



Utah County Birders:

February 2020 Newsletter

President's Message - February 2020 *by Mabelle Johnson*

We are one month in to our 2020 challenge year, how is your 2020 vision so far??

I hope you are all enjoying the challenge and are able to get out and do some birding. There are several ways you can keep track of the categories, either electronically or on paper. Rindee Sannar created and shared a Google Doc that you can find a link to on the Utah County Birders Facebook page, search 'Rindee' and you will find it. I am keeping track of my outings in my notebook, then transferring to the various categories on the google doc. The White-throated Sparrow that I saw yesterday was added to 8 lists!

If you aren't a member of the Facebook group I would highly recommend it, it is a great page for ID help, notification of rare birds that have been spotted, and notification of meetings and field trips, plus other great information pertaining to our group and birding in Utah, search for UTAH COUNTY BIRDERS. Leena Rogers does a fantastic job as the administrator, thanks Leena!

Here are some helpful links:

<http://utahbirds.org/ucb/UCB%202020%20Challenge1.pdf> (2020 Challenge)

<http://utahbirds.org/counties/index.html> (County information)

<http://utahbirds.org/RecCom/ChecklistUtah.htm> (Current Utah Checklist) [\[Printable PDF\]](#)

Some good birds have been seen lately, some of them are still around:

Locally in the county:

White-winged Scoter - Utah Lake SP (Continuing)
Barrows Goldeneye - Utah Lake SP, Salem Pond (Continuing at Salem Pond)
Red-breasted Merganser - Lincoln Point (as of 1/12)
Lesser black-backed Gull - Lincoln Point (seen mid January)
White-throated Sparrow - Spring Lake (Continuing)
Harris's Sparrow - Lehi (as of 1/25)
Trumpeter Swan - Skipper Bay Trail (Continuing)
Black Phoebe - Skipper Bay Trail (Continuing)
Evening Grosbeak - Evergreen Cemetery, Springville (Continuing)
Greater Scaup - Salem Pond (Continuing)

North:

Williamson's Sapsucker - Liberty Park (Continuing)
Brant - West Valley (as of 1/24)
Glaucus Gull - Lee Kay Ponds (as of 1/20)
Rosy Finches - Alta (Continuing)

South:

Pacific Loon - Quail Creek Res (Continuing)
Green Heron - Tonaquint Park (Continuing)

There are others being seen around the state as well, Greater White-fronted Goose, Cackling Goose, Cinnamon Teal, Blue-winged Teal, Say's Phoebe, other gulls at Lee Kay Ponds and Farmington Bay, plus a few other good birds for this time of year. I suggest you sign up for ebird rare bird alerts and check the Facebook page often. You can also go to utahbirds.org and see how to get on other hotline lists.

If you have questions or suggestions about the challenge feel free to email me at mabelle13johnson@yahoo.com. Remember #11 is to attend 20 club meetings or field trips, so I hope to see you at the February meeting. Keeli has a great program planned for us.

Good Luck and Good Birding Everyone!

February Meeting:

Thursday, February 20th, 2020, at 7pm (a different night than usual).

Sam Braegger from the Utah Lake Commission will talk about some lake-related topics, Jake Holdaway, with the **Walkara Way Conservation Project** will give a quick overview and update on that project, and Melissa Stamp, with the **Provo River Delta Restoration Project** will present updates on that project. If you have questions about what's slated to happen with the Skipper Bay Trail and the restoration area around the mouth of the Provo River, now's your chance to ask them!

Up-coming Field Trips:

Saturday February 1, 2020

Gull Identification Clinic.

Those that sign up are just going to be meeting at the George S. and Delores Dore Eccles Wildlife Education Center at 9:45 am. It starts at 10:00 am. They will have the clinic first then those who want to go on a field trip to Farmington Bay WMA to put their skills to the test! It's a fun outing and really informative! Bring a lunch. Here is the link to sign up:

<https://m.facebook.com/groups/469267963170380?view=permalink&id=2635809396516215&sfnsn=mo>

If anyone wants to carpool we can meet at the Pioneer Crossing Park&Ride at 8:30am.

Friday February 21, 2020

Delta Snow Goose Festival.

We will meet at the Payson Walmart NE part of the parking lot close to the new construction of Quick Quack carwash at 8:00 am. We will carpool to Delta looking for birds along the way. We will hopefully get 20 species in a birding day, 20 species in Juab and Millard County., 20 species at a Utah Reservoir, and 20 species in a few cities or towns, and add to our 20 species of waterfowl! Helping complete #2, 4, 12, 13 and 16 for our 2020 challenge. Bring a lunch and plan on being home in the afternoon.

Bird of the Month:

The Tawny Eagle (*Aquila rapax*)

Article and Photos by Steve Van Winkle

My scant personal history of these this bird of prey begins in Noboisho Conservancy, Maasi Mara, Kenya where I had the opportunity to volunteer on a Big Cats research project. The conservancy occupies 50,000 + acres consisting of acacia woodlands, scrub, and grassland savannah intertwined with a meager number of seasonal and permanent streams.

Our primary goal was to gather data, both numerical and photographic, on game (prey) species, lions, leopards, cheetahs, birds of prey, specifically eagles, and elephants. Other birds of prey seen and all of which were lifers, during our daily surveys included: Martial eagle, *Polemaetus bellicosus* Brown-chested and Brown Snake-Eagles, *Circaetus pectoralis* and *Cercaetus cinereus*, respectively; Little Sparrowhawk, *Accipter minullus*; Augur Buzzard, *Buteo augur*; Bateleur, *Terathopius ecaudatus*; and Long-crested eagle, *Lophaetus occipitalis*.

The Tawny eagle is a long-lived bird of prey reaching an age of 16+ years in the wild barring threats to survival due to habitat loss and subsequent changes in prey-predator ratios, nesting sites and other conflicts associated with human development and occupancy. A more recent and very significant threat that has come under scrutiny is the poisoning of carcasses by poachers. Their method is to make indiscriminate kills of large mammals, lacing the carcasses with poisons and, thus killing any vultures, eagles, and other carrion feeding carnivorous animals that otherwise unharmed might whilst circling attract the attention of anti-poaching ranger teams to illegal kills. Presently the IUCN list the status of the Tawny as Vulnerable.



Geographic Range As described by Dr. Gianfranco Colombo in Discover the Biodiversity- Manaco Nature Encyclopedia the Tawny is found throughout “sub-Saharan Africa from Sahel up to South Africa and in the north-eastern part of the continent. It survives in the Indian subcontinent from Pakistan up to Myanmar with an isolated population on the Arabian-peninsula”. It is for the most part a non-migratory species occupying its territorial expanse throughout its life span.



Description The Tawny eagle was first described by the Dutch naturalist, Conenraad Jacob Temminck in 1828 and at one time considered closely related to the larger migratory Steppe eagle of a similar geographic range. This is though not the largest of eagles belonging to the genus *Aquila*, boasts an impressive wingspan of 63-75 inches which was quite a sight to behold as I was able to witness during my adventure at Noboisho Conservancy. In Terry Stevenson and John Fanshawe’s excellent field guide “Birds of East Africa” their description describes it as livery dark brown color (from genus name *Aquila*), to creamy-buff, vaguely streaked and rather scruffy in appearance. Though, as one can easily discern in my photo above there is

nothing scruffy in this particular bird’s appearance. In flight the wings are held flat and the tail is broad and rounded. This photo is of an adult Tawny which I will describe. The primary base color throughout is tawny (bronzish to swarthy) broken by streaks and blotches of seashell white. The lores, chin and a well-defined crescent below the eye are a seashell white. The crown, nape and shoulder are finely streaked with the same gorgeous seashell white. Wave and crest patterns of seashell are present on the primaries, flanks and upper leggings and although not visible a distinct pale buffy rump crescent exists. The gape is short not extending past the middle of the eye.

Breeding In Kenya, Tawny eagles show little to no preference regarding nest location (being constructed from small sticks) with respect to height or spatial distribution between nesting pairs. They do, however, demonstrate a deference to tree species selection preferring *Euphorbia* trees, Giraffe Thorn and the “glory and fame” tree *Euclea*. And, in regions where electrical transmission towers have been erected the Tawny show an unfortunate favoritism to these sites for nest building. Tragedy waiting around the “corner”, so to speak. Clutch size averages a little less than two eggs, and due to siblicide

very rarely does more than one chick survive to fledge. Incubation is by only the female, although both birds provide the chicks with meals.

Habitat-Ecology The Tawny much prefers open, steppe, lightly wooded savannah, high desert and open Pasteur lands where while soaring at significant heights it is able scan the ground and scrub for prey utilizing it's very keen eye sight. Once honing in on its target, most often small mammals, including hares and rodents, birds as large as guinea fowl and partridge, snakes and lizards it plunges downward and at the last moment thrusts its forelegs forward snatching its prey with deadly force and grip of talons. "It also has the innate habit to assail smaller raptors or other carnivorous birds, stealing them their just secured prey", as witnessed by many observers and described by Dr. Colombo. The Bateleur eagle that we often saw in Noboisho conservancy region, is often the candidate for this particular behavior exhibited by the Tawny resulting in its colloquial Dutch sobriquet **Roofarend** meaning robber. The Tawny will feed on the kills of other predators, exhibiting no aversion for carrion.

And, Africa awaits my future visits! It's a spectacular continent with a myriad of interesting wildlife and birdlife for the nature lover and curious alike.

Field Trip Reports:

20 Jan 2020 **Twenty on the Twentieth Field Trip**
Lee Kay Ponds, Decker Lake & Jordan River Trailhead Park

Photos and text by Leena Rogers
Information and Fieldtrip Leaders:
Keeli Marvel & Sam Phillips

In spite of the freezing cold January weather, our Gulling Field Trip was a great success thanks to Keeli Marvel and Sam Phillips. We birded Lee Kay Ponds, Decker Lake, and Redwood Trailhead Park to locate our 20 birds on the 20th. Fun morning!

List of the highlights we saw from Keeli Shea Marvel: Highlights at Lee Kay included 6 gull species: **Ring-billed, California, Herring, Iceland, Glaucous, Lesser black-backed, a Rough-legged Hawk**, and Canvasback **ducks, Green-winged Teal and Common Mergansers** at Decker Lake, and several **Barrow's Goldeneye** at the Jordan River Trailhead park bridge on the Jordan River.



1 Jan 2020

New Years Day Field Trip **Twenty on the First day of 2020**

by Suzi Holt

Are we going? Are we not? Yes we are!

16 birders braved the weather and met at Salem Pond at 8 am. The forecast for snow was correct but wasn't as extensive as it was supposed to be. Our first bird is hard to determine cause everyone was looking. I am going with **Northern Flicker!** We also saw tons of **European Starlings** and **American Robins**. **Mallard, Eurasian Collared Doves, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Song Sparrow** and tons of **Common Goldeneye**. We saw **Pied-billed Grebe, Lesser Scaup, American Coot, Ring-necked Duck, Northern Shovelers, Black-capped Chickadees** with their joyful song, **Dark-eyed Junco, House Sparrows, House Finch. California Quail, Woodhouse's Scrub Jay, Red-tailed Hawk. Belted Kingfisher, Ring-billed Gull, Yellow-rumped Warbler**, three **Black-crowned Night Herons, Canada Goose** and a **Merlin**. On the way to the Payson Cemetery we saw a couple **American Kestrels**.



At the Payson Cemetery our cute little **Western Screech** is back, we also added **Black-billed Magpies, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-crowned Sparrows** and a pair of **Barn Owls**. From there we decided to go after the **Evening Grosbeaks** and **Red-naped Sapsucker** at Evergreen Cemetery. The grosbeaks welcomed us with beautiful views right as we drove in. The Red-naped Sapsucker was down on the western edge in the pines, we also found a **Lesser Goldfinch** and **Townsend's Solitaire**. It ended up being a awesome day and so glad we went!! We happily surpassed challenge #1- First 20 species of 2020!