

I Spy

Wildlife Sightings at Redwood Natural Area

By Sandra McIntyre

This winter has been exciting for wildlife watchers in the Redwood Natural Area. My wetlands buddies and I were rewarded again and again for pulling on our jackets and hats to walk the loop in December and early January. Besides the great views across the open fields to the snow-covered peaks of the Wasatch Front, we spotted many birds and mammals making their living, including these:

- **Bald Eagle** – A day or two before Christmas, we saw a large dark shape perching in one of the tallest trees on the west end. Looking through binoculars, we identified the large white head and yellow bill of a mature bald eagle as it calmly surveyed the area. Over the next ten days, it re-appeared there and in other trees, and everyone I talked with while walking had an exciting story to share about spotting it. One afternoon, it glided by just above eye level over the Jordan River, only 50 feet away. Another noon it flashed its white tail as it swooped into a tree on the edge of the large frozen pond. The sight of this healthy, majestic bird in the Redwood Natural Area gives new meaning to the Trees for Eagles project! I hope it continues to find the habitat it needs for making Utah its winter home.

- **Red Fox** – We noticed that small groups of Canada Geese, winter residents of the area, were repeatedly flushed from the center fields, rising suddenly and noisily, and we started wondering if a fox was responsible. The next day, we glanced down a path near the substation and caught sight of a large Red Fox as it moved with cat-like ease down the path into the shrubs. With a full tail, pointed snout, and a remarkable variation of rusty red color across its body, it was stunning to watch, and we later saw it crouched for the hunt. A few days later, we came out after a snowfall and followed its tracks as they crisscrossed the fields.

- **Red-tailed Hawks** – Last year, a mated pair nested on a platform in the Rocky Mountain Power substation, and we were glad to see them (or

another pair?) circling overhead just before New Year's. With their white underparts and dark-tipped wings, they were easy to identify against the blue sky.

- **Other birds and mammals** –

We have also seen muskrats in the canals, kestrels on the wing, Northern flickers with their flashy salmon-colored underwings, flocks of American Goldfinches, large groups of Red-winged Blackbirds (all males!), robins, and plenty of magpies and Canada Geese. In the river are plenty of water birds: coots, Northern Shovelers, Buffleheads, and Goldeneyes. The Redwood Natural Area continues to make winter walks rewarding. Check it out!

Walking the Wetlands

How you can go where the wild things are

Want to check out the wildlife yourself? The Redwood Natural Area is easy to access and provides a level 1.1-mile walking loop through 72 acres of semi-restored habitat, a mix of wetlands and small wooded areas. Salt Lake County maintains the paved trail year-round, even snow-plowing as needed. You can park in the lot across the street from the Redwood Recreation Center at 3060 S. Redwood Road and start your walk at the trailhead sign, heading east. The east end of the loop is part of the Jordan River Parkway Trail, so bikers can enter the area from there, and your journey can continue along the river for more sightings of water birds if you like. The Redwood Natural Area is open year-round from 24 hours a day.