



# Utah County Birders Newsletter

May 2023

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## MAY MEETING:

**Thursday May 11<sup>th</sup> at 7pm**

Come join us for a *BIRD WALK* along the Jordan River Trail. We will meet at the parking area where the river trail crosses 1500 N in Lehi, and walk south towards Willow Park from there.

Meeting Location: [https://maps.app.goo.gl/Wf4JyLuYsQQmdMPT8?g\\_st=ic](https://maps.app.goo.gl/Wf4JyLuYsQQmdMPT8?g_st=ic)

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## FIELD TRIPS:

**Monday MAY 15<sup>th</sup> 7:00am: UTAH COUNTY HOT SPOTS**

Meet at 7am at the Payson Walmart to the west of the Quick Quack car wash. Bring a lunch, we will be out until 3pm or so. We are doing this trip to prepare for our Salt Lake Bird Festival field trips that we lead on Friday and Saturday that weekend, so if you want to tag along we'd love to have you!

Please plan to carpool as much as possible, and bring a walkie-talkie if you can.

Saturday MAY 27<sup>th</sup> 7:30am: Pinyon Juniper Specialties

Meet at the Payson Wal-Mart by Quick Quack. We will be looking for Pinyon Juniper specialty birds like Gray Vireo, Gray Flycatcher, and Black-Throated Gray Warblers. Be sure to bring sunscreen and water!

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## **President's Message – May 2023**

By Yvonne Carter

I have a very interesting grandson, Zach Carter, now in his mid-twenties, who loves the out-of-doors. I rarely get to see him because he is either a river guide working out of Moab, working at the ski resorts, rock climbing (and now I just found out that there is such a thing as boulder climbing), amongst other activities as water skiing with his father, our youngest son. Right now, he is driving to Alaska to be a river guide up there for the summer. He attended one year at the University of Utah, and he couldn't stand it, being completely bored with computer science. He recently finished a 28-day trip on the Colorado River and stopped to see us on his return. Instead of spending the entire time sharing his exciting experiences, he wanted to talk about all the birds he saw. When Zach was a young kid, every time we went to visit his family in Oregon, we always went birding. I would bring extra binoculars and also my scope. And once in a while, he would call me and excitedly say, "Nana, I saw this bird but can't figure out what it is!" And we would proceed to figure it out. That interest in birds has stayed with him. There were several species he couldn't figure out on this recent trip. So with my phone and the Merlin app and the Sibley's book, we had a fun time either playing the call, or looking at the drawings. By the way, he saw in one area/sighting, 40 Condors.

Now, all of you birders, always look for opportunities to share the wonderful world of birds with your children and grandchildren. It is easy to say that you're busy, and maybe later would be better. You never know who will take a lifelong interest in birding. The activity of birding together helps create memories and builds a connecting bond.

Happy birding!  
Yvonne

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

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## BIRD OF THE MONTH

### Red-winged Blackbird

*Agelaius phoeniceus*

ORDER: Passeriformes

FAMILY: Icteridae

By Torrey Best

The red-winged blackbird is one of the most common birds in North America, but that doesn't stop me from being excited every time I see one. As a relatively new birder, the red-winged blackbird was one of the first birds I was able to positively ID. It was also one of the birds that taught me that all the birds I was seeing in the distance weren't just little smudges but were actually unique and diverse species. This bird taught me to slow down, notice the details, and appreciate the beauty all around. These discoveries further fueled my passion for birding and changed how I perceived the world around me.

Red-winged blackbirds are seen in marshy areas throughout Utah year-round. Males are black with bright red and yellow shoulder markings while females sport more conservative hues of brown. These birds are also typically polygynous, with males having up to 15 female mates. To protect their territory, these males will spend several hours a day chasing off potential threats such as other males and occasionally chase larger animals such as humans or horses.

These birds have up to a 13" wingspan and sometimes travel up to 50 miles a day to forage for food. Summer food consists mostly of insects while winter food includes a variety of seeds. During the winter, red-winged blackbirds will congregate in open fields. Once the breeding season begins, they can be found in marshes or areas with standing water.

Next time you notice a flock of blackbirds, take a minute to spot the red-winged blackbirds whether it's one of the males enjoying the spotlight with a song or a more subdued female hopping around in the cattails.

Sources:

[https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Red-winged\\_Blackbird](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Red-winged_Blackbird)

National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of Western Northern America

Sibley Birds West

Photo by Mia McPherson, Farmington Bay, 04/02/2010, [utahbirds.org](http://utahbirds.org) photo gallery

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



## FIELD TRIP REPORTS:

### RIVER LANE - SANDY BEACH - BENJAMIN SLOUGH - LINCOLN BEACH

4/8/23

Report by KC Childs, Photos by Esther Sumner

Five cars with about 17 birders left Springville at 8 a.m. and headed first for **River Lane**. On the way there, we immediately saw a large group of **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** in a tree. Shortly after, two **Sandhill Cranes** flew overhead. We drove past semi-flooded fields with **American Avocets** taking advantage of the little pools on one side and some **Brewer's Blackbirds** on the other side. Then, as we passed by a field, we could see a female **Mountain Bluebird** on a fence post, which was soon joined by a male Mountain Bluebird. In a field, in the distance, we could see **American Wigeons**, **Mallards**, **Canada Goose**, **Killdeer**, **White-faced Ibis**, and a **Western Meadowlark** perched in a tree. We also saw an **Osprey** perched at the top of a pole that took flight. We also saw **Say's Phoebe**, **Black-billed Magpie**, **European Starlings**, some **House Sparrows**, and some **Red-winged Blackbirds**.

We stopped and got out of our vehicles at **Sandy Beach**, where we could see another large flock of yellow-headed blackbirds. We set up scopes (thank you birders for sharing your scopes!) and enjoyed **Cinnamon Teal**, **Northern Shovelers**, **Gadwall**, **Mallards**, **Green-winged Teals**, **Black-necked Stilts**, **Killdeer**, **Ring-billed Gulls**, **American White Pelicans**, one **Great Blue Heron**, one **Downy Woodpecker**, one **Northern Flicker**, one **American Kestrel**, one **swallow**, and some **Dark-eyed Juncos**. As we headed out of Sandy Beach, we found a **Red-tailed Hawk** perched in a tree.



On the way back from Sandy Beach, we added to our River Lane count with two **Vesper Sparrows**. We stopped to look for the Vesper Sparrows, and as we did, a **Northern Harrier** flew past.

Next, we headed to **Benjamin Slough**. This location is tricky for parking, but we had just the right amount of cars and birders that we decided to make the stop. As soon as we parked, we could see a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** bouncing around a tree. In another distant tree, we could see 16 more Yellow-headed Blackbirds and some Brewer's Blackbirds! Two **Savannah Sparrows** flew by and landed on the wire in the Slough, giving us good looks. We also saw Canada Goose, Cinnamon Teal, Northern Shovelers, Gadwall, American Wigeons, **Northern Pintails**, **Redhead ducks**, **Ring-necked Ducks**, **Lesser Scaup**, **Bufflehead**, **Common**

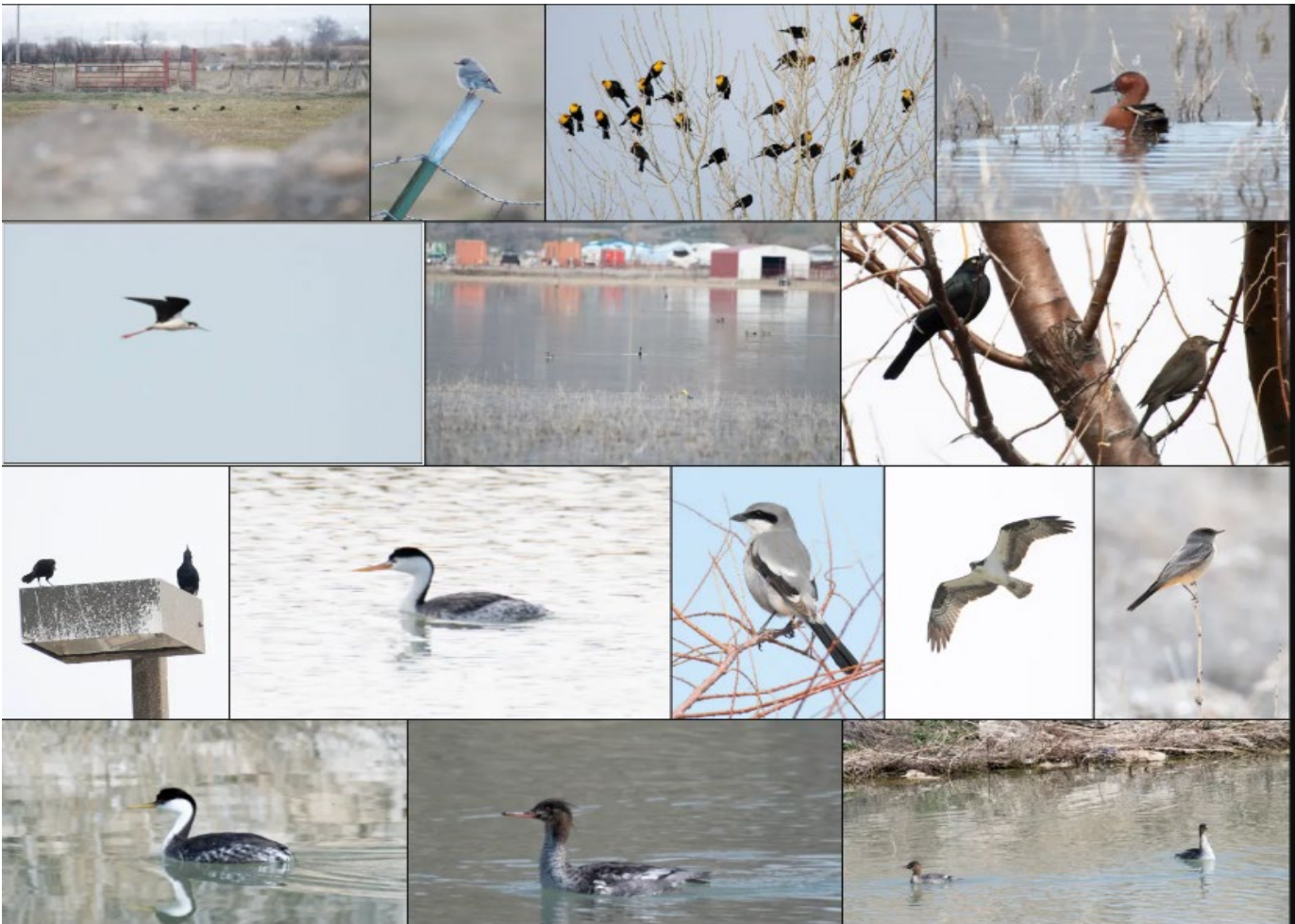


**Goldeneyes**, **Ruddy Ducks**, **Eurasian collared-Doves**, **American Coots**, **Black-necked Stilts**, **American Avocet**, **Killdeer**, **California Gull**, **American White Pelican**, **Black-Billed Magpie**, **European Starlings**, and a **Yellow-rumped Warbler**.

From there, we went to the nearby **Lincoln Beach**. As soon as we pulled in we could hear and see two **Great-tailed Grackles** that moved from a Pavilion to a light post, an **Osprey** sitting on a power line pole, and two Grebes in the boat loading ramp - BOTH a **Western Grebe** and a **Clark's Grebe**! A **Loggerhead Shrike** flew in and landed on a bush nearby and stuck around long enough for us to get pretty close as we walked out. As we looked toward the shore, we could see Canada Goose, Cinnamon Teal, Gadwall, Mallard, Common Goldeneye, **Common Merganser**, **Red-breasted Merganser**, American Coots, American Avocet, Killdeer, a California Gull flying past, a **Double-crested Cormorant**, American White Pelican, an Osprey fishing. We also saw some sparrows that were too far to identify, but also, a **White-crowned Sparrow**, **Black-Capped Chickadee**, a Western Meadowlark, a Northern Harrier that flew by, and a couple of **House Finches**!



In all, we went to four locations over four hours and saw **60** birds!



Top L to Bottom R: White-faced Ibis, Mountain Bluebird, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Cinnamon Teal, Black-necked Stilt, various ducks at Benjamin Slough, Brewer's Blackbird, Great-tailed Grackle, Clark's Grebe, Loggerheaded Shrike, Osprey, Say's Phoebe, Western Grebe, Red-breasted Merganser (2 photos)

## HENEFER LEK FIELD TRIP

4/21/23

Report & Photos by Suzi Holt

We had a great fieldtrip today to the **Henefer Lek** to see the **Greater Sage-Grouse**!! 12 Birders got up way too early!! For me it was 3 am. We met at 4:30 am in Orem and headed Northeast. We got to lek in the early dawn hour of 5:50. We couldn't hear or see any grouse yet. We had parked on the other side of the road because we'd been told they were lekking on the big parking lot. There's still lots of snow!

It was about 6:19 and a few birds started coming out on the snow beyond the fence. Within 15 minutes we'd counted 24 birds. Mostly males with a few hens! The dancing began, and then the fighting! All the time they kept getting a little bit closer.

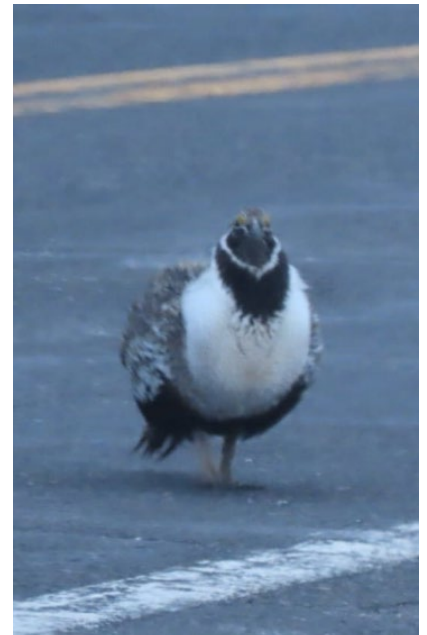
Three other vehicles had showed up and parked on the other side. Some birds braved the road and came across on our side to feed and get a drink.



At one point we had 6 with one male dancing in the middle of the road!! What a sight! On this side we actually got them in Summit County.

By 6:45 they all flew off back to the sage and the show was over.

**Definitely worth the trek!!**



We then headed down to **East Canyon reservoir**. It's still pretty iced over. Our first birds were **American Coots, Mallards** and **Canada Geese**. Then a few **Vesper Sparrows** and **Dark-eyed Juncos**.



(Vesper Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Gray-headed)

We also saw a couple **Mountain Bluebirds** and **Black-billed Magpies**. Further down we saw a few pairs of **American Kestrels**, some **American Robins** a **Swainson's Hawk**, and a pair of **Golden Eagles**. At the south end there was more open water with lots of waterfowl! There were more Mallards, **American Wigeon**, **Common Goldeneyes**, **Common Merganser**, **Green-winged Teal**, **Gadwall**, **Redhead**, **Bufflehead** and American Coots, plus lots of **Common Loons**.



We had another Golden Eagle flyover as well. Down by the resort a flock of sparrows flew across the road. They were Vesper Sparrows. While watching them I thought I heard an off-kilter Song Sparrow. Spring dumbness, haha!! Thanks, KC, for the ID- **Fox Sparrows**.

A few **Brewer's Blackbirds** and heard a **Red-winged Blackbird** *imitating* Say's Phoebe. We saw a **Red-tailed Hawk**, Oregon Dark-eyed Juncos, a Pink-sided and tons of Gray-headed Juncos. Down by Dutch Hollow there were a couple **Wilson's Snipe** too!

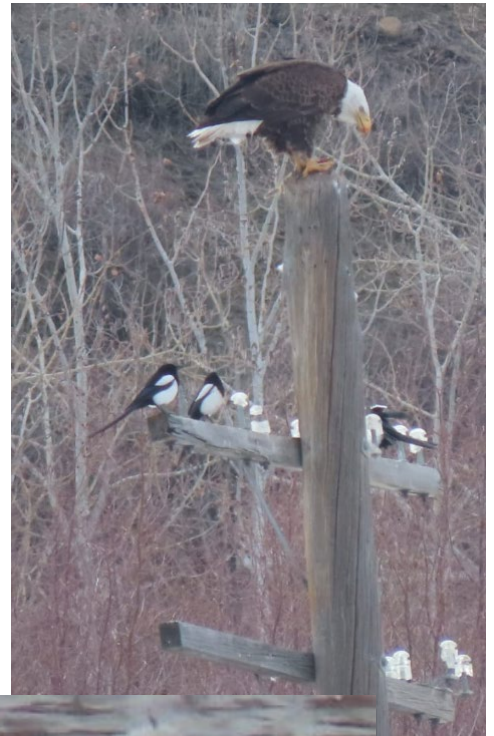


Weston Smith had told us about a nesting **Bald Eagle**! A fun sight to see!

While watching a flock of Vesper Sparrows and Gray-headed Juncos there were a few **White-crowned Sparrows** in the mix, and we *heard* a **Spotted Towhee**! We also saw a few more Red-winged, and Brewer's Blackbirds. And don't forget the **European Starlings**. As we entered the Jeremy Ranch Road, we saw an **American Dipper** working his way up a small stream. The snow-covered road forced us to turn around. We saw a few more flocks of sparrows, saw and heard a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** and *heard* more Fox Sparrows.

The nesting Bald Eagle started calling and we saw the mate come in with lunch! In the distance we were serenaded by Sandhill Cranes. We also saw a lot of **Northern Flickers**, **Black-billed Magpies** more American Robins plus a flyover **Common Raven**. We drove around the Campground at the resort and added a **Mountain Chickadee!**

Our next stop took us towards **Echo Reservoir**. Along the way we saw a **Franklin's Gull**, **California** and **Ring-billed Gulls**, a **Rock Pigeon** and **Eurasian-collared Doves**. A couple more nesting Bald Eagles and a lot of **Ospreys!** At the reservoir we saw American Coot, **Red-breasted Mergansers**, tons of Common Loons, lots of **American White Pelicans**, another couple Franklin's Gulls and some more waterfowl including a **Blue-winged Teal!** We added **Northern Shoveler**, and a **Great Blue Heron**, **Western**, **Clark's** and **Eared Grebes** too. Sadly, a bunch of Elk had died towards the west end of the reservoir. We heard and saw some **American Pipits** and **Killdeer** there as well.



Next stop was **Rockport Reservoir**. It was pretty iced over all but the south end, so we headed for the State Park. There were so many Gulls including another few Franklins. There was a group with all three species of Teal, **Cinnamon**, Green-winged and Blue-winged! And tons more Common Loons. We added a **Double-crested Cormorant**, **Northern Pintail**, **Ring-necked Ducks** and **Canvasback!**



We totaled 33 species in Morgan County and 41 species in Summit. **A grand total of 55 species for the trip!** It was freezing cold for the end of April! Thanks for coming. If you couldn't go with us, you should try to head up there soon!

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## Back Yard Birds

**Catherine White – Orem:** Just my usuals: **Woodhouse's Scrub Jay, Lesser Goldfinch, House Finch, California Quail, Eurasian Collared Dove, European Starling, House Sparrow, American Crow.**

**KC Childs – Orem:** I was excited to get a new yard bird. I had a pair of **Sandhill Cranes** flyover!

**Milt Moody – Provo:** I've had a **Lincoln Sparrow** hanging around my yard for almost a week. One day I had a **Song Sparrow, Brewer's Sparrow, Gray-headed Junco** (sparrow family), and my usual **Spotted Towhees** and more common Juncos, who joined the Lincoln Sparrow – a fun **PASSERELLIDAE** family reunion with some unusual and highly esteemed guests.

**Yvonne Carter – Highland:** I had an awesome view of a **Cooper's Hawk** flying directly towards me as I was looking through my kitchen window. I wish I had a camera ready as he was chasing a House Finch. He veered to my left as he pursued his prey.

**Shawn Miller - Provo:** I had my first **Lesser Goldfinches** in my yard, a mating pair. The female kept confronting her own reflection in my windows.

**Kaylene Hamilton – Mapleton:** I've had **Cassin's Finch** and **Green-tailed Towhees!**

**Alona Huffaker – Springville:** In addition to the usual migrants, I had 3 **Evening Grosbeaks** at my feeder for a couple of minutes only on the 19<sup>th</sup>. I was lucky to hear them and look out!

**Esther Sumner – Lindon:** We had a pair of FOY **Lazuli Buntings** in our yard on April 25. They came and went in about one minute so we were lucky to be backyard birding at the time.

**Bruce Robinson – West Jordan:** (SL County) **American Robin**, I know-nothing special, except this one had white tail feathers. And a **Great Horned Owl**, always fun to see and hear.