



# The Mountain Chickadee

Newsletter of the Wasatch Audubon Society  
Volume 45, Number 2 ~ March / April 2026

## President's Corner

by Jen Hitt

Hello and Happy Spring! It feels strange that springtime is nearly at our door when winter never really got started, but that seems to be the case this year.

Despite the unusual weather, there have been some great sightings on our recent bird walks. We saw an Iceland gull at Bountiful Pond, a great horned owl at Willard Bay, and an American goshawk at Mueller Park. Our Wednesday walks are such a great way to get outside and connect with other birders. I invite each of you to join us if you can. Birders of all levels are always welcome. See our upcoming walks in the events section.

In March, the spring migration commences for our earliest migrators. Please remember to dim or turn off outside lighting at night, as those bright lights can disorient birds flying overhead. If that's not possible, consider light fixtures that focus the light downward, rather than up. That way, you will still get the illumination, but it won't have such a big impact on migrating birds.

If you are looking for an opportunity to be more involved in Wasatch Audubon, we are still looking for a new program director. The program director is responsible for scheduling speakers for our membership meetings every other month. If you are interested in this position, please contact me at [jenhitt@hotmail.com](mailto:jenhitt@hotmail.com). Alternatively, if there are speakers whom you would like to invite to an

upcoming meeting, please let me know. I'm running out of ideas, and could really use your help!

I hope to go birding with you soon.

Jen



Ring-billed Gull at Farmington Bay on 23 January 2026.  
Credit: Ben Johnson



Looking for a Great Horned Owl on the annual eagle field trip, Morgan, Utah. Credit: Jen Hitt

**Wasatch Audubon Society**

Officers		
President	Jen Hitt	801-540-5091
Vice President	Dallin Henderson	801-309-7285
Secretary	Sharen Perry	801-392-9554
Treasurer	Jay Stretch	801-721-9432
Past President	John Bellmon	801-814-7544

Board		
2026/2027	Lynn Carroll	801-392-8216
2026/2027	George Muller	801-745-4035
2026/2027	Ruth Carmona-Murray	703-258-2652
2025/2026	Abigail Johnson	
2025/2026	Leah Johnson	
2025/2026	Laura Johnston	801-458-9558
2025/2026	Dan Johnston	801-645-8633

Committee Chairpersons		
Conservation	Lynn Carroll	801-392-8216
Conservation	John Bellmon	801-444-3704
Education	Ruth Carmona-Murray	703-258-2652
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	801-829-3383
Hospitality		
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. You might also want to visit our website at:  
<http://www.wasatchaudubon.org>

**2025 Christmas Bird Counts**

**by John Bellmon**

December saw the 126<sup>th</sup> Christmas Bird Count (CBC) for Audubon and the 46<sup>rd</sup> CBC for Wasatch Audubon, which is how we got started. Our Christmas Bird Counts went well. A big “thank you” to all who participated and made last year’s CBC's such a success. All of the data are very important for understanding population trends of wintering bird species. We had record-breaking warm, dry weather during the month and a half before the counts. This is likely the reason for such low numbers of species that normally over-winter here and high numbers of birds that spend the winter much further south. Gathering these valuable sighting data is possible because of all of your support.

The 46<sup>th</sup> Ogden Christmas Bird Count proved really exciting! The weather was cloudy and there was light rain in the morning, but it was a good day for birding. We counted 80 species, versus 90 in 2024. Some of the highlights were Cackling Geese, White-faced Ibis, Canyon Wrens and Orange-crowned Warblers.

For the Bear River Refuge Christmas Bird Count it was again cloudy with intermittent light rain, but unseasonably warm. Nonetheless, it was a good day for birding. We counted 63 species, compared with 65 in 2024. Exceptional sightings included large numbers of Snow Geese, Tundra Swans, Sandhill Cranes, and Marbled Godwits. There were likely many more Snow Geese and Trumpeter Swans in the area, but we could not get to where we could count them.

During the Antelope Island Christmas Bird Count it was again cloudy and rainy most of the day,\*\* but again another good day for birding, and a great way to finish your annual bird count. We counted 66 species (61 in 2024), including White-winged Scoter and Lesser Black-backed Gull. Thanks again to all who participated in the counts!

\*\*Editor’s warning: Had there been a blizzard, John would still have thought it was a good day for birding.

## Conservation Corner

### Audubon's Conservation Ranching

by Lynn Carroll

*"to enhance the biodiversity, productivity, and resilience of grassland ecosystems for birds and the people that depend on them"*

Grassland birds have experienced the steepest population decline since 1970 of any terrestrial biome - over 40%. Habitat loss and degradation, encroachment by trees and shrubs, and pesticide use contribute most heavily to the decline. Since most grassland habitat in the U.S. is privately owned, Audubon created the Conservation Ranching Program (ACR), aiming at stabilizing bird populations in partnership with farmers and ranchers.

Landowners who enroll in the program agree to follow practices that will benefit specific species, depending on the region. Moving cattle to produce diverse patches of vegetation is commonly part of Habitat Management Plans. Beside habitat management, other requirements involve environmental sustainability and animal welfare. When these are met, as determined by a third party verifier, the land is certified as bird-friendly. More than 100 ranches nationwide, totaling nearly 3 million acres, have earned this status.

Ranchers receive technical assistance for meeting necessary protocols so that the quality and quantity of forage for their animals will improve over time. Birds and ranches benefit from increased biodiversity, improved soil health and better water quality. An essential component of the program is the market boost provided by the Audubon Certified Bird-Friendly seal on packages of beef and bison grown on the bird-friendly land.

That's where you come in, if you eat beef. Audubon asks: "Do you have an appetite for bird conservation?" Purchasing meat with the Bird-Friendly seal, which is priced somewhat higher than average, provides an incentive for ranchers

to participate in the program, in spite of the increased costs they incur. Markets in our area that sell these products are the Natural Grocers (by Vitamin Cottage). There is one at 270 12<sup>th</sup> Street in Ogden. If you shop at another specialty store, you could encourage them to contact Audubon about carrying Certified Bird-Friendly products.

I learned from an Audubon Rockies webinar that there are ACR-enrolled ranches in Colorado and Wyoming, but none in Utah yet. If your family owns a large ranch, they'd like to talk to you!

For more information see: [Conservation Ranching in the Rockies | Audubon](#) about the ACR or [Conservation Ranching FAQs](#) about Certified Bird-Friendly meat.



Red-tailed Hawk, Farmington Bay, 23 January 2026. Credit: Ben Johnson

## Youth Corner

## Finding Joy in Winter Backyard Birding

by Leah Johnson

Winter is a wonderful time of the year. Utah sees fluffy, white snow, at least, in a normal year. But snow isn't the only gift winter brings us. This season brings many species of birds we don't see any other time of year! Many of these species, I see in my backyard every day, and you can too.

Some of my favorite winter birds are the Dark-eyed Juncos. They are often referred to as "snow birds." I see them hopping about on the snow-covered ground almost every time I look outside. Here in Utah we have the Oregon Junco, which is a sub species of the Dark-eyed Junco.



Oregon Dark-eyed Junco. Credit: National Audubon Society

In my backyard, I often see Cedar Waxwings munching throughout the day. They especially enjoy trees with fruits that stay through the winter such as serviceberry, juniper and dogwood. They also eat fruits of hawthorn, mountain ash, and crabapple trees.

Another favorite species of mine is Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow. I can see them at 6:00 am most mornings, eating seeds off the ground and the snow. We have also seen them at 9:30 pm, in a blizzard, coming to get seed!

Anyone can make these observations. All you need is a bag of mixed bird seed. Then scatter it

on the ground. Be certain to consistently scatter the seed in the same places. It may take around a week for the birds to find your seed initially, but don't lose faith. Don't forget to record your observations on eBird so we can all celebrate your sightings!

## January Field Trip Report

by Laura Johnston

Our January field trip was to Howell Valley and Promontory Point. Fourteen birders went on this cool, clear day with no snow cover. The lack of snow resulted in no sightings of Snow Buntings or horned larks. However, we did get great views of Golden and Bald Eagles, flying and perching. We saw a Great-horned owl at the Golden Spike Monument parking lot and a flock of Chukars made an appearance in the Monument.



American Dipper at Twin Creek, Fish Lake, 18 January 2026. Credit: Ben Johnson.

### March and April Bird Walks

**March 4 - Antelope Island Causeway (this is a fee area): 8:00 AM** Breakfast at Warren's Drive In, 1778 S. 1000 W., Syracuse

**9:00 AM** Meet at the [parking lot at the toll booth](#) R, L

**March 11 - Powder Mountain Feeders and Surrounding Area: 8:00 AM** Meet at Dylan's in Ogden, 981 12<sup>th</sup> St., Ogden

**9:30 AM** Meet at [Powder Mountain to view feeders and surrounding area](#) P L B

**March 18 - GSL Nature Center: 7:00 AM** Breakfast at Dylan's in Kaysville, 185 N. Main St., Kaysville

**8:00 AM** Meet in the Nature Center [parking lot](#). Farmington. R U L B

**March 25 - Dale Young Nature Park in Perry, UT: 7:00 AM** Breakfast at Ramblin Roads 1720 W 12<sup>th</sup> S Ogden

**8:15 AM** Meet at [1200 Davis St, Perry, UT 84302](#). R L B

**April 1 - 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

**April 8 - Croydon Lost Creek Area: 7:00 AM** Breakfast at Ramblin Roads, 1720 W. 12<sup>th</sup> St., Ogden

**8:30 AM** Meet at Croydon City Park. [1801 N 6900 E, Croydon, UT 84018](#) No applicable accessibility codes

**April 15 - Riverdale Trail- South: 7:00 AM** Meet 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

**April 22 - 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, L

**April 29 - Willard Bay (this is a fee area):**

**7:00 AM** Breakfast at Ramblin Roads 1720 W 12<sup>th</sup> S Ogden

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

**May 6 - Garr Ranch, Antelope Island (this is a fee area):**

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

**8:15 AM** [Meet at the parking lot at Garr Ranch](#) R, L, U

#### 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

### April Meeting

Our April meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 21 at 7:00 pm. We will be discussing binoculars. Sharee Harrison of the For the Birds and Bees store will be joining us with some binoculars to try. Join us in person at the Ogden Nature Center located at 966 W 12<sup>th</sup> Street in Ogden or attend virtually via Zoom.

### Upcoming Field Trips

**March 21 - Antelope Island 8:00am**

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 18 - Lek and Loon Trip 6:00 am**

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 are Greater Sage Grouse, Bald Eagle, Common Loon, American Dipper. Take lunch and water. Accessibility: Minimal walking, stop for restrooms. Leader - John/Dan

**New and Renewed Members**

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

- Adrienne Atkinson
- Jacob Bytauberg
- Brian Fairbourn
- Stephanie Fuller
- Julie Gardiner
- Allan Heiskanen
- Carma Hicks
- Shelley Hill-Worthen
- Sharon L. Kight
- Craig Lewis
- Peggy C Madsen
- Joan Miller
- George Prawitt
- April Ritzinger
- Sharon Spinney
- Kristin Stevens
- John R. Tanner
- Sandra Vanta
- Lynn Walker
- Roslyn White
- Robert E. Whitney
- Gail Williams
- Russell Williams



Meadowlark on fence. Credit: Jessica Rockmane



A vole hitching a ride with a Short-eared Owl, Farmington Bay Wildlife Management Area, 2 February 2026. Credit: Ben

### Dark Sky Monitoring Progress

The Sky Monitoring Project of Weber County has completed its first year of seasonally measuring sky darkness. The data is being compiled by scientists in Audubon Rockies and Gilmor Sanctuary to share with those interested in keeping our skies dark for migrating birds and for other environmental benefits. Each season volunteers spend a couple hours at night measuring darkness. If you are interested in learning more about this, contact Laura Johnston at [laurajohns0150@gmail.com](mailto:laurajohns0150@gmail.com).



### Owl Pellets

Thanks to all who collected owl pellets for me 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

### Audubon Membership Application

Membership in Audubon automatically enrolls you as a member of Wasatch Audubon. When you join, you will receive four issues of Audubon magazine each year. Six issues of our chapter newsletter, *The Mountain Chickadee*, are on our website. To join as a new member with an introductory fee of \$20, please go to the following website:

[Audubon Membership](#)

### Calling All Bird Photographers

Several avid photographers regularly share their outstanding photos with us, but we know that many more of you are also stalking Utah's wild areas with your own cameras and professional lenses. We would be delighted to showcase your best work as well. If you have good photos of Wasatch bird life, please send it to WAS President Jen Hitt, at: [jenhitt@hotmail.com](mailto:jenhitt@hotmail.com)