

Utah County Birders Newsletter

June 2015



Contents

[June Meeting](#)

[Upcoming Field Trips](#)

[Captain's Log](#)

[Bird of the Month](#)

[Field Trip Report - Skipper Bay Trail](#)

[Backyard Bird of the Month](#)

JUNE MEETING:

Thursday, June 11th, 2015 - 7:00 pm

Our meeting this month will be a short **evening bird walk** at the mouth of **Rock Canyon in Provo**. Meet at the parking area at the mouth of the canyon and we will bird around the area.

FIELD TRIPS:

Friday, June 5th, 2015. 7am-12pm. **Diamond Fork hotspots**. Meet in the Provo East Bay Sam's Club Parking Lot. Keeli Marvel will lead the same trip she has led for the Great Salt Lake Bird Festival three years running. We usually get a wide variety of species on this trip.

Thursday, June 11th, 2015. 7:00 pm - Our meeting this month will be a short **evening bird walk** at the mouth of **Rock Canyon in Provo**. Meet at the parking area at the mouth of the canyon and we will bird around the area.

Saturday, June 20th, 2015. 7am. **River Lane in Utah County**. Led by Sheryl Serrano and Mabelle Johnson. Meet in the Provo East Bay Sam's Club Parking Lot.

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

Utah County Birders Captain's Log: June 2015

by Keeli Marvel

Well it finally feels like summer has arrived! Spring brought a fair amount of migrant movement (including myself). I took advantage of the long Memorial Day weekend to make a quick trip down to southern Arizona and back. I definitely wouldn't recommend that drive in one go on a regular basis. That is a long haul! I took my little sister, a fledgling birder, with me and we headed south. The weather was surprisingly cool for southern Arizona. While it was still raining up here, it was perfect in the mid 70s and low 80s for the couple of days we spent down there.

We stopped at Navajo bridge, in Cameron, to look for the California Condors that normally hang out there, but the bridge had been fenced off and the weather was producing some spitting rain so we pressed on. We got a little sleet outside Flagstaff but by the time we hit Tucson the weather was on its best behavior again.

The next morning outside our hotel I located a Vermillion Flycatcher- the first my sister has ever seen. From the hotel we headed to the Sonoran Desert Museum. The drive out to the museum is really nice and takes you right through the saguaro cacti forest. We stopped at a little viewpoint with a trailhead on the way to the museum where I saw Brown-crested Flycatchers and Black-tailed Gnatcatchers.

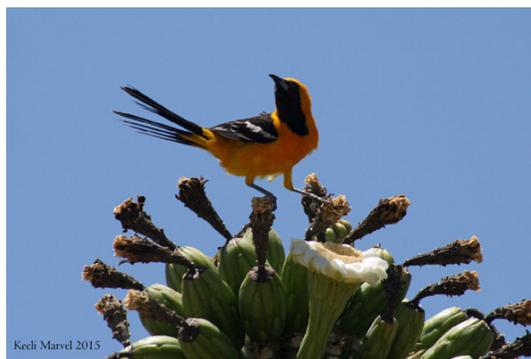
At the Sonoran Desert Museum one of the first birds we encountered was a lifer Pyrrhuloxia. The museum has both captive bird enclosures and wild birds that come in and we saw tons of wild Gila Woodpeckers, White-winged Doves, and Cactus Wrens and enjoyed seeing all the hummingbirds up close. We even got great looks at a Hooded Oriole feeding from one of the cactus blooms. The Sonoran Desert Museum exhibits were mostly outdoors and the museum does a really good job of showcasing desert species in their native environments. I highly recommend a visit to anyone in the area.

After the museum, we had tacos (when in Rome) and headed south to Madera Canyon where we had a room reserved at the Santa Rita Lodge. Madera Canyon, as others who have been there have reported, is a really cool place full of really cool birds. The canyon is only a few miles from top to bottom and has a campground, several picnic areas, and three lodges which all cater specifically to birders. On the way into the canyon my sister got to see her first Greater Roadrunner running across the road.

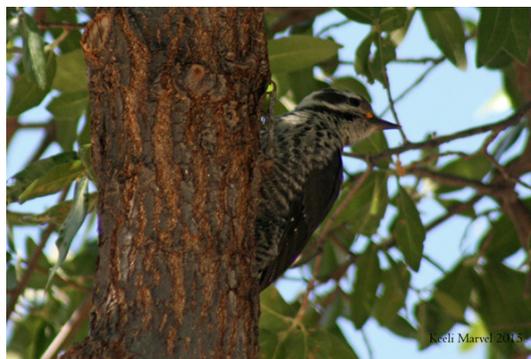
We got settled into the lodge and ran back into Green Valley, the nearest town, for more Mexican food for dinner. Back at the lodge by dusk, we waited patiently, and were rewarded with views of a pair of elf owls emerging from a pole at the lodge



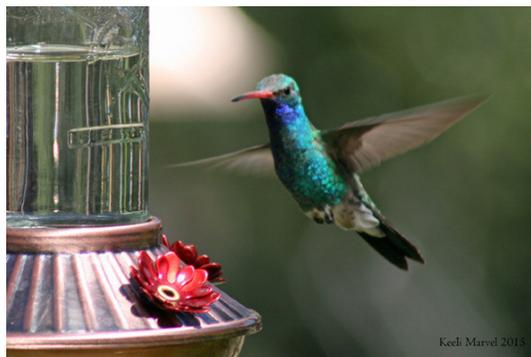
Pyrrhuloxia
photo by Keeli Marvel



Hooded Oriole
photo by Keeli Marvel



Arizona Woodpecker eating something yellow.
photo by Keeli Marvel



Broad-billed Hummingbird
photo by Keeli Marvel

where they nest. After dark, we drove up to the top of the canyon where we heard and saw Mexican Whip-poor-wills, and heard Common Poorwills, more Elf Owls calling, and both Western and Whiskered Screech Owls. Later in the evening, around 9:30, I wandered around the lodge parking area to see if I could get eyes on one of the Elf Owls that were still chuckling from the trees around the lodge, and I heard a Mexican Spotted Owl calling.

The next day we got up early for a training run (which luckily I took my binoculars on) and we saw Painted Redstarts at the top of the canyon, and Rufous-crowned Sparrows, Bridled Titmice, Mexican Jays, and Acorn Woodpeckers up the Bog Springs Campground Road. A large tom turkey put on an intimidating display in the middle of the canyon road and surprised us by making quite a lot of noise gobbling and fluffing his wings up and dragging the tips of them along the road. I think we were more impressed than the hen he was putting on the display for. At the bottom of the canyon there was a Bell's Vireo calling at the National Forest information/fee collection site near the turn off for Proctor Road.

Each of the three lodges up Madera Canyon keeps up an impressive array of feeders and the birders and birds flock to them. Back at Santa Rita Lodge after our run I spent an hour relaxing, watching the feeders, and chatting with some of the other birders. I managed to pick up a few more lifers just sitting there including a Gray Hawk circling overhead, a pair of Arizona Woodpeckers, a Bronzed Cowbird, and a Magnificent Hummingbird (magnificent indeed!) I really enjoyed watching the Broad-billed Hummingbirds come into the feeders in droves and I was so surprised at how colorful they are. Occasionally a displaying male caught the light just right and all his blues and greens would really jump out at us.

Other birds that weren't new to me but that we're fun to see as they came into the feeders included Blue Grosbeak, Scott's Oriole, Bridled Titmouse, Acorn Woodpecker and White-breasted Nuthatch.

That afternoon we took a picnic lunch and headed south to Patagonia Lake State Park. Unfortunately, it was a holiday weekend and the park was overflowing with people. We were also there during the hottest part of the afternoon but we saw a Black Phoebe, Great-tailed Grackles, a flock of Bushtits, and a few other more common species when we wandered around after lunch.

Back in Madera Canyon that afternoon we headed up to a turnoff in the canyon where one of the hotel guests had reported an Elegant Trogon. We heard it call once, but couldn't ever relocate it. On the way back down the road to the lodge I could hear Sulphur-bellied Flycatchers calling. We ended the night by watching a copy of *The Big Year* loaned by the lodge (which my fledgling sidekick thoroughly enjoyed), and a quiet evening listening to the Elf Owls chuckling around the lodge again. The next day it was back on the road for a long drive home.

In two days I picked up 13 new life birds and my sister got a crash course in birding and still came away saying she'd thoroughly enjoyed herself. Southern Arizona was a really cool place for birding, and I look forward to another trip back to try and see the birds we missed and explore more of the area. Those 13 species brought my life list up to 474 species. Maybe I could go for 500 this year? What do you think? Where to next?

Happy Birding!

Bird of the Month

Elegant Trogon

Trogon elegans

by Keeli Marvel

I decided to highlight this bird because of my recent near-sighting. As I mentioned in my Captain's Article for this month, I recently spent the weekend down in Southern Arizona where I *almost* got to see one. My sister and I both heard it. It had been spotted the day before by another birder staying at our lodge, but we were not so lucky.

The name trogon come from a Greek word meaning gnawer, referring to the hooked shape of their bill they use to eat insects or fruit. The Elegant Trogon is a magnificent looking but elusive bird. They looks like a Christmas tree all decked out in red and green, and their call sounds like either a seal or a fox yipping. They have a large eye, and they sit on tree branches with their tails hanging straight down. The under sides of their tails are white with a unique black barring called vermiculation which reminds me of vermicelli noodles you can get at Vietnamese Restaurants.



photo by Bryan Shirley

The breeding range of the Elegant Trogon extends from Central American to Mexico and up into the tiniest southern corner of Arizona. According to Birds of North American (BNA) online, the first nest in the U.S. was discovered in Madera Canyon back in 1944. Southern Arizona because such of a hotspot destination for birders to see this species in the 1970s that the Arizona Game and Fish and the U.S. Forest Service began conducting studies to determine whether so much birding traffic would have a negative impact on the health of the trogon population. Despite these studies, a lot of the bird's biology still remains a mystery (Kunzmann et al. 1998, BNA online).

The Elegant Trogon has one relative, the Eared Trogon, which is an even rarer visitor to the U.S. Other species of Trogons occur further south, but none have ever been recorded in the US, to my knowledge. Elegant Trogons are found in pine-oak woodlands, and seem to especially prefer riparian areas (generally canyons with creeks or rivers) for their nesting habitat. They often nest in vacant woodpecker holes (which the Acorn Woodpeckers seem to leave a LOT of down there), and the male and female will take turns sitting on the eggs and hunting for food.

Some folks who stopped to check out the feeders at the Santa Rita lodge where we were staying gave us instructions on how to see the nesting pair of Elegant Trogons up one of the main trails at the top of Madera Canyon, however, we were out of time to hike up far enough to see them. Other sightings have been recorded further down in the canyon by various birders (including the call heard very clearly by my sister and me). I'd very much like to return to Madera Canyon or any of the other canyons in the area where they are known to occur to get a better look at an Elegant Trogon. Such a cool species!

Information for this article was taken from the Sibley Guide to Birds by David Allen Sibley and from the Birds of North American Online Article: Kunzmann, M. R., L. S. Hall and R. R. Johnson. 1998. Elegant Trogon (*Trogon elegans*), The Birds of North America Online (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Retrieved from the Birds of North America Online:

<http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/357doi:10.2173/bna.357>

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

Field Trip Report

Skipper Bay Trail - May 9, 2015

by Keeli Marvel

Nineteen birders met this morning for a Utah County Birders field trip on Skipper Bay Trail. The rain held off until the very end and we got several FOY birds including Bullock's Orioles, Green-tailed Towhee, and an Eastern Kingbird. Highlights also included Savannah sparrows calling from the fields on the east side of the trail, an Osprey bringing a fish back to its nest platform and a Caspian Tern catching a fish in the lake. We ended the trip with 37 species. Thanks to all who joined us, especially the new birders who were attending for the first time!

A complete list of birds seen is included below.

Happy Birding!

May 9, 2015

Skipper Bay Trail

Traveling 2.1 miles

160 Minutes Observers: 19

22 Canada Goose

4 Mallard

3 Cinnamon Teal

2 Ring-necked Pheasant

3 Western/Clark's Grebe

2 Osprey

2 Killdeer -- Heard only

2 Black-necked Stilt

1 Spotted Sandpiper -- Heard only

1 Caspian Tern

6 Mourning Dove

1 Broad-tailed Hummingbird -- Heard only

1 Belted Kingfisher -- Flew over while we were gathering at the parking spot at the beginning of the trip

3 Downy Woodpecker

9 Western Kingbird

1 Eastern Kingbird

3 Black-billed Magpie

20 Northern Rough-winged Swallow

5 Tree Swallow

1 Violet-green Swallow

1 Bank Swallow

6 Barn Swallow

2 Ruby-crowned Kinglet

1 Hermit Thrush

12 American Robin

9 Yellow Warbler

7 Yellow-rumped Warbler

2 Green-tailed Towhee

2 Chipping Sparrow

2 Savannah Sparrow -- Seen and heard calling in the fields east of the trail

4 Song Sparrow

5 White-crowned Sparrow

10 Red-winged Blackbird

2 Western Meadowlark

12 Yellow-headed Blackbird

3 Brown-headed Cowbird

4 Bullock's Oriole

Backyard Bird of the Month

May 2015

Jack Binch - Sandy

Looks like the **Kestrels** will be my yard bird for a while. They are keeping most other birds away. (see photos)

Lyle Bingham - Payson

We've been seeing **Evening Grosbeaks** recently at our feeder in Payson, UT.

Herb Clayson - Salem

Middle of the month 2 **Forster's Terns** flew over my yard beyond the head of Salem Pond.

Eric Huish - Pleasant Grove

So many good birds this month. I guess my favorite was the singing male **Wilson's Warbler** that stayed for a couple of weeks. Runners-up - Cooper's Hawk, Hermit Thrush, Common Raven, MacGillivray's Warbler, Western Tanager, Lazuli Bunting and Cassin's Finch.

Keeli Marvel

Too many to choose! Last week we had our windows open and just after dark I heard **Common Poorwills** calling in my neighborhood! I've also had **Yellow-headed and Red-winged Blackbirds** coming into my feeders and a **Bullock's Oriole** hanging out in the yard. Every evening this last week there have been a few **Common Nighthawks** cruising around the neighborhood.

Milt Moody - Provo

The **Cassin's Finches** left and then came back again with some new members of the family.

Bruce Robinson - West Jordan

Common Grackle - Spent an afternoon in my yard and on my deck. Great looks!

Dennis Shirley - Shemya Island, Western Aleutians, Alaska

My last two birds on Shemya before I left last Wed. were **HAWFINCH** and **ORIENTAL GREENFINCH**, not bad North American birds.

Alton Thygerson - Provo

Band-tailed Pigeon - Two have been sporadically coming to backyard. One day, on the ground and under a feeder at the same time were two Band-tailed Pigeons, two Eurasian Collared-Dove, two Mourning Dove, and two California Quail.

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



American Kestrels in nest box
Three hatched today and have been very well fed. Poppa brought in two mice and three baby birds. Momma stashed most.
photo by Jack Binch (nest box camera)



American Kestrels chicks in nest box
photo by Jack Binch (nest box camera)

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.