



## Utah County Birders:

### December 2019 Newsletter

#### UCB Captain's Log, December 2019

by Keeli Marvel

Greetings Birders! Tis I, your fearless leader, once again leading you into the end of another year. I'm so excited to tell you a little bit about my trip to Costa Rica! I'm going to keep it fairly brief in case I end up giving a presentation at one of our meetings about my trip, but suffice it to say, it was awesome, and I picked up 102 life birds, hitting both my 600th and 700th species on my world life list. I only got to visit two parts of the country, the west coast by Tamarindo, and the area around Arenal Observatory Lodge and the little town of La Fortuna, and we did most of our birding without a guide except for the estuary tour and the guided walk at Arenal and in Arenal National Park.

My first lifer of the trip was a **RUFIOUS-COLLARED SPARROW** at the car rental in San Jose. We flew into San Jose on an early morning flight from Orlando, picked up a rental car and drove about 3.5 hours west to the Pacific coast (my step-dad did all the driving, thankfully, as the driving is a little adventurous in Costa Rica). We stayed in a really nice vacation rental condo about 5 miles away from the beach town of Tamarindo. While there I picked up several lifers around the condo complex. Every morning at dawn we had several **BLACK-HEADED TROGONS**

singing a dawn chorus in the small group of trees outside our building. We also had both **STREAK-BACKED** and **SPOT-BREASTED ORIOLES**, and **RUFIOUS-NAPED WREN** that were regulars in the bushes outside our condo. **WHITE-THROATED MAGPIE-JAYS**, and both **ORANGE-CHINNED** and **ORANGE-FRONTED PARAKEETS** were regulars around and flying over the condo. On a walk around the complex we found Howler Monkeys, Iguanas, House Geckos and other fun wildlife, and **CINNAMON HUMMINGBIRDS**, **ROSE-THROATED BECARD**, **HOFFMAN'S WOODPECKERS** and **GROOVE-BILLED ANIS**. **GREAT-TAILED GRACKLES** and **WHITE-WINGED DOVES** were common most places we went. While staying outside Tamarindo, we went on a catamaran boat tour around the coast and saw several **MAGNIFICENT**

**FRIGATEBIRDS**, lots of vultures (**BLACK** and **TURKEY**), **GREAT KISKADEE**, and **TROPICAL KINGBIRDS**. We also took a boat tour up the estuary from Tamarindo into Las Baulas National Marine Park which is filled with mangroves and saw several American Crocodiles and Spiny-tailed Iguanas. Other highlights included **BARE-THROATED TIGER HERON**, **MANGROVE SWALLOW**, **COMMON TODY-FLYCATCHER**, **TROPICAL GNATCATCHER**, lots of other herons/egrets (**LITTLE BLUE**, **SNOWY**, **YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT**, **TRICOLORED**, **GREAT BLUE** and **GREEN**), and both **RINGED** and **GREEN KINGFISHERS**.



Black-headed Trogon  
outside our condo near Tamarindo

After spending 3 nights in Tamarindo, we took off and headed inland to Arenal Observatory Lodge which is at the base of the Arenal Volcano outside of the little town of La Fortuna. The drive there was amazingly beautiful around Lake Arenal, and the views from the lodge are amazing. I had a couple of different people tell me I absolutely needed to stay there, and they weren't kidding. The accommodations were comfortable and affordable, and included a really fantastic morning buffet, the property included miles and miles of trails, they offered a free guided naturalist walk daily, additional tours (including private birding guides) for a small fee, and populations of howler monkeys and coatimundi that both wandered through the area daily. Between the trails at Arenal, Arenal



Arenal volcano- last erupted in 2010. Still had steam coming out of the top. View from the patio of one of the hotel rooms!

National Park which was about 3 miles down the road, and the sloth reserve down in La Fortuna (Sendaro Bogarin) I picked up 88 lifers. Had we been there another day I probably would have hired a private guide for a few hours and seen half again as many species. I don't have room to list them all off but my favorites were probably the **MONTEZUMA OROPENDOLA** because of the weird noises they made and how crazy they looked, all of the tanagers (we saw **BLUE-GRAY, SCARLET RUMPED, GOLDEN-HOODED, EMERALD, CARMOL'S, BAY-HEADED**, and **SILVER-THROATED TANAGERS**), the **BROAD-BILLED MOTMOTS**, the hummingbirds with all their crazy names: **STRIPE-THROATED HERMIT, PURPLE-CROWNED FAIRY, LONG-BILLED STARTRHROT, VIOLET-HEADED HUMMINGBIRD, SCALY-BREADED HUMMINGBIRD, BRONZE-TAILED PLUMELETER, CROWNED WOODNYMPH, RUFOUS-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD**, and the crowning glory, the **BLACK-CRESTED COQUETTE**. It was really unreal seeing the **YELLOW-THROATED TOUCANS**, and the **COLLARED ARACARI** in the wild as well.

Back in San Jose the night before our flight home I was a few species away from 700. At the Hotel Bougainvillea gardens Terri spotted us a pair of lifer **FERRUGINOUS PYGMY-OWLS** just as it was getting dark. The next morning in the woods next to the Alajuela Walmart next to our hotel (there's at least one Walmart in Costa Rica and **Great-tailed Grackles** hang out there too) Terri spotted my 700th species: **LESSON'S MOTMOT**. Next to our Marriot we got my 701st species: **TROPICAL MOCKINBIRD**.

It was an amazing trip full of fun memories, like having a guide drive us for a couple hours in the dark down a terribly bumpy dirt road to see baby sea turtles hatching and heading into the ocean. There were a few misses, like not making it to Monte Verde to see the Resplendant Quetzal, but overall the food was great, the people were great, the birds were beyond great and I have a feeling I'll be going back for more in the future.

If you've made it this far, I just wanted to say as well that I've just finished serving my 7th year as president of the Utah County Birders, and I'm hoping to pass the torch soon and hand off the presidency to someone else. I plan on sticking around and helping with the club in some capacity for awhile yet. I've really enjoyed getting to know so many of you and share your passion for birds and birding and I hope to see many of you out at a Christmas Bird Count the next few weeks. I hope you all have a safe and happy holiday season, a Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year!

Happy Birding!

Keeli Marvel

## DECEMBER MEETING:

**Thursday, December 12th,** 7pm at the Monte L Bean Museum in Provo, UT

We will have a fun bird ID quiz and hand out folders and assignments for the Provo Christmas Bird Count.

## FIELD TRIPS:

### **December 14th, All day** *Provo Christmas Bird Count*

Provo CBC will be Sat. Dec 14th. The tally and potluck dinner (bring something to share) will be at 6pm at the Utah County Health and Justice Building, 151 S. University Ave. Rm. 2500 (second floor). There's parking outside, or in the parking tower. Email Bryan Shirley at [bt\\_shirley@hotmail.com](mailto:bt_shirley@hotmail.com) to sign up for an area for the Provo count. Our December meeting will be a bird quiz to get ready for the count and to hand out the folders for the area assignments.

### **January 4th, All day** *Payson Christmas Bird Count*

The Payson CBC will be Saturday Jan 4th. Meet at 7:30 am at the Payson McDonalds for assignments. Contact Bryan Shirley for more information. 801-722-9346 or

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## Bird of the Month:

### **White-throated Sparrow** (*Zonotrichia albicollis*)

*by Lynn Garner*

...with thanks to Cornell Labs and *All About Birds*

A scarce winter visitor in Utah is the White-throated Sparrow (*Zonotrichia albicollis*). It is a plump, long-tailed sparrow in the Passerellidae family. It is common in Canada, where it breeds, and in the eastern and south-central states and on the Pacific coast, where it winters, often in large flocks. Though the species is found year-round in the north-eastern states, summer and winter birds are still migrants and tend to be different populations.



White-striped morph © Keenan Yakola



Tan-striped morph © Ryan Shane

There are two genetically-determined morphs, bright and dull, named for the white or tan stripes on the head. Both forms have black crown stripes, a black eye stripe, yellow lores, a



thin black malar stripe, and white throats that contrast sharply with a grayish, lightly-striped or splotched breast. The back and wings are a dull reddish-brown. The two morphs persist, because each form prefers to mate with the other form; this behavior appears to be unique among birds. Whether male or female, the bright morph tends to defend territory and the tan morph tends to prefer nesting duties.

The song of the White-throated Sparrow is an easily-recognizable thin, high-pitched whistle, described as "*oh-sweet-Canada*." An alert signal is a sharp chip note, often given by a bird on a conspicuous perch. The bird often responds to pishing sounds.

The White-throated Sparrow is a forest dweller and a ground forager. It readily comes to feeders or to scavenge beneath them. Though not closely related, it is often found in company with Dark-eyed Juncos, with whom it sometimes produces intermediate hybrids. Nests are usually on the ground, but sometimes are found in conifers several feet above ground, probably to avoid predators.

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**Field Trip - 23 Nov 2019**

## *Annual Wild Turkey Trot*

*by Suzi Holt*

We started off the morning leaving Sam's club at 8:05 heading straight to East Lawn and saw **12 turkeys!** We also saw a couple **Woodhouse's Scrub Jays** and a **Black-billed Magpie**. From there we went up South Fork and found 7 different flocks of turkeys totaling 121! Running total is 133!

Terry gave us a tip to try Hobble Creek canyon and the golf course. We are sad to say we only found golfers. We met Kaylene at the Chevron and trotted up to Diamond Fork. I have never been to Diamond Fork and not seen turkeys. Let's just say we learned turkeys are



Eastlawn Memorial Cemetery

turkeys. We counted ourselves lucky to see a **Bald Eagle**, **Dark-eyed Juncos**, a **Red-tailed Hawk**, more **Scrub Jay's**; **Magpies** and **Townsend's Solitaire**. We have now been on our trukey trot for as long as it takes to cook a large Thanksgiving turkey! Although we were sad that Diamond Forks turkeys flew the coup, we found **27 turkeys** close to Covered Bridge. Running total is up to 160. Trotting over to Loafer Canyon and Elk Ridge. We stopped by to see if Dennis had any...nope but we had a nice visit and shared some turkey cookies. We talked to my Mom to get the scoop and talked to Geniel and my Dad. **Geniel had 7** visit in the

morning, you bet we are counting those. Lesson #2 is from Lynn "the turkeys may or may not be where you think they are and may or may not be where you might think they are."

We stopped to see my Dad the biggest Turkey of all and shared some more cookies. Best birds up there were **Red-tailed Hawk, Black-capped Chickadees** at Dennis's home and **Scrub Jays** at moms.

On with the trot to Payson Canyon. In the meadow we found **3 flocks totaling 103!!!** Our running total is 269!!

We also saw **Black-capped chickadees, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Brown Creeper, Red-breasted Nuthatch** and more **Stellar's Jay's** and **Townsend's Solitaires**, some **American Robin's**, a **Northern Harrier** and a **Sharp-shinned Hawk**. Carol Jean and Machele had a belly full of Turkey and decided to head home. The 5 of us trotted on to Santaquin Canyon. We successfully found **4 turkeys**, tallying **273 Wild Turkeys!!!**



Bryan Shirley's girls were up at Grandpa's  
...and were luck enough to get some turkey cookies.

I noticed James had sent me a email saying he had 9 Turkeys in his yard. **GRAND TOTAL 282!!!!** Look at all them turkeys! 7 hours 44 minutes and 188.3 miles! A fun day had by all! We are thankful to all who joined or helped in any way to a successful Turkey Trot.