Charismatic Mega Fauna – Bald Eagle

The Bald Eagles wintering in Northern Utah receive a lot of attention by birders, photographers, and all nature lovers. Many of us remember the “olden” days when Bald Eagle populations were low and seeing just one eagle was a rare treat. The Bald Eagle was listed as endangered in 1967, well before the Endangered Species Act of 1973. Successful protection allowed the Bald Eagle to be removed from the endangered species list in 2007. The Bald Eagle represents one of the real success stories resulting from endangered species protection and management. With “recovered” populations, we now enjoy large numbers of eagles in Northern Utah. There is also an increasing nesting population in the area, so seeing eagles during any month of the year is a possible birding highlight.

Utah has a vibrant tourist economy and Eagle Day, sponsored by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, has become a special event (mark the date from our calendar). The media mostly concentrate on the ski industry during the winter; however, eco-tourism for eagle watching and bird watching, in general, provides a significant contribution to our economy. Many times, I’ve shared the joy and excitement of a local or foreign visitor as they were treated to great views of our National Bird.

Our dedication to providing good habitat for wintering birds is honorable. I encourage all of you to continue to support habitat projects, as well as eco-tourism activities. Winter is a difficult time for wildlife, and it is imperative that our wintering populations have adequate cover and food so they return to their breeding territories in good condition.

Keith Evans
President’s Pipeline

Dear Santa:

Here is my Christmas wish list for this year. I hope I am not asking for too much. If you can get me even one or two gifts that are on my list, that would be great:

1. I wish I could have a car that would get about 75 miles per gallon. It doesn’t have to be quick or sporty. Heck, I don’t even need satellite radio or temperature-controlled seats. Just give me a car that gets a lot better gas mileage than what they’re making now. I know your elves can come up with something.

2. Santa, since you’re going to be on everybody’s roof on Christmas Eve, how about leaving a nice set of solar panels at each house to power our homes and heat our water. If you did that, maybe people wouldn’t feel the need for a nuclear power plant at Green River or for more coal for the power plant in Delta.

3. Santa, it would sure be a nice gift if you could get people to realize that stringing more pipelines across the countryside or drilling all over the place is not the solution for water and energy needs.

4. My last gift request would be a Comprehensive Management Plan for the Great Salt Lake that is gift wrapped with an assurance that the water-bird habitat of the Lake will be protected into perpetuity.

This past year, Santa, you gave me some great gifts. I now know that my house will not be bulldozed for the Legacy Highway. Plus you gave me a whole bunch of great views of wildlife. These are gifts that will keep on giving.

Thanks again! Paul Merola

P.S. My term as chapter leader of WAS is over the end of December. Arnold Smith will assume the reins of chapter leader as of January. Arnold was raised in Morgan, Utah, and has been an active member of the Wasatch Audubon Society since the 1990s. Several times, he has served as president, vice president, and a member of the Board of Directors. He received the John Nelson Award in 2008 for his commitment to conservation, volunteer service to the community, and his lifetime dedication to the Audubon cause. He has a great appreciation for wildlife and is our “go to guy” when we have a question pertaining to bird nesting habits, locations, and identification. Arnold has also dedicated much time and effort to leading field trips and presenting workshops for the annual Great Salt Lake Bird Festival. I hope each of you will support Arnold as he guides Wasatch Audubon during 2012-2013.
CONSERVATION CORNER
by Lynn Carroll

Each in His Own Way

As Conservation Chair for Wasatch Audubon, I often use this space asking you to do more to conserve wildlife. Over the past holiday season, I reflected on the varied ways that people can contribute to wildlife conservation, and I want to thank our members for what you do, each according to your own style.

Politics. This is not most people’s cup of tea, but with the 2012 Utah Legislature about to begin, I’ll be asking you to pay attention to the issues and possibly communicate with your representatives about a couple. Please share your e-mail address for timely updates. Later this year, you’ll be voting in important elections. If you want to vote for conservation-friendly politicians, you may find it helpful to check on their records with Project Vote Smart, which researches and shares office-holders’ voting records on all sorts of issues, or the League of Conservation Voters.

Citizen Science. Land managers and wildlife agencies need good science on which to base decisions about use of natural resources. Many of you have helped by participating in the chapter’s Christmas Bird Counts. John Bellmon organizes these counts each year. Thanks, John. There are a number of other opportunities to put our time out-of-doors to use for science. Check out Project Feeder Watch (thanks, Mort), volunteer with HawkWatch, learn about amphibians and join FrogWatch …. If you keep track of birds you see, help scientists and your fellow birders by recording the data online in e-bird. If you are skilled at recognizing bird songs, look into Breeding Bird Surveys.

Lifestyle Choices can reduce pollution, greenhouse gases, and other negative effects on the environment. Some people choose to model the actions we would like to see everyone take. Two of my co-workers bicycle to work daily. Others live near their workplace, limit the meat and processed foods they consume, and/or embrace simplicity. Smaller but still significant contributions can be made by turning off lights, recycling, buying efficient appliances and shade-grown coffee, and repairing water leaks. Thanks for each choice you make to reduce your consumption of resources.

Feeding Birds. Over the decades, hundreds of square miles of open land and water are converted to serve human needs. As natural bird habitat dwindles, feeding birds and planting trees and gardens can help at least some species to flourish.

Monetary Help. Donations to environmental organizations average less than 1% of charitable giving nationwide. It’s understandable that we relate most to people in need, but consider how important environmental health is to our health, how detrimental climate change is to our prosperity, and how important nature is to our happiness. Thanks to all of you who support WAS with your sunflower-seed purchases and donations. Please do what you can for other non-profits whose conservation and restoration work you know.

Education. It starts with your own children—teaching them to love nature and take responsibility for environmental stewardship. There are many children whose parents didn’t grow up with that love to pass on or don’t know the first thing about ecology or threats to wildlife. These children may “get it” after a visit to the Ogden Nature Center, where Susan Snyder loves her work and puts in extra time to improve their experiences. Our contributions to Audubon Adventures help teachers get the biology right while stimulating children’s imaginations. To help these lessons stick better, Dennis Collins has been volunteering in a school where he provides such enriching activities as dissecting owl pellets. Thanks, Susan and Dennis. Adults understand bird behavior better after talking to Keith Evans, Jack Rensel, Kris Purdy, or Arnold Smith, and become better advocates.

Volunteering. There are plenty of ways you can help environmental organizations do more good without more money. Each needs board members and officers. Rich Kennedy has been doing a job for WAS that everyone else was avoiding—Newsletter Editor. Thanks Rich. Joyce Overdiek volunteers at Ogden Nature Center; Les Talbot leads bird walks and teaches school children at Bear River bird refuge; we’ve heard that GSL Nature Center needs more volunteers for their education...
programs too. You can work with the Forest Service or Utah State Parks. Commitments can be long-term or limited to a single day. I hear of environmental projects that need extra man-power for a day or two, such as pulling noxious weeds on Forest Service land or planting trees and shrubs with Great Salt Lake Audubon. Again, providing an e-mail address can help us reach you with such opportunities. Mine is bradlynnc@comcast.net.

Others I haven’t mentioned and more that I haven’t heard about contribute to the cause. Thanks to all, and let’s keep it up!

**Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge**

*October 22nd, 2011*

*by Les Talbot, Field Trip Chair*

We woke to clear skies and a temperature of 42º—great weather for getting out to discover what birds awaited us at the refuge. Even though the duck and swan hunts were in full swing, we were able to see an abundance of birds. Most of the birds were along the north and west legs of the auto tour loop. All-in-all we saw 34 bird species: Greater Yellowlegs, Killdeer, American Kestrel, Northern Flicker, Black-billed Magpie, Marsh Wren, Red-winged Blackbird, Double-crested Cormorant, Northern Harrier, Western Meadowlark, Song Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Ring-necked Pheasant (heard only), American Pipit, Common Raven, Great Blue Heron, House Sparrow, Loggerhead Shrike, Mallard, California Gulls, Northern Shoveler, American Avocet, Pied-billed Grebe, American White Pelican, Ruddy Duck, American Coot, Gadwall, Snowy Egret, American Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, and Western Grebe. As we entered the Refuge, we noticed that there were a lot of Mallards to the south of us. A look through a scope revealed that they were decoys. Trip participants were: Marie Fulmer, Jeane Taylor, Betty & Keith Evans, Paul Lombardi, Christina Rockwell, Jack Rensel, Lynn Carroll, Annette & Richard Johnson, John Bellmon, and myself.

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**2011 Christmas Bird Counts**

*by John Bellmon*

This year we have encountered fog and smog along with cold weather during our Christmas Bird Counts. At press time, we have just completed our first two counts; Bear River Refuge and Ogden. A few unusual birds were found, Great Egrets on the Bear River Refuge Count; and a White-throated Sparrow and Red-naped Sapsucker on the Ogden Count. Thanks go to all who participated and helped in the counts. Everyone had a good time. We will have a more complete report in the next newsletter after we have completed Morgan and Antelope Island Counts. Hope everyone is having good winter birding.

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**JOIN THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT**

**COUNT FOR FUN, COUNT FOR THE FUTURE**

Bird and nature fans throughout North America are invited to join tens of thousands of everyday bird watchers for the 12th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), February 17-20, 2012.

Participants count birds and report their sightings online at:  

http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/

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**MEMBER CORNER**

**Editor’s note**: Following are a few new columns/articles submitted by our members. Each month we will have something new in this section. Some will become regular monthly columns, while others may be a onetime treat! Please feel free to send me your ideas, photos, articles, etc. or anything you might like to share with the readers of the Chickadee at geoteck@hotmail.com. Enjoy! -Rich-

**HOME SWEET HOME**

*by Keith Evans*

In addition to information on 150 birding hotspots, the book entitled, *Utah’s Featured Birds and Viewing Sites* is full of information on habitat types. Is habitat as important as size, color, wing-bars, and bill shape for bird identification? Probably
not, but being habitat aware sure helps. And, for the birds, habitat is everything. This month-by-month series is based on information from the book with a few anecdotes to add interest.

**January in the Desert.** When it’s cold, snowy, and hazy (smoggy) around Ogden, the southwest corner of Utah provides an excellent winter birding get-away. Winter birding does not necessitate an early morning starting time. The birds and birders can sleep late, have a leisurely breakfast and enjoy each others company after 9:00 am. Although deserts cover over 30% of Utah, a large portion of these are “cold” deserts. In January it’s appropriate to feature the “warm” habitats of the Mojave Desert. Desert plants are widely spaced and these “barren” areas often appear “bird free” as birders zoom by on the straight, flat highways. A closer look may surprise you. The long growing season of the Mojave Desert results in more diversity than apparent at first glance. Key plants include catclaw acacia, mesquite, Joshua tree, saltbush, snakeweed, rabbit brush, and many species of grasses and forbs. Common birds of the Mojave include Greater Roadrunner, Gambel’s Quail, Northern Mockingbird, Bendire’s Thrasher, Crissal Thrasher, Abert’s Towhee, and many wintering migrants. I like winter birding along the Virgin River, Santa Clara River, and throughout the Beaver Dam Slope area. I recommend enjoying a birding trip to Lytle Preserve as the preserve offers diversity with low-elevation riparian vegetation, as well as desert shrub (Joshua tree) vegetation. The plentiful Dark-eyed Juncos, White-crowned Sparrows, American Pipits, and American Robins seen here in January may have spent the summer in Canada or Alaska. For those birders keeping a “Utah bird list,” the Lytle Preserve, Beaver Dam Slope, and other Mojave Desert hotspots are essential for listing many species that occur nowhere else in the state. I could tell many stories from past Mojave Desert experiences. However, I will spare the reader a few thousand words with a one-story limit. Arnold and I had spent a wonderful day in the desert. It was dark when we decided to find a camping spot. Notice I referred to a camping spot, not a campground. There is a vast difference. The wind was howling when we decided to just place our tents near the road for the night. We carried large boulders to place on the tent stakes to keep the tents from rolling across the desert. We ate a cold meal in the vehicle as our primitive camp stove would not work in a high wind. Most of the night was restless, but by morning it was calm and clear. We exited from the tents to discover we had camped in a recently burned area that left everything either dusty or sooty. We also discovered that less than a mile up the road there was a beautiful green area protected from the wind by a large cliff. Oh well, bad decisions make for better stories!

**February on the Marsh.** In February the birding hotline is full of reports of rare and unusual gulls, challenging those who like to refer to all gulls as “seagulls.” However, early migrants like Tundra Swan, Green-winged Teal, and Northern Pintail are increasing in numbers, while wintering birds like Bald Eagles and Rough-legged Hawks have not moved north and are still common. Many birders think of the marsh as best during the peak migration and nesting season and are thinking, “Let’s wait a couple of months to visit the marsh.” A February visit to marshes, like the Farmington Bay, Ogden Bay, or Salt Creek Waterfowl Management Areas (WMA), will provide a unique experience. Most WMAs lower water levels during winter to control carp numbers and protect the dikes from ice damage. This provides a smorgasbord for fish-eating species like Bald Eagles and gulls. My old bones complain during cold weather; but with an extra set of long underwear, I can enjoy many hours of birding from the car. February birding also fills the gap between the Super Bowl and March Madness. I remember when Jack and I were peering through spotting scopes looking over a few thousand birds at Farmington Bay WMA. I was intent on looking at each gull and calling off species like Ring-billed, Thayer’s, Glaucous-winged, Western (very rare in Utah), and California when I noticed Jack taking photos with his digi-scope. Later, I asked if he got some good gull photos. After a little hesitation, he asked if I had noticed the Bald Eagle with a red band on the right leg. It turned out that while I was getting my “gull fix,” Jack was checking details on charismatic mega fauna like Tundra Swans and Bald Eagles. We did agree that if a singing-bird clock with the calls of spring marsh birds was available, we would both buy one.
EVOLUTION
by Jay Hudson
(With a little help from Christopher Hitchens.)

If you stare at something long enough, your brain may morph the facts into a fantasy. Or you may see a bus in the very cloud that you just took for a fish. Peter and Rosemary Grant of Princeton U. went to a small island in the Galapagos and studied what is commonly called “Darwin’s Finch.” After 30 years of constant observation and measurements, they found that evolution is alive and thriving. As the finch’s surroundings changed; the finch changed. They found that the size and shape of the finches’ beaks would “adjust themselves to drought and scarcity by adaption to the size and character of different seeds and beetles.” They saw it all happening and recorded it for the rest of us to accept or reject according to our beliefs. It makes you wonder just what is happening to the natural world as it heats up and birds are living farther north and eating new plants and animals. It makes you wonder about the anti-scientific declarative statements of pocket politicians and their parroting pronouncements of the organized-religious non-believers. But it does add to their campaign plate offerings. I’m not going to be around long enough to make any significant observations, but I do respect those who have.

HUNTING CRANES
by Jay Hudson
(With help from Jack Weatherford’s Genghis Kahn and Peter Mattiessen’s The Birds of Heaven)

As the White-naped Cranes (Grus vipio) migrated north in the spring to breed on the shallow lakes and rivers of Mongolia; one man waited under them in northern China. He was stretched out on his silk couch covered with tiger skins in a pavilion locked together on the backs of four elephants. Genghis Khan’s grandson, Kublai, the reigning Great Khan of the Mongol empire, was too fat to ride a horse so he was lifted onto the elephants that his soldiers had captured in Burma. As thousands of cranes called with their distinctive long-throated, far-traveling voices, Kublai gave the signal for hundreds of falconers lined up beside the elephants to lift the bird’s hoods and loose gyrfalcons, peregrine falcons and eagles. How many of the beautiful, and now rare, White-naped Cranes fell to the Great Khan’s birds of prey is not recorded in the thirteenth century Secret History of the Mongols.

Kublai’s grandfather Genghis, did not sanction the hunting of any game during its breeding season; but Kublai’s gout did not take well to the cold so he changed the law to allow his personal hunting in the spring. Even the warmth of his white-ermine coat and sable blankets inside his covered pavilion atop the elephants would not bring him out in the north China winter from his palace in what is today called Beijing.

Today the White-naped Crane is listed as “threatened” in many parts of its range. I was lucky to see them in the winter in the Yangtze River wetlands of central China. Their beauty is eye catching and their mating calls arresting! I could see why the Great Kahn would want to master them as he mastered an empire. Interestingly the De-militarized zone between North and South Korea (DMZ) has a “Civilian Control Zone” (CCZ) on the south side of the DMZ of 375 square miles. The White-naped Crane has taken up residence in this homo sapien free nature park. The crane’s presence would be seriously threatened if North Korea marched south again. Kublai Khan ruled from the Pacific to the Atlantic, including the Korean Peninsula; but he and the elephants are gone now, and the White-naped Cranes are back.

Welcome New Members
by Paul Lombardi

Please join us in welcoming those who have recently joined Audubon and/or our chapter:

Patricia Bausman
Beverly Bird
Lin Brown
Ken Clark
Tessa Hill
Barbara Hunt
Stan Jacobson
Catherine James
W. Kesinger
Edith Lorenz
The Lathams
Davis Lib
Catherine Sessions
Glenn Steigmeyer
Bernadette Tallon
Valdine White
Shelley Wood
Bill Woudenberg
Fred Younker

Hope to see you at our next meeting or field trip.
January 2012

4 Wednesday 8:30/9:00am  Bird Walk  
**WAS Meeting**  Meet at 8:30am at the Burger King (SE corner of 21st and Wall) for breakfast or at the entrance to the Fort at 9:00am.

11 Wednesday 8:30/9:30am  Bird Walk  
**Ft. Buenaventura:** Meet at Dylan’s (12th and Monroe) for breakfast or at 9:30am at the MTC Park on the Ogden River off Monroe.

17 Tuesday 7:00pm  WAS Meeting  
Dr. John Cavitt, ornithologist and Weber State University professor, will present The Ogden, Utah Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds. At the Ogden Nature Center (966 W 12th). (See front page sidebar for details.)

18 Wednesday 8:30/9:00am  Bird Walk  
**Beus Pond:** Meet at 8:30am at McDonald’s (5745 S Harrison) for breakfast or at 9:00am to carpool. If time permits, we may also check out Glasmann Pond near the parking lot for McKay Dee Hospital.

21 Saturday 7:00am  Field Trip  
**Elk Feeding at Hardware Ranch WMA:** Meet at Harmon’s in Ogden (2nd Street). Leave no later than 7:00 am. The ranch will only allow 8 people on the feed wagon, so the first 8 people to show up will get to go on the wagon. After the ranch we will visit the First Dam at the mouth of Logan Canyon and bird there. We’ll end the trip with brunch at the Blue Bird in Logan. There is a cost of $5.00 for everyone who goes on a sleigh ride.

25 Wednesday 8:30/9:00am  Bird Walk  
**Fernwood Trail/Kays Creek:** Meet at McDonald’s (5745 S Harrison) for breakfast or at 9:00am to carpool. Directions: From U.S. 89 in Layton, turn East on Cherry Ln. Take Valley View Rd north. Turn onto Fernwood Dr. (2000 N) heading east. Turn right at first “T” intersection. Stay on Fernwood Dr. to parking area.

February

1 Wednesday 8:30/9:00am  Bird Walk  
**Perry Nature Park:** Meet at McDonald’s (1838 W 2700 N), just east of Exit 349 on I-15) for breakfast or at 9:00am to carpool.

7 Tuesday 7:00pm  Board Meeting  
The Board of Directors meets at 7:00 at the Ogden Nature Center (966 W 12th). All members are welcome.

8 Wednesday 8:30/9:00am  Bird Walk  
**Riverdale Trail (South):** Meet at McDonald’s (Riverdale Rd and 900 W) for breakfast or 9:00am at the trailhead parking lot (from Riverdale Road, south on 700 W for one block, then left on 4600 W to lot on right at the end of road).

11 Saturday 10:00am to 3:00pm  Bird Walk  
**Bald Eagle Day**  Come to Compton’s Knoll at Salt Creek WMA between 10:00 am and 3:00 pm. Wasatch Audubon members will be assisting DWR personnel there. Call Jack Rensel (801-399-0240) for more information. DWR personnel will also be at Farmington Bay WMA from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm.

15 Wednesday 8:30/9:00am  Bird Walk  
**Willard Bay State Park:** Meet at McDonald’s (1838 W 2700 N) just east of Exit 349 on I-15) for breakfast or at 9:00am to carpool. Remember, this is a fee area.

21 Tuesday 7:00pm  WAS Meeting  
Dr. Steve Clark, Weber State University professor, will present Re-connecting with Wildness – Adventures with an Ethno-Botanist. At the Ogden Nature Center (966 W 12th). (See front page sidebar for details.)

22 Wednesday 8:30/9:00am  Bird Walk  
**South Ogden Nature Park:** Meet at 7:30 at McDonald’s (5745 S. Harrison) for breakfast or at 8:00 to carpool.

25 Saturday 8:00am  Field Trip  
**Morgan Bald Eagle Count:** Meet at the DWR Office in S. Ogden (515 E 5300 S) at 8:00 a.m. This is a great opportunity to see Bald and Golden Eagles and Turkeys. We will stop at the Spring Chicken Inn in Morgan for Breakfast.

29 Wednesday 8:30/9:00am/9:30am  Bird Walk  
**Antelope Island Causeway and Fielding Garr Ranch:** Meet at McDonald’s (Riverdale Rd and 900 W) for breakfast or 9am to carpool. Alternatively, you can meet the group at the parking lot near the entrance at 9:30am. Remember this is a fee area.

March

7 Wednesday 8:30/9:30am  Bird Walk  
**North Arm Pineview Reservoir:** Meet at Dylan’s (12th and Monroe, Ogden, UT) for breakfast or at Smith’s parking lot (12th and Harrison) to carpool at 9:30am. Depending on conditions in the area, we may alter the location.

Don’t forget the Great Backyard Bird Count  
February 17th–20th
http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc

All activities listed above are open to the public. No fees are charged for any event unless noted. Unless noted, all trips are in the Ogden, UT area.

For further information on Meetings: Jack Rensel 801-399-0240  
Field Trips: Les Talbot 801-731-4925  
Bird Walks: Paul Lombardi 801-295-7738
Audubon
Membership Application

Please enroll me as a member of Audubon and of my local chapter, Wasatch Audubon. Send my membership card, and my annual subscriptions to Audubon magazine (6 issues) and The Mountain Chickadee (6 issues) to the address below. My check for $20 (Introductory rate only) is enclosed.

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Send this and your check for $20, payable to Audubon to:

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P.O. Box 422250
Palm Coast, Florida 32142-2250

Local Chapter: Wasatch Audubon Society C9ZW540Z

Wasatch Audubon Society

Mountain Chickadee Subscription

You can receive The Mountain Chickadee (6 issues) for just $6, without joining National Audubon. If you would like to support Wasatch Audubon's education and conservation efforts, please indicate the amount of your contribution and include it in your check. Thank you.

✓ 1-year Mountain Chickadee subscription: $6.00
__ My contribution to Wasatch Audubon: ______

Total enclosed: ______

NAME_______________________________________

ADDRESS___________________________________

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Send your check, payable to Wasatch Audubon to:

Wasatch Audubon Society
P.O. Box 3211
Ogden, Utah 84409