



# The Mountain Chickadee

Newsletter of the Wasatch Audubon Society  
Volume 42, Number 4 ~ July/August 2023

## President's Corner

by John Bellmon

With this issue we are changing to an emailed newsletter. If there are any problems, please contact us so that we can correct them. The newsletter will be sent to everyone for whom we have an email address. If you know of someone who does not have email access and they do not receive a mailed copy, please contact us. This may take a little adjustment, but we hope that this transition can be implemented without any major problems. Thank you very much for your patience and understanding.

As we enter the summer season, please get out and view birds as much as possible. With all the migrants here and nesting, with new young already arrived or coming soon, there will be much to see. One of the really spectacular bird shows that we have in our area is the shorebird migration, which will begin in the latter part of July or the first part of August. The causeway to Antelope Island will be a wonderful place to witness this, along with refuges in this area. A special event will be the congregation of Wilson's Phalaropes that will stage on the Great Salt Lake to feed and store fat reserves for their flight to South America. It is estimated that 68% of all Wilson's Phalaropes breed in Utah.

They, along with others that will stop on their way, will number 500,000 or more. They will remain here in those numbers for about two weeks, depending on the weather and other conditions. The enormous numbers of these flocks are something to behold. If you have never seen this, I recommend that you do so!

Also, our hummingbird populations now raising their young will start their migration around the first of August, again, depending on the weather. So, make sure that you keep your hummingbird feeders clean and full. This year's young, along with the adults, will overload your feeders. Then, the Rufous Hummingbirds will head south through our area, and they will try to take over your hummingbird feeders from the summer breeding population. This is another one of our wildlife spectacles that you do not want to miss!

On 15 August, we will again have our annual pot-luck picnic at the Ogden Nature Center (see page 8). I encourage you to attend this enjoyable gathering. It is always fun to sit around and talk about birds and other outdoor activities that you have had during the spring and summer. A great time will be had by all.

So, the main message is, "Get out and go birding", and have fun during our summer season.

**Wasatch Audubon Society**

**Officers**

President	John Bellmon	801-444-3704
Vice President	Ben Johnson	801-231-7008
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Treasurer	Nancy Arnett	801-388-0637
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Bird Walks	Ben Johnson	801-231-7008
Historian	Ruth Davis	801-309-0425
Hospitality	Jeane Taylor	801-394-2813
Newsletter	Steve Aird	<a href="mailto:steven.d.aird@gmail.com">steven.d.aird@gmail.com</a>

**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 outdoors 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**

**Reconsidering Recycling**

**by Lynn Carroll**

Ogden City recently changed its curbside recycling program. Wanting to be a good citizen and environmentalist, I carefully studied what we should now place in our blue recycling bins. The changes are significant, and I got to thinking about whether it is an improvement. My conclusion is that it depends on your goals. Cities are usually trying to save landfill space and money.

The new arrangement is with Wasatch Integrated Waste Management District (WIWMD), which also serves Davis and Morgan Counties, so many of you already send your “recyclables” to them. What actually gets recycled is about the same at WIWMD, as with Ogden's former system.

- Aluminum cans, empty: the most valuable and easily recycled.
- Steel or iron items, mostly empty food cans
- Cardboard, must be clean and dry
- #1 and #2 plastics, empty, without lids

I’ve always been concerned about recycling containers. How “empty” do they have to be? If much water will be needed to rinse out a soup can or shampoo bottle, it may be better to throw it in the trash.

Under Ogden’s previous system, the county was trying to recycle paper, which only works with high-quality paper. Glossy paper in magazines and junk mail inclusions like address labels were not allowed. WIWMD deals with paper in a different way. It is

combined with non-recyclable plastics #4-#7 “for use as an engineered fuel.” That is, it is burned.

The mixture is sent to the cement kiln near Devil’s Slide in Weber Canyon. WIWMD and Holcim US, the cement plant owner, emphasize that this reduces the use of fossil fuels or other natural resources to make the cement. Burning the alternative fuel still puts carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, however, so it still exacerbates the climate crisis.

Both the plastics and cement industries are major greenhouse gas emitters. 7% of the world’s carbon dioxide emissions come from cement production. Plastic as fuel is slightly better than coal in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, but worse than natural gas.

Fossil fuel companies are counting on increased production of plastics to offset the falling demand for oil and gas for transportation. So they have been encouraging the idea that the problem of too much plastic in the world can be solved by incineration and they are calling this a form of recycling. A better way to solve the plastic problem is to drastically reduce its production and use.

Burning plastics releases all sorts of toxic substances, including dioxins and furans, cancer-causing chemicals, as well as lead, mercury, and fine particulates. Where there is inadequate regulation of the practice, this is a major public health problem. Holcim says in its Devil’s Slide fact sheet that it has “Ensured [that the plant] has the most effective technology available to maintain proper air quality.” I wonder whether this is adequate to keep toxins out of the environment.

Ogden’s new use of WIWMD means that I don’t have to open my junk mail. Less waste will go to landfills. Our residents can believe that they are recycling more plastics and feel good about that. On the other hand, the city is paying more to truck this waste farther. It’s not clear whether the program is any better for the planet.

### New and Rejoined Members (June, 2023)

Rachel Altmann  
 Arlene Andersen  
 Brian Bankhead  
 Nanci Byers  
 Linda Fallat  
 Terry Freeman  
 Julie Gardiner  
 Wynn Hansen  
 Mary Johnson  
 Anne H. Kwiatkowski  
 Michael Levesque  
 Monique MacCarthy  
 Mark Metzger  
 Georgia P Meyer  
 Rosa Parrilla  
 Laurie Spinks-Loevy  
 Dan Stallings  
 Lincoln Stone  
 Janice Ward

## July and August Bird Walks

### July walks begin at 7:00 a.m.

#### **July 12- Green Pond Trail near Snowbasin:**

Meet at the trailhead on Snowbasin Road just past milepost 2. **U, not level.**

#### **July 19- Great Salt Lake Nature Center,**

**Farmington:** Meet in the parking lot. 1157 S. Waterfowl Way (1100 W Glovers Lane) Farmington. **R P/U L B**

#### **July 26- Willard Bay:**

Meet at the Pilot Flying J Travel Center (600 W 750 N, Willard) in the parking lot, south end. Exit I-15 at Willard and go east. This is a fee area. **R P/U L B**

### August/September walks begin at 7:30 a.m.

#### **August 2- Riverdale Trail- South.**

Meet at the trailhead off Riverdale Road at 700 W. 4800 Weber River Dr, Riverdale, UT 84405. **R, P, L**

#### **August 9- Little Mountain Trail:**

Meet at the trail head located at 2000 W on 4000 N (west from Smith & Edwards). **U L**

#### **August 16- Fort Buenaventura River trail to**

**Kingfisher Loop:** Located on A Avenue in Ogden. Meet at the entrance to the park, walk the trail that goes along the river to Kingfisher Pond. **P L B**

#### **August 23- Great Salt Lake Nature Center,**

**Farmington:** Meet in the parking lot. 1157 S. Waterfowl Way (1100 W Glovers Lane) Farmington. **R P/U L B**

#### **August 30- Ogden Botanical Gardens**

**including Parkway.** 1750 Monroe Blvd, Ogden, UT 84401. **R P L B**

#### **September 6- Buffalo Ranches Trail.**

Meet at the corner of Ranch Rd. and Prairie View Dr. (residential neighborhood—park on street). We will cross the Legacy Highway dirt road construction and walk to the Buffalo Ranches ponds on the west side of the new highway. **U—rough surface, B, L**

## Naming the WAS Newsletter

by Jay Hudson

In 1982, the Wasatch Audubon Society's future Board of Directors was trying to decide upon a name for the society. They considered names of various shore birds, but Keith Evans suggested that because the organizational name mentioned the Wasatch Mountain Range, a montane bird might be appropriate, and he recommended the diminutive, adorable, and hyperactive mountain chickadee. That name appealed to everyone, and the newsletter became the *Mountain Chickadee*. The first artistic rendering was created by Judy Nelson.



Adult Mountain Chickadee (*Poecile gambeli*)  
Slavin Ranch, Spokane, Washington, 22 April 2019  
Photographer: Michael Woodruff  
Permission: Macaulay Library, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Although we mostly see black-capped chickadees here at lower elevations, Keith says that mountain chickadees occasionally visit his backyard feeders, probably just to remind us of our commitment.

(continued on next the page)

Chickadees have some unusual habits, especially when it comes to nesting. It's the female that has construction talent. The male assists with the supply chain by bringing small bark chips, moss, and bits of string.

Keith tells of times when he gathered bison fur at Antelope Island and made it available to the birds, who find its nest-building qualities to their liking. I once read that Mongolian larks collect fur for their nests directly from the backs of marmots.



Black-capped Chickadee gathering bison hair for nesting material. Photo by Keith Evans

**Note: We are warned to NOT offer lint from clothes dryers because of chemicals and synthetic materials that are not biodegradable.**

## Japanese Chickadees

by Steve Aird

When I accepted an invitation to serve as editor of the WAS newsletter, I knew nothing about it. Subsequently, I was delighted to discover the newsletter's name, the origin of which has been explained in the foregoing piece by Jay Hudson.

I grew up in the woodlands of suburban Maryland, where Carolina chickadees were daily visitors at my parents' bird feeders. I think that chickadees are loved by birdwatchers everywhere that these birds occur. Diminutive, hyperactive, bold, intelligent, and communicative, how could anyone not love them?

When my wife, Yayoi, and I moved to Nagano Prefecture, Japan, near the base of the northern Japan Alps, in September 2021, we were delighted to discover that two chickadees, the Japanese tit (shijukara) and the varied tit (yamagara) are abundant here. I built three bird houses and put up bird feeders.



Japanese Tit (*Parus minor*)  
Kumamoto, Kumamoto, Japan, 30 January 2016  
Photographer: Ta-Chih Chen  
Permission: Macaulay Library, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

The bird feeders are only 1.5 - 3 m from my desk, so I watch our visitors year round. This also allows me to keep monkeys (Japanese macaques) at bay. Most of you probably think that squirrels are a problem at your feeders! As one friend put it, "Very agile, and very intelligent are not qualities we look for in a garden pest."

## The Mountain Chickadee



Varied Tit (*Sittiparus varius*)  
Yoyogi Park, Shibuya Ward, Shibuya City, Tokyo, Japan,  
02 December 2017  
Photographer: Chris Maines  
Permission: Macaulay Library, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

In warm weather, shujukara prefer their natural foods, especially caterpillars and spiders and they stop coming to the feeder. In the winter they like sunflower seeds and the Audubon Society's woodpecker suet, which they greatly prefer to the High-Energy Suet, even though the latter features a chickadee on the package. When offered both types, they consume the woodpecker suet at about 4x the rate of the latter. Shujukara also love chunky peanut butter.

Yamagara prefer sunflower seeds to almost anything else, although their visits to the feeders taper off in late June once their chicks are fledged. They also take suet in cold weather, but interestingly, they utterly refuse to touch peanut butter for any reason.

When shujukara grab seeds from the feeders, they usually fly down into the shrubbery to hack them open. In contrast, yamagara tend to fly up into the branches of a nearby oak tree to do the same. Early on cold mornings, both chickadees "grab a seed and go." But when they are nearly satiated, they become corrupted by the abundance of seeds, often pulling out and tossing several seeds overboard before finding one that they like.

Frequently they land on a lower perch of the tube feeders, and toss several seeds at each perch as they hop upward from perch to perch, finally taking

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one to eat from the highest perch. Both species also pick up seeds that they tossed, but shujukara seem more comfortable feeding on the ground. This "wasteful" habit benefits oriental greenfinches, bramblings, and yellow-throated buntings, which are largely ground feeders.



Shujukara on the feeder crosspiece and the peanut butter feeder, while a brown-eared bulbul hovers badly in an attempt to steal peanut butter.

This spring, two of our birdhouses hosted shujukara and the third produced a brood of yamagara. When the four yamagara chicks reached adult size, their parents brought them to the feeders, and I was able to observe yamagara parenting in action. Many human parents are not as wise as these chickadees! As the adults hacked open the large sunflower seeds on the feeder pole's wooden hangers, one youngster sat in a bush several meters away, fluttering its wings, cheeping, and generally trying to act helpless. When that failed to garner the de-

sired attention, the young bird flew to the feeder hanger near the adult, and repeated the act. For its trouble, it got fed. The next day, the “helpless” act didn’t work as well. The adult ate its own seeds in the presence of the manipulative child, offering it only a single piece of a seed. On the third day, no more feeding. The kids were on their own.

The young birds knew where Mom and Dad got the seeds, and quickly managed it themselves. They also soon learned that pecking at seeds they could see through the plastic tube, didn’t work well. Retrieving a seed from a port, one young bird flew up to the wooden hanger, where it promptly stuffed the seed between its toes as Mom had done; however, this wasn’t as simple as it looked. On the first peck, the seed got loose and plunged 3.5 m to the ground, landing on a layer of sunflower seed shells. The young bird literally dove after it and was back on the perch with the seed less than 2 seconds later! The speed of its recovery spoke to both the bird’s visual acuity (It knew which of the many shells was the intact seed.) and its flying skill. A moment later, the seed escaped again, but this time the bird’s response was so rapid that it retrieved the seed in midair, before it hit the ground! If I had not seen it, I would not have believed it was possible. And this involved a bird that hasn’t been out of the nest more than several weeks. I wish I could learn new skills as quickly!

Once previously, I had seen an adult yamagara fly immediately beneath a roofed platform feeder, only to do a quick buttonhook so as to land on the tray on the opposite side - an instantaneous 180° turn! How do these birds manage the G-forces of these phenomenal direction changes?

I never tire of watching and listening to these diminutive neighbors, even when I am being chastised for taking too long in re-filling the feeders.

## Field Trip Report

A group of Wasatch Audubon members enjoyed some beautiful weather while exploring and birding the Donner/Mormon Trail on June 24th. They followed the trail from a campsite in Henefer to the mouth of Little Emigration Canyon. Dan and John narrated the history of the area as they traveled, and they stopped to read historical markers along the way. Some birding highlights included sightings of a group of common nighthawks, sandhill cranes, bald eagles, gray catbirds, and a yellow-breasted chat. An osprey family entertained them at East Canyon. The group also enjoyed observing a nursery of 6 baby magpies that were lightly supervised by an adult magpie. At Mormon Flats the group ate their picnic lunches while buzzed by a broad-tailed hummingbird.

## Future Field Trips

### 15 JULY, Saturday, 8:00 am

**Monte Cristo/Randolph:** Heading to higher elevation to beat the heat, we will search for high elevation species along SR 3. We will go on to the Woodruff area in hopes of seeing common nighthawks and black terns. There will be a little easy hiking. It will run into early afternoon, so bring lunch and water. Meet at the north end of smith’s (12<sup>th</sup> and Harrison) parking lot at 8:00 am to caravan. **Restrooms on the drive/minimal walking.**

### 19 AUGUST, Saturday, 8:00 am

**Ogden Valley:** Meet at Smith’s 12th and Harrison at 8:00, **OR** at Chris’ in Huntsville, at **8:20**. Wandering through Ogden Valley, we’ll be

hope to see Lewis' woodpeckers, ospreys and great horned owls. Bring lunch and water.

**Restrooms on the drive/minimal walking**

**Annual WAS Picnic**

There will be no meeting in July, but join WAS for the annual picnic at 6:30 p.m. on August 15<sup>th</sup>!

We'll gather on the lawn behind the visitor center at Ogden Nature Center. The grill will be fired up, so bring something to cook for yourself, and a potluck dish to share. Wasatch Audubon will provide plates and cutlery and napkins. There also will be a cooler of sodas and water. But feel free to bring any other beverages you might enjoy.



**Owl Pellets**

Thanks to all of you who collected owl pellets for me during the last school year. I was able to present my owl program in third, fourth, and fifth grade classes in three school districts. I never have enough owl pellets, so please keep them coming. The larger barn and great horned owl pellets are best. If you know of a good location to collect them, please give me a call.

Thanks again, and happy birding!  
Dennis Collins (801) 393-1115

**WAS Open Position – Treasurer**

Wasatch Audubon needs 1-2 hours of your time per month to fulfill Treasurer's duties: maintain a checking account and an Excel spreadsheet, provide a bi-monthly balance sheet to the Board members, pay a few bills, and file an IRS form, make deposits, mail correspondence to donors and members. Contact Nancy Arnett at 801-388-0637 or any Board member.

**Audubon Membership Application**

Membership in **Audubon** automatically enrolls you as a member of **Wasatch Audubon**. When you join, you will receive four issues of Audubon magazine and six issues of our chapter newsletter, *The Mountain Chickadee*, each year. To join as a new member with an introductory fee of \$20, please go to the following website:

[Audubon Membership](#)



**Wasatch Audubon Society Mountain Chickadee Subscription**

You can receive the *Mountain Chickadee* (6 issues) for just \$12, 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: \$12.00

My contribution to Wasatch Audubon: \_\_\_\_\_

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City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Send your check, payable to Wasatch Audubon, to:

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