

Utah County Birders Newsletter

April 2023

CONTENTS:

- [Monthly Meeting](#)
- [Upcoming Field Trips](#)
- [President's Message](#)
- [Announcements](#)
- [Bird of the Month](#)
- [Field Trip Reports](#)
- [Backyard Birds](#)



APRIL MEETING:

[Thursday April 13th](#)

7pm at BYU Bean Museum and online via Zoom

Birding in India

Presented by Robert Parsons

We are excited to have Robert Parsons as our guest speaker this month. He will be giving a presentation titled "Birding in India—Land of contrasts and color!"

FIELD TRIPS:

Saturday APR 8th 8:00am to early afternoon:

[Swede Lane, River Lane, Benjamin Slough, Lincoln Point](#)

Meet at the Springville Wal-Mart parking lot, across the street from Security Service Federal Credit Union. We will be going to Swede Lane, River Lane, Benjamin Slough, and Lincoln Point to look for shorebirds. Car-pooling is encouraged as parking is limited at certain stops.

Date to be determined, possibly Friday April 21st, or Monday April 24th,

5:00am to early afternoon:

Henefer Greater Sage-Grouse Lek

Meet at the Orem Harmons parking lot west of the gas pumps to discuss lek etiquette and carpool. If there is a desire, once we visit the lek we will continue up to East Canyon reservoir to see what's there.

President's Message – Apr 2023

I am sure we are all ready for better, sunny, and dry weather. With the better weather, there are more opportunities for getting out there for birdwatching and there will be more opportunities for field trips. I had a recent experience on our field trip to Rush Valley. I rode with a sweet gal from Florida--I think her name was Debbie--and I left my raincoat in her car when we parted, which gave me the idea for my president's message with a few suggestions to follow.

1.-- On our field trips, we are often out on remote narrow roads and if there is a high number of cars trying to not only stay together besides parking at the side of a road, it becomes a 'nightmare' for the field trip guide. Suzi would definitely agree with this! So, we strongly encourage carpooling. Sometimes it can pose a problem for some, especially if you have to leave the group early or you already have family members, etc. with you, and that's okay.

2 -- If you are riding with someone you are not acquainted with, get to know them, where are they from? Is this their first time with our Utah County group? How long have they been birding? Encourage them to stay in touch with our group. Share contact information. I got to know my driver but didn't get contact information, which was my 'downfall'.

3 -- When you ride with someone else, be sure to practice the courtesy of helping with gas expenses. With today's economy, that will be much appreciated.

4 -- We are usually on lengthy trips, so we are often 'eating as we go', so ask first.

5 -- If you are feeling 'a little under the weather' but want to participate, come along but perhaps drive separately and be safe around others.

6 -- Our organization uses walkie talkies, so if you borrow a walkie talkie, be sure to return it to Suzi or whoever is leading the group. Walkie talkies are a great help as we drive along.

7 -- At the end of the field trip, and if you have ridden with someone else, be sure to take all your belongings-- check 2 or 3 times!

So, we look forward to seeing each other on that next field trip! And have fun!

Yvonne Carter

President, Utah County Birders

For Birding Suggestions for our "ODD" Year click [here](#)

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Note from Esther Duncan: :Thanks for the beautiful basket arrangement for Flora Duncan."

Mr. Cranky article link

"Mr. Cranky" the unfortunate events that led to the fortunate event for one juvenile Bald Eagle

A happy ending for Mr. CRANKY but for others it's not. Please help spread awareness about lead bullets. This beautiful juvenile Bald Eagle ingested a rabbit that contained a lead bullet. Here is the story of the last two-month journey.

Follow this link for the full story:

<http://utahbirds.org/ucb/Newsletters/2023/AprArticle-MrCranky.pdf>

BIRD OF THE MONTH:

Turkey Vulture

Cathartes aurathe

Buzz for the Carrion Crew

by Catherine White, March 2023

Photos by Sonya Massey

What is your favorite bird? Is it the mighty eagle? The stunning Steller's jay with its stately crest? The birds of paradise and their quirky displays? My dad's favorite bird was nothing as you would expect. He had a few - blue jays, eastern bluebirds - but one that he always seemed to favor most was rarely a favorite of anyone... An odd-looking scavenger – *Cathartes aurathe*, the Turkey Vulture.

Turkey Vultures are carrion birds that use their large nostrils to find food while soaring the skies from North America to South America. If you are looking to add one to your list, they are typically in Utah from March to October, after which they migrate south for the winter.

Turkey Vultures boast the largest olfactory bulb of the brain of any bird, relative to brain size. You will often find them near the sides of highways or gliding along thermals in the sky. With wingspans reaching up to 6 feet, they can be distinguished in flight by their V-shaped wings and teetering, or wobbly, flight pattern. Just like the paragliders you may catch at the Salt Lake County Flight Park, Turkey



Vulture use heat thermals in the air to swirl around, often in groups called a "kettle". While the Turkey Vultures soar up and down on the warm air, they use their eyesight and mostly their sense of smell to sniff out carcasses to munch on.



Turkey Vultures have red, bald heads that jut starkly against their dark brown and black bodies. The bald head is not just for good looks, but the lack of plumage comes in handy by keeping the bird's head bacteria-free after it has been head-deep in a deer belly. They are around 2 ½ feet tall, and despite their large body, only weigh around 3-4 pounds!

They hop around on the ground with wings slightly spread to attract mates, and they will typically stay paired for life. Turkey Vulture chicks are fluffy white with dark grey heads – this may be the only stage you could call them cute!



Turkey vultures, sometimes referred to as “turkey buzzards” (although they are not technically buzzards), do not sing or call – they simply lack the anatomy to do so. Instead, they let out guttural hisses when they are fighting for the best spot at the all-you-can-eat carcass buffet. With a sound that I can only describe as ripping duct tape, how much more endearing can they get? Well, if irritated or prodded enough, the Turkey Vulture’s go-to defense mechanism is to vomit! When they get too cool, often in the mornings, you can find them roosting with wings outstretched in the sun. And when they’re too warm? They... defecate on their feet.



So, with all their “charm” why on earth would it be anyone’s favorite bird? Other than being easy to identify, fascinating to watch, and interesting to study with their anatomy of course! This stinky, rot-loving, and harsh bird still has a place on this earth. They serve a very important purpose in the cycle of life. They are one of nature’s great recyclers and clean-up crews, which helps control the spread of some diseases and certainly makes the air smell more pleasant. So, the next time you see a Turkey Vulture, say a quick thank you and remember you have a purpose, too.

In memory of my father, Billy Massey, who loved the joy of flight and these “buzzards”.

references: I read probably over 20 articles, so I just went from memory on some. Ebird and all about bird were used for the basic data (wingspan, weight, height, coloration, and range). Chattnaturecenter.org and naturemappingfoundation.org were a few others.

[See past Bird of the Month articles\]](#)

FIELD TRIP REPORTS:

RUSH VALLEY/TOOELE COUNTY FIELDTRIP

(Photos by Suzi Holt)



18 Birders headed for Tooele County this morning! The weather cooperated but the birds not so much!! We were excited to see a flock of **PINYON JAYS** just before the Juab/ Tooele County line!!



(Lynn Garner took this photo in the same place on the way home)

We were going to start at James W. Fitzgerald WMA but it was covered in ice...so onward we went. As we neared Rush Valley there wasn't as much snow so we decided to head up to Clover Springs. It was still covered in snow but the edges of the road were clear so we birded a little there. Lots of **COMMON RAVENS**, a pair of **RED-TAILED HAWKS** and **AMERICAN KESTRELS**.

A few **AMERICAN ROBINS** and a couple **WOODHOUSE'S SCRUB JAYS**. There were lots of **EUROPEAN STARLINGS**, **BLACK-BILLED MAGPIES**, **DARK-EYED JUNCOS**, a **LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE** and a couple **GREAT-HORNED OWLS** on nests!



From there we went down Johnson Lane and saw some **HOUSE SPARROWS**, **SONG SPARROWS**, more **DARK-EYED JUNCOS**, a **RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD**, another **RED-TAILED HAWK** and **COMMON RAVENS**. In the fields we saw some **HORNED LARKS**!

We took a little restroom break at the Town Hall and met some of the residents. They were filling sandbags to prepare for possible spring flooding. There has been so much snow this year!

We continued along Main Street we added a couple **CANADA GOOSE**.

We decided to try Ophir and it too was pretty dead. We did add another **GREAT-HORNED OWL**! So, if you were looking for Great-horned Owls is was a great day!! We also saw more **DARK-EYED JUNCOS**, a couple **WOODHOUSE'S SCRUB JAYS**, a dew **BLACK-BILLED MAGPIES** and a **STELLAR'S JAY**! We decided to call it a day!



Back Yard Birds:

Yvonne Carter – Highland: I've had a **Cooper's Hawk** lurking around on the streetlamp post. Scares my birds away from the front yard feeder!

Alton Thygerson – Provo Foothills: Northern Flickers – All at the same time and in and below the same tree, seven Northern Flickers were eating at the suet feeders and on the ground.

Lynn Garner – Provo: I have added three species to my life yard list this month—**Wild Turkey**, **Canada Goose**, and **Rock Dove**.



Shawn Miller - West Provo: We had a **Sharp-shinned Hawk** on our side fence feeding on what appeared to be a Eurasian Collared Dove. We also had more than **40 Crows** feeding around the base of our Cottonwood one morning. I assume there was some hatch going on. Neither species were firsts in the yard but striking behaviors.

Esther Duncan – Delta: I have a seed and nyger feeders. I can have 30 **House Sparrows**, 15 - 20 **Gold and Lesser Goldfinches**, a half dozen **House Finches**, a few **Juncos**, **Eurasian Collared Doves**, and today there was a **Killdeer** in my front gutter.

Paul Killpack – Lindon: Saw, for the first time in my yard, a **Yellow-rumped Warbler** calling in a tree as I was taking the garbage out.

Kent Bates – Pleasant Grove: So many yard birds! 3 **Woodhouse' s Scrub Jays**, 20 **House Sparrows**, 4 **White-crowned Sparrows**, 8 **House Finches**, 25 **American and Lesser Goldfinches**, 10 **Dark-eyed Juncos**, 4 **Eurasian Collared Doves**, 2 **Mourning Doves**, 1 **Downey Woodpecker**, 1 **Northern Flicker**, 8 **California Quail**, 1 **Coopers Hawk**, 3 **Black-billed Magpies**, 4 **Black-capped Chickadees**, 6 **American Robins**.

Robert Parsons – Orem: **Say's Phoebe**.

Milt Moody – Provo: I've only seen a **Steller's Jay** in my Provo yard a couple of time in 27 years, but I saw one this month watching a scrub-jay eating from my suet feeder. The bird watched the scrub-jay curiously as I watched curiously to see what was going on. The Steller's Jay didn't go for the suet -- probably won't be back in my yard very soon, unfortunately.

[BACK TO TOP](#)