



Utah County Birders Newsletter

September 2026

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SEPTEMBER MEETING

Sept. 17, 2026

In lieu of a meeting this month, we will be having a bird walk that will start at the new Provo River Delta Gateway Park on September 17th at 6:00 pm. This is not the Provo River Delta parking. The location can be found on Google Maps. We will be checking out the Provo River Parkway trail to see what migrants are around.

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

8 SEP 19
SATURDAY
7:00 AM

SEVIER & SANPETE COUNTIES

CARPPOOL: MEET AT PAYSON WALMART PARKING LOT OFF THE 800 S EXIT - 240A

WE WILL LEAVE FROM THE PAYSON WALMART PARKING LOT AT 7:00. WE WILL HEAD TO **YUBA LAKE AND FAYETTE BOTTOMS** FOR SANPETE COUNTY AND THEN **REDMOND LAKE** FOR SEVIER COUNTY.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

President's Message

By: KC Childs

It's September which means it's prime time for birds and birders and to get out and work on the birding challenge. It's definitely not too late to finish the challenge, even if you haven't started. It is possible for you to still go for gold if you are very motivated, or you can still get your bronze medal. The challenge can be found on the Utah County Birders website and explains the rules. We also still have some fun field trips to finish several of the letters in the challenge to help you out on your journey. The board also has been compiling some great prizes for those who complete the challenge. I hope that everyone is having an amazing year of birds, and I hope you are able to get out this September and enjoy the peak of fall migration. It's a great time to be checking any riparian forests in the valley, or down along Utah Lake for shorebirds. Hopefully you will run into a wayward visitor that doesn't usually find itself in Utah. Happy birding to everyone!

BIRD OF THE MONTH

Pied-billed Grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*)

Text by: Lynn Garner

The Pied-billed Grebe is the most widespread grebe in North America and probably the grebe most-often seen, though it is classified by Sibley as uncommon. Its habitat is ponds and marshes across the continent, breeding as far north as central Canada, and migrating south only as far as open water can be found. It dives quickly when startled and can move swiftly underwater, its legs being set far back under the body. The body is stocky and relatively short-necked, about pigeon sized, which is smaller than most grebe species. The males and females are similarly



Photo by Lynn Garner, 2008

plumed, mostly brown overall, with dark eyes and a strong white beak encircled by a black ring. Seasonal changes in plumage are minimal, consisting mainly of black patches that develop on the chin and throat. In flight, almost no white in the wings can be seen, in contrast to other grebe species.

These grebes are usually quiet, except during the breeding season, when both sexes give loud, low-frequency barking or grunting sounds, often in a slowing sequence. Nests are commonly floating marsh vegetation, well-hidden and anchored among reeds. A clutch consists of about six whitish eggs, often stained brown. Their diet is small fish, crustaceans, and aquatic insects. They seem to especially like crayfish, which they easily crush with their sturdy bills.

The population of Pied-billed Grebes seems to be stable, except for declining numbers in New England. Some states have given them threatened or endangered status; the major factor seems to be gradual loss of habitat. I have seen Pied-billed Grebes in Utah County without variation in frequency for the past fifty years. They are a welcome and stabilizing occurrence in shallow waters across the area.

References: Sibley, Guide to Birds; National Audubon Society, Birds of North America.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

North Eastern Utah. Duchesne, Uintah and Dagget counties overnight fieldtrip. By Suzi Holt.

We headed out early Thursday and pulled into the Rabbit Gulch CG at Starvation Reservoir. We set up camp and the kids played on the sand and in the water while I scoped the shoreline. We got quite a few birds even before the fieldtrip started. Not a lot of action on the lake, but there were Osprey, Mallards, Common Merganser, Barn and Cliff Swallows, American Coot, Canada Goose, California Gull and Western Grebe. After dinner we took a little walk and found a flock of song birds: Yellow-rumped Warbler, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Juniper Titmouse, Bushtit, Bewick's Wren, American Goldfinch, Black-throated Gray Warbler. We also saw a Mourning Dove. 17 species!

The lightning show that evening across the Uintas was incredible. I've never seen one quite like that!

Friday morning we met everyone at the main entrance to Starvation State Park. John, Julie and Torrey, Damien, Tyler, Zach, Atlas and Laurie and John. We were welcomed by an Osprey taking a fish to the Osprey nest! That was exciting. We also had Mourning Dove, House Finch, and Barn and Cliff Swallows. At the Mountain View CG we added Eurasian Collared-Dove, Great Blue Heron, Western Grebe, Canada Goose and California Gull. In the Campground I heard a sound similar to a Cedar Waxwing. We finally found the source, a juvenile Brown-headed Cowbird begging for food from his momma Chipping Sparrow. We then heard a Pinyon Jay! It took a bit, but right before we got in the cars 11 flew over. At the other CG we added Cooper's Hawk, Black-capped Chickadee, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, American Robin, American Kestrel, Woodhouse's Scrub Jay, Rock Wren, Canyon Wren, Juniper Titmouse, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Chipping and Vesper Sparrows, Killdeer, Yellow-rumped Warbler and Spotted Sandpiper! We hit 26 species in Duchesne County by 8:30 am.

We then made our way to Uintah County. First stop, Pelican Lake CG. On the way there we saw American Kestrel, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Common Raven, Turkey Vulture, European Starling, Canada Goose and Black-chinned Hummingbird.

At the CG the first bird was a Loggerhead Shrike, then American Goldfinch, Cliff and Barn Swallows, Western Kingbird, Cinnamon Teal, Mallard, Mourning Dove, American Coot, American Avocet, Western and Eared Grebes, Yellow-rumped and Orange-crowned Warblers, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, American White Pelican, American Robin, Olive-sided Flycatcher and a Peregrine Falcon!!! And our favorite was Izzy and Tatum fishing for bluegill (they caught one); they were fishing alongside an American Bittern. They didn't know how cool that was til Tyler spotted it again down by the boat launch out in the open. We loved every minute of that. And while we were watching it, a Rufous Hummingbird flew in. We finished Uintah County by 11:30 am!!!

The Glassfords were headed to meet us at noon so we headed over to Ouray Wildlife Refuge to finish out our day! We birded around the Visitors center first and Lisa gave us info on the bear seen Wednesday at the shorebird area in Leota Bottoms. She drew us a map to get there. There were hummingbird feeders at the bunk house with a Rufous Hummingbird and Black-chinned Hummingbirds in the double digits!! We also saw Western Kingbird, Barn Swallow and House Finch. We started the auto tour route with Red-tailed Hawk, Common Raven, Turkey Vulture, Northern Yellow Warbler, and Northern Flicker. At that point we lost a couple of birders who had to return home. We continued down to the cottonwoods and added Black-capped Chickadee, Western Wood



Photo by Laurie Kauer

Pewee, Spotted Towhee, Western Kingbird, another Olive-sided Flycatcher and Mountain Bluebird!! From there we went to L4 Leota Bottoms. On the way over we watched a Rufous Hummingbird defending his flowers for a bit. At the water we began with Cinnamon and Green-winged Teal and Black-necked Stilt.

Torrey went to sit down on the culvert and we heard a big, weird crash. She looked down and there was a bear claw print and a lot of scat below. A little unnerving. We quickly added Lesser Yellowlegs, Killdeer, Spotted Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper, Wilson's Snipe, a young Sora, Greater Yellowlegs, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Say's Phoebe, Song Sparrow, Mallard, Virginia Rail, Gadwall, Ring-billed Gull, and another out-in-the-open American Bittern!!! We started hearing thunder and saw lightning

and a quickly approaching storm, so we boogied on out of there. The storm came in with a wicked wind and rain as we headed towards Vernal.

We found a nice spot to camp up by Flaming Gorge in the Deer Run CG. Tatum and Izzy went fishing, and we finally got a nice shower and some dinner! We were serenaded by Common Nighthawks and Juniper Titmouse that evening.

Saturday morning, we met at 7:30 am at Swett Ranch! Wow! What an awesome spot. It was so beautiful with big lodgepole pines, fir trees and aspen trees! And the cute cabins and homestead at the ranch were so cool to see. A couple of Red-tailed Hawks were screeching and a Stellar's Jay and Black-billed Magpies welcomed us!! There was a little barn with Vesper Sparrows and Green-tailed Towhees scratching around for grass seeds. We took a little trail with a boardwalk over a small stream where we had a flock of songbirds. The Orange-crowned Warblers were plentiful! We also had a Virginia's Warbler, Pine Siskin, House Finch, Northern House Wren, Northern Flicker and a Red-breasted Nuthatch. At the blacksmith cabin we had Song Sparrow, Gray-Headed Junco and a Red-naped Sapsucker!! Back at the cars I heard the pip pip pip of Pygmy Nuthatches and they all flew in and gave quite the show. Down the road we wandered into the trees and added Western Wood Pewee, Oregon Junco, White-breasted Nuthatch, Turkey Vulture, Clark's Nutcracker, Mountain Chickadee and Chipping Sparrows! At the car we had a Downy Woodpecker, putting us at 26 species for Dagget County!!! We decided to go to the Flaming Gorge dam and see what else we could see. We added Barn and Cliff Swallows, Canyon Wren, Spotted Sandpiper, Plumbeous Vireo and a Belted Kingfisher!!!



American Bittern. Photo by Tyler Whatcott



Mountain Chickadee. Photo by Damien Bosse

From there we finished the fieldtrip. Some went down to the Green River, some headed home, and we headed to Manila and Red Canyon Lodge. The Hummingbirds were awesome there; I added 4 species. I was excited!

BACKYARD BIRDS

Atlas Goodrich, Provo: Nothing too interesting yet, but I did hear a Western Screech Owl in my backyard the other night.

Yvonne Carter, Highland: I keep hearing our Cooper's Hawk who has his nest tucked way back in trees between us and neighbors. And I fight the racoons from getting to our bird feeders.

Lynn Garner, Provo: For the first time, I had Western Kingbirds in my yard last week. I have lived here almost 49 years!

Dallen Smith, Salt Lake City: Had a nesting pair of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers and 3 young chicks.



Blue-gray Gnatcatchers

Steve Van Winkle: The Lesser Goldfinch was from Steve's backyard. The Greater Yellowlegs was from the Shorebird Survey at Timpe Springs WMA.



Lesser Goldfinch



Greater Yellowlegs

Dan Simmons, Orem and Monticello: The only unusual bird we have seen in our yard this summer was a Western Wood Pewee. We haven't had a feeder up for most of the summer, but our neighbor has been battling the racoons, as has Yvonne. He says that he has had 20 racoons removed. Our main backyard bird story this last month took place in San Juan County. While on our birding challenge trip, our alternator died and we were stranded in Monticello for all of one evening and most of the next morning without transportation. At that point we had only seen a half a dozen birds. We were a little concerned about finding 26 birds, but we went walking and it turns out that there are a lot of backyards with a lot of birds in Monticello. Before our car was ready we found 21 species within walking distance of our motel, including Cassin's Finch, Western Tanager, Rufous Hummingbird and Western Bluebird.