



Newsletter of the Wasatch Audubon Society Volume 42, Number 5 ~ September/October 2023

President's Message

by John Bellmon

As we start a new chapter in the Wasatch Audubon Society with a digital newsletter, I want to offer a heartfelt thank you to Laura Johnston for being our newsletter editor for the last five years. Laura has been there for us through all of our ups and downs. She has done an excellent job, keeping us informed of current and future activities, and she did all this despite the constraints of producing a hardcopy newsletter on recycled paper, which could not accept color photos. She managed to get it printed in time to be mailed out to everyone by the first of the month. Laura has helped all of us during these years, especially, Dan, our president and acting president. In addition, for the last 12 years, Laura has been the WAS coordinator for the Winter Bird Feeding Program at the Ogden Nature Center. She organized a group of volunteers to fill the bird feeders daily and to be certain that there was bird feed available. So thank you very much, Laura, for being so dependable, and for all your many contributions.

For those who are not aware, the American Ornithological Society has revised its list of bird names. AOS has reclassified the Pacific-slope Flycatcher and the Cordilleran Flycatcher as a single species, the Western Flycatcher. This was the case about 30 years ago, and then they were split into two species. Because of this reclassification, some of you may have lost a bird on your life lists, as I did. The other modification that affects North American birders is that the name of the Northern Goshawk was changed to the American Goshawk. This was only a name change, so nobody lost any species; however, it reflects the results of research on these birds over many years.

I hope that you will be able to help support WAS in its annual fund-raising activity, the Big Sit. It is always a delightful time for all and an enjoyable way to raise funds.

The fall migration period is upon us again so please keep your outdoor lighting off, or at least pointed downward to help migrating birds that will soon be heading south for the winter.

Conservation Corner

Utah Audubon Council Supports New BLM Rule

by Lynn Carroll

Last March, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announced a proposed Public Lands Rule intended to "guide the balanced management of America's public lands for the benefit of current and future generations." It provides a framework for promoting conservation and restoration of lands that are increasingly subject to devastating wildfires, long droughts, and destructive floods. It puts "conservation on an equal footing with other uses, consistent with the BLM's multiple use and sustained yield mission." It creates a tool called a "conservation lease", whereby a specific tract of land may be leased for a specific period of time. In essence, an organization would be paying the government to protect or reclaim that piece of land.

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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

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During the comment period for the Public Lands Rule, Steve Erickson wrote a letter to the BLM on behalf of the Utah Audubon chapters supporting the new rule. He began, "Utah Audubon Council supports the proposed rule as a balanced approach to public lands management. We recognize that the Bureau has the authority under the Federal Lands Policy and Management Act to enact this rule, and consider it an appropriate and overdue modernization of policy." This is Steve's last year as our Policy Advocate. We'll miss him.

We are not alone in supporting the new rule. Roughly 90% of public comments were in favor. Yet Utah Representative John Curtis sponsored a bill this summer (H.R. 3397) that requires the BLM to withdraw the rule and forbids any similar future rule. The bill passed out of committee on a party-line vote and may pass the full House this fall.

The Salt Lake Tribune editorial on June 25 was strongly in favor of the Public Lands Rule. The Tribune asserted that "those who benefit from other major uses [of BLM lands]— specifically grazing livestock, mining or drilling for oil and gas and cutting timber — are waving the bloody shirt of federal overreach." The editorial explained conservation leases and noted, "The main difference between a conservation lease and a drilling lease, for example, would be that the leaseholders would leave the land in a condition that was much better than they found it, to the benefit of the American taxpayer" and added, "Such leases would not — despite the wailing of the extractive industry and Western political leaders - become de facto wilderness or otherwise shut off public access. And the rule specifically states that such conservation efforts could not push aside any existing grazing or drilling right."

There seems to be a good chance that the Senate version of HR 3397 won't pass, and hopefully the BLM will be able to implement the final form of this great rule.

Proliferation of Inland Ports Imperils Wetlands

by Lynn Carroll

On August 17 I sent out an "action alert" about an inland port project area that has been created in the Bear River Basin near Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge. It is called the Golden Spike Inland Port, although it is far from that historical site. It is adjacent to the Bear River Bay Important Bird Area and includes associated wetlands. Another concerning aspect of this development is proposed subsidy of an agricultural exporter that currently ships up to 140,000 tons of hay internationally in a year, an amount that consumes about 67 billion gallons of Utah water.

The next day, I learned that the Weber County Commission (Gage Froerer, Jim Harvey, and Sharon Bolos) has voted to create an inland port project starting with 903 acres of land just north of Ogden Bay WMA and south of the Union Pacific rail line that crosses Great Salt Lake farther west. They envision expanding it to 6000 acres in the future. What kind of development it will attract is unclear.

This information comes from an article in the August 18, 2023 *Salt Lake Tribune* by Leia Larsen. She notes that "most of the port projects proposed to date" include "some of the state's few remaining wetlands." The Center for Biological Diversity has been trying to map inland port projects and see which impact Great Salt Lakeassociated wetlands. These are: the original port in Salt Lake City's NW quadrant, one in Tooele, the sites in Box Elder Co referenced above, and a Spanish Fork project with wetlands on Utah Lake. Center staffer Deeda Seed is quoted, saying "The Weber County location is extremely disturbing." It is so close to where the Weber River estuary empties into GSL.

So what is going on? The author asked Utah Inland Port Authority (UIPA)Executive Director Ben Hart "why port projects keep popping up around wetlands." It's because UIPA is now focused on developments which can move goods by trains instead of trucks, and that's where the railroads are. Hart said that UIPA will encourage preservation of wetlands but can't require it.

Deeda Seed and Great Salt Lake Audubon president Heather Dove oppose any development in wetlands and especially at the edges of Great Salt Lake subsidized with tax money. I bet we all agree. The Tribune article discusses the benefits of wetlands to communities and the money state legislators have directed "to save the Great Salt Lake and its vital ecology. ... At the same time, the port authority is potentially funneling millions more to developments that could result in significant wetland degradation."

NOTE: If you did not receive the inland port action alert mentioned above, it's probably because you didn't provide your e-mail address to National Audubon or to us. Send it to me at <u>bradlynnc@comcast.net</u> for timely notices and action alerts. On the other hand, if you got it but don't want such action alerts, ask me to mark your address as "no political." You'll still get notices about WAS activities.

"Hummingbird" in any other language by Jay Hudson

As the Marines fought their way up Iwo Jima's Mt. Suribachi, to plant the American flag, they had to contend with cuts from the jagged lava, as well as the tenacious Japanese defenders. Among the dauntless Marines were Navajo "code talkers", who used portable "walkie talkies" and hard-wired radio phones to pass information about the battle to their

commanders. Having come from the Navajo reservations of Arizona, the code talkers were bilingual, but many considered English their second language. Many Japanese knew English well, but they could not understand the Navajos. Because the Navajo language has no written form, it was an ideal code, because it was impossible for any Japanese to have learned it. Navajo speech is further complicated by inflections, and on Iwo Jima, the code talkers used Navajo words to represent battlefield objects, so American communications remained secure.

The Navajo word for hummingbird, "da hir ti hi", meant nothing to the Japanese, but to the Navajo, it means hummingbird, and on Iwo Jima, they used it to signify fighter planes. Hummingbirds were well familiar to the Navajo for their small size and scrappy behavior when defending patches of flowers, so "da hir ti hi" made an apt metaphor for fighter planes.

Now when I go out on the deck to watch hummingbirds at the feeders, I imagine them as opposing enemy fighter aircraft desperately attempting to defend Mt. Suribachi. As a young man growing up during WWII, my bedroom ceiling was covered with hanging stick and paper airplanes, but it never occurred to me to think of them as hummingbirds.

"Top Gun" in Feathers by Jonathan I. Aird

Move over Tom Cruise and Top Gun. The most spectacular aerial dogfights belong to hummingbirds in early fall. These tiny, delicate, fascinating little birds turn into fighter aces armed with beaks and claws.

In Davis County, in late July through September, we witness post-breeding dispersal of hummingbirds. After raising their young, they move to find nectar- and insect-rich areas to double their weight before heading south to central and southern Mexico for the winter. My yard has become such a place. Over the past five years I have become obsessed with pollinator-scaping my yard. At this time of year, my yard is glowing with thousands of flowers designed to attract hummingbirds, and they come by the dozens. This creates the perfect stage for hummingbirds to reveal their dark sides.

The first bird to post up this year was a fullcolored male Black-Chinned Hummingbird. He located the perfect lookout on a dead twig of a scrub oak, from which he could supervise one of my four feeders and a 60-square-foot section of flowers. His head constantly swiveled from left to right at one-second intervals. Any other hummingbird who entered this zone immediately incurred his wrath. A Black-Chinned female zipped toward a feeder, but stopped twelve inches shy of the white plastic petals. She anticipated an attack and wanted to stay mobile in case another bird was on guard. The attack came quickly, before she could settle to drink and she exited rapidly. The male Black-Chin then returned to his post, to await another intruder on which to vent his rage. He remained top bird for nearly two weeks, but in this regard, he was fortunate that the Rufous Hummingbirds arrived later than normal this year.

If you have ever watched a Rufous Hummingbird, you could be forgiven for thinking that every chirp they utter is a swear word. Their fire-orange color matches their temperament. An overnight migration from northwestern Canada settled in my neighborhood, bringing over a dozen Rufous Hummingbirds into the yard. They scuffled for sectors of the yard and soon even areas as small as ten square feet were being patrolled for interlopers.

These tiny birds are bound and determined to defend their patches. Intruders are usually first warned with expletive-laced chirping. Verbal beakto-beak arguments escalate into violent skirmishes in which combatants cudgel each other with wings beating 53 times per second and stab, poke, and grab their opponents with their beaks. Sometimes the defenders weave and dodge repeatedly, forcing their opponents to hover within inches of the ground. On other occasions they drive subdominant birds to the safety of the nearest vegetation with a 10-foot U-shaped dive as a warning.

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The Mountain Chickadee



Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*). Madera Canyon, Santa Cruz County, Arizona. Photographer: John Serrao.

Occasionally, an unsuspecting interloper sipping nectar from a feeder is ripped from its perch by a defender that lands on its head or back. Infrequently the dogfights include as many as five birds fighting each other simultaneously or in quick succession. This year the fighting was so intense that even the sphynx moths had to hover discreetly, in order to avoid similar treatment.

One battle we witnessed over a patch of orange zauschneria flowers started with an aerial verbal argument, but quickly escalated into a violent clash of wings and beaks. While these two males jousted for top bird, they began to climb, soon reaching nearly 200 feet before one fled and the other gave chase. The chase continued, exiting the yard multiple times and returning to the airspace above it. Nearly five minutes later the victor returned to his watchtower on the horizontal bar of my kids' swing set.

Despite the energy wasted on this continual skirmishing, hummingbirds are convinced that flower wars are the best way to gain weight. By early September, I have observed that they prefer sipping flower nectar to guzzling sugar water at a feeder. Tubular flowers of every color contribute to the war zone by producing more nectar during this period. However, by October 1st, the contestants have moved south, and my yard is sadly quiet. Sitting outside is far less enjoyable. However, the return of cold weather grants me time to conceive new plant combinations to improve the theatre that will return in April. **Authors note:** Hummingbird feeders require a strict commitment to changing the nectar every 2-3 days in hot weather. Failure to clean your feeder can cause the death of the birds we love. Please take this commitment seriously if you want to attract these magnificent little creatures. Flowers on the other hand provide equal benefits without the strict maintenance routine.

Upcoming Events

Bird Walks

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**

September 13 - Farmington Bay Meet on 1325 W (entrance to Farmington Bay Waterfowl Management Area), not GSL Nature Center. **R U L**

September 20 - **Bountiful Pond.** Take the 500 South exit off Legacy Highway, turn west; then follow the frontage road around and back to the north. **R P/U L B**

September 27 - **Kay's Creek Trail.** Located at 2370 Canyon View Dr., Layton. Meet at the parking lot which can be reached off Hwy. 193. **P B L**

October 4 - **Croydon Lost Creek Area.** Meet at Croydon City Park. 1801 N 6900 E, Croydon, UT 84018

October 11 - GSL Shoreline Trail boardwalk- West Layton, 1002 South 3200 West. Take Gentile Street west and turn left on 3200 West, follow to the end of the road. Boardwalk trail. **R P/U L B**

October 18 - Beus Pond. 4240 Country Hills Drive, Ogden 84403. R P/U L B

October 25- Kaysville Ponds 920 S 50 W, Kaysville, UT 84037 on the Frontage Road. Meet in Botanical Center parking lot to walk the trail from there. **R P/ U M B**

November 1 - **Ogden Bay WMA.** Meet at the North Parking area off of 7500 West. 2357 S 7500 W St, Ogden, UT 84404.

Bird walks start at 7:30 a.m.

Lectures/Talks

September 19 - Join Wasatch Audubon as we hear from Dr. Blair Wolf, a Biology professor from the University of New Mexico who has done research on effects of extreme heat on bird populations. Meet in person in the education building at the Ogden Nature Center, or tune in via Zoom. Meeting starts at 7 p.m.

November 21 - Tentatively, we will hear from Rocky Mountain Power's Sherry Liguori, who will tell us about the company's bird conservation efforts. Meet in person at Ogden Nature Center, or tune in via Zoom. Meeting starts at 7 p.m.

December 19 - We will end the year by enjoying the annual Wasatch Audubon photo slideshow and a couple of prize drawings. Please email Susan Snyder photos of WAS outings or birds you have seen locally or on trips during 2023. Please only send photos taken during 2023. Digital (email) format only. Send them to Susan at <u>naturescall@gmail.com</u> with "WAS slide show" in the subject line.

Other Events

September 30 - Saturday 8:00 am field trip Blue Bird Nest Box Clean-out: It's time to clean out the nest boxes so they will be ready for the Blue Birds next spring. This is very important, as the birds will not use old nests. We will meet at Smith's (12th and Harrison Blvd., Ogden) at 8:00 am. We will divide into teams, if needed, and then head up to Monte Cristo. You need no skills, just enthusiasm! Wear hiking shoes and bring lunch and a drink, if wanted, for a picnic afterward. Leader-John This is an off-trail hike with some elevation.

October 7 - Saturday 4:00 am to 8:00 pm special event, The Big Sit!: Robert N. Hasenyager Nature

Reserve at Farmington Bay, just south off the western end of Glover Lane (in the parking lot of the Eccles Wildlife Education Center). Bring a chair, lunch, water and your binoculars. **R P L**

October 17 - at 7 p.m. - Join Wasatch Audubon member Susan Snyder for a live demonstration of The Art of Birding, a brief exploration of the craft of keeping track of birds and other natural phenomena in a nature journal. Bring your own pencil and notebook or paper to draw along with Susan and learn a few tips for diving deeper into your nature observations. Meeting will be in person at the Ogden Nature Center and also on Zoom.

Gillmor Sanctuary Fall Work Days

Come join the Gillmor Sanctuary staff to lend a helping hand and see birds of Great Salt Lake! When: Oct 13th, 14th, and 21st Time: 8:30 am - 12:30 pm Meeting Place: Volunteers will be notified upon registration, self-drive / carpool What to bring: Water, snacks, warm layers, boots, gardening/leather gloves, bug and sun protection, binoculars Ages: 12 years and up Difficulty: similar to garden work Sign up for one, two, or three days – it's free!

Registration and more information at:

https://act.audubon.org/a/gillmor-sanctuaryworkdays-fall-2023

WAS August Picnic

On August 22nd, a group of about 15 WAS members enjoyed a picnic at the Ogden Nature Center. It was warm, but we were able to find shade for our tables. We shared birding stories and had a good time just being with such nice people at the end of the summer. The grill got hot just in time and the potluck dishes were delicious – no one went hungry! A special yearly treat was Jeanette's berry cobbler, and almost every berry was meticulously stemmed by Brian! Thanks to everyone who came.

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Indoor Books for Outdoor People by Kristin Purdy

Non-fiction:

Shearwater: A Bird, an Ocean, and a Long Way Home, by Roger Morgan-Grenville

The natural history of the Manx Shearwater, one of the world's amazing winged travelers, followed over the course of a year, along with the author's personal connection to both nature and the shearwater through his Scottish grandmother. Part natural history; part memoir.

The Whale Warriors: The Battle at the Bottom of the World to save the Planet's Largest, by Peter Heller

For the crew of the eco-pirate ship the Farley Mowat, any day saving a whale is a good day to die. In *The Whale Warriors*, veteran adventure writer Peter Heller takes us on a hair-raising journey with a vigilante crew on their mission to stop illegal Japanese whaling in the stormy, remote seas off the forbidding shores of Antarctica. The Farley is the flagship of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society and captained by its founder, the radical environmental enforcer Paul Watson. The Japanese, who are hunting endangered whales in the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary, in violation of several international laws, know he means business: Watson has sunk eight whaling ships to the bottom of the sea.--Publisher

The Liars of Nature and the Nature of Liars: Cheating and Deception in the Living World, by Lixing Sun

Blending cutting-edge science with a wealth of illuminating examples—from microscopic organisms to highly intelligent birds and mammals—Lixing Sun shows how cheating in nature relies on two basic rules. One is lying, by which cheaters exploit honest messages in communication signals and use them to serve their own interests. The other is deceiving, by which cheaters exploit the biases and loopholes in the sensory systems of other creatures. Both techniques are employed to give creatures a survival or evolutionary advantage. --Publisher

Queer Ducks (and other animals): The Natural World of Animal Sexuality, by Eliot Schrefer In sharp and witty prose—aided by humorous comics from artist Jules Zuckerberg—Schrefer uses science, history, anthropology, and sociology to illustrate the diversity of sexual behavior in the animal world. Interviews with researchers in the field offer additional insights for readers and aspiring scientists. --Publisher

Look Big: And other Tips for Surviving Animal Encounters of all Kinds, by Rachel Levin

A humorous and helpful illustrated field guide to avoiding interactions--both dangerous and annoying--with 50 wild animals, including survival techniques, wildlife etiquette, and other essential advice. Packed with expert tips, fascinating animal facts, and harrowing true tales, **Look Big** is a musthave survival guide for outdoor, urban, and suburban adventurers alike. --Publisher

Myth-busting the Great Outdoors: What's True and What's Not, by Jamie Siebrase

Myth-busting tackles a wide range of common misconceptions plaguing **the** world of outdoor adventure, using science to debunk beliefs even longtime nature lovers (maybe you!) might erroneously take as fact. –Publisher

And for you fans of fiction: Small Game: A novel, by Blair Braverman

A gripping novel about a survival reality show gone wrong that leaves a group of strangers stranded in the northern wilds. What happens when the goal to survive for 6 weeks in the wild for a TV program is interrupted because the film crew ... just doesn't show up?

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The Last Ranger, by Peter Heller

Officer Ren Hopper is a Yellowstone park ranger, tasked with duties both mundane and thrilling: breaking up fights at campgrounds, saving tourists from moose attacks, and attempting to broker an uneasy peace between **the** wealthy vacationers who tromp around with cameras and the locals who want to carve out a meaningful living amid this western landscape. When Ren discovers his friend Hilly, a biologist and wolf expert, nearly dead in **the** steel jaws of a wolf trap, he hopes it's just an accident, but the small red ribbon tied to the stake makes him fairly certain that it wasn't. What begins as an inquiry into a known poacher soon opens into the discovery of a local group of ranchers who have formed an alliance at odds with both **the** park and with Ren's responsibility to protect it. --Publisher.

WAS is Adopting a Bird!



Wasatch Audubon Society is adopting a bird from the World Bird Sanctuary and we need your input! We have devised a poll so that WAS members can decide which bird to adopt. Here are the four candidates:

(Any resemblance to candidates in the 2024 presidential primary races is strictly coincidental.)





American Kestrel

American White Pelican





Barn Owl

Common Raven

To vote, click this link:: <u>https://</u> <u>www.surveymonkey.com/r/XXMC8BB</u> In the November-December newsletter, you will see which bird WAS is adopting, so keep a look out!

New / Rejoined Members (August, 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.

> Jayne Christiansen Ben Clouser Luella M. Demers Mary J. England Dawn Harold Sharon Hatch Ken Hurwitz John Kase Arlene Likens Melissa Lindholm Natalie Little Kathleen Lukken David Lundstrom Michael Maez Joshua Markel Jennifer Murphy Cecilia Nackowski Lynette Olney **Diana** Price Caleb Runyon Christina Steele Susan Vanderpool Terrance Waiss Don Watts



Owl Pellets

Thanks to all of you ho 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 s 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: <u>Audubon Membership</u>



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!

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