



# The Mountain Chickadee



Newsletter of the **Wasatch Audubon Society**

<http://www.wasatchaudubon.org>

Volume 31, Number 3

*May/June 2012*

## WAS Meetings and Happenings

### May 15<sup>th</sup>

Jolene Rose, Antelope Island State Park Wildlife Biologist, will present Re-introducing Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse to Antelope Island State Park – Jolene will bring us up to date on the status of these native upland game birds and the project so far. Be prepared to ask questions of this and other wildlife activities on Antelope Island State Park. At the Ogden Nature Center, 966 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Ogden.

### June 19<sup>th</sup>

June is the perfect time to refocus on spring and summer wildflowers! Keith Evans will present Wildflowers of Northern Utah – Keith has been recording and photographing local wildflower species and will share his experiences with us. At the Ogden Nature Center, 966 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Ogden.

**Come and bring a friend!**

## Our Target Bird is ...

No, I'm not thinking of something to shoot with a gun. I'm thinking of the "other" definition of target - striving to achieve a goal. When on a field trip, we enjoy looking at birds and all other wonders of nature. However, we often name one species that is of special interest or provides the impetus for the trip. Think of Tundra Swan Day, Eagle Day, visiting the grouse lek, census of the Bluebird box trails, and looking for Bobolinks and Grasshopper Sparrows (see details for the last two trips on the calendar page). I've often wondered why humans require such a goal-driven existence. Betty and I visit Antelope Island State Park about once a week. We go mainly to get out of the house, and we find all wildlife and plants interesting; however, we often "target" a specific bird as we drive to the island. On a recent trip, "I hope the Burrowing Owls are back" became our chant for a target bird on that tour of the Island.

The timing of this issue of the Mountain Chickadee (May-June) is perfect for enticing everyone to select a target species and head out to find that target. And, don't limit yourself to just the birds. Here are a few suggested targets for your consideration: (1) find a Great Horned Owl nest with young; (2) locate a population of Bobolinks; (3) locate a Swainson's Hawk nest; (4) look for American Avocet young; (5) find the Utah state flower - sego lily; (6) count the eggs and/or young Mountain Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, and House Wrens (hint: go on the appropriate WAS field trip); and (7) be the first to record a young (colt) Sandhill Crane. Attending the 14<sup>th</sup> Great Salt Lake Bird Festival between May 17 and 20 should provide many opportunities to set new targets and accomplish your goals.

Enjoy this wonderful time to be out-of-doors and we'll see you along the trail.

Keith Evans



**Wasatch Audubon Society**  
 Website: wasatchaudubon.org

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**President's Pipeline**

The next two months (May & June) are the busiest bird times of the year. The resident birds are busy selecting territories, building nests and raising young, while migrating birds are returning and doing the same. It's an exciting time for people to watch birds dressed in their finest feathers, dancing and singing their best songs. When you consider all there is to do, backyard bird watching, field trips and bird surveys, it's a busy time for people too.

As president I would like to invite everyone to participate in some of the events going on during the next two months. There are the regular Wednesday and third-Saturday field trips. May 17<sup>th</sup> through the 21<sup>st</sup> is the Great Salt Lake Bird Festival. This is a great event to learn about birds with classes and field trips. This year Greg Miller of "The Big Year" fame is the keynote speaker. You can find information on line at [GreatSaltLakeBirdFest.com](http://GreatSaltLakeBirdFest.com)

Another event which comes up in June is Wasatch Audubon's Bluebird Box census. Taking part in this count is a great way to learn about many breeding birds and see what happens in the wild as it unfolds before your very eyes. Kids are always welcome if accompanied by an adult.

If you are so inclined there are also Breeding Bird Surveys (BBS) on a Federal level that you can do if you have the bird identification skills. There are many routes open in the state of Utah. Hope to see you at some of the upcoming bird events.

Arnold

**About Us:** The *Wasatch Audubon Society* is an association of people who share an interest in birds, all natural things, and Utah's varied habitats. Our goals include: educating ourselves and others about wildlife and the natural environment; enjoying the out-of-doors in fellowship with others who share similar values; fostering an appreciation of wildlife and understanding of ecological principles; promoting opportunities for the public to see and appreciate birds and bird habitats, and influencing public policy toward a conservation ethic. You might also want to visit our website at: <http://www.wasatchaudubon.org>

**Newsletter Articles:** Items for the next newsletter are due by the 15th of the month prior to the newsletter date. Send letters, articles, or comments to Rich Kennedy at: [geoteck@hotmail.com](mailto:geoteck@hotmail.com)

## CONSERVATION CORNER

*by Lynn Carroll*

Do you know a “climate skeptic?” Are you unconvinced that it’s important for mankind to be reducing greenhouse gas emissions? To me it comes down to these facts:

1. Earth is getting warmer. You can’t easily make out the long-term trend looking at yearly numbers, but plotting 10-year averages over a century or more makes it clear.
2. Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) is accumulating in the atmosphere. Atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> levels have risen 36 percent in the last 250 years, with half of that rise occurring only in the last three decades.\*
3. CO<sub>2</sub> is a “greenhouse” gas, that is, it traps heat near Earth’s surface instead of letting it all radiate back into space. Methane, a much more potent greenhouse gas, has accumulated so little that its warming effect has been smaller, but it can still be a problem. Whether or not global warming was started by greenhouse gases released by human activity, they are certainly multiplying the size of the change.

The effects of this warming on climate are becoming more noticeable as the ability of the ocean and forests to absorb the excess CO<sub>2</sub> decreases. The pace of the change is predicted to increase as CO<sub>2</sub> continues to pour into the atmosphere and positive feedback effects kick in. (One example of positive feedback is a spike in methane release from thawing Arctic tundra that was reported in 2007.) Dealing with the effects, such as greater temperature extremes and stronger storms will be extremely costly both in monetary terms and to people’s well-being. Audubon showed us that birds are being affected by publicizing changes in birds’ ranges and breeding dates.

So worldwide reduction in the burning of forests and fossil fuels is urgently needed. The EPA has just taken one important step in that direction with a rule limiting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from **new** power plants

to 1000 pounds per megawatt-hour. (This limit cannot be met using coal without new technology.) Many congressmen are vowing to reverse this action through legislation. It’s a shame that they are unwilling to invest in an “ounce of prevention,” leaving it to another generation to fund the “pound of cure” while also dealing with the debilitating effects of the “disease.”

Utah’s state legislators are unlikely to complain about the EPA’s new rule, being all for natural gas. They’ve tried to make it easy for companies to drill for natural gas by removing obstacles, such as environmental regulations and people who don’t want access roads bulldozed through their land. Anyone who has any influence with these politicians should try to change their attitudes.

While we wait for widespread change backed by legislative action, we are left with acting locally. We can support campaigns to increase efficiency of vehicles and appliances, preserve or restore forests, and generally conserve energy. In a future article I will provide some ideas about what actions can have the biggest impacts on our personal carbon footprints.

\* [Sources: Union of Concerned Scientists: <http://www.ucsusa.org/> ]

## ANNUAL BALD EAGLE COUNT

February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2012

*by Les Talbot, Field Trip Chair*

In the late 1700’s our Founding Fathers set up our great nation. As part of this, they desired to have a bird represent us as our national symbol. Benjamin Franklin chose the Turkey and led a campaign to have it adopted. As we all know, the Bald Eagle won and the Turkey lost. Today the Turkeys won and the Bald Eagles lost. The score was: Turkeys - 106, Bald Eagles - 16 (3 immature) and the Golden Eagle = 0. Other birds seen on the trip were: Red-winged Blackbird, European Starling, Black-billed Magpie, American Robin, Eurasian Collared Dove, Downy Woodpecker, Dark-eyed Junco, Mallard, Northern Flicker, Ring-necked Duck, and American Goldfinch.

When I left Roy at 7:30 a.m., it was 41 degrees and partly cloudy. When we left the Spring Chicken Inn, it was starting to snow and it continued

snowing all the way up the canyon. At the Grouse Lek it was blizzard conditions with snow blowing across the road. By the time we got to Henefer, it had stopped snowing but continued to be cold.

John Bellmon told me that on one of the counts they counted over 90 Bald Eagles. At that time the count was in January and then later was moved to February. I remember a February count in which we had over 70 eagles. I believe that the warm, dry winter kept the eagles dispersed and not concentrated in smaller areas to find food.

Even though it was cold and snowy, we had 20 people participate: Frank D'Amico, Dennis Henry, Pat & Walt Bausman, Sharen Perry, Nancy Arnett, Sharon & William Woudenberg, Betty & Keith Evans, Joyce & Jim Peters, John Bellmon, Paul Lombardi, Jeanette & Brian Nosker, Jack Rensel, Shirley Lee, Bruce Nelson, and myself.

#### **UTAH NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM TRIP**

March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012

*by Les Talbot, Field Trip Chair*

The museum needs to be on everybody's bucket list. If you have been to the old museum, you'll remember it as a sterile (NO TOUCHING) Indiana Jones type of museum. The new museum is magnificent. There are not enough superlatives to describe it.

There is an outdoor path that leads to the main entrance. The path leads you through the Geologic Time Scale and explains the major events of each time period. Inside it is best to take the elevator to the fifth level and work your way downward. The museum includes numerous hands-on displays which help explain what you are seeing. The Great Salt Lake Display features a short video about the value of the lake. The video also includes a short segment on bird life narrated by Bill Fenimore.

When you visit the museum, plan on plenty of time to take it all in or revisit several times. One visit can be overwhelming. I visited twice in the same week and still wasn't able to absorb it all.

Those who thoroughly enjoyed the museum on this trip were: Sharen Perry, Paula and Lee Shirley, Jeane Taylor, Barbara and Jay Hudson, Shirley Lee and myself.

#### **LEWIS WOODPECKER NEST BOXES**

*by John Bellmon*

In the winter 2011 issue of the *Living Bird* by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology there is an article about putting up Lewis's Woodpecker nest boxes to help the species recover in an area after a big catastrophic fire. This was started by a group of volunteers from the East Cascades Bird Conservancy in Bend, Oregon. The places in our area where we have seen Lewis's Woodpeckers have decreased along with the populations of the bird. I brought this up during the February, Board of Director's meeting. If the population of Lewis's Woodpeckers could benefit from the placement of nest boxes in Oregon, could we help the population of Lewis's Woodpeckers in Northern Utah in the same way?

The board thought that we could try a few in some of our areas to see if it would help our population of Lewis's Woodpeckers. We had the design of the nest boxes from the East Cascades Bird Conservancy, and so we made a few to be placed in Ogden Valley. With very generous help from Scott Baxter, three very fine nest boxes were constructed from good material and taken up into the valley and placed in good looking habitat areas at the Swanson Environmental Center and Middle Fork Division of Wildlife Resources areas. We hope that the nest box project will be successful for the Lewis's Woodpeckers in our area; and if they are, we will place some more in different areas of good habitat for the birds.

A special thanks goes out to Scott Baxter for construction of all of the nest boxes. The installation project was helped very much by Kris Purdy, Jack Rensel, Dennis Collins and Paul Merola. Without their help, I could not have put the nest boxes up. We will be anxiously waiting to see if this project is successful. Good luck to the Lewis's Woodpeckers and good birding to all.



**2012 GREAT SALT LAKE BIRD FESTIVAL**  
**May 17 – 21**

The 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Great Salt Lake Bird Festival, Farmington, Utah will spotlight the many great birding areas in Northern Utah and around the world-famous Great Salt Lake. The workshop programming focuses on interacting with live birds, involving youth and families in birding, and providing detailed information for serious birders.

We are excited to have “The Big Year” birder, Greg Miller, join us. Greg is portrayed by actor Jack Black in the comedy movie. He has many stories to tell of birding, including several adventures he shared with his father. Greg will be our keynote speaker for our Dutch Oven Dinner on Saturday night. Also, young Ivan Richardson will present a workshop on his experiences of birding with his family.

There are many workshops on birding challenges and issues that everyone will enjoy. Also, there are a few field trips that have not filled up yet. The Great Salt Lake Bird Festival is a great place to cultivate young birders and take advantage of the beautiful surroundings to make fun family memories. So everyone come out to the Great Salt Lake Bird Festival and have a great time.

GreatSaltLakeBirdFest.com  
801-451-3286

**HELP NEEDED!**

A volunteer is needed to take over the role of the Wasatch Audubon Newsletter Editor. The position requires some computer skill, including document formatting and familiarity with Microsoft Word. It requires just a few hours every two months. Please communicate your interest in this position to any board member.

**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](mailto: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.

**April in Shrub-Steppe.** I moan loudly when the alarm sounds off at 0-dark-30. However, I look forward to enjoying the sights, sounds, and smells of the early spring sagebrush. The sights and sounds of the courtship dance of the Greater Sage-Grouse are especially rewarding. Utah is 15% Shrub-steppe habitat which is considered a high priority habitat for management. Shrub-steppe habitat is important to many birds which are decreasing in numbers. Human activities like urbanization, grazing, energy extraction, and agriculture have had a negative impact on the quality and quantity of the shrub-steppe habitat throughout the west. Shrub-steppe habitat is usually dominated by sagebrush, but many other associated plant species are present in good condition habitat. High quality habitats include native species like bluebunch wheatgrass, needlegrass, winterfat, dandelion, Indian paintbrush and more. Obligate nesting species in our sagebrush habitats include Greater Sage-Grouse, Brewer’s Sparrow, Sage Sparrow, and Sage Thrasher. The clear notes of the ubiquitous Western Meadowlark add to the early morning experience. As the Sage-Grouse only dance at the crack of dawn, there’s a lot of daylight left for more birding and to visit nearby reservoirs to count the Common Loons on their migration north. I’m most familiar with the sagebrush areas in northwestern Utah as I’ve visit them often. However, I’m ending this

story by talking about the area north of Vernal in the northeast corner of the state. The Diamond Mountain Bird Habitat Conservation Area (BHCA) features sagebrush as a priority habitat type and contains the largest concentration of Greater Sage-Grouse in northeastern Utah. The section of US-191 running from Vernal to Flaming Gorge offers many bird viewing hotspots. The Diamond Mountain Road is approximately 24 miles north of Vernal.

**June in Mountain Shrub and Aspen.** Mountain-shrub and aspen forests are often listed as two separate habitat types, but I'll cover them together as many bird species are found in both. Approximately 7.5% of Utah is classified in these habitat types. Trees and shrubs include aspen, Gambel oak, big tooth maple, serviceberry, mountain mahogany, chokecherry, elderberry, and snowberry. Depending on the moisture regime, the understory can be fairly barren or very dense. Many early spring-flowering plants bloom before June as the sunlight reaching the ground is more intense before the leaves on the trees are fully developed. Many of the birds found here also utilize the riparian areas and include Red-naped Sapsucker, Mountain Chickadee, Lazuli Bunting, Green-tailed Towhee, Virginia's Warbler, and Western Scrub-Jay. At higher elevations look for American Three-toed Woodpecker and Cassin's Finch. Back in 1985, John "helped" me add a Williamson's Sapsucker to my lifelist. John Bellmon owned a great 4x4, high clearance vehicle, but we decided to take my low riding Plymouth. The roads would be good was our reasoning. We headed to the Daniels Pass area south of Heber City where Williamson's Sapsuckers had been regularly reported. Well, I did add the sapsucker to my lifelist as well as scraping off the muffler and a few other problems. Due to the distance, this was also an all day trip. At the very next Audubon meeting, a member reported seeing Williamson's Sapsuckers along the paved road by the Monte Cristo Campground. Oh well, my memories and stories are much better this way.

**OUTPOST NUMBER ONE**

*by Jay Hudson*

The Great Wall begins at Jiayuguan in North West China on top of an 80 meter cliff. It was felt that the enemies of the Han Dynasty couldn't get around the cliff, so they built an earthen guard post on its

edge and called it Number One. I was standing on a glass platform jutting into space from a cave in the cliff looking straight down through the glass. A thousand yards away on the bend in the river sat outpost number one. It is impossible to climb to it from the river or get around it. It's so remote that even Google Earth can't see it. Here is where the world of the West met the world of the East. Here is where travelers on the fabled Silk Road entered the East with trade goods and caravans left with silk and secrets.

Vast barren country lay to the northwest and snowcapped mountains loomed in the distance. As I scanned the great chasm cut by the Tao Lai River, a brown-backed stubby-winged raptor flew below me and up the river. There was something exciting about looking down on this bird in such a faraway place. The book told me that it was the bird of the falconers, the bird seen on the arms of both sheiks and Mongolian nomads. It was the fabled hunter linking rational man to nature for fun and image.

The Saker is about the size of a Gyrfalcon and is listed as endangered because of habitat loss and illegal taking. It is popular with the rich of the Middle Eastern moneyed crowd; and although it is against the law to import them into the United Arab Emirates, private jets are an easy way to bring them from Russia or Mongolia. Smugglers like female Sakers because of their ferocity in hunting. I now know how lucky I was to be standing out in space at Outpost Number One on the Great Wall of China and seeing one.

**Welcome New Members**

*by Paul Lombardi*

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

- |                  |                       |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| Marilyn Adams    | John Elwell           |
| Vicki Allred     | George Fairbanks      |
| Bonna Auffhammer | Stanley Goodness      |
| Dixie Bingham    | Kenneth Latham        |
| Donna Browne     | Paula Magnuson        |
| Janeal Burgert   | Janae Manning         |
| Duane Burton     | Bruce Leath Nelson    |
| Judy Collins     | Bruce & Barbara Perry |
| Pablo Cordero    | Shaylee Simmons       |
| Kathleen Deremer | Helen Wight           |
| Marleen Eastman  |                       |

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

🦅 CALENDAR 🦅

**May**

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

**9 Wednesday 8:00/8:30am** **Bird Walk**  
**Swanson Environmental Center:** Meet at 8:00am at McDonald's (Washington & 2600 N, N. Ogden) for breakfast or at 8:30 am to carpool.

**15 Tuesday 7:00pm** **WAS Meeting**  
 Jolene Rose, Antelope Island State Park Wildlife Biologist, will present Re-introducing Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse to Antelope Island State Park. At the Ogden Nature Center (966 W 12<sup>th</sup>). (See front page sidebar for details.)

**16 Wednesday 7:30/8:00am** **Bird Walk**  
**Fernwood Trail/Kays Creek:** Meet at McDonald's (5745 S Harrison, Ogden, UT) for breakfast or at 8:00am 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.

**23 Wednesday 7:30/8:00am** **Bird Walk**  
**Willard Bay:** Meet at McDonald's (1838 W 2700 N, just east of Exit 349 on I-15) for breakfast or at 8:00 am to carpool.

**30 Wednesday 7:30/8:00am** **Bird Walk**  
**East Mountain Wilderness Park, Kayville:** Meet at McDonalds (5745 S Harrison) for breakfast or at 8:00am to carpool.

**June**

**2 Saturday 8:00am** **Field Trip**  
 We will visit **Northern Utah** to look for Bobolink, in the fields north of Brigham City, and look for Grasshopper Sparrows north of the steel plant in Plymouth, then finish at Salt Creek WMA. We will meet at Harmon's (2<sup>nd</sup> Street in Ogden) at 8:00 a.m. Bring water and a lunch. (RSVP Les Talbot at 801-589-2591)

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

**6 Wednesday 7:30/8:00am** **Bird Walk**  
**Sherwood Hills:** Meet at McDonalds (1838 W 2700 N, just east of Exit 349 on I-15) for breakfast or at 8:00 am to carpool.

**13 Wednesday 7:30/8:00am** **Bird Walk**  
**Green Pond:** Meet at 7:30am at Dylan's (12<sup>th</sup> and Monroe) for breakfast or at Smith's parking lot (12<sup>th</sup> and Harrison) to carpool at 8:00am.

**19 Tuesday 7:00pm** **WAS Meeting**  
 Keith Evans will present Wildflowers of Northern Utah. At the Ogden Nature Center (966 W 12<sup>th</sup>). (See front page sidebar for details.)

**20 Wednesday 7:30/8:00am** **Bird Walk**  
**Lagoon Trail:** Farmington. Meet at McDonalds (Riverdale Rd & 400 W) for breakfast or at 8:00am to carpool.

**23 Saturday 8:00am** **Field Trip**  
**Annual Bluebird Nest Box Census:** Meet at Smiths (12<sup>th</sup> & Harrison in Ogden) at 8 a.m. This is a great opportunity to get up close and personal with Mountain Bluebird, Tree Swallow, and House Wren eggs or young. Bring a lunch and water. (RSVP Les Talbot at 801-589-2591)

**27 Wednesday 7:30/8:00am** **Bird Walk**  
**Riverdale Trail (South):** Meet at McDonald's (Riverdale Rd and 900 W, Ogden, UT) for breakfast or 8:00am 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).

**July**

**4 Wednesday** **Bird Walk**  
 4<sup>th</sup> of July holiday, no Bird Walk.

**Don't Forget!****Great Salt Lake Bird Festival**

May 17-21, 2012

The 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Great Salt Lake Bird Festival, Farmington, Utah will spotlight the many great birding areas in Northern Utah and around the world famous Great Salt Lake. The workshop programming focuses on interacting with live birds, involving youth and families in birding, and providing detailed information for serious birders (see compete article on page 5).

On-line registration begins March 1 at 9:00 a.m. Go to: [www.GreatSaltLakeBirdFest.com](http://www.GreatSaltLakeBirdFest.com) or call 801-451-3286.



*Wasatch Audubon Society*

P.O. Box 3211

Ogden, Utah 84409



**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.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Local Chapter: **Wasatch Audubon Society C9ZW540Z**



*Wasatch Audubon Society*

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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.

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