



Utah County Birders:

June 2018 Newsletter

UCB Captain's Log, July 2018:

by Keeli Marvel

Greeting intrepid birders! The temperature is climbing and we are entering the dog days of summer. Hopefully you all are staying cool. Sam and I got our Pony Express BBS route done a couple of weeks ago, and Fish Springs NWR was warm and buggy but hopping with birds. We had a few noteworthy sightings while conducting the survey. The first was a **White-winged Dove** perched in a tree over the bunkhouse at the refuge. It was a first record for the count and a rare sighting for Tooele Co. to boot! Not to mention, it's always so satisfying when there's no doubt about the ID of a rarity and you can back it up with easy photographic evidence.

Our second noteworthy sighting was a species we generally get on the count, **Snowy Plover!** The cool thing is we saw hatchling plovers, which I know I've raved about before, but seriously deserve another rant. They're so cute! They're basically little cotton balls with toothpicks for legs. They nest at Fish Springs so, while it was no surprise to get them on the count, it is always a pleasure.

Our third and last noteworthy sighting we also generally get on the count but we got to witness behavior I'd only heard about before and never seen for myself. Every year we usually hear **American Bittern** while conducting the bird survey. This year we heard one during the count, but we had the added bonus of seeing one on the drive back. It was standing in the middle of a low green grassy area and I think it thought it was camouflaged because as we watched it, it gently wobbled its' neck back and forth like it was grass blowing in the wind. It was the coolest behavior to witness and a great way to end another BBS count.

In other news, we have a few nest boxes at work that were put up for **American Kestrels** to nest in, and nest in them they have! We monitor them as part of a Hawk Watch kestrel conservation initiative, and this week the



nestlings were old enough to band. Kestrels are hardy little birds and are pretty adapted to human disturbance and two of our boxes that were occupied this year were within a few hundred feet of our office building at work. Once the kestrels reach a certain age, we are able to take them out of the nest boxes briefly to record some simple measurements and put a USGS numbered band on them. This band enables us to identify them if they return in the future, and in fact, one of the birds we banded last year returned as an adult this year to nest! The only downside is once they hit a certain age their little talons get pretty sharp and they can latch on to you pretty good. After banding 3 boxes in the last week, Sam and I both have scratches and puncture wounds on our fingers to show for it.

Well, that's all I have for now. Happy 4th of July and happy birding!

Keeli Marvel
Sam

JULY MEETING:

Thursday, July 12, 2018, 9pm: Searching for Black Swifts

For our July meeting we are going to meet at Bridal Veil Falls and spend the evening looking for Black Swifts.

Meet at the Bridal Veil Falls Overlook (the parking area just off the highway, not down along the river).

7PM until dark.

Field Trips:

Saturday, July 21st, 8 am -- Nebo Bench Trailhead

We will meet at Payson Canyon Kiwanis Park, S Payson Canyon Rd, Payson, UT 84651

Map: <https://goo.gl/maps/c6AN4tiMMUx>

Bird of the Month:

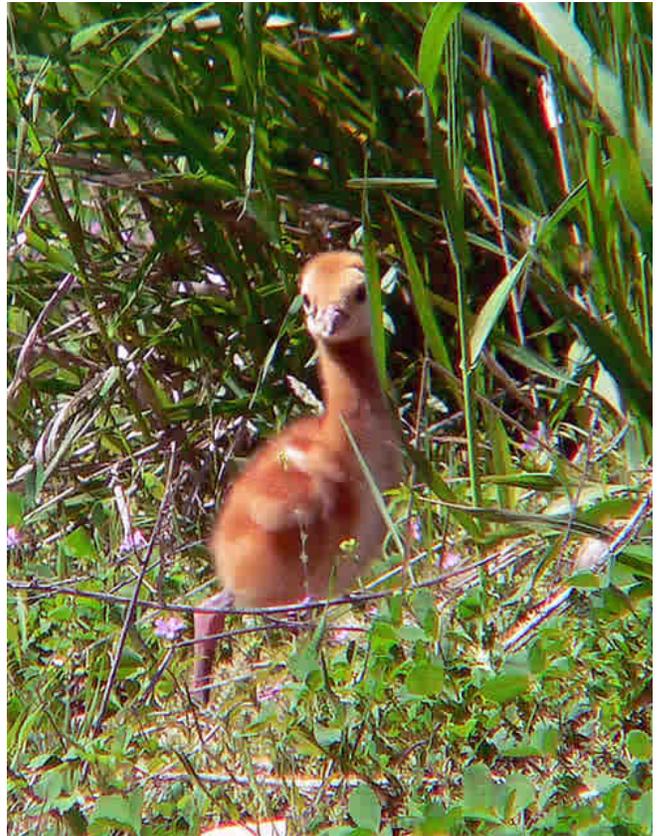
Sandhill Crane (Antigone canadensis)

by Milt Moody

When I started birding some 20 years ago or so, we had to go to Heber Valley to see the Sandhill Cranes. Heber was in the southern most part of the breeding range for this species. Most Sandhill Cranes go to the isolated wet meadow of Canada to find an appropriate nesting ground. Now they are also nesting here in Utah Valley and they're becoming quite numerous.

A couple of weeks ago I took my nephew Derick and his wife Aubree, out towards Lincoln Beach to see some birds. In the large fields south of the beach we saw three pairs of **Sandhill Cranes**. Two of them had young chicks with them. We got out the scope and watch the nearest family as the youngster was jumping up and down and flapping its featherless wings as it tried to keep up with its parents. A week earlier perhaps the same parents were shielding the young one with their wings as a **Northern Harrier** patrolled the area. Harriers and other birds of prey along with foxes, racoons, wolves, cougars, etc. are on the look out for vulnerable young birds like this. It's a very dangerous world for young birds.

The young chicks, known as colts, kind of stand out with their orangish-rust, fluffy feathers. They look somewhat awkward but are as cute as can be, which can be said for most young birds. Of course they have to grow quickly and learn how to fly and do the other crane-types of things so they will be ready to migrate south for the winter, where they usually congregate in large groups of cranes in low damp wetlands and roost at night in shallow standing water. The colts will stay with their parents 'till the next spring, eating roots, tubers, seeds, grains as well as other things found in the wet meadow environment which is ideal for young birds like this.



Sandhill Cranes are mature enough to mate in their second year. They mate for life and strengthen their bonds with dance, which takes place morning and evening on the roosting grounds and most usually during spring time although they can also dance other times of the year as well. During migration they gather in large groups on their way to the breeding grounds where unattached cranes can find a mate. One such place is along the Platte River in Nebraska where an estimated half million Sandhill Cranes meet during migration every spring as a part of a long-established crane community event. After this "spring fling" they continue north, on to their breeding grounds where each pair builds a low, broad mound (4-6" high and 30-40" across) out of marsh plants, grasses and weeds which will serve as their nest. They lay up to 3 eggs, but usually only one chick survives to fledge.

After nesting and raising their families, Sandhill Cranes and their fully grown colts start their migration southward, some, perhaps to the same place our first set of chicks, now one year old, are maturing and preparing to head north the next spring, maybe to the same field where they grew up-- and the cycle begins again.

Sources:

The Audubon society Encyclopedia of North American Birds by John K. Terres
All About Birds, website: The Cornell Lab of Ornithology
Wikipedia website
Smithsonian.com

Field Trip Reports:

The UCB Meeting this month was a night-time Field Trip - 14 June 2018

Nebo Scenic Loop Owling Trip
by Suzi Holt

On Thursday June 14th we met at 9 pm. Our trip was great! We had a group of 25!

To start off a few of us saw a **Common Poorwill** at Beer Can Flats. We tried to call it in, but we could only hear it a ways off. We tried again for them below Maple Dell with no luck, although those in my car got a great look at one wanting to play chicken in the road on the way up. At Blackhawk it was really windy, Keeli, Amanda and Sam heard a flammie up there, and some of us heard a **Northern Saw-whet**. It sounded like they were on the other side of the campground so we headed over there only to wilder hurricane winds.

We gave up on top and drove down below Payson Lakes and Mabelle heard one more flammie. A mile lower we heard another Northern Saw-whet calling. We got it to come right in, everyone heard it well with even some barking! But only a few saw it. Down below the road damage we stopped and heard two more **Flamulated Owls**. We finished back at Beer Can Flats where we called the **Western Screech Owls** and heard probably 5. We had one come in and everyone got great looks! Overall we hit all four targets!!! Not a lot of photos :- (and they were crappy at that :-) We finished a little after Midnight..

Washington County - 1-2 June 2018
by Suzi Holt

UC Birders take on Washington County for two days! 95 SPECIES!!!

June 1-2, 2018 13 UC Birders met at 6am:

Day 1. We headed out to Lytle Ranch. On the way we saw Gambel's Quail, CACTUS WREN, White-Throated Swifts, Great Blue Heron, Ravens, and Loggerhead Shrikes.

At the ranch we promptly saw one of our Target birds the SUMMER TANAGER! We walked out towards the Pecan Orchard and up a little draw to see the BLACK-TAILED GNATCATCHER, Verdin, Black-chinned Hummingbird, and a LADDER-BACKED WOODPECKER!!

From there we made our way towards the pond. We saw Bell's Vireo, Bewick's Wren and tons of Mourning Doves. We also saw Desert Willows, Creosote bushes and some



Summer Tanager

ghourd that I can't remember the name of.

We walked around the back side of the pond and found the Lucy's Warbler, had a White-winged dove flyover and heard a Ash-throated Flycatcher. On our way back we saw a BLUE GROSBEAK, Black-headed Grosbeak, PHAINOPEPOLA, Western Tanagers, House Finch and Bullock's Orioles eating in the top of the Mulberry tree til a Cooper's Hawk flew over.

I then took them for a sneak peak and the "Lizard Death Trap" and then we walked the wash. We saw another Summer Tanager, heard a Black-throated Sparrow, saw a Yellow Warbler, Ash-throated Flycatcher and Gambel's Quail. We wanted to see the Brown-crested Flycatcher so we drove up the road to the wash and by the river found a BROWN-CRESTED FLYCATCHER!!!

Amanda and Natalie got down and close with the tadpoles and baby frogs in the river. We had just started back on the road and Izzy spots a bird on a Joshua Tree, we stopped and as soon as I got the binos on it I screamed, "its a SCOTT'S ORIOLE!!!!" A lifer for many of us and a beauty at that! From there we had one more surprise.... and saw lots more Loggerhead Shrikes, Black-throated Sparrows, Turkey Vultures and Ash-throated Flycatchers

. We stopped at Utah Hill and heard the Black-chinned Sparrow and some got a quick look at it. Drove up the Gunlock Wash and some got a sneak peak at a COMMON BLACKHAWK!!! We saw Cliff Swallows and a Meadowlark and American Coots.

We stopped at Tonaquint and saw ABERT'S TOWHEE, Song Sparrow, Black Phoebe, Neotropic Cormorants, Say's Phoebe, and lots of pond ducks. At Brook's Nature Park we saw HOODED and Bullock's Orioles. Sharon misted us with water and we made plans for Saturday. Our final stop was Boots/Cox Park for the VERMILLION FLYCATCHER!. We were exhausted and had put 9870 steps on the fitbit so we decided to call it quits.

Day 2- We met at 7am so we got a hour more shut eye. We headed for Kolob Terrace. It is a beautiful ride and the scenery is spectacular, but we went straight to the top to Lava Point Lookout to see the CALIFORNIA CONDORS.

We got there at 8 am and looked out to the North in the Ponderosa snags exactly where Maurice showed me on Thursday and there were 5!!! We saw White-throated Swifts, Violet-green Swallows, Turkey Vultures and a Peregrine Falcon flyby at eye level. We patiently waited for the Condors to take off at 9:30 like they did on Thursday but they were a little later than that. We all got great looks at 2 of them catching the thermals, the others continued to stretch and warm up, so we decided to hit the trail.

We saw House Wren, Dusky Flycatcher, Pine Siskin, Mountain Chickadee, a choir of Warbling Vireos, Western Bluebirds, Red-Breasted Nuthatch, Yellow-rumped Warblers and Chipping Sparrows.

We also got great looks at a Green-tailed Towhee and a Olive-sided Flycatcher. At Blue Springs we saw a Hammond's Flycatcher, MacGillivray's Warbler, Snowy Egrets, Red-tailed Hawk, Western Kingbird, Pied-billed Grebe, a Canada Goose family, a Ruddy Duck and Bald Eagle. We searched for the Acorn and Lewis's Woodpeckers with no luck, but we did see a White-breasted Nuthatch, Cassin's Finch and Mountain Bluebirds. We then drove around

Kolob Reservoir and saw Eared Grebe, Brewer's Blackbirds, Brown-headed Cowbirds, Yellow Warbler, another Bald Eagle and Spotted Sandpipers. On the way down we saw a Northern Flicker.

We found 95 Species!!!! I ended the night with a Great Horned Owl, a White-crowned Sparrow and #98 LESSER NIGHTHAWK! Thanks to all who came. Amanda, Izzy and Sammy for their extra eyes, Peter and Sharon for spending their 53rd Anniversary with us, Natalie and the Botanists(Janet and Renee) they helped us learn many different trees and plants my favorite being the Snowberry, Yvonne and Lynn for being great passengers and thankful that we only lost Jim and Vee once! What a great trip!!



After a selfie and a couple songs on the lookout over Zion we went for a hike on the C.G and Barney's Trails. by Suzi Holt