



The Mountain Chickadee

Newsletter of the Wasatch Audubon Society
Volume 42, Number 6 ~ November/December

President's Message

by John Bellmon

As we enjoy this unbelievably colorful fall, we start to prepare for the coming winter. The Big Sit logged 37 species with 12 individuals participating. A big "thank you" to all those who came out to help on a beautiful day. We also completed our Bluebird Nest Box Trail cleanup on all four trails. Again, thank you to all who help in that effort. In the middle of November, we will again start the daily bird feeding at the Ogden Nature Center, with individuals filling the bird feeders daily on the nature trail at the center. December will bring us the Christmas Bird Count. Many winter birds will be coming into our area again. As the seasons change the birding changes a little also.

The Bluebird Nest Box project was again a success with almost all of our 130 nest boxes used, provided that they were not knocked down. There were just a few that were not used this year. Almost all were occupied by Mountain Bluebirds, House Wrens, or Tree Swallows. Some boxes had to be repaired and put back up. Some boxes may have to be relocated to different locations for better use and access. Thank you to Arnold Smith and his grandson for completing one route, to Jen Hitt for helping me to complete two other routes and to George Muller for helping me to complete the fourth.

The Big Sit was a success this year also thanks to the good group that came out on a wonderful day to help. 37 species of birds were sighted or heard and identified. I am grateful to Jen Hitt, Elsie Hitt,



A female mountain bluebird and one of this year's brood at a WAS nest box. Photo: Jen Hitt

Martha Ann Albertson, Jay and Lucy Stretch along with their daughter, husband and two children, George Muller, Lynn Carroll. This is always a fun event with pleasant weather.

During December we will again have our Christmas Bird Counts (CBC). The Christmas Bird Counts are an exciting time for winter birding. The areas are covered by different teams, and more are always welcome to help. The more sets of eyes you have, the more birds you will see. Please come out to help us with the counts. Our chapter sponsors five Christmas Bird Counts:

Saturday, Dec. 16, 7:00am, Ogden Christmas Bird Count. Meet at Denny's (take 21st Street to 1100 W., on the north side by the Flying J Plaza, Ogden) for

breakfast and to get your assignment. It is an all day trip, so bring water and lunch.

Tuesday, Dec. 19, 7:30/8:00am Morgan Christmas Bird Count. Meet at the Utah DWR (515 E. 5300 S., South Ogden) to carpool at 7:30. Or meet at Arnold Smith's house in Morgan, 796 N. 700 E., at 8:00am. There will be four to five teams depending on how many people can help. It is an all day trip so bring water and lunch.

Sunday, Dec. 24, Ogden Valley Christmas Bird Count. Contact Mike Hearell at 801-529-8693 or at utmarshrat@yahoo.com to receive route assignments or additional participation information.

Wednesday, Dec. 27, 9:00am, Bear River Christmas Bird Count. Meet at the Bear River Refuge Headquarters' parking lot at 9:00am. We will divide into three teams to cover different areas. It is an all day trip, so bring water and lunch.

Monday, Jan. 1, 8:00am, Antelope Island Christmas Bird Count. Meet in the parking lot at the entrance to the park. We will divide into teams to cover the area. It is an all day trip, so bring water and lunch.

Winter birding in area is extremely exciting, with winter birds that are not seen at other times of the year. There are winter populations of Bald Eagles that migrate from the eastern edge of the Rockies in Canada and the Rocky Mountain states north of us. These include winter raptors such as the Northern Rough-winged Hawk from its breeding area in the high Arctic. The Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, Red and White-winged Crossbills descend from higher mountains. Just dress for the weather and get out and enjoy the excellent winter birding that we have.

Wishing all a Great Thanksgiving, Happy Hanukkah, Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year!

John

Conservation Corner

Great Salt Lake Collaborative - Recommended Reading

by Lynn Carroll

If you read a Utah newspaper or listen to local news, you've surely been enlightened by stories from the Great Salt Lake Collaborative about the plight of Great Salt Lake (GSL). The GSL Collaborative is a "group of news, education and media organizations that have come together to better inform and engage the public about the crisis facing the Great Salt Lake, and what can be done to make a difference before it is too late," says their website. Again quoting that website, "You can always learn something new about the Great Salt Lake." As birders, we share a deep concern about this topic and can become more effective advocates by educating ourselves. That's why I recommend visiting GSLC's site, <https://greatsaltlakenews.org>.

I found it only recently, when my husband tipped me off to an item from the Collaborative that he had seen somewhere. Exploring, I discovered "Latest News" going back to May, "Newsletters" from Dec. 2022 to present, an anthology of writings about GSL, "Lake Facts," and more.

The item I had been seeking was "Ogden mayoral hopefuls discuss potential policy related to the Great Salt Lake." The Collaborative presented a set of 10 great questions to the Ogden and Salt Lake City mayoral candidates, which all answered in some detail. Whether you live in either of those cities, I think you will find both the questions and answers informative. I did. You might even pose similar questions to candidates in your locale (if voting hasn't started before you read this).

Audubon Council Update

Tidbits from the Utah Audubon Council Fall Meeting

by Lynn Carroll

The Utah Audubon Council (UAC) meets twice a year for the chapters to report what they have been doing, to share ideas, and to cooperate on big projects. We also hear from Audubon employees in Utah and our region (Audubon Rockies). There are currently five chapters in the state, Red Cliffs Audubon (RCA), Utah Lake Audubon Society, Great Salt Lake Audubon (GSLA), Wasatch Audubon Society (WAS), and Bridgerland Audubon Society (BAS). I represented WAS at the October 7 meeting. (John was at the Big Sit.) The following are some of the things mentioned during the 4.5 hour meeting that might be of general interest.

BAS told about an online tool for reporting dead or injured birds, called dBird. I checked it out and found this on the Birds Connect Seattle website: "[dBird.org](https://dbird.org) is an online crowd-sourcing data collection tool that provides a way for all of us to contribute to research on human-related bird mortality and injury." Although it can be used by individuals, BAS suggested that an organized effort by the chapters to promote it would provide more useful information.

Speaking of bird deaths, GSLA, Utah's largest chapter, has a Bird-Window Collision Working Group. Having made presentations to many organizations about the collision problem and solutions, they were ready to speak to the SLC Council and Planning Department, asking for support of bird-friendly glass and building materials. The Group is also working with the Eccles Wildlife Education Center in Farmington to treat problem windows in the building with Feather Friendly markers. They are installing some Tree Swallow boxes and will monitor to see whether this

strategy is effective in diverting swallows from the windows.

RCA announced that the next Red Cliffs Bird Fest at Greater Zion will be on April 25-27, 2024. <https://redcliffsbirdfest.com/> I had a great time when I went a couple of years ago.

BAS and GSLA and another group are collaborating on a project designed to connect students/youth "in the Great Salt Lake (GSL) watershed to their segment of it [and] promote understanding of the need to maintain a healthy GSL for birds and people." Entitled, *Speaking for the Birds of the Great Salt Lake-People, Puppets, and the Power of Story Telling*, the project includes making large finger puppets of birds, brine flies, and brine shrimp with materials provided to teachers and youth group leaders. A kick-off event planned for Saturday, November 11, on the state Capitol steps is called "Native and Youth Voices Honoring the Great Salt Lake."

Snowy Plovers nest on the south shore of GSL. The interior population of this species is thought to be declining, so Audubon's Gillmor Sanctuary and Saline Lakes personnel, helped by Tracy Aviary, initiated a pilot project monitoring the current breeding success at two sites known to be productive in the past. They completed 23 surveys from late March through August, documenting disturbance from humans and predators. They plan to ask for volunteers and provide training in order to expand the project.

[Brine fly_puppet.jpeg - Google Drive](#)



Snowy Plovers (Photo by Mick Thompson)

UAC's biggest undertaking has been to contract with a Policy Advocate (lobbyist) to represent our viewpoint at the Utah Legislature. We have had five people in that position over the years, but Steve Erickson has been at it the longest and has accomplished the most by far. He will be retiring at the end of this, his 14th year. The council formed a search committee, but no one has been found to replace him. In fact, they have concluded that it will take two people to replace him—a bill-tracker to follow the bills of interest as they move through the legislature, and the policy advocate to attend meetings, formulate strategy, and speak for us. For the upcoming session, we may be able to hire a bill-tracker, such as an experienced intern, or may rely on other conservation-oriented groups. UAC hasn't decided what actions to request of our members. We'll see how things work out this year with help from our friends and keep trying to find a policy advocate.

A Sad Story

by Jay Hudson

It was June 1, 1997, and our Audubon group was taking a bird walk up Wheeler Creek Canyon at the base of Pineview Dam. We were a couple hundred yards from the parking lot when I saw my first MacGillivray's Warbler. Of course, as a relative novice, I hadn't been the one to spot it. Someone pointed it out to me and the sighting was brief, but I did see its yellow underbelly, grayish head and partial eye ring. We didn't talk about where it was going, from whence it had come, or how often one is likely to see one. I added it to my budding life list and we continued up the canyon looking for other avian wonders. Just six months later in November, Barbara and I were being shown the birds at Audubon's Crooked Tree preserve in Belize, when another MacGillivray's was identified by Glenn, our guide. At the time, I didn't make the connection between Wheeler Creek and Crooked Tree.

On Labor Day, September 7, 2009, lying dead on our air conditioner, with tiny feet curled and eyes closed was my third MacGillivray's. Suddenly, it all came together. Who knew if the McGillivray's in Wheeler Canyon hadn't just arrived from Belize, or whether the McGillivray's at Crooked Tree hadn't just returned from Utah. Such things are marvelous to contemplate, but when I held the small dead form of such a seldom seen, beautiful bird in my hand in my own back yard, I felt a loss. This delicate greenish, long-distance flyer was just deprived of a trip to Belize by my window. I know that birds die by the millions each year, but this one hurt!

Upcoming Events

Field Trip

Saturday, 25 November, 8:00am Antelope Island

Meet in the parking lot before the gate. We will be visiting the birding hot spots on the island – the Causeway, Lady Finger Point, Garr Ranch. Bring lunch and water. This is a fee area. Restrooms available/minimal walking.

There will be no December field trip due to the Christmas bird counts.

Bird Walks

In December, Christmas Bird Counts will replace walks on the weeks in which both are scheduled.

Bird Walks start at 8:00 a.m.

November 8 - Bountiful Pond. Take the 500 South exit off Legacy Highway, turn west; then follow the frontage road around and back to the north. A pre-bird walk species search will be held. Meet in the parking lot. **R P/U L B**

November 15 - Bountiful Pond. Take the 500 South exit off Legacy Highway, turn west; then follow the frontage road around and back to the north. A pre-bird walk species search will be held. Meet in the parking lot. **R P/U L B**

November 22 - 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**

November 29 - South Ogden Nature Park. Meet at the trailhead for the nature walk. Parking for the trailhead is at 5981 Park Vista Dr., south of the Ogden Athletic Club. **B P/U M.**

December 6 - 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**

December 13 - Riverdale Trail South: Meet at the

trailhead off Riverdale Road at 700 West. **R P L B**

December 20 - Great Salt Lake Nature Center, Farmington: Meet in the parking lot. 1157 S. Waterfowl Way (1100 W Glovers Lane) Farmington. **R U L B**

December 27 - Great Salt Lake Nature Center, Farmington: Meet in the parking lot. 1157 S. Waterfowl Way (1100 W Glovers Lane) Farmington. **R U L B**

January 3 - Andy Adams Reservoir/Community Fishery: Gordon Avenue and 1750 East, Layton **U**

New / Rejoined Members (October, 2023)

Welcome to our new members, and welcome back to those who have joined again after an extended absence! We look forward to seeing you at a meeting or on a birding trip.

Maureen Davies

Tamara Dickemore

Ronald Gault

Marcus Hadlock

Cheryl Henley

Annette Marquardt

Kelly McMunigal

Vesta Okelley

Marcy Rizzi

Doug Threlkeld

Patricia Uhl

Wasatch Audubon Society		
Officers		
President	John Bellmon	801-444-3704
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Secretary	Sharen Perry	801-392-9554
Treasurer	Nancy Arnett	801-388-0637
Past President	Jay Stretch	801-721-9432
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2022/2023	Lynn Carroll	801-392-8216
2022/2023	George Muller	801-745-4035
2022/2023	Dan Johnston	801-645-8633
2023/2024	Abigail Johnson	
2023/2024	Leah Johnson	
2023/2024	Jen Hitt	801-540-5091
2023/2024	Susan Snyder	801-388-4201
Committee Chairpersons		
Conservation	Lynn Carroll	801-392-8216
Conservation	John Bellmon	801-444-3704
Education	Dennis Collins	801-393-1115
Feeder Projects	Laura Johnston	801-458-9558
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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	steven.d.aird@gmail.com

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>



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