



The Mountain Chickadee

Newsletter of the Wasatch Audubon Society



Vol 32, Number 5

Sept/Oct 2013

WAS Meetings and Happenings

Tuesday Sept 17
7:00pm
WAS Meeting

Our speaker is John Neill, the Avian Biologist with the Great Salt Lake Ecosystem Program for the Utah Division of Wildlife. John conducts and coordinates surveys of water birds on the Great Salt Lake. Come and bring a friend!

Tuesday Oct 15
7:00pm
WAS Meeting

Our speaker is Rich Hansen, Farmington Bay Wildlife Management Area Manager for the Utah Division of Wildlife. He is responsible for maintaining wetland habitat for the myriad of animal species inhabiting it. Come and bring a friend!

**MORE DETAILS ON
THE CALENDAR**

PROPER FIELD TRIP ETIQUETTE

by Les Talbot, Wasatch Audubon Field Trip Chairman

Have you ever taken the time to realize what a great birding area we live in? Where else can we go to see one-half-million Wilson's Phalaropes? Our area covers a wide range of different habitats. If you drive 12th Street (Highway 39) from the Great Salt Lake to Monte Cristo you pass through 12 different habitats, and each one provides a variety of birds. How can we ensure that this area is preserved, not only for ourselves, but also for future generations? The answer is simple. We need to remember the National Audubon Policy which states: "For over a century, Audubon has been a leading voice in encouraging conservation of precious habitat and wildlife for future generations."

The best and easiest way to do this is to practice "Leave No Trace." When the Bear River Bird Refuge and Hardware Ranch discuss "Leave No Trace" with students, they point out that nothing should be disturbed. Students are told to leave the environment as they found it. We should leave an area just as it was when we entered it and later visitors should not be able to tell that we were there. For example, we should not pick the flowers. We should not pick up or move objects, rocks, sticks, etc., from the ground. These objects may be providing a home to an organism. It is against federal law to remove migratory birds, any part of a protected bird, its nest, or feathers.

We need to conserve the natural world that we enjoy, so other people can do the same. As WAS Field Trip Chairman, I appreciate your support and willingness to follow this admonition: "The human spirit needs places where nature has not been rearranged by the hand of man" (author unknown).

For further information see: www.fs.uda.gov, The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16U.S.C. 703-712), National Park, State Park and BLM regulations.



Wasatch Audubon Society
 Website: wasatchaudubon.org

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PRESIDENT'S PIPELINE

by Arnold Smith

Since I became president of Wasatch Audubon Society in January of 2012, a lot of changes have occurred in the world. This is also true for Wasatch Audubon – some changes have been good, some not so good. September of 2013 marks the first time in over 30 years that Wasatch Audubon has not held an annual sunflower seed sale. For those who may not already know, the explanation is that the sunflower crop will no longer be grown locally.

Wasatch Audubon's annual sunflower seed sale had two purposes. First, to help people feed the birds and second, to raise enough money to sustain the society's operating expenses and programs. So far, the Board of Directors has been unable to come up with a strategy to replace the sunflower sale source of revenue. As a result, we will no longer be able to sustain programs at the level that we have in the past.

I would like to personally thank all those who have supported Wasatch Audubon's sunflower program in the past. The Board of Directors would welcome any ideas and support you can give us.



HELP SAVE A TREE!!

Do you prefer reading electronically or hard copy?

This newsletter is available electronically at www.wasatchaudubon.org. If you would rather not receive a hard copy every other month, please send an email message to that effect to bkevans4@comcast.net or call **801-476-0232** and we will remove your name from our hard-copy mailing list.

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>

CONSERVATION CORNER

Cats as Predators

by Lynn Carroll



When cats have been introduced on islands with no small mammalian predators (so the prey are less wary), they've caused or contributed to the extinction of a number of bird, reptile, and mammal species. The Hawaiian Islands have been seeing the effects of cats (and mongoose and rats) on endemic birds since the 19th century, and felines are considered the greatest threat to some endangered birds there today.

Here in the lower 48, though, the impact of cats on native animals is not as easily identified. We know that all across the country, the numbers of free-roaming pets have been exploding while the habitats of the native animals shrink. Ecologists and wildlife conservation groups warn that this is yet another way that people are disturbing ecosystems and marginalizing native species, but how does this threat compare with others we might spend our energy fighting? How do we even begin to quantify the deaths due to predation by domestic animals? A couple of studies published in the past year shed some light on cats as predators.

The first focused on cats that have a home but spend some of their time roaming freely. Small video cameras attached to collars were placed on cats on each of 7-10 days before they were allowed out-of-doors. The video recorded as 55 different cats roamed and was analyzed by researchers at the University of Georgia. Each season of one year was covered by a different group of cats. All lived in one county centered on Athens, GA. Twenty-four of the cats hunted (stalked or chased animals) while they were recording, but only 16 (30%) captured anything, for a total of 39 prey animals. Fourteen were reptiles, 10 were mammals, 8 were invertebrates, 5 were birds, and 2 were amphibians. All vertebrates except one, a mouse, were native species.

This small study can't identify the animals killed by cats country-wide. Hunting behavior varies with climate and, even in mild climates, cats spent less time hunting in the winter than the rest of the year. Most of these cats lived in suburban neighborhoods. The most interesting

result from this study is the fact that only 23% of the prey were taken home. Half were left behind and 28% were eaten. So researchers who asked cat owners to record the animals their cats brought home probably seriously underestimated the number of kills the cats made.

The second study I want to mention is an ambitious attempt to estimate the numbers of birds and mammals killed by cats in the United States (less Hawaii and Alaska). It was a "meta-analysis" in which information from a number of selected smaller studies is analyzed using specialized statistical methods to obtain the results that might have come from one bigger study. Research on hunting by "owned" cats (with an indoor home) uses different methods from that on cats that spend all their time outdoors (strays, barn cats, and those born wild), which they called "un-owned." Determining what kinds of animals the latter kill involves examining scat or the stomachs of dead cats. For a predation rate, these authors assumed that the remains in each scat or stomach represent the animals killed in one day.

Multiplying estimated populations of each category of cat by the estimates of how often they prey on birds and adding the two results gives the total birds killed by cats. There is a lot of uncertainty in each of these numbers, especially for "un-owned" cats. Their final result was 1.2 to 3.7 **billion** birds killed by cats each year, with maybe 69% due to the "un-owned" cats. This range is considerably higher than other published estimates. It is higher than estimates for any other human-related bird deaths, such as building collisions. Maybe it's too high, or maybe the others are too low.

What to do about predation by cats is another matter. However you feel about this, making policy needs to start with the best research available.



References available on request.



CALENDAR Sept/Oct 2013

September

4 Wednesday 7:30/8:00 am Bird Walk

Willard Bay State Park: Meet at McDonald's (1838 W 2700 N, Farr West just east of 1-15 exit 349) at 7:30 am for breakfast or at 8:00 am to carpool. We'll check to see if the campground is open. If not, we'll try the South Marina area. **This is a fee area.**

11 Wednesday 7:30/8:00/8:30 am Bird Walk

Antelope Island Causeway and Fielding Garr Ranch: Meet at McDonald's (900 W Riverdale Rd) at 7:30 am for breakfast or at 8:00 am to carpool. Alternatively, meet the group at the parking lot near the entrance to the State Park at 8:30 am.

12 Thursday 6:00 pm Birdy Thursday Evening Walk

Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge: Meet at 6:00 pm in the Refuge loop road parking lot. We'll pile into as few cars as possible, then head out onto the loop to see who's there. The trip should take about 90 minutes with an opportunity to socialize afterward. Flat trails. No dogs or children under 12 years old.

14 Saturday 8:00 am Utah Audubon Council Meeting

Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge: Utah Audubon Council's semiannual meeting at the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge in Brigham City. Birding from 8:00 - 9:00 am will be followed by the business meeting. Lunch and refreshments will be provided by the host chapter, Wasatch Audubon. The business meeting continues after lunch with more birding at the end of the day. Everyone is invited but please **RSVP to John Bellmon (801) 444-3704.**

17 Tuesday 7:00 pm WAS Meeting

Ogden Nature Center with John Neill: Meet at 7:00 pm at the Ogden Nature Center (966 W 12th Street). John Neill is the Avian Biologist with the Great Salt Lake Ecosystem Program for the Utah Division of Wildlife. John conducts and coordinates surveys of water birds that utilize the Great Salt Lake for resting, feeding, or breeding. This unique habitat is important for locally breeding birds, but it is absolutely necessary for migrating birds. Come and bring a friend to learn more about this spectacular ecosystem.

18 Wednesday 8:00/8:30/9:00 am Bird Walk

Lagoon Trail: Meet at McDonald's (900 W Riverdale Rd) at 8:00 am for breakfast or at 8:30 am to carpool. Alternatively, meet the group at 9:00 am in the parking area located on the dead-end street (200 W, south off of 600 N in Farmington). This parking lot has ample parking.

21 Saturday 7:00/8:00 am Field Trip

Bluebird Nest Box Clean Out: Meet at Smith's (12th St and Harrison) at 8:00 am. Bring a lunch and water. This is a great opportunity to serve the chapter and the birds. Everyone is welcome.

25 Wednesday 8:00/8:30 am Bird Walk

Riverdale Trail, South: Meet at McDonald's (900 W Riverdale Rd) at 8:00 am for breakfast or at 8:30 am at the trailhead parking lot (from Riverdale Rd, south on 700 W for 1 block, then left on 4600 S). The lot is on the right at the end of the road.

October

1 Tuesday 7:00 pm Board Meeting

Ogden Nature Center: All members welcome to attend. 966 West 12th Street, Ogden.

2 Wednesday 8:00/9:00 am Bird Walk

Ogden Nature Center: Meet at the Village Inn (322 W 12th Street) at 8:00 am for breakfast or at 9:00 am at the Nature Center (966 W 12th Street) for the walk.

9 Wednesday 8:00/9:00 am Bird Walk

Antelope Island Causeway and Fielding Garr Ranch: Meet at McDonald's (900 W Riverdale Rd) at 8:00 am for breakfast or at 8:30 am to carpool. Alternatively, meet the group at the parking lot near the entrance to the State Park at 9:00 am. Members of Great Salt Lake Audubon Chapter will meet us in the parking lot and join us on this trip. **This is a fee area.**

10 Thursday 5:30 pm Birdy Thursday Evening Walk

Bird Song and Rainbow Trail Areas: Meet at Rainbow Gardens parking lot (Valley Drive at the mouth of Ogden Canyon) at 5:30 pm. We'll walk one or both trails, depending on the group's preference and pace. Some uphill walking. Bring water. There will be an opportunity for socializing afterward. No dogs or children under 12 years old.

15 Tuesday 7:00 pm **WAS Meeting**
Ogden Nature Center with Rich Hansen: Meet at 7:00 pm at the Ogden Nature Center (966 W 12th Street). Utah boasts of its many man-made fresh water marshes that provide excellent habitat for breeding waterfowl, shorebirds, and other marsh-loving wildlife. Rich Hansen, Farmington Bay Wildlife Management Area Manager for the Utah Division of Wildlife, is responsible for maintaining this wetland habitat for maximum productivity of the myriad of animal species inhabiting it. Maintaining appropriate water levels in each unit in a desert environment with fluctuating water supplies is a difficult job. Come and bring a friend!

16 Wednesday 8:30/9:00 am **Bird Walk**
Kay's Creek Parkway: Meet at McDonald's (5745 S Harrison) at 8:30 am for breakfast or at 9:00 am to carpool.

19 Saturday 8:00/8:30 am **Field Trip**
Antelope Island and Causeway: Meet in the parking lot near Wendy's in Roy (the southeast corner of the 1900 W 5600 S intersection) at 8:00 am. Alternatively, if you live south of Roy, you may prefer to meet us at the kiosk parking lot on the east end of the Causeway at 8:30 am. Bring a lunch and water.

23 Wednesday 8:30/9:00 am **Bird Walk**
Little Mountain Railroad Trail: Meet at McDonald's (1838 W 2700 N, just east of Exit 349 on I-15) at 8:30 am for breakfast or at 9:00 am to carpool. We'll walk south along the railroad grading from the parking lot on 4000 N (This is the road leading west from Smith and Edward's.).

30 Wednesday 8:30/9:00 am **Bird Walk**
East Mountain Wilderness Park in Kaysville: Meet at McDonald's (5745 S Harrison) at 8:30 am for breakfast or at 9:00 am to carpool.

November

6 Wednesday 8:30/9:30 am **Bird Walk**
North Arm Pineview Reservoir: Meet at Dylan's (12th and Monroe) at 8:30 am for breakfast or at 9:30 am to carpool.

PLEASE RECYCLE

Ogden Nature Center has partnered with a local recycler and a large bin for newspaper recycling has been placed in the Newgate Mall parking lot west of the new Burlington store. Proceeds from this recycling effort will benefit the Nature Center.

WASATCH AUDUBON OUTDOOR ACTIVITY INFORMATION

"For over a century, Audubon has been a leading voice in encouraging conservation of precious habitat and wildlife for future generations."

LEAVE NO TRACE

Wasatch Audubon sponsors many outdoor activities. Our main goal, of course, is bird watching. We take our time and most walks are not strenuous. Water and binoculars are recommended equipment. Please do not bring dogs. They frighten the birds.

We meet for breakfast (optional) prior to our Weekly Wednesday Morning Walks. These walks usually last about 2 hours. All ages are welcome. Contact Paul Lombardi for more information at [801] 295-7738.

We meet for coffee or drinks (optional) following our Monthly Birdy Thursday Evening Walks. These walks usually last about 2 hours and are for ages 12 and up. Contact Susan Snyder for more information at naturescall@gmail.com or [801] 388-4201.

Saturday Field Trips are more rigorous, and we are often out until 3:00 to 5:00 pm. In addition to water and binoculars, bring a lunch and dress for changing weather. All ages are welcome. Contact Les Talbot for more information at [801] 589-2591.

Wasatch Audubon encourages conservation in the form of carpooling. When birding in remote areas, it is often necessary to carpool or caravan to keep the group together. On longer trips and/or trips to hard-to-find places, members use walkie talkies on frequency 11-22 to communicate between cars.

MEET A WAS OFFICER:

Katie McVey

Katie grew up in rural North Central Wisconsin and spent much of her childhood outdoors exploring. A love of nature led her to pursue a biology degree from Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. Katie's college summers were spent researching turkey vultures and working at Raptor Education Group Inc., a raptor education and rehabilitation center in Wisconsin. It was there that she began her life-long love of owls. Katie moved to Boise, Idaho where she investigated the diet and niche of burrowing owls in Southwestern Idaho and earned a Masters in Raptor Biology from Boise State University

Katie arrived in Utah in the fall of 2010 to work for the US Fish and Wildlife Service at the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge in Brigham City. Her work there includes environmental education, public outreach and special events, as well as biological work. When not at the Refuge, you can find Katie out exploring the great outdoors with her husband Kyle or gardening in her backyard.

PIGEON POOP

by Jay Hudson

*with help from Sir John Chardin's "Travels In Persia
1673-1677"*

Pigeon-keeping was a favorite pastime of Persians in the 1600's. Great coops were built all over the kingdom of Persia of "brick overlaid with plaster and lime." They were tall, round and looked like cut-down lighthouses. Cities could boast of thousands of these noisy dovecotes, but there were problems for non-Moslem coop-keepers. If you were a follower of Zoroaster (the pre Islamic monotheistic Persian religion) or of Buddha or even Christ, you could build but you had to pay a "Dung Tax." The tax was based on a "twelve pound weight" and went to the Shah (King). In the city of Ispahan, it is estimated that there were over three thousand great coops all built "for the sake of the

Dung, more than the sake of the breed of the pigeons." To boost the number of pigeons, tame birds would be sent out to bring in wild pigeons or to steal other tame birds thus increasing coop owners' dung supply.

Persia had wonderful apples (originated in present day Kazakhstan), 20 types of melons and grew wonderful grapes (raisins), dates, apricots, peaches, nectarines, pomegranates, pears, oranges, quinces, pistachios, cherries, almonds, figs and olives. I once took a photo of a smiling street vendor in Turkmenistan proudly holding up two large perfectly oblong-shaped watermelons for the camera. A substantial trade with Europe and China on the Silk Road developed. Even today in Iran (name changed from "Persia" in 1935), tables are set with copious amounts of these fruits originally made famous through the use of pigeon dung fertilizer albeit sans the Shaw's strange tax.

Another use of pigeon excrement is found in Morocco. Barbara and I had taken the night train to Fez, where we later wandered the Medina of the world's oldest (900 years) tannery. Great open vats set up in a still-working primitive production line were filled with dyes where sheep and goat hides were processed for the making of handbags, coats and shoes. A despicable, suffocating stench wafted across the area requiring us to sniff mint leaves to survive. The first vat contained dry, hard hides and was filled with diluted acidic pigeon excrement. Sometime, in the history of the tanning process, someone discovered this odd but effective method of softening hides. Two additional vats contained different vegetable dyes which colored the hides. The hides were then hung on lines to dry so that the craftsmen could then create the final products. Desperate men have made a difficult living wallowing in these Augean stinking pits for centuries. When an innocent buyer puts on a finely designed soft sheepskin coat, she probably has no idea of the 900 years' use of pigeon poop.

FIELD TRIP REPORT

Silver Lake Trip

July 20, 2013

by Les Talbot

No matter where we go for our flower walk, it is always inundated with people. Silver Lake was no exception. The drive up the canyon was slow due to bicyclists, runners, and traffic. Fortunately, there were enough parking spaces for our two vehicles.

Sharen kept a list of the flowers that we saw. She will get the list to me later. Although the lake was crowded with people, we did see the following fourteen bird species: American Robins, Cliff Swallows, Song Sparrows, Brewer’s Blackbirds, Mallard Ducks, White-crowned Sparrows, Tree Swallows, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Common Ravens, Pine Siskins, Yellow Warblers, MacGillivray’s Warblers, and a Brown-Headed Cowbird. We also heard a Lincoln Sparrow and a Steller’s Jay.

Even though we were at the top of the Canyon, it was 80 degrees during lunchtime. The water in the lake is the lowest that I have ever seen it. We had to walk quite a way west to even get to the water.

The trip was enjoyed by Carol and John Bellmon, Carma Dorney, Kris Purdy, Marily Gren, Marie Fulmer, Sharen Perry and I.



There are always flowers for those who want to see them

Henri Matisse

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

by Paul Lombardi

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

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| H. J. Anderson | Margie Kirshaw |
| E. Berchtold | Sally Lewis |
| Kristi Bloomfield | John Mijer |
| Beverly Devoy | Jean Morgan |
| Margaret M. Donley | Jerrye Stillman |
| Roger S. Dutson | Linda Stoddard |
| Emmanuel Erskine | Brittany Strickland |
| Carole Evans | Jay Thompson |
| Mae Garrett | Frank & Alma |
| Diana Gerwig-Dixon | Welde |
| Leah Graves | Beth-Ann Wymore |

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

Follow Wasatch Audubon Society on Facebook

Our Facebook page has upcoming field trip information and the ‘B3B’ – the best three birds viewed on each field trip. You can view this information without joining Facebook, but you won’t be able to participate in games and posts. Just go to the WAS website (<http://wasatchaudubon.org/>) and click on:





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

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 _____

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CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

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