



Utah County Birders Newsletter

March 2026

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MARCH MEETING

Thursday, March 12. Bean Museum

Thursday, March 12, 7pm at the Bean Museum downstairs auditorium (different room than our usual meeting location).

This meeting will be in person only, no zoom.

UCB MOVIE NIGHT! Join us and watch The Big Year. Play along with our movie bingo cards and win prizes! Hope to see you all there!

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

This month's field trip is scheduled to be to Iron County on Saturday, March 7. To carpool, meet at Payson Walmart parking lot off the 800 South exit (Exit 248). The group will leave at 6:30 a.m. with plans to visit Minersville Reservoir, Parowan Gap, Bulldog Pond, Quichapa Lake, Cedar Hill Pond, and Cedar Canyon Lower Trail.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By KC Childs

In my years of birding, I always have found that I get antsy around the end of February waiting for spring migration. It seems that as I go to all my favorite birding areas in the winter, I see the same birds over and over and start to look forward to the movement of birds. Many new birders probably think of April or May as the time for bird migration around Utah County, but the truth is migration has already begun, and it's the perfect time of year to get out and start noticing the bird migration as it takes place. In March we can welcome the return and movement of waterfowl to begin with. It's the time of year we see Ross and Snow Geese moving through. We also start to see the return locally of Cinnamon Teal, and can see huge numbers of ducks moving through and using Utah Lake and surrounding ponds. The sparrows start to move slowly during March; some are arriving while others are leaving. Also, we start to see shorebirds trickle in slowly, and other water birds like American White Pelican and Grebes. The large birds are also on the move. The different kinds of hawks will have begun their shuffle. We start to see Rough-legged Hawks leave and Swainson's Hawks begin to trickle in. Turkey Vultures and Osprey will be migrating through or stopping to stay put for the summer. We also will start to see swallows move through. It's the time of year you just don't know exactly what will show up, and the build up to peak spring migration is very exciting. You can feel the energy shift from winter to spring. There are so many great areas to get out and witness migration. Whether it's the Provo River Delta, River Lane, or Utah Lake North Shore, you are sure to see all kinds of new and exciting birds you haven't gotten to see in months, and maybe you'll just stumble on something you've never gotten to see locally. I mean I like to remind myself how lucky we are to watch the miracle of bird migration on such a large scale, especially when there are parts of the world where the bulk of birds are stationary and not much changes during the change of seasons! I wish everyone happy birding and an abundant migration!

BIRD OF THE MONTH

Northern Saw-whet Owl

Aegolius acadicus

Text by KC Childs

Photos by Jeff Cooper

The Northern Saw-whet Owl is one of our more common owls in wooded habitats; it is also one of the owls that have a lot of mystery built around them. It has only been in the past 30 years that a better picture of these owls' habits, diet, range, migration patterns, and mating habits have started to become better understood. They are readily recognized among avid birders because of their large heads with round facial discs on a small owl. Other important identification marks include their yellow eyes, brown coloration on back and wings, brownish streaking against a white breast, and rounded wings. As is the case with owl species, the

female is 25 percent larger than the male. The males weigh similar to an American Robin. Also, as you travel north in latitude they gain size, which is common for many species of birds and mammals. They range in habitat locally and across North America. They can be found in conifer and deciduous forests, with higher densities in areas near water. Northern Saw-whet Owls are a migratory owl, with a large number of owls leaving their northern breeding grounds for places south. Migration happens from September to November with numbers peaking in October. During this time it is possible to find Northern Saw-whet owls in a wide range of habitats, including in our own backyards if we are lucky. During the winter they can be found in any of our local canyons or mountain areas, however they prefer mid to lower elevations, especially in winter. During the breeding season you can find them locally in mid-range elevations in our mountains. They need cavities or nest boxes to breed, so they will be found in places that provide nesting areas. They often use Northern Flicker holes, so you can find them in Aspen, Fir, Spruce, and even Ponderosa Pine forests in Utah. The best time to hear them actively sing happens to be this very month, March. This is the time of the year that they will start incubating eggs. The best time to hear them singing is around 2 hours after sunset. A great local place to hear them singing this time of year is the area around Aspen Grove on the Alpine Loop. The owls will spend a lot of time hunting from a half hour after sunset to a half hour before sunrise. They mostly hunt mice and voles, but they occasionally will take small birds like kinglets and chickadees, and they also are known to eat insects like grasshoppers. They are one of most common owls in Utah, but one that you don't get to see often. This is the time of the year to head up to the canyons in the evenings and listen for their fast-paced whistle and see if you can't get lucky with a flashlight and get a look at an owl many consider the cutest of our North American owls.

Source: Birds of the World by Cornell



Northern Saw-whet Owl, immature
Photo by Jeff Cooper



Northern Saw-whet Owl, adult
Photo by Jeff Cooper

FIELD TRIPS

Suzi Holt posted on Facebook the following report about February's field trip to Davis and Weber counties:

Eccles Wildlife Education Center at Farmington Bay and Ogden Bay WMA

We started about 8:30 am at the Wildlife Education center. In the first ponds on the way in we had Canada Geese, Mallard, Northern Shoveler, Green-winged and Cinnamon Teal, American Wigeon, Pied-billed Grebe and American Coot. In the parking lot we added Song and White-crowned Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird and Marsh Wren. We also saw Northern Harrier, Red-tailed, Rough-legged Hawk and Common Raven. We began the nature trail and could see a distant Bald Eagle, a kiting American Kestrel and an obliging Spotted Towhee. We also added European Starling. On the Boardwalk we heard and some saw a Virginia Rail! We also saw Gadwall. Also, a few American Crows flew over. We also had a Northern Flicker flyover. As we left the gates we added Brewer's Blackbirds! Everyone had completed their 26 species for Davis County, finishing letter D!! From there we drew a wildcard and headed to Weber County. First stop was Ogden Bay WMA.

We were greeted by a Prairie Falcon and a Sharp-shinned Hawk. We also had a couple of Bald Eagles in the tree with lots of European Starlings. We also saw California Quail, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Dark-eyed Junco and a Great-horned Owl!! We saw Northern Harriers off in the distance. As we walked the road down to the south parking lot, we added Song Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Sandhill Cranes, American Robin, American Kestrel and a Ring-necked Pheasant. Down by the river and ponds we added Belted Kingfisher, Marsh Wren and a Ring-billed Gull. In the ponds we also saw American Coot, Pied-billed Grebe, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Ring-necked Duck and Great Blue Heron. On the way back we saw another Prairie Falcon and a Cooper's Hawk.

I think most had over 30 species! We killed it!! Weber is done! Wildcard for the extra letter R!! We decided to stop by Glendale Golf Course and check out the Long-tailed Duck Valentine's Day couple; they were joined by Barrows and Common Goldeneye, Ring-necked Duck, American Coot and Canada Goose. What a great day! The weather was absolutely beautiful and we had such a great turn out! Thanks to KC for helping out!!

BACKYARD BIRDS

Dan Simmons, Orem: Some of the most conspicuous birds in our neighborhood near the Orem Cemetery over the past year have been a flock of wild turkeys. They are frequently in the cemetery itself, where I have sometimes seen people taking photos of them. I quite enjoy them, but some of my neighbors have expressed annoyance at having them in or near their yards. Last Spring they seemed to be roosting close to some of the neighbors and the noise they made in the evening was easily heard 2-3 blocks away.

McKade Pay, Provo: I saw this Belted Kingfisher in my backyard in Provo the other day.



KC Childs, Orem: My backyard bird of the month is an **American Kestrel**. I haven't been perfect about logging my backyard birds, but this made my 70th bird in this yard at this house.

Lynn Garner, Provo: Here are a couple of pictures of unusual birds in Provo, the Eurasian Wigeon and the Long-tailed duck.

