will drive to Vernon to the James Fitzgerald WMA first, then bird around Rush Valley and finish at Clover Spring's Campground. Route may change a bit depending on snow totals.

Saturday MAR 25th 5:00am to early afternoon:

[Henefer Greater Sage-Grouse Lek](#)

Meet at the Orem Harmons parking lot west of the gas pumps to discuss lek etiquette and carpool. If there is a desire, once we visit the lek we will continue up to East Canyon reservoir to see what's there.

President's Message – Mar 2023

Before I get into a few topics I would like to talk about, I am wondering how everyone is doing with their 'personal' challenges this year. Since there isn't a group challenge this year as this is an odd numbered year, in January I presented the idea for each to design your own personal challenge. I hope you have started a challenge all your own.

A couple of months ago I came across a wonderful video through speeches@byu.edu, a presentation given by Dr. Paul Alan Cox entitled "Exploring Nature's Curiosity Cabinet". Please take the time to watch this presentation. He draws on the inspiration of his research experiences around the world and highlights some of God's greatest botanical creations. He encourages us to reverence and preserve our planet's beauty and biodiversity.

The above leads me to a related topic regarding our own participation in birdwatching. A week ago, I was birding in the Daybreak area of Salt Lake County (Sorry) and came across two teenagers, a boy 16 and his sister aged 14, out birding near Oquirrh Lake. They were well equipped with an excellent camera and binoculars. I visited with them, and they told me that they lived in the area, and the young man is, if not daily, frequently out in the area, keeping track of the birds through the seasons. These youth were acting appropriately in taking pictures and observing the birds. This is what we strive for in our group, the Utah County Birders. We hope to pull into our group people of ALL ages and families to participate in this marvelous activity. Birding Etiquette is a concern in our group. This newsletter includes information as to a GUIDE to follow as we go about our birding activities either in a group or individually. It is NOT a set of strict rules that must be followed. I am aware of a few groups who have very strict rules for birders, including observers in their group who check the submissions and can eliminate members' submissions who break the rules. I know of one group that will not allow playing bird calls. This is not the spirit of our group. Please be considerate of the birds. It is fine to play a 'bird call' but please do not play the call for a long time. With photography, watch your distance as some birds are very sensitive. In a few cases, we want to be careful with our submissions, a rare sighting might pull in a lot of people that could disturb the area, but the sighting could be shared privately.

Enjoy your birding experiences. Thanks for being a part of this marvelous group of birders.

Yvonne Carter

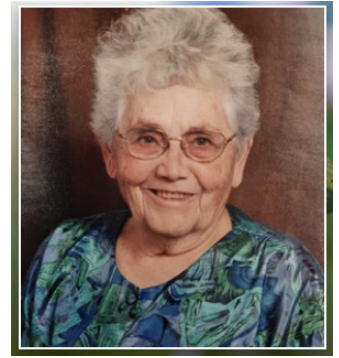
President, Utah County Birders

[For Birding Suggestions for our "ODD" Year click here](#)

ANNOUNCEMENT:

Flora Duncan, an avid birder, and long-time member of our group, passed away on February 8th. Here is the link for her obituary. We offer our love and sympathy to her daughter Esther and the rest of her family. She was admired by many in our group! ❤️ Flora and Esther both earned the Gold level in our 2022 birding challenge!

https://memorials.walkersanderson.com/flora-duncan/5136464/index.php?_ga=2.186925608.1846341635.1677509428-978092558.1676301744

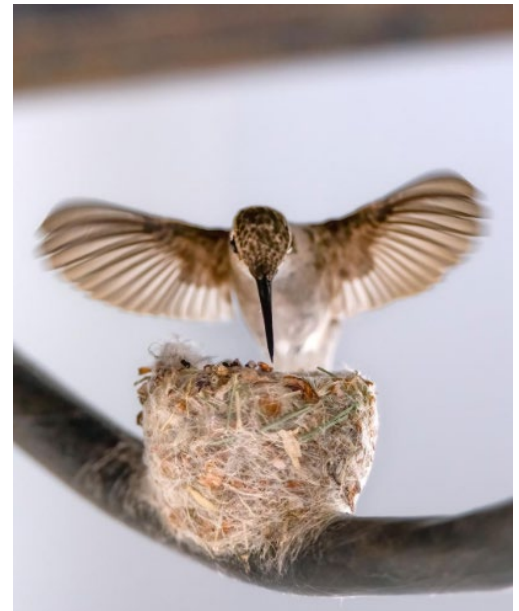


BIRD OF THE MONTH

Anna's Hummingbird
Calypte anna

Article and photos by Jan Munger

On June 5th of 2020, my husband and I started getting our 33ft. 5th wheel ready for a much anticipated camping trip. In that process we made the most surprising discovery...a hummingbird had built a nest on a power cord that was hanging from the front of the 5th wheel hitch, and there were two tiny eggs. There was no delay in either of our minds as to what would happen next...we canceled the trip, and I began a month long photographic journaling of this very special mama bird and her babies. I quickly learned that the mama was an Anna's Hummingbird. I read on www.allaboutbirds.org that "Anna's are medium-sized and stocky for a hummingbird. They have a straight, shortish bill and a fairly broad tail. When perched, the tail extends beyond the wingtips." Her feathers were a pretty metallic green and her body was green & gray. I read that they are "stocky" for a hummingbird, but she always seemed long and thin to me...I guess that's because of her long tail. I named her "Lady Winifred, the 5th, but called her **"Winnie"**.



Winnie at the nest



We don't know how long her nest had been there on the power cord, but breeding season is from December to May/June and incubation runs about 16 days. Only the female sits on the eggs and on June 16th, the babies hatched. I soon christened them, **"Benny & June"**. Winnie and I developed an understanding early on...I was careful to not push my presence on her and took my time in working my way to a closer vantage point for photography.

I started “shooting” her from outside our gate and slowly inched my way closer inside the gate until in the end I was about 7 ft from her nest. I generally tried to set up my tripod and long lens during a period where she wasn’t at the nest (out getting food) but would hear her chirping overhead if she came back and found me taking a peek in the nest. She tolerated me and my equipment and I dealt with the lousy light and never tried to illuminate the nest area.

As for habitat, I can’t stress enough how brilliant I think she was for choosing that power cord to build her nest...she had a huge roof over her head and great wind protection. Being right under the tip of the 5th wheel she was well hidden from any predators like kestrels or scrub jays and well out of reach of any cats. And the intricacy & artistry of her nest would be a whole ‘nother article.

During the nestling period, on June 28th, south Saratoga Springs was evacuated due to a rapidly spreading wildfire and as residents of that area we had to act quickly. We were so invested at that point with protecting our little hummers that we made the decision to leave our 5th wheel behind...holding on to hope & trust that the fire would not take out our home and belongings. Thankfully we returned the following day to a smoky smelling house and hummers that were fully unaware of the drama that had unfolded around them.



During my early research, I read that sometimes that the babies will fall out of the nest before they’re ready to fly, so after designating her home “Casa de Winnie”, I added two padded rugs that would soften the fall if one of the babies fell. I also added some flowers and a hummingbird feeder, so Winnie didn’t have to go far in search of food. Again, according to www.allaboutbirds.org their “nestling period” is about “20 days”...for Benny & June it was a little more than that, but after they left the nest, I observed them hanging out under our pontoon boat for a short while longer, Winnie still returning to feed them. Before they left the nest, I had put out hummingbird feeders in my front yard and often saw one or all of them visiting, although by then it was more difficult to tell them apart. The whole experience was just a hair over one month, but I was watching them almost every single day, often morning, noon & night and they were for that very brief period in my life...my family. And I loved them.

Anna’s Hummingbird

Calypte anna

“Habitat – open Woodlands” (or underneath a 5th Wheel)

“Food – nectar”

“Behavior - Anna’s Hummingbirds hover deftly and zip from flower to flower. They are at their most splendid when performing their wild courtship dives. A male flies as high as 130 feet in the air and then plummets toward the ground (and the watching female), where he lets loose a unique short high-pitched noise made by air whipping through his tail feathers. As courtship progresses, the male chases a receptive female, who leads him toward her nest site, and perches again. The male then performs a “shuttle display,” where he swings back and forth about a foot above the female, keeping his body horizontal and his head down toward the female, often singing an intense song. When males are not feeding or performing, they often sit fairly high in a bush or small tree, noisily chattering. Males and females do not form pairs, and both sexes likely mate with more than one individual per season. Only the females care for the young.”

Sources: www.allaboutbirds.org

[\[See past Bird of the Month articles\]](#)

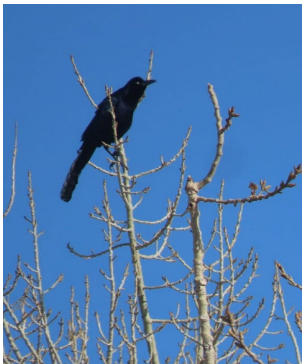
FIELD TRIP REPORTS:

Utah Lake SP Field Trip (photos by Suzi Holt)



26 Birders showed up this morning for our fieldtrip! With so many of us we decided it was best just to walk.

From the parking lot we saw an **American Kestrel** out in the distance. A **Great-tailed Grackle** serenaded us from a close tree, he was joined by a **Black-billed Magpie**. We had a **Black-capped Chickadee** off to the south welcome us with its happy song too!



We walked over to the river and saw a lot of **Mallards** a few **Canada Geese**, one **American Robin**, a couple **Northern Flickers** and **European Starlings**. We also heard **Sandhill Cranes**. We also had a **Bald Eagle** flyover!!



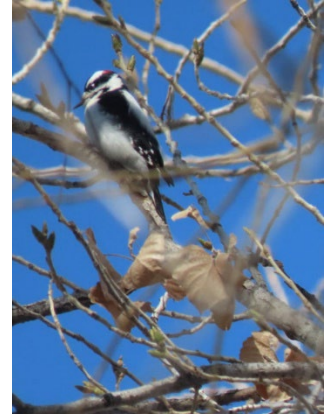
We continued our walk down the north jetty, we had more Black-capped Chickadees and lots of **Dark-eyed Juncos**, a couple more Black-billed Magpies and the mate to the American Kestrel.

On the dike we saw **Ring-billed Gulls** and had **Common Mergansers** and **Northern Pintails** fly over. A **Red-winged Blackbird** flew into the top of a tree. Out on the ice we saw another Bald Eagle. On our way back down the dike we spotted another Bald Eagle on a collision course with an incoming plane on its final approach to the airport...that was pretty exciting for all of us!

We had just started down the south jetty and were looking at **Ruddy Ducks**, **Common Goldeneye**, **Green-winged Teal**, American **Coots** and more Mallards when Alton called and said he had some Evening Grosbeaks outside of the park on Harbor Drive. Unfortunately, by the time we got there they had flown but we saw **Spotted Towhees**, **White-crowned Sparrows**, and a **Red-tailed Hawk**.



From there we decided to walk the Provo River Trail in search of the grosbeaks. A **Great-horned Owl** was a nice consolation prize and we also saw a **Downy Woodpecker**. Around the corner I got excited when a flock of Blackbirds flew into a tree off in the field. As I looked at them there was one lighter bird in the middle. Yippie a female **Evening Grosbeak!!** Everyone got a good look in the scope! We walked around the Oxbow and added more black-capped Chickadees, Dark-eyed, Northern Flickers, and a couple Common Goldeneye with all the Mallards. We decided to call it a day! It was a beautiful morning and I hit my **10,000 steps** for the day! Thanks for coming!



Delta Snow Goose Festival 2023

Photos by Suzi Holt



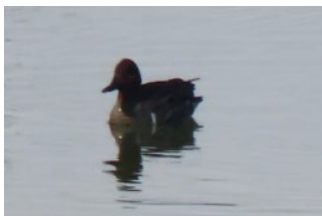
Wow!



The weather was a little hairy this morning with the snow and wind. It may have spooked a few people into not coming. We did have 4 carloads, a group of 14! The roads were decent until **Eureka**. I've never seen it covered in that much snow! The whole town was car deep in snow! Once we got through the Tintics it was sun and blue skies. A lot of **Horned Larks** were feeding along Hwy 6. You could have mistaken them for chickens, like they just liked playing chicken! That was fun to see!

We got to Gunnison Bend Reservoir around 9:45 am. We had a small flock of **Snow Geese** flyover and welcome us to the festival! On our way over the bridge, we saw **Green-winged Teal**, **Northern Shoveler** and **American Wigeon** and a few **White-crowned Sparrows**. In

Sherwood Shores we saw **European Starlings**, **American Robins**, **Dark-eyed Juncos**, **Northern Flicker**, **Townsend's Solitaire**, a huge flock of **Northern Pintails**, **House Finch**, and **House Sparrows**.



DNR was set up at the reservoir, but the geese were out in the fields still feeding. They told us they were out by 2500 W and 3000 S. So, we headed over there. They were really close to the road as well. We estimated around 4200 Snow Geese and 800 **Ross's Geese**!! I've never seen that many Ross's together!

We had a few **Northern Harrier's**, **Red-tailed Hawks**, a Northern Flicker, **Common Ravens**, Northern Pintail, Horned Larks, **Sandhill Cranes**, **Canada Goose** and **American Kestrel** there as well. It was bitter cold with the wind chill, so we headed back to the Reservoir. At the bridge a few ducks remained, and we added **Great Blue Heron**, **Belted Kingfisher**, Red-tailed Hawk, **Killdeer**, **Song Sparrows**, and White-crowned Sparrows.



Snow Geese & Ross's Geese

As we drove around the reservoir there was another huge flock of Northern Pintails on the ice, two **Tundra Swans**, **Common Mergansers**, one **American Coot**, Green-winged Teal, **Mallards**, a few more Snow Geese! Two **Bald Eagles** flew over and stirred up all the ducks! We saw a mixed group of House Sparrows, House Finch, Dark-eyed Juncos and White-crowned Sparrows in the sage brush, lots more American Robins, a **Eurasian Collared Dove** and a few more Horned Larks. An American Kestrel was being chased by a Common Raven and we heard a **Red-winged Blackbird**!



From there we went to DMAD reservoir. We saw another Townsend's Solitaire, a **Cooper's Hawk**, Killdeer, Green-winged Teal, **Ruddy Duck**, Northern Shoveler, Mallard, American Coot, Red-tailed Hawk, a flock of **Cedar Waxwings**, a couple American Robins and a Canada Goose! It was a great day for the festival. We were sad that the weather may have scared a few people off and we missed Jeremy's Chocolate birthday cake with snow geese balloons. But nonetheless we had a great time! (P.S. Happy Birthday Jeremy!)



Back Yard Birds



Paul Killpack-Lindon: I saw 2 **Golden Eagles** soaring overhead at the end of January and then a **Bald Eagle** soaring over the neighborhood at the end of February.

Yvonne Carter-Highland: New bird for the yard was a **Bohemian Waxwing**. There has been a good showing of Bohemian Waxwings this winter in our region.

Julie Hollingworth – Provo: I don't usually mention the **American Robin**, but I have seen so many the last few weeks and often more than twenty at a time! I've also loved watching my nesting pair of **Downy Woodpeckers** in my maple and **Northern Flickers** poking around in the grass at the top of my yard! I didn't even know woodpeckers would forage on the ground!

Tammy Northrup – Lindon: I saw a dark shape in a tree in our Lindon backyard on the morning of February 15. I was excited to discover it was a **Merlin**! A new and unusual yard bird for us!



Milt Moody – Provo: There was a very small, but very spiffy male **Sharp-shinned Hawk** in breeding plumage already. It looked very small for what I'm used to around my yard.



Rex Hadlock - We have a frequent visitor, a **Coopers Hawk**, that has discovered a flock of pigeons living under our solar panels. I believe he has eaten breakfast here four times so far!

Dennis Shirley – Elk Ridge: Anywhere from 2 to 41 **Wild Turkey** frequenting our feeders and yard in Jan and Feb. Keeps the 20-25 California Quail busy looking for what's left to eat. Our 2 resident Golden Eagles keep them all on their toes.

Suzi Holt – Payson: I've had a **Townsend's Solitaire** in my backyard trees. It's been calling as well!

Neal Sullivan – Saratoga Springs: A wide variety of birds have visited our feeders during the month: **Eurasian-collard Dove**, **Red-winged Blackbird**, **Brown-headed Cowbird**, **House Finch**, **House Sparrow**, **Black-capped Chickadee**, **European Starling**, **American Goldfinch**, **Spotted Towhee**, **Dark-eyed Junco**, and **California Quail**.

Lynn Garner – Provo: We have had a flock of **Spotted Towhees** in our yard this winter. With all the snow on the ground right now, they have taken to the feeders. On the platform feeder, they scratch just like they do on the ground!

Sheryl Serrano – Orem: A **Great-horned Owl** on the roof of our house! This was a first sighting for our yard. I believe it was looking for dinner.

