



# Utah County Birders Newsletter

May 2024

## CONTENTS:

- [Monthly Meeting and Announcements](#)
  - [Upcoming Field Trips](#)
  - [President's Message](#)
  - [Bird of the Month](#)
  - [Field Trip Reports](#)
  - [Backyard Birds](#)
- 

## MAY MEETING

**Thursday May 9<sup>th</sup> , 7pm at Bean Museum and on Zoom**

Fighting bird-window collisions through partnerships and community science. Cooper Farr, Conservation Director for the Tracy Aviary and Jeanne LeBer from the Great Salt Lake Audubon will present on an ongoing citizen science project to identify downtown SLC bird window collision hotspots and help bring awareness to the issue and potential solutions.

LINK TO APRIL ZOOM MEETING: [https://byu.zoom.us/rec/share/z1qkZ7b6mUhjZPH0UDpYJeX1K4e-imDorZd8ARq3v8DbDugsL8PIK9b7miPrhTkB.fojfnTiK3XA\\_ihQV?startTime=1713488553000](https://byu.zoom.us/rec/share/z1qkZ7b6mUhjZPH0UDpYJeX1K4e-imDorZd8ARq3v8DbDugsL8PIK9b7miPrhTkB.fojfnTiK3XA_ihQV?startTime=1713488553000)

Passcode: \$k9CRti3

LINK TO 2024 Challenge: <http://utahbirds.org/ucb/Newsletters/2023/2024Challenge.pdf>

LINK to 2024 Planned Field Trips: <http://utahbirds.org/ucb/FieldTrips/2024FieldTrips.pdf>

---

## UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

### Saturday May 11<sup>th</sup> Provo River Delta

FIELD TRIP IS FULL, If you signed up with Keeli Marvel for this field trip, meet at 7:30 am just inside the gate at the Provo River Delta Restoration area off of Boat Harbor Drive. There is a little office trailer there and a parking area. We will bird the area that is still closed to the public.

We will try to arrange another field trip this summer, and once it is open to the public this fall we will do another trip and/or the Big Sit in October.

### Saturday May 25<sup>th</sup> Burraston Ponds

Meet at 8:00 am at the Payson Walmart to the west of QuickQuack car wash. We will carpool to Burraston Ponds in Juab County. This is mostly a driving route, so carpooling is preferred.

**Notice:** The June trip is an overnight trip to Dagget County, June 7-8. Please email [machelle13johnson@yahoo.com](mailto:machelle13johnson@yahoo.com) if you are planning to go, we would like to know in advance how many will be going.

---

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

President's Message:

I came upon a very interesting article from Cornell Lab under ALL ABOUT BIRDS. It has some interesting points to consider for improving our personal birding experiences. We all have our favorite hot spots to bird, special techniques to find the birds, and approaches. Cornell Lab had a very interesting article to encourage us to expand our birding experience. You might consider the following:

- 1--Systemically scan open areas and edges. First check the perches around perimeters. Next scan where the open spaces meet dense habitat. Then check the open area in an "S" pattern, moving left to right and then right to left and that just might come alive.
- 2--'Eke' birds out of the Sky. Look high in the sky. You might be surprised what's in a large kettle of birds high up there.
- 3—Take a seat. It's easy to walk right past small birds who scurry into the bushes. The birds see us as huge giants. Slow down and sit awhile and do some ground level birding. The 'little guys' just might come out of the bushes.
- 4--Practice tracking birds in flight with common birds. Birds are constantly on the move, flitting and zipping in and out of view. Fine tune following birds in flight by practicing on small common birds.
- 5--Scan Ebird bar charts to see who might be in the neighborhood. Find the weekly bar charts especially during migration. Find Ebird Explore and enter the county and select bar charts and notice the peaks.
- 6--Target the birds you need, focusing your efforts on the species you are missing with Ebird Targets. Take a close look at your life list .
- 7—Let Merlin listen for you. It is a wonderful app. It helps detect those high pitched calls.
- 8--Always be birding by expanding your definition of birding. Notice the birds while going places. Keep a spare pair of binoculars in your car. Be tuned to the movement and sounds of birds and potential perches. There are pockets of bird habitat everywhere you go.

Happy birding!  
Yvonne

---

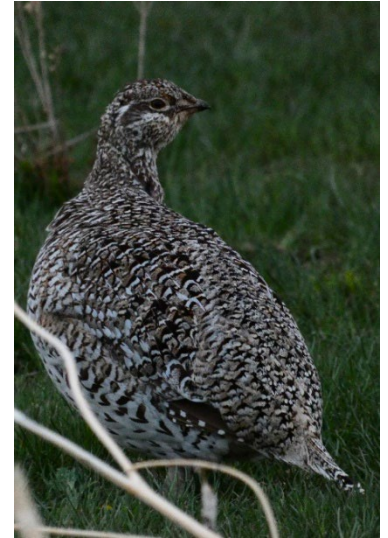
## BIRD OF THE MONTH

Sharp-tailed Grouse  
*Tympanuchus phasianellus*  
Article and photos by Nichole Telford

The Sharp-Tailed Grouse is a round, chicken sized bird with brown, speckled plumage. As the name suggests, its tail comes to a point. The males and females look very similar, but the males have more contrast in their markings, as well as yellow eyebrows and a dark patch of feathers on their neck that hides violet skin patches. These skin patches are for the courtship display that happens at the lek, similar to the skin patches that Greater Sage Grouse exhibit during their own displays.

The display itself is a delight to see. The grouse lifts its tail, lowers its head, spreads its wings and drums its feet on the ground in a quick tippy-toe dance. They use this dance to both impress females and assert their dominance over the other males. Because of this, you can either witness a solo act of one male trying to impress a female, or you can witness a dance off between two males, one of which is likely going to run away in the end. Either way, it is an enjoyable sight.

After the grouse's energetic dance, the birds will suddenly stop and take a bit of a rest. They'll walk around for a few minutes, or they'll take a break, sitting on the ground, before suddenly they're at it again. Displaying, fighting or running can happen without warning. Then resting will occur again. Eventually, when the grouses are all done and tired out— meaning when the courtship and mating season is over— the females will choose a spot not that far from the lek to make a nest and lay their eggs.



The courtship displays on the lek start before the sunrise and continue for some time after, as long as they are not disturbed by birds of prey or noisy humans. This means that their displays can be witnessed and photographed during the “golden hour” when the lighting is really nice. This is why, despite them being less common than the Greater Sage Grouse, I have gotten better pictures of Sharp-tailed Grouse. They do not stand out as much as sage grouse do with their white bellies, but the drumming sounds and squeaky noises they make help you know they are still around.

Sources:

[https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Sharp-tailed\\_Grouse/id](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Sharp-tailed_Grouse/id)

<https://www.birdzilla.com/birds/sharp-tailed-grouse/>

[\[See past Bird of the Month articles\]](#)

---

## FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Ouray NWR, Pelican Lake WMA and Starvation Reservoir SP  
(Article by Suzi Holt, photos by Suzi, Amanda, Jessica Holt, Richard Glassford)



What a wonderful day. We started our long drive towards Ouray at about 7:05 am. 17 Birders in 5 cars!!

Around 10 am we began our search at Ouray NWR. On our way into the Visitor's center, we saw **Turkey Vultures, Western Meadowlark, a Red-winged Blackbird, Song Sparrow, House Finch** and a couple cooperative **Sage Thrashers** sharing a greasewood bush with a **Brewer's Sparrow**. Oh, and a fly-by of a **Mourning Dove**.

At the Visitors Center they had some feeders. We added **Say's Phoebe, White-crowned Sparrow, American Kestrel, Yellow-headed Blackbird, House Sparrow, American** and **Lesser Goldfinch**. A few saw some **Sandhill Cranes**. We also had a couple Buteos flying high up in the clouds. We met some Uintah County Birders, Joseph and Stephanie Runs Through and a friend.

After some butterfly netting with Tatum, we began the autoloop around Shepherds Bottom.

Our first stop yielded about 4 cabbage butterflies with an almost casualty from the vitamin pill bottle container. We saw **Savannah Sparrows, Killdeer, Northern Shovelers, Cinnamon Teal, Mallard, American Coot, Gadwall, American Pipit** and a **Brewer's Blackbird**. Rich spotted a huge raptor in a dead tree. It was a **Golden Eagle!**

We also saw a "pine pig" porcupine afar off resembling a fox. At the next bend our new friends had spotted a beautiful **Black-bellied Plover** in breeding plumage. A beautiful sight. In that pond we added **Greater** and **Lesser Yellowlegs, Marbled Godwits, Ring-billed Gulls, Canada Goose, American Avocet, American White Pelicans, White-faced Ibis, Great-blue Herons, Great and Snowy Egrets, Green-winged Teal** and a fly-by of a **Double-crested Cormorant**.

We also saw one wild horse!

We ended the loop along the beautiful Green River with another close pine pig, an **American Robin, Black-capped Chickadees** and a **Spotted Towhee**. Our total species count was 47!



*Sage Thrasher Rich Glassford*



*Song Sparrow*



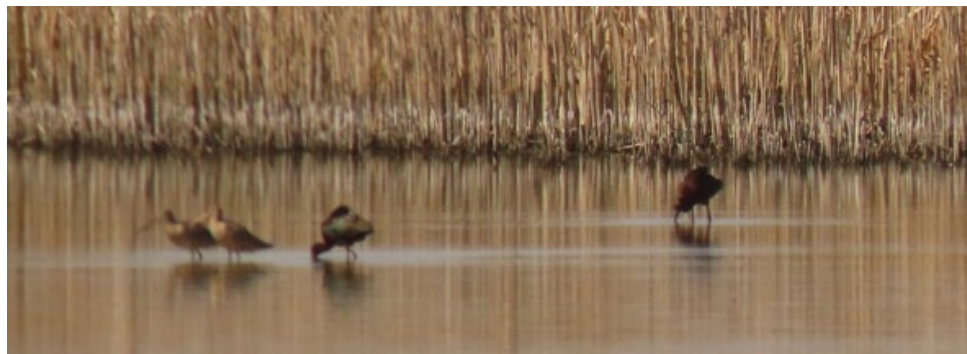
*Great Blue Heron Rich Glassford*



*Golden Eagle*



*Black-bellied Plover*



*Marbled Godwit, White-faced Ibis*



*Great Blue Heron*



*Great Egret*



*Porcupine*

Next stop Pelican Lake WMA. We saw lots of **Common Loons, Western, Clark's, Eared and Pied-billed Grebes, Mallard, American Coot, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Cinnamon Teal, Osprey, Great Blue Heron, Eurasian-collard Dove** and a **Northern Harrier**. We also saw a couple Prairie Dogs and a Yellow-bellied Marmot.

Along the dirt road we added **Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, Marsh Wren American Pipit, Killdeer, Red-tailed Hawks, Savannah Sparrow and Song Sparrow**. A couple silly **Canada Geese** had built their nest right on the shoulder of the road.



*Pelican Lake*



*Goose nest on the side of the road*

At the fisherman's access we added **Green-winged** and **Blue-winged Teal**, and **Sandhill Cranes**. On our way past the Canada Goose nest Amanda said "mom it's a, it's a, it's a" then I yelled Bittern!!! Yes an **American Bittern**! We all got to see it after it sneaked into the reeds and posed like a reed. So cool! A lifer for some. While there we also added a **Tree Swallow**! 27 species! Yippie another location done.

(There is a video of this bittern on the Facebook page on Suzi's report.)



*Well camouflaged American Bittern*

Last stop was Starvation Reservoir SP. It was rough! The heat waves were terrible! We managed 16 at the main marina. First off were **Ospreys** on the nesting platforms. A kettle of **Turkey Vultures**, a couple **European Starlings**, **Common Loons**, **Western Grebes**, a raft of **Eared Grebes**, unidentified long distance gulls, **Canada Goose**, **House Finch**, **American Robin** and a flock of **Pinyon Jays**!!

We also saw **Killdeer**, **Yellow-rumped Warbler**, **Mountain Bluebird**, **Black-capped Chickadee** and a group of **Marbled Godwits**.

We then headed to another campground and added a group of **Redheads**.

At Rabbit Gulch Campground at the west end of the lake we did a little rock scrambling, lizard catching and rockhounding haha! We also added a **Loggerhead Shrike**, **Woodhouse's Scrub Jay**, **American Coot**, **Red-winged Blackbirds**, **Common Mergansers**, **Juniper Titmouse** and a couple **Red-naped Sapsuckers**!! We all had different lists and some finished and went home. But because of some hooligans at the main marina... (Amanda, Tatum, Ember, Jessie, Renee and Lynn jumping in the lake) we still needed a few more. Once we added the Red-naped Sapsuckers Natalie and Renee were finished and headed home. The Glassfords joined us to the end as we raced back to the main marina for one more species for Amanda and Jessie. A pair of **Mountain Bluebirds** to finish the SP!!



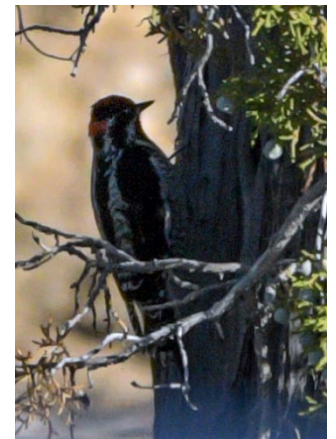
*Yellow-rumped Warbler Rich Glassford*



*Marbled Godwits Rich Glassford*



*Pinyon Jay Rich Glassford*



*Red-naped Sapsucker  
Rich Glassford*



I also finished Duchesne County on my goal of 100 in every county in the state!

Three locations and one long, fun, and absolutely amazing sunny day!! Thanks for coming!!

---



## Back Yard Birds

**Yvonne Carter – Highland:** I was standing on the side of our house, hearing a lot of noise from birds in the back yard, when all of a sudden, a whole lot of birds such as Eurasian Collar Doves, House Finches, Chickadees, Goldfinches, etc flew around the corner followed really fast by a Cooper's Hawk in pursuit!

**Holly Minor – Erda:** Our nesting **Swainson's Hawks** have returned to Erda!



**Milt Moody – Provo:** I've seen at least one **Band-tailed Pigeon** half of the days so far in April and at least three or more at a time, one fourth of the days. There should be more coming in greater numbers if this is like the past 8 years.



**Dennis Shirley – Elk Ridge:** I've been pretty much confined to our home this month so my birding has been in our yard. It's been ok, but ready to get back out in the world. Here's my new ELK Ridge yard birds for April. I do keep track each year of my first yard bird record, if I'm around. Most birds show up within a day or two each year. It's fun to see how close they appear each year.

Turkey Vulture - April 15

Swainson's Hawk - April 18

Lazuli Bunting - April 21

Broad-tailed Hummingbird - April 21

Red-breasted Nuthatch - April 22

Ruby-crowned Kinglet - April 22

Chipping Sparrow - April 23

Bullock's Oriole - April 23

Yellow-rumped Warbler - April 23

Orange-crowned Warbler - April 24

**Bruce Robinson – West Jordan:** **Black-chinned hummer.** I've missed these little gals (and guys).