



The Mountain Chickadee

Newsletter of the Wasatch Audubon Society
Volume 44, Number 3 ~ May - June 2025

President's Message

by Jen Hitt

Hello and Happy Spring!

The spring migration is underway in northern Utah. Migrant shorebirds, songbirds and raptors have started to appear. If you're wondering what birds are coming in overnight in your area, the Cornell Lab has a great tool for monitoring the status of the migration. Check out BirdCast for Weber County here.

An important action we can all take to help birds during their migration is dimming or even turning off our outside lights overnight. Strong outdoor lighting can disorient the birds, which can interfere with migration patterns and cause them to crash into buildings.

If you would like to get out and see some of these recently migrated birds, we invite you to join us on a weekly bird walk or monthly field trip in May and June. These are great months for birding in Utah, and we've got some terrific trips planned. All levels of birders are welcome. Please see the Upcoming Events sections for dates and locations.

Wasatch Audubon Society will be hosting a booth at the Great Salt Lake bird festival this year. The festival will be headquartered at the new Western Sports Park (where the Legacy Events Center used to be) located at 25 N Sports Park Drive in Farmington. We'll be at the table on Saturday, May 17 from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm. We'd love to see you there! Please

Please stop by and say hi, or even sit with us at the table for a bit.

Happy spring birding!
Jen



Vermillion Flycatcher at BYU Lytle Preserve, 2 April 2025.
Credit: Leah Johnson.

Conservation Corner

Pep Talk for Nature Lovers

by Lynn Carroll

Bad news abounds in the realm of environmental causes this year. The Utah legislature was stingy with funds for Great Salt Lake water transactions and supported coal-burning over clean energy alternatives. The Trump administration is dismantling the E.P.A.

and proposing to change the definition of “harm” in Endangered Species Act regulations so that habitat destruction won’t be prohibited. It’s overwhelming. Let’s not be paralyzed by depression, but find a balance between activism and seeking good news and enjoyment.

Pick your fights. Rather than respond to every call to action, make a few impactful. Call your legislator’s office rather than add your name to a mass email.

Bring it home. Practice water and energy conservation. Turn house lights off at night for migrating birds. Remember that many small changes add up.

Get political. Support candidates who will consider the environment in their deliberations. Give your time and/or money as well as your vote.

Get out in nature. WAS bird walks and field trips are fun, relaxed ways to learn and make new friends.

Environmental organizations continue to do good work fighting pollution, improving habitat, providing nature education, doing research, etc. They all need your help; give what you can. Look to them for good news as well. For example, Audubon and The Nature Conservancy are co-managers of the Great Salt Lake Watershed Enhancement Trust (GSLWET). On the trust’s website, I found details about grants awarded in 2024 for work in wetlands around GSL. About \$5.5 M from the legislature was combined with about \$1.7 in donated work and matching funds to “help protect and promote the incomparable services that wetlands provide ... while also benefiting the hydrology of Great Salt Lake and the surrounding communities.” This work is taking place at Salt Creek, Public Shooting Grounds, and Ogden Bay WMAs, Manes Flats at the GSL Shorelands Preserve, Farmington Bay, and stabilizing the Goggin Drain banks on the south shore. More information at:

[Wetland Grants — Great Salt Lake Watershed Enhancement Trust.](#)

At Audubon.org, I found a fun story about Vermillion Flycatchers, a favorite of birdwatchers in St. George. They are often found around water and as is typical of flycatchers, fly from a perch to catch bugs mid-air or from the surface of the water. A photographer in Tuscon, AZ, enjoyed photographing Black Phoebe and Vermillion Flycatchers at a local park, and saw a phoebe catch a tiny minnow, which is a known, though perhaps rare, behavior. Last fall, he had good views of both species at El Rio Preserve and saw that fish were “what the Vermillions were catching when they quickly dunked their spiky crests below the water’s surface.” His photographs are thought to be the first documentation of the behavior in Vermillion Flycatchers. He has also seen the species kill and eat a small lizard. See the photographs and full story at [‘Oh, Wow!’—Stunning Photos Offer First Known Proof of Vermilion Flycatchers Fishing | Audubon](#).



Mountain Bluebird at the Henefer lek, 19 April 2025.
Credit: Lindsey Ammerman.

Lek and Loon Field Trip Report

by Jen Hitt

On Saturday, April 19, we had our annual field trip visit to the Henefer Lek to look for Greater Sage Grouse and to East Canyon State Park to look for loons. Thirteen birders showed up to brave the 6 a.m. start time and 19° degree weather.

At the Henefer lek, we counted over 40 displaying males.

After the lek, we headed to East Canyon where we saw Mountain Bluebirds, Osprey, a Clark's Grebe and the target Common Loons.

A trip through Morgan and Croydon yielded sightings of Sandhill Cranes, more Ospreys, a pair of Canyon Wrens, and an American Dipper.

Thanks to everyone who came out; it was an incredible day of birding.



Male Greater Sage Grouse at Henefer lek, 19 April 2025.
Credit: Lindsey Ammerman.



Common Loon, East Canyon, Utah. Credit: Jen Hitt.



A pair of Canyon Wrens near Morgan, Utah, 19 April 2025:
Credit: Jen Hitt.



Intrepid and indefatigable WAS birders photographed in
their natural habitat. Credit: Jen Hitt.



Double-Crested Cormorant at Kaysville Ponds on 17
March 2025. Credit: Ben Johnson.

What if I don't have a 'Spark Bird,' is that okay?

by Ben Johnson

I recently read Kenn Kaufman's epic book, *Kingbird Highway: The Biggest Year in the Life of an Extreme Birder*, for the second time. While introducing his ultimate 'Big Year' he speaks about his 'spark' or 'hook' bird, the Western Kingbird, which motivated him to become interested in birds. I have often heard birders speak of their special bird, the one that got them interested in birdwatching or birding. Some of you are likely thinking of your spark bird right now.

Well, I'm in my ninth year of birding, and I have a confession- I don't have a spark bird. I'm not sure how to feel about this. Part of me feels a little gipped. Shouldn't I have had one? Is it okay that I don't? I have avian taxa in which I'm especially interested, with no particular order: woodpeckers, warblers and flycatchers are three groups I really enjoy seeking and watching. If you asked me what my favorite bird is, I'd probably say Lewis' Woodpecker. But this wasn't my spark bird. In fact, it was the 331st bird on my Life List. I don't think this qualifies as a spark bird, because I was already hooked on birding when I first saw it three years after I started birding!

I grew up in a home where we appreciated the outdoors, all of God's creations, as well as the spaces dedicated for protection of the environment and species. My father, in particular, instilled in me a love of nature (He has a PhD in zoology, and spent his career working with venomous snakes). My paternal grandparents took us traveling around the country in their RV. I saw the beauty of the the country, from Florida to the American West, the majesty of our National Parks, and all sorts of birds and other animals.

From an early age, my brother was interested in birds. I never shared that interest growing up, I was more interested in sports instead. I now wish I had started birding when my brother did. This, of course, was long before the advent of eBird. I remember my brother tracking his early sightings on some sort of database on the

on the computer. I just never caught the desire to watch birds. My uncle is also an avid and expert birder, who has 790 US species on his tally. I wish I had caught the fire from brother Jon or from my uncle in those early years. But I didn't. Now I think of all those years wasted, focused on sports, when I could have been birding instead! That makes me sad. However, I'm just glad I finally did catch the spark at age 37. My wife often reminds me that she was interested in birding long before I was, which is absolutely true. She had us participate in the Backyard Bird Count in 2014, two years before I started birding.

In 2016, my grandmother Laurie passed away. As a family we gathered at her Maryland residence bordering the woods; and I sat talking to my uncle on the back porch where my grandmother spent decades feeding birds. As we talked about life and death in that setting, the conversation naturally turned to birds. My uncle Bruce pointed out the incessant singing of a Carolina Wren, a bird that my grandfather, John, once described as "the smallest bird with the biggest beak in the woods", by virtue of its penetrating voice. Suddenly a Red-Shouldered hawk perched in a tree began screeching. My interest was peaked. I had caught the spark. Thereafter, I got my first pair of binoculars. I started taking pictures and learning bird calls, and started birding as often as possible.

I don't have a spark bird, but I did have a spark experience, and maybe that's just as good. After all, it certainly ignited my passion for birding!



Red-Tailed Hawk at Greenwich, Utah on 17 February 2025. Credit: Ben Johnson.



Killdeer at Farmington Bay Wildlife Management Area on 15 March 2025. Credit: Ben Johnson.

Field Trip Report

by **Laura Johnston**

The March field trip to Antelope Island was enjoyed by twenty birders. It was a cool, mostly sunny day, with little wind. There weren't a lot of birds along the Causeway, but we saw a total of 42 birds on the trip. Highlights were sightings of a Rock Wren, Bewick's Wren and Sagebrush Sparrow all at Ladyfinger Point. We also saw a Sage Thrasher. It was a "triple owl day" with Burrowing, Great Horned, and Barn Owls spotted.

End of ONC Bird Feeding

In a couple weeks we will wrap up another successful season of the bird feeding project at Ogden Nature Center. Thanks to Ruth, Brian and Jeanette, John B., Bettyeann and John, Becky, and Julia Barber and family. Wasatch Audubon Society donated more than 30 bags of birdseed and Dan and Laura kept the cans full of seed. The reward for all is that ONC birds thrived this winter. Spotted Towhees, White-crowned Sparrows, Black-capped Chickadees, Song Sparrows, House Finches, California Quail, Juncos, and one gorgeous Ringneck Pheasant all benefitted from our efforts. (Oh, deer and raccoons also helped themselves occasionally, too.) We look forward to November when we start all over again!



Upcoming Events

Meetings and Talks

Our June meeting will be held at 7:00 pm on Tuesday, June 17. Jennifer and Danny Menlove will join us to talk about their experience banding, building nesting boxes for, and collecting nesting data on American Kestrels. They will be joined at the Ogden Nature Center by their American Kestrel, Vanya. Join us in person at the Ogden Nature Center located at 966 W 12th Street in Ogden or attend virtually via Zoom.

Field Trips

May 24 – Bear River Bird Refuge Saturday 8:00 am

Meet at the Visitor Center parking lot. We will follow the auto tour route which is a 12-mile loop through the heart of the Refuge. We hope to see migrating shorebirds, a variety of hawks and White Pelicans. The Western Meadowlarks will be serenading us. Mostly done in car, restroom available.

June 21 - Bird the Donner/Mormon Trail Saturday 8:00 am

Meet at the DWR office, 515 E 5300 S (Adams Ave.) in South Ogden. We will caravan to Henefer where we will pick up the trail, follow it to East Canyon Reservoir and go on to Jeremy Ranch Road (a dirt road). We will spot historical markers and birds along the way, ending at Mormon Flats. Target birds: Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Dusky Grouse, Hermit Thrush, American Dipper. Accessibility: Mostly done in car, restrooms along the way. Leader Dan/John.

Bird Walks

May 14 - Dale Young Nature Park in Perry, UT:

7:00 AM Breakfast at Ramblin Roads 1720 W 12th S Ogden

8:15 AM Meet at 1200 Davis St, Perry, UT 84302. **R L B**

May 21 - 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**

May 28 - Willard Bay (this is a fee area):

7:00 AM Breakfast at Ramblin Roads 1720 W 12th S Ogden

8:15 AM Meet at Flying J Parking Lot and travel to Willard Bay from there. **R P/U L B**

June 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 **R**

June 11 - 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**

June 18 - Pineview Reservoir North Arm Natural Area:

7:00 AM Breakfast at Dylan's in Ogden, 981 12th St., Ogden

8:15 AM Meet in the Trailhead parking lot: From I-15 exit 344, turn east on SR-39 and drive through Ogden Canyon. At the head of the canyon, turn left (north) onto SR-158 and over Pineview Dam. Drive 3.8 miles and turn right into the trailhead parking lot.

June 25 - Green Pond Trail near Snowbasin:

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

8:15 AM Meet at the trailhead which is on New Snowbasin Road just past mile post 2. **U, not level.**

July 2 - 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**

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



Song Sparrow. Great Salt Lake Nature Center 18 April 2022. Credit: Ben Johnson.

Announcement

By Susan Snyder

Wasatch Audubon is looking for a new program director! This is a fancy title for the person who schedules speakers for our monthly membership meetings. In 2025, we will be meeting in February, April, June, August, October, and December. The August meeting is our annual picnic. Speakers have already been scheduled for February, so that's not very many months left to find speakers. It's a fun position, and allows us to bring diverse topics to our members. Anyone who is interested should contact WAS President, Jen Hitt jenhitt@hotmail.com.

New/Rejoined Members (December, 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.

John Alusik
 Randall Brown
 Clint Chadwick
 Beth Clemenger
 Casey Connors
 Annette Evans-McPartland
 Stephanie Fausett
 Eric Giles
 Adam Groves
 Brentton Hansen
 Kassie Harbath
 Robynn A Imada
 Andrew Jones
 Jessie Kidd
 Hemming Lammi
 Joseph Loffredo
 Nick Martinez
 Lisa M Mullin
 Sandy Nield
 Chris Northcutt
 Troy Parkin
 Suzanne Perrin
 Susan Pollex
 Nathan Sabbagh
 Heidi Schofield
 Pat Simonson
 Brianna Smith
 David Sullivan
 Nora Tang
 Louis Waikart

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	Jen Hitt	801-540-5091
Vice President	Dan Johnston	801-645-8633
Secretary	Sharen Perry	801-392-9554
Treasurer	Jay Stretch	801-721-9432
Past President	John Bellmon	801-814-7544

Board

2024/2025	Lynn Carroll	801-392-8216
2024/2025	George Muller	801-745-4035
2024/2025	Ruth Carmona-Murray	703-258-2652
2025/2026	Abigail Johnson	
2025/2026	Leah Johnson	
2025/2026	Laura Johnston	801-458-9558
2025/2026	Dallin Henderson	801-309-7285

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		
Historian	Ruth Davis	801-309-0425
Publicity	Arnold Smith	801-829-338
Hospitality	Jeane Taylor	801-394-2813
Newsletter	Steve Aird	even.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