



Utah County Birders Newsletter

January 2026

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JANUARY MEETING

Thursday January 8, Bean Museum, 7:00 pm

Beginner Birder Night!

For all you beginner birders out there... this meeting is for YOU (of course all you seasoned UCB members we'd love to have you there too). We'll have a short presentation on tips and tricks for being a beginner birder and then you'll have a chance to pick the brains of some of our more seasoned folks about any birding topics you'd like (we can take a stab at IDing pics, so if you have some you'd like help with, here's your chance!)

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

This month's field trip was the Payson Christmas Bird Count. Thanks to all those who participated!

2026 Utah County Birder's Challenge: A more detailed description will be included in the Feb. Newsletter, but a brief summary is available on our Instagram page.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By KC Childs

Welcome to 2026! I am so excited to be able to take over as the president of the Utah County Birders, and realize that I have big shoes to fill. I am so grateful for the time that Yvonne devoted to this organization in the past year. I know I speak for everyone when I say how truly grateful we are for her time and service. I am also so inspired by all those who have kept this club running for over 50 years now. In my 25 years of being part of this club, we truly have had so many wonderful people that taught me so incredibly much, and I hope that I can even pay forward a small amount of what has been given me.

I thought I would do a quick introduction for those who do not know me. My name is KC Childs and I am originally from here in Utah and have spent the past 27 years of my life transfixed by this incredible hobby. My initial spark bird was a Black-billed Magpie. I was maybe 7 or 8 when I was running over to a friend's house and as I was getting to his house, I noticed the most incredibly exotic bird I had ever seen in my life and figured that someone's pet bird had to have escaped. I ran home and grabbed my mom to tell her someone's bird had escaped and it needed help. She hurried back to my friend's house with me, where the magpie was still around. I pointed to it and she giggled, and said... "that isn't exotic, it nests in our backyard! It's a magpie!" I was absolutely shocked that a bird so incredible could possibly live in my yard. From that moment on I started to always notice the birds around me, but it wasn't until high school when I had to find 75 birds in a semester that the bug really bit me, and I haven't looked back since that day I got that assignment. I hope that as time goes on I can relate different aspects of my life and how birds have played a very important role in so many of those milestones.

With a quick introduction out of the way, it's absolutely crazy that it is 2026, and a new year that falls on an even year means that the Utah County Birders have a new challenge. The challenge for this year can be found elsewhere in this newsletter and it is something I look forward to doing every time I have the chance to participate. We have a wonderful challenge that will hopefully give you the chance to see parts of our beautiful state and maybe to try birding an area you've never been to before. Our amazing field trip coordinator Suzi Holt has a lot of wonderful field trips planned all year, and we can't thank her enough for all the hard work she puts into these trips! She truly is the best! I really hope that everyone can come and experience some of these fun trips and see some amazing birds, and even make some friendships that will last a lifetime! I have been so blessed by the friendships I've made through this club! They truly are the best kind of people! I look forward to the coming year and hopefully getting to meet more birders, either at the meetings, our potluck, our field trips, or just maybe chasing after a rare bird at a landfill, waste treatment plant, or a nice industrial toxic dump. Those places seem to get the best birds! Cheers to a very exciting 2026!

BIRD OF THE MONTH

Bewick's Wren *Thryomanes bewickii* By Keeli Marvel



Photo by Paul Higgins

Named after John James Audubon's friend Thomas Bewick, Bewick's Wrens are extremely vocal, high-energy wrens with bold white eyebrows and barred tails they often hold at a jaunty angle. I usually find them bopping about in dry brushy/shrubby areas looking for their insect prey. They are common year-round residents across most of the southwest, west coast, and the Pacific northwest. Historically they were widespread in the east as well, but it is believed that competition with House Wrens drove them out of much of their historic eastern range.

Bewick's Wrens can be extremely challenging to identify by sound alone because of the many different noises they make. More than once, I've said to other birders "if I hear something that I can't identify (and we're in the right habitat) it's probably a Bewick's Wren". As All About Birds puts it... "These master vocalists belt out a string of short whistles, warbles, burrs, and trills to attract mates and defend their territory, or scold visitors with their raspy calls." You'll usually know when one is near because you will hear them scolding you first.

Their song is reminiscent of a Song Sparrow but usually coming from the wrong type of habitat for Song Sparrows. They're very curious and seem a little sassy or impish to me. If you play a call or make phising noises they will readily come investigate, and when they realize it's not another wren invading their territory, they will scold you soundly.



Range map courtesy of Cornell University's All About Birds

One of the cool facts I learned as I was researching Bewick's Wrens is that they form monogamous pairs, meaning the males and females pair up and faithfully stick together during the breeding process. When young Bewick's Wren males are still with their parents, they learn to sing from their fathers and from neighboring adult males, but their songs differ from their fathers (which probably helps prevent inbreeding). The song young males develop when they are 1-2 months old will be the one they use for life.

FIELD TRIP REPORT

Here's the summary of the Provo CBC:

Thanks to the unseasonably warm weather we had tons of open water and we finished the Provo CBC with 113 species! While we didn't beat our all-time record, this is one of the second highest counts we've ever had in the 50+ years of conducting the Provo CBC. Thank you again for all of the folks that joined us, we couldn't do the counts without you!

Some highlights - the following species were only found by a single group during the count, so if your group found these birds, give yourself a pat on the back!

Cackling Goose
Eurasian Wigeon
Wood Duck
Hooded Merganser
White-winged Dove
Sora
American Avocet
Sandpiper sp. (currently under review)
Eared Grebe
Snowy Egret
White-faced Ibis
Double-crested Cormorant
Neotropic Cormorant
Western Screech-Owl
Northern Pygmy-Owl
Saw-whet Owl
Loggerhead Shrike
Clark's Nutcracker
Juniper Titmouse
Bushtit
Horned Lark
Barn Swallow
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Northern Mockingbird
Cassin's Finch
Pine Siskin
Yellow-headed Blackbird

BACKYARD BIRDS

Yvonne Carter, Highland: This is a 'SAD' sighting. I found a dead Bohemian Waxwing on my front porch. It probably hit the large glass above the door. Darn!

Steve Van Winkle, Wakara Ponds: Sharp-shinned Hawk.

