



APRIL 2025

UTAH COUNTY BIRDERS NEWSLETTER

CONTENTS:

- Monthly Meeting, Announcements
- President's Message
- Upcoming Field Trips
- Bird of the Month
- Field Trip Reports
- Art Gallery
- Backyard Birds



APRIL MEETING

Thursday April 10th, 2025 at 7pm

BIRD WALK-Utah Lake West Shore

We will meet at Eagle Park in Saratoga Springs and bird along the lakeshore trail.

Directions to Eagle Park: From I-15, take Pioneer Crossing west to Redwood Road. Turn left on Redwood Road and drive south for 2.8 miles. Turn left on Centennial Blvd. Follow Centennial until you see the park and parking lot on your left.

https://maps.app.goo.gl/DjMctJw1PuryrL6G6?q_st=com.google.maps.preview.copy



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I think in last month's letter I noted that Spring is around the corner or something similar. Well, for sure, Spring is here, and we should start seeing an increase in species coming here, or on their way. And I know that I mentioned that the Great Salt Lake Bird Festival is coming up in May.

I have received some interesting emails from that organization, in which they have added some new activities. There are new field trips, and 'Pre-Festival' activities. There is a planned Race for the Birds, in which you can team up with your birding friends and see how many species you can find during a specific time. Birding with a group should really increase your numbers. So, look that race up in the Great Salt Lake Bird Festival site for the particulars. The Great Salt Lake Bird Festival was the vehicle in which it really opened my eyes and has really been a great experience to increase my knowledge about birds.

KC Childs is a great birding guide for our group, so watch what he has planned each month. Not only attend the field trips, but if you have suggestions for an area to bird, let KC know.

Keep on birding!
Yvonne Carter, President

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

Saturday April 19th – KHYV Peak – Migrating Hawks

We will be doing some hawkwatching up at the Khyv Peak Overlook that is accessed from Provo Canyon. We will be sitting enjoying the views and any migrating hawks that fly by. It's a great chance to practice your skill at identifying hawks in flight. We will meet at the **Khyv Peak overlook at 11 AM and stay until around 2 PM**. It'd be great if you could bring a chair and something to drink and come see what is out migrating. Keep a close eye on the Facebook page in case there are any last-minute changes because of weather or conditions.

Saturday April 26th – Antelope Island

We will be heading out to look at shorebirds and see what migrants have showed up on Antelope Island. The sun comes early, so it will be an early start to avoid poor light and heat shimmers. We will meet at the **American Fork Pioneer Crossing Park and Ride at 6:30 AM**. We will try to carpool. We will check the causeway for shorebirds and work our way to Garr Ranch to see what is around. If you bring lunch, we will stop and eat at the picnic area at Garr Ranch before heading back home. I'm hoping to be back between 1 and 2 o'clock in American Fork. A reminder that Antelope Island is a state park, so bring a pass if you have one, also there is a \$2 fee to cross the causeway per vehicle. (Entrance fee \$15 per vehicle, \$10 seniors 65+, plus \$2 causeway fee)

BIRD OF THE MONTH

Northern Shrike

Lanius borealis

By Jeremy Telford



Northern Shrike, photo by Telfords

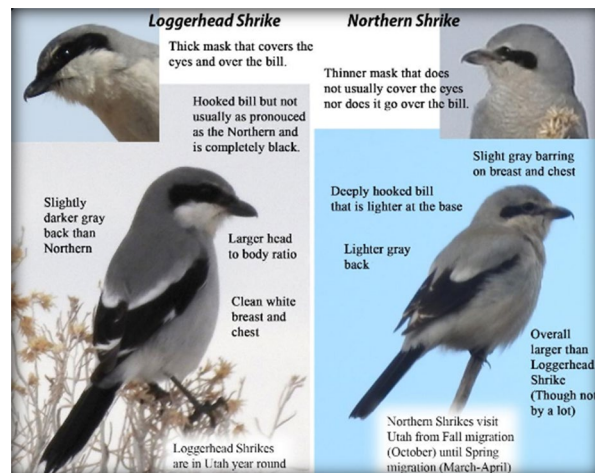
There are thirty-three species of shrike in the world, but most live in Africa or Asia. There are only two species of shrike that live in North America, and both can be found in Utah. They are the Loggerhead Shrike and the Northern Shrike.

Although they hunt in some ways similar to raptors, shrikes are in fact passerines or songbirds like warblers and sparrows.

The Loggerhead Shrike is the most common shrike found here in Utah. It has a thick black eye band that completely covers the eye and goes over the beak. The beak is hooked but less sharply than the Northern Shrike. It also has a white belly.

The Northern Shrike's black eye band does not usually cover the top of the eye or go over the beak, the beak is deeply hooked, and the belly has faint gray banding on it. It is generally a lighter shade of gray on its body than the Loggerhead and a tad bit larger. The juvenile is more brownish than gray, including the barring on its breast and belly.

Loggerhead Shrikes are generally non-migratory, with up to two-thirds of the population staying in one place year-round. Northern Shrikes are mostly migratory except for a small year-round population in coastal Alaska. Yearly, we have a small population of Northern Shrikes visit Utah during the Winter.



Although the Northern Shrike is considered less threatened than the Loggerhead Shrike as the planet's climate continues to change, its arctic habitat could be threatened. If temperatures rise by as little as 1.5 degrees C (2.7 degrees F) they could lose as much as three-quarters of their habitat.

A group of shrikes is called a 'watch,' referring to their territorial nature, or an "abattoir" which is derived from the French word for "slaughterhouse." Considering their famous behavior of impaling prey, it is not surprising that shrikes also carry the nickname "butcher birds."

It is amazing all the different techniques the Northern Shrike has adopted when searching for prey. The techniques are almost as varied as the size and types of prey they hunt.

Among other creatures, they hunt and eat insects, birds, small mammals, lizards, and snakes. As to how they hunt to catch these prey...

On the wing: Like Kestrels, they may perch high up and then catch insects or songbirds on the wing. They don't have talons but they do have strong legs that they can use to catch smaller birds. They have a notched bill which create what are called "tomial teeth" that they use to quickly kill their prey.



Illustration by Jeremy Telford

Patently stalking: In dense brush, Northern Shrikes may sit and watch mouse holes or bird nests, carefully determining the best time of day to attack.

Diving to the ground: For songbirds, especially ones that are heavier or bigger than themselves, they may dive and drive the birds to the ground where they quickly kill them. They have even been seen killing birds the size of pigeons and ducks, though this is more likely done while aggressively defending their territory rather than seeing these larger birds as food.

Sing-song lure: It is well documented that Northern Shrikes use the imitated songs of other birds in courtship. It is also widely believed and accepted that they use these imitations to lure in other songbirds to them and then attack.

Flushing Prey: Northern Shrikes can hop through brush, sometimes flapping their white wing-spots to startle insects and birds and flush them out into the open where the shrike attacks.

Ground search: Northern Shrikes can also walk or hop along the ground searching for insects or small mammals.

Carrion eaters: Occasionally the shrike will even eat carrion while wintering, going after dead livestock or roadkill.

Shrikes often catch more food than they can eat. They cache them by impaling their prey on thorns or barb wire or putting them in the forks of branches in the trees. They also do this with some poisonous insects so they can wait for the toxins to break down before consuming them.

Since they don't have talons, thorns are also used to hold prey in place as they tear it apart and consume it.

With larger insects they often pull off the wings and beat the insect against their perch to soften it up before consuming it.

When catching bees or hornets the Northern shrike will carefully remove the stinger before eating them.



Shrike cache by Nichole Telford

Northern Shrikes nest in the far north, in the taiga or boreal forests. They tend to nest near open meadows, they especially like the border between the forest and the tundra where the trees are stunted. Wherever they nest, they tend to avoid areas that are too densely filled or completely open.

Males and females arrive in the breeding area at the same time and begin nesting almost immediately.

Males sing from preferred potential nest sites and may even place nesting materials at those sites, but it is the female that ultimately decides on the nesting place. The nest is typically made of twigs with softer material in the inside like moss, animal hair, or feathers and is most likely built by both of the sexes.

Food is part of the courtship ritual for these birds. This is important because until the chicks hatch the male is responsible for bringing the female her food. After the young hatch he continues to bring food, along with her, to the young. During courtship if the male does not bring enough food or does not bring it often enough, she will scold him or make aggressive displays.

The Northern Shrike's nest is a large deep cup, it is so deep that when the female is sitting in the nest only the tip of her tail is visible.

They typically lay four to seven eggs, though as many as nine have been found in nests in Alaska. The greenish-grayish speckled eggs incubate for a little over two weeks before hatching.

The shrikes defend the area around the nest for up to seven acres, their hunting territory can be much larger however, up to three hundred and sixty acres.

When looking for the Northern Shrike in Utah search in the Fall and Winter months between October and March (maybe as late as April). We tend to find them in juniper and sagebrush areas especially where there is a decent amount of open ground between the bushes for them to hunt. We have seen them most often on Antelope Island, but have seen them on Swede Lane, at Farmington Bay, and on the drive down to Delta for the Snow Goose festival in February.

Sources:

All About Birds

https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Northern_Shrike/overview

Badgerland Birding

<https://youtu.be/t5l7GPs4ePE?si=2zX9aR5KpNN2Hafz>

Audubon

<https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/northern-shrike>

Edmond News

<https://myedmondsnews.com/2018/10/bird-lore-northern-shrike/#:~:text=Collective%20nouns%20for%20a%20group,a%20species%20of%20low%20concern.>

American Bird Conservatory

<https://abcbirds.org/blog21/shrikes/#:~:text=Do%20shrikes%20kill%20birds?,birds%20to%20lure%20them%20in.>

FIELD TRIP REPORT

PROVO RIVER DELTA, SKIPPER BAY, PROVO RIVER PARKWAY

Article by KC Childs, Photos by Clarissa Chipman

Wednesday March 12, 2025

A group of 14 birders went out on a nice morning walk to see what birds we could scare up at the Provo River Delta, Skipper Bay, and the Provo River Parkway. As soon as we began, we were treated to the local celebrity, the **Long-tailed Duck**. It might be the most reported bird I've ever seen in Utah County.



As we continued walking along, we were treated to a good variety of ducks. We had **Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Northern Shoveler, Cinnamon Teal, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, and Ruddy Duck**. We saw some **American White Pelicans**, and **Double Crested Cormorants** that were starting to filter in. It appeared that the resident **Bald Eagle** was getting ready to nest for another year.

After the delta, we walked down the Skipper Bay Trail and were greeted with some new birds, including a great variety of gulls. We had **California Gull, Ring-billed Gull, American Herring Gull, and Lesser Black-backed Gull**. We had more waterfowl, songbirds like a **Song Sparrow** and **Black-capped Chickadee**. We also saw some woodpeckers like **Downy Woodpecker** and **Northern Flicker**.

We finished by looping back on the Provo River Parkway Trail. We were able to add some more birds, including a group of **Sandhill Cranes** flying over. We were able to pick up lots of new little birds while walking back including **White-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Lesser Goldfinch, American Goldfinch, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Cedar Waxwings**. We also were treated to a diving **Pied-billed Grebe** on the river.

We finished off the day with a great look at a pair of **Wood Ducks**. They are just so over the top, that you can't help but have a big smile and be happy when seeing them. We ended up with over 40 species, which is always a great walk in early March!



I appreciate everyone that was able to make it out on a weekday to do the bird walk. The company was excellent, and all the sets of eyes were a lot of help in finding birds. I hopefully will see lots of you out on one of our April field trips.



FIELD TRIP REPORT

EMMA PARK ROAD, SCOFIELD, DIAMOND FORK CANYON

Article by KC Childs

Saturday March 22, 2025

On March 22nd, a good size group of 18 birders headed up to Emma Park Road near Scofield to try and see some Greater Sage Grouse. We had luckily dodged most of the storm, and were greeted with a beautiful, serene winter scene as we pulled onto Emma Park Road. We drove to the Lek sight, but there were no birds. We decided to keep heading down the road and Suzi spotted 5 male **Greater Sage Grouse** out in a field. They weren't strutting, but we were all excited to see them. We decided to turn back around to head to Scofield. As we were driving out on Emma Park Road, we came across 6 more male Greater Sage Grouse, and these birds were in Utah County. They aren't always the easiest bird to find in Utah County. A couple even strutted for a minute. Everyone was able to get looks and were pleased to see more.



Greater Sage Grouse, photo by Holden Green

Next, we headed over to the town of Scofield and along the ride we got beautiful looks at an adult **Golden Eagle**. We also saw some other birds like **American Robins** and **Black-billed Magpie**. When we got to the town of Scofield, we saw some small birds around town that were fun to get views of like **Mountain Bluebirds**, **Pine Siskin**, and **Red-breasted Nuthatch**.



Golden Eagle, Holden Green



Mountain Bluebird, Suzi Holt



Fox Sparrow, Holden Green



Lewis's Woodpecker, Holden Green

We drove over to where the river dumps into the Reservoir and had a large assortment of waterfowl hanging in the only open water on the reservoir. We had **Canada Goose, Gadwall, Mallard, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Common Goldeneye,** and **Common Merganser**. There were also other water loving birds like **Great Blue Heron, Pied-billed Grebe,** and **American Coot**. There was also a **Bald Eagle** hanging close by looking for a meal.

We ended the day going up to Diamond Fork Canyon. We stopped at the small pond when we pulled in and had some ducks, which was fun. We had **Bufflehead, Cinnamon Teal,** and **Mallard**. As we drove up the canyon we had some Mountain Bluebird, **Western Meadowlark,** and a beautiful soaring Golden Eagle. We stopped and admired 4 **Lewis' Woodpeckers**, along with a **Northern Flicker**. Next, we walked around the Diamond Campground and got a look at a first of year for everyone **Fox Sparrow**. What a beautiful sparrow! We also saw some other birds like **Spotted Towhees,** and **Black-capped Chickadees**. We finished off the day at Red Ledges Picnic Area hoping for a Canyon Wren, but unfortunately, none were to be found, but we did hear, and some saw an **American Dipper**.

It was another wonderful trip, and I truly appreciate everyone who shows up and makes them so much fun. I hope that some of you are able to join us on one of our April field trips.



Photo by Suzi Holt



ART GALLERY



Jim Strong – Photography



Black-capped Chickadee, Jim's backyard, Lehi



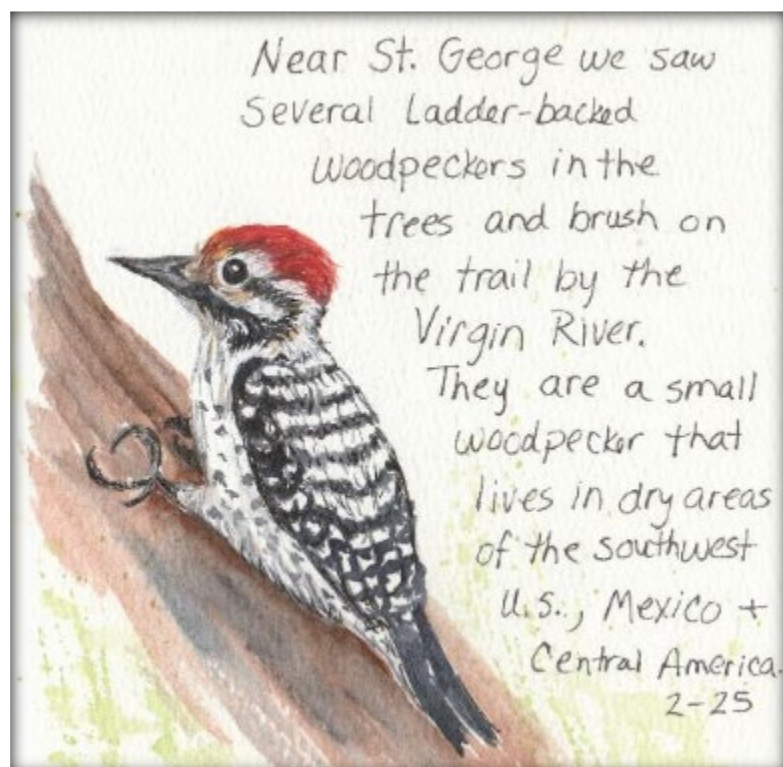
Hooded Merganser, Lehi City Pond



Northern Cardinal, Arizona Birding Convention



Tammy Northrup – Watercolor





Kayla Echols – Colored Pencil Sketches



Back Yard Birds

Holly Minor – Erda: The Meadowlarks have begun singing me awake every morning.

Lynn Garner – Provo: Our most frequent avian visitors this past month have been House Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos and Wild Turkeys!

