



The Mountain Chickadee

Newsletter of the Wasatch Audubon Society
Volume 43, Number 2 ~ March - April 2024

President's Message

by John Bellmon

I hope that everyone is having a great winter with our crazy Utah weather. Birding has been good this year with some rare visitors showing up in our area. I hope that you were able to get out to see some of them. Spring is just around the corner and all the migrants will be showing up soon. Please prepare for their coming. During the Spring Migration please do not use outdoor lighting that illuminates the sky. This disorients songbirds, which migrate mostly at night. Reduced artificial illumination is very important to ensure their survival.

We just ended our Great Backyard Bird Count. This is the world's largest wildlife survey. At the last review of information, 253 countries participated, 284,000 checklists were submitted, and 7,769 species were counted. For further updates on the counts, you can go to the National Audubon or Cornell Lab of Ornithology web sites. Again, [a big thank you](#) to all who participated in this important bird survey event.

The Christmas Bird Counts that we sponsored also went well. At Bear River Refuge 13 observers saw 50 species. The Ogden CBC recorded 87 species with 24 observers. Twelve observers in the Morgan CBC saw 61 species. The Ogden Valley CBC went well also, as did the Antelope Island CBC, in which 18 observers spotted 55 species. It is always great to see familiar winter birds as well as

unexpected migrants, such as the Rough-legged Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, Common Grackle, Canyon Wren, and Blue Jay. Many thanks to everyone who helped with our Christmas Bird Counts. You make it work!

We now have Wasatch Audubon Hats for sale at \$20.00 each. These are adjustable baseball caps with our chapter patch on the front, and they look very good. Hats off to George Muller, of our board of directors, who organized this fund raiser for our chapter. Just let me know if you would like one. I usually have some with me.

I wish everyone a great Spring with wonderful times out birding during the spring migration. Take care, stay safe and good birding.

Conservation Corner

Opposed to a West Weber Inland Port

by Lynn Carroll

On January 2, 2024, the Weber County Commissioners met about creation of an "inland port" in western Weber County. They heard public comments, asked staff to elaborate on the plan, then voted in favor of a resolution that says in part:

"WHEREAS, the Commission finds that Weber County residents can enjoy tremendous benefits from an inland port in the Proposed

Area, including the creation of new jobs, boosting the local economy, access to state and federal resources, and assisting with the development of the West Weber Industrial District and Renewable Energy Hub; and

WHEREAS, the Commission wishes to partner with the Utah Inland Port Authority to create a long-term plan for the Proposed Area and develop the Proposed Area into an inland port.

...

"... the Commission consents to the Utah Inland Port Authority including the Proposed Area in a project area plan."

The land area included in this resolution is almost ten times more than the commission approved last fall. As you may know, the Proposed Area occupies much of the land between the Harold Crane Waterfowl Management Area and the Ogden Bay WMA. The full resolution is available at the beginning, and maps are at the end of this site:

[G8 Resolution Requesting UIPA Adopt a Project Area 1-2-24.pdf \(webercountyutah.gov\)](#)

Almost all of the public comments expressed concerns about loss of wetlands, loss of wildlife habitat, air pollution from truck traffic, negative impacts to Great Salt Lake, etc., and asked for delay of the vote (because there hadn't been enough time to understand the proposal) or "no" votes. The public was asked to stay to hear the rest of the meeting, during which the Commissioners 'splained that we were needlessly alarmed.

The Utah Inland Port Authority (UIPA) will meet on March 26 at 3 pm and probably discuss the West Weber port. The location is TBA, but probably Ogden or SLC.

It is unclear whether letters to the Weber County Commissioners or the UIPA board would make any difference. Nonetheless, I will list a few of the statements that were made about the port and my responses to them.

- *Everyone is worried about the Great Salt Lake, but by bringing infrastructure like sewer to the area, the port will send more water out to the Lake, where it's needed.*

No, the water is needed in the wetlands that are an essential part of the GSL ecosystem. Water held in wetlands is shaded by vegetation, so it doesn't evaporate as quickly as water out in the open lake. In contrast, expanses of pavement heat up and will evaporate water falling there on warm days.

- *The core area of the proposed port has very little wetland.*

They must be talking about the uplands at Little Mountain. Not so long ago, over half of the surrounding area within the port boundaries was wetland. With extended drought they diminished, and it became easier to drain the water from these wetlands. What remains is all the more precious. As long as they aren't filled in, they will keep providing benefits of flood control and replenishing groundwater in wet years such as this one. They can catch and hold some of the dust blowing off of dry lakebed, partially protecting our health.

- *With the inland port, you're actually going to have a pretty significant financial source that goes back to protect wetlands.*

He's talking about what happens when a landowner wants to fill in wetlands. They are often required to pay to "mitigate" the loss

by creating or rehabilitating about ten times as much wetland area. Such mitigation is rarely as good as what was lost. The lake needs wetlands on its shores, but where will there be enough shoreline available, when so much is being developed?

- *The county general plan included industrial development of the area "for years," so you could have objected sooner.*

Maybe so, but I viewed a public presentation about the County General Plan from 2022, just before the latest one was adopted. While mention was made of some industrial development, the only maps that were shown and discussed were the residential areas.

- *By using railroads, the inland ports will reduce pollution overall because trucks are worse.*

I'm not sure whether to believe this, as so many of the UIPA's statements are unbelievable.

- *All of the land in the port area is private property, which can be developed whether it is part of a port or not.*

This is true, but would it?

Help Ogden Nature Center with Bird Window Strike Surveys

by Maya Pendleton

Ogden Nature Center Staff Ecologist

Bird strikes are one of the leading causes of bird mortality worldwide, behind outside cats. Migration is a particularly dangerous time for birds as many of them are making journeys through the night.

The Ogden Nature Center (ONC) experiences bird window strikes, and we need to document

this to apply for funding to retrofit windows with bird-safe materials. This project also will be conducted at the Weber State University campus by a student intern, making this part of a larger, more meaningful conservation project with hopes of growing bird-friendly initiatives across the city.

We are looking for a volunteer or volunteers to conduct bird window-strike surveys around the ONC education building and visitors center to collect the data needed for this project.

A single volunteer will need to commit to 6 weeks of surveys on non-consecutive days, three times a week over peak migration in the spring (March-April). If more than one volunteer applies, so that no one person has to commit the needed amount of time, the surveys will need to be done exactly the same way by all parties. All surveys must be done in the morning for a total of 18 survey days.

Buildings need to be walked around, and if evidence of a window strike is found (dead bird, prints on the windows), the volunteer will fill out an incident sheet, take pictures, collect birds, and freeze them (at ONC) for Weber State University collections, and report findings. If a stunned bird is found, the volunteer will take action to rehabilitate the bird on-site.

This survey will need to be completed again in the fall, using the same methodology, for another 6 weeks in September-October, for a total of 18 survey days in the fall. The WSU study also will be conducted in the fall.

Surveys are not expected to take longer than an hour each visit. However, there may be a requirement to climb a ladder to get a view of some of ONC building overhangs. Birds can strike high windows and not fall to the ground because of the overhangs. ONC will provide the ladder.

If the project and grant are successful, ONC will install UV tape on all windows and repeat

spring and fall surveys a year later to determine the effectiveness of retrofits.

For more information, or to volunteer, contact Maya Pendleton

mpendleton@ogdennaturecenter.org

Thinking Outside the Box: Chunky Peanut Butter and the Hiyodori Wars

by Steve Aird

Birds in mixed flocks not only share habitats, but often have similar food requirements; therefore, they pay close attention to activities of associated species in order to survive. The Northern Japan Alps are home to at least four chickadee species, two of which are abundant in Azumino, Nagano Prefecture at moderate elevation. Behaviorally, the Japanese tits (shujukara) and varied tits (yamagara) are quite similar in some regards, but not others. Both species are very intelligent, but the shujukara are the adventurous ones. They are always the first to explore new bird feeders and food sources.

When I first put up a pair of Droll Yankees tube feeders full of sunflower seeds, the shujukara quickly discovered them. They were also the first to try a suet feeder and a peanut butter feeder (an 8-cm log hung vertically with 30-mm holes drilled into it, into which peanut butter can be stuffed). The yamagara soon followed suit, up to a point. They love sunflower seeds more than any other food, and they will take suet occasionally. But peanut butter, they have steadfastly refused to touch for the past three winters, despite the fact that I must have close to 30 shujukara coming to it.

Warbling White-eyes (mejiro), diminutive bright olive-green birds with a lemon-yellow throat patch and bright white eye rings, are predominantly nectar feeders in warm weather. However, after watching shujukara eat

peanut butter, mejiro have also developed a great love of it. (So far, I have refrained from enhancing it with jelly! That might push nectar feeders completely over the edge.) Mejiro have a habit of exploring potential new nectar sources, so this investigative behavior may not be so surprising for them. There are now at least 6-8 Mejiro coming to the peanut butter feeder.

To my surprise, one day this month, a yamagara zoomed onto the peanut butter feeder, took a quick, miniscule peck, and rocketed back into the woods. I could just imagine its thinking, "Oh gross! I knew that stuff would be disgusting!" When this bird failed to return the next day, that seemed to confirm my assessment. However, to my surprise, on the third day, it was back, and this time it hung on the feeder, packing away a surprisingly large quantity of peanut butter over several minutes. So far, I am not aware that any other yamagara has adopted this habit, but in most un-Japanese fashion, this bird was clearly thinking outside the accepted yamagara box.

With longer-lived animals, such as Japanese macaques, new behaviors can potentially spread through the entire population, and perhaps eventually, species-wide. Young macaques observed human bathers at an outdoor hot spring (onsen) here in Nagano Prefecture, and imitated them. Pretty soon the entire troop began doing it. That was the end of human bathing at the onsen, but tourism to watch bathing monkeys soon far outstripped the original onsen patronage. You can watch the macaques here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0hShN4Qb0s>

But what about shorter-lived birds such as chickadees? Turnover among small birds is so high that it is hard to say whether such behaviors will become widespread. This year, it seemed that we had almost no returning birds that were familiar with our feeders. How to interpret this, I am not certain.

Brown-eared bulbul (hiyodori) are uniformly

gray, robin-sized birds with a brown patch on each side of the face. They do not care for seeds; nonetheless, they watch other birds carefully and they are diabolically intelligent. One hiyodori decided to try peanut butter, since the shijukara obviously like it. That is when the trouble started. The feeder was hung 3.5 meters above the ground, which made it a relatively easy target for hiyodori. The hiyodori could not land on it as the smaller birds did, but with great effort, it could hover clumsily like an ungainly hummingbird, just long enough to grab some peanut butter with its long beak. No effort on my part succeeded in driving it away for long. Worse still, by means I do not understand, it told all its friends.

The hiyodori adapted their tactics, landing on the house roof so that I could not see them, and then launching themselves at the feeder for a quick grab, before flying off into the woods to bolt their ill-gotten gain and to smack their beaks. Nothing I attempted succeeded in dissuading them. Because hiyodori are skittish birds, I moved the peanut feeder directly in front of my window, figuring that my near presence would deter them. It didn't. I had underestimated the strength of their addiction to the brown, gooey stuff, and had failed to understand that there is nothing that they are not willing to risk in order to get a beakful. Since imported Skippy Chunky peanut butter costs about \$7 for a jar the size of your fist, and since a single hiyodori can consume a awful lot of it, something had to be done.

I hastily made a cage for the peanut butter feeder out of green chicken wire. That upset the hiyodori plans, but the hiyodori soon discovered that if they landed on the cage, it would swing in the opposite direction, allowing them to make a quick grab at a peanut butter port on the near side, since the feeder continued to hang straight down. I adapted by tying the peanut butter feeder to the cage, so that if the cage shifted sideways under the weight of a hiyodori, the peanut butter feeder moved with it. However the cage had no bot-

tom, and the enterprising hiyodori soon found that they could fly in along the house, below my field of view, land on the ground, and then flap and claw their way up into the cage. Attaching a bottom to the cage put a stop to that.

The hiyodori, sometimes sit in a nearby oak tree or on the bird feeder hanger, peering down at the peanut butter feeder, first with one eye, and then the other, in what is clearly an avian reconnaissance mission. The chicken wire was too soft and the hiyodori bent it downward slightly by landing on the lid. By this means they can sometimes grab a little peanut butter from the top ports. It isn't efficient, but occasionally it works, and that is all it takes to encourage them. However, it puts them squarely in my field of view, so now when I am home, they zoom in and land, and the first thing they do is look in the window to see if I am watching. If I am, they take off immediately. Now I am designing a new cage of heavy, rigid, plastic mesh. It is larger in diameter so that hiyodori will not be able to reach the ports from any angle. I just hope they do not learn how to use tin snips!

In the interim, I think a name change is in order for these feathered pests, and since I detest non-descriptive common names for birds, I recommend "Peanut Butter-Eared Bulbul."



Brown-eared Bulbul. Photo: Birds of the World

Report on the Annual Morgan County Bald Eagle Trip, February 24

by John Bellmon

The Bald Eagle Trip encountered beautiful weather and warm temperatures, but few Bald Eagles. The reservoirs were completely frozen, so the eagles couldn't fish there. We saw 11 Bald and 8 Golden Eagles. This was the lowest numbers that we have seen in over 40 years of doing this field trip. There were 11 individuals that came out for the day of birding, with a total of 16 different species seen. We hope that next year the numbers will improve.

Upcoming Events

Celebrate Earth Day

April 20 - Ogden Nature Center

Enjoy earth-friendly exhibitors, demonstrations, entertainment, food, nature crafts, and enjoyable activities. Explore the trails and learn what you can do to improve the health of the planet. See ogdennaturecenter.org for more information.

Lectures

March 19 - Laura Western, the Ogden Nature Center's new Executive Director, will introduce herself to Audubon members and will talk about what's new at the Center. The meeting will start at 7 p.m. and will be in a hybrid format. Participants can meet us in the L. S. Peery, Education Building at the nature center, or tune in via Zoom.

April 16 - Lisa Thompson, of the Natural History Museum of Utah, will come to the nature center in person to talk about NHMU's new book, "Wild Wasatch Front," which discusses, exploring the wild areas in and around the Salt Lake area. Meeting will start at 7 p.m. and be in a hybrid format. Participants can meet us in the L. S. Peery, education building at the nature center, or tune in via Zoom.

Great Salt Lake Bird Festival

May 16-19

Information on registration and tickets is now available. Go to the website at:

daviscountyutah.gov/greatsaltlakebirdfest

to register and get details on presenters, field trips, workshops and more.



Long-billed Curlew. Photo: All about Birds

Gillmor Sanctuary Spring Work Days

Join Gillmor Sanctuary staff to lend a helping hand on projects that improve bird habitat. See birds of Great Salt Lake!

April 19 - 20

8:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Meeting Place: Notified upon registration, self-drive / carpool

What to bring: Water, snacks, warm layers, boots, gardening/leather gloves, bug and sun protection, binoculars

Age group: 12 years and up

Difficulty: similar to garden work

Sign up for one or two days – it's free!

Registration and more information at: <https://buff.ly/3SvSsWc>

Red Cliffs Bird Fest

April 25-27 - St. George, Utah

This is a unique opportunity to learn about birds who live in a variety of environments - desert, high altitude, Colorado Plateau, riparian, urban parks – all in one beautiful setting. Sign up for trips and events and learn from exhibits and speakers. Wasatch Audubon is pleased that

Susan Snyder, WAS Board Member and Program Director, is the featured artist at this year's Fest and will teach a nature journaling class. Her approach to art and nature makes both accessible to all and her teaching skills draw her students into the creative process. To get information or register go to redcliffsbirdfest.com.

Field Trips

March 23 - Antelope Island

8:00 a.m.

Meet at the parking lot before the gate. We will bird the Causeway, north end, and Garr Ranch, looking for shorebirds, Rock Wren, Borrowing Owl and Great Horned Owl. Mostly done in vehicles. Take lunch and water.

Accessibility: **R** Leader-John/Dan

April 20 - Lek and Loon Trip

6:00am field trip

Meet at DWR office, 515 E 5300 S (Adams Ave.) in South Ogden. We will caravan to the lek south of Henefer to observe the grouse displaying from inside our vehicles. Target birds: Greater Sage Grouse, Bald Eagle, Common Loon, American Dipper. Take lunch and water. Accessibility: **Minimal walking, stop for restrooms.** Leader John/Dan

Bird Walks

March 13- Great Salt Lake Nature Center, Farmington.

8:00 a.m. Breakfast at Dylan's, 185 North Main Street in Kaysville

9:00 a.m. Meet in the parking lot. 1157 S. Waterfowl Way (1100 W Glovers Lane) Farmington. **R U L B**

March 20- Antelope Island Causeway.

8:00 a.m. Breakfast at Warren's Drive Inn, 1778 South 1000 West Syracuse

9:00 a.m. Meet at the parking lot at the toll booth. **R**

March 27 - Riverdale Trail North.

8:00 a.m. Meet at Moore's Family Restaurant 3558 Wall Ave Ogden

9:00 a.m. Meet at the trailhead next to the Kayak Park, off Riverdale Road at 700 W, 4300 South, Riverdale, UT 84405 **R, P, L**

April 3- Ogden Cemetery.

8:00 a.m. Meet for breakfast at Dylan's, 981 12th Street in Ogden

9:00 a.m. Meet at 1875 Monroe Blvd. Ogden **P/U L**

April 10- Beus Pond.

8:00 a.m. Meet for breakfast at Ramblin Roads 1765 East Skyline Drive, South Ogden

9:00 a.m. Meet at 4240 Country Hills Drive, Ogden 84403. **R P/U L B**

April 17- Riverdale Trail South.

8:00 a.m. Meet at Moore's Family Restaurant 3558 Wall Ave Ogden

9:00 a.m. Meet at the trailhead off Riverdale Road at 700 W. 4800 Weber River Dr, Riverdale, UT 84405 **R, P, L**

April 24- Buffalo Ranches Pond. Note earlier start time, different meeting place for walk.

7:00 a.m. Breakfast at Dylan's, 185 North Main Street in Kaysville

8:00 a.m. NOTE different meeting place! Meet at large white (ball) radar station by the GSL Nature Center, walking to the Ranches ponds from there (over 3 miles round trip).

May 1- Kaysville Ponds. Note earlier start time

7:00 a.m. Breakfast at Dylan's, 185 North Main Street in Kaysville

8:00 a.m. Meet at 920 S 50 W, Kaysville, UT 84037 on the Frontage Road (50 West). Meet in the Botanical Center parking lot to walk the trail from there. **P/U M B**

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

Wasatch Audubon Society

Officers

President	John Bellmon	801-444-3704
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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

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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
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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. 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.

- Doug Auerbach
- Ann Barker
- Nancy Behnken
- Cindy Boss
- Lennit Callen
- Thomas Carpenter
- Nathan Cederlof
- Denise Checketts
- Sheryl Cox
- Dion Dostaler
- Debbie Fetters
- Don Gardner
- Jody Giddings
- Brian Glissmeyer
- Nancy Guild
- Jan Hamer
- Tracey Hanzelka
- Kathryn Hardy
- John Ludema
- Ann M. Miller
- Valerie Millette
- Janene Muller
- Joy Pashley
- Charles Pitchforth
- Ernie Schneider
- Cathy Stavast
- Pamela S. Vasquez
- Sandra Weinstock



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