

Utah County Birders Newsletter

February 2015



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FEBRUARY MEETING:

Thursday, February 12th, 2015 - 7:00 pm

This month's presentation will be given by past president **Ned Hill**, and is titled: **Birding Adventures in Romania: Dobruja and the Danube Delta.**

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

FIELD TRIPS:

February 21, 2015 (Sat) - 9am-11am Bird walk along the **Jordan River** (NOT the same location as the walk in January). This time we will be meeting at the parking area next to the old closed bridge at roughly 9600 N. 10000 W. in Lehi (this address will work in google maps if you plug it in HOWEVER the map shows 9600 N. as also being 1500 W.) We will meet in the parking area next to the bridge and walk up-river. Map location link here:

<http://goo.gl/maps/RYB08>

February 28, 2015 (Sat) - **Delta Snow Goose Festival** 7:30am-early afternoon. Meet at the East Bay Sam's Club parking lot to carpool. Bring a lunch. Weather dependent.

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

UCB Captain's Log: February 2015

by Keeli Marvel

Whew. You have no idea how long it took me to get the spelling of February right in that heading.

So... Hi! How has January been treating you? The weather has been unusually warm for winter here this past month. January is usually the cold dark month where I long for spring and envy all the people on their Caribbean cruises and Disney vacations, but the past week or so has sure felt like spring already to me. I'm conflicted about this. While the warm weather has been bad for our snowpack and for skiing, it has been good for my daily commute and for the birds and the birders.

The St. George Winter Bird Festival is coming up this weekend, and I'm hoping to make it on at least one of the field trips and spend some quality time visiting my grandma down in the sunny climes of Southern Utah. I'm also hoping to pick up a few of the rarities that have been hanging out down there. I'll report back on how it goes! I feel like the festival has gone through some decline in attendance since I started attending 10 years ago. I've been thinking maybe next year we could attend as a club and sponsor a booth at the festival.

I haven't had much time to go birding lately, but I do winter raptor surveys every other week at work, so at least that gives me a chance to see some birds. Last week while driving through Terra, the little town on the west side of Johnson Pass in Tooele County, I saw a flock of 20+ Evening Grosbeaks. I saw a flock of birds fly in and thought "ooh those don't look like starlings - I bet it's something good." So I flipped the truck around and put my scope up on them. That same survey I saw two separate pairs of Golden Eagles sitting in tandem on power poles. The Golden Eagles and the Red-tailed Hawks are pairing up and checking out potential nesting locations. Great Horned Owls should already be sitting on nests. Sure makes me feel like spring is on the way!

Over in Rush Valley I've been seeing a resident Ferruginous Hawk who likes to sit on the same sprinkler wheel week after week. This week, I was surprised when in place of the Ferruginous Hawk there was a Bald Eagle. The Ferruginous Hawk was circling overhead, patiently waiting for the eagle to buzz off so he/she could have his/her favorite perch back.

I've enjoyed reading the posts and seeing the pictures of those who have been out birding. Keep them coming! Also, if you have a request for a short bird walk, email me and let me know. I might start making the model airplane park/Jordan River Trail a monthly thing as I think it would be interesting to see what birds come and go as the seasons change.

Hope you are all well, and happy birding!
Keeli Marvel



Bird of the Month

Ruby-crowned Kinglet

Regulus calendula

by Milt Moody

Before I was a birder I was walking up in Payson Canyon one day on the dirt road to Pete Winward Reservoir when I heard an interesting and very loud bird call. I looked for the bird, but as it turns out I was looking for much too large a bird and much too low down in the trees than I should have been. I decided to call it the "trick-or-treat bird" until I found out what kind of bird it actually was. I got into birding and found out it was a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, a dainty and kind of nervous-acting bird with a big voice. This is a bird I've become very fond of for its voice and unique behavior.

For the last month or so I've had a pair in my yard eating seeds, flitting about the trees and sipping from my birdbath. Yesterday I came eye to eye with the female as I went to fill the feeders. We looked at each other for at least 10 seconds from about 5 feet away. It seemed like she knew I was a friend -- and I am.

Kinglets comprise a unique group of birds which is now given family status with the name "Regulidae" having a mere 6 species in the whole family ["Regulus" and "kinglet" both mean "little king"]. We have two species here in Utah -- the only ones in our hemisphere. There are two other species in Europe: the Goldcrest and the Firecrest, and one in the Canary Islands and another one in the mountains of Taiwan. That's the whole family.

The Ruby-crowned Kinglet is among the smallest birds of North America. With a length of 4.25 inches it is just larger than the Broad-tailed Hummingbird and the related Golden-crowned Kinglet which are both about 4 inches in length. (The Calliope Hummingbird is the smallest bird in North America at about 3.25 inches).

Ruby-crowned Kinglets breed in spruce and fir forests and lay from 5 to an incredible 12 eggs which can weigh, all together as much as about 80 percent of the female's body weight. Male kinglets aggressively defend their territories with vigorous singing and by raising their intimidating ruby crown feathers while the female builds the deep, flexible, cup-shaped nest in conifers using mainly mosses, lichens, grasses, papery bark, etc. The female incubates the eggs for 14 to 17 days and both parents care for the initially featherless birds at hatching until they can fledge in 16 to 22 days.

With their characteristic wing flicking and fluttering flight, they move actively through leaves of deciduous trees and needles of conifers in search of insects and spiders or their eggs and larvae. They can also hover to get nectar from blossoms and flycatch for active prey. In the winter they can eat fruits and seeds as they often travel in small scattered



Photo by Paul Higgins



Photo by Jack Binch

groups (kettles) with chickadees, creepers and nuthatches as they search for food farther down along the foothills. Some even show up in people's yards!

I'm glad to be acquainted with these charming little birds and always smile a little bit when I see one flitting like a butterfly around the apple blossoms or hear the unique song when I'm walking in the mountain forests.

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

Payson Christmas Bird Count – January 3, 2015

by Bryan Shirley

I am just finishing up the data input for the Payson Christmas Bird Count. This was only the 6th year of the count, but this was our best year so far. We ended up with 91 species (plus one more for count week).

We added 9 species that we haven't recorded in previous years:

Wood Duck
Long-tailed Duck
Eared Grebe
Black-crowned Night Heron
Goshawk
Sandhill Crane
Sora
White-breasted Nuthatch
Evening Grosbeak

Also large numbers of mountain species were around and we smashed our high count records on many species. For example we only have seen Steller's Jay 4 of 6 years and our high was 33, but this year we recorded 151.

Thanks to everybody who participated - in any of the Christmas Bird Counts.

Field Trip Report

Saratoga Springs, Jordan River Parkway - January 17, 2015

by Keeli Marvel

We had a good turn out for the bird walk at the Jordan River Model Airplane Park in Saratoga Springs. If I remember correctly, we had about 16 people attend. We didn't find anything too unusual, but our best birds were Cedar Waxwings, a Mountain Chickadee, a Prairie Falcon perched on one of the power poles at the beginning of the walk, and a pair of Greater Yellowlegs seen by just two of us at the end of the bird walk on the other side of the river by Inlet Park. A complete list of species is below.

Saratoga Springs model airplane park, Utah, US-UT
Jan 17, 2015 9:07 AM - 11:07 AM
17 species (+1 other taxa)

Canada Goose 200 All flyovers-several large groups
Great Blue Heron 1 Flyover
Red-tailed Hawk 1
Greater Yellowlegs 2 Seen by Keeli marvel and Nicole Christensen in the pond in front of the hydroelectric plant at

mouth of Jordan River. They were calling and we spent about 30 minutes watching them feeding in the mud around the open water near the north end of inlet park

gull sp. 100 Distant flyovers

Downy Woodpecker 1

Northern Flicker (Red-shafted) 7

Prairie Falcon 1

Western Scrub-Jay 1

Black-billed Magpie 10

Common Raven 2

Black-capped Chickadee 10

Mountain Chickadee 1

American Robin 30

Cedar Waxwing 5

Spotted Towhee 3

Song Sparrow 3

Dark-eyed Junco 5

Backyard Bird of the Month

January 2015

Jack Binch - Sandy

A **Western Screech-Owl** checked out my owl box in January. Short lived though, it was only here two days. :-)

Lyle Bingham - Payson

White-breasted Nuthatch with 5 BC chickadees 3days ago. It looks like a funny chickadee that hangs upside down on the tree. :-)

Jeff Cooper - Pleasant Grove

A **Merlin** and a **Sharp-shinned Hawk** on the same day.

Eric Huish - Pleasant Grove

I've had some particularly brightly colored **Pink-sided Juncos** visiting this January.

Milt Moody - Provo

I saw a different-looking bird on the ground with its back towards me -- with a yellow patch on the rump! A **Yellow-rumped Warbler** -- and on the ground!

Alton Thygerson - Provo

Western Scrub-Jay - As many as six coming to feeders at the same time.

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

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.

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.