



Utah County Birders Newsletter

January 2024

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JANUARY MEETING

Thursday January 11th, 7pm at Golden Corral 171 W University Pkwy, Orem

Our January meeting will be a buffet dinner meet-up at Golden Corral on University Parkway in Orem (171 W. University Pkwy), at 7pm on Thursday Jan 11th. Come eat with us, talk about birds, and get excited about our 2024 UCB Birding Challenge!

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

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

Deer Creek State Park – Saturday January 6th

Meet at 8am at Harmons in Orem, to the west of the gas pumps. We will bird around the State Park and hopefully get 24 species!! This will be our first trip towards the 2024 Challenge!!

Utah Lake State Park – Saturday January 27th

Meet at 8am at the State Park by the office building. We will drive the dikes and walk the park and campground. Hopefully finding 24 species! If you have a State Parks pass and are willing, meet in the lot across from the state park and carpool in to the park.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Yvonne Carter

Time flies! I can't believe it's the end of 2023, and 2024 is going to be interesting indeed. I hope everyone created their own personal challenge during 2023, since we do the challenge in even numbered years. Details for the January meeting is shown above, the challenge for 2024 will be introduced--it will benefit all of us to explore new areas in Utah.

I came upon some interesting information about Christmas Bird Counts this last week and wished I could have included this in the last newsletter before our own Christmas Bird Counts were conducted. Before 1900, hunters would go out around Christmas time and have a challenge to see who could shoot the most birds and waterfowl. Conservationists and bird watchers were becoming concerned about the decline of certain species. The Christmas Bird Count began on Christmas Day 1900 when Frank Chapman, an officer in the new Audubon Society had proposed a tradition--a Christmas Bird Census--counting the birds instead of shooting them. Due to the enthusiasm of Frank Chapman and 27 birders, 25 Christmas Bird Counts were held that day from Toronto, Canada to Pacific Grove, California with most counts held near populated areas in the northeastern area of the United States. They tallied over 90 species with all counts combined.

There is a delightful 4-minute video called History of the Christmas Bird Count on the Audubon site with several clips related to the subject. It's so wonderful to see the enthusiasm for birding around the world. So, sit back with a cup of tea, or hot chocolate and enjoy those videos.

We look forward to the activities planned for our new year.
Happy birding!
Yvonne

BIRD OF THE MONTH

WOOD DUCK *Aix sponsa*

Article by Marie Hinckely, photos by Edison Hinckley



The wood duck was one of those target species that, for a few months in the beginning of my hobby as a birder, I was destined to keep missing. What an unusual looking duck! And they perch, too? How unexpected! And, though not as ornate and colorful as the male, it's fun when the female is pretty too.



Wood ducks are usually found on shallow lakes and ponds, often swimming near the edges. They feed on aquatic plants and their seeds, acorns, insects, and crustaceans. They have a wide range throughout the United States.

During breeding season, they typically build their down-lined nests in tree cavities, up 65' off the ground. Egg clutches range from 6-15 eggs. Hatchlings use their little claws to climb to the edge of the nest and will jump out onto the ground. They're pretty resilient! The female tends to the young for 5-6 weeks before they are on their own. They're able to fly after about 8-9 weeks.

But the most notable thing about wood ducks is their colorful plumage. Adult males have a green crested head and chestnut breast with bold white markings contrasting with black, blue and other colors. Their red eyes are also striking. Females are warm brownish gray with a smaller crest and a white teardrop eye ring.



https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Wood_Duck/id
<https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/wood-duck>

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

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

PROVO CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

On Saturday, Dec 16 we conducted our annual Provo Christmas Bird Count in a count circle that has been counted consistently for over 50 years. The 15 mile-diameter count circle, divided into 19 different count areas, was counted by roughly 56 volunteer birders. We had mild and hazy weather conditions this year for the count, but despite the mild weather several counters reported that it seemed like a slow day. Cumulatively though we came up with a total of 98 bird species for the count circle, which is well above our average of 92 species.

Some notable species that were found on our count this year include:

-Donel Jensen and the Wasatch Nature School group found one and then later both of the Vermilion Flycatchers that have been hanging out at Utah Lake State Park CG. Vermilion Flycatchers have only been reported one other year on the Provo CBC. They also picked up the only Barrow's Goldeneye and Orange-crowned Warbler on the count.

-Jeff Cooper picked up two Eurasian Wigeon and a Common Yellowthroat on the East Bay ponds. He also had two Snow Geese fly over, which have only been reported 3 other years on the Provo CBC.



Herring, Iceland (Thayer's), Ring-billed Gull by Suzi Holt



Eurasian Wigeon among American Wigeon by Jeff Cooper

-Suzi Holt picked up a Herring Gull and two Thayers (Iceland) Gulls, and the only American Tree Sparrow and Brown-headed Cowbird on our count this year in her area that covered the Provo Airport Dike and the north end of Provo Bay.

-Esther Sumner and her team hiked several miles up Rock Canyon this year and got a Ruffed Grouse, Canyon Wren, and Brown Creeper, which were our only ones on the count.

-KC Childs started extra early and got Northern Saw-whet Owls up Provo Canyon. He also picked up the only Wild Turkey on the count.

-Paul Killpack picked up the only Hairy Woodpecker and Pine Siskin on the count in the South Orem/North Orem area.

Notable misses this year included all of the mergansers, Ruddy Ducks, Chuckar, Steller's Jay, and Golden-crowned Kinglets.

Thanks to everyone who came out to support the Provo CBC!

Provo Christmas Bird Count Photo Gallery



Lesser Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull by Suzi Holt



Gadwall x Mallard hybrid by Jeff Cooper



Bald Eagle by Suzi Holt



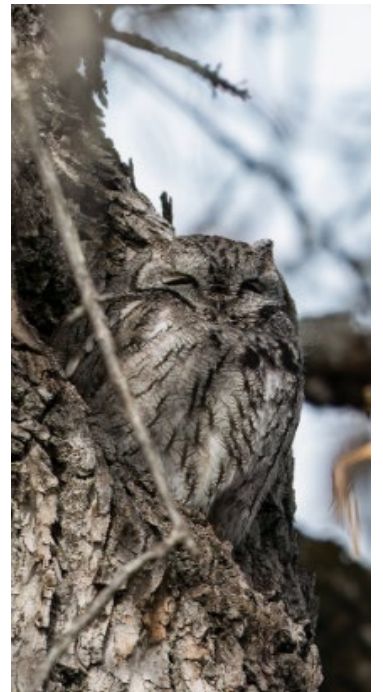
Goldeneye by Suzi Holt



Sharp-shinned Hawk by Steve Van Winkle



American Kestrel by Suzi Holt



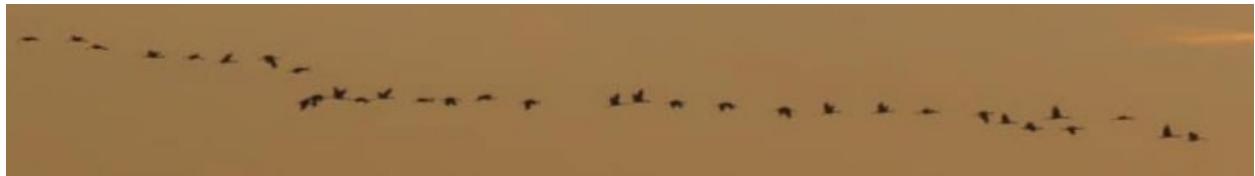
Western Screech Owl by Jeff Cooper



Cedar Waxwings by Steve Van Winkle



Red-breasted Nuthatch by Steve Van Winkle



Sandhill Cranes by Suzi Holt



The Tally Crowd by Amanda Tinoco

PAYSON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Roughly 26 birders braved the rainy/snowy conditions on the Saturday before Christmas to participate in the Payson CBC. We had two feeder watchers and the rest of the group covered our 15 mile count circle which includes Payson, Elk Ridge, Spring Lake, Santaquin, Genola, Warm Springs, parts of Goshen, Lincoln Beach and Lincoln Point. Our species count came to 88 species, which is the third highest ever reported and about 9 species above average, so we did pretty well! Highlights of the count included a Horned Grebe I ID'd with KC's help at the reservoir in southwest Santaquin, and KC found a late season Snowy Egret in the Goshen/Genola/Warm Springs area, which was a count first. KC also picked up the only Sora and Rough-legged Hawk on the count, Steve Clark found the only Red-naped Sapsucker and David Olsen and his wife found the only Killdeer and Great Blue Heron on the count. Mabelle Johnson found our one Lewis's Woodpecker for the count. Strangely as well, Connie Misket found the only Mourning Dove on the count, although we did have others reported during count week. We had the highest turkey count in the last 11 years of counting with 286 total turkeys (I saw the most I've ever seen up Santaquin Canyon!).

Thanks to all who braved slick roads and rough morning weather to count birds this year! Those who stuck it out through the day were rewarded with beautiful afternoon weather and a gorgeous sunset to end the day.

Happy Birding and Happy New Year!



Mt Timpanogos Sunset by Keeli Marvel

BACK YARD BIRDS

Bruce Robinson – West Jordan: On the eve of Dec. 24, I saw 8 birds that resembled reindeer flying across the sky. And on Christmas morning I was paid a visit by a Merlin.

Suzi Holt – Payson: I had a Ruby-crowned Kinglet today in Payson in my yard. Not a common visitor but they do stop by in the winter sometimes :)