

Utah County Birders Newsletter

November 2016



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NOVEMBER MEETING:

HawkWatch is holding a training for Winter Raptor Surveys on Thursday, Nov 10th at 6pm at the HWI office (2240 S 900 E SLC). Anyone who is interested in finding out how the surveys are conducted or volunteering for a driving survey is invited to attend this training. Due to the HawkWatch training being held on our normal meeting night, we are pushing our UCB meeting forward a week to the 17th.

Thursday, November 17th, 2016

Tom Becker, a biologist with the UDWR, recently went on a once-in-a-lifetime trip to **Africa**. Join us as he shares experiences and photographs of birds and sights from his trip.

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

FIELD TRIPS:

Saturday November 12th, 2016: 7:30am - mid-afternoon. **Loon Loop**, weather dependent. If the weather looks like it will cooperate, we will visit some of the mountain reservoirs in search of loons and other rare waterfowl. Meet at the parking lot on 800 N. at the mouth of Provo Canyon (east of the gas station) to carpool.

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 Keeli at - keeli.marvel@gmail.com

Utah County Birders Captain's Log: November 2016

by Keeli Marvel

Nothing new and exciting to report from the home front. As those of you who access our club facebook page know, I tried for the Surf Scoters at the Heber WTP last week without success. I also spent a good chunk of time studying Common Loons on Deer Creek hoping to turn one into something rare. No luck either way, but birding is like that, right? We win some, we dip a lot. C'est la vie. It's the wins that keep me going back.

In lieu of birding success I discovered a cool little coffee shop/deli/ice cream joint in Midway worthy of a stop if you're in the area. It's the place that looks all done up Route 66 style with cars sticking out the front. You'll know what I'm talking about if you drive by there. They have amazing quiche and pastries. That's all I'm gonna say.

I heard a story on the NPR radio show Science Friday last week about Common Swifts. This is a swift species similar in appearance and habits to our White-throated Swifts. Common Swifts migrate between Scandinavia and Central Africa every year, and a new paper was recently published in the journal Current Biology which showed that some swifts may spend most of the year in flight, reminiscent of the Frigate birds I wrote about a month or so ago. In the study, they put tiny tracking devices on several Common Swifts and found that they can spend up to 10 months at a time airborne. This means they eat in flight and possibly even sleep in flight. How cool is that? In a similar article by the same author, they used Doppler weather radar to track Common Swifts and found that they ascend to a higher altitude at dusk for nocturnal roosting, meaning they're probably flying up to a higher altitude, and then sleeping on the wing overnight as they glide back down. Pretty cool use of non-invasive technology, I think. If you'd like to read more, the journal article about the nocturnal ascents is here:

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0003347212005556>

The abstract about the long term flights can be found here:

<http://www.cell.com/current-biology/abstract/S0960-9822%2816%2931063-6>

I can't believe it's November already. I went to schedule something on the calendar for December and realized it's time to start thinking about Christmas Bird Counts. If you've never participated, this year is a great year to start. No expert birding knowledge is needed, just the pleasure of your company. Last year I participated in three CBCs, and I'll probably try and do the same this year. December is a busy month, I know, so pencil it in now!

Hope all is well and the birding is enjoyable.

Happy Birding!
Keeli Marvel

Bird of the Month

Wild Turkey

Meleagris gallopavo

by Robin Tuck

[Rerun article from November 2007]

It must have been 10 years ago, when one of my Church friends showed me a picture of what he said was a 40 pound Tom Turkey he had 'harvested' from the Cedar City area. This dedicated hunter wanted to see if I, a dyed-in-the-wool birder, would be shocked at the target of his hunting prowess.

As it turns out, all of the Wild Turkeys in Utah are here as the result of successful re-introductions by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources funded by the hunting community, principally, the Utah Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation. These re-introductions began with a failed attempt in 1925, which was tried again successfully in 1952 and continues today. Currently, most of the re-introductions come from Utah populations that are trapped and released in new places where the Division believes they will prosper.

Utah has two subspecies of Wild Turkeys, Rio Grande (*Meleagris gallopavo intermedia*) and Merriam's (*Meleagris gallopavo merriami*), that differ slightly in habitat selection, mature weight and coloration, with the feather tips lighter in the Merriam's. The Merriam's are concentrated in the southern part of the state and live in more mountainous terrain with ponderosa pine along with aspens, grassy meadows and oak brush. The Rio Grande turkeys are scattered throughout the state and choose to live at lower elevations favoring cottonwood river bottoms and riparian areas with oak brush.

Turkeys and other upland game birds have a high rate of reproduction, with Toms often breeding with up to 10 Hens, each having 10 to 12 eggs in their nest. Because of this, hunting is limited to Toms with the hunting season being from mid April to the end of May.

Wild Turkeys have been very successful in Utah, with an estimated population of 18,000 to 20,000 birds with most being the Rio Grande sub-species. This abundance of turkeys has caused the DWR to increase the number of Turkey permits; the 2007 number of 2900 expected to be increased at least by 30% for 2008.

Unlike their domesticated cousins, Wild Turkeys can fly for a short distance and roost in trees for the night. It was with astonishment that I watched Wild Turkeys fly out of tall cottonwoods early one morning, wondering how they got up there the evening before. Wild Turkeys are somewhat smaller than domesticated turkeys, with their average weights for Toms being 18 to 21 pounds, and for Hens being 8 to 11 pounds which accounts for their ability to fly at all.

Many birders I know began their love of birds from hunting them, then switching from shooting to simply watching. I suppose that some of these same birders still creep off in the early morning hours shotgun in hand looking for Wild Turkeys and other upland game birds. Your opinion may vary, but I appreciate the conservation efforts and dollars invested by our hunting friends.



photo by Cliff Miles

Field Trip Report

The Big Sit - Provo Airport Dike - October 8th, 2016

Team Notes

Weather: Clear, high in the 70s

Location: Provo Airport Dike Southwest Corner

Time At Location: 12 hours

Team Checklist

Canada Goose	American White Pelican	Black-capped Chickadee
Mallard	Great Blue Heron	Marsh Wren
Northern Pintail	Snowy Egret	American Robin
Gadwall	Northern Harrier	American Pipit
Ring-necked Pheasant	Red-tailed Hawk	American Goldfinch
California Quail	Belted Kingfisher	Orange-crowned Warbler
Clark's Grebe	Northern Flicker	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Eurasian Collared-Dove	American Kestrel	Song Sparrow
American Avocet	Black-billed Magpie	White-crowned Sparrow
Greater Yellowlegs	Common Raven	Dark-eyed Junco
Lesser Yellowlegs	Tree Swallow	Red-winged Blackbird
Ring-billed Gull	Cliff Swallow	Yellow-headed Blackbird
California Gull	Barn Swallow	Brewer's Blackbird
Caspian Tern		

Field Trip Report

International Center and Lee Kay Ponds - October 15th, 2016

by Keeli Marvel

On Oct 15 the UCB met for a field trip to the International Center and Lee Kay Ponds. Most of the migrants had moved on from the International Center, but highlights from the trip were a Merlin and Lincoln Sparrows at the International Center, and Thayer's and Herring Gulls at Lee Kay. Thanks to everyone who joined us!

Backyard Bird of the Month

October 2016

Jack Binch - Sandy

During that little cold spell we had in October, one of my winter **Yellow-rumped Warblers** was on my deck rails.

Jeff Cooper - Pleasant Grove

A flyover by a **Cooper's Hawk**.

Eric Huish - Pleasant Grove

American Kestrel - Very colorful, sitting majestically at the top of a tree outside my window.

Keeli Marvel - Saratoga Springs

I saw a flock of **Cedar Waxwings** passing through my neighborhood this week.

Milt Moody - Provo

A **Hermit Thrush** has been coming to my birdbath and hiding in the wild rose bush near by.

Alton Thygerson - Provo

Downy Woodpecker - Only saw it once at a suet feeder.

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