



The Mountain Chickadee

Newsletter of the Wasatch Audubon Society
Volume 43, Number 5 ~ September - October 2024

President's Message

by John Bellmon

As we move into fall after the second-hottest summer on record, keep an eye out for all of our fall migrants. Many have already started coming through on their way south for the winter. Watch for rare bird reports by email and on Facebook. During September, Antelope Island is a good stop-over for some rare migrant songbirds. Waterfowl and raptors will be arriving to winter in our area. This is an exciting time for birders all across the country.

During this migration season please be careful about night-time lighting that is pointed into the sky. This confuses many songbird migrants that travel mainly at night. Also, encourage your friends and neighbors to do likewise. This is very important for the long-term survival of many of our songbirds.

On September 21 we will have our Bluebird Nest Box Clean-up along our Bluebird Nest Box Trail on Monte Cristo, east of Ogden on HWY 39. This nest box trail was started in the mid 1980s and has been maintained annually by Wasatch Audubon member volunteers. There are four sections of the trail and all of the nest boxes need to be cleaned out so that the birds will use them next spring. Please come out to help with this project. A big thanks to everyone who can help.

The big fund raiser for our chapter each year is the Big Sit. This year it will be held on the 12th of October in the parking lot of the Eccles Wildlife Education Center in the Robert N.

Hasenyager Nature Reserve at Farmington Bay. You can get pledges from your friends for an amount for each species of bird that we are able to identify with in a 17-foot diameter circle on the west site of the parking lot. This is a great occasion and a wonderful way to raise funds for chapter activities. Come on out to a great place and a lot of fun birding while visiting with birding friends.

Fall is a very exciting time for birding no matter where you are in the country. So get out and go birding during the bird migration and enjoy the great fall weather. I hope to see you on the birding trail this fall.



Red-Naped Sapsucker in the Soapstone Basin area, Uintas, 23 June 2024. Credit: Benjamin A. Johnson.

Conservation Corner

A Supreme Court Ruling Increases Peril to GSL Wetlands

by Lynn Carroll

The inland ports being formed around the shores of Great Salt Lake are meant to facilitate development in those areas, even though all include or are adjacent to wetlands, so people are concerned about loss of the many services wetlands provide. In addition to providing food and shelter for birds, they supply habitat for other animals, filter pollutants out of the water, recharge aquifers, soak up flood waters, and absorb carbon, offering "resilience to climate change threats like drought, flooding, and extreme storm events."*

Port Authority Executive Director Ben Hart often assures the public that the Authority believes wetlands are important and that they will encourage developers to protect wetlands. Their "Comprehensive Wetlands Policy," approved last November, simply lists the laws that apply to wetland protection. It states that a percentage of the tax increment that is generated from inland port development will be spent on mitigation of wetland loss or maybe incentives to landowners to preserve wetlands. (It's 3% in the case of the West Weber Port).

The concern is that, over a year ago, the U.S. Supreme Court greatly weakened Clean Water Act protections. The Act applies to "Waters of the United States." These had been defined to include not only navigable waters, interstate waters, and seas, but also other waters like wetlands that could affect them. In *Sackett vs. E.P.A.*, the court ruled that the other waters can be federally regulated only if they have "a continuous surface connection" to the larger bodies. The E.P.A. and the Army Corps of Engineers can still regulate activity on Great Salt Lake and wetlands that flow directly into it

or into the Weber, Bear, or Jordan River. They can't require a permit to fill a wetland that doesn't meet the connection requirement. We can only try to persuade the landowners, counties and the port authority to do the right thing.

The *Sackett vs. E.P.A.* ruling is particularly impactful in the West, where so many of the streams are seasonal and wetland connections to lakes and rivers are often underground. Colorado has acted to replace most of the lost federal protection with state law. Virginia has kept its stricter regulations on wetlands around the Chesapeake Bay. Audubon has joined other environmental groups in support of any state's legislation that makes up for some of the lost federal regulation.*

It's hard to imagine Utah following Colorado's example. Audubon's Saline Lakes program will continue to make good use of the Great Salt Lake Watershed Enhancement Trust money, of which 25% is earmarked to protect and restore wetlands habitat to benefit Great Salt Lake. Utah Audubon chapters will be lobbying the Utah legislature to appropriate more funds for the Trust.

*[Audubon.org (21 May 2024) How Audubon is Working to Protect Wetlands a Year After Supreme Court Gutted Protections]



Virginia Rail, Great Salt Lake Nature Center, 20 July 2024.
Credit: Benjamin A. Johnson.

A Search for Himalayan Snowcocks

by Jen Hitt

In early August, a small group of us from the Wasatch Audubon Society headed to the Ruby Mountains in Nevada to search for Himalayan snowcocks. We set out from Tooele early Friday morning, and made it to Elko by lunchtime. We headed into the mountains to familiarize ourselves with the trail, and do a little afternoon birding. After dinner at a unique Basque restaurant, we turned in early to ensure we were at the trailhead before sunrise Saturday morning.



No woodcocks, but a great day otherwise! WAS members in Nevada. Credit: Patty Griffith.

Saturday started out beautifully cool, and we hit the trail with our headlamps. We found a lovely rock next to an alpine lake to sit and watch the sunrise and to scan the cliff side for the snowcocks. While we missed seeing our target bird this trip, we had a wonderful time anyway. Some highlights of the trip were great views of mountain bluebirds, MacGillivray's warblers, Clark's nutcrackers, a family of mountain goats, and meadows filled with wildflowers. It was an incredible adventure!



Clark's Nutcracker, Elko Nevada, August, 2024. Credit: Raquel Johnson.

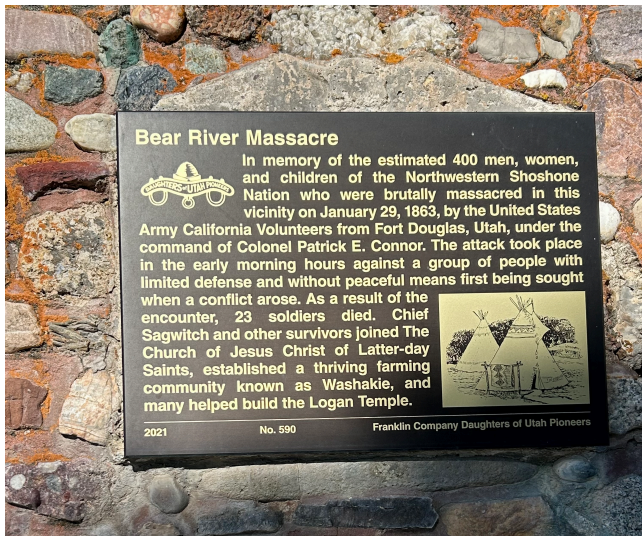
A Visit to the Bear River Massacre Site

By Susan Snyder

About 20 Wasatch Audubon members and friends traveled to Preston, Idaho, in August to learn about the restoration of the Bear River Massacre Site from Darren Parry, an elder with the Northwestern Band of Shoshone.

Parry met the group at the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers monument just north of Preston. The stone pillar was erected in 1953 to commemorate the massacre on 29 January 1863 in which approximately 400 Shoshone tribal members, many of them elderly, women, and children, were killed by U.S. cavalrymen from Fort Douglas under the command of Colonel Patrick Connor.

The original 1953 plaque describes the event as the "final battle," after "attacks by the Indians on the peaceful inhabitants in this vicinity." On the other side of the pillar, a plaque installed in 2021 corrects the narrative, noting that the unprovoked attack resulted in the brutal massacre of an estimated 400 members of the tribe while they resided in winter camp: "The attack took place in the early morning hours against a group of people with limited defense and without peaceful means first being sought when a conflict arose."



Memorial plaque summarizing the main details of the massacre.

Parry told the group he likes to start his tours at the monument, because it shows how differently the cultures can view the event. "Time", he noted, "has allowed people to learn more and to consider all of the perspectives to fully understand the tragedy." "All stories are important", Parry said, "and everybody has a story."



Darren Parry, Shoshone elder, explains the Bear River massacre to visitors.

Over the past few years, Parry, the former tribal chairman, has helped the Northwest Band acquire the land where the massacre was perpetrated in preparation for creating an interpretive center about it.

The first step has been to reclaim and heal the land by removing invasive species such as Russian olive trees, and by replacing them with native cottonwoods and grasses. Groups of volunteers help plant new trees in the fall. The next planting dates are 1 and 2 November.

The rest of the plan involves building a state-of-the-art interpretive center on a bluff overlooking the spot where the calvary attacked the Shoshone winter lodges, sending many fleeing into the freezing waters of the Bear River.

Parry said he loves sharing the site with others, especially the fourth-grade classes that come on field trips. He recalled one such trip where the children were looking at a tree that stands next to the original stone monument. People have hung flags and other mementos of remembrance in its branches. One boy noticed a mirror hanging in the tree, and asked why someone would hang a mirror there.

"It was silent, and I was really trying to think of something I could say," Parry said. "But then a little girl raised her hand and said, 'I know why it's there. It is there to remind us that we did this, and if we don't learn from history, we could do it again.'"

Several Wasatch Audubon members expressed interest in volunteering for the fall planting day or in making donations to the tribe for the new center. To learn more about efforts of the Northwest Band of Shoshone to restore the site or to make a donation, visit:

www.wudaogwa.com.



WAS members visiting the Bear River Massacre site listen to Darren Parry explain the tragic events that occurred

Monte Cristo/Woodruff Field Trip Report

by Dan Johnston

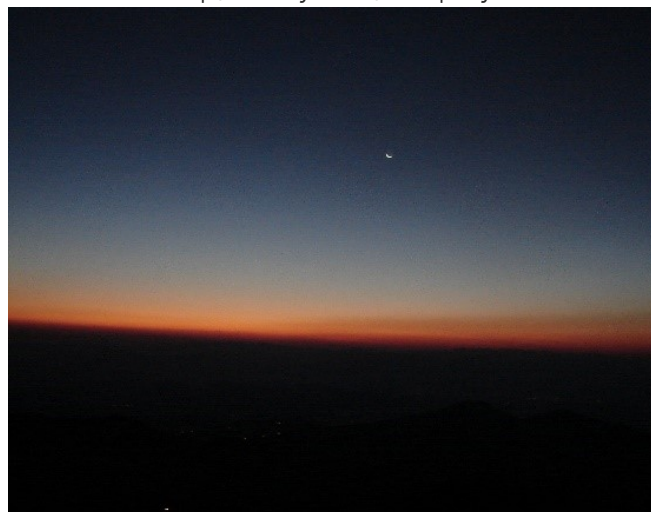
On June 13, a small group of WAS birders took a trip to the high country. We went up over Monte Cristo and on to Woodruff. A quick check of the bluebird boxes near the highway revealed some House Wren eggs, some baby Tree Swallows and some Mountain Bluebird babies. After that, we saw three highly anticipated birds: a Dusky Grouse on the route past the bluebird boxes, a Black Tern at Bear River, and Common Nighthawks at Randolph City Park. We enjoyed the many mountain flowers in bloom along the way. Additional excitement was provided by a thunderstorm and microburst winds.

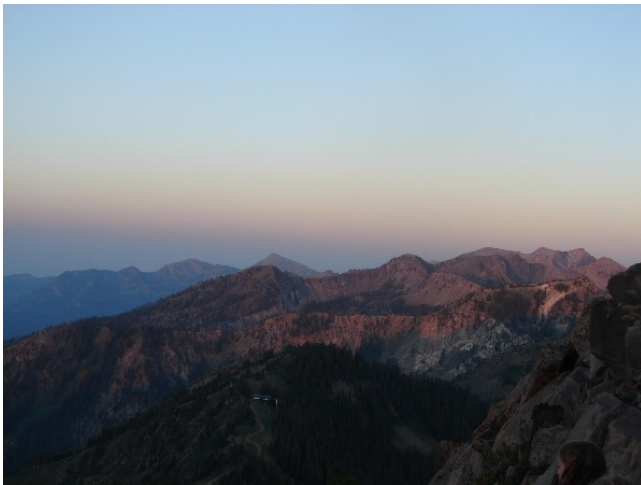
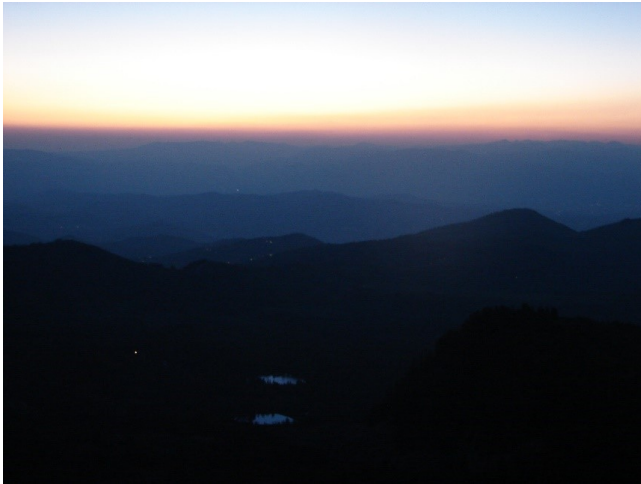
Youth Corner

by Leah Johnson

Hi Wasatch Audubon family! As all of you know, hiking is a popular recreational activity for people around the world. It's also a great way to observe wildlife and birds around us! My family loves to travel and visit national parks. Here in Utah, we have five, all with wonderful hiking opportunities. We love hiking trails and obviously, birding while doing so. On a recent

occasion, Abigail and I had the opportunity to go on a sunrise hike. It was a six-mile hike round trip, and three of those miles were straight up a mountain, with few breaks. The destination of the hike was the very top of the mountain so we could see the sunrise. However, to make it in time to see the sunrise, we had to get up at 2:00 am and leave just before 3:00 am. Although it was a challenging hike in pitch darkness on the way up, seeing a sunrise from on top of a mountain is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and made it worth the hike. Starting so early, we couldn't see anything but faint shapes of trees. However, it was perfect for star gazing, and the stars were absolutely stunning at high elevation. After watching the exquisite sunrise, we hiked back down the mountain. On the way, we saw many things we had missed on the way up. The towering trees were magnificent, and there were all sorts of beautiful wildflowers, including Columbines, Bluebells, Forget-Me-Nots, Indian Paintbrush, and more. Plus, we got to see many squirrels and chipmunks and a variety of birds, including a Western Tanager. Best of all, toward the end of the hike, we saw a Moose with two babies! Personally, this was awesome because I had never seen any Moose babies before, but now I have! This hiking experience is one I will never forget. Hiking opens many doors into the natural world around us while also getting us the exercise our bodies need. If you ever get the opportunity to hike to see the sunrise from a mountain top, or any hike, I hope you take it.





Advice from Audubon about feeding wild birds

Melissa Groo wrote an excellent article for *Audubon* magazine in 2018, entitled, [When It's Okay \(or Not\) to Feed Birds](#). In it, she asks three important questions of those who wish to feed birds.

1. Is this species at risk?
2. Is the food appropriate and safely provided?
3. Is feeding this bird likely to change its behavior in harmful ways?

All of us want to help birds to survive and to maintain healthy populations. This good counsel will help us all to avoid causing unintentional harm.



Warbling Vireo- Unitas: Soapstone Basin area 22 June 2024. Credit: Leah Johnson

Upcoming Events

September / October Field Trips

21 September, Saturday 8:00 am

Blue Bird Nest Box Cleanout: It's time to clean out the nest boxes so they will be ready for the Mountain Bluebirds 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 afterwards. **This is an off-trail hike with some elevation.**

12 October, 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**

Bird Walks

September 11 - **Buffalo Ranches Pond.**

7:00 AM Breakfast at Dylan's in Kaysville

8:00 AM Meet at large white (ball) radar station by the GSL Nature Center, walking to the Ranches ponds from there (over 3 miles round trip). **U L B**

September 18 - **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. **R P B**

September 25 - **Fort Buenaventura river trail to Kingfisher Loop.**

7:00 AM Breakfast at Moore's Family Restaurant, 3558 Wall Ave., Ogden

8:00 AM Located on A Avenue in Ogden. Meet at the entrance to the park, walk the trail that goes along the river to Kingfisher Pond. **P L B**

October 2 - **Little Mountain Rail Trail.**

7:00 AM Breakfast at Ramblin Roads, 1720 W. 12th St., Ogden

8:00 AM Meet at the trailhead located at 2000 W on 4000 N (west from Smith & Edwards). **U L**

October 9 - **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**

October 16 - **Farmington Bay.**

7:00 AM Breakfast at Dylan's, 185 North Main Street in Kaysville

8:00 AM Meet at 1325 W (entrance to Farmington Bay Waterfowl Management Area), not GSL Nature Center. **R U L**

October 23 - **Kaysville Ponds.**

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**

October 30 - **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**

November 6 - **Buffalo Ranches Pond.**

7:00 AM Breakfast at Dylan's in Kaysville

8:00 AM Meet at large white (ball) radar station by the GSL Nature Center, walking to the Ranches ponds from there (over 3 miles round trip). **U L 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



Lark Sparrow, Buffalo Ranches Pond, Farmington, UT. 17 August 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

| | | |
|-----------------|----------------|--|
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| 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 |

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 (September, 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.

Corey Anderson
Michael Blinn
Elizabeth Chicado
Aaron B. Cole
Josh Egan
Audrey Everett
Philip Falkowski
Kiersten Hancock
Sydney Hunt
Henry James
Heather Johnson
Charles Jory
Jennifer Lakman
Adam Loomis
Paula Maddock
Carol May
Willis McCree
Ryan McCulloch
Mary McKinley
Mike S Moss
Connie Neil
Bev Parker
Gloria Perry
Carmen Riddle
Gary Shelton
Cody Standing
Shaylee Stevens
Linda Stewart
Meghan Strand
Dia Taylor
Calli Toulatos
Renee West



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