



# Utah County Birders: August 2018 Newsletter

**UCB Captain's Log, August 2018:**      *(Reprinted from July 2016)*  
by Keeli Marvel

August is upon us! The days are long and hot, and it's time to head to the mountains.

I read an article recently about a study that was done on great frigatebird flight using satellite transmitters and body function

telemetry data and it reminded me of the Magnificent Frigatebird that graced southern Utah with its' presence a few springs ago. In the study, they discovered that great frigatebirds fly up to 12,000 ft. above sea level and they do it expending very little energy by using thermals or updrafts inside clouds.

What was cool to me is they're literally hitching a ride on the clouds and they're one of the only bird species known to do it. Using those thermals helps them save energy, to the point where one bird in the study flew 40 miles without a single wing flap. That's incredible! Frigatebirds aren't waterproof like many ocean birds, so they can't actually land on the ocean. They've adapted instead by taking flight efficiency to the max.

The study also showed that they can fly for weeks continuously – up to two months in one case—and average around 300 miles a day. With those numbers it's not hard to see how one wrong turn could put a Magnificent Frigatebird on our doorstep. I wonder if the day after he left he was down having fish tacos in Baja California and reminiscing about his vacation in Southern Utah.

If you'd like to read the article from NPR, or the abstract to the study published in the journal Science, the links are here:

[Nonstop Flight: How The Frigatebird Can Soar For Weeks Without Stopping](#)

[Frigate birds track atmospheric conditions...](#)

I wish you all a happy, safe, and birdy August! The baby birds are cheeping and fall migration will be here before you know it.

Happy Birding!  
Keeli Marvel



*by John Crowley*

## **AUGUST MEETING:**

**Thursday, August 9th at 7 PM -- Summer Picnic at Rock Canyon Park, in Provo**

The picnic will be Potluck. (Cups, plates, utensils and water will be provided). We will be in one of the pavilions on the north end of the park near the water tanks (The park address is 2620 North 1200 East, in Provo -- NOT the trailhead at the mouth of Rock Canyon).

## **Field Trips:**

### **MIRROR LAKE HWY field trip**

Friday August 24, 2018 6:30 am.

Meet at Harmons grocery store in Orem on 800 N on the west side of the gas pumps. Pack a lunch. If you have a National Park pass (America the Beautiful pass or a Senior Pass) please bring it. There is a fee to enter.

## **Bird of the Month:**

### **Canada Jay, Once Known As a Gray Jay**

*by Alton Thygerson*

Say goodbye to Gray Jays. They will disappear this month because of politics rather than from physical extinction although that is always a possibility since their numbers are dwindling due to habitat losses.

In a July announcement the Gray Jay species may become once again officially known as Canada Jay. The American Ornithological Society decided to restore the name for the bird that had been used from at least the 1830s through 1957.

Ornithologists argued to have the name changed back to Canada Jay partly because the Canadian government might adopt the species as the country's national bird, and it would be more likely to do so if it were named Canada Jay. Canada does not have a national bird.

This bird's unofficial names or nicknames are interesting. These jays adapt to human activity in their territories and are known to approach humans for food, inspiring nicknames such as "camp robber" and "venison-hawk."

The Canada Jay is a passerine bird of the family Corvidae. This large songbird is slightly smaller than Clark's Nutcracker (with which beginning birders confuse as being a Canada Jay) and about the same size as a Steller's Jay. It resembles a large chickadee. The bird has a large head, small black bill, and a robust body. It perches upright atop spruce trees and except for the bill, seems very raptorlike. Adults are gray and Rocky Mountain species have a pale head.

While widespread, they are not an easy-to-find bird. My personal success in Utah has largely been in the Mirror Lake area of the Uinta Mountains.



They are found in various kinds of coniferous and mixed forest, but rarely occur where there are no spruce trees. If you have difficulty in identifying a spruce tree, use the Boy Scout method for identifying them—the “s” in spruce helps recall that these trees have square and stiff needles. Incidentally, you can use “f” for fir trees because their needles are flat and flexible.

Pete Dunne warns that Canada Jays occur in the same range and habitat as bears. You may want to avoid pishing for this bird since you may get a bear to respond. Additionally, Mr. Dunne says the bird does not respond quickly to pishing but does to Northern Saw-whet Owl imitations.

The Canada Jay is a “scatterhoarder,” caching thousands of food items throughout the year but especially during the summer and recovering them from memory for use the following winter. The bird’s sticky saliva helps it stick pieces of food in bark crevices and other spots.

I like Canada Jays for various reasons—their mountain habitat, their friendliness allowing close observations, and their beauty.

**Sources:**

Alderfer, Jonathan. National Geographic Complete Birds of North America (Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 2006).

Dunne, Pete. Pete Dunne’s Essential Field Guide Companion (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006).

“The Ever-Changing North American Checklist,” Birdwatching, July/August, Vol. 32. No.4, 2018.

\*\* Photo by Paul Higgins

**Field Trip Reports:**

**Nebo Bench Trailhead - 21 July 2018**

by Suzi Holt

We had a wonderful trip up the Nebo Scenic Loop today. We stopped by the Purple Martin Colony and got great looks and a flyby of a few **Purple Martins**, saw **Mountain Bluebirds, Chipping Sparrows, Cedar Waxwing, Violet-crowned Swallows** and **Black-headed Grosbeaks, American Kestrel, and Cassin’s Finches**.

From there we made our way to the water trough at Nebo Bench. We hung out there for about a hour watching tons of **Pine Siskins, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Mountain Chickadee** and **Dark-eyed Junco** babies. We had a surprise visit from a male and female **Red Crossbill**. we also saw **Chipping Sparrows, White-crowned Sparrows, Flicker,** and **Red-naped Sapsucker,** We heard **Downy Woodpeckers, Ruby-crowned Kinglet** and **Western Wood Pewees**.

It was a great morning!, but we were on a hunt for a American Three-toed Woodpecker! We went to the Trailhead where multiple birders have seen a pair in the last few weeks. We patiently sat waiting and waiting. We saw **Broad-tailed Hummers, Mountain Bluebirds, Red-tailed Hawks,** another Flicker, more **Pine Siskins** and **Cassin’s Finches**. No luck on the Woodpecker!

From there a few of us continued down Mona Pole Road to find a **Olive-sided Flycatcher** and Cordilleran Flycatcher. We got the Olive-sided and happen on to some **Rufous Hummingbirds** but no luck on the Cordilleran. It was a fun day and the wildflowers were phenomenal. Thanks to all who joined with us!

