



# Utah County Birders Newsletter

August 2024

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## **AUGUST MEETING** Potluck at Timpanogos Cave NM.

Meet at Timpanogos Cave NM at 5:30. We will bird from 5:30 to 7pm and eat at 7. Bring a dish to share, paper goods and water will be provided.

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Timpanogos+Cave+National+Monument/@40.4439249,-111.7077239,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m6!3m5!1s0x874d879f67b05f19:0x6f396a1591cb3beb!8m2!3d40.4439208!4d-111.7051436!16zL20vMDQwOWZf?authuser=0&entry=ttu>

(Visitors going just to Timpanogos Cave National Monument, including the Canyon Nature Trail and Swinging Bridge Picnic Area, are not required to pay the US Forest Service American Fork Canyon fee.)

## **ANNOUNCEMENT:**

Leila Ogden, a long-time member of our birding group passed away on May 28<sup>th</sup>. She was an avid birder and lifelong educator.

Here is a link to her obituary:

<https://www.sundbergolpinmortuary.com/obituaries/leila-ogden>

LINK TO 2024 Challenge: <http://utahbirds.org/ucb/Newsletters/2023/2024Challenge.pdf>

LINK to 2024 Planned Field Trips: <http://utahbirds.org/ucb/FieldTrips/2024FieldTrips.pdf>

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## UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

### Saturday August 24<sup>th</sup> Fish Springs

Meet at 5:00 am at the Payson Walmart to the west of the Quick Quack to follow Suzi, or the Saratoga Springs Walmart to follow Keeli. Bring a lunch and whatever else you might need, we will be gone most of the day.

NOTE – This trip is dependent on the weather, if it is raining it is a No Go!

\*\*Please respond if you are interested: There is an overnight trip planned to Escalante NM, Kodachrome Basin SP, & Escalante Petrified Forest SP Sept 13 to 15<sup>th</sup>. If you are planning to go on that trip, please email [machelle13johnson@yahoo.com](mailto:machelle13johnson@yahoo.com) so we can get an idea of the interest for that trip.

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

President's Message:

During this last month I have not been able to attend our field trips. All I can say is, "Darn!" I have had several family activities here in Utah and in Oregon. I dearly love my family and feel family togetherness is important. Still, I sure have missed the field trips with you wonderful people.

Participating in field trips is a wonderful way to learn more about the birds we see. Instead of two eyes, there are 12, 18 or 24 eyes out there looking for the birds. Not only are we seeing the birds together, but there is that sociality in the group to share experiences and knowledge about birds and birding. Those of you who have been in our Utah County Birds group for many years or decades are needed. We might think we are too old, or have trouble seeing or hearing the birds, but your presence is vital to the group. This is especially important as we strive to pull in new members that feel like they are just beginners. I previously shared my experience on my first field trip—a real 'greenie' with \$10 binoculars—and Milt Moody shared his scope with me which opened up the whole wonderful world of birding for me. Thank you, Milt.

WE NEED ALL OF YOU—BOTH THE NEW BIRDERS AND THOSE WITH MANY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE.

On August 8th, we will have our traditional summer potluck dinner up American Fork Canyon across from the Timp Cave trail at 'Swinging Bridge'. Starting at 5:30 until 7:00 we will bird on the trail adjacent to the picnic area followed by dinner. Bring your favorite dish to share and join the fun.

Happy birding!  
Yvonne

## BIRD OF THE MONTH

**Burrowing Owl**  
*Athene cunicularia*  
Article by Natalie Tanner



Photo by Natalie Tanner

Their scientific name is *Athene cunicularia*, and there are close to twenty subspecies. They are found as far north as Southwestern Canada and inhabit most countries in South America. There is a population in Florida, otherwise they are just found in the west in the U.S. There are also populations in the islands of the Caribbean. Those populations in Utah and north are breeding populations that migrate to the southern U.S. or Central America. However, there have been individuals found hunkered down in burrows that have overwintered in areas previously thought to have been vacated for winter. Most populations are greatly reduced in number with habitat loss being the major contributing factor. They are listed as a species "of least concern" when it comes to population numbers, but some states are seeking "endangered" or "threatened" status for Burrowing Owls.

Burrowing Owls have developed longer legs than other owls which they use for sprinting after prey. Like other owl species, they do most of their hunting at dusk and dawn as they have excellent night vision. They have a variable diet mostly including invertebrates and small vertebrates, usually preying most heavily on what species are most abundant. They have been known to prey on other bird species taking birds as large as dove size, which is approximately their size! Unlike other owls some populations even consume fruits and seeds. They hunt from short perches and catch prey with their talons, or they chase prey down on foot.



*Photo by Asher Lee*

There is little sexual dimorphism with Burrowing Owls, but the female is usually a bit heavier and the male a bit longer. The males are usually lighter colored because their feathers tend to be sun bleached from spending more time outside of the burrow. Size-wise Burrowing Owls are slightly larger than Robins. They have life expectancies of around 9 years in the wild and slightly longer in captivity. Badgers, coyotes, snakes and feral cats and dogs are their natural enemies.

Burrowing Owls nest in late March or early April with one mate, but occasionally a male will have two mates. They are slightly tolerant of humans and if they can't find a suitable burrow, they will use a man-made structure (like those found on Antelope Island). In the western U.S. they prefer using vacated Prairie Dog burrows, or they may use Badger or squirrel dens. They seek open areas with short vegetation. If they live where the ground is softer, they can excavate their own burrows. They usually line the entrance and inside of their burrows with dung that attract insects they can feed on.

The female will lay 4-12 eggs, with populations in the west being on the higher end of that number. The female incubates the eggs for 3-4 weeks with the male bringing her food. After hatching, both parents feed the young for several months. The chicks start leaving the burrow around 4 weeks old and make short flights and learn to hunt from their parents. Migratory populations are less likely to return to the same burrow in subsequent seasons.

Burrowing Owls are one of my very favorite birds and each year I look forward to their return and hope I get to observe them, especially with their young. I hope their numbers remain steady and we can enjoy them for years to come!

## Bibliography

Birds of the Great Basin, Fred Ryder Jr. pp.269-270,

Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior, David Sibley, pp. 345–348.

Lives of North American Birds, Kenn Kaufman, pp. 315-316

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

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## FIELD TRIP REPORTS

### Wasatch Mountain SP

Saturday July 13, 2024

Article and photos by Keeli Marvel

Seven birders met Saturday morning to bird Wasatch Mountain State Park. It's a funny park without a ton of public space unless you're golfing, camping, or mountain biking, but there are a couple of hiking trails and places to look for birds.

We started the trip at the main visitor's center by the pond. There we picked up a handful of species right off the bat. We had **Yellow Warbler**, **Song Sparrow**, **House Sparrow** and **House Finch**, **Barn**, **Cliff**, **Tree**, and **Violet-green Swallow**, **Red-winged Blackbird**, and **Brewer's Blackbird**. **Wild Turkey** and **Canada Geese** were both on the golf course in larger numbers with people just golfing past them. We got **American Goldfinch**, **Broad-tailed Hummingbird**, **American Robin**, were in trees around the parking area and the neighborhood across the street, and three **Osprey** made passes over the lake.

From there we went up to the Campground and disc golf course. We got **Woodhouse's Scrub Jay** and **Spotted Towhee** by the parking lot. We could hear **Lazuli Buntings** up on the hill, but we never got a good look at one. We hiked up a trail that turned into the disc golf course and found our trip highlight, a pink flamingo (a tiny fake plastic one), but also got good looks at **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher**, **Downy Woodpecker**, **Warbling Vireo**, **Black-capped Chickadees**, **Black-headed Grosbeak**, **Mourning Dove**, and a heard only **Western Tanager** we chased around for a few minutes rounding out our species for the 2024 birding challenge. Thanks to all who came out!



**Dairy Fork WMA**  
Saturday July 20, 2024  
Article and photos by Suzi Holt

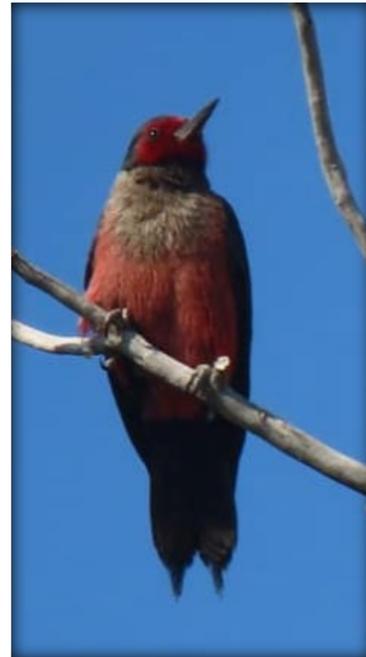


13 birders showed up early to head to Dairy Fork. The breeze was nice and cool in the morning. At the beginning we had a ton of swallows. **Northern Rough-winged, Barn, Cliff** and a couple **Bank Swallows**. Lots of juveniles! We also had a few **Song Sparrows** serenading and flitting around!

From there we drove a little ways up and had **Lazuli Bunting, House Finch, Chipping Sparrow, American Robin, Pine Siskins, Red-tailed Hawks, Woodhouse's Scrub Jay** and **Black-chinned Hummingbirds**. Along the way some even saw a family of **Cooper's Hawks** and a **Black-capped Chickadee**.



Next stop was at the corral we had lots of **Mountain Bluebirds**, heard a **Spotted Towhee**, a **Rock Wren** was jumping around on the cattle guard, **Rufous Hummingbirds** were on the Thistles. **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** and 3 **White-breasted Nuthatches** were on the other side of the road up in the snags and Pinyon pines. We watched a couple **House Wrens** and an **American Robin** along the bank of the stream. From there we drove up to the Cottonwood trees. First bird was a **Lewis's Woodpecker**. We eventually saw 4 of them!



We also had **Yellow Warblers**, **American Goldfinch**, **Lesser Goldfinch**, **Northern Flicker**, **Bullock's Oriole**, **Mourning Doves**, more Red-tailed Hawks and a **Wild Turkey** with babies!! There were **Black-headed Grosbeaks**, **Western Wood Pewee**, **Broad-tailed Hummingbird** and **Brown-headed Cowbirds** too. At the bottom there was a **Western Kingbird** and a couple **Common Ravens**. We tallied 37 species by 10:30 or so. It was a great morning. Thanks for coming!



## Back Yard Birds

**Lynn Garner – Provo:** Has a **Greater Roadrunner** ever been seen in Provo before? We found this fellow in our back yard in Edgemont this morning. No mistaking it for something else! He spent quite a while crossing our yard, then went over the fence into the neighbor's yard. I walked around and saw him there crossing their back yard. Then a construction vehicle came close, and he hid in the bushes.



**Bruce Robinson – West Jordan:** **Rufous Hummingbird!** It's been 2 years since I last saw one of these territorial, possessive, controlling, aggressive, and cute little buggers at my feeders.



**Steve Van Winkle:** In my birding 'backyard' last week while on a hiking tour on Cape Breton, Nova Scotia – a **Great Cormorant!**

**Dennis Shirley – Elk Ridge:** Nothing really exotic here in Elk Ridge. But did have 2 hen **Wild Turkey** and 17 small Poults show up at my feeder yesterday. Heaven help my bird seed supply!

**Yvonne Carter – Highland:** I stepped outside the other morning and noticed the birds were quiet. And then I heard the screech of a **Cooper's Hawk**. Ah! That's why.

**Holly Minor – Erda:** Our three **Swainson's hawk** chicks have fledged in Erda and are busy learning to hunt in our field. Here's one begging for a big gopher that mom caught.



**Robert Parsons – Katowice, Poland:** Big hello from Katowice, Poland—our current “backyard.” We see **Fieldfare** pretty often, along with the more common **Eurasian Magpie**, **Eurasian Moorhen**, **Hooded Crow**, **Jackdaw**, and of course **White Storks**. I also saw a **White-throated Dipper** and a new life bird for me – **Alpine Accentor**!



*Fieldfare*



*Eurasian Moorhen*



*Jackdaw photo by Bryan Shirley*



*White-throated Dipper*



*Alpine Accentor*