

BIRDS OF THE MURRAY JORDAN RIVER PARKWAY

Compiled by Terry and Pam Sadler

Updated 2003

- Pied-billed Grebe: Permanent resident. A small, common grebe that dives for its food. Usually slips under water when approached.
- American White Pelican: Summer resident occasionally seen along the Parkway. Has a wing span up to 9'. One of the largest breeding colonies in the world is on Gunnison Island in the Great Salt Lake.
- Double-crested Cormorant: Summer resident. This dark bird can be seen perched with its wings spread out drying after a dive.
- Great Blue Heron: Permanent resident. Stands almost 4' tall. Catches fish in the shallow edges of the Jordan River. Also eats rodents, snakes, and frogs.
- Snowy Egret: Summer resident. Has wispy white plumage, long black legs, and bright yellow feet.
- Black-crowned Night-Heron: Summer resident. Seen regularly along the Jordan River during the early morning and late evening hours.
- White-faced Ibis: Common summer resident. A dark bird with a long down-curved bill. Usually seen flying in large flocks or feeding in nearby fields.
- Turkey Vulture: Summer resident. Often mistaken for a Golden Eagle in air. While soaring high above it holds its wings in a shallow V and rocks back and forth. Eats dead animals.
- Canada Goose: Common year-round resident. Frequently seen flying in small flocks in a V formation. There are a number of breeding pairs along the Jordan River. Young Chicks can be seen with their parents in early summer.
- Wood Duck: A very uncommon permanent resident of Utah. Only seen once in the Parkway. This very beautiful duck nests in tree cavities.
- Green-winged Teal: More commonly seen during the winter months. This is the smallest surface feeding duck and a very swift flyer.
- Mallard: Very common permanent resident. This duck has become semi-domesticated along the Murray Jordan River Parkway.
- Northern Pintail: Common summer resident, occasional winter sightings. The white line going up the sides of the neck and head along with the long tail feathers make the male Pintail easy to identify.

- Cinnamon Teal: Common summer resident rarely seen on the Jordan River. The male Cinnamon Teal is easy to identify with its rich cinnamon color and a blue speculum on the wing. The female lacks the cinnamon color but has the blue speculum.
- Northern Shoveler: Can be seen both summer and winter. Resembles a Mallard but has a very large spatula-like bill. Feeds primarily by straining small plants and animals from the water's surface through the comb-like edge of its bill.
- Gadwall: Year-round resident. Gadwalls are known to nest in dense stands of stinging nettles which discourages predators. There are no known nesting pair along the Parkway.
- Redhead: Common summer resident, occasional winter resident. Not often seen along the Parkway. They nest along the Great Salt Lake often using nests of other ducks.
- Lesser Scaup: Winter resident, although only a few sightings of this diving duck along the Jordan River Parkway.
- Common Goldeneye: Seen occasionally during migration and winter. The male has a round white spot on each side of the face.
- Bufflehead: A few sightings during the winter, this duck nests primarily in Canada. These are small ducks and the male has a large, puffy white patch on the back of the head.
- Common Merganser: Common winter resident, occasional sightings along the Parkway. The Common Merganser's long, thin, serrated bill helps this diver catch fish and aquatic insects.
- Osprey: Rare Summer resident of Utah seen occasionally along the Parkway as it migrates through to its nesting sites.
- Bald Eagle: Common winter visitor of Utah, occasionally seen flying along the Jordan River. There is now one nesting pair of Bald Eagles near the Jordan River north of Salt Lake. They primarily eat fish.
- Northern Harrier: Common permanent resident of Utah but seen rarely along the Parkway. Formerly known as the Marsh Hawk. Usually seen flying low and slowly over the marshes and ground in search of prey.
- Sharp-shinned Hawk: Common permanent resident. This small, fast hawk catches birds in flight. People with bird feeders see this hawk often.
- Cooper's Hawk: Permanent resident of Utah but rarely seen along the Parkway. Looks similar to a Sharp-shinned Hawk but has a larger head and rounded tail.
- Swainson's Hawk: The bird is a summer resident of Utah but has only been seen a few times along the Jordan River Parkway during migration. The favorite prey of this hawk is large insects like grasshoppers and crickets.

- Red-tailed Hawk: Permanent resident. Usually seen in the Parkway perched on one of the power line poles or soaring high above. Eats mice, squirrels and rabbits.
- Golden Eagle: Permanent resident of Utah but rarely seen along the Jordan River Parkway. The Golden Eagle usually nests on a high cliff side. One such nest is in City Creek Canyon north of Salt Lake City.
- American Kestrel: Common permanent resident. Seen frequently along the Parkway. Formerly called the Sparrow Hawk, it is our smallest falcon. The Kestrel catches mice and insects.
- Merlin: Winter visitor. The Merlin has only been seen twice along the Murray Jordan River Parkway. It was formerly called the Pigeon Hawk because of the way it flies. It can catch small birds in flight.
- Peregrine Falcon: Rare permanent resident of Utah, seen once along the Parkway. These are extremely fast flyers and can catch ducks, pigeons and other swift birds in flight.
- Prairie Falcon: Common resident of Utah, seen and reported only once along the Parkway. Prairie Falcons usually catch their prey off the ground. They eat Meadow Larks, Mourning Doves, squirrels and can also take birds in flight.
- Chukar: Common permanent resident of Utah. The one, extremely rare sighting of a Chukar along the Murray Jordan River Parkway was during the hard winter of 1992-1993. They are usually found in rocky, dry foothills.
- Ring-necked Pheasant: Common permanent resident. The sighting of the Ring-necked Pheasant along the Parkway has decreased the last several years due to habitat loss. It is an introduced game bird from Asia.
- California Quail: Common permanent resident. Seen and heard often along the Parkway. When approached Quail usually run very rapidly along the ground and fly only as a last resort. A flock of 10 - 30 birds is common.
- Virginia Rail: Common summer and uncommon winter resident of Utah. The Virginia Rail can occasionally be heard calling in the marsh wetlands of the Parkway. They are very secretive and not often seen.
- Sora: Common summer resident of Utah. It has been seen only a few times along the marshy wetlands of the Parkway. They are very secretive and more often heard than seen.
- American Coot: Common permanent resident. Seen regularly in the shallow water and ponds of the Parkway. Coots are not ducks. They are related to the Virginia Rail and Sora. They have cute reddish colored chicks.

- Killdeer:** Common permanent resident. Seen regularly along the Parkway. Killdeer are a type of shorebird call Plovers. They often feign injury to lead predators away from their young.
- American Avocet:** Common summer resident of Utah but not seen too often along the Parkway. In the fall, thousands of these shorebirds congregate on the shores of the Great Salt Lake before their migration South.
- Greater Yellowlegs:** Common transient through Utah during the spring and fall. Seen rarely along the shoreline of the Jordan River. These shorebirds, as the name suggests, have long yellow legs that enable them to wade in water to catch aquatic insects.
- Spotted Sandpiper:** Common summer resident of Utah and rarely seen along the Jordan River. Spotted Sandpipers have a unique way of flying from spot to spot with their wings arched downward in quick sputtering beats.
- Wilson's Snipe:** Common summer and uncommon winter resident. Occasionally seen along the Parkway on muddy shorelines, shallow water, and boggy areas. Snipe have very long bills that they use to probe deep in the water and mud for invertebrates. Their plumage allows them to blend in well with their surroundings and they are hard to spot when they stand still.
- Franklin's Gull:** Common summer resident of Utah but seen rarely along the Parkway. Franklin's Gulls are one of several species of gulls that have a black hood or head during breeding season.
- California Gull:** Common permanent resident. This is the State bird of Utah. It takes four years for the newly hatched bird to become an adult.
- Ring-billed Gull:** Common year-round resident but seen more regularly in winter. They are smaller than California Gulls and have lighter gray backs.
- Caspian Tern:** An uncommon summer resident of Utah and seen occasionally flying up and down the Jordan River in search of fish. Caspian Terns are larger than the more common Forester's Tern seen along the river. They also have very large reddish bills.
- Forester's Tern:** Common summer resident seen regularly along the Parkway. They are high divers plunging from high in the air into the water to grab their prey, usually small fish.
- Rock Dove:** Common permanent resident along the Parkway. Rock Doves are feral pigeons that have established free living populations and are no longer domesticated.
- Mourning Dove:** Common summer resident along the Parkway. A few overwinter along the Parkway especially if the weather is mild. Their call has given them their name. People often think they are hearing an owl when they coo in late spring and early summer.

- Barn Owl: Uncommon permanent resident of Utah and the Parkway. Nocturnal birds with a raspy screech. They can be heard at night especially in late winter and early spring.
- Great Horned Owl: Common permanent resident. These large nocturnal birds of prey can be almost 2' tall. They are frequently heard along the Parkway during late winter and early spring. They eat skunks, rabbits and even domestic pets.
- Common Nighthawk: Common summer resident. Generally crepuscular, meaning they feed at twilight in the late evening and early morning. They catch insects in flight scooping them out of the air with their large mouths.
- Black-chinned Hummingbird: Common summer resident along the Parkway. Vigorously defend their individual feeding territories chasing away intruding hummingbirds.
- Broad-tailed Hummingbird: Common summer resident. The wings of the Broad-tailed Hummingbird make a very loud, shrill whirring or buzzing noise in flight and can be heard coming and going from far away.
- Rufous Hummingbird: A large hummingbird seen during late summer and early fall. The male is very aggressive and dominates flowers and hummingbird feeders, driving away other hummingbirds.
- Belted Kingfisher: Uncommon permanent resident of Utah but seen and heard regularly along the Parkway. Have a loud rattling call giving away their location. They are expert at catching fish diving head first into the river for their prey. They nest in burrows excavated in dirt banks along the River.
- Downy Woodpecker: Common permanent resident. A small woodpecker usually found in the riparian cottonwood and willow stands along the river where it forages for insects on the trunks and longer branches of medium-sized trees. Its "whinny" type call is easy to identify.
- Northern Flicker: Common permanent resident along the Murray Jordan River Parkway. This type of woodpecker does most of its foraging for food on the ground. Up to 45% of its food consists of ants.
- Olive-sided Flycatcher: Common summer resident in the coniferous forests of Utah. Seen very rarely in migration along the Parkway. The song sounds like the bird is saying "Quick- three-beers".
- Western Wood-Pewee: Common summer resident of Utah seen rarely along the Parkway during migration. This bird is a type of flycatcher. It perches on a branch and watches for flying insects. When it spots its prey, it flies out, snaps up the insect then usually returns to the same perch to repeat the process of flycatching.
- Cordilleran Flycatcher: Common summer resident of Utah seen very rarely along the Parkway during migration. The breeding habitat of this flycatcher is usually near running water in well-shaded mountain forests and canyons.

- Western Kingbird: Common summer resident seen regularly along the Parkway. There are several nesting pair in the cottonwood trees near the Jordan River. Very aggressive in defending their nests and territory. They have voracious appetites and can consume well over 100 grasshoppers per day.
- Northern Shrike: Rare to uncommon winter resident in Utah, only one known sighting within the Murray Jordan River Parkway. Breeds in the boreal forests of Alaska and Northern Canada, where its main diet is rodents including voles and lemmings.
- Loggerhead Shrike: Common permanent resident of Utah a few have been sighted along the Parkway. Also known as the butcher-bird, Shrikes have a strong hooked bill like a raptor and kill vertebrates such as mice and birds by biting them on the back of their head or neck. They then impale their prey on a sharp object like a thorn or barbed wire
- Plumbeous Vireo: Common summer resident throughout Utah but has been seen a few times in the Parkway during migration. These birds look like they are wearing spectacles with their white eye rings and connecting white band crossing the top of their bills.
- Western Scrub-Jay: Common permanent resident a few have been sighted in the Parkway. Scrub Jays may be rare in the Parkway because the Black-billed Magpie, another corvid, is so dominant it keeps the Jays out.
- American Magpie: Common permanent resident and one of the most common birds in the Parkway. It is hard to miss this bird with its black and white color, long tail and very loud, harsh voice. Magpies build huge nests of twigs and sticks which are reused year after year if not by other magpies, then other birds like the Great Horned Owls.
- American Crow: Rare summer and common winter bird in Utah, rarely seen in Salt Lake County, though quite common in Utah County. There is only one recorded sighting of an American Crow in the Murray Jordan River Parkway.
- Common Raven: Common permanent resident. Ravens are larger than crows. They are very intelligent, omnivorous and found in virtually every elevation and habitat in the State.
- Tree Swallow: While a common summer resident of Utah's mountain areas, Tree Swallows are seen along the Parkway during spring and fall migration. Tree Swallows make their nests in tree cavities.
- Violet-green Swallow: Common summer resident of Utah seen occasionally along the Parkway. These birds build their nests in old woodpecker holes or other natural crevices.
- Northern Rough-winged Swallow: Common summer resident. These swallows nest in burrows, crevices, and holes. They have drab, gray-brown throats.

- Bank Swallow: Common summer resident in Utah and seen occasionally along the Parkway. These swallows have a distinctive brown band across their chests. They nest in colonies in excavated burrows on river banks.
- Cliff Swallow: Common summer resident seen regularly along the Parkway. These swallows make their mud nests in colonies usually under the bridges that cross the Jordan River.
- Barn Swallow: Common summer resident. Have a deeply forked tail, are very graceful fliers and forage for flying insects together in flocks.
- Black-capped Chickadee: Common permanent resident seen and heard regularly along the Parkway. This small active bird gets its name from its call which sounds like “chickadee-dee-dee”.
- Mountain Chickadee: Common permanent resident of Utah occasionally seen along the Parkway during some winters. Nests at higher elevations in the conifer and aspen zones. Look very similar to the Black-capped Chickadee but has a white eyebrow running through its black-capped head. Its call note is “chickazee-zee-zee”.
- House Wren: Common summer resident of Utah seen occasionally along the Parkway during migration. This small bird is usually seen with its tail uptilted singing its beautiful, bubbly whistled notes.
- Marsh Wren: Common summer and uncommon winter bird of Utah heard and seen occasionally in the mossy wetlands around the small ponds east of the Nature Center. Their song varies but is usually harsh, scolding staccato notes.
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet: This small active bird is found along the Jordan River Parkway during the winter. In the summer it breeds in mountain forests. Ruby-crowned Kinglets are in constant motion searching for small insects among the bushes and trees along the river.
- Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: Common summer resident of Utah heard and seen rarely in the Parkway. These very small birds are usually only heard as they actively forage in thickets and heavy brush for insects.
- Mountain Bluebird: Common summer resident of Utah occasionally seen along the Parkway during their early Spring migration.
- Townsend’s Solitaire: Common permanent resident of Utah with two reported sightings along the Parkway. Usually found at moderate to high altitudes in summer but come to the foothills and valleys during the winter. Beautiful birds with a bold white eye ring, buff colored wing patch, and a long tail with white outer tail feathers.
- Hermit Thrush: Common summer and rare winter bird of Utah. A few have been seen in winter and early spring along the Parkway. A shy bird that stays hidden in the underbrush. It has an extremely sweet, clear musical song.

- American Robin: Common permanent resident. Very common along the Parkway. Outside of the breeding and nesting season, robins are very gregarious. Flocks of 50 - 100 birds are common in the fall and winter months.
- Northern Mockingbird: Common summer and uncommon winter bird of Utah. More common in Southern Utah. The only record of the Mockingbird in the Parkway was in 1989.
- European Starling: Common permanent resident. Flocks of several hundred Starlings are commonly seen in the Parkway during the fall and winter months. Native of Europe, introduced into North America in 1890. It didn't show up in the Salt Lake Valley until 1939 and the first nesting record in the valley is in 1949.
- American Pipit: Common summer and uncommon winter bird of Utah occasionally seen along the Parkway during the winter. Usually nest in the high Alpine zone, above tree line.
- Bohemian Waxwing: Irregular winter visitor to Utah. Have been sighted on few occasions in the Parkway. They are slightly larger than Cedar Waxwings and have cinnamon-colored undertail coverts.
- Cedar Waxwing: Rare summer but common winter resident of Utah. Frequently seen along the Parkway in winter. These birds have crested heads, sleek bodies and a yellow tipped tail. Their call is very high pitched which usually gives away their location in the trees.
- Orange-Crowned Warbler: Common summer and rare winter resident of Utah. Seen occasionally in the Parkway during spring and fall migration. It is a plain, dull-colored warbler and its orange crown is rarely seen. It primarily feeds on insects and spiders that it gleans off trees and shrubs.
- Nashville Warbler: Uncommon transient through Utah. Few have been seen during fall migration through the Parkway. They breed north of Utah and spend the winter in Mexico.
- Yellow Warbler: Common summer resident seen and hear regularly in the Parkway. Nests in the Parkway. Feeds almost entirely on insects and spiders.
- Yellow-rumped Warbler: Common summer and rare winter resident of Utah. Breed in mid to high elevations in Utah. During the spring and especially the fall they are a common bird in the Parkway, some even overwinter here.
- Townsend's Warbler: Uncommon transient through Utah. There are two reported sightings in the Parkway. They breed north of Utah and winter south into Mexico. They pass through during migration.
- MacGillivray's Warbler: Common summer resident of Utah. The few sightings of this warbler have been during the fall migration. They nest in foothills and middle elevations in Utah.
- Wilson's Warbler: Uncommon summer resident but common transient bird that commonly nests in the boreal forests of Alaska and Canada. Seen in the Parkway during spring and

fall migration. Looks very much like the yellow warbler but the male has a black cap on its yellow head. Feeds along the willows along the Jordan River.

- Yellow-breasted Chat: Common summer resident of Utah. At least two birds have taken up summer residency in the Parkway. Very elusive birds, that stay hidden in the riparian thickets where they feed. Their cacophonous repertoire of calls and notes can't be missed. They are known to sing all night, especially on moonlit nights.
- Western Tanager: Common summer resident of Utah seen occasionally in the Parkway during migration. The male of this beautiful species has a red head, yellow body and black wings and back.
- Green-tailed Towhee: Common summer resident of Utah occasionally seen in the Parkway during spring migration. Usually found in the higher valleys and mountains of Utah staying in dense shrubs and chaparral on dry mountain sides.
- Vesper Sparrow: A common summer resident of Utah. Usually found in high valleys of open sage brush and forest clearings. Seen occasionally along the Parkway during migration.
- Lark Sparrow: While a common summer resident of Utah's open shrublands and foothills, Lark Sparrows are seen occasionally along the Parkway during migration. The distinctive head pattern of rust, black and white make this a beautiful bird.
- Spotted Towhee: Common permanent resident. These colorful orange, black and white birds are typically ground feeders and are frequently heard scratching away as they forage under dense shrub thickets.
- Song Sparrow: Common permanent resident. Seen in brushy thickets bordering the Jordan River. In spring and summer their variable and musical song can often be heard from the tree tops.
- Lincoln Sparrow: Common summer and rare winter resident of Utah. One reported sighting of this sparrow during spring migration. It spends its summers in high mountain meadows.
- Harris's Sparrow: Rare winter visitor of Utah. Up to 3 Harris's Sparrows have spent recent winters in the Parkway visiting nearby neighborhood feeders. They breed in Northern Canada.
- White-crowned Sparrow: Common permanent resident of Utah and common fall and winter resident of the Parkway. Breeds in high mountain, sub-alpine meadows. The white markings on the head look like they are wearing bike helmets.
- Golden-crowned Sparrow: Rare winter visitor of Utah. There is only one record of a Golden-crowned Sparrow in the Salt Lake Valley. This bird was in the Parkway during the winter of 1999 - 2000.

- Dark-eyed Junco:** Common permanent resident of Utah frequently seen along the Parkway in winter. It breeds in the mountain areas of the state, but winters in the valleys. There are three different races of the Dark-eyed Junco seen in the Parkway, including the Oregon, slate-colored and pink-sided.
- Black-headed Grosbeak:** Common summer resident of Utah, a few nest in the Parkway. The song is very similar to that of an American Robin but is more fluid and rich sounding.
- Lazuli Bunting:** Common summer resident of Utah, a few are seen in the Parkway in spring during migration. The adult male Lazuli Bunting is a beautiful bright blue with a rust colored chest.
- Red-winged Blackbird:** Common permanent resident and very common along the Parkway. These gregarious birds are found in the marshy areas around the ponds in the Parkway. The familiar “ko-karee” call is often heard during springtime.
- Western Meadowlark:** Common permanent resident of Utah seen and heard occasionally along the Parkway. Western Meadowlarks were more common in the Parkway several years ago but development in and near the Parkway have reduced their numbers.
- Yellow-headed Blackbird:** Common summer and rare winter resident of Utah seen occasionally in the Parkway especially during spring migration. The male is easy to identify with its black body and bright yellow head. A few spend the winter in the Parkway where they are found in flocks of Red-winged Blackbirds.
- Brewer’s Blackbird:** Common permanent resident of Utah occasionally seen in the Parkway. Their numbers have been increasing the past few years. A small flock has taken up residence near the southern end of the Parkway near 6400 South. The male Brewer’s Blackbird has a purplish gloss on the head and neck. The yellow eye is a good identification mark.
- Common Grackle:** Rare summer resident in Utah, a small flock resides in Vernal, Utah. There are two reported sightings in the Parkway in 2000 and again in 2001. They look like Brewer’s Blackbirds but are larger and have long keel-shaped tails.
- Brown-headed Cowbird:** Common summer and rare winter resident of Utah. There are an increasing number of Brown-headed cowbirds in the Parkway. Cowbirds lay their eggs in the nests of other birds. This parasitism is a detriment to the host bird’s offspring.
- Bullock’s Oriole:** Common summer resident that breeds in the Parkway. Brightly colored birds with striking colors of orange and black. They are more often heard than seen keeping hidden in dense deciduous trees where they build their pendulous nests.
- Cassin’s Finch:** Common permanent resident of Utah, occasionally seen wintering in the Parkway. They breed in the high mountain areas of the State. Cassin’s Finches look much like house finches. Check a field guide for the subtle differences.

- House Finch: Common permanent resident, very common on the Parkway. Has a beautiful song. The rambling warble ending in a final “zeep” reaches full intensity as spring arrives.
- Pine Siskin: Common permanent resident of Utah They inhabit coniferous forests but wander down to the valley in winter where they are occasionally seen on the Parkway. They are small birds with streaks of bright yellow through their wings and tails.
- American Goldfinch: Common permanent resident. During breeding season the male is a brilliant yellow with a black cap and black wings with white bars. Their bright colors are lost in the winter when they become drab brown and gray with just a hint of yellow. Because of its canary-like song and color, the male American Goldfinch is sometimes called a wild canary.
- Evening Grosbeak: Rare summer resident and an irregular winter visitor in the Parkway. It may not be seen for several years and then show up in great numbers. Evening Grosbeaks have huge bills which they use to crush seeds like pinyon nuts and fruit pits.
- House Sparrow: Common permanent resident. The House Sparrow is not native to North America. It is a Eurasian species that was introduced in the mid 1800's. It is considered by many as a pest species along with the Starling.

References used in compiling Birds of the Parkway:

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2. - The Sibley Guide to Birds. National Audubon Society. Written and Illustrated by David Allen Sibley.
- 3 - Birds of th Great Basin. Fred A. Ryser Jr.
- 4 - The Birders Handbook. Paul R. Ehrlich, David S. Dobkin and Darryl Wheye.
- 5 - Field Checklist of the Birds of Utah. Compiled by the Utah Ornithological Society Bird Records Committee.