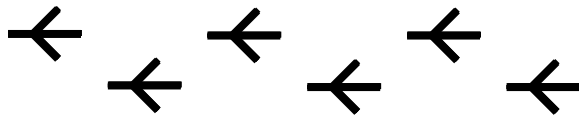
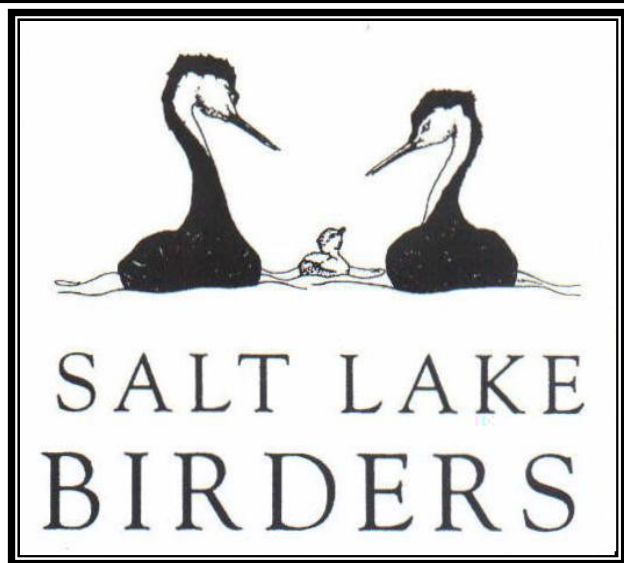


# BIRD



# TRACKS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SALT LAKE BIRDERS



March 2006

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## Utah's Snow Goose Festival by Steve Carr

On Saturday, February 25, the monthly club tour took us to Delta, Utah, and beyond, to participate in the annual Snow Goose Festival that the folks down there put on. Every year, practically all the Snow Geese that nest in the high Arctic migrate through Utah and stop at the Gunnison Bend Reservoir to feed for a few days before continuing north. On the way down we stopped at the little ponds on the eastern outskirts of Lynndyl. There was an assortment of ducks and Canada Geese. A couple of Virginia Rails were heard and briefly seen in the marshy reeds. A BirdTalk posting reported 4 Trumpeter Swans at 5:30 that afternoon but they weren't there at 10:30 a.m.

This was the first day of the 8-day Festival, and we weren't disappointed. Even before we arrived at the reservoir, we watched a small flock of Snowies feeding in a grain field right next to the road. On the reservoir, wave after wave of Snow Geese, with an occasional Ross's Goose, flew over, landed on the water, then took off for the grain fields. After a half-hour we found the resident flock of Great-tailed Grackles in a weeping willow tree nearby. Then, while checking out the swampy areas below the spillway, Pat Jividen spotted a bird hopping around behind a big rock. We identified it as a Sora, unfortunately with a gimpy leg. One leg was all askew, causing it to hop instead of to walk properly. Even then, it managed quite well.

Leaving Delta, we journeyed southward to the Clear Lake WMA. The usual array of ducks and a couple of Great Blue Herons met us there, along with the sorrowful view of a Barn Owl that had been shot fairly recently. The blood was still fresh. We didn't hear a shot as we drove up, but there may have been a vehicle just leaving as we came. We were all pretty angry at the malcontent who perpetrated this outrage. Cindy Sommerfeld was especially upset with the wanton destructiveness that some people possess.

We headed back toward Fillmore, hoping to see the Great Horned Owls in the cottonwood tree on the way, but it appeared that some of the branches had been cut down, so the owls, of course, were not present. Most ranchers by now realize that owls are beneficial in ridding the countryside of mice and other vermin, but some people seem to think that they can do better without the owls in the neighborhood.

Many raptors were seen along the way—mostly Red-tailed Hawks and Harriers, but there were several Golden Eagles, one Bald Eagle and some Kestrels.

At Chicken Creek Reservoir, there was quite a bit of ice-free water with large numbers of puddle- as well as diving ducks. The only Canvasbacks we observed on the trip were here.

Participants on the trip were - Jack Binch, Geoff Hardies, Nancy Howard, Bob Huntington, Pat Jividen, Bob MacDougall, Carol Matsukawa, Jack Skalicky, Cindy and Steve Sommerfeld, Roberta and Bart Wherritt, Steve Carr.

Birds seen - Snow Goose, Ross's Goose, Canada Goose, Tundra Swan, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Mallard, Cinnamon Teal, Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Common Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Pied-billed Grebe, Great Blue Heron, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Golden Eagle, American Kestrel, Virginia Rail, Sora, Coot, Killdeer, Feral Pigeon, Flicker, Loggerhead Shrike, Magpie, Raven, Horned Lark, Marsh Wren, Mountain Bluebird, Starling, Song Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Junco, Red-winged Blackbird, Brewer's Blackbird, Meadowlark, Great-tailed Grackle, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.

## **SALT LAKE BIRDERS**

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### **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 20<sup>th</sup> of the month for the following month's issue, preferably as an e-mail attachment, but by letter, hard copy, also.

## **Upcoming Field Trips**



### **Salt Lake Birders**

There are four marvelous birding opportunities coming up in the next three months. Everyone should try to get to at least a couple of them.

1- Steve Sommerfeld will lead the group to the **Greater Sage-Grouse lek** in Morgan County on Saturday, March 25. Because of the distance from Salt Lake, and due to the closure of the East Canyon Road in winter, it will be necessary to leave from the southeast corner of the Sugar House Shopko parking lot at 5:00 a.m. sharp. Even then, it will be almost getting light when we get to the lek, and the birds will already be displaying. It will be necessary to remain in the vehicles while at the lek site so as to not disturb the birds. Shortly after it gets pretty light, the big birds disperse and become invisible. It will still be fairly cold, so wear layers; bring water and snacks. While in the lek area, we will bird East Canyon and possibly Echo reservoirs, and some other spots nearby. Call Steve for details - 261-4270.

2- A combined **Salt Lake Birders/Utah Ornithological Society (UOS)** 3-day (2 nights) field trip will be held Friday to Sunday, April 7-8-9. We will carpool and leave from the Sugar House Shopko parking lot, southeast corner, at 7:00 a.m., and travel to the Burraston Ponds near Mona, then to the Chicken Creek and Sevier Bridge reservoirs, then to the Bicknell Bottoms WMA, a nice wetland area in the valley south of Bicknell. It might be a little early for warbler and flycatcher migrants, but there is still a good variety of birds to be seen. Antelope and deer are often observed in the nearby hills. Then we'll head down U-95 to see what can be found at Hite on the Colorado River, then along the White River to Blanding. If there is still light, we'll check out the Devil's Canyon campground for Pygmy and White-breasted Nuthatches, Wild Turkeys, and the Acorn Woodpecker, which has been reported already this year. We will spend the night in Monticello or Blanding. A list of motels and campgrounds follows. This first leg will be led by your editor.

The next morning, probably 5:00 a.m. (Daylight Savings Time will then be in effect then) we will be led by Lu Giddings, Pat Jividen and Dr. Jim Redd of Blanding to the Gunnison Sage-Grouse lek. This bird will be a lifer for many club and UOS members. It is endemic to only western Colorado and a tiny area in eastern Utah. After the birds break up, we will venture out to see many other places in San Juan County that most of us never get to.

There are numerous places such as, the Hickman Flats wetlands, Recapture Reservoir, the sewage lagoons at Monticello and Blanding, Montezuma Canyon, Lisbon Valley and LaSal, Bluff and Hovenweep. There is a very slim possibility that Dr. Redd will have located some Scaled Quail by then, if so, we will go directly there, then adjust afterward. Most of the birding activity from late Saturday morning till later Sunday afternoon will be from Blanding southward.

Some of the group will be leaving Saturday afternoon, and will catch The Nature Conservancy's Matheson Wetlands area in Moab on the way home. Others may want to stay over Saturday night and continue birding with Lu and Jim until Sunday afternoon.

We are listing motels in both Monticello and Blanding as mentioned below, and also because of the possibility that a Moab jeep safari may take some of the rooms in Monticello. It would be wise to make reservations now if you are planning to participate.

#### Motels available in Monticello:

*Triangle H Motel*, 164 E. US-491, (435) 587-2274, Approx. rates—\$36 for 1 person, \$44 for 2, \$4 for each extra person. (I have reserved this motel for Friday night.)

*Best Western Wayside Inn*, 173 E. Central Street, (800) 528-1234; (435) 587-2261, Approx. rates—\$55-75/night.

*Go West Inn and Suites*, 649 N. Main Street, (435) 587-2489, Rates not listed in the 2006 AAA book.

*Monticello Days Inn*, 549 N. Main Street, (435) 587-2458, Approx. rates—\$55-85/night.

*Navajo Nation Trail 9 Inn*, (435) 587-2251.

*Western Trailer Park*, (435) 587-2762.

The closest KOA campground is in Moab, 3225 S. Highway 191, (435) 259-6682, [info@moabkoa.com](mailto:info@moabkoa.com).

The closest Forest Service campground is there at Devil's Canyon, but it is closed till later in the spring.

Motels available in Blanding, in case you may want to move from Monticello to Blanding for Sunday birding, or even to stay the 2 nights in Blanding:

*Four Corners Inn*, 131 E. Center St., (435) 678-3271, Approx. rates—\$50-64/night.

*Best Western Gateway Inn*, 88 E. Center St., (435) 678-2278, Approx. rates—\$54-89/night.

*Comfort Inn*, 711 S. Main St., (435) 678-3271, Approx. rates—\$58-74/night. (Recommended by Lu Giddings.)

*Super 8*, 755 S. Main St., (435) 678-3880, Approx. rates—\$52-70/night.

*Kam Park* (campground) - (435) 678-2991.

More details will be in the April newsletter.

3— The **Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge** is holding their official Grand Opening and open house of their wonderful new office headquarters, education facility and book/gift shop on Friday and Saturday, April 21-22. The new building is on the south side of Forest Street, 1/3 mile west of the I-15 Forest Street exit to Brigham City. Forest Street, of course, is the road that heads west to the Refuge.

Tours of the new facility and Refuge will be conducted, and the main speaker will be Kenn Kaufmann, well-known American birder and author. Watch for details in the regular news and next month's newsletter.

4— The annual **Great Salt Lake Bird Festival** will be held from Thursday to Tuesday, May 18-23, based at the Davis County Fairgrounds in Farmington. This festival keeps getting bigger and better every year. Member Deedee O'Brien, with her committee, plays a very important part in planning and developing the numerous workshops and field trips for the event.

Dozens of field trips are offered — around the Lake and Antelope Island areas, nearby canyons and other sites. Some of these field trips will be led by our club members. Numerous hands-on workshops will be held on Friday and Saturday, May 19 and 20. There are also lots of activities for younger children and scouts. The helpful folks at HawkWatch Intl. always have several raptors that they display and talk about. To see these big buteos up close is always a great thrill for young people — even teenagers!! (Even oldsters.)

Featured speaker and presenter will be Arthur Morris, one of the most talented bird photographers and naturalists in the country. He will be presenting workshops on photography of nature, especially birds. And, he will discuss how he moved from film to digital photography after firmly deciding that he wouldn't. Most of the workshops and many of the field trips are free, but require a ticket to register. Some of the field trips, such as to Deseret Ranch, are sold out early, so you may want to contact the Festival to obtain a free booklet and registration information. The booklets have just come off the press and are now available. Contact-

Great Salt Lake Bird Festival

P.O. Box 618

Farmington, UT 84025

[www.greatsaltlakebirdfest.com](http://www.greatsaltlakebirdfest.com)

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Along with GSLA, we encourage **carpooling** and **helping with gas costs** — we recommend a \$3 donation per person for trips under 40 miles, and \$5 for more than 40-50 miles round-trip.

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

## The Northern Pygmy-Owl: Small wonder, big deal

by Kris Purdy

Courtesy Ogden *Standard-Examiner*, February 1, 2006

“Ohmygosh — ohmygosh.” That was all I could mumble. A Northern Pygmy-Owl perched quietly in a scrub oak 20 feet to my right, staring at me intently. To my left, another Pygmy-Owl perched on a power line 35 feet away, back turned while hunting on a grassy slope. I had become part of a sandwich: two slices of Pygmy-Owl and me as the filling.

The Northern Pygmy-Owl is the least common of Utah’s nine regularly occurring owl species. Seeing just one each year is never guaranteed. But this seems to be the winter of the Pygmy-Owl. About a dozen of them have been reported since November in deciduous tree-choked canyons along the Wasatch Front. And there I was, sandwiched between two.

The quiet owl on my right had just zipped by as I walked down the center line of State Highway 66, a couple of miles below East Canyon dam. The bird was so fast my brain only registered a small brown missile wending through the scrub oak that lined the road, then flaring up into the branches to take a hidden perch.

I wasn’t even sure the missile was a Pygmy-Owl. I moved closer. Suddenly, a second brown missile sliced down the road between the trees and me just 10 feet off my shoulder. This bird flared up into the open and took its perch on the wire.

I reached the power line Pygmy-Owl — *ohmygosh*. I turned to the trees and found the intense yellow and black eyes of the Pygmy-Owl in the scrub oak — *ohmygosh!*

The word pygmy was carefully chosen as part of the Northern Pygmy-Owl’s name. Imagine an owl the size of a large navel orange with a short tongue depressor for a tail. The bird is a midget. A wee one. A small wonder.

Contrast the tiny Northern Pygmy-Owl with the most familiar of owl species, the Great Horned. The Great Horned Owl is the Sherman tank of owls. Perhaps you’ve seen this bulky bird in silhouette on a prominent perch at dusk, or rendered in plastic and hanging from structures to scare away starlings. It would take the weight of twenty Northern Pygmy-Owls to equal the weight of just one Great Horned Owl. But to my mind, the Northern Pygmy-Owl is a big deal.

Big deal No.1 in the oak tree calmly endured my inspection. The Pygmy-Owl was an unwary puffball feathered in warm brown and creamy white. White spots covered the brown head, back, and wings, becoming stripes on the stiff little brown tail. The breast was streaked brown and cream; the irises, beak, and talons, a bright yellow. This owl looked

clean, neat, and well composed.

Big deal No.2 on the wire was not so well groomed. This Pygmy-Owl was hunting. He or she was ruffled with tail cocked at a high angle. The owl’s head swiveled quickly while the bird seemed to lurch forward, left, and right on the wire. The dark feathers on the nape, called false eyespots, “looked” at me. Researchers have suggested these eyespots confuse predators or birds that mob Pygmy-Owls from behind.

The owl’s beak and one yellow toe were completely covered in dried blood — sure signs of hunting success. Perhaps that blood belonged to a dearly departed vole, or a mouse or a small bird.

As if by signal, each owl turned and launched one at a time from the oak thicket and from the wire. They became brown missiles again, swooped across a pasture below the road, and ducked into thick trees lining East Canyon Creek.

I had just witnessed the reason Northern Pygmy-Owls are effective predators of songbirds. The flight pattern of both owls across the pasture was fast, and swooping. Pygmy-Owls are strong fliers, able to out-fly and out-maneuver winged prey as large as themselves. It was no wonder both birds had appeared as missiles the first time I saw them. They are fast and lethal.

Pygmy-Owls have been compared to Northern and Loggerhead Shrikes for their habit of flying fast and low, and swooping up at the last minute to take a perch. Like shrikes, Pygmy-Owls may perch conspicuously on the top branch of a shrub or small tree to survey the ground below for prey. This is just the way one owl behaved on my second trip to the canyon.

Friend Glenn Barlow and I planned our late afternoon visit to coincide with one of the owls’ most active times of day. On the third slow pass along the road, we saw what we were looking for. A little brown blob perched on the top twig of a Hawthorne in the waning light, high on the slope above the road.

The Pygmy-Owl swooped down, down, down the embankment and landed on another top twig. We watched the owl focus down and study the ground like a shrike until it dashed to another perch, out of sight in a twinkling. I can only relay the wonder of these tiny Northern Pygmy-Owls with one more word — *ohmygosh!*



(Ancient Mayan representation of an “earless owl.”)





This delightful photo of a Northern Pygmy-Owl was taken by Paul Higgins and goes with Kris Purdy's story on the previous page.

### Caribbean Colors by Steve Carr

What a delightful time to be in the Caribbean and the coast of Yucatan Mexico and Belize. I participated on a combination archaeological cruise and land tour in the middle of February, but had twice as much fun as the other participants because I was able to observe and identify many birds along the way.

Although the Cayman Islands, south of Cuba, are not known for any archaeological treasures, the ship docks there for a day. Most passengers went snorkeling, while I opted to see the Blue Iguanas that are endemic on Grand Cayman. The males are up to four feet long and dark blue color. Females are smaller and charcoal gray. Many birds on these islands have been given names that are quite interesting. Even some of the apprentice naturalists don't know them by their usual English names. Here are some of the ones I saw with their Cayman names:

Diving Dapper - Pied-billed Grebe  
Boatswain Bird - White-tailed Tropicbird  
Mary Perk - Green Heron  
Crab-catcher - Yellow-crowned Night-Heron  
Killyhawk - American Kestrel  
Old Black Arnold - Smooth-billed Ani

Tom Fool - LaSagra's Flycatcher  
Nightingale - Northern Mockingbird  
Sweet Bridget - Yucatan Vireo (Cayman subspecies)

One treat on the mainland in the ancient site of Kohunlich, Mexico, was seeing a Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl fly past my shoulder and land on a branch 30 feet away.

At the ceremonial site of Tulum, Mexico, built on a cliff right above the Caribbean Sea, the colors really stood out. I picked up four lifers within 10 minutes and 100 feet of each other. The brilliance of the Orange Oriole contrasted with the yellow features of the Yellow-backed Oriole. A Yucatan Woodpecker is quite similar to the Golden-fronted or Red-bellied Woodpeckers. The Yucatan Jay sports black underparts, head and neck, and bright blue wings and tail supported by bright yellow legs.

We were fairly close to the acclaimed birding sites of Lamanai and Chan Chich, Belize, but I had to settle for what birds showed up on the tour. No lifers in Belize but plenty of others.

### PUZZLE PAGE

Every language in the world undoubtedly has a word than means 'bird.'

For this month's quiz, match the word on the left with the language in which it is spoken. (In the case of languages that do not use the Roman alphabet, the pronunciation is given.)

Aderyn –	Swedish
Ave –	Croatian
Avis –	Hungarian
Burung –	Finnish
Fågel –	Turkish
Fugl –	Spanish
Kuş –	Latin
Lintu –	Navajo
Madár –	German, Dutch
Manu –	Portuguese
Muut –	Spanish
Niã –	French
Oiseau –	Norwegian, Danish
Pájaro –	Chinese
Pássaro –	Korean
Ptak –	Welsh
Ptica –	Italian
Sae –	Cholan Maya
Tair –	Arabic
Tsídii –	Indonesian
Uccello –	Hawaiian
Vogel –	Polish

Answers will be found in next month's *Bird Tracks*.

## St. George Winter Bird Festival Report

by Geoff Hardies

Although the Salt Lake Birders did not sponsor a trip to the St. George Winter Bird Festival, there were a number of members in attendance. Bob MacDougall and I headed down on Friday, avoiding most of the snowstorm that was traveling north into the Salt Lake Valley. We proceeded toward Lytle Ranch to see what we could find. The road in started out devoid of all bird life. After a while we started seeing occasional Loggerhead Shrikes. A stop produced a Bewick's Wren, Black-throated Sparrow and a Crissal Thrasher. The ranch entrance produced the Phainopepla that was supposed to be there, although the ranch itself was closed so we proceeded to the river.

The river made up for the disappointment of the ranch being closed. Almost immediately we started seeing bird life. We saw a Gray Flycatcher, Virginia's Warbler and Ladder-backed Woodpecker, besides numerous Yellow-rumped Warblers. That made up for the ranch being closed.

Back in St. George we made a quick stop at the river walkway near the convention center. The bridge over the river is still out, but that did not deter the birds. We were able to find Say's and Black Phoebes along with a Mockingbird, Abert's Towhee and Gambel's Quail.

The next day we participated in one of the festival trips. This one went to the Red Cliffs Campsite, Toquerville, Springdale and Grafton. The highlights from this trip were the Wood Ducks, Hooded Merganser, Anna's Hummingbird and Verdin. There were quite a few people attending this trip ranging from those who could identify a bird from a squirrel to those who really knew them their birds. Fortunately the trip was able to provide something for everyone.

On our way back to St. George, our trip leader took Bob and me to see the Vermilion Flycatcher. It was a very impressive sight, and I was quite pleased to have had the opportunity to see it. We also stopped to see the Burrowing Owls at their usual haunt out in the Washington Fields.

That evening at the banquet we checked in with other Salt Lake Birders to find out what trips they had been on and what they saw. After talking with them I was even more certain that we had had the best trip, at least for what I wanted to see.

On Sunday we made a return trip back to Lytle Ranch. Judging from our experience it would be best to call the ranch ahead of time if you want to get past the gate. We did stop at Welcome Springs, and down below there we were treated with sights of the Black-tailed Gnatcatcher. We also spotted a Cactus Wren and more Ladder-backs.

Overall, an excellent trip.



## Not Quite What I Expected

by Carol Gwynn

Picture this: About 45 birders standing at attention behind a line of spotting scopes of every possible make and model. In the rain. Dressed in rubber boots and Gore-Tex. Looking a bit dorky. Some of them paying good money and vacation time for the experience. Standing on this dike for about three hours. Watching for black dots flying through the air.

This was the scene at Waldo's Dike, on the east end of Tomales Bay, at Point Reyes National Seashore the last weekend in January. I, along with other die-hards, was in pursuit of the elusive Black Rail. During this, the highest tide of the year, the rails are pushed in by the tide towards this dike. As they move inland to escape getting their feet as wet, Great Egrets and Great Blue Herons scatter around the salt marsh, waiting to pick them off as they either scamper to higher ground or fly to the next tuft of grass.

Through the scope, I witnessed my lifer Black Rail flying madly through the air, only to be pursued and snatched in mid-flight by a Great Egret. That was rather disconcerting. We watched two other Black Rails as well as a Virginia Rail meet the same fate. Here I had been hoping to see a Black Rail scurrying around on the ground trying to avoid detection. It was not to be. Poor little guys.

Besides that in-your-face look at predator/prey relationships, how was the rest of the trip? Very good, thank you. I saw my lifer Tufted Duck in a junky little pond one block from a Mervyn's store in Vallejo. Not exactly your picture of wilderness splendor, but after all, this was the Bay area. When I told people I was going birding around San Francisco Bay, most of them chuckled and looked to see if I was serious. "There aren't really any places around there to bird, are there?" Actually, yes. We found a multitude of marsh birds just a couple of blocks from Google's headquarters campus in Silicon Valley. Once again, not quite what one would expect. Maybe I'll go work for those guys. Then I can bird on my lunch hour. Maybe I could even bird from my office window. . . .

From a marsh near Berkeley, we observed several Clapper Rails parading around right out in the open. And these rails weren't even getting eaten. So when those college kids aren't busy protesting something or being plugged in to their iPods, they could go and watch an endangered species.

What were other highlights? How about 200 Mountain Plovers in one field in Sonoma County? That was quite a sight for someone who had only seen a grand total of 3 Mountain Plovers before this trip. Or watching Horned Grebes from about 20 feet away at Bodega Bay? Or walking to the edge of a pier that was carpeted with dozens and dozens of Willets and Marbled Godwits? Even watching a pair of Red-shouldered Hawks sit on a pole and survey the countryside. Yes, this was one cool trip, even though we saw Black Rail carnage and got soaked to the skin several times. I also learned some valuable lessons. Lesson One — Keep pant legs outside of rubber boots or you are walking in water INSIDE your boots. Lesson Two — Scopes don't bounce. That lesson is too painful. Don't ask.

## COMEDY CORNER

We all know how modest Deedee O'Brien is; and she has been that way all her life. When she and Dick were married (actually, some time ago now) they found a quaint little hotel up in the Catskill Mountains of New York for their honeymoon that had two bridal suites called "The Peacock Suite" and, just below it, "The Bird of Paradise Suite." They chose The Peacock room, because she has always loved Peacocks, and the room was decorated to the hilt with beautiful Peacock feathers and paintings.

As they were getting ready to go to bed for the night, she had heard that some bridal suites were bugged with little transmitters so that the hotel keep could listen in on the pillow talk of honeymooners. She asked Dick if he would check on some likely places for such an item. He looked under the telephone, inside the nightstand drawer, behind the headboard, practically everywhere, and everything seemed to be okay. Then, to be sure, she had him pull the carpet back "just to check." He did, and — sure enough — there were two wires under the carpet. He stepped outside to get a pair of wire clippers from the tool box in the car, returned and dutifully clipped the two wires, and they promptly disappeared. She was satisfied then, so he rolled back the carpet and turned out the lights.

The next morning as they were checking out, the hotel manager came up and asked if there had been a problem during the night. Deedee said, "No, uh, no, not at all. Why do you ask?"

He replied, "Well, about midnight last night, the couple in the suite below yours had the chandelier fall down on them!"

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On our recent bird outing up City Creek Canyon, Lyn Christiansen and Geoff Hardies were talking:

Lyn -- Did you hear about the scientist who crossed an ostrich with a turkey to get bigger drumsticks?

Geoff -- No, what happened?

Lyn -- All he got was a scrawny bird with a long neck that insisted on keeping its head stuck in the mashed potatoes!

Then Geoff replied -- He must've been the same scientist who crossed a carrier pigeon with a woodpecker. He got a bird that knocked on the door when it delivered its message.

## Accipiter Antics

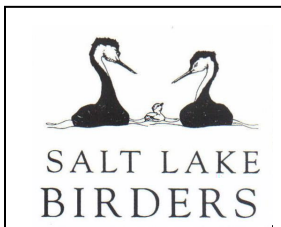
It's interesting to watch the relationships between Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks and the rest of the birds in the neighborhood.

Many years ago, while I was doing the dishes and watching outdoor activity, suddenly, the small feeder birds vanished and I assumed that a hawk was nearby. However, a Flicker, feeding on the back lawn was unperturbed. Immediately, a Sharpie flew in and landed on a clothesline pole. It stared at the Flicker, and the Flicker stared right back, then kept on feeding, always keeping the accipiter in view. After a half hour, the hawk flew off. Apparently the hawk estimated that the Flicker was a little too big for itself, and, somehow, the Flicker felt the same.

Just a couple of winters ago, a flock of Siskins and Goldfinches was feeding at my nyjer tube feeders. Within a second they disappeared — except for one Siskin that flew only as far as the top of a nearby sunflower feeder. There, it hunkered down and spread its wings to make itself as flat as possible. A Sharpie flew in and landed on a branch next to the tube feeders. As it looked around and surveyed the yard, it couldn't have helped but see the Siskin, barely eight feet away. But, not having seen the Siskin fly, and with its wings spread out, it may have appeared to the hawk to be just another dry, dead leaf. The Siskin didn't move a feather during the 10 minutes that the hawk was present. Only after it had flown off, and other birds started coming back did it fly back to the tube feeder, as if its life had never been in danger at all.

Similarly, three months ago, a Downy Woodpecker was feeding on a hanging peanut butter log, when a Cooper's Hawk descended on the yard. Again, there was a mad exodus of the little brown birds, but the Woodpecker simply jumped to the back of the pine tree that supports the feeder. Once there, it also didn't move a muscle or feather. It didn't even peek around to check on the raptor. It simply waited until normal passerine activity resumed before it jumped back to finish its lunch. In this case, the hawk never even saw the Downy.

On one instance, a young Cooper's Hawk came shooting over the roof of the house, scattering the finches and sparrows, but, evidently had its eye on one specific House Finch from the beginning, which it followed all over the yard, and behind the neighbor's fence, until it caught the hapless finch. It ignored all the 20+ other birds and focused in on just the one.



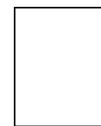
## ***Bird Tracks***

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### **BIRD BYTES-**

#### **People with the right names -**

Brian **Finch** – Birding tour guide in Kenya and Madagascar, Africa

John **Flicker** – President of the National Audubon Society

(Can you think of any others?)



### **PUZZLE PAGE**

Here is the solution to the word puzzle in the February issue.

#### **MY NAME IS TORK - PART 2**

**Merlin** looked **smart** in his robe. In his hand he held the only **card** in **all** the tarot deck that mattered: the picture of the ogre's **hovel**. **Erratically** waving his **wand**, he exited.

After we **ate all** of the caviar, while a cat was **mewing**, we **three** decided to kill the comic **hick**. **A deep** silence ensued as we watched the hick struggle. Then he gave his last **nod**, **dying** gracefully. "Be quick, **I tell** you, leave this **second**, or else! Ask **not** what will happen now!" I said to the two. They **both rushed** out the door. We could hear the mob **ranting**. What a frantic **row**! Suddenly, the King **turns to Nemesis**, now **rendered** mute, and the **ogre** begins to tremble. "Who did this?" the King asked, *viva voce*. "The **burglar** killed him!" said Nemesis. The King replied, "Telling a **fib** is not the way to go." And then went the **shaggy babbler**, Bob, **rambling** on about the injustice of it all.

Nemesis had no **regrets** **after** naming the real killers. "Go, and take your demigod with you" the King exclaimed. The King set a **big rack** lengthwise on the hick's body, trying to **cover dingy** signs of murder. **He** next put his first **elf in charge** and lived happily ever after, the **goose**.

Myna and stork appear in the title. Bird names appearing in the story: merlin, martin, cardinal, shoveler, swan, teal, smew, chickadee, noddy, kite, condor, knot, thrush, brant, crow, turnstone, wren, grebe, avocet, lark, ibis, shag, babbler, brambling, tern, egret, godwit, grackle, verdin, finch, goose, ree, hen, chick.