



# The Mountain Chickadee

Newsletter of the Wasatch Audubon Society  
Volume 45, Number 3 ~ May / June 2026

## President's Corner

by Jen Hitt

Happy May! With birdsong filling the air, butterflies landing on blossoming trees, and temperatures warming up, it's officially spring!

Spring migration is well underway in northern Utah. On our March field trip to Antelope Island, we were excited to see that snowy plovers, long-billed curlews, and black-necked stilts had returned. The Cornell Lab has a great tool for monitoring the status of migration; check out BirdCast for Weber County [here](#). Using BirdCast, you can get an idea of the number and types of birds migrating each night. We can help birds find their way by dimming our yard lights during migration. Bright lights can be disorienting and can disrupt their flight patterns. Light fixtures that focus light down rather than up can also be a big help.

Hummingbirds were reported in Utah as early as March this year, so now is a great time to put up your feeders. For an easy hummingbird nectar recipe and helpful information about feeding hummingbirds, see the National Audubon Society website [here](#). Another way to help hummingbirds is to plant native plants in your yard. Utah State University has published a great article about attracting hummingbirds to your garden using native plants, and it can be accessed [here](#).

In addition to all the migrating birds, May also bring the return of the Great Salt Lake bird fest-

ival. At the time I'm writing this letter, there are still several field trips with spots available. In addition, there will be free lectures and workshops at the Legacy Sports Complex in Farmington. If you participate, we'd love to have you stop by the Wasatch Audubon Table at the festival to say hi. Learn more about the festival and register [here](#).

Don't forget to check out the calendar section of the newsletter for our upcoming bird walks and field trips. Spring is an incredible time to bird in Utah, and we would love to have you join us!

I hope to bird, or talk birds, with you soon!

Jen



Yellow-headed Blackbird at Farmington Bay, 21 March 2026. Photo: Benjamin A. Johnson.

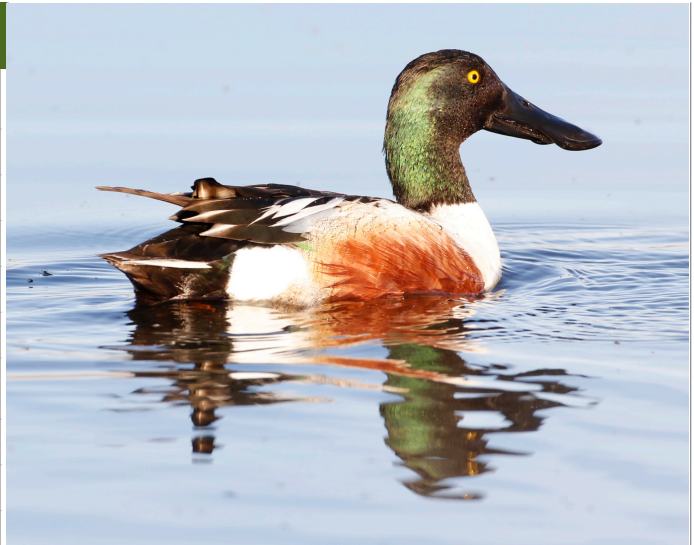
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**About Us**

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. You might also want to visit our website at:

<http://www.wasatchaudubon.org>



Northern Shoveler at Farmington Bay, 21 March 2026. Photo: Benjamin A. Johnson



Acorn Woodpecker; Filoli Estate, San Mateo, California. Photo: Ethan Eisenbarth



Golden-crowned sparrow; Sawyer Camp Trail, San Mateo, California. Photo: Ethan Eisenbarth

## Conservation Corner

### The Potential of Geothermal Energy

by Lynn Carroll

Climate change due to the heat-trapping effects of greenhouse gases remains the greatest threat to people and birds. It's frustrating to see our state and federal leaders pushing back against transitioning to clean energy. That's why I am excited by what I learned from Logan Mitchell, a scientist with Utah Clean Energy. He spoke about the potential for "next generation" geothermal systems to help decarbonize our electrical grid.

Hydrothermal (heat+water) resources can power turbines to generate carbon-free, renewable, continuous electricity independent of the time of day or weather. However, only about 0.5% of electricity in the U.S. is currently produced this way. That's because conventional geothermal systems rely on naturally-occurring underground reservoirs of hot water in the right sort of rock formations, an uncommon combination.

Other ways to use the heat of the earth for clean electrical generation are being explored, using three approaches. One is called enhanced geothermal systems (EGS). It involves drilling deep to hot rock, then using hydraulic fracturing to create the permeability needed to circulate and heat water. More wells are drilled to pipe hot water from this reservoir to the power plant and back after the heat has been transferred. The second is an advanced, or "closed-loop," system (ACS). Multiple long loops of tubing take water from the surface, past hot rock to absorb heat, and up to a power plant at the surface where the heat is exchanged, and the water cycles back. The third, "super hot rock," is too expensive, because drilling to the great depth required is difficult. That's except where molten rock is near the surface at an Oregon site, where high energy output is achieved. These three systems are referred to as "next generation geothermal."

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has been

funding research and demonstration projects, and it continues, along with tax breaks, under Trump. Much of this is happening in Beaver Co., UT, at the Frontier Observatory for Research in Geothermal Energy (FORGE). One of the successes at FORGE has been increasing drilling rates, which lowers the cost of drilling, a major capital expense. While it uses techniques developed for oil and gas, geothermal drilling is especially challenging, because it often must go through granite.

Next door to FORGE, Fervo Energy started an EGS project in 2023. Its first phase is expected to be operational this October, much faster than its competitor, nuclear energy! Two more will follow. Environmental impacts are small compared to other energy sources. Less land is used than for solar. The fracking water doesn't have chemicals like natural gas. Earthquakes induced by drilling are possible, but so far minor. Unfortunately, water will be consumed; it's not clear how much, but Fervo's modeling says it will be less than coal or gas plants consume for the same amount of power.

There are benefits for Utah. Workers in the natural gas industry here can easily be retrained to do the same jobs in geothermal projects. With available subsidies, the price of the electricity should be competitive with gas and is sure to go down over time. Geothermal generation can be made "dispatchable," meaning it can be turned up or down, on or off, as needed.

These next-generation geothermal power plants could be developed almost anywhere in the country, unlike conventional geothermal. This is exactly what this country needs: more clean, always available, dispatchable, affordable electricity.

## Youth Corner

## The Importance of Maintaining Biodiversity

by Abigail Johnson

In our neighborhoods and all around us there is a diverse network comprising vast numbers of species, from large to microscopic. A truly remarkable ecosystem is located not far from us. I am talking about the big salty puddle in the middle of northern Utah, the Great Salt Lake. Most people don't realize it, but this lake supports many species of animals in Utah, from brine shrimp to birds of all kinds. In addition to all the wildlife, it supports humans too, without their even realizing.

This ecosystem is a vital habitat for over 10 million migratory birds of more than 330 species. The salty water is home to brine shrimp and brine flies that serve as the primary food source of half the world's Eared Grebe population along with the largest breeding colony of the American White Pelican. Other species include spiders, bison, antelope, California gulls, and Wilson's phalaropes. All of these animals create the beauty we see today and the balance of life is achieved.

But this amazing biodiversity and food web has been severely harmed by human activities, principally water overuse. As water levels recede to record-low levels, toxins are released into the air and can harm us. The decreasing water levels have exposed and are killing microorganisms that provide food for invertebrates that live in/near the lake. Fewer invertebrates mean less food for birds and reptiles. In the end, this means that the whole food chain could collapse due to lower lake levels. Another problem caused by the shrinking lake is loss of habitat and nesting sites. This means that more nesting sites are vulnerable to predators like coyotes and foxes. Ultimately, the lower lake levels are impacting the biodiversity and food web in a negative way.

You might wonder what we can do to help recover the lake and all the life it supports. Some solutions are easy, but others are complicated. Some solutions include using less water by xeriscaping your yard, which uses less water. Another way to help is by joining WAS and other groups that are trying to raise awareness about the importance of the lake. Other groups include "Save Our Great Salt Lake", "Utah Rivers Council", etc. Helping promote awareness in our communities is also something we can all do.

## Temporary Auto Route Closure / Alternate Route - Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge

The Refuge's regular Auto Tour Route will be closed starting on Saturday, April 4 through mid-September due to a planned maintenance project. During this time period, an alternate route will be available for the public to drive. More information about the closure, alternate route, and project can be found [here](#). Information is also available at the Visitor Center and at Refuge kiosks.



Red-winged Blackbird at Farmington Bay, 21 March 2026.  
Photo: Benjamin A. Johnson.

### May and June Bird Walks

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](#)

May 13 - **Buffalo Ranches Pond:**

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

**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) **P, L, B**

May 20 - **Ogden Botanical Gardens and Parkway:**

**7:00 AM** Breakfast Dylan's in Ogden, 981 12<sup>th</sup> St., Ogden

**8:00 AM** [Meet in front of Ogden Botanical Park, 1750 Monroe Blvd.](#) **R P L B**

May 27 - **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**

June 3 - **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 Bountiful Pond parking lot.](#) **R P/U L B**

June 10 - **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 17 - **Pineview North Arm Natural Area:**

**7:00 AM** Breakfast Dylan's in Ogden, 981 12<sup>th</sup> St., Ogden

**8:15 AM** [Meet in North Arm Natural Area Parking Lot](#) Off of Highway 158, just past 2200 North Eden, UT 84310

June 24 - **Little Mountain Rail Trail:**

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

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

July 1 - **Kaysville Ponds**

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

**8:00 AM** [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

### June Meeting

Our June meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 16 at 7:00 pm. Dan Johnston and Dallin Henderson will be presenting Birding 101. They'll talk about identifying common local birds, using field guides, and tracking the birds you see. Please let all your budding birder friends know about this one. 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.

### Future Field Trips

**May 23 Bear River Bird Refuge Saturday 8:00 am**

Meet at the Visitor Center parking lot. The regular auto route is under construction so we will take the alternate route on the D-line. We hope to see migrating shore birds, a variety of hawks and White Pelicans. Western Meadowlarks will be serenading us. Mostly done in car. Bring water. We should be done by noon. Restroom available.

**June 20 - 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. We will follow it to East Canyon Reservoir and go to Jeremy Ranch Road (a dirt road). We will check out the historical markers and birds along the way, ending at Mormon Flats. Target birds: Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Dusky Grouse, Hermit Thrush, American Dipper. Mostly done in car, restrooms along the way. Leader Dan/John.



Nesting Sandhill Crane near Henefer, Utah, 7 April 2026. Photo: Dennis Collins.

**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.

- |                |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|
| Eric Bostrom   | Kirby Family      |
| G Neil Clawson | Ronald Kunzler    |
| Dee Cutrera    | John Mijer        |
| Tully Frain    | Nina Sumi         |
| James Fronk    | Peggy Vandegriffe |
| David Hadley   | Nita Vono         |
| James L. Hill  | April Wale        |
| Stacey Kennedy |                   |

**Field Trip Report**

**by Dan and Laura Johnston**

On March 21<sup>st</sup>, we enjoyed a sunny, 70°F day at Antelope Island. (No, Antelope Island is not in Arizona!) There were a lot of us – 27 birders participated. Along the Causeway, we spotted a pair of Snow Plovers, a couple Long-billed Curlews and Black-neck Stilts, and hundreds of American Avocets. Our next stop was Ladyfinger Point where we saw a pair of Rock Wrens, a few Chukars, a Northern Mockingbird and a Loggerhead Shrike. It was a triple owl day with a dozen Burrowing Owls, a Great-horned Owl, and a Barn Owl. As for mammals, we saw a large herd of female and yearling Bison and a couple dozen Pronghorns.



Intrepid participants in the East Canyon field trip. Photo: Dallin Henderson

**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 Gillmor 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](#)



White-tailed kite; Coyote Hills Regional Park, Alameda, California. Photo: Ethan Eisenbarth.

**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 really good photos of Wasatch bird life, please send it to WAS President Jen Hitt, at: [jenhitt@hotmail.com](mailto:jenhitt@hotmail.com)