

# Utah County Birders Newsletter

## April 2017

### Contents

[April Meeting](#)

[Upcoming Field Trips](#)

[Captain's Log](#)

[Bird of the Month](#)

[Field Trip Report](#)

[Backyard Bird of the Month](#)



---

## APRIL MEETING:

**Thursday, April 13th, 2017**

It's documentary night! We will be watching a beautiful documentary about birds and some of the threats they face. The movie runs a little long, so we will start it right at 7.

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

---

## FIELD TRIPS:

**Saturday, April 8th, 2017:** 5:00am to early afternoon

### **Henefer Greater Sage-Grouse Lek**

Meet at the parking lot at the mouth of Provo Canyon to discuss lek etiquette and carpool. If there is a desire, once we visit the lek we will continue up to East Canyon reservoir to see what's there.

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](mailto:keeli.marvel@gmail.com)

---

## Utah County Birders Captain's Log: April 2017

by Keeli Marvel

Spring must be here! This last week I've seen phoebes and swallows and avocets, so the migrants are heading back. As some of you might have seen on our club Facebook page, I was out doing a survey this week at work and saw a flock of American Wigeon with a tag-a-long American Avocet in a flooded spot on the playa (aka salt flat). The sight of an avocet in breeding plumage was a nice reminder to me that spring is well on its way. I've enjoyed the snow this year, but I'm ready for some warmth and spring migration for sure.

I attended the annual Utah Wildlife Society Meetings this last week in Bryce Canyon and picked up a few good birds while hiking a couple of the trails in the park. The first morning of the meetings I went with a group on a short hike down the Fairyland Trail just outside the entrance to Bryce Canyon NP. The trailhead access road was closed due to snow, so we had a mile long walk just to get to the trailhead. Along the road we saw Pygmy and White-breasted Nuthatches, a pair of Pine Grosbeaks, Steller's Jays, Western Bluebirds, Cassin's Finches, American Robins, and Northern Flickers. I heard the beginning of what sounded like a Northern Goshawk call, but I never heard it again, and I have a sneaking suspicion it was a Steller's Jay. Jays can be good mimics, and while the Ponderosa Pine forests at Bryce are good habitat for Northern Goshawks, the clipped quality of the call and the fact that I didn't hear it again gave me reason to believe it was a Steller's Jay.

After the end of the meetings on Friday I went back into the park and drove down to the end of the park. In my experience, as you drive further into the park, the tourists start to thin out and the elevation gets higher, so you can see different species you might not see down near the entrance. Plus, the views are incredible. It's definitely worth the 15 mile drive. I stopped at an overlook called Piracy Point, and went for a walk through the woods to the overlook. Along that walk I picked up White-breasted and Red-breasted Nuthatches, making the trip a three nuthatch trip for me. I thought that was pretty interesting. Anecdotally, it seems like the Pygmy Nuthatches preferred habitat a little lower in the park and the Red-breasted Nuthatches preferred to be a little higher, and the White-breasted Nuthatches overlapped with both, which may be a form of habitat partitioning. Later that day, I drove down through Zion NP and saw more Pygmy Nuthatches on the East side of the park as well.

The weather didn't cooperate, and the shuttle was running already so I didn't do much birding in Zion, but I stopped in Springdale on my way through. I drove up to the little collection pond at the gate for the amphitheater in Springdale. There I found Rock Wrens and FOY Black Phoebes and Northern Rough-winged Swallows. I was due to meet my grandma for lunch in Hurricane, but I drove up the Dalton Wash road in Virgin a short ways to see if I could find any Rufous-crowned Sparrows. None were to be had, but I did discover that Black-throated Sparrows are back in Southern Utah (if they even left). Interesting side note- they will readily respond to playing a Rufous-crowned Sparrow call, which was interesting to me.

That's all I've got for you this month, but stay tuned because I'll have some really exciting birds to talk about in my next article! I'm headed to Key West, Dry Tortugas NP and the bottom of the Grand Canyon at the end of the month, so I'm looking forward to reporting some awesome life birds.

Happy spring and happy birding!

---

## Bird of the Month

Brown Creeper (*Certhia americana*)

by Jeremy Telford

The first time I saw a Brown Creeper I was up past South Fork Park in the Provo Canyon area. My wife and I, birders for about a month, were sitting in the car with our binoculars and camera trained on a distant bird feeder. All of the sudden a little round flash of brown and white zoomed in front of our car and onto the base of a nearby tree. We turned the camera to take a picture, pushed the button, and the camera froze. We got no pictures of the Creeper that day, and usually, still being a beginning birder, I won't count a bird on my life list that I can't verify through photographs, but once seen the Brown Creeper is hard to mistake.

The naturalist W. M. Tyler once wrote that Brown Creeper "looks like a fragment of detached bark that is defying the law of gravitation by moving upward over the trunk, and as he flies off to another tree he resembles a little dry leaf blown about by the wind." (source- Cornell Lab of

Ornithology website). A leaf is a pretty good description. The overall body shape of this small bird is oval and flat, and the slightly forked tail juts out from the body like the base of a leaf. The back of the bird blends well with the bark of the tree it clings to, being mostly brown with streaks of buff coloring. There is a bolder buff streak just above each eye. The chest and belly (if you see them) are a bright unmarked white. Add to that a slightly down-curved bill and you have yourself a Brown Creeper.

The Brown Creeper can be found throughout North America in Winter, but during the summer they tend to hang out in more mountainous regions. Utah is one of the lucky mountainous regions (source- Cornell Lab of Ornithology). Look for this small bird in evergreen or mixed



photo by Jeremy Telford; note earwig prey

evergreen/deciduous forests. The Creeper flies from the upper parts of one tree to the base of another spiraling up the trunk as it uses its thin curved bill to probe for insects in crevices of the bark.

These are common birds, but that doesn't necessarily mean they are always easy to find. I have had the best success in winter and early spring before there are many leaves on the trees. Though I have seen them in my local neighborhood I see them most often when hiking the scrub oak at the base of the hills or mountains. Sometimes they will be on the scrub oak themselves but more often they go for the taller trees that are interspersed throughout. Look for a small bird hopping up the tree (if you see one going down it is more likely a nuthatch). If it hops out of view just be patient as they spiral when they climb and you will hopefully get a clearer view.

Of course knowing the song and sounds of the Brown Creeper can help you find one even faster. The song is a beautiful mixture of high thin notes. I've unfortunately never been good at describing bird song, but Cornell's website describes it as singing the phrase beautiful trees. When not doing their full song they can still tweet out long high notes which can easily be mistaken for Golden-crowned Kinglets. And if that still doesn't help they do have playable sound bytes on the Cornell website itself ([https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Brown\\_Creeper/sounds](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Brown_Creeper/sounds)).

And if you do happen to mistake a Golden-crowned Kinglet's song for that of a Brown Creeper it is still okay. Just let me know where you found it, I still need to see one of those.

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

---

## Field Trip Report

Dennis Shirley led an owling Field Trip on March 11th. Report to come.

---

## Backyard Bird of the Month

Jack Binch, Sandy

My favorite for March is the last of the winter **Yellow-rumps**.

Milt Moody, Provo

A **Townsend's Solitaire** and a **Hermit Thrush** have come to drink at my bird bath. The Hermit Thrush has been coming now and then for a few weeks now. A **Yellow-rumped Warbler** is still coming to my suet feeder. He's come almost all winter.

Alton Thygerson, Provo

**Great Horned Owl**. Audible only at midnight and for one night.

Yvonne Carter

**Spotted Towhees** flying and singing around the yard, besides **American** and **Lesser Goldfinches**, **Chickadees**, **Scrub jays**.

Leila Ogden

I have a nesting **Western Screech owl** in my owl box this year. She came at end of Feb. and flies out every night at dark. I don't know whether eggs have hatched or not. Haven't heard or seen anything.

Jeff Cooper, Pleasant Grove

A soaring **Red-tailed Hawk**.

Report your favorite backyard bird each month to Josh Kreitzer at [joshkreitzer@gmail.com](mailto:joshkreitzer@gmail.com)

---