



Utah County Birders: October 2018 Newsletter

UCB Captain's Log, October 2018

by Keeli Marvel

Greetings from across the pond! I just spent the last week in Dublin on the East Irish coast doing touristy things and birding my way around Dublin. I picked up 11 lifers in Ireland and 2 during my 7 hour layover in New York City on the way there. Talk about a good trip so far!

When I found out I was going to be stuck at JFK airport in New York for 7 hours on my layover I contacted the Queens County Birding Club president. He put me in touch with one of the local Birders who offered to pick me up from the airport and take me Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge 20 min away from the airport to do a little birding during my layover. I had 3 goal species: American Black Duck, Glossy Ibis, and White-rumped Sandpiper, and we managed to pick up the first two. Jamaica Bay is an urban refuge right on the bay between Queens and Manhattan and can be really good during migration.



In Ireland we spent the first day doing touristy things around town, so I didn't get much birding in. **Hooded crows** and **wood pigeons** were pretty common around town. The second day was our big birding day. We drove north up the coast from Dublin to a place called Bull Island where we parked at an old bridge and went for a walk along a tidal waterway. Along the jetty and bridge I picked up 7 lifers: **European Golden-plover**, **Common ringed plover**, **Mew Gull**, **Rook**, **Hooded Crow** (seen before but not recorded in ebird), **European Stonechat**, and **Reed Bunting**. There were also a bunch of **Black-headed and Herring gulls**, and huge flocks of what sounded like goldfinches and greenfinches to me. Oh, and of course, **European starlings** hah!

From there we went further up the coast to a headland called Howth and went on a couple walks along a coast path and the harbor wall. There were quite a few shorebirds along the shoreline and I saw tons of

European Oystercatchers, Common Redshank, more Stonechats, a **Curlew**, and picked up a lifer **Little Egret** which is basically the same as our Snowy Egret. In Howth harbor you can see the island off the coast called Ireland's Eye where they get nesting **Northern Gannets** and **Common Murres**. You can take boat trips from Howth harbor that go out around Ireland's Eye and get good looks at all the birds that nest and roost on the island. We were too late in the day but we did get looks at some distant flyby gannets.

The next day in Dublin we went to the botanical gardens, which is another great place for birding. Entry is free and they have lots of great habitat. There I picked up a lifer **Sparrowhawk** (similar to our Sharpie/Cooper's Hawks), a **Goldcrest** (like our kinglets) and a **Grey Wagtail**, which acts similar to a dipper and can often be found perching on rocks on fast moving streams or rivers. I also saw a couple of my other favorite European birds- **Blue Tits** which are really common in gardens and city parks, a **Long-tailed Tit**, and several melodious **European Robins**.

Our second to last day in Dublin we took a boat across Dublin bay to Dun Laoghaire (pronounced Dun Leary), and back out to Howth Head. On the boat ride I picked up Mediterranean gulls, better looks at **Northern Gannets, Black Guillemots, Common Murres, and Razorbills!** The Mediterranean Gulls and Razorbills were both lifers. The boat is a really nice way to see the coast and you get great views of several lighthouses on the ride.

That's it for Dublin! Tune in next month for part two of my birding travelogue: The Netherlands and Germany.

Happy Birding!
Keeli Marvel

OCTOBER MEETING:

October 11, 2018, 7:00 PM at the Bean Museum on BYU Campus

Lisa Thompson and Brian Fox from the Utah Museum of Natural History will be presenting on citizen science projects they are currently running and the iNaturalist program.

Up-coming Field Trips:

Big Sit!

October 13, 2018. Provo Airport Dike -- details to come later!

Eccles Wildlife Education Center!!!!

Saturday Oct 27, 2018

We will meet at 8:30 @ the Pioneer Crossing park and ride and head to Farmington. We get a personal tour with Billy Fenimore!!!! Bring a lunch!

Fall migration in ST.GEORGE!!!

Friday November 2nd, meet at 6:30 am at McDonald's on Bluff street. -chasing rarities with Kendall Watkins.

Saturday November 3rd, meet at 6:30 am at the McDonald's on Bluff street. We will be birding at Lytle ranch!!!

Bird of the Month:

Secretary Bird (Sagittarius serpentarius)

by Mabelle Johnson

Just for fun I thought I would write about something way out there, half way around the world-out there. Recently my parents went on a trip to Africa. It was my dad's turn to pick where they would go and he said he wanted to go on an African Safari, so that's just what they did! I told them they had to look for a Secretary Bird, and showed them pictures and videos. They saw lions, hippos, giraffes, wildebeest, wart hogs, crocodiles, elephants, lots of birds, and yes, they saw a Secretary Bird!

I'm fascinated by these very large birds with an eagle-like body on crane-like legs, they can be over 4 feet tall with a wing span of 7 feet! And they prey on SNAKES! Holy-Moly, have you see a video of this bird stomping on a snake?? Incredible! They use their wings to protect them from snake strikes because a bite to a hollow feather won't hurt them, and their feet and legs are protected by tough scales. They also prey on insects, mammals ranging in size from mice to hares and mongoose, crabs, lizards, tortoises, small birds and bird eggs. There are even some reports of secretary birds killing young gazelles and cheetah cubs. It is also said they they can be locally important, being kept as pest controllers by farmers to rid of snakes.

They are ground-hunters, but they can and do fly. They nest high in the tops of Acacia trees, building nests that can measure 8 feet wide and 1 foot deep. They prefer open grasslands for hunting, and may travel over 30 kilometers a day in search of prey. They can stomp on prey with a force equal to 5 times their own body weight, which on average is 8.9 lbs.

Adults typically hunt alone, but can also hunt in pairs and sometimes as loose familial flocks, stalking through the habitat with long strides. Prey is flushed out of tall grass by the birds stomping on the surrounding vegetation. It also waits near fires, eating anything it can that is trying to escape. They can either catch prey by chasing it and striking with the bill and swallowing, or stomping on prey until it is rendered stunned or unconscious enough to swallow.

So why is it called a Secretary Bird instead of Raptor Crane, or Snake Hawk, or something like that? One theory is that the feathers jutting out behind the bird's head reminded 19-century Europeans of the quill pens that secretaries tucked behind their ears or in to their wigs, while its grey and black body was reminiscent of their tailcoats and pants. Seems silly to me to call such a fierce bird of prey a secretary though. Another theory is



that the name derives from the Arabic 'saqr-et-tair', or 'hunter bird'. This makes much more sense to me, although Snake Hawk is pretty cool. Africans call it the marching eagle, and sometimes call it the Devil's Horse, which gives a thought-provoking visual image.

I've attached a video [[download video](#)] that my mom took with her phone but you should also google this bird and see more images and videos. They are so cool!!

Resources: Wikipedia, San Diego Zoo Animals & Plants, <http://www.howitworksdaily.com>, video of Secretary Bird taken by DyAnn Houston on the plains of the Serengeti, August 2018.
Photos: Top photo by Machel Johnson's Mom; Bottom photo from Wikipedia.

Field Trip Reports:

ANTELOPE ISLAND

Field trip on September 14th. Causeway, Island, and Garr Ranch

Nine UCBers met on Friday to bird the Antelope Is Causeway and Garr Ranch. We spent a few hours birding the ranch, and while we didn't turn up any great vagrants or rarities, we ended up with a sizable list of 40 species. Highlights at the ranch include a FERRUGINOUS HAWK cruising by, a BARN OWL, three hummingbird species at the feeders: BLACK-CHINNED, BROAD-TAILED and RUFOUS, 6 species of warblers: YELLOW, YELLOW-RUMPED, ORANGE-CROWNED, several WILSON'S and MACGILLIVRAY'S WARBLERS, and a pair of NASHVILLE WARBLERS. We also had a CORDILLERAN FLYCATCHER, a couple of VIRGINIA'S RAILS calling in the marsh, LINCOLN, SONG and WHITE-CROWNED SPARROWS.



The heat waves made birding the causeway a bit tricky on the returntrip, but we picked up a several large mixed flocks of WILSON'S and RED-NECKED PHALAROPE *Photo by Carol Gwynn ©Carol Gwynn* and some WESTERN and LEAST SANDPIPERS, a few FRANKLIN'S GULLS, and a LONG-BILLED CURLEW.

We made a quick stop at Bountiful Pond on the way home in search of the reported Brown Thrasher, but we were not able to find it. We did see both CASPIAN and FORSTER'S TERNS, a GRAY CATBIRD and a GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE.

Thanks for all who came out and joined us for a fun morning of birding!

Ebird checklists for our trip:

Garr Ranch: <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S48542494>

Causeway: <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S48542519>

Bountiful Pond: <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S48542525>

Happy Birding,
Keeli Marvel