



The Mountain Chickadee

Newsletter of the Wasatch Audubon Society
Volume 43, Number 6 ~ November - December 2024

President's Message

by John Bellmon

As we have another very beautiful fall in our mountains and valleys, the breath of winter starts to tease us. Some of our fall activities have gone very well. The Big Sit was a success again this year for the 11th time. There were 47 species sighted by the 15 members who were there on a wonderful day. A big "thank you" to all of those who came out to help with this fundraiser for our chapter. The Bluebird Nest Box Trail cleanup was completed on all four trails (with sad news on one trail, details in a later article). Again, a big "thank you" to all who came out to help with this 40-year project hosted by our chapter. I hope that you enjoy the Mountain Bluebirds on Monte Cristo, since that is what it is all about. With winter coming, we will again start filling bird feeders daily at the Ogden Nature Center in mid-November. If you would like to volunteer for a day of the week to do this, please contact us. It really is very enjoyable to see the winter birds. In December we will again host five Christmas Bird Counts in our area. We need as many people as possible to help with this effort. It is always fun to see the winter birds coming into our area each year.

Our officers and Board of Directors have decided to have chapter meetings every other month. This is because of the difficulty in finding individuals to present good programs and the low attendance at these meetings at the Ogden Nature Center. We will hold the meetings on even-numbered

months and meetings will still be available on Zoom for those who cannot attend in person. This schedule will still include our annual WAS picnic in August at the Ogden Nature Center. I hope that everyone will support our efforts to better serve our membership.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your support and for the help that you have given me while I served as your president for a fourth time. The chapter that was started by a few dedicated bird conservation volunteers 43 years ago has grown to the chapter that we have today. This is all due to everyone's helping in whatever way they could. Let's continue to grow into an even better birding group in the greater Ogden area. It has been one of the real delights of my life to see this chapter grow and accomplish all that it does in our community. Please support the new officers just as you have supported me and many others in the past. Again, thank you all very, very much. I look forward to seeing you on the birding trail always.

John Bellmon

Conservation Corner**Utah Needs More Clean Energy ASAP****by Lynn Carroll**

Recent floods, fires, and hurricanes make it clear that global warming is costing our country many billions of dollars annually. The rapid melting occurring at the poles foretells worse to come. We know that climate change is harming many bird species, so reducing the drivers of climate change on a global scale is essential.

Here in Utah, progress toward clean electricity generation has been achingly slow. I watched a presentation¹ by Logan Mitchell, climate scientist and energy analyst for Utah Clean Energy. He made the case that faster investment in renewable energy resources will not only be good environmentally, but also financially. Rocky Mountain Power (RMP), which supplies electricity to about 81% of Utah households, has requested an 18% increase in electricity rates in 2025.

As a public utility, RMP is entitled to recoup its costs, and the Public Service Commission (PSC) decides what rates are fair. Based on information that RMP filed with the PSC, Dr. Mitchell showed that the power company's recent cost increases had two major sources: Fossil fuel price instability and effects of climate change.

Coal and natural gas still fuel over half of Utah's electricity generation². In spite of local production of natural gas, its price is volatile because of global events, such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Coal is subject to mining accidents, mechanical failures, transport interruptions, and supply chain issues. A fire in the Lila Canyon coal mine burned throughout 2023, which reduced the local coal supply by 25%, so RMP's two coal-burning plants generated less electricity, so more power had to be purchased at high market prices. That

led to about 10% higher power bills for RMP customers starting this July, not through a rate increase, but with a line item called the Energy Balancing Account. The company expects that to stay in place instead of a 2026 rate increase.

Climate change is the other driver of cost increases for our power. Heat waves increase peak power prices, strong winter storms damage infrastructure, and inexpensive hydro-electric generation is reduced by drought. Most expensive is the increased risk of wildfires. Insurance premiums soar, and the utility must undertake costly changes to operations, such as burying power lines or managing vegetation.

Power costs can be stabilized by adding more clean "renewable" resources, including wind, solar, and geothermal, which have zero fuel costs. RMP credits its investment in more wind power for helping keep its cost increase down, along with a new transmission line and participating in the western regional market to add more low-cost, clean energy. Speeding up the addition of renewables now that they are much cheaper will help Utah residents and businesses. At the same time, air pollution and CO₂ emissions can be reduced by phasing out coal and gas earlier.

The majority of UT state legislators have concerns that without coal plants, there won't be enough "dispatchable" generation, that can be ramped up and down according to demands on the electrical grid. Battery storage will help a lot with this and has become increasingly affordable. About 70% of Utah's current power generation is dispatchable or firm (constantly available), while about 25-30% would be enough. More dispatchable geothermal energy is coming, especially if "enhanced geothermal," which uses fracking without the toxic chemicals, proves to be as safe as E.P.A. asserts.

In summary:

- Fuel prices and climate change are driving increasing electricity costs.
- Zero-fuel cost resources (wind, solar, geothermal) and regional markets save money, reduce emissions, and support a healthier climate and healthy communities.
- Building new clean energy, transmission, and storage resources is the best path for Utah's future.

Citizens in our communities need to understand these facts. Please spread the word, especially to your state legislators before the January, 2025 start of the legislative session. Comments submitted to the PSC and letters to the editor would be helpful too.

¹ Birds 'n Bites, Utah's Renewables Backslide & Getting Back on Track, archived at greatsaltlakeaudubon.org

² [U.S. Energy Information Administration - EIA - Independent Statistics and Analysis](#)

September Field Trip Report – Bluebird Box Clean Out

by Laura Johnston



Photo: Cornell University

Hard working bird lovers cleaned out and repaired or replaced more than 100 Bluebird boxes in the mountains this fall. Many boxes on one of the four routes were gone or had major

damage due to work on a new fence project. Fortunately, most of the Blue Birds had fledged before the damage. On another route, three new boxes (made by Dallin Henderson) were installed. The other two routes were in pretty good condition after a few repairs. This is a labor of love – some heavy hiking and light work in the mountains in the beautiful season of fall. The occasional sighting of a Mountain Bluebird was a bonus.

The Big Sit

By Jen Hitt

Saturday, October 12 was our annual Big Sit fundraiser. The Big Sit is a yearly event promoted each year by Bird Watcher's Digest. Each year, groups from around the world participate by setting up a circle with a 17 foot diameter, and sitting in that location to count birds. Only birds seen from within that circle can be counted.

The weather for our big sit was perfect: a cool morning gave way to a sunny, warm afternoon and evening. We had a great turnout with over 15 members sitting and counting throughout the day. We ended the day with 47 bird species counted. Highlights include a barn owl, a short eared owl, an osprey, a Say's phoebe and a belted kingfisher.

Wasatch Audubon holds the Big Sit annually as our primary fundraiser. Funds received from this event are used to continue our education, bird feeder, and Youth Impact of Ogden programs.



A late Palm Warbler. Credit: Colin Maguire. Photographed on 15 October 2024 at Buffalo Ranches Pond.

Youth Corner

by Abigail Johnson

Welcome back to the Youth Corner! We just had our Big Sit on October 12th. I love watching birds in their habitats. We saw so many birds and had lots of fun enjoying nature. Among the many species we were able to observe were an Osprey, a Belted Kingfisher, and a Cooper's Hawk. We were even able to see a coyote running across the marshes!

This reminded me to check on our adopted Barn Owl named Goblin. The Wasatch Audubon Society adopted Goblin just a few months ago.

I have adopted two animals myself. I have an orangutan named Mary. My grandma bought me Mary from The Orangutan Project. It was a great Birthday present. My grandma also bought me a Manatee named Millie. I got her from the Save the Manatee Club. I am lucky enough to get updates about Millie from the Newsletter the Club sends out. A lot of times Millie is the star of the articles. I find out how Millie is doing about every other month. It always makes me excited to learn new things about my two pets. These are two of my favorite animals. It was a gift that I could not be grateful enough for. This is a fantastic way to have a pet without having to take care of a pet.



As this holiday season approaches, I have been thinking of what I want for Christmas. I realized that having adopted pets was a really enjoyable part of my year. Therefore, for parents or grandparents with children or grandchildren who like animals, adopting a bird or some other animal is an easy and educational present. Not only is it entertaining, but there is also no cleaning up for you to do. So, do not wait. Go adopt a bird right now!

Happy Holidays from the Youth Corner!



Feeding Birds at Ogden Nature Center – Help Needed

by Laura Johnston

WAS is happy to be able to support birds anywhere, but the ONC is a special place to us and birds. From November through mid-March bird lovers fill a few feeders scattered around the Center's grounds. Seed and seed bags are easily accessible in the yurt to the east of the Education Center. We have an almost full crew of feeders, but there are still a couple of opportunities available. Winter is a peaceful time at ONC, with winter birds abundant. It's truly a beautiful experience, especially after a snowfall. In person training is provided. If you are interested, call Laura Johnston, 801-458-9558.

Membership Meeting Change

by Laura Johnston

Wasatch Audubon Society is making a change in its membership meeting schedule. Beginning in 2025, the monthly membership meeting will be held every other month, still on the third Tuesday and still at the Ogden nature Center or via Zoom. This new schedule will begin in February 2025. Going forward from that date, meeting months will be April, June, August, October and December. We will meet as planned on the third Tuesday in November 2024 and December 2024.

Upcoming Events

Wasatch Audubon Christmas Bird Counts

Saturday, 14 December, 7:00 am, Ogden Christmas Bird Count

Meet at Denny's (take 21st Street to 1100 West, on the north side by the Flying J Plaza, Ogden) for breakfast and to get your assignment. This is an all-day trip, so bring water and lunch.

Tuesday, 17 December, 7:30/8:00 am, Morgan Christmas Bird Count

Meet at the Utah DWR (515 E. 5300 S., South Ogden) to carpool at 7:30. Or meet Weston Smith at McDonald's in Morgan, 297 E. 300 N., at 8:00am. There will be four to five teams depending on how many people can help. This is an all-day trip so bring water and lunch.

Thursday, 19 December, 9:00 am, 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 the different areas. This is an all-day trip, so bring water and lunch.

Tuesday 24 December, Ogden Valley Christmas Bird Count

Contact Mike Hearell at 801-529-8693 or at utmarshrat@yahoo.com to receive a route assignment or additional participation information.

Wednesday, 1 January, 8:00 am, 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.

Field Trips

23 November, Saturday, 8:00 am, 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.

November / December Meetings and Talks

November 19, 2024. WAS members Dan Johnston and George Muller are going to tell us about birding in the jungles of Costa Rica. Meeting starts at 7 PM on zoom and in person at the Ogden Nature Center L.S. Peery Education Building.

December 17, 2024. Annual WAS slideshow. Please email any photos of birding trips, birds, or Wasatch Audubon outings from 2024 to Susan Snyder, naturescall@gmail.com. Deadline for sending is Dec. 10. Meeting is at 7 p.m. Dec. 17 on zoom and in person at the Ogden Nature Center L.S. Peery Education Building.



Long-eared Owl. Credit: Colin Maguire. Bountiful Pond. From October 1, 2024

Bird Walks

November 13 - **Riverdale Trail- South.**

7:00 AM Meet for breakfast at Moore's Family Restaurant 3558 Wall Ave Ogden

8:00 AM Meet at the trailhead off Riverdale Road at 700 W. 4800 Weber River Dr, Riverdale, UT 84405 **R, P, L**

November 20 - **Ogden Bay WMA- North Parking Lot.**

7:00 AM Meet for breakfast at Ramblin Roads, 1720 W. 12th St., Ogden

8:30 AM Meet at Ogden Bay WMA, North Parking Lot off of 7500 West (take 900 South to 7500 West) **L, U**

November 27 - **Beus and Glasmann Ponds- Ogden.**

7:00 AM Meet for breakfast at Ramblin Roads, 1765 E. Skyline Dr., South Ogden

8:00 AM Meet at Beus Pond parking lot. 240 Country Hills Drive, Ogden 84403. **R P/U L B**

December 4- **South Ogden Nature Park.**

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

8:00 AM 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 11 - Bountiful Pond.

7:00 AM Breakfast at Ramblin Roads, 544 W. 400 N., Bountiful

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**

December 18 - No bird walk due to Christmas bird counts.

December 25 - Christmas Day, no Bird Walk

January 1 - No bird walk.

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

New/Rejoined Members (October, 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.

Bryce Anaya	Abby McCall
Calan Bachman	Glenn McRae
Heather Ball	Amber Mecham
Luis Barenas	Hunter Meredith
Kelli Barkema	Tamara Merry
Patricia Becnel	Jefferey Montague
Keelee Bennett	Cory Nelson
James Bertagnolli	Nathan Nelson
Adam Blundell	Alex Orchard
Marianne Cook	Katie Ortiz
Angelina Frank	Zach Oveson
Melissa Gerber	Megan Palmer
Amanda Gibb	Pamela Paulson
Cody Gil	Brody Peel
Cherie Gilmore	Alan Perez
Sheila Gosset	John Perez
Nancy Graham	Hal Reeder
Courtney Haddick	Rachel Robinson
Kenyon Hansen	Amy Rodriguez
Vincent Hansen	Sloan Russell
Cindy Herl	Amber Schiavino
Skye Holmes	Rebecca Sessions
Mary Hopson	Bailey Sjoblom
Jennilyn Keinsley	Katarina Tasic
Lindsay Kely	Mark Thomas
Brad Lewis	Frank Torvik
Jenada Jill Longhurst	Tasha Valls
Elissa Lucero	Gini Vanarsdell
Halle Maestas	Richard Watts
Mitzi Malouf	Douglas Woolf
Jake McBride	Matt Zacher
Linda McBride	

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>

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	steven.d.aird@gmail.com



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