



# Utah County Birders Newsletter

September 2023

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## SEPTEMBER DRIVE-ALONG: Goshen Canyon to Mona

**Thursday September 21<sup>st</sup>** (This is a week later than our usual monthly meeting)

In place of our regular meeting this month we will take a drive from Goshen to Mona and look for Short-eared Owls, or anything else interesting along the way. We will have 2 meeting locations. Meet Keeli at 6:30pm in Saratoga Springs in the southeast end of the Smith's parking lot near the gas pumps. OR meet Machel at 6:45pm at the Payson Wal-Mart near QuickQuack. We will all meet up in the parking lot at Goshen Elementary around 7pm and continue from there.

Goshen Canyon is quite narrow, please carpool as much as possible. We will bird until it's too dark to see!

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## UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS:

### Saturday September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 7:30am River Lane-Sandy Beach

Meet at 7:30 am at the new beach access. We will look for migrating shorebirds, then drive or walk down River Lane. We should be done around noon, possibly sooner.

### Saturday September 16<sup>th</sup>, 7:00am Antelope Island

Meet at 7:00am at the Pioneer Crossing Park & Ride to carpool to Antelope Island. We will stop along the causeway, at the Visitors Center and Garr Ranch. Bring a lunch, should be home by mid-to late 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.*

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## President's Message – September 2023

By Yvonne Carter

I recently came upon an article/podcast concerning the high temperatures in New Mexico and Arizona, and how they are affecting birds and their usual coping methods. It was an interview between Bryce Dix of Byline and Blair Wolf of the University of New Mexico. Here is one segment:

Bryce Dix: This is Bryce Dix in Albuquerque, N.M, where the heat wave has triggered statewide excessive heat warnings. The scorching heat spells trouble for humans, but it's also hurting wildlife, especially bird populations. Normally to keep cool in heat waves like this, birds have a variety of tools at their disposal. Some urinate on their own legs, but the most common is a sort of avian panting. That's where the bird will open its mouth and flutter its neck muscles. But panting can cause birds to lose water and become dehydrated rapidly. Now, experts say the climate is warming much too fast for birds to adapt.

Blair Wolf: We're talking about birds that breed once a year.

Dix: That's University of New Mexico biologist Blair Wolf. He's concerned for bird diversity in the Southwest and across the world as global temperatures recently reached the hottest they've ever been in history, causing unprecedented dehydration and loss of food sources.....Those susceptible birds might include small songbirds like goldfinches, which get dehydrated fast, or birds like the curve-billed thrasher, which only live in the desert and can't move to cooler places.....You can listen to more of this podcast on Gastropod--The Incredible Egg.

My youngest son recently sent me a podcast of an interview and story of a well-known world travelling birder with an incredible goal for his life list. I think all of you will enjoy listening to his experiences, and perhaps recall some of your own challenges in finding that one special bird that has been a nemesis on your life list. Enjoy!

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/outside-podcast/id1090500561?i=1000623433021>

Happy birding!  
Yvonne

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

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## BIRD OF THE MONTH

By KC Childs

Photo by John Crawley

### Dusky Grouse

(*Dendragapus obscurus*)

It's that time of year again where birds are on the move on a large scale across the world. As birders, there is no better time to be out watching birds than during migration, and when we think of migration, we often think of long arduous journeys many birds take, however some stay close to their breeding grounds and migrate a short distance. Dusky Grouse happens to be one of those birds that stay close to their breeding grounds year-round.



Dusky Grouse is a relatively new species that was formed from when the Blue Grouse was split into two species, The Sooty and Dusky Grouse. They are best identified by range, size, coloration, and if you are lucky enough to see a male displaying during the spring, you would see a purple/red patch on the neck, surrounded by a bright white ring and combs above the eye that go from yellow to red. They also have a dark black tail, with a gray tip at the end of the tail.

Dusky Grouse are a sizable bird that range from 17 to 22 inches tall and have a wing span of around 2 feet. They are mainly omnivores and eat plant material, berries, however in the summer, juveniles and adults take advantage of some insects like grasshoppers and beetles. Their numbers seem to be increasing, thanks to difficulty in accessing their breeding grounds.

Dusky Grouse migrate mainly by altitude in the spring and in the fall. They prefer to breed in montane mixed woods near clearings where juveniles can take advantage of bugs like grasshoppers to eat. The distribution of Dusky Grouse is in the mountains of the interior of North America. They are seen as far south as Arizona and as far north as the Yukon Territories. Breeding usually occurs around the end of April and start of May. When the breeding season is over, they migrate usually upwards in elevation towards conifer forests, where they survive the winter by eating the needles of conifer trees.

In the state of Utah, Dusky Grouse habitat can be found from north to south, and east to west. In Utah County specifically they are seen mainly in the Wasatch Mountains, and the month of September is a prime time to be able to view Dusky Grouse close to home. Some of the best places to view them are by hiking trails on the Alpine Loop, Nebo Loop, South Fork of Provo Canyon, and areas around Diamond Fork. I have had great success seeing them hiking up the Big Springs Hollow Trail in South Fork during September. I challenge you to get out this month and hike one of the many trails in the local mountains and see if you are lucky enough to see one of these elusive and gorgeous birds!

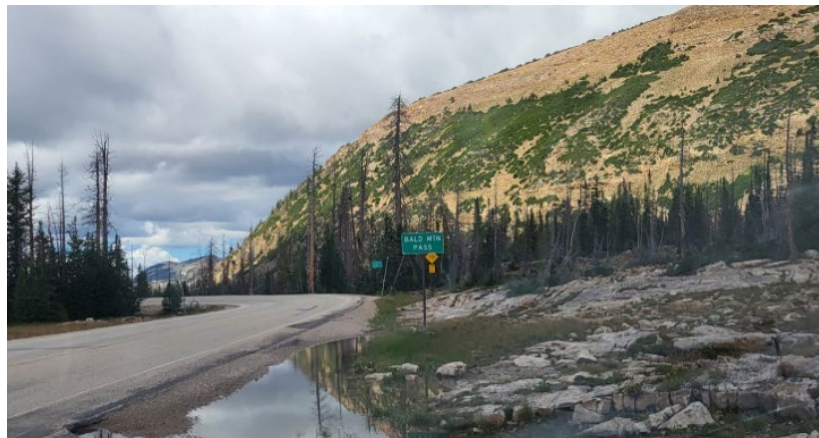
Reference: [birdsoftheworld.org](http://birdsoftheworld.org)

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

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## FIELD TRIP REPORT:

### Mirror Lake Field Trip 8/25/23 Report and photos by Suzi Holt



We had a fun day up in the Uinta's! We headed straight for Mirror Lake in case of inclement weather. We drove around the Horse Campground loop gaining nothing! Then decided to do the Highline Trail. It was definitely not the most profitable birding area, but we did manage 21 species in the area. We started off with **Mountain Chickadees, Dark-eyed Juncos, Clark's Nutcrackers** and a **Common Raven**.



*Clark's Nutcracker*



We then had a family of five **Red-breasted Nuthatches**, a couple **Mountain Chickadees**, a couple **Yellow-rumped Warblers** and a **Brown Creeper** mobbing a cavity in a dead pine. Pretty exciting! We *heard* a **Northern Goshawk**. Had lots of **Red Crossbills** "pip-pip-pipping" and flying over. Saw **Ruby-crowned** and **Golden-crowned Kinglets**, a few **American Robins**, a **Northern Flicker** and had a not so much obliging **Canada Jay**. A juvenile **Bald Eagle** was soaring above, and a **Lincoln's Sparrow** was hopping in the brush along the trail.



*Red-breasted Nuthatch*



*Juvenile Bald Eagle*



*Lincoln's Sparrow*

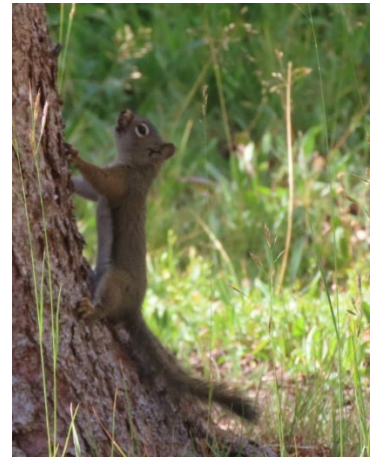
As we were passing the pond KC spotted a Pine Marten! We followed it and got quite the show as it was hunting a vole, he caught it and then did what all mommas say not to do, "don't play with your food" it was quite the sight! The best thing all morning. We also saw a few chipmunks and cute squirrels.



*Pine Marten with a Vole*



*Uinta Chipmunk*



*Squirrel*

As we entered the campground a couple of **Pine Grosbeaks** flew over. We also had a "sitting still" Red Crossbill. A group of **White-crowned Sparrows** were taking a bath in the meadow. In the trees around there, a couple of **Pine Siskins**, and a pair of **Wilson's Warblers** were flitting around. At the car we had a **Sharp-shinned Hawk** flyover.



*Female Red Crossbill*

Some dark thunder cells were getting close and threatening so we decided to head down. We stopped at Hayden Peak Lookout, and it was really boring, although we did find a few tart currants.



*Hairy Woodpecker*

We decided to try Bald Mountain Trailhead and added **Green-tailed Towhee**, **Western Tanager**, **Orange-crowned Warblers**, **Chipping Sparrow**, **Cassin's Finch**, **Hairy Woodpecker**, **Red-tailed Hawk** and a **Mountain Bluebird**.

Our last birding stop was at Soapstone Basin, we were greeted by **Cedar Waxwings** and a **Western Wood Pewee**, had a couple Yellow-rumped, **Yellow** and Wilson's Warblers, **Black-headed Grosbeak**, Mountain Chickadees and a **Willow Flycatcher**. Tatum and I shared a few ripe raspberries along the river and then we all parted ways.

We found a picnic table and ate our lunch at Yellow Pine Campground. We also tried choke cherries, they are true to their name. They put a film all over your mouth and do cause some "choking". I always love this trip up in the mountains! Thanks for coming.

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## Back Yard Birds

**Esther – Delta:** At my orchard in Orderville, UT there was a **Cassin’s Kingbird** on a post – “Ka Beer”! It was a great yard bird moment!

**Robert & MaryAnn – Orem:** Nothing from us, we are in Northern Minnesota. But watching loons on the Great Lakes and **Canada Jays** on the Canadian border has been fun.

**Suzi – Payson:** Lots of hummers in Payson! I’ve had **Black-chinned**, **Rufous** and **Broad-tailed**, and I’m watching for juvenile Calliopes. The Rufous ‘bullies’ are back in force! But I love them, I’m going to be so sad when they all leave.

**Milt – Provo:** At my feeders in Provo, I had a three-dove-species-at-a-time week in August where a **Mourning Dove** would show up early and then was joined by the **Eurasian Collared-Doves** and then the **Band-tailed Pigeons**. It was fun to see the size difference that is not obvious when they’re seen separately!

**KC – Orem:** I’ve been seeing lots of migrating **Swainson’s Hawks** flying low over my yard!

**Noel – Springville:** Fall migration is picking up in my little riparian corridor in Springville. In the last week or so I have had **Broad-tailed** and **Rufous Hummingbirds** competing with the **Black-chinned** at my feeder, **Western Tanagers** going after my plums, lots of **Lazuli Buntings**, especially juveniles with streaky breasts, going after my weed and grass seeds (my excuse for keeping a weedy yard), and **Yellow and Wilson’s Warblers**. (I see Yellow Warblers occasionally throughout the summer). Early morning and late afternoon are the busiest times, much more so than during the heat of the day.

**Bruce – West Jordan:** **Great-horned Owl** silhouetted against the breaking day in my West Jordan yard.

**Glenn – Bountiful:** On August 22<sup>nd</sup>, I went into my bedroom and looked out my window at my very aged pint tree. I was pleased to see a **Brown Creeper** ascending the trunk, I suppose, looking for food. I think it’s been at least over 30 years since I have seen one.

**Kent – Pleasant Grove:** Black-chinned hummingbird, family of 7 California Quail, Lazuli Bunting, and Bullock’s Oriole. Plus the regular assortment of feeder birds.