

November/December Hotspots

Though the weather is starting to cool and many birds have left for warmer areas, Utah is still filled with many bird species. Winter migrants are beginning to come in at this time as well as wandering alpine species and many types of waterfowl. Overall, the best places for winter birding are any forested areas with berry trees for fruit-eating birds or any open water source for ducks and other waterfowl. Here is a list of some Northern Utah Hotspots to see plenty of birds in the months of November and December:

Antelope Island: Antelope Island is a great place to see wintering ducks and raptors as well as a few other interesting species. The past few Novembers have had all three North American scoter species seen along the causeway and the thousands of Eared Grebes are replaced by thousands of Northern Shovelers and other dabbling ducks. Remember that the Island is a State Park and has an entry fee/park pass to enter.

Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge: Near Brigham City lies one of the greatest wetland birdwatching sites in the state of Utah. Every season has something unique, and in November and December, the Tundra Swans are coming back to spend the winter around the Great Salt Lake. There are also dozens of other species like owls, Rough-legged Hawks, Ring-necked Pheasant, Northern Shrike, and thousands of ducks.

Jordan River (esp. around 2100-2500 S): Anywhere along the Jordan River Trail is a great place for birds any time of year, and though there may be fewer ducks than the larger wetlands and ponds, the riparian habitat allows for more encounters with songbirds like robins, kinglets, Yellow-rumped Warblers, and various sparrow species. The area of the Jordan River between 2100S and 2500S in West Valley is especially good in late November as there are a decent number of Barrow's Goldeneye that frequent that area of the river.

Wasatch Reservoirs (Deer Creek, East Canyon, Rockport, Jordanelle, and Echo): The man-made reservoirs in the Wasatch Mountain area are wonderful hotspots for birds in late fall since the roads and the reservoirs have yet to freeze up. Each reservoir has the likelihood to be home to many different species of birds from gulls and ducks to Bald Eagles, hawks, and some alpine bird species. These reservoirs are also the best places to see loons including Common, Pacific, and the rare sightings of Yellow-billed and Red-throated.

Lee Kay Ponds: Near the Salt Lake County Landfill lies a "diamond in the rough" wetland filled with many interesting species from scaups, Canvasback, and mergansers to Bald Eagles, cormorants, and various sparrow species. Because of the landfill, this is also a great place to see many species of gulls and the winter is the best time to see upwards of 8 different gull species.

Farmington Bay: Though it may be the end of the hunting season, Farmington Bay is a great place to see wetland birds including Bald Eagles, Wilson's Snipe, grebes, coots, various ducks, Tundra Swans, and different species of raptor.

Big Cottonwood Park: Big Cottonwood Park in Murray (along 4800S) is a fun place to see many neighborhood bird species including woodpeckers, sparrows, finches, robins, and different hawks and falcons. With all of the Russian Olive trees there is usually a sighting of Evening Grosbeaks in this Park in winter.