

Utah County Birders Newsletter

December 2016



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DECEMBER MEETING:

Thursday, December 8th, 2016

Our meeting this month will be in **preparation for the Christmas Bird Count(s)** and will be on December 8th at 7 pm 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, [801-722-9346](tel:801-722-9346)

Meet at 7:00 pm at the Monte L. Bean Museum. 645 East 1430 North, Provo, UT

FIELD TRIPS:

We have no field trips planned this month. Come out and join us on a Christmas Bird Count!

Saturday, December 17th, 2016: Provo Christmas Bird Count - We will be giving out assignments at the meeting (Dec 8th at the Bean Museum). Contact Bryan if you want to participate but won't be at the meeting. Plan on attending the result compiling and pot luck dinner too after the bird count!. Bryan Shirley: bt_shirley@hotmail.com, 801-722-9346

Sunday, January 1st, 2017: Jordan River Christmas Bird Count - 7am---EASY-MODERATE - Leaders: Jeanne Le Ber and Ray Smith - Meet at 7am at Kneaders Bakery and Cafe, 177 East 13800 South in Draper, UT 84020. 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).

Monday, January 2nd, 2017: Payson Christmas Bird Count - Contact Bryan Shirley for info about the bird count. Bryan Shirley: bt_shirley@hotmail.com, 801-722-9346

Utah County Birders Captain's Log: December 2016

Happy December!

Hope you all had a fabulous turkey day. I got to spend some quality time with family and friends, and got out to do a little birding besides! So...big announcement.... I FINALLY hit the gold point level this last weekend, with the help of a quick trip down south, and a quick trip up north.

I headed south a couple of weekends ago with Terri as copilot to chase down some birds in southern Utah. I failed yet again to turn up a single Rufous-crowned Sparrow, and not for lack of trying! I'm not sure they even exist at this point. Hah. We spent a short time cruising the neighborhood where the Broad-tailed Hummingbird was reported, but unfortunately we never caught the homeowner at home, and were unable to track down the hummingbird. Fortunately, several people have had better luck since then and have posted some great pics. Sad I missed that one!

Terri and I spent most of a day Saturday checking Springdale and Dalton Wash for birds. We ended the day with a drive up to Kolob Reservoir and Terrace. We spent a fair amount of time driving around the Whispering Pines development looking for Acorn Woodpeckers and Williamson Sapsuckers without any luck. We did locate 4 separate Lewis's Woodpeckers between there and Kolob Reservoir, so that was fun! It's hard to be bummed when you see Lewis's Woodpeckers, even though we missed our target species. We also found 2 Surf Scoters on Kolob Reservoir. Must be the year for them since they seem to be showing up at most of the mountain reservoirs.

At the end of the day we pulled into Lava Point and, as the sun was turning the distant sandstone cliffs of Zion NP rosy pink, Terri's eagle eyes spotted a dark form in a tree way down in the valley below Lava Point. I was making noises about the cold and getting ready to head back to the car when Terri said, "See that dead tree? Yeah. See the dark spot in the tree next to it? Yeah." We grabbed the scopes and sure enough, she'd spotted a California Condor setting up to roost for the night. Fun fact – condors have huge blue-gray feet. Although we couldn't get a good look at the bird's head, we could see the ginormous feet, and as it turns out, they were condor feet. We were ecstatic! To top it all off, our drive back down from Kolob Terrace was graced with a beautifully vivid sunset. What a great way to spend a day!

We finished up our quick trip the next day with a drive around Sand Hollow Reservoir, a stop at Grandpa's Fishing (Stratton) Pond and Quail Creek Reservoir. Cactus Wrens and Sagebrush Sparrows were perched on cholla bushes near the road above the east side of the reservoir. Down on Sand Hollow we spotted one lone Tundra Swan surrounded by thousands of ducks. Grandpas' Fishing Pond held a few interesting ducks – a drake Hooded Merganser and at least one Greater Scaup. Incidentally, Grandpa's Fishing Pond has been upgraded to a DWR Community Fishing Pond and now has parking lots, walking trails, picnic tables, a playground, manicured landscaping, and public restrooms. The ducks don't seem to mind the improvements.

At our last stop at Quail Creek we found a Barrow's Goldeneye keeping company with a raft of Common Goldeneye near the south end of the reservoir. At the north end where the creek flows into the reservoir we tried one more time to find a Rufous-crowned Sparrow, but found a very vocal mixed flock of Bewick's Wren and Ruby-crowned Kinglets instead. I still don't think Rufous-crowns exist. Hah.

That trip got me up to 352 points. With my goal in sight, I headed up north this last Saturday. I made a quick stop at Box Elder Campground in Sardine Canyon and found a large flock of Turkeys, but no Pacific Wren that had been reported there a few days before. From there I pushed onward to Hyrum Reservoir. Most of the birds on the reservoir were hanging out on the southwest edge of the reservoir across the lake from the state park when I got there, but I spotted a Pacific Loon near the dam on the northeast side, and then later, the Red-necked Grebe out in the middle cruising around a large flock of gulls. I ran into Mike Mahlmquist getting ready to put his boat out on the water hoping to get some good shots of the loons. If you get a chance, check out his photos. They turned out pretty great. I believe he posted them to one of the hotlines. The Pacific Loon and Red-necked Grebe brought me up to an even 360 points and gold status for the UCB competition.

Whew! It only took all year. What a great challenge! I hope everyone who has participated has had as much fun as I have getting out and birding this year. We'll have our award ceremony at our January dinner meeting, and the prizes are shaping up to be really great this year, so I hope everyone joins us!

As we move into December, it's time for the Christmas Bird Counts and there are counts all over the state that need our help. If you can't make it out to do a count, but you live inside a count circle and have a bird feeder, then do some feeder watching and record the time and all the birds you see at your feeder instead!

Hope everyone has a happy and safe holiday season, and, as always, Happy Birding!

Keeli Marvel

Bird of the Month

Japanese Crested Ibis

Nipponia nippon
by Bryan Shirley

This month I decided to write about a cool species that you aren't likely to see around Utah Lake. It is the Japanese Crested Ibis (or some books just call it Crested Ibis). First a bit of background. Crested Ibis we once found throughout much of Japan and mountainous areas of China. In the early 1900's numbers were declining due to habitat loss, pesticides, & hunting. By the 1970's they were thought to be extinct in China and only 8 birds remained in Japan, all on an island called Sado in the Sea of Japan. By 1981 there were only 5 birds remaining. They were all captured and put into captivity in a last-ditch effort to try to save the species. Unfortunately, they failed to reproduce and slowly died off.

Remember Martha, the last Passenger Pigeon? She lived a lonely life in the Cincinnati Zoo, being the last of her species until she died in 1914. Well the Crested Ibis is Japan's Passenger Pigeon and last, lonely, Crested Ibis was a female named Kin who died in 2002.



Just like the Passenger Pigeon, that could have been the end but this story. Another species gone forever. But it looks like this story may have a happy ending. After 18 years with no sightings in China, a few isolated populations were located. The total number was 46 birds. Ornithologist from China and Japan worked together to catch and try to another captive breeding program in Japan. This time things have taken off and they currently have 173 ibis in captivity and 217 wild ibis on Sado (I am not sure about the status in China). This year they celebrated the second generation of wild ibis breeding and producing offspring.

Last month I was in Japan on business and arranged my schedule so I had a couple extra days. I had never been to Sado and ever since they reintroduced the Ibis I had wanted to go. I thought it was a good omen that the bullet train to NE Japan is called the Ibis (toki in Japanese). Once I made it to Sado the ibis were easy to find – I saw about 40 in a couple hours. Since it was supposed to be a business trip I didn't take my camera but got a photo with my phone though my binos. They always have the red facial skin, but are gray in breeding plumage and turn pinkish-white in winter.

Backyard Bird of the Month

November 2016

Jack Binch - Sandy -- Winter birds are showing up. I had a small flock of **Cedar Waxwings** in the yard.

Yvonne Carter – Highland -- The blue **Western Scrub Jays** are showing up nicely in the snow.

Eric Huish - Pleasant Grove -- I finally refilled the thistle feeder outside my bedroom window and got all my **Lesser Goldfinches** back.

Keeli Marvel - Saratoga Springs -- A **Bald Eagle** flew over my house last week in Saratoga Springs.

Milt Moody – Provo -- I was pleased to see a **Red-breasted Nuthatch** show up at my feeder. Hopefully he will stay the whole winter like last year.

Leila Ogden – Orem -- I had a beautiful **Kestrel** checking out my owl box. No owl though.

Dennis Shirley - Elk Ridge -- Flock of 40 **Sandhill Crane** circling high over Elk Ridge 11/21/16.

Kay Stone – Lehi -- I have observed a **Spotted Towhee** under our feeders a few times in the month of November.