



# The Mountain Chickadee

Newsletter of the Wasatch Audubon Society  
Volume 43, Number 4 ~ July - August 2024

## President's Message

by John Bellmon

Summer has finally come to northern Utah. With above average snow fall last winter, we are again looking forward to some rise in the water level in the Great Salt Lake. We also hope for a summer without extreme weather, which could be headed our way.

Summer bird populations should be raising their young when you receive this newsletter. Your backyards, parks, and hills should be alive with singing songbirds, accompanied closely by their young, begging for food from mom and dad. Some of their colors are amazing and their songs are wonderful.

This is the time to make sure that your bird feeders are clean and in good repair for all of this year's new birds. A supply of fresh bird seed is also best for these new birds. They really enhance the yard and home. Make sure that your hummingbird feeders are supplied with fresh hummingbird solution (4 parts water to 1 part sugar is best).

One of the really spectacular bird shows 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 local wildlife refuges (Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, Ogden Bay Waterfowl Management Area, Farmington Bay Waterfowl Management Area, Lee Creek Natural Area). This special event will include a congregation of Wilson's Phalaropes that will stage on the

Great Salt Lake to feed and increase fat reserves before their flight to South America. There is a very good article about this in the Spring, 2024 issue of Audubon magazine. It is estimated that 68% of all Wilson's Phalarope breed in Utah. They, along with others, will stop on their migration south, and they will number 500,000 or more. They will remain here in those numbers for about two weeks, depending on the weather and other conditions. These enormous flocks are something to behold. If you have never seen them, I recommend that you get out to the lake in a late afternoon during this staging time. When they take flight, the sky is filled with phalarope/shorebird wings.

In addition, our hummingbird populations are now raising their young and will start their migration around the first of August, depending on the weather. So be certain that you keep your hummingbird feeders clean and full. This year's young along with the adults will overload your feeders. When the Rufous Hummingbirds pass south through our area, they will try to take over the hummingbird feeders from the summer breeding population. This is another of our wildlife spectacles that you do not want to miss.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of August, we will again have our annual pot-luck picnic at the Ogden Nature Center. I encourage you to attend this enjoyable gathering. It is always fun to sit around and talk about birds and the summer's outdoor activities at this event.

See you on the birding trail!

## Conservation Corner

### West Weber Inland Port Is Official

by Lynn Carroll

On May 20, the Utah Inland Port Authority (UIPA) board voted to approve the creation of the West Weber Project Area (WWPA) and adopted the WWPA plan. Thus, was born one of Utah's largest Inland Ports, at roughly 9000 acres. In the "listening session" that took place prior to the UIPA board meeting, assurances were given regarding the types of businesses that will be attracted, how wetlands will be treated, and how much pollution may result. Whether you believe them or not, you may shrug and think, "It's too late to do anything now." Actually, this is the time to begin holding the Weber County government and the port authority accountable. Will their actions match their words?

Regarding environmental questions, the answers were essentially, "we care, and we'll follow the law." So, when it comes to wetlands, a landowner proposing a development must determine whether there are "jurisdictional wetlands" on the property and if so, consult the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers about their options. UIPA is designating 3% of the project area tax differential for wetland mitigation, including "water purchases, land easements for natural buffer zones, wetland characterization", as well as "restoration, establishment, enhancement, or preservation" mandated by the Corps. UIPA won't support a project that can't get a permit from the Corps, but what about wet areas that act like wetlands biologically but don't meet the latest criteria? We could ask the county to discourage such a development if we knew about it.

A buffer zone for the Ogden Bay WMA is written into the WWPA plan: "Areas of the Weber County Project Area that border state waterfowl management areas shall have a minimum of a 600-foot buffer." A new Weber

County ordinance provides for a buffer of 300 feet from the high water line on each side of the Weber River. Another stipulation in the WWPA plan is that "Weber County will create an advisory board composed of administrative staff, property owners, and project area stakeholders that shall serve to make recommendations about the administration, finances, and governance of the project area to the Port Authority Staff and Board." According to county staff, this committee will vet development proposals to be certain that they conform to the Western Weber General Plan.

One sort of assurance concerning air pollution comes from it being a "nonattainment" area. We were told that for this reason, all developments will have to use filtration to avoid releasing pollutants into the air. Of course, that doesn't decrease pollution by vehicles.

It's easy to believe the Weber County planners who say that they don't want to have the sort of development we associate with a port, i.e., warehouses. They're looking for the sort of industry that requires skilled workers who will be paid good wages. They'll be asking developers to cooperate in setting aside a corridor for future mass transit. They've mentioned creating a "renewable energy hub," whatever that means. UIPA's plan says preferred industries are: advanced manufacturing, aerospace and defense, **distribution and logistics, data centers**, and renewable energy. The boldface is for those that I think are the worst.

Making a difference for wildlife, GSL, and county residents will require following planning meetings and commissioner work sessions (in person or online), asking questions, and working with others to plan responses. If you would help, let me know ([bradlynncc@comcast.net](mailto:bradlynncc@comcast.net)).

## A Trip To See Crossbills

by Dan Johnston

I led a small group of birders to Thompson Flats Campground in Idaho in June. Our goal was to see a Cassin's Crossbill. This is not a guaranteed sighting, but this determined group did see a group of Crossbills! As on most birding trips, we saw a lot of other species along the way.

After leaving the gas station called The Middle of Nowhere (the sign actually says that), which was not open yet, we saw two nests of Burrowing Owls, one of seven and one of five. We also saw Short Eared Owls that were performing an aerial display and a Swainson's Hawk being harassed by Blackbirds. Other species that we sighted included Sage Thrashers, Horned Larks and Vesper Sparrows. We were serenaded by Western Meadowlarks along the way.

We continued to Thompson Flat Campground to find the gate locked due to snow on the road. So, we parked and hiked into the campground. Here we saw the small flock of Crossbills. We also saw a Red-Naped Sapsucker, Williamson's Sapsucker, and Olive-Sided Flycatcher. The Violet Green Swallows overhead gave us an air show. It was a great birding day!



Tree Swallow nesting at GSL Nature Center on 18 May 2024. Credit: Benjamin A. Johnson

## An East Canyon Evening Encounter with Common Nighthawks

by Lynn Carroll

When I learned that Great Salt Lake Audubon's 40<sup>th</sup> Basin and Range seminar in early June wasn't full, I decided to go. It took place in the group campground at the south inlet to East Canyon Reservoir. If you've never been to one of these, you've missed a wonderful learning experience. The chapter finds folks who are very knowledgeable about a variety of natural history topics and enjoy sharing. Westin Smith was one of them this year. Participants can choose among topics for 3-hr. classes, two on Saturday and one on Sunday.

I arrived Friday evening around 8:15. Putting up my tent, I noticed birds calling and flying back and forth overhead. I stopped for a good look and recognized that these largish, dark birds with a white slash part-way down each wing were nighthawks. Other campers watching them identified these as Common Nighthawks, saying that Lessers, the other species in Utah, are only found farther south. Lesser Nighthawks are smaller and usually fly lower. The white bar on their wings is closer to the wingtips, although that's hard to make out. Our birds were flying both high and low, sometimes only a few feet above us, mouths open to catch insects. This was repeated the next evening, although we didn't see as many, as the evening program continued until dark. Someone told me that Westin had said that these birds may have nests at the top of the steep canyon wall, and that they come down to the reservoir to feed.

Back at home, I decided to find out more about this seldom-seen bird. I was surprised that Common Nighthawks actually have a wide range across North America, breeding in all lower 48 states and much of Canada. So why have I only seen them a handful of times? Well, they are only here for a brief breeding season,



Common Nighthawk. Credit: Gary L. Clark

arriving in late May, breeding in June and July, and taking off as early as August, as soon as insects become less abundant. They are most active at dawn and dusk, so camping out is the most common situation in which they'd be seen, but that must be in the right sort of habitat—grasslands, open forest, beaches, sagebrush, and most importantly, buggy! Their diet consists of insects of all sizes from gnats to grasshoppers. When nighthawks are roosting or on a nest, they are so well camouflaged that you can rarely see them even when you know where to look. Many of you have had that experience on a WAS field trip that stopped in a Randolph park where they roost.

Males establish territories and court females using a diving display flight with wings flexed so that wind rushes through the primary feathers, creating a "boom call." Nighthawks are ground nesters, simply laying two eggs on a flat surface, often in a patch of gravel where their mottled eggs are camouflaged. In urban areas of the East and Midwest, these birds often use flat, gravel-covered roofs as nest sites, but this sort of rooftop is disappearing. Male birds sometimes stick around and help incubate the eggs, in which case the rate of success is increased.

The mother nighthawk stays on the nest with the chicks to keep them at a safe temperature. Like Killdeer, the female will get off the nest

and feign a broken wing to draw predators away from the nest. Frequent or lengthy disturbances leave newly hatched chicks exposed to the weather. The first couple of days, when they can't even walk to shelter, are the most dangerous part of their lives.

Adult nighthawks are extraordinarily heat-tolerant. They cool themselves by opening their wide mouths and panting. In periods of inclement weather (too hot or cold, or when insects aren't flying), they can enter torpor, in which they lower their metabolic rate, like short-term hibernation. Even so, heat waves have killed them in some cases.

Common Nighthawks winter in South America. Because they catch their insect meals on the wing, they can eat as they migrate. They gather from all over the continent into large flocks in the central U.S., where they are often seen gathered around light sources that attract insects. They use the Mississippi flyway for their southward trip of up to 6,200 miles. During migration they make stops in farmland, river valleys, marshes, etc. Not much is known about their southern homes.

Worldwide, aerial insectivores (including bats) are declining faster than any other group. That's why we're hearing "Protect insects to protect birds."

Sources: [allaboutbirds.org](http://allaboutbirds.org); The Hidden Lives of Common Nighthawks with Gretchen Newberry; and <https://nationalzoo.si.edu/news/mysteries-common-nighthawk-migration-unlocked-using-gps-tracking>



Common Nighthawk. Credit: Andy Reago & Chrissy McClarren



## Youth Corner

by Abigail and Leah Johnson

Recently our family traveled to Yellowstone National Park. It is a beautiful place with abundant wildlife. While we were there, we saw lots. Here are some of the highlights!

We loved seeing a Mama Grizzly Bear with three cubs, right off the road, about 10 yards away.



We were able to see Wolves in the Lamar Valley, and they had at least two pups. We enjoyed seeing a golden eagle feeding one of its babies.

Watching at least six baby coyotes roughhousing and playing right off the road was cool. We also observed a coyote hunting in the brush.

We saw a herd of Big Horn Sheep on the mountain side. We saw a red fox up close wandering in the parking lot of a picnic area.



There was a male moose on the trail in front of us on a hike, and we had to wait for him to move off the trail before proceeding on our hike.



We saw a Mama Black Bear with two cubs playing. We observed many bison with their calves, and even stopped for a Mama feeding her calf in the middle of the road!

Observing a Trumpeter Swan on a pond near the road was special and was a good set up for pictures.



Perhaps the best duck sighting of the trip was a male and two female Harlequin Ducks!

Seeing the beautiful wildlife at Yellowstone National Park was such a treat. We recommend going to Yellowstone to see the wildlife and of course, the birds! Going to Yellowstone was a memorable experience and if you ever have the chance to go, be prepared for bison stopping traffic on the roads! Keep birding and make sure to come back to the Youth Corner in the next issue!



## June Field Trip Report

by Dan Johnston

Our annual trip from Henefer to Mormon Flats was a successful birding outing and an informative review of some Utah history. Seven of us made the journey and saw some species we were anticipating in this area. The highlight was two Bald Eagle nests which included three eaglets, ready to fly, and two adults. We also saw two adult Ospreys and one juvenile on a nest at East Canyon. Other species we saw included Common Nighthawk, Bobolink, and Wilson's Snipe. A special visual treat was an abundance of Mountain Bluebirds flashing their beautiful color in the sunlight.

## Upcoming Events

### WAS Annual Picnic

There will be no meeting in July, but join WAS for the annual picnic at 6:30pm on August 20th at Ogden Nature Center, at 966 W 12th St.. We'll gather on the lawn behind the visitor 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, cutlery and napkins. There also will be a cooler of sodas and water. But feel free to bring any other beverages you might enjoy.



Ogden Nature Center

## Field Trips

**13 July, Saturday, 7:30 am, Monte Cristo/Woodruff.** Heading to higher elevation to beat the heat, we will search for high elevation species along SR39. We will go on to Woodruff area in hopes of seeing Common Nighthawks and Black Terns, and maybe Dusky Grouse. There will be a little easy hiking into early afternoon, so bring a light lunch and water. Meet at North end of Smith's parking lot (12th and Harrison) at 7:30 am to caravan. Accessibility: Mostly by car, restroom stops along the way.

### AUGUST

**17 August, Saturday, 8:00 am, Utah Pioneers/Bear River Massacre Site (north-northwest of Preston, Idaho):** We will meet Darren Parry, of the Northwest Band of Shoshone, to explore the site and look for birds. As this is a first, there are no target birds – we will just be surprised. Bring a light lunch and water. Meet at Denny's on 21<sup>st</sup> St. in the parking lot at 8:00 to caravan. R P/U L



## Bird Walks

July 10 - **GSL Nature Center**

**7:00 AM** Breakfast at Dylan's in Kaysville, 185 N. Main St., Kaysville

**8:00 AM** Meet in the parking lot. 1157 S. Waterfowl Way (1100 W Glovers Lane) Farmington. **R U L B**

July 17 - **Kay's Creek Trail**

**7:00 AM** Breakfast at Ramblin Roads, 1765 E. Skyline Dr., South Ogden

**8:00 AM** Meet at trailhead located at 2721 N 2125 E, Layton, UT 84040. Meet at the parking lot which can be reached off Hwy. 193. **P M/L**

July 24- **Pioneer Day. NO BIRD WALK**July 31 - **Beus Pond**

**7:00 AM** Breakfast at Ramblin Roads, 1765 E. Skyline Dr., South Ogden

**8:00 AM** 4240 Country Hills Drive, Ogden 84403. **R P/U L B**

August 7 - **Ogden Botanical Gardens and Parkway**

**7:00 AM** Breakfast at Dylan's at the corner of 12th South and Monroe, Ogden

**8:00 AM** Meet in front of Ogden Botanical Park, 1750 Monroe Blvd. **R P L B**

August 14 - **Bountiful Pond**

**7:00 AM** Breakfast Dylan's in Kaysville, 185 N. Main St., Kaysville

**8:00 AM** Take the 500 South exit off Legacy Highway, turn west; then follow the frontage road around and back to the north. Meet in the parking lot. **R P/U L B**

August 21 - **GSL Shoreline Trail boardwalk-West Layton**

**7:00 AM** Breakfast at Warren's Drive In, 1778 S. 1000 W., Syracuse

**8:00 AM** Meet at 1002 South 3200 West. Take Gentile Street west and turn left on 3200 West, follow to the end of the road. **R P/U L B**



Western Grebes along the Buffalo Ranches Trail on 18 May 2024. Credit: Benjamin A. Johnson.

August 28 - **Antelope Island Causeway (this is a fee area)**

**7:00 AM** Breakfast at Warren's Drive In, 1778 S. 1000 W., Syracuse

**8:00 AM** Meet at the parking lot at the toll

September 4 - **Antelope Island Causeway (this is a fee area)**

**7:00 AM** Breakfast at Warren's Drive In, 1778 S. 1000 W., Syracuse

**8:00 AM** Meet at the parking lot at the toll booth

**Accessibility Codes for walks and trips**

**R** - Restrooms available

**P** - Paved trail    **U** - Unpaved trail

**P/U** - Combination

**L** - Level trail    **M** - Moderately level trail

**B** - benches available



White-Faced Ibis at Farmington Bay on 17 June 2024. Credit: Benjamin A. Johnson.

## Wasatch Audubon Society

### Officers

President	John Bellmon	801-814-7544
Vice President	Jen Hitt	801-540-5091
Secretary	Sharen Perry	801-392-9554
Treasurer	Jay Stretch	801-721-9432
Past President	Jay Stretch	801-721-9432

### Board

2024/2025	Lynn Carroll	801-392-8216
2024/2025	George Muller	801-745-4035
2024/2025	Dan Johnston	801-645-8633
2023/2024	Abigail Johnson	
2023/2024	Leah Johnson	
2023/2024	Laura Johnston	801-458-9558
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
Field Trips	Dan Johnston	801-645-8633
Bird Walks	Ben Johnson	801-231-7008
Membership	Lynn Carroll	801-392-8216
Programs	Susan Snyder	801-388-4201
Historian	Ruth Davis	801-309-0425
Publicity	Arnold Smith	801-829-3383
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. Visit our website at: <http://www.wasatchaudubon.org>

## New / Rejoined Members (March, 2024)

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

Karl Ebling  
Steven Hall  
Bruce McWhorter  
Christine Monroe  
Susan Parkinson  
Joyce Peters  
Richard Shaw  
Allen Telford  
Nancy Wright



Male Northern Harrier, Buffalo Ranches Trail, 18 May 2024. Credit: Benjamin A. Johnson.



## Owl Pellets

Thanks to all who collected owl pellets 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