



Utah County Birders Newsletter

August 2026

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AUGUST MEETING

Aug. 20, 2026

UCB August Meeting

It's our annual birder potluck!!

Thursday August 20th, 6:30-9pm (NOTE it's the third Thursday)

Join us for an evening of birding, socializing, and a potluck dinner at Pavilion #1 at Big Springs Park, up South Fork in Provo Canyon.

Bring your binos, a food item to share (extra points if it's bird themed), and any family/friends that want to tag along. We will provide plates, napkins, silverware, cups, and water. If you'd like to sign up for specific potluck items or see what other folks are bringing, check out our potluck signup sheet here: <https://www.perfectpotluck.com/KTQO7042>

All of you newer birders who have joined us on bird walks lately- we would love to have you there!

Happy Birding!

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

7 **AUG**
14-15
FRI-SAT
6:30 AM

DUCHESNE, UINTAH, & DAGGETT COUNTIES

MEETING POINT: MEET AT STARVATION STATE PARK (CARPOOL TO THAT POINT IF DESIRED)

WE WILL BEGIN ON FRIDAY AT **STARVATION SP** AT 6:30AM FOR DUCHESNE, THEN HEAD TO **OURAY WILDLIFE REFUGE** AND **PELICAN LAKE** FOR UINTAH COUNTY. **SLEEP OVERNIGHT IN VERNAL**. THEN BIRD SATURDAY AT **LIEDY PEAK, FLAMING GORGE, SWETT RANCH** FOR DAGGETT COUNTY.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

President's Message

By: KC Childs

I know I've been going on about migration, but August is prime migration month. It is the time to get out and find all the birds flying through that don't breed or winter in Utah. It is a great time to get out and look for shorebirds, warblers, sparrows, hummingbirds, and even hawks in migration. I love spring migration, but fall migration might be my favorite because it's a truly wonderful time to find some really rare birds we rarely get to see in Utah. I thought that I might put together a list of some of my favorite places to look for migrants in August around Utah County. I am sure I don't need to remind you that August is still hot, so getting out early in the morning and in the evenings is best as that's when birds are most active. The most popular place to check for birds during fall migration in Utah County is River Lane and Sandy Beach west of Springville. It's great stopping grounds for birds heading south and needing a break after flying across Utah Lake. Along those same lines is checking Lincoln Beach, Lincoln Point, and LeBaron Point for shorebirds and passerines. All of these areas are great for southbound migrants as well. The Provo Airport Dike, Utah Lake State Park, and Provo River Delta area are all three easily accessible and have lots of migrants moving through, and you just never know what might show up with over 250 species seen at each hotspot according to eBird. The water levels play a big factor into where shorebirds are, so be sure to look for any mudflats in those areas. I've had some fun birds in parks like The Hollow Park in Payson, and Highland Glen Park in Highland. The North Shore Trail, while not as productive as in the spring, still gets a fair number of migrants moving through. Also, Swede Lane and the 4000 West area in Palmyra can be great for shorebirds depending on the water levels. If you are feeling adventurous, then in late August, you should head out early in the morning to Garr Ranch. It can be very rewarding, as will the causeway with all the shorebirds. I hope that everyone can get out and enjoy something we shouldn't take for granted, as many people around the world don't get to witness the miracle of migration, as most of their birds are stationary, like Australia. I hope you'll be able to see some birds you never or rarely get to see, and maybe just luck into seeing a rarity that will have everyone running out to see. I can't wait to see what shows up in August!

BIRD OF THE MONTH

Cactus Wren

Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus

Text by Jeremy Telford

Photo by Kristin Telford

When our family takes a trip to Southern Utah, usually once a year if we are lucky, we have a few goals in mind: quality family bonding time, good car snacks, and birds - lots and lots of birds. I always have one or two lifers in mind. Our first trip it was the Greater Roadrunner. We watched it and two juveniles run up and down the walkway chasing bugs and lizards and generally having way too much energy in the kind of heat we were experiencing. The next year we headed to Lytle Ranch and were generally disappointed with the birding that day. We had a few scattered Verdin but little else until we headed out. We got lucky and spotted a couple of Black-tailed Gnatcatchers - another target bird acquired! Our latest trip found us in a little town called Kayenta. Here the homeowners don't plant neat little lawns of grass but encourage native cactus and bushes to cover their property. I would not encourage kids to run through the yard, but the wildlife loves it. It was here, at the end of a cul-de-sac, that we saw our lifer Cactus Wren.

It was large for a wren, easily the largest I'd ever seen (it is, in fact, the largest wren in the US). It had the classic wren shape with the long, slightly downturned bill, buffy light belly full of dark spots that became much thicker on the breast and throat until it was almost a solid black patch. A dark brown stripe ran from the bill through the eye, with a white eyebrow above and a dark brown cap - slightly reminiscent of the Bewick's Wren. The tail had the stripes you find on most wrens, but the tail was much, much longer in proportion to the body and the striping seemed mottled, almost messy, and the pattern extended up into the wings. While most wrens seem smaller than a House Sparrow, this monster was pushing Spotted Towhee size. And unlike its skulking cousins it posed for us briefly, allowing us to snap a few pictures. If only I could coax a Marsh Wren to be so amiable. As we sized it up upon its cactus perch it returned the favor, singing out a song that some describe as the sound of a car refusing to start. To me it sounded more like the buzzing of insects that increased in volume as the song continued. One thing I noticed was that it did not cock its tail up like most other wrens I'd seen. Apparently they like to fan their tails out and display the white tips of their tail feathers but we didn't observe this behavior in our encounter.

Cactus Wrens mate for life and establish a territory where they remain all year together. They generally nest fairly low to the ground, perhaps 3-10' up. Though they have been seen to nest as much as 30' up. They like to nest in a thorny bush or cactus where the thorns act as protection while they roost or raise their young. The female initiates nest building and then the male joins in. Not only that but they will build multiple nests. These nests are large football (American football, not soccer) shaped things with a tunnel entrance. They will also cavity nest if they find someplace suitable. Sometimes a female will lay in one nest, incubate the eggs to hatching, and then move to the next nest to incubate a new clutch while the male feeds the chicks at the first one; otherwise they raise the young together. They can have up to three broods this way during a season and each brood can have 2-7 eggs. The extra nests also act as roosting sites when the birds aren't breeding. The extra nests can also be decoys distracting predators away from their active nests. Besides being prolific breeders Cactus Wrens don't really like having neighbors. They destroy the nests of other birds and may peck at, or even remove, their eggs.

Like many desert animals the Cactus Wren rarely drinks water, instead getting most of its liquid from food like insects or fruit, that fruit being mostly cactus fruit. It is mostly a ground forager though and turns over rocks and other detritus in search of spiders, grasshoppers, ants, wasps and whatever

other bug it can wrap its beak around. It will also feed on small frogs and lizards if it can catch them. This is a more social wren than its temperate cousins and often forages in pairs or even family groups. When the Cactus Wren spots a predator in its territory, it will scold and mob the predator. These would be things that would consume the eggs or chicks like snakes, or even those who would eat the adults like hawks, cats, or the Greater Roadrunner.

The Cactus Wren is not considered a strong flier and generally sticks to small flights while rapidly flapping its wings. While the Cactus Wren is not yet listed as a species of concern it is listed as a common bird in steep decline. It has lost over half its population between the years 1966 and 2019 and scientist predict that if the current trend continues it will lose another 50% of its population within



the next twenty years. This is thought to be due mostly to habitat loss. This loss can be due to commercial building like golf courses or disasters like fires. If you hope to find Cactus Wren in Utah head down to the southwestern-most corner. Kayenta, where we found our lifer, seemed ideal since it was filled with the cactus and desert shrub they seem to love. If you move further south into Arizona, they are a lot more common and also happen to be the State bird there since 1931. It was a treat to see our lifer Cactus Wren this year and we hope to see more in years to come. Maybe we'll try for a Crissal Thrasher next year. We always have to have a target bird.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

So Saturday was our Salt Lake, Summit and Morgan County field trip. We began at Parley's Gulch in the Parley's Nature Park! What an awesome spot! We were greeted by Lesser Goldfinch, House Finch, Black-chinned Hummingbird and Mourning Dove. Down the trail we saw at least "50" species of DOGS haha!!! We also saw Song Sparrow, American Robin and heard California Quail. There were Yellow Warbler, Black-headed Grosbeak, Canada Goose, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Spotted Towhee, Black-billed Magpie, Lazuli Bunting, Eurasian Collared-Dove, American Kestrel, Barn

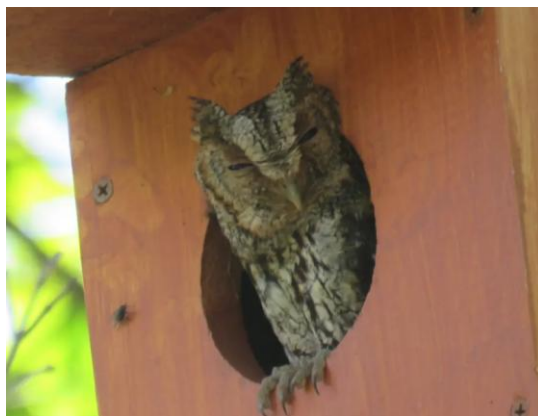
Swallow, Warbling Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat, Downy Woodpecker, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Northern Flicker, Gray Catbird and Rock Pigeon. The Cooper's Hawks put on a great show! And we had European Starlings in the parking lot. We tallied 27 species here, finishing another "S" for Salt Lake County!

From there we went to Swaner Preserve and Eco Center, another new spot! Getting out of the car we saw Black-billed Magpies. Over the pond at the center we had Mallards, Barn, Cliff and Tree Swallows, Great-tailed Grackles on the beaver dam and Red-winged Blackbirds, Brown-headed Cowbirds and Song Sparrows flying around. There were juvenile Yellow Warblers begging parents for food, a juvenile American Robin, Black-capped Chickadees and House Finches. Out on the preserve we saw Red-tailed Hawks, a Swainson's Hawk and Sandhill Cranes!! Oh, and a House Sparrow. We tallied 19 species there. We made our way down Jeremy Ranch Road and saw Brewer's Blackbird, Black-chinned Hummingbird, American Goldfinch, Green-tailed Towhee, Gray Catbird, Barn, Cliff and Tree Swallow, Great Blue Heron, European Starling, Brown-headed Cowbird, Willow Flycatcher, heard a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and saw a Golden Eagle! Plus we had a few Cooper's Hawks trying to catch a swallow or two for lunch! We ended Summit County with 30 species adding another "S" for the challenge!!!

The Jeremy Ranch Road runs into Morgan County and we added Mourning Dove, Violet-green Swallow, American Goldfinch, Yellow Warbler, American Crow and Lazuli Bunting. At East Canyon Reservoir there were Mallards and Gadwalls with babies, and Barn, Cliff, and Tree Swallows. We also saw Song Sparrow, Canada Goose, American White Pelican, Greater Yellowlegs, Killdeer, California Gull, Great Blue Heron, Turkey Vulture, and American Crows sharing a fish. Swainson's Hawks, American Kestrels, and Black-billed Magpies were flying around as well. By Mormon Flat we saw lots of American Crows and a couple American Goldfinches! Down to Croydon we went to Weston Smith's; it's one of my favorite birding hotspots! Plus you get to see his Lovebirds! We saw Bullock's Oriole, House Finch, Mourning Dove, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Red-winged Blackbird and Black-capped Chickadee!! He then took us up on his



Lazuli Bunting



Flammulated Owl

family's property and we saw his Flammulated Owl in one of the boxes plus a Flying Squirrel taking up residence in one of the boxes. Sadly, the Northern Saw-whet weren't home! But what an amazing experience!! Thanks to all who came and made it so fun, and thank you again to Weston!!!!

BACKYARD BIRDS

Lynn Garner: I came across an interesting quote recently. After encouraging people to become birdwatchers, she said, “after all, one should not go through life listlessly.”

Noel Zaugg: Early in July I saw a recently fledged Song Sparrow perched next to an adult and begging for food. It was interesting to note how much less streaked its chest was, compared to the adult. Also early in the month, I saw two recently fledged Bullock's Orioles perched next to an adult female and begging for food. Recently fledged House Finches have seemingly been doing this same thing periodically all summer long. In the last few days I'm seeing Lazuli Buntings again, after not seeing them since spring. Common birds at my feeders all month long are House Finches, Eurasian Collared-Doves, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Black-capped Chickadees, California Quail, Black-chinned Hummingbirds, and Lesser Goldfinches, along with an occasional Mourning Dove. And as I'm writing this, my first yard Turkey Vulture of the year flew past, high in the air. I've had 33 species visit or fly over my yard so far this year, and I thoroughly enjoy watching them.

McKade Pay: My buddy found this really lethargic hummingbird while working (in Provo), picked it up, brought it back to his house and got it some sugar water. Once it had a rest and a drink it flew away.



