



Utah County Birders Newsletter

January 2023

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JANUARY MEETING

Thursday Jan 12th

7pm at Golden Corral, 171 W University Pkwy, Orem

We will meet at Golden Corral at 7pm, pay your own way, we have a room reserved for our meeting. We will announce the Challenge Award Levels and have prizes available for you to choose from! We will also welcome Yvonne Carter as our new UCB President for 2023-2024.

FIELD TRIPS

Woodpecker Hunt at the Hollow Park

Saturday January 7, 2023, 9 am to noon

We will meet at Hollow Park (400 E 800 S Payson) at 9 am. We will be walking the trails so please dress warmly. We will look for Northern Flicker, Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers and hopefully add a few other species that use trees in the winter like Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatches, Stellar's Jay, Woodhouse's Scrub Jay, Juniper Titmouse, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Mountain and Black-capped Chickadees.

Raptor Route

Wednesday January 25, 2023, 9 am to 1 pm

We will meet at 9 am at the Payson Walmart to the west of the Quick Quack carwash. We are doing this as a midweek trip to avoid traffic as much as possible. We will drive through Genola, Goshen, Elberta and Mosida looking for Birds of Prey. Hopefully finding Hawks, Falcons, Owls and Shrikes!

President's Message

By Yvonne Carter

Welcome everyone to a New Year 2023, and what it might bring! Let me first introduce myself. I started birding about 15 years ago as a result of a billboard on I-15. Strange as that sounds, it's true. I had some unique experiences around birds before then and always wanted to know more about birds. So, upon seeing that billboard, I said to myself, "Okay Yvonne, do you want to 'put your money where your mouth is'?" I didn't know what to expect from a bird festival and with free time on that Saturday, there I was at the Davis Co. facility, walking into a class given by Dennis Shirley on Optics--which I obviously needed as I 'treasured' my \$10 binoculars! By the end of the class, I could see I needed help. An announcement was made at the end of the class that there was one ticket left for a field trip to Farmington Bay. Well, I didn't know what happens on a birding field trip and with extra time on my hands, I grabbed the chance and there I was boarding the bus; noticing the big scopes, people with notebooks in hand (I couldn't imagine what they needed notebooks for), 'big binoculars, all rushing for a window seat.

There we were moving along on the bus, someone to my right shouting, "A Harrier at 3 o'clock" and all heads turned to the right. I just turned my head to the right like everyone else--whoa! that was a big bird. And then, "Look, a Northern Shoveler at 9 o'clock!" I looked and thought, "Mmmm, I thought that was just a duck," That's how uninformed I was, a true 'greenie'. The bus stopped by Egg Island, and upon exiting the bus, out came all these scopes being set up, binoculars at the ready, and all scanning the terrain. I did the same but not seeing too much from my fabulous \$10 binoculars. A gentleman to my right, seeing I was obviously a 'greenie' at this new experience, offered me the opportunity to look through his scope. Showing me how it works, I looked through that scope, saw a wonderful Northern Harrier in all its beauty, and I was awestruck. And that was my start on this wonderful journey of birding.

That gentleman was Milt Moody, and in a discussion with a few others like Dennis Shirley on the bus, I was invited to go on a Utah County Big Day field trip the following Monday. Thus began a wonderful experience with you, a great group of people who I have come to appreciate and treasure your friendship. So, when Mabelle asked me to step in as President, I hesitated but I felt I owed something to this marvelous group of people, who love to share their knowledge and experiences with birds. So here I am.

This is, being 2023 an 'odd' numbered year, no challenge for the group. But in past discussions with fellow birders there seems to be less effort on the 'odd' years. So, I propose that each member create their own 'personal challenge' for the year.

Consider these ideas: ----Some birders have had a personal challenge to have a minimum of 100 species in each of our 29 counties in Utah. A few have reached that goal----Yep! There are a few counties that are hard to meet that goal. But worth the effort. I'm at 9----much to do there. So, take a look at your county lists. ----Ebird is a marvelous app that aids us in our birding. Can we use it more? ----Bird every day and submit a report/record each day for a week, a month? ----Add new birds to your Life List: 5, 10 or more? ----Participate all 12 months in the monthly meeting for the Utah County Birders.

So, think about your own Personal Challenge for this 'odd' year and share with us at our January Awards dinner/meeting on January 12th. See you there!

BIRD OF THE MONTH

Western Screech Owl

Megascops kennicotti

by Tammy Northrup

When I started birding, I had no idea how many different species of owls could be found in Utah. The Western Screech owl is one of my favorites. I love its small size. They range in size from about 7.5-10 inches tall. Females are usually larger than the males. Their size does not stop them from being fierce hunters. Their diet may include insects, small mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians. They are nocturnal and do most of their hunting at dusk, dawn or night.

The Western Screech owl is commonly found in most of Western North America and in parts of Central America. They can be found in a variety of habitats including forests, lowland creeks, deserts, riparian areas and may even be seen in urban areas. Its gray-brown color and streaking helps it blend in with the bark of many trees that grow within its habitat.

The Western Screech owl is a cavity nester. They prefer to use holes (often made by woodpeckers) or cavities in trees or cactus. They will also use a nest box which can be a good way to attract them to your backyard.

Three years ago, in October, we followed Jeff Cooper's example and put an owl box high up in a tree in our Lindon backyard. We made sure it was placed so we could easily see it from our kitchen and family room windows. In less than a month we had an owl! We were so excited! It stayed through the winter then left sometime in March and didn't come back. We were disappointed an owl didn't come the next winter, but some starlings were thrilled to make the box their home.



Putting up the owl box...

Western Screech Owl in box

Western Screech Owl - winter

We have an owl again this year! We check several times a day to see if he has poked his head out. Sometimes we see his little face on sunny days as he takes a nap in the sun. If it's a gray, cloudy day we don't see him until it's almost dark. At dusk he pokes his head out and looks around then when the time is right, he flies out to hunt. We are hoping it will mate and raise its family in our backyard. A female Western Screech owl usually lays 3-7 eggs. They incubate for around 26 days. The female does all the incubation and cares for the young owlets. It is the male's job to feed his family and himself. He brings food to the female, and she carefully feeds her young. In about a month the young owls are ready to leave the nest for the first time. In about 5 or 6 more weeks they will venture out into the world on their own. If you enjoy backyard birding and have some tall trees, get an owl box. Fall is the best time to place an owl box in your yard. You might get lucky and have a Western Screech owl to take up residence. It will provide a safe haven for them and give you a chance to observe and learn more about them.

Sources:

www.perigrinfund.org

www.allaboutbirds.org

www.owling.com

[See past Bird of the Month articles]

Field Trip Reports



We had some open water in our area, but it was the first time I've seen the Provo river partially frozen.

Provo Christmas Bird Count 50th Official Year Summary

17 Dec 2022

by Keeli Marvel

56 birders braved frigid temperatures (including negative wind chill temps in Provo Canyon) to count birds for the 50th official Provo Christmas Bird Count this year. Counters covered everything from Lindon and the foothills above Orem, to Provo and Rock Canyons, all the way down to Springville.



Provo River partially frozen

We counted a total of 101 species, which is above average for our count circle but did not beat our 2001 high count of 108. Highlights this year included a **Ross's Goose** and **Eurasian Wigeon** in the Provo East Bay area, a **Barrow's Goldeneye** up Provo Canyon, a **Swamp Sparrow** on the Skipper Bay Trail, a **White-throated Sparrow** in the South Orem/Provo River corridor area, and **Bohemian Waxwings** counted in several areas across the count circle. We drove a cumulative 411 miles and trudged a cumulative 65 miles in snowy and icy conditions to count birds within our 15-mile diameter count circle. A huge **THANK YOU** for all the dedicated counters that made this year's count a success! Happy Holidays and Happy Birding!

If you participated and didn't get a sticker, please reach out to me.



Here are some of the pictures you took and shared on the Facebook post:

Barrows Goldeneye, Hairy Woodpecker, Hermit Thrush by KC Childs



Black-capped Chickadee, Coopers Hawk, Cedar Waxwing, Dark-eyed Junco, Townsend’s Solitaire
by Kayla Echols



Bohemian Waxwing, Canvasback, American Coot, (what else can you see?), Suzi's 3-Generation gang, by Suzi Holt





Backyard Birds

We are bringing back the Backyard Birds segment! Each month I'll send out an email request for birds you've seen in your yard. Note what it is and something about it, such as it's the first time you've had it in your yard, it is a frequent visitor, at your feeder, etc. Also list the city you are in.

Machelle Johnson, Orem: My December backyard bird was a Crow, there is a flock that frequents our area and one day several of them sat in the tree for a bit.