

Utah County Birders Newsletter

January 2018

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2018 Birding Challenge and Other News

The most exciting part of being a Utah County Birder is participating in the Birding Challenges. Please review the rules for the new 2018 challenge and species lists provided by Milt Moody on this page: <http://www.utahbirds.org/ucb/BirderChallenge2018.html> Good birding!

As a reminder, the American Birding Association has created a Code of Ethics to help us balance our desire to see as many birds as possible with our responsibility to promote their conservation. You can read it in full here: <http://listing.aba.org/ethics/>

In other news, Keeli Marvel will continue to serve as President (yay!), and she will also take on the role of Meeting Coordinator. Suzi Holt will now serve as the Utah County Birders Field Trip Coordinator.

JANUARY MEETING

Thursday, January 11th, 2018 Golden Corral, 7:00PM

Dinner at Golden Corral in Orem (225 W University Pkwy, Orem). Pay on your own and join us as we introduce the 2018 birding challenge, our new field trip coordinator, and enjoy a meal together. As we have done in the past, we will have a back room reserved for our group. Hope to see you all there!

FIELD TRIP:

Saturday, Jan. 20th, 2018: Salem Pond/Surrounding Area

Meet at 8 am in the Salem pond parking lot by the park. We will check out the pond, then do a snipe hunt! We will be out until noon.

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 Suzi Holt at - suzergholt@gmail.com

Utah County Birders Captain's Log: January 2018

by Keeli Marvel

Hope you guys aren't tired of me yet, because I'm sticking around for another year! Hope everyone had a lovely Christmas and a Happy New Years! We're bringing the challenge back this year, so Jan 1 it'll be time to get back out there and start seeing birds! To get you in the mood, I bring you part 2 of my South Texas birding trip:

After a fruitful Big Day birding all over South TX Sam and I had planned a much more laid back Pontoon boat trip along the Rio Grande River. Unfortunately a fog bank had crept in overnight, so the first half of the trip was socked in. Despite the fog, and eventually, after it lifted enough we were able to get a couple more lifers. As we slowly motored down the Rio Grande we saw Altamira Orioles (which were so bright they stood out, despite the fog), a Gray Hawk, Green, Ringed, and Belted Kingfishers (all three possible in this area), and trees FULL of Black Vultures. At one point a pair of Border Patrol boats cruised past us in the fog. On our return trip to the dock we got a surprising look at a Pyrrhuloxia, an uncommon, but not totally unusual species in the area.



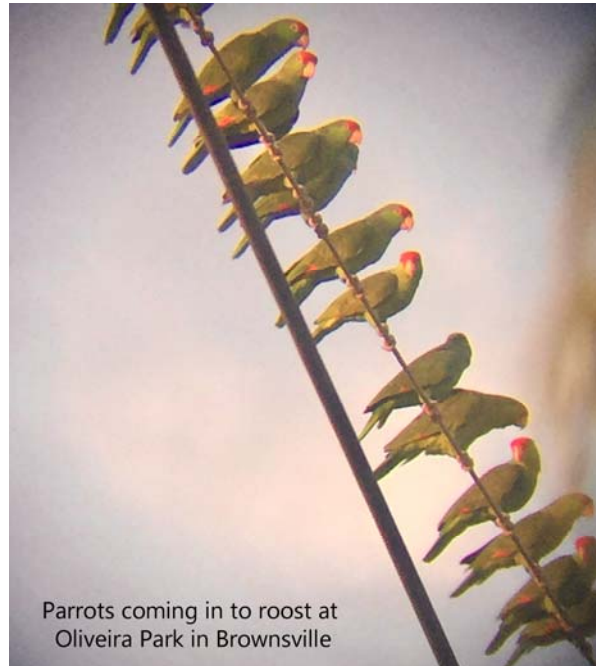
Trees full of Vultures, photo credit: Sam Phillips



Following our foggy boat ride the tour bus navigated its way around some very tight turns to take us to Anzalduas Park, a few miles down the river. There we got great looks at another Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet (which, if you'll remember from my last article, is the smallest flycatcher in North America). We got to watch Green Jays hard at work stashing acorns much like Acorn Woodpeckers. We also saw several Great Kiskadees, a stunning male Vermillion Flycatcher, and a couple of different species of Thrashers. We tried for a Sprague's Pipit, as the grassy fields along the dikes are often a good place to find them. Unfortunately, we struck out on those. Following our visit to Anzalduas Park, our guide had promised us a surprise. Unfortunately, the surprise was a Burrowing Owl which was a no show. We also got asked politely to leave the area where we stopped to look for the owl by Border Patrol as they said the stretch of land along the border there was a dangerous no-man's land where drug cartels tried to operate and violence had occasionally erupted when cartel members would sometimes take shots at anyone wandering around suspiciously on the US side of the border. So that was exciting- a little touch of danger in our otherwise benign birding trip. I would say that the majority of places we visited were perfectly safe, especially if you stayed within park boundaries and birded with a partner or a group.

Following our return to Harlingen, we spent the afternoon at Hugh Ramsey Park picking up a few more birds that we had missed up to that point. They had several blinds and feeding stations set up and we got great looks at White-tipped Doves, which came in to feed at a feeding blind with Green Jays, Plain Chachalacas, and a cute little Javelina. We also got our lifer Couch's Kingbird which can only be distinguished from Tropical Kingbirds by their call. We'd managed to miss all of them up to that point.

We finished off that day with a trip back to Brownsville, not to the dump, but to Oliveira Park at sunset to watch the parrots come in. They were hard to miss, a flock of noisy parrots that flew in right about sunset and perched on the trees and powerlines at one end of the park. There were a few birders gathered there to witness the spectacle, and with group effort, we managed to pick out the five possible species – Red-crowned, Yellow-headed, Lilac-crowned, Red-lored, and White fronted Parrots. It was fun to watch their antics as they seemed quite playful and would pester each other and goof around, sometimes ending up hanging upside-down on the powerlines. That ended our second day of birding in South Texas.



Parrots coming in to roost at Oliveira Park in Brownsville



Just hanging around - Parrots at Oliveira Park in Brownsville (Digiscoped)



Javelina at Hugh Ramsey Park

For a report of our third and final birding day in South Texas, tune in next month. And, as always,

Happy Birding!

Bird of the Month

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Sphyrapicus varius
By Machel Johnson

It's probably best not to lead off a sentence to a non-birder saying, "I saw a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker today!" If your friend is like my husband then you will get a full 5 minutes of mocking such as "Really, did you also see a Dimple-cheeked Fuzzy Tail? How about a Lizard-eyed Flat Head? A Barrel-chested Big Nose?" Etc., etc. He thinks he's so funny...But really, Yellow-bellied



Photo by Suzi Holt

Sapsucker? Well, yes. That describes this bird exactly. They are fairly small woodpeckers with stout, straight bills. Mostly black and white with boldly patterned faces. Both sexes have red foreheads, and males also have red throats. Look for a long white stripe along the folded wing, although it is not always conspicuous. Learn not to depend upon it. Bold black-and-white stripes curve from the face toward a black chest shield and white or yellowish underparts. As for the sapsucker description, they feed at sapwells—neat rows of shallow holes they drill in tree bark. They lap up the sugary sap along with any insects that may get caught there.

Typically found in the east, it is very rare to see one in the west. For the past week there has been one hanging around in the Springville Evergreen Cemetery. I saw one a few years ago at Lytle Ranch in Washington County. I was a bit surprised at the overall mottled, dingy look of the bird, I was expecting crisper definitions per my field guide but later I read Pete Dunne's description: "Yellow-bellied Sapsucker's upperparts are less contrasting than pure black and white. The pattern replicates the 3-D dappling of sunlight on branches. Note: Most field guides show the birds with more contrast and crisper definition than is evident in the field. Shabbily patterned underparts are tarnished yellow with shadowy barring. All in all, and unlike most woodpeckers, the basic plumage of adults is muted – a backdrop that makes the distinctive red-black-and-white pattern of the face and the very white racing stripe defining the edge of the folded wing stand out."

References: Pete Dunne's Essential Field Guide Companion, www.allaboutbirds.com

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

Field Trip Reports

Provo Christmas Bird Count Report, Dec. 16, 2017, by Bryan Shirley

Every year the Audubon Christmas Bird Count is a lot of fun and this year was no different. The count in Provo was held on Dec 16, 2017. This was the 118th year of the count total and the 46th year in Provo. We had 37 participants covering our count circle. Going into the count day the weather predictions were not great, but the weather held and although it was a bit cold there was no storm and it could have been a lot worse. Overall most of us felt like the birding was slow and numbers felt low - especially for passerines. We ended up with a better than average species count though and totaled 97 species. We added 2 new species that we have never recorded before - Blue Jay and White-winged Dove. Other highlights included Tundra Swan, Eurasian Wigeon, Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher, Bewick's Wren, and Harris' Sparrow. There were a few notable misses, the biggest was Townsend's Solitaire. We have only missed it 2 other years.

Thanks to everybody that participated & thanks again to Milt for hosting the compilation and pot luck party!

New Year's Day Birding, Jan. 1, 2018, by Suzi Holt

We had 13 UCB show up for our New Year's kickoff field trip!!! We started at East Bay and struck out with the Eurasian Wigeon, but we did get a Cackling Goose and Black-crowned Night Heron! From there we checked out Flowserve ponds getting a Great Egret, and our resident American White Pelican at East Bay. Headed to Cliff's for the White-winged dove, strike 2. Then to KC Childs for his Juniper Titmouse...strike 3. We picked up Red-breasted nuthatch and Black-capped Chickadee there. At Clegg's pond we got a Wood Duck. Decided to try again at East Bay for the wigeon :-(. The field trip officially ended there but a few of us decided to try Salem for the Greater White-fronted Goose, that was a success! We ended at the Payson Cemetery with a Red-naped Sapsucker! A good day!

48 species

Greater White-fronted Goose
Cackling Goose
Canada Goose
Wood Duck
Northern Shoveler
Gadwall
American Wigeon

Mallard
Green-winged Teal
California Quail
Pied-billed Grebe
American White Pelican
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Black-crowned Night-Heron
White-faced Ibis
Northern Harrier
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Bald Eagle
Red-tailed Hawk
American Coot
Killdeer
Ring-billed Gull
California Gull
Rock Pigeon
Eurasian Collared-Dove
Mourning Dove
Belted Kingfisher
Red-naped Sapsucker
Downy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
American Kestrel
Black-billed Magpie
Common Raven
Black-capped Chickadee
Red-breasted Nuthatch
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
American Robin
European Starling
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Dark-eyed Junco
Song Sparrow
Spotted Towhee
Brewer's Blackbird
Great-tailed Grackle
House Finch
Lesser Goldfinch
House Sparrow
