



The Mountain Chickadee

Newsletter of the Wasatch Audubon Society
Volume 45, Number 5 ~ September / October 2026

President's Corner

Greetings from Wasatch Audubon!

I hope that you've had a terrific summer and have been able to get out and enjoy the birds. Despite the continuing high temperatures, autumn is getting closer and the fall migration is coming. As the days become shorter, birds will start making their way toward their winter grounds, stopping periodically to fuel up. Keep an eye out for rarities at migrant stopover sites like Garr Ranch on Antelope Island, Bountiful Pond, or the Salt Lake International Center. As always, dimming or turning outdoor lights off during the migration will help birds navigate.

We've been out looking for interesting birds each week on our Wednesday walks. One of the most noteworthy walks we had since my last writing took place in July at the Kaysville ponds. There, we found a great-tailed grackle that was entangled in fishing line and bound to a tree branch. Thankfully, Davis Swanson, a recent Weber State graduate with experience handling birds as part of the college's bird banding program, was with us, and he was able to safely extricate the bird.

If this sounds familiar, it may be because I wrote about a similar situation on a bird walk early in 2025. Finding two birds tethered to vegetation by fishing line in as many years really highlights what an extensive problem this is. Please watch for stray fishing line when you're out for a walk, birding, or walking your dogs. Picking up the line and disposing of it properly can have a huge positive impact on birds and other wildlife.



Davis Swanson unwinds fishing line from a great-tailed grackle.
Photo: Jen Hitt.

We will continue to get out for bird walks each week through autumn. Check the calendar for dates and locations. On October 3, we will have our annual Bluebird Nest Box Clean-up in Monte Cristo, east of Ogden on Highway 39. The birds will not nest in boxes that have a previous year's nesting materials in them, so this is really important. Thank you to everyone who can come out to help!

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Wasatch Audubon Society

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Vice President	Dallin Henderson	801-309-7285
Secretary	Sharen Perry	801-392-9554
Treasurer	Joan Miller	717-448-5480
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
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Programs		
Historian	Ruth Davis	801-309-0425
Publicity	Arnold Smith	801-829-3383
Hospitality		
Newsletter	Steve Aird	steven.d.aird@gmail.com

About Us

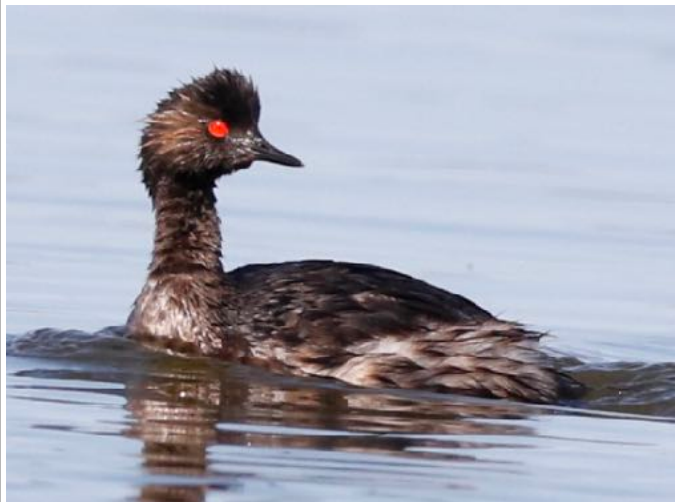
The Wasatch Audubon Society is an association of people who share an interest in birds, all natural things, and Utah's varied habitats. Our goals include: educating ourselves and others about wildlife and the natural environment; enjoying the outdoors in fellowship with others who share similar values, 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. You might also want to visit our website at:

<http://www.wasatchaudubon.org>

On Saturday, October 10, we will be holding our annual Big Sit fundraiser in the parking lot of the Eccles Wildlife Education Center. The Big Sit is a yearly event, in which groups from around the world participate by setting up a circle with a 17-foot diameter, and sitting in that location to count birds. We would love to have you drop by and count birds with us for a few hours that day! If you can't join us, we would appreciate your support by collecting pledges from your friends and neighbors. Funds received from this event will be used to continue our education, bird feeder, and other programs.

I hope to bird with you soon!

Jen Hitt



Eared Grebe. Ambassador Duck Club, 17 August 2026. Photo: Ben Johnson.



Kestrel. Little Mountain Rail Trail, 24 June 2026. Photo: Joan Miller.

Gillmor Volunteer Days – Fall 2026

by Chelsea Cameron

Join Gillmor Sanctuary staff for a special opportunity to visit National Audubon Society's Gillmor Sanctuary, a 3,597-acre protected property that is typically closed to the public to protect important bird habitat. Located along the southern shoreline of Great Salt Lake, Gillmor Sanctuary provides vital nesting and migratory habitat for vast numbers of shorebirds, waterfowl, and other migratory birds.

Participants will help with hands-on habitat stewardship projects, have the opportunity to go birding with sanctuary staff, and experience a property that visitors typically do not have the chance to explore. It's a unique opportunity to contribute directly to habitat conservation while seeing some of the birds and landscapes that make Gillmor so important!

Sign up for one or more volunteer days. It's free!

Fall 2026 Volunteer Days

- Friday, September 18
- Saturday, September 26
- Friday, October 2
- Saturday, October 10
- Friday, October 16
- Saturday, October 24
- Friday, October 30 Time: 7:45 AM–12:30 PM MDT

Host: Gillmor Sanctuary Staff

Limit: 25 people per volunteer day

The meeting location will be provided with confirmation of registration. Please provide your own transportation; carpooling is encouraged.

What to bring: Water, snacks, warm layers, waterproof boots, gardening gloves, sun protection, and binoculars

Difficulty: MODERATE

Registration required: <https://www.mobilize.us/audubon-rockies/event/1004377/>



Volunteers assisting with invasive plant management at Gillmor Sanctuary. Dalmatian toadflax weevils were collected and redistributed onto patches of Dalmatian toadflax as a form of biological control. These weevils specifically target toadflax. Adults feed on the leaves and stems, while larvae develop inside the plant tissue, gradually weakening it and reducing its spread. Photo: Chelsea Cameron.



California Quail. Kaysville Ponds, 1 July 2026. Photo: Joan Miller.

Conservation Corner

Good News and Bad News about Clean Energy

by Lynn Carroll

Birds and people are suffering from drought and fires made worse by global warming, so we cheered at news of increased solar energy generation in Utah. News outlets reported that during May this year, nearly one terawatt-hour of energy was produced by photovoltaic panels, the most ever here. That was about 33% of energy generation in the state, edging out natural gas (2%), and coal (28%). Wind and other renewables made up most of the rest. Of course, solar cannot provide a third of our electricity year-round. There isn't enough battery storage yet, but the upward trend is good. The bad news is that much of the new solar power (up to 685 MW) is going to Meta's Utah Co. data center.

Another good trend is the surge in wind generation in Wyoming. Since wind generation is highest in the winter, it complements solar well. Rocky Mountain Power (RMP) is the division of PacifiCorp that serves Utah, Idaho, and Wyoming. Previously, the majority of electricity provided by RMP in winter had been produced in its coal-fired Utah plants until PacifiCorp put new turbines into one of its Wyoming wind farms last year. Last December and January, more of our electricity was generated from wind than from coal or gas.

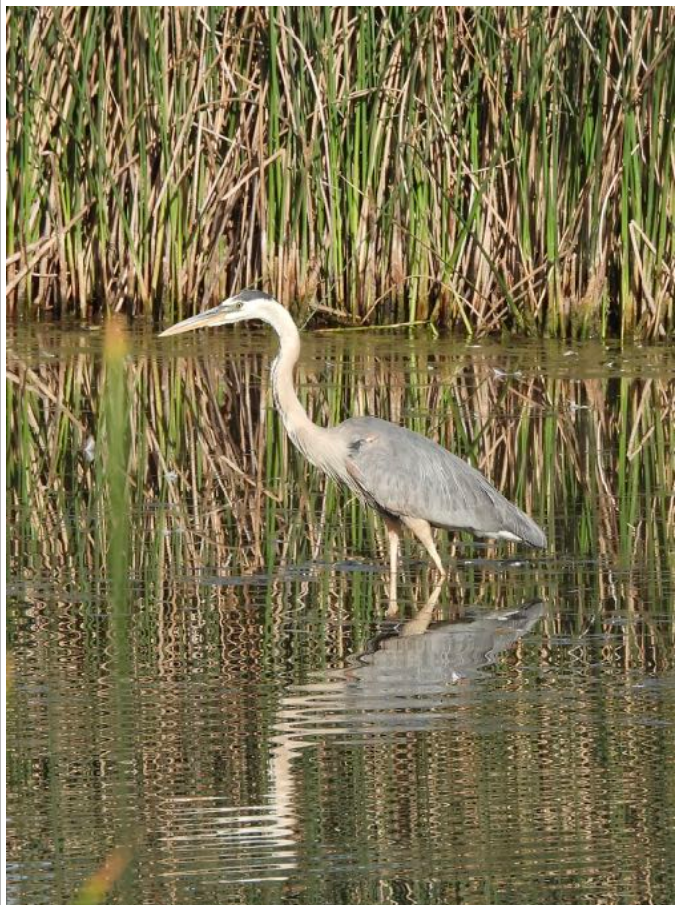
Federal tax incentives for wind and solar are being phased out, so PacifiCorp has suspended plans to build more. Meanwhile they plan to buy more wind and solar from third parties, which is good. RMP is gradually reducing the amount of coal it burns, but they keep pushing back the planned retirement of their coal-burning power plants, with encouragement from our legislature. The latest Integrated Resource Plan projects that they will continue to use coal into the 2040s.

Reducing climate-warming pollution is urgent. The state's interest in geothermal and nuclear energy is good, since it should speed research

and development. The bad news about nuclear is that it's a poor choice in the arid West. There are no working models of the much-discussed small modular reactors in the U. S., so we don't know how much water they will require, but it's probably too much.

There is a final bit of good news for residents of Ogden City. We are part of the Utah Community Clean Energy Program. In early 2027, we will begin financially supporting additional new local, utility-scale clean energy. The bad news is the extra \$4 on our power bills, unless we opt out. The good news is that that amount won't go up, and might even go down. The goal is to add enough clean electricity generation to what RMP provides other customers to reach net 100% clean energy within a few years.

Source: Salt Lake Tribune, Aug. 4 2026, which used data from Ember Energy Research and the U.S. Energy Information Administration.



Great Blue Heron. Kaysville Ponds, 1 July 2026. Photo: Joan Miller.



Snowy Egret. Great Salt Lake Nature Trail, 3 July 2026.
Photo: Ben Johnson.



Bullock's Oriole. Riverdale Trail South, 8 July 2026. Photo:
Joan Miller.

Future Events

September-October Bird Walks

September 2 - 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

September 9 - 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

September 16 - 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

September 23 - 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

September 30 - Pineview North Arm Natural Area:

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

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

October 7 - Buffalo Ranches Pond:

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

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

October 14 - 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. [4240 Country Hills Drive, Ogden 84403](#). **R P/U L B**

October 21 - 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**

October 28 - Dale Young Nature Park in Perry, UT:

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

8:15 AM Meet at [Dale Young Nature Park](#), 1200 Davis Street, Perry, UT 84302. **R L B**

November 4 - Woodland Park, Farmington:

7:00 AM Meet at Dylan's in Kaysville Kaysville, 185 N. Main St., Kaysville

8:00 AM [300 South 200 East in Farmington](#) **R P/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



Black-Headed Grosbeak feeding recently fledged young. Green Pond, 29 July 2026. Photo: Amanda Su Conklin.

September Field Trip

On **Saturday, 19 September**, we will be going to the Bear River Bird Refuge.

Meet at the Visitor Center parking lot at **8:00 AM**. We will follow the 12-mile auto tour loop through the heart of the Refuge. We hope to see migrating shorebirds, a variety of hawks, White Pelicans, and possibly Tundra Swans. Mostly done in the car, restrooms available. Trip leaders Jen/Joan.

The Big Sit

This year's event will be held at the **Robert N. Hasenyager Nature Reserve at Farmington Bay, Saturday, 10 October**, from **4:00 AM to 8:00 PM**

Just south off the western end of Glover Lane in the parking lot of the Eccles Wildlife Education Center. The entrance is through a gate on the south side of Glover Lane. Bring a chair, lunch, water, and your binoculars. **R, P, L**

Bluebird Nest Box Cleanout

It's time to clean out nest boxes so they will be ready for 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 on 3 October**. 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 for a picnic afterwards.

This is an off-trail hike with elevation.

October Meeting

Our October meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 20 at 7:00 pm. We will be joined by Punita Koustubhan, Chair of Great Salt Lake Audubon's Bird Safe Utah program. Punita will talk to us about the Bird Safe Program, and what they are doing to prevent window collisions. Join us in person at the Ogden Nature Center located at 966 W 12th Street in Ogden or attend virtually via Zoom.

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.

Crystal Abernathy	Pennie Magee
Elaine Aliberti	Malia Manske
Tyler Anderson	Michael McAuliffe
Rose Baldwin	Joe McDonald
Nikki Blandford	Miss Sam Mello
Shawn Buchanan	Michael Moran
Jeff Burnett	Pamela Oberg
Nora Button	Wade Owen
Ruth Carmona-Murray	Monika Petrowski
Genevive Coleman	Rhett Potter
Linda Dever	Danie Probst
Ron Franzen	Tera Purkey
Brent Frost	Justin Santos
Ceci & Scott Galva	Ernie Schneider
Marcus Hadlock	Michael Scott
David Hamilton	Karen Stephenson
Lamar Harvey	Holly Sutliff
Deanna Hill	Stacy Van Hook
Lynda Jenson	Thomas Vining
Deanna Johansen	Phil Wagner
N. Kemeny	John H Whitby
Zia Lefay	Alexandria Wirth
William Lythgoe	Ingrid Wuenschel

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.

July Field Trip Report

by Dan Johnston

On July 18, 26 participants traveled to Monte Cristo in 8 vehicles. Along the route we saw Purple Martins flying overhead. Western Warbling Vireo fledglings were spotted begging for food from their parents. Four types of woodpeckers were seen: Red-naped Sapsucker, Northern Flicker, Downy Woodpecker and Hairy Woodpecker. In Randolph we found a couple Common Nighthawks roosting in trees at the park, along with fledgling American Kestrels. By mid-day it was hot, so on the way to Bear River all we saw was a field of 23 Sandhill Cranes. At Bear River, more than 20 Black-crowned Night Herons flew out of a grove of Russian Olive Trees. In total, 49 species were seen.



Western Warbling Vireo feeding its recently fledged offspring. We saw many western warbling vireo families during the Monte Cristo field trip. Photo: Richard Shaw.



Common Yellowthroat. Farmington Bay, 27 June 2026. Photo: Ben Johnson.

Dark Sky Monitoring Progress

Measuring the darkness of the night sky during the rainy season proved impossible in August this year due to sky cover. We must have a predicted sky cover of no more than 10% to proceed on a given dark sky night. It just didn't happen. So, our team of about 20 volunteers is hoping dark sky nights are clearer in September. Keep your fingers crossed! For more information on this seasonal effort, or to sign up, here is a [link](#).



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](#)



Brown-Headed Cowbird. Farmington Bay Wildlife Management Area, 27 June 2026. Photo: Ben Johnson.

Help Wanted

by Lynn Carroll

I'm slowing down and need help with responsibilities I have assumed. As WAS Membership Chair, I track who is officially an Audubon Society member, using lists I receive each month from the national organization. This task requires a computer. I share the Conservation Chair with John Bellmon. We report on issues in Utah that affect the environment, especially birds, and find ways that our members can help. I write a Conservation Corner column for this newsletter. If you would be interested in writing some or all of these columns, or in serving as Membership Chair, please contact me (bradlynncc@comcast.net).

In addition, WAS still needs a Program Chair. To help with any of these matters, or to lead another conservation project of your choice, contact John, Jen Hitt, or myself. Phone numbers for all of us are found on page 2. Thanks!

John Nelson Award Presented to Jay Stretch



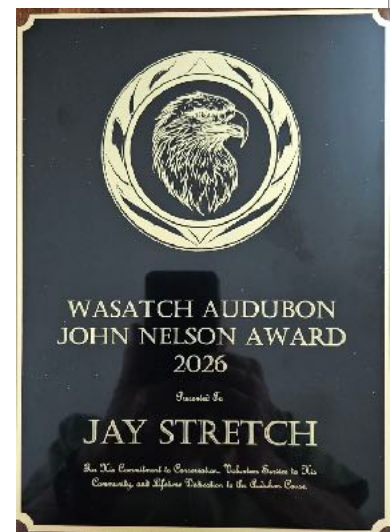
Jay Stretch receives the John Nelson Award.

L to R: Laura and Dan Johnston, Jay Stretch, John Bellmon, Jen Hitt and a canine admirer.

The Wasatch Audubon John Nelson Award was recently presented to Jay Stretch. This award is given to recognize years of commitment to conservation, volunteer service to the community, and lifetime dedication to the Audubon Cause. Jay has been a member of Wasatch Audubon for over 20 years, and during that time he has served as President, Vice President, Treasurer, as a member of the Board of Directors, and in many other capacities.

Jay has always helped with our field trips, Christmas Bird Counts, and work projects, such as the Bluebird Nest Box Trail. He was instrumental in getting our chapter involved with Youth Impact. This helped inner-city youth in Ogden develop an appreciation of nature through education and field trips. As the Zoom coordinator, Jay kept our chapter in contact during the COVID outbreak when we didn't have meetings. During his time as treasurer and assistant treasurer he advised us on important investment ideas and options for our funds. In all of our meetings and outings, he has been exceptionally helpful.

Throughout his time in the U.S. Air Force, Jay has been involved in local conservation groups wherever he was stationed. He had a very distinguished career as an Air Force pilot. Thank you, Jay, for your many years of admirable service!



Explanation of the John Nelson Award**by John Bellmon**

John Nelson was a team leader in the first Ogden Christmas Bird Count in 1980. He then served as a member of the planning committee that formed the Wasatch Audubon chapter in the greater Ogden area. John was instrumental in many activities that the new chapter instituted. He started the bird feeding program at the Ogden Nature Center in the early 1980s and many of the birding field trip locations that he selected have remained on our schedule to this day. John became an Audubon member in the 1940s. He was a big supporter of birding by ear and made many tapes of bird songs throughout the county, especially in Arizona. He was always a respected member of our chapter and valued for his input. The Wasatch Audubon John Nelson Award was created in the early 1990 in his honor.

Sage Thrasher. Antelope
Island Causeway, 19 August
2026. Photo: Joan Miller.



**Female Red-Winged Blackbird
with a dragonfly.** Farmington
Bay, 27 June 2026. Photo: Ben
Johnson.

Wednesday Bird Walks



Donner Trail. (20 June 2026). Photo: Dallin Henderson.



North Arm of Pineview Reservoir. (17 June 2026). Photo: Jen Hitt.



Willard Bay. (5 August 2026). Photo: Dallin Henderson