



# Utah County Birders Newsletter

February 2026

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## FEBRUARY MEETING

**Thursday, Feb. 12, Bean Museum, 7:00 pm**

The UCB meeting for Feb will be:

Thursday, Feb 12, 7pm on Zoom and in person at the Bean Museum in Provo

“Tips and Tricks for Making Your Yard More Bird Friendly and Water Wise” presented by our guest speaker Connie Misket. Connie is a certified Master Gardener, an avid birder and a gifted photographer. She volunteers with several organizations including Sageland Collaborative (Migratory shorebird surveys and Pollinator Pursuit, and was Intermountain West Shorebird Survey Volunteer of the Year in 2023), Xerces Society (Bumblebee Atlas), Tracy Aviary Conservation (Breeding Bird Surveys and Snowy Plover Monitoring Program), UDWR (Shorebird Surveys), as a trip leader for the GSL Audubon Society Bird walks, and a team lead for multiple Christmas Bird Count circles. This is going to be a great presentation so hope to see you all there!

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# Utah County Birders

## 2026 FIELD TRIP INFORMATION\*\*\*

EACH YEAR, **UTAH COUNTY BIRDERS** ORGANIZES AND RUN **FREE FIELD TRIPS** TO ALL WHO ARE INTERESTED. THIS YEAR, THE FIELD TRIPS WILL HELP BIRDERS COMPLETE THE **2026 UTAH COUNTY BIRDERS CHALLENGE** WITH A GOAL OF GETTING 26 SPECIES IN ALL THE COUNTIES THROUGHOUT THE STATE THAT START WITH THE LETTERS "UCBIRDERS".

A **BIG THANK YOU TO SUZI HOLT** FOR ORGANIZING, PLANNING, AND LEADING OUT ON THESE FIELD TRIPS!

JOIN US TO SEE BIRDS, MEET NEW FRIENDS, AND GET OUT TO ENJOY NATURE!

BRING PLENTY OF WATER, SNACKS, AND GOOD WALKING/HIKING SHOES.

WE ENCOURAGE CARPOOLING AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE!

WE HOPE SEE YOU OUT THERE!

\*\*\*DATES AND LOCATIONS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE DUE TO WEATHER OR OTHER EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES.\*\*\*  
STAY UP TO DATE BY CHECKING OUR FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM PAGES AS WE GET CLOSER TO EACH FIELD TRIP DATE.

**1 FEB 7**  
**SATURDAY**  
7:30 AM

### DAVIS & WEBER COUNTIES

**CARPOOL:** MEET AT PIONEER CROSSING PARKING PARK & RIDE OFF A.F. MAIN STREET EXIT

WE WILL LEAVE THE PARK AND RIDE AT 7:30 AM AND HEAD TO **FARMINGTON BAY** FOR DAVIS COUNTY, THEN GO TO **OGDEN NATURE PARK AND HAROLD CRANE WMA** FOR WEBER COUNTY.

**2 MAR 7**  
**SATURDAY**  
6:30 AM

### BEAVER & IRON COUNTIES

**CARPOOL:** MEET AT PAYSON WALMART PARKING LOT OFF THE 800 S EXIT - 248

WE WILL LEAVE THE PAYSON WALMART AT 6:30 AM AND HEAD TO **MINERSVILLE RESERVOIR** AND SURROUNDING AREA FOR BEAVER COUNTY THEN HEAD TO **PAROWAN GAP AND BULLDOG POND, QUICHAPA LAKE, CEDAR HILL POND AND CEDAR CANYON LOWER TRAIL.**

**3 APR 18**  
**SATURDAY**  
5:30 AM

### CARBON & EMERY COUNTIES

**CARPOOL:** MEET AT THE CHEVRON ON POWERHOUSE ROAD IN SPANISH FORK

WE WILL LEAVE THE CHEVRON ON POWERHOUSE ROAD IN SF AT 5:30 AM. WE WILL HEAD TO **EMMA PARK ROAD** FOR GREATER SAGE GROUSE THEN HEAD TO **SCOFIELD** FOR CARBON COUNTY. THEN WE WILL GO TO **HUNTSVILLE RESERVOIR AND DESERT LAKE** FOR EMERY COUNTY.

**4 MAY 23**  
**SATURDAY**  
6:00 AM

### BOX ELDER, CACHE, & RICH COUNTIES

**CARPOOL:** MEET AT PIONEER CROSSING PARKING PARK & RIDE OFF A.F. MAIN STREET EXIT

WE WILL LEAVE THE PARK AND RIDE AT 6:00 AM. WE WILL BEGIN AT **WILLARD BAY SP** AND THEN DO THE SURROUNDING AREA FOR BOX ELDER COUNTY. THEN GO TO **CUTLER MARSH AND TONY GROVE** FOR CACHE COUNTY. THEN HEAD UP TO **BEAR LAKE** AND SURROUNDING AREAS TO DO RICH COUNTY.

**5 JUN 5**  
**FRIDAY**  
6:00 AM

### UTAH COUNTY

**CARPOOL:** LOCATION TBA - CHECK FACEBOOK AND/OR INSTAGRAM FOR DETAILS

WE WILL BE COMPLETING A LOCAL **"BIG DAY"** FIELD TRIP **THROUGHOUT UTAH COUNTY.**

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

February is the month of love, and love comes in so many forms. The love so many of us as birders share is the love of birds. I don't think that we would get an argument from any one of us about how much we love these winged wonders. I mean, if showing up at a landfill, sewage plant or a back alley in some forgotten part of the city isn't love, then I don't think I know what love is. However, this past month really got me to think about how much I really love and care for the birding community that we have here locally. I was talking with a local birder named Eli Phillip while birding in December, and he asked me if I ever start the year off by doing a big day at the start of January. I told him I do some form of that most years, as is a birding tradition for many. He then wondered if you could find 100 species of birds in Utah County in one day in January? I had to admit that I didn't know the answer to that. As far as I knew it wasn't anything I'd ever heard of being done. I thought about that and started talking to some local birders, asking if they thought it could be done? Some thought it was possible, while others didn't, but I decided with the new year coming, I might as well give it a try and see how many species I could find with the help of some fellow birders. I happened to be heading out on the Payson Christmas Bird Count with Natalie Tanner and Clarissa Chipman, so figured I'd toss it to them and see if they had any interest in joining me on this expedition. Luckily for me they were both down to give up a day and see how many species we could find. I guess this is the part as a birder speaking to fellow birders that I could give you a run-down of the day. I could tell you about our first bird all the way to the final bird of the day we saw; I could bring up the moment we almost died, to the moment we watched a Long-eared owl flying around at dusk. I think that could be fun to do, but that wasn't the most memorable part of the experience. As the day progressed, and we had so much fun getting to enjoy the winged wonders we all love, the more I realized that part of the magic is in the community of birders that we have here. I just am so grateful that we have such a fun group of birders that are down to go spend a day in January trying to track down a Rock Pigeon and European Starling. As I have been birding now for 27 years and have made so many irreplaceable friendships through the Utah County Birders, I am always amazed how many times in that 27 years I have heard the same story over and over about a local birder, me included, who moves elsewhere, and returns to say what a truly incredible group we have here in Utah County and how lucky we are to have it. We have such an inclusive group of birders that truly want to help however they can, and spend time with each other on the days at the landfill, to the days in some of the most awe-inspiring places on this planet. As much as I love the birds, I have to say I love the birders here even more. I always look forward to every single Utah County Birders Field Trip that Suzi leads. With it being a challenge year, it's a great time to be able to get out there on some of the field trips, show up to a meeting, or just connect with someone in the Facebook group and be able to see some amazing birds, and also make a lifelong friend. Sometimes it's about being able to see an incredible bird you never thought you'd get the chance to do, and sometimes it's just about the chance to be with some amazing people and some mundane birds. And in case you were wondering, we ended up seeing 85 species in January in a day. I guess we'll just have to try again next year to see if we can find 100 species in a day in January.

By KC Childs

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## BIRD OF THE MONTH

Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle  
Chilean Blue Eagle  
*Geranoaetus melanoleucus*

Text and photos by Steve Van Winkle

The Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle: Is it a buzzard (hawk) or is it an eagle? It is often placed, archaically, with the genus *Buteo*. Why eagle? It is one of, if not the largest of the buzzards in South America with a range that extends from northern Venezuela to the very tip of Tierra del Fuego adjacent to the west coast of South America. And from Bolivia, its range extends east to the Atlantic, throughout southern Brazil and the entirety of Argentina.

It is considered eagle-like because of its bulky and powerful looking build that includes a long and broad wing span. However, its flight (soaring on thermals) behavior is most characteristic of buzzards and hawks, if one prefers the American inclination for Buteos.

My first and only encounter with this formidable-looking bird of prey was below the rugged cliffs that bordered Laguna Blanca and the grassland steppe at Morro Chico, Primavera, Chile. Our excellent guide spotted it feeding on a small passerine, most likely the austral negrito (*Lessonia rufa*), a very common inhabitant of this biome. After swinging a U-turn on the seemingly deserted highway, we were able to exit the van to watch and photograph this stunning buzzard feeding on its prey. The primary food sources of this species are European rabbits, a variety of rodents and birds that occasionally include the Chilean tinamou. The European rabbit is an unwanted alien species that may cause significant crop loss and the Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle and other regional carnivores are a benefit to the estancia owners. But, despite this positive attribute the buzzard is also hunted by the ranchers, because it has been recorded to have “talonized” young newborn lambs.

The adult's shortish tail retrices upper coverts are thinly barred black amidst a silvery background that is also conspicuous on the wing coverts, secondaries and proximal primary feathers. The breast and belly are a handsome ash-grey-and-white, while the uppermost breast is dark brown and bordered by a white throat. The undersides of the wings' primary coverts are dark while the secondaries and primaries have a silvery hue.

Habitats of the Eagle-Buzzard in Chile include mountainous or hilly terrain of sparsely vegetated shrubland and the *Nothofagus*, beech forests. A common sight in suitable topography is observing the bird of prey soaring on thermals and vertical drafts. Anthropomorphically speaking, observers describe this sight as being of a quite playful nature.

The pair nests in high areas, relative to the environment. Tree height and plant form are dictated by the constant and often ferocious winds that are one of the more dominant environmental elements. They will also find cliff projections and hollows suitable for nesting, where 1 to 3 eggs make up the clutch; both male and female will tend to the incubation and care of the young. Aggressive defense of their fledglings has been recorded by observers.



The Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle is categorized as a species of Least Concern in Brazil, but in northern Chile its populations may be in decline due to either poisoning or shooting by ranchers and crop growers. Ironically, as previously noted, this species assists with the control of European rabbit populations that are detrimental to the growers and ranchers.

Sources: R.M. Brower and R.L. Thorson (2020), Birds of the World: Wikipedia.org with numerous contributing references



## FIELD TRIPS

The Payson Bird Count was the January field trip and was covered in last month's newsletter.

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## BACKYARD BIRDS

Yvonne Carter, Highland: I had a Cooper's Hawk fly into the backyard yesterday morning. Surprised by that since one doesn't show up until May or so.

Steve Van Winkle, Oquirrh Lake: A Redhead pair at Oquirrh Lake.

