

# The Mountain Chickadee



Newsletter of the Wasatch Audubon Society

<http://www.wasatchaudubon.org>

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July/Aug 2012

## WAS Meetings and Happenings

**Tuesday August 21st**

**It's time once again for our annual potluck. The grills will be fired up and soft drinks will be provided. Bring a dish to share, your own meat to barbecue, dishes and utensils. Don't forget insect repellent. After dinner will be a time for socializing and sharing experiences. 7:00 PM at the Ogden Nature Center (966 W 12<sup>th</sup>).**

**Also check out the calendar for details on our field trips**

**July 21<sup>st</sup>  
Annual Flower Walk**

**August 25<sup>th</sup>  
Bear River Meadows**

## It's Baby Time!!!

The baby Barn Owls on Antelope Island are losing their "fuzz" and look more like the handsome adults. The baby Black-capped Chickadees have left (fledged) the nest box I provide outside our dining room window. The Mallard, Mandarin, Wood, and Gadwall female ducks at Beus Pond in South Ogden are now being followed by babies. There are reports of adult Yellow Warblers, Dippers, and more feeding young at various nest sites. At Willard Bay, we watched a young American Robin with its spotted breast imitating the food hunting behavior of an adult. Jack and I saw a small plover with one breast band and thought it might be a Semipalmated Plover until the "fuzzy" look gave it away - it was a baby Killdeer. Oh, yes, we also enjoyed the brood of Long-billed Curlews along the causeway to Antelope Island and by the time you read this, young Western and Clark's Grebes will be riding on the backs of their parents at Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge. And it isn't all birds - I've kept my camera busy taking photos of bison, pronghorn and mule deer young on Antelope Island.

The challenge of identifying the young birds can definitely enhance any outdoor experience. Learning to sit quietly while a young bird strengthens its wings and learns to fly on its own; watching the behavior of adult birds as the young leave the nest and begin to be less dependent on parental feedings; and tracking the molt sequences of the various birds as summer progresses are all experiences that enrich the appreciation and education levels of everyone who spends time out-of-doors.

The "productive" summer season is a critical time for wildlife to supplement their numbers for the future. We receive great pleasure from enjoying the antics of the young, and we also can facilitate that productivity. Providing nesting boxes helps the cavity nesters, and various feeding stations help the young gain weight and become prepared for migration or winter conditions (watch for the Wasatch Audubon Society sunflower seed fund-raising project in September). Probably the biggest help we can provide to all birds is to respect the nest site and minimize any disturbance to these critical nest-site activities.

Hope you have the opportunity to observe some of the babies this month. See you on the birding trail.

Keith Evans



**Wasatch Audubon Society**

Website: wasatchaudubon.org

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Secretary	Sharen Perry	801-392-9554
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**PRESIDENT'S PIPELINE**

*by Arnold Smith*

**48 Hour Mystery**

In March of 2012, four pairs of American Robins took up residency in our yard. By mid to late April, they were busy building nests. These nests were evenly placed in the yard: two in the back and two in the front; two in deciduous trees and two in Blue Spruce. Of the two in deciduous trees, one was by a back bedroom window and the other by the front living-room window.

We were delighted to watch the Robins as they went about hauling grass and mud to complete their architecturally sound nests. On April 29<sup>th</sup>, we were watching the nests from the house, and it seemed that incubation of the eggs was taking place. Yet 48 hours later, on May 1<sup>st</sup>, no Robins were going to the nests. There was no apparent activity at the nests for several days, and I assumed a predator had raided them.

The two front yard nests were very high in the trees, and the one in the Spruce was difficult to see. I decided to check out the two in the backyard, because they were low enough to look into with a mechanic's mirror. To my surprise, both contained 3 turquoise eggs sitting in neat, seemingly undisturbed nests.

Since 3 to 5 eggs is the normal clutch, the nests with 3 eggs may have contained full clutches – or not. I have seen cold weather cause birds to abandon nests, but the nest hidden high in the front Spruce Tree was still active. This pair was feeding fledging young on May 23rd and began working on a second nest on May 25th. Why were three nests abandoned and one not?

*Continued on page 6*

**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>

**Newsletter Articles:** Items for the next newsletter are due by the 15th of the month prior to the newsletter date. Send letters, articles, or comments to Melissa Hofer @ [mah3338@msn.com](mailto:mah3338@msn.com).

## **CONSERVATION CORNER**

*by Lynn Carroll*

### **Willard Spur Airboat Trip**

Ten members of Great Salt Lake Audubon and Wasatch Audubon Society were able to accept an invitation from the Utah Airboat Association to ride with them on the Great Salt Lake. Four airboats carried us on water that varied between two or three feet and two inches deep in the area called the “Willard Spur.” One purpose was to see where Great Salt Lake Minerals would like to expand its east-side operations. They called the area a “wasteland” and that may be how it appears in early fall when it’s dry most years. Actually it is part of a dynamic ecosystem.

What we saw on June 2<sup>nd</sup> was a patchwork in green and brown—islands of young green vegetation emerging from brown mud in shallow water. Bits of brown sago pondweed gave evidence that this duck food had recently been growing here and its tubers were waiting in the mud to spring to life again. Closer to shore was the bad news—walls of Phragmites Australis that might have blocked our passage if not for the airboaters’ workdays spent keeping the channel clear.

Of course we also wanted to see what birds were there. Speeding through the deeper water, we didn’t identify many of the ducks that flew from our path, but the grebes didn’t move far. They were feeding on the small fish that live in the fresh water coming from the Bear and Weber rivers. Pelicans congregated on the water farther away, and their fly-overs were beautiful, as usual. Avocets and stilts foraged in the water at their preferred depths. The best treats were the nesting birds. Our hosts knew of a colony of Snowy Egrets hanging out in a stand of young Phragmites. These birds appeared to have bent the supple reeds over to form nesting platforms.

Best of all was an island of grasses where White-faced Ibis had nests. Our arrival caused them to take to the air briefly, but they soon settled back to foraging or sitting on nests. We enjoyed seeing the multitude of colors produced by their feathers seen up close. California Gulls hanging out there reminded us that the Ibis would have to be vigilant against the gulls’ predations.

Other birds seen or heard included Yellow-headed Blackbird, Marsh Wren, American Coot, and Eastern Kingbird.

The WAS members who attended were Mark Elzey, Pat and Walt Bausman, and myself.

## **FIELD TRIP REPORT**

*By Les Talbot*

### **Box Elder County Hotspots June 2, 2012**

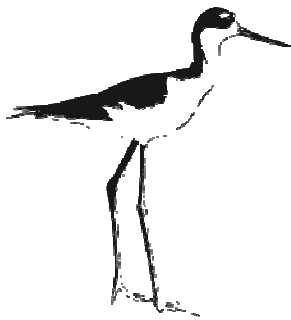
I have now named this trip the Box Elder County Hotspots. We travel to various places in the county and they have proven to be hotspots. We begin in the fields north of Brigham City to look for Bobolink. We then drive to Plymouth to look for Grasshopper Sparrow in the fields north of Nucor’s Steel Plant. Then we go up Johnson’s Canyon and down into White’s Canyon. From there we head south to Howell Reservoir and then go to Salt Creek WMA.

This trip held true to its name. There were an unusual number of Swainson’s Hawks throughout the trip.

Birds seen were: Bobolink, Starling, Red-winged Blackbird, Great Blue Heron, Western Meadow Lark, Common Raven, Western

Kingbird, Mourning Dove, Sandhill Crane, Grasshopper Sparrow, Horned Lark, American White Pelican, Lark Sparrow, Loggerhead Shrike, Rock Wren, American Kestrel, Swainson’s Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Lazuli Bunting, Bank Swallow, Brewer’s Sparrow, Sage Thrasher, Brown-headed Cowbird, Brewer’s Blackbird, Northern Harrier, House Sparrow, Cliff Swallow, Pied-billed Grebe, Ferruginous Hawk, Mocking Bird, Ring-necked Duck, Gadwall, Franklin’s Gull, American Coot, Mallard, Redhead Duck, Canada Goose, Northern Pintail, Ruddy Duck, Black-necked Stilt, Cinnamon Teal, American Avocet, California Gull, Killdeer, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Forster’s Tern, Turkey Vulture, and two Gopher Snakes.

The following were on the trip: Betty and Keith Evans, Jack Rensel, Sharen Perry, Dave Factor, Marily Gren, Howard Brower, Linda and Brian Ferguson and myself.



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## **MEMBER’S CORNER**

### **The Birdsong Trail**

*by Jay Hudson*

This trail was completed in 2006 and is considered one of the better in terms of birding, habitat variety, views and ease of grade. You can make a long loop by using city streets to get to the 22<sup>nd</sup> street trail head and then drop back down to the Rainbow Gardens.

The trail was laid out by Gib Wallace of the Ogden Trails Committee (OTC). Small, specialized bulldozers were used to complete the project. Labor was provided by volunteers from the OTC, Audubon, work release crews from the Weber County jail and Ogden City Parks and Recreation Department. The land was made available by an old pioneer family for purchase by Ogden City and an agreement was made with the owner of Rainbow Gardens.

The name “Birdsong Trail” was agreeable to all parties and avoided the differing interests of those who would have liked to have preserved family names. It was also a success for Audubon, which prefers to name trails, wetlands and other geographical locations after birds.

This successful naming program complements Audubon’s efforts to preserve land in its natural state while giving the public the opportunity to enjoy it through trails, boardwalks, blinds, towers, signage and viewpoints.

The Birdsong Trail offers many different types of trees, bushes and flowers. It offers views of the mouth of Ogden Canyon with its hanging water line, the golf course, the Police Department shooting range and the surrounding mountains in all directions. It is the location of a rare frog, song birds in the spring, quail, grouse and migrating birds. It can be ridden by bike or is a great family hike that takes about an hour round trip. Be sure to stop at the bench in the deep trees to enjoy the small waterfall, pond and year round birds.

*Birdsong Trail is the destination for Wasatch Audubon's Wednesday, July 11<sup>th</sup> Bird Walk – see the calendar for details.*

## HOME SWEET HOME

by *Keith Evans*

In addition to information on 150 birding hotspots, the book entitled, "Utah's Featured Birds and Viewing Sites" is full of information on habitat types. Is habitat as important as size, color, wing-bars, and bill shape for bird identification? Probably not, but being habitat aware sure helps. And, for the birds, habitat is everything. This month-by-month series is based on information from the book with a few antidotes to add interest.

**July in the High Country.** Finally, the mountain snow cover has been reduced to small patches on the north slopes and roads only used by snowmobilers a few months ago are open to auto traffic. By July, in the high elevation mountains of Utah, the flowers are blooming and the birds are singing – in some cases the mosquitoes are hungry. All roads heading east from the Great Salt Lake Valley go uphill. Three of the best are US-89 to Bear Lake, UT-39 from Ogden east over Monte Cristo Pass, and the Mirror Lake Road from Kamas, Utah, to Evanston, Wyoming. Every stop along these roads offers opportunities to identify flowers (bring a flower guide) as well as observe and listen to birds. Some characteristic birds include: Warbling Vireo, Red-naped Sapsucker, Western Tanager, Mountain Chickadee, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Chipping Sparrow and Mountain Bluebird. There are "specialty" spots throughout these areas: the Purple Martins at the Curtis Creek road just over Monte Cristo Pass on UT-39; the Cassin's Finch and Pine Siskins in the top of trees at the Bald Mountain picnic area on the Mirror Lake Road; and the American Dippers and Fox Sparrows observed along the Logan River on US-89. I remember driving towards Monte Cristo when a hen Dusky Grouse stood in the middle of the road and stopped all traffic. When all of her chicks made it safely across the road, the hen followed. This experience gave us a chance to talk about the recent split in the Blue Grouse group changing the name of what we always called Blue Grouse to Dusky Grouse. Those birders along the Pacific Coast now call their "Blue Grouse" the Sooty Grouse. Each

time I look at my photo of this Dusky Grouse, I'm reminded that you don't always need to rise early to enjoy a great bird sighting. I took this photo at high noon and the bird's shadow is projected directly down onto the paving.

**August in the Pinyon-Juniper Woodlands.** The pinyon-juniper woodlands (P-J habitat) are common in Utah and comprise almost 20% of the state. Due to arid conditions, this conifer woodland is often called the pygmy forest as trees are small. The P-J habitat is quite variable and occurs in small patches associated with the shrub-steppe type, the mountain shrub type, or the mixed conifer type, as well as in extensive stands covering large areas of the landscape. P-J bird species rarely found anywhere else during the breeding season include: Gray Vireo, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Gray Flycatcher, Pinyon Jay, and Juniper Titmouse. Because of the immense size of the P-J woodlands and the low productivity per acre, birds are rarely concentrated. The extensive size makes up for the low productivity when ranking the importance of the P-J woodlands. Many birders will say, "Don't go in August; it's hot and the summer birds have quit singing." This may be true, but consider that the specialty species numbers are the highest with all the juvenile birds of the season and many species begin to flock preparing for fall migration. In addition, there is a challenge in identifying many of the juvenile birds. When you become tired of hearing, "what flycatcher is that," the flocks of busy Bushtits, noisy Juniper Titmice, and flashing Chipping Sparrows provide a distraction from the non-descript flycatchers. The first time I visited the Clear Creek Campground in the Raft River mountain range managed by the Sawtooth National Forest, I was surprised to find P-J habitat. The Clear Creek Road is in the bottom of the valley and provides good birding for riparian species. However, the south facing slope (north of the east-west running road) is covered with a nearly pure stand of pinyon pine. I really enjoyed the flocks of Pinyon Jays mixed in with Gray Flycatchers and highlighting a diverse range of riparian and P-J birds.

**President's Pipeline** (cont. from page 2)

The only out-of-the-way thing I observed those last days of April was a Cooper's Hawk that entered the yard and landed in two of the trees that had abandoned nests in them. We still have several pairs of Robins foraging in our yard; but with the exception of the one successful pair, none seem to be building nests.

Perhaps I will never know the reason that three pairs of Robins abandoned their nests in that 48 hour period. Nature does have its mysteries!



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**Welcome New Members**

*by Paul Lombardi*

Please join us in welcoming those who recently joined Audubon and/or our chapter:

- |                   |                |
|-------------------|----------------|
| John Castro       | Cheryl Hensley |
| Virginia Chittick | Anne Johnson   |
| Terrie Clemons    | Sara Lee Neill |
| Marie Devey       | Bernard Ryan   |
| Alene Fornoff     | Alan West      |
| Marilyn Gren      |                |

Hope to see you at our next meeting or field trip!

Instead of complaining that the rose bush is full of thorns, be happy that the thorn bush is full of roses.

German Proverb

**MEMBERS CORNER**

**Call For Submissions**

Many of the columns/articles that appear in *The Chickadee* are submitted by our members. Some are regular contributors, while others may be a onetime treat! Please feel free to send me your ideas, photos, articles, etc. or anything you might like to share with our readers to:

Melissa Hofer at [mah3338@msn.com](mailto:mah3338@msn.com)



Office.microsoft.com

## CALENDAR

### July

**4 Wednesday** No Bird Walk  
HOLIDAY

**11 Wednesday 7:30/8:30am** Bird Walk  
**Bird Song Trail Area:** Meet at Dylan's (12th and Monroe) for breakfast or at the Trail Head (west parking lot area of Rainbow Gardens) at 8:30am.

**17 Tuesday 7:00pm** **No WAS Meeting**  
No meeting for July.

**18 Wednesday 7:30/8:15am** Bird Walk  
**Perception Park, South Fork:** Meet at Dylan's (12th and Monroe) for breakfast or at Smith's parking lot to carpool at 8:15 am.

**21 Saturday 8:00 am** Field Trip  
**Annual Flower Walk:** The flowers will be blooming the birds will be singing, so it is time for our annual flower walk at Monte Cristo Campground. Meet at Smith's (12<sup>th</sup> & Harrison, Ogden) at 8:00 a.m. Bring water and a lunch. (RSVP Les Talbot at 801-589-2591)

**25 Wednesday 7:30/8:15am** Bird Walk  
**Jefferson Hunt Campground:** Meet at Dylan's (12th and Monroe) for breakfast or at Smith's parking lot to carpool at 8:15am.

**8 Wednesday 7:30/8:15am** Bird Walk  
**North Arm Pineview Reservoir:** Meet at Dylan's (12th and Monroe) for breakfast or at Smith's parking lot to carpool at 8:15am.

**15 Wednesday 7:30/8:00am** Bird Walk  
**Willard Bay SP:** Meet at McDonald's (1838 W 2700 N just east of Exit 349 on I-15) for breakfast or 8:00am to carpool.

**21 Tuesday 7:00pm** **Annual WAS Potluck**  
**Ogden Nature Center** (966 W 12<sup>th</sup>):  
See Front Page for Details.

**22 Wednesday 7:30/8:00am** Bird Walk  
**Morgan's Mickelsen Mile:** Meet at McDonald's (5745 S. Harrison, Ogden) for breakfast or at 8:00am to carpool.

**25 Saturday 8:00 am** Field Trip  
**Bear River Meadows:** This is a good opportunity to see Black Tern. Also there are usually a lot of waterfowl along the meadow. Meet at Smith's (12<sup>th</sup> & Harrison, Ogden) at 8:00 am. Bring a lunch and water. We'll stop at the Creek turnoff to check out the Purple Martin. (RSVP Les Talbot at 801-589-2591)

**29 Wednesday 7:30/8:15am** Bird Walk  
**Maples CG, Snowbasin:** Meet at Dylan's (12th and Monroe) for breakfast or at 8:15am at Smith's parking lot to carpool.

### September

**5 Wednesday 7:30/8:00am** Bird Walk  
**Little Mountain Railroad trail:** Meet at McDonald's (1838 W 2700 N just east of Exit 349 on I-15) for breakfast or at 8:00 am to carpool. We'll walk south along the railroad grading from the parking lot on 4000 N. (This is the road leading west from Smith and Edward's.)

### August

**1 Wednesday 7:30/8:00am** Bird Walk  
**Ft. Buenaventura:** Meet at McDonald's (Riverdale Rd & 900 W) for breakfast or at 8:00am to carpool.

**7 Tuesday 7:00pm** **Board Meeting**  
The Board of Directors meets at 7:00 pm at the Ogden Nature Center (966 W 12<sup>th</sup>). All members are welcome.



*Wasatch Audubon Society*

P.O. Box 3211

Ogden, Utah 84409



**Audubon**

**Membership Application**

Please enroll me as a member of *Audubon* and of my local chapter, *Wasatch Audubon*. Send my membership card, and my annual subscriptions to *Audubon* magazine (6 issues) and *The Mountain Chickadee* (6 issues) to the address below. My check for \$20 (Introductory rate only) is enclosed.

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ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

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

Send this and your check for \$20, payable to Audubon to:

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P.O. Box 422250  
Palm Coast, Florida 32142-2250

Local Chapter: **Wasatch Audubon Society C9ZW540Z**



*Wasatch Audubon Society*

**Mountain Chickadee Subscription**

You can receive **The Mountain Chickadee** (6 issues) for just \$6, 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: **\$6.00**

My contribution to Wasatch Audubon: \_\_\_\_\_

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