



Utah County Birders Newsletter

March 2024

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MARCH MEETING

Thursday March 21st, 7pm at Bean Museum and on Zoom

Shorebirds of Utah- Join us a members of our own group teach us about the shorebirds we might encounter while birding in Utah. Hope to see you all there! Happy birding!

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

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

Swan Day BRMBR – Saturday March 9th

Meet at 8am at the Pioneer Crossing Park & Ride. We will be drive up to Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge for Swan Day and to get 24 species there for the 2024 challenge. We will be gone most of the day so bring a lunch!

Warm Springs/Goshen WMA – Saturday March 23rd

Meet at 8am at the Payson Walmart to the west of QuickQuack. We will be trying to get 24 species at Warm Springs and Goshen WMA. We should be through around noon or early afternoon.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Saturday, my husband and I took a ride up Provo Canyon to get him out of the house and off the knee scooter. He recently had major, reconstruction surgery on his right foot—no fun, absolutely no weight on that foot for 6 weeks! Enjoying the scenic drive up the canyon and onto the Charleston Road in Wasatch County, I had ulterior motives to do some birding while up there since we were near the Wasatch Mountains State Park. Why not do multi-tasking and work on the 2024 Challenge!

I usually find Bald Eagles on certain trees along that road, but darn!, they were not in the trees. I went along the Charleston road keeping an eye out for the Eagles, I turned up the road towards Soldiers Hollow, and stopped at the Heber Creeper train stop/shelter. I was standing there, using my binoculars to scan the area when a car pulled up and parked near us.

Seating there in their car were two women, both with binoculars looking intently towards the reservoir. It was obvious these women were birders for sure! I have developed the habit over a long time, to chat with fellow birders that I don't know. We struck up a conversation as to where the Eagles could be. These gals live in Heber Valley and they started chatting about their birding activities and let me in on some good areas to keep an eye on while birding in the vicinity. I have found 'birders' to be in love with this earth, a kind, sharing group of people, willing to share their knowledge and experiences. I have learned so much when I have taken the time to chat with these 'gentle folk' we call 'bird watchers'.

On one of my trips to Florida, I struck up a conversation with a husband and wife who lived in Florida and the information they shared with me enabled me to have some tremendous experiences while birding in Florida. Take the time, when you are out bird watching, to chat with others you come across. If they have binoculars, or a scope, or a camera with wide lenses, it is a good sign they are after the same birds you are looking for. And in that chance meeting, you might learn something you didn't know before. Or they might learn something you can share with them. As a side note, I shared with these women our Utah County Birders group, the website, our newsletter, etc. JUST SHARE!

Happy birding!
Yvonne

BIRD OF THE MONTH

The Black Oriole

(Oriolus hosii)

Article by Robert Parsons

Illustration and photo from Cornell, birdsoftheworld.org

When writing these monthly columns, I usually choose a bird that is found in Utah. This time, however, I decided to try a different approach and share some thoughts about a rare bird found only in the highlands of Borneo---the Black Oriole. This oriole, also known as the Bornean Oriole, or the Hose's Oriole, along with three other closely related orioles, are members of a small, specialized group of red and black orioles. The other members are the Black and Crimson, Maroon, and Silver Orioles---all of which are only found in Asia.

The Black Oriole (*Oriolus hosii*) is a species in the family [Oriolidae](#). It is a scarce and poorly known species with a very highly restricted range which is often quite difficult to get to. This unique species is only found in montane and submontane forests in a small section of northwestern Borneo, primarily within the Paya Maga highlands of Sarawak and there are only sightings from six different locations in the world, all located in this area. To put this in perspective, there are only 150 observations in eBird of the Black Oriole, and many of these are the same individuals reporting sightings in consecutive days. For example, our group of five birders, who spent three days searching for this oriole, make up almost 10 percent of these observations. By comparison, the Bullock's Oriole has almost 600,000 observations in eBird and even the American Goshawk has over 75,000. This bird is named after Charles Hose who collected the first specimen of the species on Mount Dulit in the late 1800's. However, after that this species was mostly considered "unknown" until it was recently once again discovered in the mountains of Borneo. In fact, the very first photograph of a Black Oriole wasn't taken until 2010 when Ch'ien C Lee found one in a remote section of mountains 18 miles from Ulu Temburong National Park in Brunei.



The male is a distinctive dark inky black with a slight blue gloss, offsetting a bright red bill and a dark rust-red vent. The female has a gray belly and the same red bill and vent. These birds, which are about 21 centimeters long, usually forage quietly in the canopy, often alone but sometimes in pairs, and seldom come to the ground. Their short echoing song can be likened to "woo-wich 'ew.'" with the first note short and the second similar but slightly higher pitched and the last the longest and even higher pitched but descending. Each phrase lasts less than one second. The total population of the species is unknown but is likely small due to its highly restricted range coupled with habitat loss. Fruits, berries, and some invertebrates such as termites make up the known diet. The habitat is subtropical or tropical moist montane forests. There is virtually no information on the breeding patterns of the Black Oriole, other than a juvenile that has been seen in mid-February.

In June of 2023, I was fortunate to be part of a small group of five birders that were able to spend three weeks in Borneo, including three days searching for the Black Oriole. To find this bird, we hiked four to five miles up a swampy, wet and muddy mountain, forging several streams and wading through muddy fields and trails. We spent two nights sleeping on a wooden platform without electricity or water, cooking our limited food on a fire. Each of our three daily birding hikes were through steep, muddy, leech-infested paths. But boy was the birding fantastic. In addition to several sightings of the Black Oriole, we also saw a number of other rare birds including Bornean Frogmouth, Maroon-breasted Philentoma, Chestnut-bellied Malkoha, Cinnamon-rumped Trogon, Diard's Trogon, and Malaysian Rail-babbler---all Near-threatened Species. Look them up just for fun.

Although I will always love finding a Chuckar or a Green-tailed Towhee in our local foothills, once and awhile it is fun to really have to put a lot of effort into finding a new bird and the Black Oriole was exactly that.



Female



Male

References

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4. Wikipedia. Black Oriole.
5. Birds of the World. Cornell University. Birdsoftheworld.org.
6. Animalia.bio/black-oriole.
7. Dickinson, E.C. (2004) "Systematic notes on Asian birds 42 A preliminary review of the Oriolidae" Zool. Verh. Leiden 350, 47-63.
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FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Farmington Bay and Lee Kay Ponds (Article and photos by Keeli Marvel)

Saturday Feb 24th fifteen birders met to bird Farmington Bay WMA and Lee Kay. We drove straight up to Farmington Bay first. For those wondering- the new exit on I-15 takes you on to a parkway that does NOT let you turn off for Farmington Bay, but the old way will still get you there despite some road reroutes and a new roundabout and overpass.

We regrouped in the parking lot by the sheds at the entrance to Farmington Bay and quickly saw a good portion of our 24 species including a pair of **Belted Kingfishers** chasing each other, a couple dozen **Great Blue Herons** perched on the large transmission poles, **American White Pelicans** and thousands of ducks flying over the WMA when some airboats flushed them off the water, and a **Bald Eagle** that was drawing a lot of photographer attention. When we headed into the refuge, we tried for a Marsh Wren, they were singing but they weren't cooperating with showing themselves.

The gate was open and we continued along the dike road. There were thousands of ducks out there and some surprising shorebirds including a large flock of **American Avocet** that we got too looks at and some snoozing **Marbled Godwits** with their heads tucked in that we puzzled over for a few minutes. Close along the shore we got good comparisons between **California Gulls** and a **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, which Esther spotted as something different, and which turned out to be a lifer for a few folks in the group. We ended at Farmington Bay with **35 species** including 9 species of ducks!

After that we headed to Lee Kay. We stopped at the observation gazebo first and picked up a good number of species there. There were thousands of birds on the dump- **starlings, blackbirds, ravens, crows, gulls, a Red-tailed Hawk**, and even a **Bald Eagle**! The ponds weren't as full of ducks as I'd hoped but we picked out quite a few species including **Northern Shoveler, American Wigeon, Ring-necked Ducks, Common Merganser**, and one **Red-breasted Merganser**! Most of the folks in the group rounded out their 24 species with a **Western Meadowlark**. My car missed the meadowlark, but we picked up **Brewer's Blackbirds** and **Dark-eyed Juncos** on the way back out for our **24 species**. It was a great trip and it was great to see everyone who came out to bird with us!



American Avocets, Marbled Godwit



Lesser Black-backed Gull
