



# The Mountain Chickadee

Newsletter of the Wasatch Audubon Society

Volume 42, Number 2 March/April 2023

## WAS MONTHLY MEETINGS AND HAPPENINGS

A SPECIAL TREAT IN MARCH AND APRIL IS THAT BOTH PRESENTERS ARE WASATCH AUDUBON'S OWN!

### Tuesday March 21, 2023 7:00PM

Keith Evans, longtime Audubon member, previous WAS president, photographer, and bird expert, will present "Sparrows and Other LBJs." He will discuss some characteristics of our local sparrow species and relate some crossover facts with other hard to identify LBJs (little brown jobs).

### Tuesday April 18, 2023 7:00PM

Jay Hudson, longtime Audubon member, author, photographer, storyteller and trail-builder will entertain us with a slide presentation. If you remember Jay's presentation of a few years ago on the Australian outback, you can look forward to a similar program with surprises, humor and anecdotes.

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**Please note:** Monthly meetings will continue in a hybrid format until further notice. This means attendees can meet in person at the Ogden Nature Center Educational Building, or tune in via Zoom. (To get a link, see the box below.) This will allow more accessibility, as well as greatly increase the pool of speakers (especially from other locations), most of whom find it easier to present electronically.

## President's Corner

by John Bellmon

It is a real honor to serve as your President again. This is the very best organization that I have ever been associated with. It has the best people that are always friendly and helpful to everyone. Carol has said that she has never met an unfriendly Audubon member or birder. Thank you all for making this the organization that it is today.

When you look back to how it all started, it almost seems unreal that it has grown to what we have today. Back in 1980 when Dennis Collins and I put our heads together to start the Ogden Christmas Bird Count, we just wanted to set up an activity that was fun and that would add to the knowledge of the bird populations that we have during the winter. After that first count, so many participants had so much fun that they wanted to meet and have field trips monthly. So that is how our chapter got started. We had our

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**Lights out at night for  
spring migration  
April-June!**

## KEEP IN TOUCH WITH US!

Do we have your email address? We occasionally want to communicate with our members in between newsletters about **Zoom links**, changes in plans, new opportunities, or conservation action. If you want to know what's up and haven't been getting emails from WAS, please send a message to Lynn at: [bradlynnc@comcast.net](mailto:bradlynnc@comcast.net). For timely information, you can also go to our Facebook page by searching for Wasatch Audubon Society or clicking on the Facebook logo on our website ([www.wasatchaudubon.org](http://www.wasatchaudubon.org)). Also, sign up on Instagram (search for Wasatch Audubon) to get reminders of walks, etc.

**Wasatch Audubon Society**

Website: <http://www.wasatchaudubon.org>

President's Corner

cont. from pg. 1

**Officers**

President	John Bellmon	801-444-3704
Vice President	Ben Johnson	801-231-7008
Secretary	Sharen Perry	801-392-9554
Treasurer	Nancy Arnett	801-388-0637
Past President	Jay Stretch	801-721-9432

**Board**

2022/2023	Lynn Carroll	801-392-8216
2022/2023	George Muller	801-745-4035
2022/2023	Dan Johnston	801-645-8633
2023/2024	Abigail Johnson	
2023/2024	Leah Johnson	
2023/2024	Jen Hitt	801-540-5091
2023/2024	Susan Snyder	801-388-4201

**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
Historian	Ruth Davis	801-309-0425
Hospitality	Jeane Taylor	801-394-2813
Membership	Lynn Carroll	801-392-8216
Newsletter	Laura Johnston	801-458-9558
Programs	Susan Snyder	801-388-4201
Publicity	Arnold Smith	801-829-3383

**About Us:**

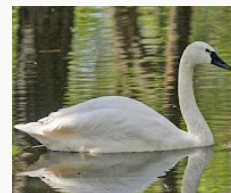
The **Wasatch Audubon Society** is an association of people who share an interest in birds, all natural things, and Utah's varied habitats. Our goals include: educating ourselves and others about wildlife and the natural environment; enjoying the out-of-doors in fellowship with others who share similar 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>.

first meeting in April of 1981, 42 years ago. It was held at the new Ogden Nature Center, meeting in the old farm house. The Ogden Mayor even attended, Mayor Durk.

Over all of these years we have grown into a great chapter with many activities that everyone enjoys. We have monthly meetings, field trips, Wednesday bird walks and many special events that we help and support. Some of those are Eagle and Swan Days, the Great Salt Lake Bird Festival, Earth Day, the Great Back Yard Bird Count and our Big Sit (fund raiser).

We have the greatest members – they help and support the chapter's many activities and projects. Over the years we have lost many of our dear original members who helped start our chapter. They are sorely missed by all of us that knew them, worked with them, and birded with them. We thank them for their assistance and advice on many things and for their help on many bird identification questions (always, how do you know it is \_\_\_\_\_). We are still dedicated to the organization's original purpose and vision.

With everyone's help and advice, together we can see that our chapter continues to grow and promote its ideals into the future. Thank you for all that you do for the Wasatch Audubon Society!



***Come for the fun!***

**Bear River Refuge presents Swan Day. Lots of exhibits and activities—great for people of all ages. Go to [www.fws.gov/event/swan-day-2023](http://www.fws.gov/event/swan-day-2023) for all the information. Saturday March 11, 10:00am-4:00pm.**

**Conservation Corner: Colorado River Conundrum**

by Lynn Carroll

The Colorado River doesn't have enough water flowing into it to meet the needs of seven states, several tribes, and Mexico, which all have claims to some of it, because the Colorado or its tributaries cross their borders. How will the "Law of the River" be tweaked to adapt to the new reality? The Colorado River Compact of 1922 divided the states into two groups, the Upper Division (Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico), where most of the water originates, and the Lower Division (Arizona, Nevada, and California). The Upper Division is required to leave enough water in the river to deliver at least 75 million acre-ft (maf) over any 10-year period, supposedly half of the available water, downstream. A later treaty committed 1.5 maf/year of the river's water to Mexico. Each Division negotiated agreements to divide its portion among member states. Courts settled disputes and allotted water to Indian tribes. Lower Division states' shares are stated as specific volumes of water. Upper Division states' portions are percentages of the water available after the Compact obligation and some for Arizona are satisfied. Wildlife, of course, is ignored.

A 1968 law directs the Interior Secretary develop operating criteria for the Colorado River reservoir system. Thus, the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), which operates the dams, plays a large role in administering the Law of the River. A streamgauge at Lee Ferry, 15 miles below Glen Canyon Dam, is where the water leaving the Upper Division is measured. Since 2000, the average natural flow at Lee Ferry has declined by 33% per BOR! The Exec. Director of the Colorado R. Authority of Utah stated last month that the estimated average annual difference between water coming into the system and water being consumed is 1.5-1.6 maf. No wonder the combined volumes of water in Lakes Powell and Mead have dropped from 92% to 26% full since 1999.

After the first large drop, the 2007 Interim Guidelines were developed for operations at the two dams, which modified releases based on the elevations of Lakes Powell and Mead. At the beginning, releases from Powell were over 8 maf, and 7.5 or more maf were released from Mead. As the level in Mead fell, more water was released from Powell, and both kept falling. The hotter summers were increasing both water demand and evaporation from the reservoirs, and precipitation was variable.

Drought Contingency Plans (DCP) for Upper and Lower Basins were signed in 2019, with the purpose of keeping the reservoirs high enough to continue generating electricity as well as comfortably above "dead pool," the level where water cannot flow past the dam. The target levels are 3525 ft for Lake Powell and 1000 ft for Lake Mead. The main piece of the Upper states' DCP is release of water from Flaming Gorge and two smaller reservoirs to bring Lake Powell up to target. Two such releases have happened, totaling about 0.51 maf. The Lower Basin's plan is

*Continued on pg. 4*

**Welcome New and Rejoined Members**

- |                     |                 |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| Karin Bennett       | Catherine James |
| Diana Booker        | Justin Kani     |
| Jon Buck            | Dana Kerby      |
| Kevin Charles       | Keith Larsen    |
| Kenneth Cuddeback   | Diane Luke      |
| Carol M. Cunningham | Robin Roberts   |
| Jennifer Franci     | Randy Runolfson |
| H. Kent Gerber      | Raelyn Rusch    |
| Jo Haymond          | Rosmarie Schoof |
| Morey Haymond       | Evelyn Shaeffer |
| Alex Herzog         | William Ward    |

not clear to me. Regardless, BOR has been urging the seven states to come up with a plan to conserve 2-4 maf more per year than has been achieved. Last fall the Bureau announced their intention to prepare a supplemental environmental impact statement to the 2007 Interim Guidelines, so that they can change their operations in late 2023. The Interim Guidelines are set to expire in 2026, but they concluded that the risk of having inadequate water is too great if they wait. The states could have input by submitting an alternative to the BOR's plan.

All of the states except California agreed to a plan that will require the Lower Division to accept cuts to their water by the amount that is being lost to evaporation in the Lower Basin, about 1.5 maf. It also makes cuts to allocations at higher Lake Mead levels than before. California disagrees, because it's water would be cut the most even though it has higher priority water rights. The Upper Division states have offered only voluntary efforts. The final interim plan will probably be a compromise. The bigger argument will be over post-2026 operations.

If we were designing a plan that would benefit wildlife the most, it would probably be "fill Mead first," that is, let most of the water flow out of Powell, so that there would be less total evaporation, leaving more water in the river and flowing to the delta (or not). It's hard to imagine that happening.

**ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT IN THE BAG!**

Our Christmas Bird counts went off well this year, although we did face some cold, snowy weather. Along with participants all over the country, we gathered information important for the study of population trends of wintering species. This is possible because of our participants' strong efforts. Thanks to all who joined us!

**Ogden Valley:** Coordinated by Mike Hearell. Twenty one participants hiked, walked and drove 195 miles. They identified 61 species and a total of 2800 birds. Highlights were Gray-crowned and Black Rosy Finches (at a research station on Powder Mountain), the butcher bird (Northern Shrike), Sharp-tailed Grouse and Northern Pygmy Owl.

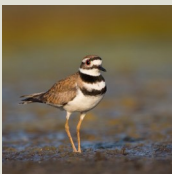
**Ogden:** Coordinated by John Bellmon. Braving a day of snow and cold, twenty four observers counted 92 species with a total of 22,904 birds. Highlights were Greater White-fronted Geese, Bonaparte's Gulls, Juniper Titmouse, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Bohemian Waxwings and a Townsend's Solitaire.

**Bear River Refuge:** Coordinated by John Bellmon. On a clear, calm but cold day, eleven observers counted 61 species and a total of 17,835 birds. Some unusual sightings were Bonaparte's Gulls, Short-billed Gull and a Lapland Longspur.

**Antelope Island:** Coordinated by John Bellmon. Kudos to those twenty three observers who braved a snow storm with strong North winds! They counted 51 species and a total of 2660 birds. Uncommon sightings were Long-eared Owls and a Bohemian Waxwing.

**Morgan:** Coordinated by Weston Smith. On a windy, snowy day, eleven observers sighted 61 species and 2971 individual birds. Noted birds were Bohemian Waxwings, Bald Eagles, and lots of Wild Turkeys.

**Two Upcoming Opportunities at Gillmor Sanctuary**



Located along the southern shoreline of Great Salt Lake, Audubon's 3,597-acre Gillmor Sanctuary provides vital habitat to vast numbers of shorebirds, waterfowl, and other migratory birds. It is an area of wide-open vistas and an abundance of wildlife attracted to wetlands and uplands restored and protected by Audubon. **1)** Volunteer for a restoration project (requiring only basic gardening abilities) on April 14, 15, and 22. More info and registration at: <https://act.audubon.org/a/gillmor-sanctuary-workdays>. **2)** Participate in a tour of the Sanctuary on April 8, 7:45-12:30. Sign up at <https://act.audubon.org/a/discover-gillmor-sanctuary-spring-migration>.

**CALENDAR**

March/April 2023



*Note: Arrangements for carpooling will be your own responsibility. Accessibility: Walks are no more than 1 1/2 miles, unless otherwise noted. See end of calendar for explanation of accessibility codes located at the end of each event.*

**MARCH**

**1 Wednesday 8:00am bird walk**  
**Farmington Pond/Mouth of Farmington Canyon,**  
**Farmington:** Meet in the lower parking lot at 750 N 75 W Farmington. Accessibility: **R P L B** Leader-Colin/Ben

**8 Wednesday 8:00am bird walk**  
**Bountiful Pond:** Take the 500 South exit off Legacy Highway, turn west; then follow the frontage road around and back to the north. A pre-bird walk species search will be held. Meet in the parking lot. Accessibility: **R P/U L B** Leader-Colin/Ben

**11 Saturday 10:00am-4:00pm Swan Day**  
**Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge Wildlife Education Center:** Located at 2155 W. Forest St, Brigham City, UT 84302. Take an auto tour of the refuge to see the swans and enjoy a variety of activities. . More details on pg. 2.

**15 Wednesday 8:00am bird walk**  
**Riverdale Trail South:** Meet at the trailhead off Riverdale Road at 700 W. Accessibility: **R P L B** Leader-Dan/John

**21 Tuesday 7:00pm WAS Meeting**  
**Ogden Nature Center or remote**  
 Keith Evans, longtime Audubon member, previous WAS president, photographer, and bird expert, will present a program on LBJs (little brown jobs). He will focus on local sparrows, sharing some crossover facts with other hard to identity LBJs.

**22 Wednesday 8:00am bird walk**  
**Kaysville Ponds:** Meet in the Botanical Center parking lot to walk the trail from there. Located at 920 S 50 W, Kaysville UT 84037 on the frontage road. Accessibility: **R P/U M B** Leader-Ben

**25 Saturday 9:00 am field trip**  
**Blue Valley/Golden Spike:** Meet At Northwest corner of Parking lot off I-15, 2700 N exit, to carpool or caravan. Bring lunch and water, as trip will last until mid-afternoon. Accesibility: **Minimal walking, stop for restrooms.** Leader-Susan

**29 Wednesday 8:00am bird walk**  
**Ogden Bay-North Parking Lot and Refuge:** Take 12th St. west to 7500 W. Turn south and go to the parking lot at end of road. Accessibility: **U L** Leader-Dan or John

**APRIL**

**4 Tuesday 7:00pm WAS Board Meeting**  
 Held remotely.

**5 Wednesday 7:30am bird walk**  
**GSL Shoreline Trail boardwalk West Layton:** 1002 S 3200 W. Take Gentile St. west and turn left on 3200 W, follow to end of the road, look for the boardwalk trail. Accessibility: **R P/U B L** Leader-Ben

**12 Wednesday 7:30am bird walk**  
**Little Mountain Trail:** Meet at the trailhead located at 2000 Won 4000 N (west of Smith and Edwards). Accessibility: **U L** Leader-Dan or John

**18 Tuesday 7:00pm WAS Meeting**  
**Ogden Nature Center or remote**  
 Jay Hudson, a long time Audubon member, author, storyteller and trail-builder, will present slides and stories. If you remember Jay's presentation on the Australian outback, you can look forward to a similar program with surprises, humor and anecdotes.

**19 Wednesday 7:30am bird walk**  
**Willard Bay:** Meet at the Pilot Flying J Travel Center (600 W 750 N, Willard) in the parking lot, south end. Exit I-15 at Willard and go east. Willard Bay is a fee area. Accessibility: **R P/U L B** Leader-Ben

**22 Saturday 9:00am field trip**  
**Lek and Loon Trip:** Meet at DWR office, 515 E 5300 S (Adams Ave.) in South Ogden at 6:00 am. We will caravan to the lek south of Henefer to observe the grouse from inside our vehicles. Target bids: Greater Sage Grouse, Bald Eagle, Common Loon, American Dipper and Northern Shrike. Accessibility: **Minimal walking, stop for restrooms.** Leader-John

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Calendar

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**APRIL**

**26 Wednesday 7:30am bird walk**

**Willard Bay:** Meet at the Pilot Flying J Travel Center (600 W 750 N, Willard) in the parking lot, south end. Exit I-15 at Willard and go east. Willard Bay is a fee area. Accessibility: **R P/U L B** Leader-Ben

**MAY**

**3 Wednesday 7:30am bird walk**

**Farmington Bay:** Meet on 1325 W (entrance to Farmington Bay Waterfowl Management Area), *not* GSL Nature Center. Accessibility: **R U L** Leader-Colin

**Accessibility Codes for walks and trips**

- R - Restroom available**    **P/U Combination**
- P - Paved trail**                    **L - Level trail**
- U - Unpaved trail**                **M - Moderately level trail**
- B - Benches available**

**CONTACTS FOR WALKS AND TRIPS:** Dan Johnston 801-645-8633, John Bellmon 801-444-3704, Ben Johnson 801-231-7008

*Appreciating an Irruption*  
The Bohemian Waxwing Invasion  
by Ben Johnson



(Photo by the author, Kaysville, January 2023)

As you may already be aware, Bohemian Waxwings (*Bombycilla garrulus*) have come to Utah in [record numbers this winter](#).<sup>1</sup> They have arrived in flocks small and large especially in [Davis](#) and [Weber](#) counties.<sup>2</sup> Some of our own bird-watchers within Wasatch Audubon have seen large flocks

numbering in the hundreds or more, with one member counting a state-record flock of 1700+ birds! This phenomenon is known as an 'irruption year.' Penn State University delightfully defined an irruption as: "...years when finches and other species that generally winter in the boreal forest of Canada and the far north, move south to the **joy** and **amazement** of bird enthusiasts."<sup>3</sup> If you have been lucky enough to see these beautiful birds this winter, you would probably agree that this experience has been both joyful and amazing!

Many of these sightings have been in the Kaysville and Fruit Heights area where the author lives. In all, since mid-December when they arrived by the dozens in my backyard, I've been fortunate enough to record 17 sightings of Bohemian Waxwings (banding code: BOWA), with at least one sighting per week since 12/13! I noticed that BOWAs frequently mixed in with other species when they first arrived in the late fall/early winter. As winter advanced, they seemed to separate more and more and were flocking mostly with only other Bohemians.

As Utahns we're not alone in enjoying this irruption, our neighboring state of Colorado has also been experiencing an influx of Bohemians. The Denver Post even took notice and featured the spectacle with an article in its '[Outdoors](#)' section on 2/2.<sup>4</sup>


BOWAs are related to a regular year-round Utah resident, the Cedar Waxwing [CEDW] (*Bombycilla cedrorum*), but are larger, greyer overall and are distinguishable by their prominent and unique chestnut-colored undertail coverts (visible on the picture above), which the CEDW lacks. Bohemians got their name from their unconventional, wandering and ostensibly carefree lifestyle.<sup>6</sup> Like their close relative, BOWAs eat a lot of fruit, specifically in the winter months, when berries make up a majority of their diet (in particular, mountain ash and juniper berries are critical). However, unlike Cedars, BOWAs eat many insects in the summer, and even fly out to catch insects in midair like flycatchers would!<sup>7</sup>

BOWAs make cup nests lined with grass and feathers, up to 20 feet off the ground in a tree, often a spruce.<sup>8</sup> They have 4-6 eggs with both parents feeding the nestlings who leave just 14-18 days after hatching.<sup>9</sup> The family groups may remain close together through the first migration season.<sup>10</sup>

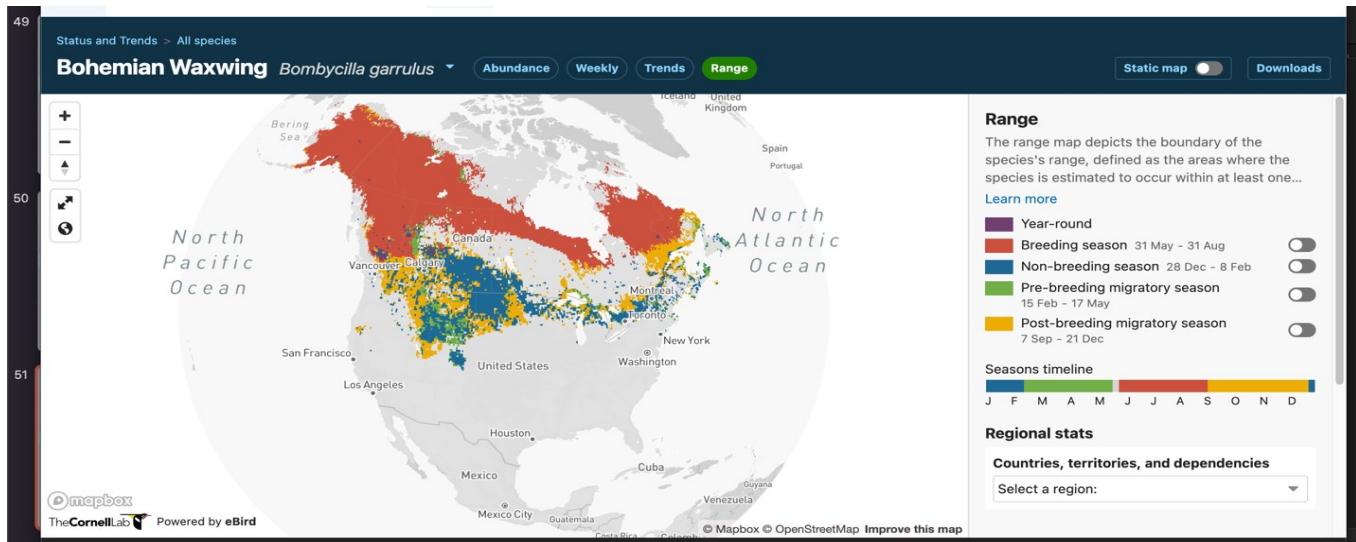
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Join the Intermountain West Spring Migration Shorebird Survey on April 24, 2023

For details, click on the QR code above or go to <https://forms.gle/Cni5MEKudhy2EvETA>



Bohemian Waxwings are a rare sight this far south, Cornell's eBird range map gives evidence of just how fortunate we are to have these boreal visitors right now:



My uncle, a prominent birder from Southern California; with well over 700 US species to his credit, gave me some perspective on just how rare this irruption is. He told me that he has only seen Bohemian Waxwings once in his lifetime of birding. This is a special thing to have this species in our midst right now. My hope is that we all can enjoy this irruption to its fullest, and perhaps if we are lucky enough, other irruptions like it in the future.

If you too have been able to see Bohemian Waxwings this winter wherever you are, give us a shout on social media on our Facebook or Instagram pages. Or join us for a Wednesday morning bird walk and tell us about in person. We hope to hear from you soon.



(Photo by the author at Kaysville Ponds, January 2023)

References

- 1- eBird data <https://ebird.org/map/bohwxw?bmo=1&emo=12&byr=1900&eyr=2023&env.minX=-112.494&env.minY=41.076&env.maxX=-111.419&env.maxY=41.434&gp=true>
- 2- eBird data <https://ebird.org/barchart?r=US-UT-011&yr=all&m=> and <https://ebird.org/barchart?r=US-UT-057&yr=all&m=>
- 3- Penn State University (2020). There's a New Bird in Town: Irruptions and Superflights accessible from: <https://extension.psu.edu/theres-a-new-bird-in-town-irruptions-and-superflights#:~:text=Every%20few%20years%20we%20have,and%20amazement%20of%20bird%20enthusiasts.>
- 4- The Denver Post, accessible from: <https://www.denverpost.com/2023/02/02/bohemian-waxwing-sightings-denver-colorado-rare-bird/>
- 5- eBird range map
- 6-10 Audubon birds app and Kaufman, Kenn (2001). Lives of North American Birds, p. 495.



**Wasatch Audubon Society**

P.O. Box 3211  
Ogden Utah, 84409

**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 and six issues of our chapter newsletter, **The Mountain Chickadee**, each year. To join as a new member with an introductory fee of **\$20**, please go to the following website:

<http://action.audubon.org/donate/chapter-membership?chapter=W54>

(By using this special page, you give our chapter credit toward a monetary reward)

Local Chapter: Wasatch Audubon Society – W54

**JOIN US ON FACEBOOK!**

Go to [www.wasatchaudubon.org](http://www.wasatchaudubon.org) and click on the FACEBOOK logo on the webpage.



**WASATCH AUDUBON SOCIETY  
MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE SUBSCRIPTION**

You can receive the Mountain Chickadee (6 issues) for just \$12, without joining National Audubon. If you would like to support Wasatch Audubon's education and conservation efforts, please indicate the amount of your contribution and include it in your check. Thank you.

\_\_\_ 1-YEAR MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE SUBSCRIPTION: \$12.00

\_\_\_ MY CONTRIBUTION TO WASATCH AUDUBON: \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

**SEND YOUR CHECK PAYABLE TO WASATCH AUDUBON TO:  
WASATCH AUDUBON SOCIETY  
P.O. BOX 3211  
OGDEN, UT 84409**