



Utah County Birders Newsletter

January 2025

CONTENTS:

- [Monthly Meeting, Announcements](#)
 - [Upcoming Field Trips](#)
 - [President's Message](#)
 - [Bird of the Month](#)
 - [Field Trip Reports](#)
 - [Art Gallery](#)
 - [Backyard Birds](#)
-

JANUAY MEETING

Thursday, January 9th, 2025 7pm Golden Corall in Orem

Our January meeting will be our traditional dinner and 2024 Birding Challenge award ceremony at Golden Corral. Even if you didn't participate in the challenge, you're welcome to join us, congratulate those that did and enjoy a meal out with birding friends! Pay your own way at the door and join us in one of the reserved rooms in the back. Hope to see you there!

Please email Machelles or Keeli your Challenge status if you haven't already done so.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

No announcements this month

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

SATURDAY JAN 18, Lindon Boat Harbor

There will be a field trip on January 18th looking for gulls near Utah Lake. We will meet at 8 AM at the trailhead parking area near the entrance to Lindon Boat Harbor. We will start here trying to see how many species of gull we can find plus whatever fun birds are around. We will head south from there and go to where gulls are congregating. Remember to dress warm, and if you have a walkie talkie or scope, to bring it along. We should hopefully finish around 1pm.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

President's Message:

Hi fellow birders, are you aware that January 5th is National Bird Day! So, get out there and watch our feathered friends!

My dear children are very aware of my interest in birds and birding. In fact, one daughter always finds something unique at Christmas time to give me. In the past, there was a unique, beautiful jigsaw puzzle produced by National Geographic picturing about 15 common birds found in the United States. This year, another daughter gave me a wonderful storybook for children entitled 'Red and Lulu'. It's about a male and female Northern Cardinal whose nest was in a large pine tree that was being cut down to use as the Christmas tree for the city square. They follow the tree, and you will have to read the story on your own to see what happens!!!

But I was really surprised by another gift. The first daughter gave me a special bird feeder. Now, I already have 5 bird feeders in the yard, not counting the hummingbird feeders. It's a 'smart' bird feeder with a built-in camera that connects to my phone. It has 2.4 GHz Wi-Fi. I sometimes watch the videos on emails but had no idea that this is available for personal use. So, spend some time in your favorite bird store and see all the new gadgets out there, and start your wish list for the new year!

Happy birding!
Yvonne

BIRD OF THE MONTH

Semipalmated Plover

Charadrius semipalmatus

Article by Nichole Telford

Photos by Jeremy and Kristin Telford



Semipalmated plovers are shorebirds that look similar to killdeer, but they are smaller and have only one black band around their throat. They look very similar to the common ringed plover, though semis have thinner breast bands. Around Utah, we are more likely to see semipalmated plovers than common ringed ones. Their breeding plumage features more distinct black markings around the eyes than non-breeding plumage, and their beak becomes orange with a black tip.

Semipalmated plovers are migratory birds. They winter in South America, and in Utah we're more likely to see them during the breeding season, which is between March and August. The actual breeding and nesting takes place in the arctic. It's not that common to see them around here though, and it is most likely that if you see a plover around here, it is a killdeer.

Semipalmated plovers nest in pretty flat areas, similar to killdeer. They put down leaves, foliage, and maybe rocks in order to better disguise their nests from predators. They lay eggs once a year, and a nest will contain around three or four eggs. The eggs are slightly longer than an inch long and are a beige color with brown mottling. When combined with at least partially rocky terrain, these eggs are well camouflaged and look like stones on the ground.

The word "semipalmated" refers to their partially webbed feet. This gives them a unique footprint when they step on mud that can be useful to signal their presence, assuming you pay attention to the tracks. They forage on the shore for invertebrates to eat using a run and snatch technique. Basically, they wander around until they



see a tasty morsel, take a few quick steps forward and dart their head down to catch whatever invertebrate food they see. Some of these invertebrates include beetles, spiders, shore flies and worms.

Semipalmated plovers are one of those species that are worth checking for when there are lots of shorebirds around. You'll most likely find them exploring the muddy shore near a lake, or wading in the shallower waters of wetlands or flooded plains. However, whatever you'll see will most likely be a killdeer, which is easily identifiable with its two breast bands. If the bird has only one breast band, it's worth it to look closer, just in case it may be a semipalmated plover.

sources- The Birder's Handbook: A field guide to the natural history of North American Birds (Paul R. Ehrlich, David S. Dobkin, Darryl Wheye)

National Geographic. Complete Birds of North America (edited by Jonathan Alderfer)

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

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Annual Christmas Bird Counts



Beautiful sunrise to start us off! Photo by Keeli Marvel

Thank you to all who joined us this month on the Provo and Payson Christmas Bird Counts! We had a great turnout of birders, open water, and tolerable weather for both and SMASHED our previous species counts for both Provo and Payson Count Circles.

Provo Count:

We had a ton of birders participate in the Provo Count this year, which was amazing! Our final species total for the Provo CBC was **116 species**, which blew our previous record of 108 right out of the water. This is just short of the state record for all count circles! **Highlights** from the Provo count were many and included a **Black Phoebe** and **Tundra Swan** in the Provo River Delta, a **Pygmy Owl** up Provo Canyon, a **Saw-whet Owl** KC got in the wee hours of the morning up Khyv Peak Rd, a **White-throated Sparrow**, **Clark's Nutcrackers**, **Golden-crowned Kinglets**, and **Canyon Wrens** up Slate/Rock Canyons and we got both **Cattle** and **Snowy Egrets** on the count for the FIRST TIME EVER. It was a great day, and a fun tally potluck! Thanks to all who participated!

Payson Count:

Our final total for the Payson CBC was **111 species**. With 29 birders we had full count circle coverage, which was awesome and doesn't always happen for this count! 111 species is INCREDIBLE and 20 species higher than our previous record of 91. The rain/sleet tapered off for most counters right as we started out, and while the light was flat, the weather mostly cooperated. **Highlights** of the count included **Snow Geese** and huge numbers of **Mergansers** and FIVE different species of gulls on the lake (**Ring-billed, California, Iceland, Lesser Black-backed and American Herring**) found by KC and McKay. **Chukar**, and **Canyon Wrens** also found by their group on West Mountain. Both Suzi and Bryan and Jesse's groups found not one, not two, but **THREE Vermilion Flycatchers**. Suzi's crew also picked up **Trumpeter Swans** which were a COUNT FIRST! Connie spotted our only **Ferruginous Hawk** of the count, Jeff and Landon picked up **Northern Pygmy-owls** up Payson Canyon, Molly and Scott, who joined us from SLC, found the only **Red-naped Sapsucker** and **Hooded Merganser** on the count. Sam spotted a **White-throated Sparrow** for my group at Spring Lake, and Donel found the only **Lewis's Woodpecker** in the foothills. The birders who joined us from SLC said they were so impressed with our group and how cohesive, dedicated, and inclusive we are. So thanks ya'll for being the amazing group of birders you are and for helping us have an AMAZING count and another great year!

Photos from the day by various people:



Say's Phoebe



Common Goldeneye



Trumpeter Swans



White-faced Ibis



I see you, Barn Owl



American Kestrel



Vermillion Flycatcher



Red-winged Blackbird, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Brown Headed Cowbird



Red-tailed Hawk



Canada Goose



Ring-billed Gulls



California Quail



Yellow-rumped Warbler



Belted Kingfisher



Bald Eagle



Western Meadowlark



Snowy Egret



Great Egret



Great Blue Heron



Northern Pygmy Owl

~Art Gallery~



Jim Strong-Photography: Northern Flicker family, Fish Lake.

Back Yard Birds

Paul Killpack – Lindon: We had a **Cooper's Hawk** take down a **Mourning Dove** and saw a **Common Raven** and **Canada Goose** fly overhead.

KC Childs – Orem: **Myrtle Yellow-rumped Warbler!**

Dennis Shirley – Elk Ridge: 25 **Cedar Waxwing**, **Cooper's Hawk**, **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**, **Lesser Goldfinch**, and 17 **Wild Turkeys!**