



Utah County Birders Newsletter

May 2026

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MAY MEETING

May 14, 2026

Thursday, May 14, 2026, 7pm

May UCB Meeting - evening bird walk at Powell Lake in Lehi. Not to be confused with Lake Powell- this quiet little neighborhood pond is a wonderful place for an evening walk and some relaxed birding. All experience levels welcome.

Location: https://maps.app.goo.gl/amU6Sx66ZeHa9JWC7?q_st=ic (40.3829644, -111.9028772)

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

There will be a field trip to **Rose Canyon in Salt Lake County on Thursday, May 7.**

Meet at Pioneer Crossing Park and Ride at 7:00 or 7:30-45 at trailhead, Rose Canyon, Herriman. Yellow Fork trail in and out is approximately 3.7 miles with several hundred feet of undulating narrow trail and dirt Forest Service road.

Leader: Steve Van Winkle

4 **MAY 23**
SATURDAY
6:00 AM

BOX ELDER, CACHE, & RICH COUNTIES

CARPOOL: MEET AT PIONEER CROSSING PARKING PARK & RIDE OFF A.F. MAIN STREET EXIT

WE WILL LEAVE THE PARK AND RIDE AT 6:00 AM. WE WILL BEGIN AT **WILLARD BAY SP** AND THEN DO THE SURROUNDING AREA FOR BOX ELDER COUNTY. THEN GO TO **CUTLER MARSH AND TONY GROVE** FOR CACHE COUNTY. THEN HEAD UP TO **BEAR LAKE** AND SURROUNDING AREAS TO DO RICH COUNTY.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By KC Childs

I look forward to April every year because of the opportunity to be part of helping to survey Utah Lake to count the number of shorebirds using it for migration. Sageland Collaborative is a local non-profit out of Salt Lake that offers volunteers all kinds of opportunities to help out our local wildlife and plants, including birds. This past Friday, along with other local Utah County birders, I had the chance to head out on airboats to count shorebirds along the shores of Utah Lake. The next day on Saturday, also with other Utah County Birders, I had the opportunity to go out to Fish Springs National Wildlife Refuge and count shorebirds in the desert oasis in western Utah. It is always a great time to help out and most of all, I hope it is providing important information for scientists to use in the future to help save so many of our declining populations of shorebirds. While I was out on the lake, I had the thought of what local birders can be doing to help our feathered friends. What opportunities do we have locally? It really had me thinking of what actions we can take, small and large, that can have a positive benefit on our local birds. A lot of us don't necessarily have a lot of time we can commit to driving out to the west desert to do a shorebird survey, but many of us can possibly provide food or water for birds where we live, and many of us do. If we are in a position where we have a yard or land, we can plant native plants and other plants that are beneficial to birds, bugs, and the entire system that helps benefit our local birds. If we have pet cats, we can make sure that the cats and birds are safe by not letting them roam freely outside. While out birding casually or in a more intensive manner, we can submit checklists on Ebird that scientists locally and afar can use. It provides data for scientists locally and beyond to help understand population trends, especially in under-birded areas. All data is good data. We can educate those in our family and friend circles about ways and things they can do to help birds, and introduce them to many of the spectacular birds they may not know exist close to their homes, which in itself makes individuals more aware of their impacts. Another simple thing we can do is to pick up trash while we are out and about. While I was birding earlier this month, I saw a duck that had the ring of a plastic bottle over his lower bill and it had trapped the tongue of the duck from being able to move. It broke my heart as I imagine it impeded its ability to feed. We as a club put together two Christmas Bird Counts in Utah County at the end of December every year and we are always in need of volunteers to get an accurate picture of what birds are using our local area to winter in. We have over 50 years of data and trends for Provo and they provide scientists with valuable information. There are all kinds of organizations locally that have volunteer opportunities that you can participate in; you just need to keep your eyes and ears open. We as a club are going to work on making sure that information about volunteer opportunities is sent out on our socials or email. Finally, a big one that I would love to see happen going forward is that birders locally

can help lead local bird walks some mornings or evenings. A lot of birders, especially new birders, don't have the time, or are intimidated by a long field trip that may be distant, but would love to learn and be part of a trip close to home that doesn't have a large time commitment. If any of you reading this would be willing to lead a bird walk in the future locally, then that would be incredible! There is no need to be a bird expert, or have a ton of time to commit. A simple walk in the morning before work, or later after work is all that is needed. If you are willing to help, then I would love for you to get in touch with me, so we can set up a date and get it on our calendar. Please feel free to get in touch with me on Facebook, or email me at orembirder@gmail.com. Collectively we all can make a positive difference for the birds that share this place we call home, and hopefully provide a better future for them and us as well.

BIRD OF THE MONTH

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher

Tyrannus forficatus

Text and photos by Dan Simmons

Most of us probably have a few memories of special moments with birds that particularly stand out in our minds, such as seeing hundreds of bald eagles feeding on carp (see last month's President's Message) or listening to the roar of a thousand snow geese taking flight. Another, much quieter moment that was impressive to me was watching a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher at close range in the small southwest Texas town of Marathon, where the accompanying photos were taken.

Scissor-tailed Flycatchers are one of the eleven species belonging to the genus *Tyrannus*, which in turn is part of the family Tyrannidae, commonly known as tyrant flycatchers for their aggressive behavior in defending their nests against larger birds. All but two members of the genus *Tyrannus* are referred to in their common names as kingbirds, the exceptions being the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher and the Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus savana*). The Fork-tailed Flycatcher's usual range is in Central and South America; I had the opportunity to observe this species several times in the mid-1970's in rural Uruguay. Although seen as a vagrant in many places in North America, sightings of Fork-tailed Flycatchers are heavily concentrated along the Atlantic coast and the Texas gulf coast of the United States. I was unable to find a single reference of a Fork-tailed Flycatcher ever being recorded in Utah.

The summer nesting range of the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher is almost all of Texas and Oklahoma and parts of all the adjacent states. The Scissor-tailed Flycatcher is the official state bird of Oklahoma and is found on the reverse of their commemorative quarter. During migration they do stray quite frequently from their usual home range, including occasionally into our state. There are documented records of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers being seen in Utah 27 times since 1963, including a sighting as far north as Logan; the last recorded sighting was Nov. 7, 2024 in Moab.



Usually Scissor-tailed Flycatchers are found in flat prairies, fields or grasslands interspersed with trees and shrubbery, but they can adapt to golf courses, parks and other suburban environments. Their diet consists mostly of insects, but they are known to sometimes eat certain berries as well. Behavior is similar to other kingbirds. The individual that I observed in Marathon had its favorite perch, from which it would swoop down repeatedly then return to after catching an insect in flight. Scissor-tailed Flycatchers have great maneuverability, seemingly aided by their long black and white tails. These birds have pleasing colors, a graceful shape and elegance in flight that have attracted people over a long period of time. Not only are they favorites of birders, but they are among a short list of non-raptors whose feathers have been in demand for use in Native American tribal ceremonies.

The nest of the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher is constructed by the female in trees or shrubs. Clutch size is 3-6 eggs and the incubation period is 13-23 days. In the late summer to early fall, after the nesting season has ended, these birds may roost in large flocks (reportedly up to 1000 individuals) prior to migration. Scissor-tailed Flycatchers winter in Mexico and Central America. Although their numbers have diminished somewhat over time, their conservation status remains at Low Concern.

References:

- 1) Cornell Lab, *All About Birds*
- 2) *Audubon*, Summer 2025 (article by Rachel Nuwer entitled "Safeguarding the Sacred")
- 3) Utah Bird Records Committee (available through utahbirds.org)

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Suzi Holt posted on Facebook the following report about April's field trip to Carbon and Emery Counties.

Carbon and Emery Counties for "C" and "E"

We got up way too early this morning! There was a 4 on my alarm clock, yikes! But totally worth it. Eighteen birders met at the SF Little Acorn at 5:30 am. We headed straight for the Emma Park Lek. We got there right at first light and spotted 19 Greater Sage-grouse. It was 4° F freezing! The males were displaying for one female. We watched them for about 10 minutes and she flew off. Shortly after, a truck headed west on the road spooked them all and they flew off over the street and into the sage. We were so lucky to get to see them!!

From there we went up to Scofield Reservoir. We started at the SP with Mountain Bluebird, Osprey, American White Pelican, Canada Goose, Common Loon, White-faced Ibis, Mallard, American Wigeon, Black-billed Magpie and Clark's Grebe. Some even heard a Black-capped Chickadee and Spotted Towhee. As we left, we saw Mourning Dove, Brewer's Blackbird and European Starling. We stopped along the east side of the lake and added Green-winged Teal, Franklin's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Cinnamon Teal, Northern Shoveler, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Common and Red-breasted Merganser, Bald Eagle, Sandhill Crane, Great Blue Heron, Brown-headed Cowbird, Red-winged Blackbird, Song Sparrow and Common Raven. In town we saw

five Tree Sparrows, a Belted Kingfisher, tons of American Coots, an American Robin, two Greater Yellowlegs, a few Northern Flickers and a Snow Goose!

"C" IS FINISHED!!

Next on to Emery County. On the road into the SP, I saw a Sage Thrasher and Corey saw a Loggerhead Shrike. As we entered Huntington Reservoir SP we were welcomed by Brown Cowbirds, an American Robin, and a Eurasian Collared-Dove. At the lake we set up our scopes. A ton of Franklin's Gulls covered the lake with a bunch of swallows flying overhead. We added Barn, Tree and Northern Rough-winged. Some saw Violet-green as well. On the opposite shore we had American Coot, Mallard, Canada Goose, Great Egret, Common Loon, European Starling, White-faced Ibis, Green-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Cinnamon Teal and Common Goldeneye. The list goes on: there were four Red-breasted Mergansers, a couple Common Mergansers, one Double-crested Cormorant and one Great Blue Heron. We saw Western and Clark's Grebe, Bonaparte's Gull, House Finch, House Sparrow, Lesser Goldfinch, Ring-billed Gull, Brewer's, Red-winged and Yellow-headed Blackbird and a Killdeer. There was a Canvasback on the opposite shore that Landon found and so I was trying to find it in my scope when I noticed a small goose with two Canada's on the shore. As it turned towards us, I noticed the white front and orange legs!! A Greater White-fronted Goose! Forty species!!! "E" is done!

We decided to visit Desert Lake as well. We added Western Meadowlark, Horned Lark, American Kestrel, Sandhill Crane, Forster's Tern, American Avocet, White-crowned Sparrow, Long-billed Dowitcher, Peregrine Falcon, Golden Eagle, Northern Harrier, Turkey Vulture, Ring-necked Pheasant and White-throated Swift!

Our last stop was up to the Price Recreation CG. We added Mountain Bluebird, Spotted Towhee, Dark-eyed Junco and Red-tailed Hawk. We got a birds-eye view of a beautiful Golden Eagle and some saw a White-breasted Nuthatch, Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Hairy Woodpecker. What a great day!

It started at 4° F and ended around 54° F. Thanks for coming. I want to apologize; I only lost one car but I felt terrible about it.



Keeli Marvel posted the following after a successful bird walk on April 23:

We had a great turnout for our bird walk this evening! Thanks to everyone who joined us, it was great to meet some new faces, and we hope you join us again! Highlights included great looks at Cinnamon and Blue-winged teal, Western Kingbirds and Say's Phoebe, a Caspian Tern and a Great Egret that cruised by, the Yellow-headed blackbirds, a huge flock of White-faced Ibis that flew over, and a pod of American White Pelicans on the lake. A few of us stragglers at the end even got a rare look at a Virginia Rail who came out of the marsh for a few minutes. It was a beautiful evening for a bird walk!



BACKYARD BIRDS

Yvonne Carter, Highland: We have our Cooper's Hawk back. I heard his call back in the big trees on the back of our property and then on the neighbor's roof taking a look to decide on his nest! Darn for our little birds.