



The Mountain Chickadee

Newsletter of the **Wasatch Audubon Society**

Volume 39, Number 4 July/August 2020

WAS Meetings and Happenings

As is usual, we will not have a membership meeting in JULY.

Tuesday, August 18, 2020 - 7:00PM

Due to the ongoing struggles with the coronavirus pandemic, we will not have our annual potluck/cookout in AUGUST. We look forward to resuming that tradition next year. We are holding our options open for possibly doing an evening bird walk, as we did in June. This depends on how the virus situation changes. Stay tuned to our Facebook page as August approaches, or call Dan at 801-645-8633

Meet at the Ogden Nature Center located at
966 W 12th St., Ogden
PLEASE JOIN US

JOIN US ON FACEBOOK!

Go to www.wasatchaudubon.org
and click on the FACEBOOK logo.

PRESIDENT'S PIPELINE

by Dan Johnston

With everyone needing to stay close to home, I decided The Corvid of the Month also needs to be something near home. The Corvid of the Month is the Western Scrub-Jay. I know many of you are thinking "Dan, there are no Western Scrub-Jays anymore." Hang in here with me. The Western Scrub-Jay, is a species of scrub-jay native to western North America. It ranges from southern Washington to central Texas and central Mexico. It was comprised of three distinct subspecies groups. Studies of its appearance, habitat, range and DNA were conducted. In 2016, they were separated into two species. They are the California Scrub-Jay and the Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay. The western Scrub-Jay was once lumped with the Island Scrub-Jay and the Florida Scrub-Jay; the taxon was then called, simply, the Scrub-Jay. While many refer to Scrub-Jays as Long-tailed Jays or Blue Jays, the Blue Jay is a different species of bird entirely.

Western Scrub-Jays are resident (non-migratory) within their range. Their diet varies by season. During the spring and summer, a large part of their diet consists of: fruits, insects, spiders, snails, rodents, reptiles, frogs, and the eggs and nestlings of smaller song birds. In winter, they switch to: juniper and other berries, nuts (favoring acorn and pine nuts), grains and seeds (including grass seeds).

At any time of the year, they may visit bird feeders for sunflower seeds, peanuts and corn. They can become quite trusting in urban settings and are known to be easily trained to eat treats (such as peanuts) off human hands. They will also feed on fruits and vegetables grown in gardens and fields. In my yard, they often prefer to take the peanuts out of the challenging wire wreath rather than the open tray.

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Wasatch Audubon Society

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

Officers

President	Dan Johnston	801-645-8633
Vice President	Jay Stretch	801-721-9432
Secretary	Sharen Perry	801-392-9554
Treasurer	Nancy Arnett	801-388-0637
Past President	Dan Johnston	801-645-8633

Board

2019/2020	Taylor Abbott	980-622-9889
2019/2020	Mike Hearrell	801-529-8693
2019/2020	Daniel Brown	801-896-8002
2020/2021	Lynn Carroll	801-392-8216
2020/2021	Jeane Taylor	801-394-2813
Vacancy		

Committee Chairpersons

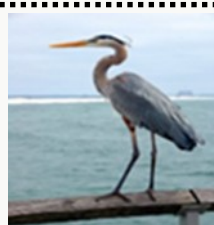
Conservation	Lynn Carroll	801-392-8216
Conservation	John Bellmon	801-444-3704
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Feeder Projects	Laura Johnston	801-458-9558
Field Trips	Vacant	
Wed. Bird Walks	Paul Lombardi	801-678-8065
Historian	Ruth Davis	801-309-0425
Hospitality	Jeane Taylor	801-394-2813
Membership	Lynn Carroll	801-392-8216
Newsletter	Laura Johnston	801-458-9558
Programs	Susan Snyder	801-388-4201
Publicity	Arnold Smith	801-829-3383
Website	Patricia Allaire	801-597-1091

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>.

Welcome New and Rejoined Members!

John Bastone	Carmen Lopez
John Burell	Therese Luzitano
Regina Duffy	Priscilla McLain
Mitch Eddards	Sandy Pagano
George Fairbanks	Sereba Posluszny
Catherine Gerwels	Karen Strong



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AND SUPPORT
WASATCH AUDUBON

When you shop at smile.amazon.com, Amazon will donate 0.5% of eligible purchases to Wasatch Audubon Society. Just sign in to <https://smile.amazon.com> and select Wasatch Audubon Society as the organization you wish to support, or go directly to <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/87-0411832>.

Thank you for your support!

Legends say that hummingbirds float free of time carrying our hopes for love, joy and celebration. The hummingbird's delicate grace reminds us that life is rich, beauty is everywhere, Every personal connection has meaning And that laughter is life's Sweetest creation

From a Papyrus greeting card

Continued from pg. 1 (President's Pipeline)

The food-caching behavior of these intelligent birds has been the subject of several studies. These birds plan ahead for times when food isn't readily available. Scrub-Jays bury excess seeds and nuts beneath leaves, grass or mulch; and will retrieve them when food sources in their environment are scarce. They may also hoard and bury brightly colored objects found in their environment. Western Scrub-Jays have a mischievous streak, and they are not above outright theft. They have been observed stealing acorns from acorn woodpecker caches. Some scrub-jays snatch peanuts/acorns from the hiding places of other jays. When these birds go to hide their own acorns, they check first that no other jays are watching.



California Scrub-Jay



Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay

Mule deer have been observed allowing Scrub-Jays to hop over their bodies and heads as they search and feed on parasites, such as ticks. The deer appeared to facilitate the process by standing still and holding up their ears to provide easy access to the jays.

Their call is described as harsh and scratchy with some musical quality. The life span of wild Western Scrub-Jays is approximately 9 years. Populations are being adversely affected by the West Nile virus.

The University of California, Davis reported an odd behavior of Western Scrub-Jays that is not typically associated with animals. These birds appear to mourn the loss of flock members.

These jays will screech loudly near a dead jay for as long as 30 minutes and remain close to the body for a day or two.

The [Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay](#) differs from the California Scrub-Jay in plumage (paler blue above, with an indistinct and usually incomplete breast band). It has a thinner, straighter bill. It prefers [pinon-juniper](#) forests, [oak](#) woods, edges of [mixed evergreen forests](#) and sometimes [mesquite](#) bosques. It ranges from southeastern Oregon and southern Idaho, including Utah, to central Mexico. Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay is named for the American naturalist and explorer, Samuel Washington Woodhouse.

The California Scrub-Jay has a brighter blue head, wings, and tail; a gray-brown back; grayish underparts; and white eyebrows. The throat is whitish with a blue necklace. It has developed a stouter, more hooked bill that helps it hammer open acorns. It prefers [oak](#) woods, [pinon-juniper](#) forests and edges of [mixed evergreen forests](#). It ranges from southern [British Columbia](#) throughout [California](#) and western [Nevada](#) near Reno to west of the [Sierra Nevada](#).

Happy Birding, Dan



**Board Member Spotlight
Jay Stretch**

I grew up on the Hawaiian island of Oahu and really was not into birding in my younger years, but was really into nature and particularly the ocean. I tried the surfing thing for a while, but later in the sixties the surfer craze meant crowded beaches, so my friends and I switched to under water instead of on top—but watching the reef fish was very much like the birding I enjoy today. I graduated from the University of Redlands in southern California, where I met Lucy, my wife of 50 years now. That was in 1969 and there was a bit of trouble over in Southeast Asia and I decided that if I had to go, I'd rather do so in a \$60 million dollar airplane than carrying a \$600 rifle. I became an officer in the Air Force in 1969 and enjoyed a 28-year career as a fighter pilot, retiring as a Colonel in 1997. Some of the most memorable times flying were in the A-10 while stationed in Alaska. We flew the A-10 very low to the ground—as low as 100 feet—and navigated all over the wilderness of that marvelous state. One flight in particular stands out even today: winter-time over the North Slope and watching a pack of wolves chasing caribou through the snow, followed shortly by flying as slowly as I could watching a magnificent Snowy Owl flying below me!

After 18 years of my own consulting business, I 'retired' again. It was then I truly became active in Wasatch Audubon, mostly through the Wednesday bird walks and Christmas Counts. Good times and good friends. But it was put mostly on hold a few years ago when I was asked to take over as the Executive Director for Lantern House, the local homeless shelter—just for a short while, of course. A year and a half later, I again 'retired'—for 28 days until I was asked to come on as Executive Director for Youth Impact, an organization

which has close ties to the WAS. This, 'just for a short time' is coming up on a year now. Youth Impact will give me a chance to resume birding more often—our kids like nature and hiking and we are about to start up such activities again after being shut down for the pandemic. The kids are fun and of all ages. We are always looking for volunteers for our many STEM projects and outdoor activities, so give me a call if you'd like to help. My number is on the second page of this newsletter.

Good birding.

**Utah Audubon Council Report
by John Bellmon**

The Utah Audubon Council Spring 2020 meeting was held via a ZOOM computer conference online because of the Coronavirus. The meeting was held on May 2nd and was well attended. We had representatives from all our chapters and our policy advocate, along with representatives of Audubon Rockies, Saline Lakes of the Intermountain West, and the Gillmor Audubon Sanctuary. The big thing that happened during the meeting was the election of a new Utah Audubon Council President. The new council president is Georgie Corkery from the Great Salt Lake Audubon chapter. She is very energetic and excited to become the council president and very involved in state Audubon issues. We are all sure that she will do a great job in this new position.

All the chapters presented their reports about what they have been involved in during the last six months and upcoming issues they will be working on. Our policy advocate, Steve Erickson, presented his report on the 2020 legislative session and other issues. There was a discussion of how the different chapters were functioning with the restrictions of the Coronavirus and how to best keep members active at different levels. We all found out that there is a new chapter that was formed through the national office by students at BYU. We are looking forward to meeting them and helping them establish a good chapter for the students on campus.

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CALENDAR



Please note: For the time being, we will NOT be meeting for breakfast at the Wednesday bird walks. We will meet directly at the trailheads at the time indicated. At all events we will observe social distancing and wear face masks. Board meeting will be held remotely in August.

JULY

1 Wednesday 8:00 am bird walk

Willard Bay State Park: Meet at 8:00 am at the pond and canal on the north side of the park. We'll then proceed into the Park. Remember this is a fee area.

8 Wednesday 8:00 am bird walk

Wilkinson Reservoir area, Mountain Green: Meet at the upper end of the reservoir. Directions: Proceed for 1.6 miles east of Trappers Loop turnoff on Old Highway 30. Turn left onto Silver Leaf Road and continue 0.6 miles. Reservoir is on your right.

15 Wednesday 8:00 am bird walk

Canal Walk: North Mountain Rd. at 2450 N., North Ogden. To reach the parking lot, take 2450 N off Mountain Rd over the canal into the small parking lot.

22 Wednesday 8:00 am bird walk

Kay's Creek Parkway: Meet at the parking lot at 8:00 am. To reach the parking lot, take 2000 E off of Hwy 193. Continue on Deere View Drive to 2125 E and continue down to the parking lot.

25 Saturday 7:30 am field trip

Monte Cristo/Woodruff: Heading to higher elevation to beat the heat, we will search for high elevation species along SR39. We will go on to Woodruff area in hopes of seeing Common Nighthawks and Black Terns. There will be a little easy hiking and will run into early afternoon, so bring a light lunch and water. Meet at North end of Smith's (12th and Harrison) parking lot at 7:30 am to caravan.

29 Wednesday 8:00 am bird walk

South Ogden Nature Park: Meet at the parking lot south of the Ogden Athletic Club. To reach the parking lot, take 1050 E off of Hwy 89 and follow signs to the Nature Park.

AUGUST

5 Wednesday 8:00 am bird walk

East Mountain Wilderness Park, Kaysville: Meet at parking lot at 8:00 am.

12 Wednesday 8:00 am bird walk

Riverdale trail (South): Meet at parking lot at 8:00am. To reach the parking area, take 700 W off of Riverdale Rd for one block. Turn left onto 4600 W to lot at end of road.

18 Tuesday 7:00 pm Membership Meeting

Possible evening bird walk at the Ogden Nature Center. As August approaches, check our Facebook page or call Dan at 801-645-8633 to make sure this event is able to be held.

19 Wednesday 8:00 am bird walk

North Arm, Pineview Reservoir: Meet at the parking lot at 8:00 am.

22 Saturday 7:30 am field trip

City of Rocks National Reserve: We will head to southern Idaho in search of the Cassia Crossbill, made a distinct species in 2009. Scenery, unique rock formations and lodgepole pine forest will be of interest. Possible easy hiking. It will run into early afternoon, so bring a lunch and plenty of water. Meet at the Park and Ride (I-15 north) exit 349 (2700 North) at 7:30 am to caravan.

26 Wednesday 8:00 am bird walk

Ogden City Cemetery: Meet at the NE corner of the Cemetery at 8:00 am. Cemetery can be accessed off of Monroe Blvd.

SEPTEMBER

2 Wednesday 8:00 am bird walk

Two Rivers Trail: Meet at 8:00 am under the 21st Street overpass.

<p style="text-align: center;">CONTACTS FOR WALKS AND TRIPS</p> <p>Wednesday Walks - Paul Lombardi pslombard@gmail.com</p> <p>Field Trips on the Saturday after the WAS meeting - Dan Johnston 801-645-8633</p>
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Aviculturist

by Jay Hudson

Could you guess what an aviculturist is? Ok: avi = bird, culturist = profession of understanding and keeping care of something. Many years ago I reached into a Puffin den and got bitten. If I had been an aviculturist or had better sense, I would have missed the experience. I was on an island off the coast of Iceland where they have puffins by the tens of thousands and I wanted to see, touch, smell and eat puffins.

It all goes back to 1953, when I started college and thought I would like to work in the world of nature. I wanted to be a zoologist and teach. But the first test involved identifying dozens and dozens of common name animals with their Latin names. After the results came in, I changed my major. I hadn't lost my wonder of the natural world; I just had to find something that was not in Latin.

Recently I was looking for a way to spend my time quarantined because of the Covid-19 threat to humanity. My doctor now calls me old and fragile so I'm down to remembering what it was like when I roamed the world. I ran into a web site that talked about how puffins change their beak configuration and colors for the mating season. It talked about how they hunt down sand eels and line them all up in their beaks to take back to hungry babies. It talked about the beak and its "casque" or helmet that along with their sad eyes make the puffin a favorite for kids and adults alike. I remember, when I was on the small open boat going around the island, how the captain stopped, opened a cooler and brought out a fledgling puffin. He handed it to me. How many of us mere mortals get to hold a wild creature? A creature that has its own culture! I got to release a wild puffin and immediately forgave the one protecting its den for biting me.

I looked up what an aviculturist made. They can top out at \$75,000 a year. The title "culturist" has a nice ring to it. You can learn until you wonder if you know more than they or if they have you just where they want you. Now I wonder if I shouldn't have learned Latin.

Conservation Corner

Healthy Soil Matters

by Lynn Carroll

I love to dig in dirt, especially to go after the deep runners (rhizomes) of Bermuda grass. Then I hear about "no till" gardening. Tilling is done to break up compacted soil and to mix in the dead plants, live weeds, and maybe some compost, aiding water penetration and returning nutrients to the soil. That makes sense until you learn about mycorrhizal fungi. These microbes occupy the roots of plants, sending out tiny filaments that help plants access water and nutrients. The filaments are also sticky and form networks that bind soil particles together in clumps, leaving space for water to percolate around them. Plants return the favor by secreting a sugary substance through their roots, feeding the fungi and other soil microbes. Tilling tears apart the delicate, beneficial fungal networks and spoils the healthy soil structure. So perhaps I am doing my lawn no favors, disturbing the soil to remove what I consider weeds.

On the other hand, "no-till" is only beneficial if you already have pretty healthy soil to begin with. Here in the West, our soils can use help. I found some recommendations in blogs from the Isaac Walton League.

Diversity is one key, right down to those soil microbes that plants feed with carbohydrate secretions from their roots. It takes microbes to recycle the nutrients from dead plants and added compost. Some bacteria take nitrogen from the air and add it to the soil. Different plants support different microbes, so variety spices up the microbial mix. You can spread the microbes that live with your annual plants to other parts of your yard by moving the beds each year. Add

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native plants when you can to conserve water. They also helps birds. Many plants in garden centers have been selected for their resistance to insects, while native insects thrive on native plants, resulting in more insects for birds to feed to their babies. In lawns, you can add clover, which supports nitrogen-fixing bacteria, and, if allowed to flower, will support pollinators. Leave some weeds.

Another piece of advice is, "Don't garden naked," that is, don't leave any ground bare. Bare ground heats up fast and may bake nearby plants' roots. It lets soil microbes die of starvation. Naked soil also erodes much faster. Mulch will mitigate these effects, but live plants improve soil more effectively. You can plant a cover crop in the fall to replace the spent vegetables in your garden. A legume plus an annual grass or grain work well. Alternatively, plant these in spring, and mow them down before putting in your tomatoes.

I wondered how soil health is related to climate change. A great deal of carbon (organic matter) is stored in soil, but the amount has been steadily falling. Agricultural practices that expose soil organics to oxygen cause the carbon to burn off. Deforestation, melting permafrost and drained peat bogs also release carbon from soils into the atmosphere. There is a lot of interest in finding ways to increase carbon storage in soils. Reducing tillage will let fungal networks trap more organic matter within clumps that exclude air. Use of cover crops, diversifying plant types, and rotational grazing will increase soil health, which stimulates plant growth, and pulls carbon dioxide from the atmosphere faster than it is released back to the air by microbial respiration. There is evidence that higher temperatures may undo the gains just described by causing release of carbon from deeper in the soil. Even if there is no net drawdown of carbon dioxide, healthier soil will benefit us and birds by growing more food.



IDEAS FOR HAVING FUN
ONLINE

From Jay Hudson

Birdwatchinghq.com is a website with great information on a variety of birds and bird-related things. Some examples are: how to attract birds and butterflies, fun bird facts, insects and many other topics.

The Audubon Society has a website which leads you to YouTube and Facebook shows on spring migration at

<https://www.audubon.org/news/i-saw-bird-audubons-spring-migration-show>

This site can also connect you to a world of information on birds and birding.

Continued from pg. 4 (Utah Audubon Council Report0

The next council meeting will be in the fall and, hopefully, we will be able to have a meeting at a location that we will all be able to attend in person. If anyone has any questions, please contact me (my number is on pg. 2 of this newsletter).

It has been my pleasure to represent Wasatch Audubon and all the other Audubon chapters of Utah as the Utah Audubon Council President for the last eight and a-half years. It is wonderful to see what we have accomplished for birds and bird conservation within the state of Utah. Thank you to all who have supported the council and all the chapters in their efforts.



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



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

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