



Utah County Birders: August 2019 Newsletter

UCB Captain's Log, August 2019

by Keeli Marvel

Hola birders! Hope you're keeping cool out there and heading up high for the birds and some heat relief. My article is going to be short this month as I'm up bat trapping in the Uinta Mountains near the WY border

I woke up this morning to **Olive-sided Flycatchers**, a **Northern Flicker**, **Plumbeous Vireos**, and **Western Tanager** calling and a **Rufous Hummingbird** buzzing my tent.

A **Bald Eagle** was perched by Hoop Lake and halfway through the morning a flock of **Canada Jays** buzzed our camp site. We'll be heading up into the Uintas later this month for a club field trip and Canada Jays are target birds on our list so I hope you all can make it! Also, our end of summer potluck has been moved to the 22nd and we have a pavilion reserved at South Fork so I hope to see you all there! In the meantime stay cool and...!

Happy Birding!

Keeli



Canada Jay

by Paul Higgins ©Paul Higgins

AUGUST MEETING:

Our August meeting will be a potluck dinner on a different night than usual on **Thursday Aug 22nd at 7pm at South Fork Park up Provo Canyon**. Bring a food item to share.

We have reserved Pavilion #2 at South Fork Park. Hope to see you all there!

The address is: 4988 N South Fork RD, Provo, UT 84601

Directions: Take US-189 up Provo Canyon. The turnoff for South Fork is 5.8 miles from the mouth of the canyon on the right. Once you turn right, you will cross the railroad tracks and pass a small park and pond. South Fork park is 1.7 miles up South Fork road on the right. Park along the guard rail and we will be in pavilion 2.

FIELD TRIPS:

MIRROR LAKE HWY field trip

Friday August 23, 2019 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.

Lark Bunting *(Calamospiza melanocorys)* by Mabelle Johnson

It seems like there were a lot of Lark Bunting sightings in Utah earlier this year, or maybe because we had a couple locally it seemed like there were a lot to me, not sure which. The Utah bird checklist says they are "rare in summer, primarily in northern Utah". I was excited to see my first Lark Bunting at the Provo Airport Dike on the west road along the first fence, before the tower. I was hoping to see the Bobolinks that Suzi had seen there the day before so I was focusing on black birds anyway. The bunting was on the road ahead of me, acting differently than a Starling or even a Brewers blackbird so I got my bino's on it and was surprised to see something I'd never seen before. My friend and I had been to Antelope Island just the weekend before hoping to see the ones that were being seen there but we were skunked.



Lark Bunting

by Paul Higginsr ©Paul Higgins

The Lark Bunting is in the Sparrow family, not the Lark family or the Bunting family. The 'lark' part of its name comes from its song flight. In courtship, the male rapidly flies up to 20-30 feet above the ground, then floats or flutters back to the ground on outstretched wings, while singing. This is similar to the displays of some Eurasian lark species (especially the Eurasian Skylark), and is the reason the buntings have "lark" in their common name." It's worth listening to on your birding app or a [website](#).

Pete Dunne describes the Lark Bunting as "a large, stocky, gregarious prairie sparrow. Overtly stocky, even portly, and shaped most like House Sparrow, with a large round head, a heavy conical bill, a plump body, and a short-ish tail." When I read this description I was confused because I didn't think it look like a sparrow

shape at all when I saw it. Not just because it was velvety black with a large white wing stripe, but because it seemed tall and slim, not short and stocky! But Dunne went on to say, "But where House Sparrows seems to crouch, Lark Bunting holds itself erect." Which explained it all! I found the bird to be quite stunning, elegant even. I watched it hop along the road, into the brush, back out, flit over to a brush pile, flit back to the road, up to the fence, back to the road, etc. It never occurred to me that it was in the sparrow family.

In breeding plumage, males are unmistakable, an all-black body, a bluish bill, and a long white patch along the lower edge of the wing. Non-breeding males, females, and immature are grayish brown above, pale and heavily streaked below. They breed in dry, open, short-grass prairie, grasslands, and

agricultural lands. They feed on seeds, invertebrates, and some fruits. In pursuit of insects, Lark Buntings are agile and versatile predators, stalking, then chasing down on foot, pursuing them in flight, and gleaning them from vegetation. They nest on the ground, normally in a small depression at the base of a shrub, cactus, or large grass clump that will provide cover and shade. Both male and female build the nest and feed the young, and the young probably leave the nest about 9 days after hatching.

Also of note, it is the State bird of Colorado, designated in 1931, it was chosen because of its acrobatic courtship dance and melodic song. John James Audubon named it the Prairie Lark-Finch, and in his description of it he includes a field note by another observer, Mr. Nuttall, who described its courtship dance and song and concluded, "In short one of the sweetest songsters of the prairie." (Mr. Nuttall is likely Thomas Nuttall, an English botanist and zoologist who lived and worked in America from 1808 until 1841, and for whom the Nuttall's Woodpecker is named.)

Sources:

- allaboutbirds.org, - 50states.com/bird/colorado.htm - audubon.org - Wikipedia - Pete Dunne's Essential Field Guide Companion

Diamond Fork Canyon - 20 July 2019

Report and Photos by Suzi Holt

We had 9 birders show up for the field trip this morning bright and early at 7 am. Our first stop was the pond at the mouth of the canyon. We saw **Brewer's and Red-winged Blackbirds**, a ton of **Barn Swallows**, **Cliff Swallows** and **Violet-green Swallows**, **Yellow Warblers**, **American Goldfinch**, **Mallards**, **Northern Shoveler** and a **Ruddy Duck**.

A little ways up the road we saw quite a few **Mountain Blubirds** on the road, **Lazuli Buntings**, more **Yellow warblers**, heard a **Western Wood Pewee**. We also saw a **Belted Kingfisher** along the river at the big corner.

At the campground we found 6 **Gray Catbirds**, tons more **Yellow Warblers**, a **Fox Sparrow**, many **Song Sparrows**, **Lesser Goldfinch**, **Warbling Vireos** and more swallows!

We drove up Juan Roads Rd again and saw **Western Tanager**, **Lazuli bunting**, **Black-headed Grosbeak**, **Red-naped Sapsuckers**, **Downy Woodpecker**, heard a **Cedar Waxwing** and a **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher**, **Wild Turkey**, **Plumbeous Vireo**, and a **Flicker**.



Canyon Wren

Our next stop was Red Ledges we saw a **Canyon Wren**, lots more swallows, two **White-throated Swifts**, and four cute **House Wrens**.

From there we went straight to Sawmill Hollow. We found more catbirds, **Pine Siskin, Warbling Vireo, Cedar Waxwings, Turkey Vultures, Woodhouse's Scrub jay** and **Robins**. We stopped on the way back down at the pond but didn't find any new species.

From there we crossed the road to the Spanish Fork River Park to see the **Black Phoebe**. There were 2, could one be a juvenile!!!! Also lots of **Cliff Swallows**, a few more **Lazuli Buntings**, a pair of **Bullock's Orioles** and a **Red-tailed Hawk**.

It was a great day and a little cooler up the canyon. I was happy with the 46 species!!!

Owling Fieldtrip – Nebo Scenic Loop - 11 July 2019

by Suzi Holt

Thirteen night owls headed out at 9:30 pm up the canyon. At the Blackhawk turn off we started calling Flammulated Owls and Northern Saw-whet...the only thing we could hear was a boombox from campers close by. Down the road we went. We stopped at another favorite spot...not just one but two generators were "not" the most welcome sound

The next spot has been a reliable spot for both mountain owls... it was dead quiet!!! I found myself a little discouraged. The next stop the wind had picked up, but over the wind we could hear a **Flammie!!!** Around the corner I noticed there was no wind so we stopped. Success again but only within hearing distance... another no show! Stinkers! Down the road we went.

The next stop we heard a **Northern Saw-whet!!!** It barked and let us know we were in its territory! He tooted for a bit but another no show. We stopped at the **Common Poorwill** spot and heard two calling. I saved the best for last. We enjoyed the begging calls of at least 3 **Western Screech Owls**. We saw two of them clumsily walking up a branch and haphazardly flying through the maples.

I considered it a successful night! And to boot the night skies and clouds were beautiful! We got home about 1:00 am and I am tired...but would be happy to go out again anytime!!!



Western Screech-Owl
by John Crawley