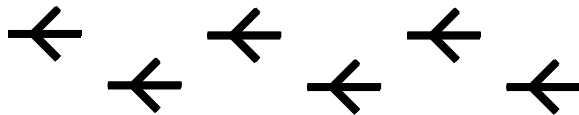
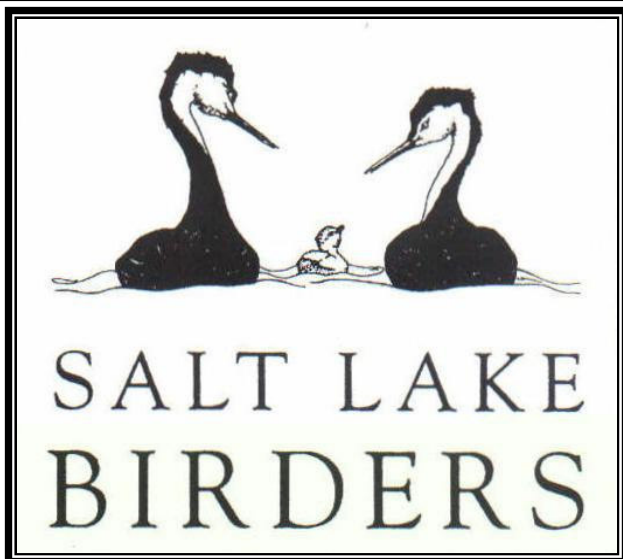


BIRD



TRACKS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SALT LAKE BIRDERS



November 2006

Volume 16, No. 11

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October Ornithologicals — Report of the October 14 Field Trip

On Saturday, October 14th, five Salt Lake Birders visited the Liberty/Eden area to look for the Lewis' Woodpeckers reported by Kris Purdy. We were able to locate two of the woodpeckers due to the great directions Kris provided. They each hammered acorns into the trees they inhabited, returning time and again. What great looking birds. Sharing the trees with them were many Cedar Waxwings and the occasional Black-capped Chickadee.

Traveling a little further along Shaw Drive we came to the Swanson Environmental Center; no trespassing signs kept us on the road but we were able to spot a Steller's Jay cruising in front of some evergreens at the back of the parking area. Turning around, we headed to Pineview Reservoir to see what we could find. As soon as we stepped out of the vehicles, a Belted Kingfisher flew overhead. While walking the upper and lower trails, we spotted a Song Sparrow, Great Blue Heron, a flock of Ruby-Crowned Kinglets, some of which were flashing their stunning crowns, a Swainson's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Mourning Doves and Yellow-rumped Warblers.

When we stopped on State Highway 158 along side the reservoir, Ruddy Ducks, American Coots, California Gulls and a Clark's Grebe greeted us. We finished up at the nature trail off Monroe Street in Ogden, but about the only bird of note there was an American Dipper. Sylvia Gray, Travis Young, Geoff Hardies, Bob Huntington and Bob MacDougall had a great day finding 30 species.

BIRDING BLUNDERS

by Alton Thygerson in Utah County Birders' newsletter (used with permission.)

Blunder #1 was used in *Bird Tracks*, September 2006, #'s 2-8 were used in the October issue.



Blunder #9: Not studying

This is one of my major shortcomings. I have not devoted the necessary time to sit down and study birds' traits and identification clues. I excuse myself by saying that I have more important things to do and my time is limited. However, before going to Montana with Junice and Dixon Markham for the Snowy Owl, I read all of my resources about Snowy Owls. While we easily found this owl, reading about it provided a greater appreciation for it.

Blunder #10: Not being patient

Many of us, are "cut-and-run" birders. We go to a good habitat area or to an area where a rarity has been reported. Then, after a short period of time, move on if nothing is seen or heard. The best birders are patient; they have learned to sit and wait.

SALT LAKE BIRDERS

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E-mail address: slbirders@yahoo.com

MISSION STATEMENT

Our purpose is to provide recreation and ongoing education for our members, to gather and contribute statistical data, and to emphasize conservation in all our activities.

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MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Salt Lake Birders is open to everyone. Dues are \$15 per year per household if you would like a hard copy of *Bird Tracks*, or \$10 if you opt to receive the newsletter via e-mail. Please make checks payable to Salt Lake Birders and mail to Lyn Christiansen at the P.O. box listed above.

To request a change of address or privacy, please contact Lyn Christiansen, Membership Director.



SUBMISSION DEADLINE

All articles must be received by the 20th of the month for the following month's issue, preferably by e-mail, or as an e-mail attachment, but by letter, hard copy, also.

Anyone using material from this newsletter — please credit the *Bird Tracks* newsletter and the author of the material quoted.

Upcoming Field Trips



Salt Lake Birders

November 11, Saturday, we'll be looking for rarities that have been reported on the recent BirdLines.

There are still some migrants/vagrants that we don't generally see at any other time. The Antelope Island Causeway very often attracts scoters and Long-tailed Ducks. The Salt Lake Marina featured a female Harlequin Duck a few years ago in early winter. Unusual loons are occasionally found along the Causeway, Bear River MBR, at Hyrum Reservoir or Mantua Reservoir.

Meet at the Sugar House Shopko parking lot, southeast corner, at **7:00 a.m.** Be prepared for some questionable weather, and bring water and snacks, as some of the chases could involve much of the day, until mid-afternoon or later. Call Bob MacDougall, 971-6077, the evening before to find out where we'll be going.

December— we will participate in the annual **Christmas Bird Count, December 16, Saturday**, this year managed by member Pomera Fronce. See details on page 5 of this issue; more specific details will be given in the December issue.

Along with GSLA, we encourage **carpooling** and **helping with gas costs** — we recommend a \$3 donation per person for trips under 50 miles, and \$5-7 for more than 50 miles roundtrip.

Guests are always welcome! Listen for us on FRS Channel 11-22.

The Wild Bird Center in Layton leads free nature/bird walks. Dress for the weather and bring binoculars. Our Nature/Bird Walks begin winter hours starting in November, leaving the Center (1860 N. 1000 West, Layton) at 10 a.m. For further information, contact Bill Fenimore, Wild Bird Center, 801-525-8400.

A Great Salt Lake Audubon Field Trip

Wednesday, November 15th, 8:30am

DECKER LAKE and LEE KAY PONDS

Leader: Kathy Coleman

Today we will be heading for Decker Lake and Lee Kay Ponds. Join us for a half day of birding. Meet at the SE Corner of the Sugarhouse Shopko parking lot for an 8:30am departure. Call Kathy Coleman if you plan to attend at (944-5773)

MORE ON HUMMINGBIRDS

WHERE DO OUR UTAH HUMMINGBIRDS SPEND THE WINTER?

by Parker Gay

Over the years many visitors to my home in Holladay have seen the hummingbirds on the feeders and some have asked, "Where do these birds go in the winter?" I have always replied "Mexico, Central America, maybe South America." However, it occurred to me recently that I could be more specific, as one of the newer bird guides has range maps for these areas. I refer to Steve Howell's *Field Guide to the Birds of Mexico and Northern Central America*, published in 1995.

We have four common hummingbirds in Northern Utah: Black-chinned, Broad-tailed, Rufous, and Calliope. Black-chinned are the more common on my feeders, and nest in the valleys and the lower elevations in the mountains. I have them all season from April until September. Broad-tailed (the buzzing ones) are the first to arrive in the spring, but spend their summers in the mountains. They are abundant on my feeders in the spring on their way north and to higher elevations. Rufous spend their summers north of Utah in Idaho and W. Montana and beyond, but come through in moderate numbers in the spring, and more in the fall when the females are very aggressive and will take over your feeder unless you have two or more feeders separated by 10+ feet. I have seen the spectacular adult male Rufous only twice in many years of watching, both in mid-July, when these machos head south without even offering to help raise the young. The Calliopes are uncommon in the spring, and I have seen adult males only twice over the years - in May; however, in the fall, many females and immatures come through and can be recognized by their small size and short bills. In fact, this August I had an adult female Calliope in my hand after it came in the back door and was trapped in the skylight where I was able to catch it. The Calliope hummingbird is North America's smallest bird.

In the spring the first hummingbirds to arrive at my feeders (I have two) are male Broad-tails, usually on April 24th plus or minus 1 or 2 days. I have been keeping track of first arrivals each year since 1992 and am amazed at how consistent they arrive. In the fall the birds - all four kinds - begin thinning out the last week of August, first week of September and are usually gone by September 15th or 20th. Some people say you need to take your feeders down so they'll leave and be on their way. My observation is that that's not true. These

people must be just theorizing. The hummers on my feeders head south when it is time, leaving loaded feeders behind. However, we keep the feeders up until October for occasional stragglers, i.e., late migrants. In fact, the stragglers that come through late probably need the juice from feeders to stay alive, as it is cold then and nectar is scarce. So don't take your feeders down early. (I just had a single late Rufous on the feeder in the snow and rain today as I write this, Sept. 22nd, after not having seen any hummers for about 3 days.)

Now, back to where the birds spend the winter. Howell's range maps show that some of the Black-chins travel the least. They only go as far south as southern Sonora, Mexico, i.e., the Alamos area. Others go nearly to Oaxaca, and of our four hummers it looks like the Black-chins are the only ones that winter on the coast. Some of the Broad-tails also don't go too far south, and many go east nearly to the Gulf of Mexico, but never near the coast. In general, all four hummers occupy southwest Mexico from Puerto Vallarta to the vicinity of Oaxaca. None go past Mexico to Guatemala and Central America, and certainly none to South America. However, the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds of the eastern U.S., in winter not only occupy the general area of our Utah birds, but also the Yucatan and Chiapas areas, and then a considerable distance into Central America. Many of the Ruby-throats are said to cross the Gulf of Mexico from the southern states to the Yucatan Peninsula, a distance of 600 miles or so over the water, non-stop of course.

One question I cannot answer is how long it takes our hummers to arrive at their wintering grounds after leaving Utah. I don't know if it's days or weeks. Surely some of the bird-banders have made studies of this. At any rate, you could see our hummers on your next winter vacation in Mexico. In fact, you could see all four of them together, apparently, plus the Mexican hummers in an area extending from Puerto Vallarta to south of Mexico City!

The Fish Springs NWR CBC will be held on **Dec. 31**. We will start about 9:30 a.m. and end around 5 p.m. As always, each counter may reserve space in our refuge bunkhouse the night before and the night of the count on a first-come-first-served basis. The traditional chili feed hosted for a participant by myself will be included as well. My contact information below can be used for additional information or reserving space in our bunkhouse. Fish Springs specialties such as American Bitterns, Great Egrets, and Short-eared Owls are likely to be part of the count for those who want a good jump on a bird year list!

Jay Banta, Fish Springs NWR, P.O. Box 568,
Dugway, UT 84022, (435)831-5353, ext. 2,
jay_banta@fws.gov

KRIS'S KOLUMN

Belted Kingfisher Offers Great Late-Season Birding

By Kris Purdy

Published in the Ogden *Standard-Examiner*, September 6, 2006, reprinted here by permission.

Schwack! Schwack! A Belted Kingfisher was beating a freshly caught minnow senseless on a dead branch. Schwack! There, that did it.

The kingfisher grasped the stunned minnow tightly in her beak and flew to a hole in a steep sandbank. She disappeared inside in a twinkling. I envisioned the bird scrambling through a 6-foot passageway to the dark nest chamber where her demanding young were waiting to be fed.

The mother's taking a whole fish into the burrow meant the nestlings were growing. They were old enough that she didn't need to regurgitate fish for them anymore. They'd soon leave their burrow and would learn to fish by retrieving food items their parents purposely dropped in the water.

Setting aside those fish-eating habits for a moment, the Belted Kingfisher could be called the woodpecker of our waterways. The kingfisher superficially resembles a woodpecker with a tall crest and a sturdy spear-like bill. The bird excavates its own burrow and even sounds like a woodpecker. If you've ever heard the voice of that old cartoon character, Woody Woodpecker, you have the idea.

The sound is often described as a dry rattle. The only excuse a kingfisher needs to rattle is to see a human. But a kingfisher will also rattle upon seeing one of its own kind. It will rattle when launching from a dead branch. It will rattle when flying along a watercourse and to announce today's catch. This bird is the town crier of the river.

In this late summer season when many bird species are silent, others have molted into drab non-breeding plumage and still more have migrated already, kingfishers are noisy, colorful and easy to observe.

The kingfisher is a character. Its slate blue crest is a long shaggy Mohawk hairdo that makes the bird look big-headed. In fact, about a third of this bird's foot-long length is taken up by the long bill and big head. The wide white collar and breast are visible at a distance and contrast strongly with the blue back and wings, and

barred blue-and-white tail.

The belts of colored feathers across the breast allow watchers to distinguish between males and females. Adult males sport one blue V-shaped belt. Adult females sport three belts — blue, white and bright rust. This is one of the few bird species where the female is more brightly colored than her mate.

The Wasatch Front offers many great kingfisher watching spots. Try the Weber River at Fort Buenaventura Park where earlier this season, I watched the adult female schwack the minnow and carry it into her burrow.

Now you might see and hear these birds ferrying between the park's pond and the river. Just a warning, though; this particular family is wary. During two recent trips, each kingfisher I saw rattled and dropped off its perch as soon as it saw me. Then each bird headed around the next river bend and out of sight. I finally earned the kingfisher watching I sought through artful use of riverside brush for camouflage.

The North and South Forks of the Ogden River in Ogden Valley and the shores of Pineview Reservoir also echo with the rattles of kingfishers. You might even find them there in the winter where riffles keep fishing spots open.

My favorite spot last week was the pond at Como Springs in Morgan. The young kingfisher I watched was crisp-looking in his new plumage. His blue wing-feathers were punctuated with tiny white tips. The brown smudges in the blue breast band and rust color along the sides of his otherwise brilliant white belly revealed the bird's youth.

He was using his new fishing skills. He stared into the clear water from an overhanging willow branch, head cocked to one side. He slowly fanned and folded his Mohawk. He deliberately pumped his tail. And then in a flash, the kingfisher dove off the branch and plop! — with a little splash, sliced headfirst into the water.

The kingfisher emerged from a shower of drips while clamped onto a plump minnow. This adult-sized juvenile easily handled his catch. With a few calculated head tosses, the successful fisher maneuvered the minnow and swallowed it, no schwacking necessary.



COMEDY CORNER

With the coming season, this story just has to be told. Marv and Beth Rallison, long-time bird club members, have been happily married for many years. In fact, they celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary several years ago. They also have several grown children, most of whom live out of state.

Last year, about a week before Thanksgiving, Marv called up one of his sons and said, "Scott, I thought I'd like to chat with you for a minute. You know how your mom and I have tried to be good parents in the raising of you kids; we've never shown any partiality to any of you; and we've pretty-well given you all a good education in the fields of your choices. Now, after all these many years, your mom and I have been developing our own interests — in fact, we've kinda grown apart with these interests — so we've decided to get a divorce."

Scott, aghast, replied, "Dad! You can't be serious!"

Marv continued, "Yes, we think it's best for us to go our separate ways now. We'll be looking up a lawyer in the next couple of days."

Then Scott burst out, "Now, wait a minute, Dad. Don't do anything right yet. I'm going to call my brothers and sisters and we're all going to come to your home and have a talk with you and Mom. OK? Don't talk to a lawyer or anyone till we get together with you. Promise?"

Marv then replied, "Oh, OK, Scott. I guess we can wait a little while longer."

With that, he hung up the phone, turned and called in to Beth, who was in the kitchen making his favorite brownies, "Honey, the kids are all coming for Thanksgiving — and they're paying their own way!!"



The accompanying insert is for your participation in the annual Thanksgiving Bird Count. This Count is only done in the western states with results being tabulated by Dr. John Hewston in California. The advantage of this Count is that it only takes an hour of observation during Thanksgiving day, and your results cost only a stamp to send in, unlike the \$5.00 that Audubon collects from each of its Christmas Bird counters.

PUZZLE PAGE

See if you can match these raptor-named cities and county with their respective states.

Bald Eagle,	Idaho
Black Hawk,	Oregon
Black Hawk,	Iowa
Black Hawk County,	Texas
Eagle,	Minnesota
Eagle,	Virginia
Eagle,	Minnesota
Eagle Lake,	Tennessee
Eagle Lake,	Wisconsin
Eagle Lake,	Oklahoma
Eagle Mountain,	South Dakota
Eagle Pass,	Tennessee
Eagle Point,	Wisconsin
Eagle River,	Idaho
Eagle Rock,	Michigan
Eagleton Village,	Maine
Eagletown,	New York
Eagleville,	Pennsylvania
Eagleville,	Oregon
Falcon,	Texas
Falcon Heights,	Colorado
Falcon Heights,	Florida
Falconer,	Colorado

SLC CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 2006

On Christmas day in 1900 a small group of conservationists led by scientist and writer, Frank Chapman, changed the course of ornithological history. They posed an alternative to the "side hunt," a Christmas day activity in which teams competed to see who could shoot the most birds and small mammals. Chapman proposed to identify, count and record all the birds they saw, founding what is now considered to be the world's most significant citizen-based conservation effort.

We invite birders of all skill levels to participate in Audubon's longest running wintertime tradition by joining us for the annual Salt Lake City Christmas Bird Count to be held **Saturday, December 16, 2006**. Not only is this a fun activity, but it produces important results that help Audubon develop a State-of-the-Birds report and prioritize bird conservation activities.



Pete Dunne's Double-dozen Important Things that have most affected Birding in our Lifetime.

This theme was presented by Pete during the UOS's Western Birding Symposium held in Brigham City in August 2006. (Topics are not listed in chronological order.)

- 1- Dwight D. Eisenhower – conceived the Interstate Highway System, which allows birders quicker and easier access to birding sites.
- 2- Death of Roger Tory Peterson – Brought more general attention to the public.
- 3- The Ross's Gull in New Jersey – Again, brought an awareness of birding to a large segment of the general public.
- 4- Birding tours – Very knowledgeable field ornithologists made identification and access easier for birders.
- 5- Zeiss 7x42 binocular – German optics paved the way for better discrimination in the field.
- 6- Black oil sunflower seed – Could be found in large quantities, more nutritious for backyard birds.
- 7- American Birding Assoc. – Brought together some of the best minds in birding and field ornithology.
- 8- Chinese optics – Made available excellent optics, challenging the German types, but at a lower price.
- 9- National Geographic Field Guide – For the first time, excellent images and even more accurate field identification than had been possible with the Peterson guides.
- 10- Cell phones – Birders can contact each other to find rare birds so much easier than any previous way.
- 11- Birding Hotlines – Birders with e-mail access can very quickly find new birds to see.
- 12- The Internet – The Hotlines above can be posted by almost everyone so that other birders can immediately respond.
- 13- Bushnell and close-focusing binoculars – Low-cost optics with closer-focusing mechanism than even the higher-end companies can produce.
- 14- Birding festivals – Bring more birders to more interesting places more often; lots of birds and lots of specialists.
- 15- Jim Lane, Father of birding trails – He developed the concept of bird-finding guides for specific states. His Lane guides have been taken over by the ABA research and sales dept.
- 16- GI Bill – Provided many returning soldiers with the funds to get a good education, thereby a better than average profession or vocation, which allowed them some extra discretionary money to use on their birding hobby.
- 17- David Sibley – An excellent artist and birder, whose newer field guides match or excel even the *National Geographic*.
- 18- Kenn Kaufman – Birder, par excellence, who showed what a young kid can do with almost no money. He now has a series of field guides, gives lectures, and leads tours.
- 19- Manfrotto-Bogen tripod – Finally, a sturdy tripod with fluid head so that one can easily watch birds in motion without the jerkiness that former tripods and heads offered.
- 20- European influence – Not only in optics, but the birders, themselves. British and Scandinavian birders are among the best birders, and their influence is being felt in the US more and more.
- 21- Kowa TSN spotting scope – There have been many scopes before and after this one, but Kowa brought out the premier, for its time, scope at a decent price.
- 22- Cape May Observatory – Brings birders of every ability, as well as non-birders, to a central place where specialists can show birds at every season of the year, as well as putting on festivals and avian education programs.
- 23- Ivory-billed Woodpecker – Whether it actually still exists or not, it has galvanized the general public and media, not to mention hard-core birders, into an awareness of birds that even previous particulars haven't been able to.
- 24- Your own special item that hasn't been mentioned above.
Some people would include Pete Dunne, himself.

The upshot of the whole idea is that Birding is supposed to be fun. Don't make drudgery out of it.



Major Concerns about the Bear River

by Amy DeFreese, River Defense Coordinator

Developing Bear River water: Is it necessary and are there alternatives?

Imagine the Great Salt Lake without the Bear River. In other words, imagine it with 60% less contributing surface flow. Without the Bear River, the Great Salt Lake would be a fraction of its current size. Over time, acres of playa, wet meadow, and emergent marsh wetlands, in addition to some of the world's most specialized migratory bird habitat, would disappear.

Dams and Diversions Proposed for the Bear

Yet water suppliers propose to create massive diversions and send Bear River water south to address a projected water deficit that cannot justify the ensuing monetary and ecological costs. Bear River development would cost Utah taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars and reduce the average annual outflow of the Bear by 18% in a low water year, and up to 70% in a high water year.

Where did this idea originate? Under the Bear River Development Act, the legislature directs the Division of Water Resources to develop 220,000 acre-feet of municipal water for distribution among the Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District, Weber Basin Water Conservancy District, Cache County, and the Bear River Water Conservancy District. The State now proposes to construct a two-phase, \$680 million project on the Bear. Yet the State's own numbers demonstrate that at the limits of their projections (2050), the predicted deficits are less than 20,000 acre-feet at the county level. **The proposed solution is 11 times larger than the predicted problem.**

Compelling Alternatives to Dams and Diversions

Of the numerous methods other states and municipalities in the West have used to address water supply issues, there are two that have a history of success: water conservation and agricultural water transfers.

Water Conservation in Utah: By the year 2050, the State of Utah aims to reduce water usage on a per capita level by 25 percent, or from 321 gpcd in 1995 to 241 gpcd in 2050. Already between 1995 and 2003, Utah achieved a 17 percent reduction in water use. In contrast, Albuquerque, New Mexico, achieved a 34% reduction in water use from 1995-2005, decreasing usage from 250 gpcd to 174 gpcd. It furthermore set a new goal for itself to achieve an additional 40% reduction by the year 2014. Clearly, the state of Utah can do more.

Agricultural Water Transfers in Utah: As the population along the Wasatch Front grows, lands currently

used for agricultural purposes will convert to residential uses. Consequently, agricultural water rights will be available for conversion to municipal and industrial uses. The State estimates that across the project area, approximately 209,000 acre-feet of agricultural water will be available for conversion by the year 2050.

Alternatives exist at a cost significantly less than Dams and Diversions:

The Council compared the cost of two alternatives, water conservation and agricultural water transfers, to that of Bear River dams and diversions. We determined that alternatives clearly trump development in cost-effectiveness. Dams and diversions on the Bear will cost \$420 million, in 2006 dollars, to deliver the first 75,000 acre-feet of water to the Wasatch Front. This translates to approximately \$5,600 per acre-foot. In comparison, by utilizing water conservation and available agricultural water transfers, the State can cut costs to \$1,600/acre-foot developed ... a cost savings of \$4,000 per acre-foot!

The Council's recommendation:

There is a solution to the predicted water deficit that does not require dams and diversions on the Bear at an unprecedented cost to Utah's taxpayers. In its analysis, the Council reviewed several scenarios and recommended the following:

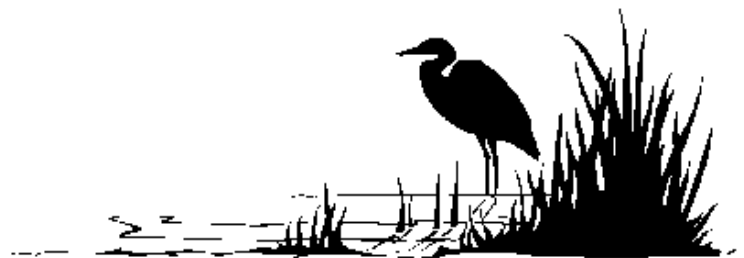
Both the Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District and the Weber Basin Water Conservancy District should increase their water conservation goal to 35 % by 2050, a 10% increase from the existing goal;

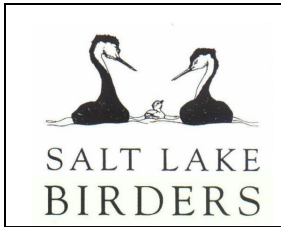
The Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District should also utilize 20 percent of the agricultural water transfers available in 2050.

These alternatives are achievable. In fact, under the Council's recommended increase in conservation, per capita use in 2050 would be equal to the per capita water use today in several western cities.

Evaluate the data and the Council's analysis in more depth at www.utahrivers.org. We can help direct your efforts where they will make the most difference.

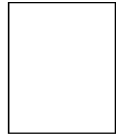
If you feel like helping, contact us: Utah Rivers Council; 486-4776; 1055 E. 2100 South, #207; SLC, 84106; amy@utahrivers.org.



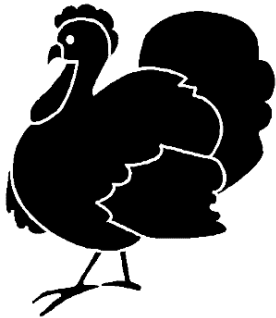


Bird Tracks

Salt Lake Birders
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Website – www.utahbirds.org



FIRST CLASS MAIL



BIRD BYTES-

The officers and board members of Salt Lake Birders wish each of our members a Happy Thanksgiving and the best of fall birding.

OCTOBER PUZZLE

Match the verb on the left to its bird verb:

- To complain – Grouse
- To renege from an agreement – Chicken out
- To fear exceedingly – Quail
- To get money fraudulently – Rook
- To stretch one's neck exceedingly – Crane
- To sell – Hawk
- To unhappily retract an opinion – Eat crow
- To be critical of and to talk sharply to – Snipe
- To brag – Crow
- To avoid responsibility – Duck
- To cross a street improperly – Jaywalk



PAGE ANSWERS

Match the word on the left to its bird synonym:

- Deglutition – To swallow
- Nutty – Cuckoo
- One who heads south for the winter – Snowbird
- Old fuddy-duddy (like your editor) – Coot
- The last word – Swan song
- A heavy, onerous burden – Albatross around the neck
- Derisive name for a person different than oneself – Turkey
- An obstetrician's assistant – Stork
- Something to bake in a pie – Blackbird
- Most advantageous and prominent position – Catbird seat
- An intimate visit – Chat
- Card game – Solitaire
- A dupe – Pigeon
- An official about to be turned out of office – Lame Duck
- A soup ladle – Dipper
- A node in a rope - Knot

