



## Utah County Birders:

### April 2018 Newsletter

#### **UCB Captain's Log, April 2018:**

Spring has sprung! It seems almost magic that one day it's winter and the weather is cold and miserable and the birds are quiet and reclusive and the next day the sun is out and the avocets and yellow-headed blackbirds are showing up in the marshes and the house finches are singing from the tops of the trees. The return of all the migratory species feels like something worth celebrating for sure, and for them, surviving another winter and a migration full of hazards is definitely worth celebrating! Ebird has some pretty cool animations based directly on birder data that show the timing and movement of different species. Here's a link for Barn Swallows if you'd like to check that out: <https://ebird.org/science/modeling/barswa>. Ebird also has a function to explore arrival and departure dates by species for whatever location you're interested in, so if, for example, you want to know when you should be seeing hummingbirds in your neighborhood, plug in the info for your location, select a previous year, and check it out! That link is here: <https://ebird.org/sightingsLocation.form?reset=first-false>

I don't have much to report yet but I finally got to do a little birding last week and picked up a few new FOY species. Looking forward to what the next few weeks bring. Now is the time to be on the lookout for vagrants and rarities mixed in with the migrants... and the migrants themselves!

A blog I follow recently (shout out to Steve at Bourbon, Bastards, and Birds) wrote a post recently that I really liked promoting the idea of birding the five mile radius (5MR) around your home. The concept is similar to birding your local patch, or to the Christmas bird count circle concept, but instead, includes all your local patches within a 5MR of your house. I like this idea for several reasons. When I started exploring the birding options within five miles of my house I realized there's some under-birded habitat within a walk or a short bike ride of my house that I haven't given much thought to. Also, some pretty killer rarities have shown up within 5 miles of my house (remember the scissor-tailed flycatcher and the little gull?!). I'm also definitely a proponent of being more conscious of the environmental impact of our birding habits and keeping it close to home feels pretty satisfyingly eco-friendly. For many birders, family commitments or obligations, health issues, financial limitations, or mobility limitations may limit your birding time, and focusing on birding the heck out of the 5MR around your home could be an easier way to satisfy the birding itch. I know some of you are probably thinking some people definitely have better 5MR birding options than others, but I think if you start looking closer you'll find some hidden gems.

So what are we waiting for!? Let's get out there and see some migrants and enjoy this beautiful spring weather! I don't know about you, but as soon as I'm done writing this I'm headed to Powell Lake to see what there is to see. Viva los migrants!

Happy Birding!

Keeli

## **APRIL MEETING:**

Thursday, April 12, 2018, 7pm at the Monte L. Bean Museum in Provo, UT.

**Winter Birding in Japan: Cranes, Eagles, & Suchi** presented by Bryan Shirley.

## **Field Trips:**

IVER LANE /SANDY BEACH

Saturday April 14, 2018 -- 8am- Noon

We will be meeting at the Springville Walmart and leaving at 8 sharp so please come early!

Park in the NE corner of the parking lot.

From there we will carpool to River Lane. We will park on the dirt road just past the corrals and walk so it will be easier to see the birds. Moving our cars occasionally and working our way to Sandy Beach. Let's hope for some good Spring migrants!

HAWKWATCH- SQUAW PEAK SPRING MIGRATION FIELD TRIP

April 21, 2018 -- 9am-3pm

I will only be able to lead one field trip this month so I have contacted Hawkwatch and they are willing to let UCB attend their Squaw Peak Hawkwatch field trip for the member price of \$15 instead of \$25. This includes a BOX LUNCH!!!

You need to register through the HWI website so they can get a head count. Here is the link:

<https://hawkwatch.org/participate/calendar/field-trip/455-spring-migration-field-trip>

This is a awesome field trip one not to miss :-)

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 - [suzerqholt@gmail.com](mailto:suzerqholt@gmail.com)

## **Bird of the Month:**

by Jeremy Telford

As some of you know, though most do not, I served a religious mission in Hungary. I was not a birder at the time but nature always fascinated me. Once a week we had a day off and were encouraged to explore what Hungary had to offer. If my companion was willing I would often opt for exploring Hungary's few forests. While there I saw wild boars, deer, song birds, but no hedgehogs, which always bummed me. I was able to see the storks nesting on the chimney tops of houses. Many houses put up a false chimney on their roof away from the real one so they could have a nesting stork without the nest filled chimney. Storks were considered good luck and no one wanted to shoo them away.



After our Golden Corral dinner, and reminiscing with Milton Moody, I decided to look back through my Hungarian photos to see if I could pick up any new lifers. I had forgotten about this bird. In fact I had to message a few of my Hungarian friends to find out what it was. In Hungarian it is called a Prémefajd which loosely translated means Furred or Furry Grouse. The scientific name is *Aprilis stultorumus*. After a lot of digging and a lot of Google translate (my Hungarian is rusty) this is what I was able to find out. The Prémefajd is one of the smallest flightless birds in the world, only the Kiwi and a few species of penguin are smaller. It is native to the forests of Hungary, especially the area around lake Tisza and the Hortobágy National Park in Eastern Hungary. The populations are not large and are considered threatened. Legislation passed through the parliament in 1982 has helped to protect this species and it is making a slow comeback. It has made enough of a comeback that they have started to reintroduce it to other parts of Hungary and southern Slovakia as of the early 2000s. The "Furred Grouse" eats leaves, twigs, buds, berries, fruit, and insects. Its main predators are raptors, and domestic dogs and cats. Wolves used to prey on these birds when they roamed Hungary's forests. Though the grouse cannot fly it is an excellent climber. Strong feet and large claws allow this bird to gain purchase on the rough bark of the indigenous trees. The Prémefajd is a small grouse though I couldn't find an exact size for it on line. It is believed both the grouse and forests used to be plentiful in Hungary until it was settled by the

descendants of the Ugric-Finnic tribe which came down out of Russia. Once settled the people spread requiring food and supplies. The forests were rapidly depleted. Deer, boar, and other animals including the Prémefajd were hunted relentlessly. Sometime in the 10th century King István V set aside the land around Lake Tisza as a hunting preserve and most likely unwittingly saved the species. Only the king and those given permission were allowed to hunt on the land and caretakers were assigned to ensure there was always a ready population of prey for the hunters. In 1526 the Turks invaded Hungary. Despite a strong and desperate defense Hungary was eventually overwhelmed. The Ottoman Empire ruled Hungary for the next 145 years. All royal lands became the property of the Sultan. The hunting preserve was likely undisturbed during this time further helping the cause of the grouse. In any case the "Furred Grouse" survived in these few forests for hundreds more years until it was finally officially protected in 1982.

I am still amazed that I was able to see this bird and wish I remembered more about the encounter. The one picture I got was dark but I'll take it! If you ever travel to Hungary and happen to find yourself in the forests of the Hortobágy National Park listen closely for the sound of the Prémefajd. Besides the usual grouse clucking it can make a surprisingly loud and jovial call. It sounds something like a chuckled, "Ayepril-Phools!"

## **Field Trip Reports:**

South Fork / Sundance – 10 Mar 2018

by Suzi Holt

Twenty-seven birders showed up this beautiful morning. We started out at Canyon Glen Park and checked off the **American Dipper**, seeing two Dippers and two Song Sparrows.

From there we went on our quest for the Northern Pygmy Owl. Our first stop was Southfork Park, they were filming a movie with knights on horses. Strike 1. Next stop Big Springs Park where they were racing a remote control car. Strike 2. Consolation prize.... **Bald Eagle, Wild Turkeys, Black-capped Chickadees, Townsend's Solitaire**, Ravens, a couple mallards and a Scrub Jay.

From there we headed for the parking lot above Aspen Grove, the fee station is open although the loop isn't but to go to the parking lot you have to pay. Strike 3! Does anyone want to see a Pacific Wren??? YES!!! Off to the oxbow we went. A cooperative **Pacific Wren**, such a cute little bird, we all got great looks. We also saw lots of Coots, heard a Downy Woodpecker and found the **Wood duck** with a crush on a Mallard hen. We got a text from Jeff Hardy saying he had seen a Northern Mockingbird at the Provo Airport Dike. We got skunked on the Mockingbird but saw a Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrels, Gadwall, lots of Flickers Juncos, White-crowned Sparrows and the **American Tree Sparrows!!!** It was a beautiful day and great company.

Emma Park Road / Scofield / Dairy Fork – 24 Mar 2018  
by Suzi Holt

Twenty birders set out for the Emma Park Sage Grouse Lek at 6:00 am. Yikes I am not a early riser and 5:00 am came way too early. We got to the Lek about 6:50. We were almost to the corral parking lot when I spotted 5 **Greater Sage Grouse** close to the road in an open field. There were 4 males and a female. The males were displaying and what a sight that is!. It was too early for decent photos, but we got a good show for about 7 minutes before they were spooked back into the sage. Wow, that was fast!

So off we went to Scofield. On the way we saw **Stellar's Jays**, Scrub Jays, Robins and Red-tailed Hawks. We also got great looks at a **herd of Elk**. We stopped at the North end of the lake by a little open water and a pond. We saw Canada Geese, Green-winged Teal, Cinnamon Teal, Mallards, Red-winged Blackbirds and Song Sparrows. On the south end of the lake we saw more Canada Geese, Ravens and some **Sand Hill Cranes**. In town we saw more Red-winged Blackbirds, Brewer's Blackbirds, **Townsend's Solitaire**, and Black-billed Magpies. We continued up past the mine to look for a Three-toed Woodpecker and Gray Jays. No luck on them but at the top we had a surprise Male **Pine Grosbeak** and a cute **Mountain Chickadee**. On the way down a Coyote ran across the road and up the hill.

We decided to head back down and stop at Dairy Fork and try our luck for a Pygmy Owl. No luck on the Pygmy Owl but we were excited to see **Mountain Bluebirds**, more Black-billed Magpies, Ravens, Stellar Jays and a Scrub Jay, a Flicker, Red-winged Blackbirds, Song Sparrows and a **Lincoln's Sparrow**. The cars and our shoes got a little muddy and we enjoyed listening to Nicole Telford practicing her bird calls!

Thanks to all for joining us!