



# The Mountain Chickadee

Newsletter of the Wasatch Audubon Society

Volume 40, Number 6 November/December 2021

## WAS MEETINGS AND HAPPENINGS

### Tuesday, November 16- 7:00PM

Kate Kohut, of Portland, Oregon will present a program called "Fabulous Females: Become a Better Birder & Aid in Bird Conservation." Portland Audubon enjoyed this presentation in October. Join us on Zoom (\*see below).

### Christmas Bird Counts

Join us for one of our Christmas bird counts. They are held from December 15 through January 1. See Calendar inside for details.

### Tuesday, December 21 - 7:00PM

Susan Snyder will present the annual photo slideshow, followed by some fun bird trivia. Drawings for a couple of door prizes will be done among those in attendance. Join us on Zoom (\*see below).

### **\*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 or want a Zoom link, 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)).

### **President's Corner**

More Little Known Facts About Lesser Known Bird Things  
by Jay Stretch

**On bird names:** In Hawaii, the Laysan Albatross (Moli in Hawaiian), is commonly known as the "Gooney Bird." Not sure how that came to be, but one instance is easily accessible for me to recall. A bunch of us kids were playing kickball in the street, when a gooney bird flew over, low and slow into the wind. Fascinated by our activity, it kept looking down and starring at us. Flying about 20 feet above the ground, it completely lost 'situational awareness' and flew right into the overhanging streetlight! It fell to the ground and flopped a bit, stood up, looked at us accusingly then ran for takeoff and continued its journey.

The largest, and most colorful, group of jungle birds in Hawaii is the Honeycreepers, Amakihi being a prime example. Interesting thing, though, is that there are no native honeybees in Hawaii—only the yellow faced bee which serves in the pollination role. Sadly, of the 56 historically identified species of Honeycreeper, only 18 are still found today.

*Continued on pg. 4*

### **PHOTOS NEEDED!**

Do you have photos from birding trips, Wasatch Audubon events, or back yard birding? Please email them by December 5 to Susan Snyder, WAS program director, [naturescall@gmail.com](mailto:naturescall@gmail.com)

### **New Inside The Chickadee!**



Our calendar now includes accessibility information. Codes with each event indicate accessibility. The key explaining the codes is at the end of the calendar.

**Wasatch Audubon Society**

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

**Officers**

President	Jay Stretch	801-721-9432
Vice President	John Bellmon	801-444-3704
Secretary	Sharen Perry	801-392-9554
Treasurer	Nancy Arnett	801-388-0637
Past President	Dan Johnston	801-645-8633

**Board**

2020/2021	Lynn Carroll	801-392-8216
2020/2021	Jeane Taylor	801-394-2813
2020/2021	Dan Johnston	801-645-8633
2021/2022	Abigail Johnson	
2021/2022	Leah Johnson	
2021/2022	Mike Hearrell	801-529-8693
2021/2022	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	Vacant	
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
Information Mgr.	Connor Johnson	<a href="mailto:johnson.connor.pro@gmail.com">johnson.connor.pro@gmail.com</a>

**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>.

***Another Successful Big Sit!***

*By John Bellmon*

Greetings, WAS Birders,

We again had a great Big Sit day at Farmington Bay in the Education Center parking lot, thanks to many faithful members who came in spite of some blustery and rainy weather. The seventeen of us who participated saw a total of 45 species. This is about what we see even on perfect weather days! Obviously the weather did not keep the birds away either. A list of birds seen can be found on page 7.

Wasatch Audubon Society will be looking forward to the donations that will be made to recognize this effort. Donations can be made on a per bird basis (i.e. 50cents per bird would be \$22.50) or a lump sum. The proceeds from this fundraiser go to youth education efforts for local elementary schools and inner city programs. Checks can be mailed to the P.O. Box listed on the back of this newsletter.

**Welcome to our new Information**

**Manager, Connor Johnson**

**Connor is a dedicated birder, having recently gotten his 304th life bird, and he is a top eBird contributor. As Information Manager. Connor will build up our Facebook and Instagram presence, hopefully attracting younger birders to our group. Welcome Connor!**

**Conservation Corner**  
**Salton Sea - The Recent Story**  
by Lynn Carroll

In the last Conservation Corner, I outlined the Salton Sea's birth when the below-sea-level Salton Sink was flooded with Colorado River water. Lakes had formed there before and dried up when the river changed course. The Sea would have met the same fate, but the run-off from irrigated Imperial Valley fields kept increasing, and kept Salton Sea alive.

The agricultural run-off also contributed to the Sea's decline. Already somewhat salty when it left the Colorado, the water's flow through agricultural fields leached more salt from ancient deposits and added nitrates and phosphates from fertilizer. The shallow lake's great surface area is exposed to summer heat that often exceeds 110° F, so the evaporation rate is high, concentrating those salts. In its heyday 1960s, the Salton Sea's salinity was similar to ocean water, around 35 ppt (parts per thousand). By 1995 it reached 45 ppt.

During the 1990s, the lake was shrinking again, and fish deaths rose. In summer the heat and salinity both reduce the amount of oxygen in the water, so fish can suffocate. Nutrients in the water fed algal blooms, and when algae decompose the oxygen is depleted more, so piles of dead fish washed up on the beaches--in 1999 7.6 million of them in one day. During four horrible months in 1996, an outbreak of botulism spread from fish to birds killing about 10,000 pelicans (both white and brown). What caused about 150,000 Eared Grebes to die in the winter of '92 is unknown. These episodes convinced many that the Sea was beyond saving, but to others, like Audubon California, "Restoring the Salton Sea is critical ... ."

For a century, Salton Sea has been attracting millions of birds of up to 400 species to nest, winter, or stop on migration. Its importance in the Pacific Flyway increased as other good habitat in California decreased, but it also

meant more birds crowding into limited space with limited food. Bird deaths from botulism, avian cholera, and starvation are increasing.

Nothing is wrong with the Sea that more water wouldn't cure, but the state was wrestling with how to live within its entitlement of 4.4 million acre-feet of Colorado River water a year. The result was the 2003 Quantification Settlement Agreement (QSA). The Imperial Irrigation District (IID) would sell water to growing coastal cities and use the profits to fund conservation measures to reduce water use in the valley. The state agreed to take responsibility for managing the resulting dust and other effects of reduced water flowing to Salton Sea. For the first 15 years, IID would provide water to the Sea, obtained by paying farmers to fallow about 10% of the land usually irrigated, in place of the reduced runoff, theoretically giving the state time to put mitigation measures in place.

Nevertheless the lake continued to shrink over this period, its average surface elevation falling by six feet from 2007 to 2017. Meanwhile, the legislature ordered reports but turned down plans for action until about 2017, the year the IID water ended. In fact the first significant work was just begun this January. Fish are disappearing and so are pelicans and cormorants. According to Audubon California, Eared Grebes are counted in the thousands, not millions. "Colonial seabirds began abandoning nesting sites en masse in 2013." On the other hand, shorebirds and shallow-feeding ducks like shovelers and Ruddy Ducks "are still wintering at, or passing along the Sea, in massive numbers."

There is hope that projects that are now under way will conserve a smaller lake with still-productive wetlands and prevent the dust storms there from getting worse.

*President's Corner continued from pg. 1*

**On Feathers:** Light as a feather—or skeleton. In most birds, 10% or less of the total weight is made up of feathers, e.g., that 2.7 ounce robin hopping around your yard only has just over a quarter of an ounce of feathers. The amazing thing is that is about twice as much as its entire weight of bones!

Not surprisingly, the number of feathers is proportional to body size, barring variations for adaptation to climate. While that hummingbird delighting you at its feeder may have (only?) 1,000 feathers, the trumpeter swans populating rivers just to our north have about 25,000.

The down that keeps so many birds warm lacks the barbules of most of the other feathers. You can't really smooth out a dry downy feather and have it stay that way. If it did have barbules, it could not fluff up so well and create the air pockets that help keep the bird warm.

Related to Gabby Hayes? (Get to google, kids!) Owls and some other night flyers, e.g. night hawks, have specially adapted and very stiff (bristle) feathers that resemble and function like the whiskers on your dog or cat.

Why don't vultures and wild turkeys have feathers on their heads? Yes, it could well be to keep the goo from fouling (sorry, bad pun) their feathers as they dine on roadkill. But it is believed that they also use this trait to regulate their body temperature—burrowing into their breast feathers for warmth and raising their heads to cool in the heat.

**On Flight.** That gooney bird mentioned above is one heck of an energy conserving flyer. Using satellite tracking, scientists observed that one albatross flew for six days without flapping its wings even once. That same study found another bird which circumnavigated the earth in less than two months!

The peregrine falcon can reach speeds of more than 180 mph in diving flight (called 'stoop'). That is about 40 miles an hour faster than the single engines Cessna's you see droning around the Hinkley airport.

Quiet flight is achieved by owls because of the serrated, as opposed to smooth, feathers on the leading edge of their wings. The serration helps to break up the airflow over the wings and keep it from too laminar a flow. Century Series jet fighters used this technique for control at subsonic speeds, but there is no way that they were anything close to silent.

**Heavyweight flyers:** The California Condor and the Trumpeter Swan each weigh in at about 28 pounds. The Swan has to work harder since the Condor has a wingspan all of 6 inches longer (about 108") and flies using thermal uplift for most of its flight. Swans use thermals as well, but usually only when migrating. The swans will circle in the updraft to gain height until they reach the top of the 'boil' of the thermal then continue their journey, having saved a lot of energy by not having to exercise to gain that height.

**Bird marathons:** While the Laysan Albatross is an occasional champion at long distance flight, it is not the gold medalist. The Magnificent Frigatebird may fly for more than two months without landing—eating, sleeping, and bathing in flight. But the pluckiest marathoner must be the Arctic Tern. It nests above the Arctic Circle and spends the northern hemisphere winter in the summer climate of the Antarctic, a yearly loop of 50,000 to 60,000 miles. Living about 30 years, each bird will fly over 1.5 Million Miles – I can't think of any car that I ever owned that could do that.

It may not take two months between stops to accomplish it, but the Bar-tailed Godwit flies from Alaska over the Pacific Ocean to New Zealand in about two weeks – that is 7,000 miles. During this time, it neither sleeps, feeds, nor drinks water. Undoubtedly, they arrive a bit lighter than when they left - not my kind of diet.

**Clever nesting:** Using your climate to support your housing. The American Dipper builds a nest of mostly moss with supportive twigs: a nest with a roof. Puzzling question: which came first the Wikiup or the dipper's nest? Anyway, these small structures would dry out and collapse without the firm structure used by the First Nations. So, what do you do? Why, you build it next to the stream where you eat every day and let the mist, spray and splashes keep the moss alive and well as long as needed.

The hummingbird holds the prize, in my estimate anyway, for most creative engineering. This tiny little genius lays two eggs the size of peas at each nesting and deposits them into a cup of lichens, moss, and other soft tidbits. Problem is, those tiny little hatchlings will stay in the nest until they reach the size of an adult, a little over three inches. That could get a bit crowded, even to the point of only one surviving. Solution? Weave in spider silk that will allow expansion of the nest to accommodate the growth of the hatchlings. Wizard, that!

*Many of these amusing bits were gleaned from "Bird Trivia: Funny, Strange, and Incredible Facts about North American Birds." © 2018 by Stan Tekiela, Adventure Publications.*



**CALENDAR**

**Please note:** In accordance with the current Covid situation, social distancing and masking are encouraged. Carpooling for field trips will be your own decision.

**Accessibility:** All walks are no more than 1 1/2 miles. See box at end of calendar for explanation of accessibility codes.

**NOVEMBER****3 Wednesday 8:00 am bird walk**

**Ogden City Cemetery:** Located at 1875 Monroe Ave. Park on east end near the dog cemetery.  
Accessibility: **P L B**

**10 Wednesday 9:00 am bird walk**

**Willard Bay State Park:** Meet at the pond north of the park. This park is a fee area.  
Accessibility: **R P/U L**

**16 Tuesday 7:00 pm WAS Meeting**

Kate Kohut, of Portland, Oregon will present a program called "Fabulous Females: Become a Better Birder & Aid in Bird Conservation." Portland Audubon enjoyed this presentation in October. Join us on Zoom (see page 1 for how to get Zoom contact).

**17 Wednesday 9:00 am bird walk**

**South Ogden Nature Park:** Meet at the trailhead for the nature walk. Parking for the trailhead is at 5981 Park Vista Dr., south of the Ogden Athletic Club.  
Accessibility: **B P/U M**

**20 Saturday 9:00 am field trip**

**Ponds Field Trip:** Meet at the large parking lot south of Wendy's in Roy (1900 W 5600 S). We will visit the following ponds: Meadows Creek, Clinton, Jensen, the resting ponds at Farmington Bay, and Kaysville Ponds. This is an all day trip - bring water and a lunch. Restroom stop possible.  
Accessibility: **P L**

**24 Wednesday 9:00 am bird walk**

**Eccles Water Management Area at Farmington Bay:** Located at 1700 W Glover's Lane. Park in the large parking area near the Center. We'll decide which trails to take depending on conditions. Accessibility: **R U L B**

**DECEMBER****1 Wednesday 9:00 am bird walk**

**Kay's Creek Parkway:** Meet at the trail parking lot. To get there, take 2000 E off State Highway 193. Then, turn left onto 2125 E and continue down the hill to the parking lot.  
Accessibility: **P L**

**6 Tuesday 7:00 pm WAS Board Meeting.**

Held remotely.

**8 Wednesday 9:00 am bird walk**

**Two Rivers Trail:** Meet under the 21st St. overpass, just east of the Flying J Plaza off I-15.  
Accessibility: **P L**

**15 Wednesday 9:00 am Bear River Christmas**

**Bird Count:** Meet at the Bear River Refuge headquarters parking lot. We will divide into three teams to cover different areas. This is an all day trip, so bring water and lunch.  
Accessibility: **R P L Minimal walking**

**17 Friday Morgan Christmas Bird Count:**

Meet at the Utah DWR (515 E 5300 S, South Ogden) to carpool at 7:30 am. Or meet at Armond Smith's house in Morgan, 796 N 700 E, at 8:00 am. It is an all day trip so bring water and lunch.  
Accessibility: **Walking depends on route, restroom stop available**

**18 Saturday Ogden Christmas Bird Count:**

Meet up with your team leader on the morning of the count at a time and place designated ahead of time by the route team leader. (If you don't have a team, call John Bellmon (801-444-3704) for an assignment. There will be 10 teams, so your help is needed. This is an all day trip so bring water and lunch.  
Accessibility: **Restroom stop available, walking depends on route**

**21 Tuesday 7:00 pm WAS Meeting**

Susan Snyder will present the annual photo slideshow, followed by some fun bird trivia. Drawings for a couple of door prizes will be done among those in attendance. Join us on Zoom (see page 1 for how to get Zoom contact).

*Continued on pg. 6*

Calendar continued from pg. 5

**Annual Nest Box Cleanout**

by Nancy Arnett

**22 No Wednesday walk**

**26 Sunday Ogden Valley Christmas Bird Count:** Contact Mike Hearell at 801-529-8693 or [utmarshrat@yahoo.com](mailto:utmarshrat@yahoo.com) to receive route assignments or additional participation information.

**29 No Wednesday walk**

**JANUARY**

**1 Saturday Antelope Island Christmas Bird Count:** 8:00 am Antelope Island Christmas Bird Count: Meet in the parking lot at the entrance to the park. We will divide up into three teams to cover the areas. It is an all day trip so bring water and lunch. Accessibility: **Restroom available, minimal walking**

**5 Wednesday 9:00 am bird walk Fort Buenaventura Park:** Follow the signs off A Avenue in Ogden. Meet in the parking lot before the entrance. Accessibility: **P L**

<u>Accessibility Codes</u>	
R - Restroom available	
P - Paved trail	
U - Unpaved trail	
P/U Combination	
L - Level trail	
M - Moderately level trail	
B - Benches available	

**CONTACTS FOR WALKS AND TRIPS**  
**Dan Johnston:**  
**801-645-8633**  
**John Bellmon:**  
**801-444-3704**

The nest box cleanout date was scheduled Saturday, September 18th, but the Huntsville Marathon starting at Monte Cristo and ending in Huntsville was also scheduled the same day. The cleanout was rescheduled to Saturday, September 25<sup>th</sup>.

September 25th could not have been any more perfect - blue sky, cool temperatures and beautiful fall foliage. Laura and Dan Johnston, Lynn Carroll, John Bellmon, Kathy and her son, Scott Dowell, Leslie Nixon and I split in two groups to cover three of the four routes along fence lines in the Monte Cristo highway area. The boxes are used by Mountain Bluebirds, House Wrens and Tree Swallows to raise their young. We hung up eleven new boxes to replace missing ones and hung up a screech owl box that John and Dan found in Jack Rensel's garage.


Each year it's fun to see what surprises we might find when cleaning out the nest boxes. This year was no exception. In several boxes that had been used by Mountain Bluebirds, we found female Western Tanager feathers used as nesting material. The most puzzling find was a handful of dried mushrooms in one box.

It was a successful day and the approximately 110 nest boxes are ready for the 2022 breeding season. Thank you to Laura, Dan, Lynn, John, Kathy, Scott and Leslie for their help. Thank you also to Arnold Smith for cleaning out the nest boxes on the fourth route on a different day.

**Birds and Earthquakes?**

by Jay Hudson

We have all heard that animals can predict earthquakes. What is the truth and how do birds fit into this theory? Much of the work done to prove the theory with caged birds has occurred in Japan and China, but no definitive studies prove that birds can see this future event! There have been observations of animals at the time of quakes which indicate that animals are sensing the quake before humans are aware, but these observations are not scientifically based. We are left with the fact that when the pet bird becomes agitated, flapping wings or squawking, it may or may not be a precursor to an earthquake. You should still be prepared in accordance with the Red Cross advisories.



**SMILE AND SUPPORT WASATCH AUDUBON**

When you shop at [smile.amazon.com](https://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!**

**Welcome New and Rejoined Members**

E. P. Austin	Becky Koldewyn
Keith Barker	Scott E. Landes
Marlow Black	Zola T. Lykins
Darlene Bridwell	Barbara Martin
Rose M. Covington	Helen Mihlfeith
Ed. Crowther	Ione Nakasone
Victoria Davis	Rick Nelson
Kevin Dellasilva	Christina K. Riehemann
Michael Franci	Lily St. Clair
George Hall	Raymond Williams
Laurie Huntington	Scott Willoughby
E. L. John	Rose C. Young

**Winter Birding Attractions**



Winter is a surprisingly good time to go birding. Yes, it's cold and sometimes wettish, so it's necessary to be ready mentally and physically for this. Fortunately, layers of clothing can prepare you well for the cold, remembering that most heat is lost through the hands and head.

Once you can get past this, winter has its birding attractions. It's the best season for raptor watching. Bald Eagles that have summered further north, winter in Northern

Utah. Wasatch Audubon chapter has a February field trip designed to see a high number of them. Wasatch Audubon is also involved in Eagle Day,

the first Saturday in February held at several locations in Northern Utah. Rough-legged Hawks, another large raptor, migrate to Utah from the high Arctic, spending their winter here.

Winter is Christmas Bird Count season. This year (our 42<sup>nd</sup>) Wasatch is holding counts in five nearby areas from Dec.14 - Jan. 1. Check out the calendar for details. It's a great chance to get involved in citizen science, helping to count our wintering population of birds. No special skills are needed as you will be a member of a team.

Winter is a great time to see some of the uncommon to rare gulls that visit Northern Utah. Antelope Island Causeway and Farmington Bay Waterfowl Management Area are the best locations for these gulls.

When birding in the winter, you will notice a few things that enhance your experience. The lack of leaves makes it easier to see in and through trees. And cold air carries sound better than warm air, so it is easier to hear bird sounds. There are not crowds to deal with either – you pretty much have your excursion to yourself.

So, come on out and join the winter birders. You will be glad you did!

John Bellmon, Dan Johnston, Lynn Carroll and Laura Johnston contributed to this article.

**Birds Seen at Big Sit**

Canada Goose, Mallard, Wilson's Snipe, American Coot, Gadwall, Short-eared Owl, Red-winged Blackbird, White-Crowned sparrow, Ring Billed Gull, American White Pelican Great Blue Heron, Caspian Tern Forster's Tern, Pied-billed Grebe, Killdeer, Northern Harrier, Song Sparrow, American Wigeon, Northern Shoveler, Virginia Rail, Northern Flicker, Double-crested Cormorant, California Gull, Lincoln's Sparrow, Black-crowned Night Heron, Ruddy Duck, Redhead, Western Grebe, Common Ravel, Greater Yellowlegs, Belted Kingfisher, Say's Phoebe, Red-tailed Hawk, Green-winged Teal, American Kestrel, Clark's Grebe, Ring-necked Duck, Canvasback, Black-billedMagpie, white-faced Ibis, Rock Pigeon, Snowy Egret, Brewer's Blackbird, Eurasian Collared Dove, House Finch



**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: \_\_\_\_\_

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ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

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

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