



Utah County Birders Newsletter

July 2023

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JULY MEETING:

Thursday July 13th at 7pm at the Monte L. Bean museum in Provo and via ZOOM
(link and passcode will be sent out the week of the meeting)

Dave Heldenbrand is our guest speaker this month. Dave's presentation will cover bird watching binoculars in detail and introduce spotting scopes and accessories. Whether you are shopping for binoculars, need help getting them properly adjusted, or wondering if a spotting scope would be worth the investment, you'll find this presentation informative. This presentation will be a good one for many of our newer members, including those who are just getting into birding.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The Provo River Delta Project Team

We're reaching out because we need your help to complete the [Provo River Delta Restoration Project](#) safely and on time. The Delta Project will not open to public access until 2024, yet we have been struggling with trespass issues at the Delta site and along the portions of original channel that are closed for construction. The good news is, once it's open, the project will clearly be an in-demand recreational resource! The bad news is that trespassing presents challenges for us as we try to safely complete construction and get native plants growing on bare soils.

Please help us by:

- Heeding on-site closure notices
- Spreading the word about project area and [trail closures](#) and the effects of trespass (see info in the notices and maps below and attached)
- While the project area remains closed, you can still get a close look at the restored habitats by pre-registering to attend one of our organized Second Saturday Site tours. Visit the [Contact Us](#) page of the project website to sign up [Contact Us — Provo River Delta Restoration Project](#)

We appreciate your help!

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS:

Saturday July 15th, 7:30am **ALPINE LOOP**

Meet at 7:30am sharp at the Harmons in Orem on 800 N, west of the gas pumps. We will head up the Alpine Loop and stop at a few different locations and at Cascade Springs. Bring water and lunch, we will bird until early afternoon.

For most field trips it is best to carpool as much as possible, many places that we go can be narrow canyons, or other busy roads. Bring a walkie-talkie if you can, it helps the convoy relay what is being seen, and reasons for stops.

President's Message – July 2023

By Yvonne Carter

There comes the time when weather (rain, snow, and high heat and, oh yes, our employer) keeps us from being out there observing the birds either alone or with others on field trips. So, the solution can be right before our eyes either a book--not a field guide--, or a television program.

I have come across some delightful books that can give us a greater appreciation for those special creatures, the birds, that go beyond a field guide. I think most of us have read "Kingbird Highway" by Kenn Kaufman, or Peter Dunn's "Essential Field Guide Companion" which is quite the tome to say the least. But I have come across a few other authors that have had 5-star ratings. Consider and explore Bernd Heinrich's books like "One Wild Bird at a Time" or his book, "Mind of the Raven". Bernd Heinrich has written, "Life is too precious Not to observe nature". There are Jennifer Ackerman's books, like "The Genius of Birds" plus others. David Sibley in 2020 came out with a book titled "What It's Like to Be a Bird". Now, how's that for a title! So happy reading during those times when you are not out there watching the birds.

Besides reading, there are some marvelous nature programs like Nova, Nature, and National Geographic that have been around for a long time. But the other day, I spent some time watching a series entitled "Wild Scandinavia" on PBS with excellent photography and commentary. Season 1 with 3 episodes is available now.

So, there you go, when you can't be out there find your favorite chair, pull out the books, or watch those videos.

Happy birding!
Yvonne

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

BIRD OF THE MONTH

Article and photo by Lynn Garner

The Magpies

On my first trip to Europe in 2009, I saw the familiar, Black-billed Magpie (*Pica pica*) that behaved like the magpies I had known all my life. But when I got home, I discovered that the American version had been separated from the Eurasian species and was now *Pica hudsonia*, a new lifer for me without even having to look at it again.

When I was in high school, before the international agreements that protected the birds of America, there was a bounty on crows, English sparrows, and magpies; the farmers viewed them as nothing but pests and paid by the egg or head to anyone who could catch them. Later in life, when I became interested in the birds themselves, I regretted that I had, with some of my young classmates, destroyed so many of these beautiful creatures. Nonetheless, the population has stabilized throughout its range. It actually turns out that a large portion of the diet of the omnivorous magpie is small rodents and insects, so that the bird is more beneficial to agriculture than destructive.[1]



Black-billed Magpie ©Lynn Garner

The Black-billed Magpie is easily recognized by its bold black-and-white feathers and long tail. It can be described as a fairly large black bird with white shoulders, belly, and sides and having prominent white wing patches that include most of the primaries. The wings and tail also often show iridescence.

The call is described as “a nasal, rising *jeeeeek*, a harsher, lower *rek rek rek rek* or *weg weg weg*, or rapid *shek shek shek shek*, three to five notes.” [2] Personally, I have heard a variety of almost conversational calls, cackles, and jeers; the sounds are often aggressive or querulous. Magpies regularly harass outdoor pets, often stealing their food. It was commonly told to us as children that magpies could learn to speak; other corvids have been given that ability in tale and legend.

The nest of the Black-billed Magpie is a large domed stick structure. In a soft-lined cup in the middle of the nest, the clutch consists of 6 to 9 speckled olive-brown eggs. Their habitat is open parklands and prairies with scattered trees, riparian shrubbery, farmland, and even suburban landscapes. Their resident range is from Alaska to northern Arizona and from eastern California to the great plains, including far western Canada.

A cousin of the Black-billed Magpie is the Yellow-billed Magpie (*pica nutalli*), found in the Central Valley of California, its range not overlapping the range of *hudsonia*.

- National Audubon Society, Birds of North America (2021), p.574.
- Sibley V2 app, Black-billed Magpie

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

FIELD TRIP REPORTS:

Diamond Fork Field Trip

Saturday June 3rd

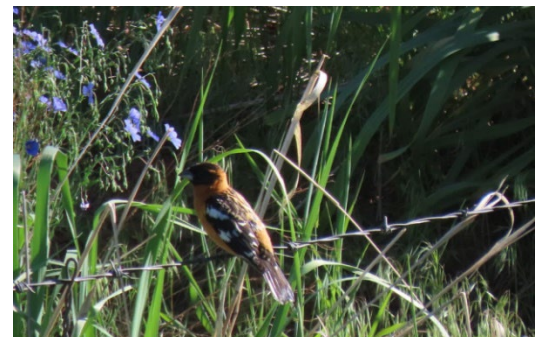
Report and photos by Suzi Holt

Saturday June 3rd was a beautiful day up Diamond Fork. The extra water we have had has made it beautiful and green! Although the rushing river is putting a damper on my fly fishing, the birding was awesome!



We started down at the bottom, the pond was overflowing.

We were welcomed with a **Barn Swallow** flight show! And serenaded by **American Robins, Yellow Warblers, Gray Catbirds, Song Sparrows** and **Black-headed Grosbeaks**! In the Willows we heard a **Willow Flycatcher** that took a minute to coax into view.



Gray Catbird, Willow Flycatcher, Black-headed Grosbeak

As we watched a **Song Sparrow** building its nest, someone spotted a **Brown-headed Cowbird** in a close bush. I can say I've seen this activity on TV but never in real life as it flew into the Song Sparrow's nest to drop off its responsibility. I'm not sure if she did deposit an egg or not but that was her intent.



Song Sparrow



Lurking Female Brown-headed Cowbird

Across the pond there was a **Yellow-breasted Chat** singing in the top of a Cottonwood. The **Black Phoebe** finally showed up on the safety fence by the SF river covert. A few **Common Ravens**, **Turkey Vultures** and a lone **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** flew over along the ridge.



Yellow-breasted Chat, Black Phoebe at the culvert, Black Phoebe in the field

Because the river has overflowed, there is water in the adjacent field. We spotted another Black Phoebe, he was hanging out with some **Mallards**. As we drove up the road, I heard a **Western Wood Pewee** singing. Glad we stopped because we had a **Broad-tailed Hummingbird** fly by and an **Ash-throated Flycatcher** perched on a dead snag. A pair of **Belted Kingfishers** were working the river. I always love to see them! Across on the hillside we had **Lazuli Buntings**, **American Goldfinch**, and a lone **Mountain Bluebird**. I thought I saw an American Kestrel but it was a **Peregrine Falcon**! There was also a perched **Red-tailed Hawk** and a **Western Meadowlark**.



Lazuli Bunting, Belted Kingfisher, Peregrine Falcon, Canyon Wren, Virginia's Warbler

Our next stop was the DF Campground. The Dipper and Fox Sparrows were a no show. But we had lots of **House Wrens**, a **Warbling Vireo**, **Chipping Sparrows**, a pair of **Western Tanagers**, a **Spotted Towhee**, and tons more Yellow Warblers.

Last stop was Red Ledges. As soon as we got out the **Canyon Wren** and **Rock Wren** were singing. There were lots of **Cliff Swallows**, Barn Swallows, a lone **Violet-green Swallow** and one **White-throated Swift!!**. Mabelle's merlin picked up a **Virginia's Warbler** and we were able to call it in. There were American Robins, a **Woodhouse's Scrub Jay** and Spotted Towhees as well. As we headed down, I heard a **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher**, so we stopped. There were more Chipping Sparrows, House Wrens, Western Tanagers calling and of course more Yellow Warblers!! It was a fun day! Thanks for coming!!

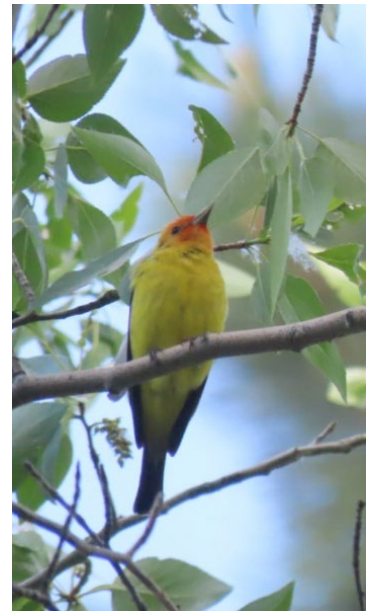
Mt Nebo Scenic Loop

Thursday June 15th

Report and photos by Suzi Holt



We did a Juab County evening fieldtrip along the Salt Creek last night. We met at the Exxon at the mouth of Nephi Canyon. While we were waiting, we had a **BLACK PHOEBE** along the river a first for me in Juab County. They are definitely expanding North. We birded a little here and also saw **Western Kingbirds**, a **Black-chinned Hummingbird**, **Barn Swallows**, **American Robins**, a **Chipping** and **Lark Sparrow**, **House Finch** and a **Bullock's Oriole**. From there we stopped at the little reservoir up the road. We had a pair of **Mallards**, lots of **Yellow Warblers**, **Red-winged Blackbirds**, **Song Sparrows** and a **Yellow-breasted Chat**. A **Broad-tailed Hummingbird** and **Black-billed Magpie** were working the north side of the road as well. Tatum also found some cool rocks!



Lark Sparrow, American Goldfinch, Western Tanager

Next stop was the little Salt Creek reservoir along the Nebo Loop. It was no longer a reservoir but a red torrent. A beautiful sight! We heard a **Spotted Towhee**, had more Yellow Warblers, an **American Goldfinch**, **Lazuli Bunting** and a **Woodhouse's Scrub Jay**.

We parked at the Ponderosa Campground, and it was pretty quiet. We saw a couple **Western Tanagers**, an American Robin and a Yellow Warbler but that was it. Although the smell of Ponderosa Pines and campfire invited us to linger longer but we headed up the road.

The river was beautiful, and the hiking trail was picture perfect with the small stream and we enjoyed our small hike! Natalie commented on all the different shades of green. We were in the time between where most birds were silent, so we hiked a ways up the trail. Just before dusk the birds started singing their last nightly serenade. We heard **Hermit Thrush**, a chip from a **Cordilleran Flycatcher** that we finally got sight of a **Great-horned Owl** off in the distance and a couple **Flammulated Owls**. The meadows were swampy, and our shoes and pant legs got pretty soaked. You could see your breath, so we called it a night. Thanks for coming!!



Back Yard Birds

Yvonne Carter – Highland: I often have 4 or 5 crows circling our area in the morning while I'm gardening.

Robert Parsons – Orem: We had a pair of Killdeers, which is pretty unusual for our Orem suburban neighborhood.

Bruce Robinson – West Jordan: California Quail and their little golf ball sized babies.

Milt Moody – Provo: Young'uns are showing up in my yard in Provo. The House Sparrows with their silly grins, the House Finches with their fuzzy horns, the Black-headed Grosbeaks with their fresh head colors and orange-buff underparts, and even a stubby-tailed Song Sparrow new born with an obvious stubby tail – for the second year in a row. There should be more to come. I'm thinking there should be BT Pigeons, E-Collared Doves and possibly Mourning Dove young showing up soon. It's a great time of the year!

