

Utah County Birders Newsletter

December 2014



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DECEMBER MEETING:

Thursday, December 11th, 2014 - 7:00 pm

Preparation for the Provo Christmas Bird Count

Tour of the BYU bird collection, bird quiz, and preparation for the Provo Christmas Bird Count.

Meet at 7pm at the Bean Museum.

FIELD TRIPS:

20 December, 2014 (Sat). Provo Christmas Bird Count: More details next month, but keep the date open!

1 January, 2015 (Thur). Utah County Birders Field Trip - 9:30- early afternoon. New Year's Day birding, **South Utah County**. Meet at the East Bay Sam's Club in Provo at 9:30 am.

1 January (Thur). Jordan River Christmas Bird Count - Leaders: Jeanne Le Ber and Ray Smith - Meet at 7am at Johanna's Kitchen, 9725 South State Street, Sandy (801-566-1762). Assignments will be distributed and groups will start birding at 8am. Team reports and count tally will begin at 6pm at the Sizzler on 9000 S. & State St. To sign up, or for more information, call Jeanne or Ray at (801-532-7384).

3 January, 2015 (Sat). Payson Christmas Bird Count. Details TBA

We are actively recruiting people to lead local half-day field trips, any time, any place. If you would like to lead a field trip or if you have any ideas for this year's field trips, please contact Bryan Shirley at - bt_shirley@hotmail.com

Our 2014 Birding Challenge is drawing to a close!

Please email Keeli Marvel (keeli.marvel@gmail.com) with your name and level of the challenge achieved, if you have completed the challenge or anticipate doing so by the end of the year so we can get an idea of the number of prizes we will need.

Our challenge is fairly simple by design this year and includes three separate levels of achievement:

Gold: 29 species in each of the 29 counties and attend 9 meetings or field trips

Silver: 29 species in 19 counties and attend 6 meetings or field trips

Bronze: 29 species in 9 counties and attend 3 meetings or field trips

UCB Captain's Log: December 2014

by Keeli Marvel

Well, it's the end of the year again. The end of the year is a time when we look back at the year that went by and wonder where the heck it went so fast.

I looked back over the past year, and it was a pretty good year as far as birds are concerned. I added 12 species to my life list: A Scott's Oriole at Dugway, the Red-eyed Vireo that was hanging out at Red Butte, A Great-crested Flycatcher and a Swallow-tailed Kite on a quick trip to Florida, six species of warblers (Worm-eating, Hooded, Northern Parula, Chestnut-sided, Blackburnian, and Magnolia) and a Scarlet Tanager in Virginia. My favorite sighting this year was a toss-up between the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher that showed up at work back in June, my lifer Swallow-tailed Kite in Florida, or the bright yellow goodness of my first Hooded Warbler in Virginia.

I finished the birding challenge this week picking up my last two species in Carbon County. They really made me work for it, too. I thought...I'll just run up Spanish Fork Canyon until I hit the Carbon County line, and I'll pull over and find a couple of chickadees and a nuthatch or something. I headed up the canyon Saturday afternoon, hit the county line, and pulled off at the (closed) entrance to the Price Canyon Recreation Area. I walked up the road a ways listening for birds, but after half an hour of hearing absolutely nothing but silence and the traffic on the highway below, I gave up and drove down Hwy 6 to the turn off for the Price Water Conservancy District facilities. I drove over the railroad tracks and down the access road to the river and parked hoping I could find a Dipper or something along the river. Didn't find one, but there were Black-capped Chickadees calling and foraging in the trees next to the river. (One species down!) I wandered up the river a short ways and found a beaver hard at work gnawing trees along the side of the river, but no birds. The sun had gone down behind the mountain at this point and I was feeling pressed for time and remaining light so after about half an hour of absolutely zero bird activity, I drove down river even further, scanning for Dippers. Finally, a Belted Kingfisher flew up the river with a small fish in its mouth. With that second species down, my last county was finally completed! It only took about 2 hours to find 2 birds. Glad the rest of the year hadn't gone at that pace!

After many miles and many trips, I saw at least 29 species in all 29 counties in Utah, and some interesting corners of Utah I've never seen before (if anyone has the list from our Millard County trip, let me know- I'm still missing it somehow). There were some moments where I wondered if I would manage to complete the challenge at the Gold level, but I did it with a month to spare! I hope everyone has had a good time participating in the challenge field trips this year - I've really enjoyed seeing parts of the state I've never seen before, and getting to know Utah County birders better. I'd like to focus on more local field trips in the coming year- to include some folks that maybe couldn't make it out to the far reaches of the state this year. Hope to see you all out at one of our local Christmas Bird Counts, and I wish all of you a happy holiday season!

Happy birding!
Keeli Marvel

Bird of the Month

Killdeer

Charadrius Vociferus

by Amanda Holt

The Scientific name: *Charadrius Vociferus*
(The name *Vociferus* comes from noisy very loud.)

I chose to write about the killdeer because it is one of my favorite birds. I have gotten to know what their call is very quickly and I can pick it out wherever I go. Around July we went up to Goshen Canyon to take some of my neighbors birding. As we were driving along I heard the little high pitched sound my alarm makes when it goes off in the morning. I knew it was a killdeer. As we looked around for the killdeer we looked for some water. There was a little bit of water left in front of someone's house and there was the killdeer, she seemed to have little babies following right behind her. Those babies were one of the cutest things I have seen! I have seen the killdeer by Utah Lake and even when we were down in Sand Hollow they were there.

These birds average 10.5 inches long in size with a wingspan of 24 inches, so more like a sandpiper size. The killdeer colors are brown, black, and white in the air and on the ground. While on the ground he has two neck bands that are black on the front of them. The killdeers habitat is usually right in front of driveways, golf courses, lawns, by water, the airport, or sandy areas, but don't be surprised if you find one in dry areas. The killdeer likes open places so they get lots of insects. Killdeers also blend into muddy areas too. The killdeers are so hard sometimes to find but listen for the high pitched screaming and you will be able to locate them anywhere. Killdeer also find places to nest their babies before they have hatched. The killdeer make their nests out of small rocks, shells, sticks, and sometimes trash. The eggs blend right in. The eggs are sort of a chocolate color. The baby is incubated for about 26 to 28 days until hatched and they follow their mom around until they are old enough to be on there own. The momma killdeer is protective like all mothers, but the killdeer mommy flies at your head like a jet plane.

The killdeer eats beetles, grasshoppers, earthworms, spiders, snails, and a few different seeds. That is why killdeer can live pretty much anywhere if these things are there. While searching for food as they walk their head bobs up and down, almost like hiccups. When the killdeer is in flight you will know, this bird flies swiftly and erratic. When in flight they have "V" shaped wings. The killdeer can migrate and survive anywhere it wants but usually doesn't go to cold wintery places. killdeer are in Utah all year-round. The killdeer has lots of different habitats to survive in different areas.

The name Killdeer is from the shrill of their call.

If you would like to write an article for the Bird of the Month, please contact Mabelle - mabelle13johnson@yahoo.com



Photos by Amanda Holt.



Field Trip Report

Beaver and Iron Counties - 8 November 2014

by Bryan Shirley

Last Saturday 5 of us made the trip down to Beaver & Iron Counties to work on the UCB Challenge. We started at Minersville where we were able to locate over 40 species on the reservoir and the surrounding areas. There was a good variety of wterfowl on the lake, plus a couple of Pelicans and Common Loons as well. The area below the dam was very active with Cedar Waxwings, White-crowned & Song Sparrows, Spotted Towhee, etc.

From there we headed south into Iron County. Our first stop was to enjoy the petroglyphs at Parowan Gap. It was a fun stop since none of us had ever been there. There weren't a lot of birds there but we did see a Canyon Wren and had a pair of Golden Eagles Soar past. After lunch we found a Red-Shouldered Hawk on a wire just west of Cedar City on the hwy toward New Castle (right at milepot 58). It was sitting on the telephone wire and every so often would jump off the wire and dive into the brush on the side of the road. Definatly the highlight of the trip! Quichipa had quite a few birds at the far South end, but the distance and heat waves made it tough to ID most of them. New Castle Res. had a Common Loon & Horned Grebe, plus a few species of common waterfowl. Iron took a bit longer to complete the challenge than Beaver, but still not bad and we made it back home just after dark. I think we ended up with about 44 species in Beaver County and a bit over 30 in Iron.

Backyard Bird of the Month

November 2014

Jack Binch - Sandy

I had a **Red-breasted Nuthatch** in November. Second one ever at home.

Yvonne Carter - American Fork

The **Western Scrub Jays**, **Chickadees**, a **Hairy Woodpecker** and **Lesser Goldfinches** have been busy and even a **Junco** showed up!

Jeff Cooper - Pleasant Grove

Nineteen **California Quail** made a showing in the yard during November. It's the largest covey I've had in my yard and it was the first visit of quail for the season. It was nice to have them join the ubiquitous Juncos as they cleaned up the seeds around the base of the feeders.

Eric Huish - Pleasant Grove

Mountain Chickadees - Chickadees are a yard favorite and seldom see mountains down in my yard.

Milt Moody - Provo

Is that a butterfly in by backyard in Provo in the middle of November? No, just a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** fluttering around -- always fun to see.

Leena Rogers - Provo

Best backyard bird for November was a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**. Such busy, energetic little guys! They seem to prefer our old apple tree on the patio.

Dennis Shirley - Elk Ridge

White-breasted Nuthatch and **Brown Creeper**. Both in the same pine tree on 11/22/2014 in our Elk Ridge front yard and both new yard birds!

Alton Thygerson - Provo

White-breasted Nuthatch - First one seen in my yard in 10 or more years.

Report your favorite backyard bird each month to Eric Huish at 801-360-8777 or erichuish@gmail.com



Red-breasted Nuthatch in Jack's Backyard. Photo by Jack Binch.