

# Utah County Birders Newsletter

December 2015



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## DECEMBER MEETING:

**Thursday, December 10th, 2015 - 7:00 pm.**

Our meeting this month will be in **preparation for the Christmas Bird Count(s)** and will be on December 10th at 7pm at the Bean Museum. Bryan Shirley will conduct a quiz and review of possible bird species we might see on the counts. We will also go over the assignments and groups. Please let Bryan know if you can't be at the meeting and want to participate in the bird count. Plan on attending the result compiling and pot luck dinner too after the bird count! For more info about the bird count contact Bryan Shirley: [bt\\_shirley@hotmail.com](mailto:bt_shirley@hotmail.com), 801-722-9346

Meet at 7:00 pm at the Monte L. Bean Museum. 645 East 1430 North, Provo, UT <http://mlbean.byu.edu/>

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## FIELD TRIPS:

We will not have any field trips in December, we encourage you to participate in one of the Christmas Bird Count circles around the state. See Utah County Counts below. For a list of all Utah CBCs visit <http://utahbirds.org/cbc/cbc.html>

**Saturday December 19th, 2015: Provo Christmas Bird Count** - Time for the best holiday tradition there is - the Christmas Bird Count! This year is the 116th count and we have over 40 years of data for Provo. As usual, our meeting this month will include a bird count quiz and then we will go over the assignments and groups. Please let me know if you can't be at the meeting and want to participate in the bird count. Plan on attending the result compiling and pot luck dinner too after the bird count!

For more info about the bird count contact Bryan Shirley: [bt\\_shirley@hotmail.com](mailto:bt_shirley@hotmail.com), 801-722-9346

**Friday January 1st, 2016: 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).

**Saturday January 2nd, 2016: Payson Christmas Bird Count** - The Payson count will be on Jan 2. Great way to start the new year! Hopefully you can come out and enjoy the best Holiday Tradition! For more info contact Bryan Shirley at 801-722-9346 or [bt\\_shirley@hotmail.com](mailto:bt_shirley@hotmail.com)

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**Friday January 1st, 2016:** Our first trip of the New Year will be on January 1st at 9:00am. We will bird the **south end of Utah County** for a few hours. Please dress warmly! Meet at the Provo Sam's Club parking lot.

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## Utah County Birders Captain's Log: December 2015

by Keeli Marvel

Hello friends! I hope you all had a lovely Thanksgiving filled with good food, warm homes, and people to share them with. I just got back from spending a few short days up in Idaho (or as I've decided to call it: The Frozen North) visiting my dad for the Thanksgiving holiday. I didn't get much time to do any birding, nor was the weather very amenable to doing so, but I have big plans to get a lifer Great Gray Owl up there once I figure out where they like to hang out (if anyone has any experience finding them, let me know!). On the drive up we saw at least ten bald eagles, a couple Red-tailed Hawks, a Rough-legged Hawk, and several hundred head of elk, which were all very impressive.



photo by Keeli Marvel

My dad's new place is surrounded by huge conifer trees, which I have discovered house a family of Steller's Jays and the occasional Mourning Doves and Chickadees. The jays always seem like they're up to something. One day maybe I'll figure out what. On a trip into town on Wednesday for groceries I spotted a couple small groups of Common Mergansers along the banks of the Salmon River in addition to several more Bald Eagles perched in the trees along the river. Later that afternoon we went for a cold and windy wander upriver a little ways exploring, and we flushed up a Chukar from the hillside. After our cozy Thanksgiving Dinner on Thursday my dad and I went for another walk around the neighborhood, and upon returning to the house, we could hear a pair of Great Horned Owls calling back and forth to each other nearby. The temperature gauge read 0 degrees F the morning we left. A little chilly, even for me! I'm really looking forward to exploring the birding in the area a little more, but maybe not until it's at least 50 degrees warmer.

Christmas Bird Counts are coming up this month! I'm getting excited, and I hope you are too! If you're available, even if it's just for part of the day, we'd love to have you come join our Provo or Payson count circles. The more the merrier! It's a challenge every year to try and beat the last year's or the high species counts, and the potluck at the end of the day is always fun. If you're interested in joining us, we'll be discussing assignments at our monthly meeting on the 10th, or you can always email me or Bryan Shirley to find out more information.

Happy Birding and Merry Christmas to all of you! Hope your holiday season is filled with warm thoughts, lovely birds, and happy memories.

Keeli Marvel

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## Bird of the Month

### Black Skimmer

*Rynchops niger*

by Sheryl Serrano

This month's bird is the Black Skimmer. Have you seen one? You certainly can't mistake it if you have. My first sighting was on the coast of California in the Long Beach area. It was very exciting watching it fly low over the water with its lower bill in the water looking for fish.

The Black Skimmer is a medium to large bird, at 15-19 inches. Its orange/red and black bill is knife thin and substantially longer on the bottom. This unique bill is used to "skim" through the water as it flies, hoping to catch small fish. At hatching the Black Skimmer's bill is equal in length, top and bottom, however, by 4 weeks the lower bill is already nearly 1 cm longer than the upper.



photo by Kendall Brown

You can find Skimmers (we only have one in America) along both coasts of the United States. Their habitat is open sandy beaches along with gravel or shell bars and mats of sea wrack. As the coasts are developed with houses for us humans, their habitat is diminishing. In the southeast there are artificial islands made from debris that are essential for nesting. As the avian kingdom continues to adapt, Black Skimmer nests have been found on rooftops as well.

While Black Skimmers are active throughout the day, they are largely crepuscular, like most fishermen I know. They will even skim when dark. They will use touch to catch fish, so light is not necessary.

Next time you are on the coast, be sure to look for this intriguing bird, I know I will.

(ref: All About Birds)

If you would like to write an article for the Bird of the Month, please contact Mabelle - [mabelle13johnson@yahoo.com](mailto:mabelle13johnson@yahoo.com)

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## Field Trip Report

**Annual Loon Loop** - November 21st, 2015

by Keeli Marvel

Six dedicated people showed up to brave the cold and go birding on Saturday. We stopped at Deer Creek, drove through Midway, and drove the Mountain Dell/Little Dell road up over into East Canyon.

At Deer Creek we spotted our first loon way out on the other side of the lake. We pulled into the Rainbow Bay Sportsman's Access parking area and picked up a Brown Creeper and some Chickadees but the only thing we saw on the reservoir at that end was a whole bunch of decoys.

Along the road between Deer Creek and Midway we saw a couple of Bald Eagles, including one that was posing iconically in a tree next to the road.

At Mountain Dell reservoir we stopped to scope out some ducks near the shore and picked up a bunch of Ring-neck Ducks, Common Goldeneye, and American Wigeon.

After driving up over the icy road from Mountain Dell (now I know why they close it in the winter), we drove up the Jeremy Ranch road looking for the earlier reported Common Redpolls. We didn't have any luck with them, but we did see some Black-capped Chickadees and a couple of Lesser Goldfinches. Back along the road toward East Canyon reservoir we saw a couple of Red-tailed Hawks, and some Bald Eagles.

At East Canyon Reservoir, there were several mixed groups of ducks on the lake. The majority of ducks we saw were Common Goldeneye, but we also picked up one Barrow's Goldeneye, a few Common Mergansers, a beautiful male Hooded Merganser, another lone Common Loon that gave us slightly better looks than the one at Deer Creek, some Western Grebes, and a handful of both immature Bald and Golden Eagles that gave us a good comparison between the immature plumages of both species.

Thanks to everyone who braved the chilly temperatures and joined me and thanks to Suzi for keeping and entering the eBird lists for our trip!

Happy Birding!

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<b>Deer Creek Reservoir --</b> Rainbow Bay, Wasatch, Utah, US	<b>Midway Downtown,</b> Wasatch, Utah, US	<b>Jeremy Ranch Road --</b> Morgan County, Morgan, Utah, US	<b>East Canyon Reservoir,</b> Morgan, Utah, US
Common Loon 1	Mallard 2	Mallard 2	Canada Goose 2
Pied-billed Grebe 1	Mallard (Domestic type) 5	Bald Eagle 5	American Wigeon 1
Clark's Grebe 3	American Kestrel 1	Red-tailed Hawk 2	Northern Shoveler 4
Bald Eagle 2	Black-billed Magpie 8	Belted Kingfisher 1	Green-winged Teal 3
American Coot 194 gull sp. 1	-----	Northern Flicker 1	Canvasback 1
Eurasian Collared-Dove 4	<b>Mountain Dell Reservoir,</b>	Western Scrub-Jay 1	Lesser Scaup 3
Black-billed Magpie 12	Salt Lake, Utah, US	Black-billed Magpie 13	Common Goldeneye 79
Black-capped Chickadee 2		Common Raven 2	Barrow's Goldeneye 1
Brown Creeper 1	Canada Goose 4	Black-capped Chickadee 6	Hooded Merganser 1
European Starling 13	American Wigeon 5	Lesser Goldfinch 2	Common Merganser 2
Dark-eyed Junco 2	Ring-necked Duck X		Common Loon 1
House Finch 4	approximately 45		Western Grebe 8
House Sparrow 1	Common Goldeneye X		Golden Eagle 3
	Ruddy Duck X		Bald Eagle 2
			Red-tailed Hawk 1
			Buteo sp. 1
			American Coot 20
			Black-capped Chickadee 2

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## Backyard Bird of the Month

November 2015

Jack Binch - Sandy

On the sixth and twenty-ninth of November I had a **Merlin** in the yard. Don't see one often here.

Lyle Bingham - Payson

Our bird of the month was a single **Sharp-shinned Hawk** feeding near our feeder. Unfortunately, the victim was a scrub jay. Thus, the feeder has been working well for about 6 chickadees, 3 scrub jays, 30+ house finches, our neighbor's cat and a pair of sharp-shinned hawks.

Yvonne Carter - Highland

With the snowstorm, birds were real busy at the feeders like **juncos, lesser goldfinches, black-capped chickadees, scrub jays**, a few bothersome **maggies** but nothing unusual.

Jeff Cooper - Pleasant Grove

I got a yard lifer in November when I heard and then located several **Mountain Chickadees** calling from some spruce trees.

Eric Huish - Pleasant Grove

**Brown Creeper** - Yard Lifer #105!

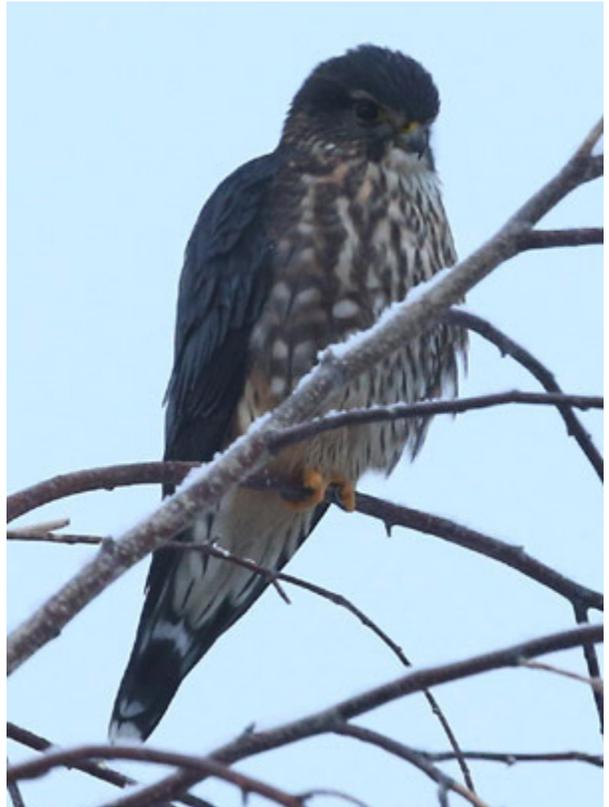
Milt Moody - Provo

This month a **Red-breasted Nuthatch** has been frequenting my yard here in Provo. It's visited the feeders, the birdbath (even after it had frozen), the trees and even the ground looking edibles.

Alton Thygerson - Provo

**Mourning Dove** - Several have been frequenting the backyard. It's not that the species is a rare visitor, but that one flew into a window and did not survive.

Report your favorite backyard bird each month to Eric Huish at 801-360-8777 or [erichuish@gmail.com](mailto:erichuish@gmail.com)



Merlin in Jack's yard.  
photo by Jack Binch

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### The Utah County Birders Newsletter is now online only/mostly.

We've decided to stop the regular paper mail version of the UCB Newsletter. This will save our club on Printing, Postage and Paper. If you would like an email notice each month when the Newsletter is posted online please send an email to Eric Huish at [erichuish@gmail.com](mailto:erichuish@gmail.com).

We are willing to print the online version of the newsletter and mail it out to anyone who still wants a paper copy or who doesn't have internet access. If you know of anyone who enjoys the UCB Newsletter but doesn't have internet access please let Eric Huish or Keeli Marvel know and we will make sure they get a copy.