



The Mountain Chickadee

Newsletter of the Wasatch Audubon Society

Volume 41, Number 4 July/August 2022

WAS MONTHLY MEETINGS

There will be no WAS meeting in July
HAPPY SUMMER BIRDING!

Tuesday, August 16 6:30PM

Join us to celebrate the return of our annual potluck at the Ogden nature Center!

Bring your own meat and food. We will provide a grill, drinks, utensils and napkins. Remember insect repellent, and bring a friend!



A big thank you to Susan Snyder who has finished her gig as WAS Program Director. She has worked hard to provide many excellent programs for our meetings over the years. We appreciate her!

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: bradlynn@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). Also, sign up on Instagram (search for Wasatch Audubon) to get reminders of walks, etc.

President's Corner

Creative Mimicry

by Jay Stretch

Bird parents, mostly the males, tutor their young in singing. While dad usually provides the fine example, mom plays a role, too. She reacts to the young birds' song, sometimes ignoring or reacting poorly if the youngster is not doing well and conversely rewarding a good or developing performance through gestures and other reactions. One would guess that to be the case, since one of the prime motivators for male birds singing is to be selected as the perfect one for mating and rearing young. Birds experience the process of learning vocalization in the same way as humans—by listening to adults, practicing, and refining. Many birds will then tune their songs to their own liking with minor or major variations, many of which are beyond a human's capacity to sense.

Not all birds sing, but all bird species vocalize whether it be the melodious mockingbird, the hawk mocking Stellar's Jay, or the dog-like barking of an Elegant Trogon. There are about four thousand species of songbirds on the planet, about half of the total number of species, and the more musical of those tend to live in tropical climes. Plain vocalization is pretty much innate, but singing has to be learned whether is a single, repetitive tune; the complex, forty note composition of the Cowbird; or the varying concert of a Mockingbird. And it is not just the males who sing; some species engage in joyous duets. But the males in mating season are the most commonly heard. Only recently, jealous humans discovered what makes this all possible using resonance imaging and computer tomography: a remarkable organ called the Syrinx.

LEARNID on Flycatchers is ON PAGE 6!

Continued on pg. 3

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

2022/2023	Lynn Carroll	801-392-8216
2022/2023	Ben Johnson	801-231-7008
2022/2023	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

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Conservation	John Bellmon	801-444-3704
Education	Dennis Collins	801-393-1115
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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 Programs	Laura Johnston	801-458-9558
Publicity	Arnold Smith	801-829-3383
Website	Patricia Allaire	801-597-1091
Information Mgr.	Connor Johnson	385-209-5396

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>.

Tribute To a Dear Friend

by John Bellmon

It is sad that we have lost a dear friend in such an untimely way. Billy Fenimore died on May 5, 2022, due to a rare neurodegenerative disorder (Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease). Billy was always a strong contributor (as was his father Bill) to our Wasatch Audubon chapter and its activities. He supported our bird feeding programs at the Ogden Nature Center and Powder Mountain by generously donating bird seed. He also helped in our chapter's support of Youth Impact activities as well as in many other chapter activities such as Christmas Bird Counts, field trips and programs. Thank you, Billy, for all that you have done for us. You will never be forgotten.

Billy was a great friend, always positive and joyful to share the birds and wildlife with everyone. He was excited to share the joy of the outdoors with youth in every way that he could. He had a positive impact on everyone that he met and will be missed by all who knew him and worked with him as he spread the joy of the natural world. Billy, you will be deeply missed by all of us who had the pleasure of experiencing the joy that you spread in this world.

Song of the American Robin

During the day, an American Robin sings a lovely, familiar song of rich phrases. The phrases vary, and ring forth with a lilting quality.

But as the sun begins to set, Robin song takes on a new and exquisitely different character. From sunset until dark, a Robin adds ethereal whispered notes to its carol, creating a song of remarkable grace and complexity.

In the high altitudes, where twilight lingers late into the evening, a Robin may expand its day time carols into a twilight symphony that continues for hours.

From Audubon Bird Note, April 4, 2022

President’s Corner

continued from pg. 1

The syrinx is composed of a delicate cartilage and two superfast, vibrating membranes. The membranes oppose each other in the organ and each is connected to a different location in the brain, thus giving our avian friends two separate sources for producing sound. Some birds can even produce differing sounds at the same time, e.g., a bass on the left and a treble on the right. Volume and frequency can be adjusted independently and at amazing speeds—your neighborhood Starling can contract/relax the controlling muscles more than one hundred times while you blink but once. A Winter Wren can sing more than thirty notes in a single second, too fast for you to perceive. While this rapid muscle contraction/relaxation enables the rattlesnake to make its hissing, it also enables burrowing owlets to imitate the sound to warn off predators. And not all birds are equipped with a single set of syringeal muscles—the Northern Mockingbird has seven pairs enabling him to change his tune 20 times a minute without wearing out (guess they would make great politicians!).

While that amazing noise maker is a great asset, it is still only a tool. It is the bird’s brain that tells it what to do, and it has to learn how to properly use it. This is done in two basic phases: In the first, the wild bird listens to the songs of the birds around him. Most birds will learn only the song particular to that species and, through repetition and effort the bird will commit that song to permanent memory. Some young birds can learn and sing a variety of songs in the same way that a human child can easily learn to speak and understand more than one language—though in both, the ability tends to wear off about puberty and erodes through aging. That is why the male tutor(s) and species traits are so important to developing the singing capability needed to survive and sustain the populations.

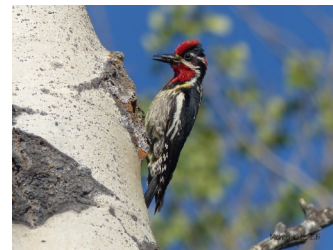
In the second phase, the young bird again parallels the human infant by exploring his young voice and what it can do. While you might not call it babbling, early ‘singing’ can be just as rough. And some birds may develop a stutter to be resolved as they mature. What’s going on is the development of motor control and brain patterning and often the development of a regional accent, as in the Chickadee.

If the bird is quick on his feet and in the air, he will have a chance to practice his song(s) hundreds of thousands of times and develop into the Lothario or dedicated mate he is destined to be.

Field Trip Report

By Leslie Loeffel

Eighteen people turned out on June 11 for a bird walk at Winter’s Grove Nature Trail and Jefferson Hunt Campground near Huntsville. A highlight was seeing many beautiful Cedar Waxwings, one with a big fluff of nesting material. Even better was watching a pair of Red-naped Sapsuckers flying in and out of their nest hole feeding young. The group, led by John Bellmon, saw over 30 species.



Red-naped Sapsucker

Youth Impact Summer Program Begins

Wasatch Audubon’s commitment to educate youth about birds and nature continues at Youth Impact. The summer program at Youth Impact (an organization that supports Ogden youth) includes field trips and lessons. Twenty youth want to participate this summer and help is needed to make this possible. Please contact Jay Stretch at 801-721-9432 for details.

Conservation Corner

News from the Great Salt Lake Issues Forum

by Lynn Carroll

The theme of the 2022 Great Salt Lake (GSL) Issues Forum in May was, “Great Salt Lake: the gift that keeps on giving, just add water.” I attended the event organized by Friends of Great Salt Lake expecting a flood of timely information and ideas, and wasn’t disappointed.

Talks for the first day focused on salinity, which is the total concentration of salts dissolved in the water (not just sodium chloride, but also potassium sulfate, magnesium chloride, and others). With less water entering GSL, the salinity has increased. The ideal level for brine shrimp is 120-160 g/l, and lately the level in the south arm has been around 160 and climbing. A crash of brine shrimp productivity would mean little food for migrating Eared Grebes, no cysts to harvest for sale, and no royalties to support the lake.

Controlling the movement of water between the south arm and the north arm, which is almost maximally saline at about 300 g/l, may help. Most of this movement is at the new (2016) breach of the railroad causeway. Water moves between the two arms in both directions! The surface of the south arm (SA) is about half a foot higher than the surface of the north arm (NA), so water flows north on top of the dense NA water. Meanwhile, the dense NA water is drawn south by the difference in salinity, flowing under the SA water. The net result is probably increasing the SA salinity. At the north side of the breach, an earthen berm was constructed to allow adjustments in the flow through the opening. The GSL Salinity Advisory Committee (SAC) was formed to advise the Division of Forestry Fire and State Lands about management of the berm for the most benefit. The SAC has recommended increasing the size of the berm, and Laura Vernon, the new GSL Coordinator, announced that plans are moving forward to do that.

The SAC also produced a salinity matrix, showing the levels that are too low, about right, and too high for each use of the lake and for growth of key organisms. It shows that the best salinity for brine fly production is very similar to that for brine shrimp. Thus all of the birds that gobble up brine flies will benefit from stabilizing the salinity too.

At the Forum I received a cute sticker (pictured in the next column) promoting the Great Salt Lake Collaborative, a group of news, education, and media organizations sharing their research about GSL issues and spreading the word. One of their recent articles answered why a long pipeline is being built out past Antelope Island. In case you missed it, here is my version.

Around the West, algal blooms are afflicting water bodies,

and many are toxic. As a result, new regulations will limit the amount of phosphate that can be left in treated water. Water treatment plants are facing expensive upgrades. North Davis Sewer District, with a facility right next to Farmington Bay, where it currently dis-



charges, argues that paying for upgrades to meet the new standard would require them to sell the water for re-use. Instead they proposed to pipe the water (treated to current standards) 6 miles out to Gilbert Bay (SA), where the salinity is too high for toxic algae to grow. The proposal was accepted, so the water will not go to Farmington Bay, contributing to algal blooms there. It will not feed *Phragmites* that currently lines the discharge canal. The full amount will go to GSL, and during the spring and summer it will nourish the organisms that the brine shrimp eat.

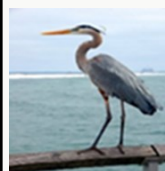
Unfortunately, the level of GSL has already peaked, so this summer or fall will bring a new record low. An aerial photo brought the sad fact home. Farmington Bay looked like just a wide spot in a river. We can only hope that the actions of the legislature, conservation, and a few wetter periods will keep the lake functioning for many years.

Bird Word Wisdom—Jay Hudson



Altricial: describes a newly hatched bird with unopened eyes, scarcity of natal down, incapable of locomotion and fed by parents.

Precocial: Opposite of altricial. Describes a newly hatched bird with opened eyes, extensive down and capable of locomotion.



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CALENDAR



Please note: Arrangements for carpooling will be your own responsibility.

Accessibility: Walks are no more than 1 1/2 miles, unless otherwise noted. See box at end of calendar for explanation of accessibility codes located at the end of each event.

JULY

6 Wednesday 8:00 am bird walk
Great Salt Lake Nature Center, Farmington: Meet in the parking lot. 1157 S. Waterfowl Way (1100 W Glovers Lane) Farmington. Leader-Ben **R P/U L B**

13 Wednesday 8:00 am bird walk
Kaysville Mountain Wilderness Park: Off Highway 89 in Kaysville, turn east on 650 N. Park will be at the end of 650. Leader-Ben/Colin **R U M**

19 NO MEMBERSHIP MEETING THIS MONTH

20 Wednesday 8:00 am bird walk
Croydon/Lost Creek Area: Meet at Croydon City Park located at 1801 N 6900 E Croydon UT 84018. Leader-Weston/Dan/John **R U M**

23 No field trip this month

27 Wednesday 8:00 am bird walk
Little Mountain Railway Trail/Plain City Sewage Ponds: Meet at 2000 W 4000 N, Plain City. We will walk the trail then go to the ponds. Leader-Ben **P L**

AUGUST

2 Tuesday 7:00 pm WAS Board Meeting.
 Held remotely.

3 Wednesday 8:00 am bird walk
West Haven River Woods Trail (Cemetery): Go west on 1800 S off 1900 W. Make a right at 2350 W and proceed north into the cemetery. Park along the road in the NW of the cemetery. Leader-Dan/John **P L B**

10 Wednesday 8:00 am bird walk
Mount Ogden Park Gibs Loop Trail: Meet at 36th South/Skyline Drive parking area. We will walk the loop trail around Mt. Ogden Park, possibly to 29th S and back. This would be 3.1 mi. Leader-Dan/John **R P/U M B**

16 Tuesday 6:30 pm WAS Meeting
Ogden Nature Center: Annual WAS picnic. See details on page 1.

17 Wednesday 8:00 am bird walk
Kays Creek Trail: Located at 2370 Canyon View dr., Layton. Meet at the parking lot which can be reached off Highway. 193. Leader-Kris **P L B**

20 Saturday 8:00 am field trip
Ogden Valley: Meet at Smith's 12th and Harrison at 8:00, or at Chris' in Huntsville, at 8:20. We'll be hoping to see a Lewis's Woodpecker, Osprey and Great Horned Owl. Bring lunch and water. **Restrooms on the drive/minimal walking**

24 Wednesday 8:00 am bird walk
GSL Shoreline Trail boardwalk in West Layton: Address 1002 S 3200 W. Take Gentile St. west and turn left on 3200 W, follow to the of road to the trail. Leader-Ben **R P/U L B**

31 Wednesday 8:00 am bird walk
Beus Pond in Ogden. Meet in parking lot. Off Harrison Blvd, turn east on Country Hills Dr./40th St. Go about a half mile, parking lot on east. Leader-Kris **R P L**

SEPTEMBER

7 Wednesday 8:00 am bird walk
Buffalo Ranches Trail in Farmington: Meet at the corner of Ranch Rd. and Prairie View Dr. (residential neighborhood—park on street). We will cross the Legacy Highway dirt road construction and walk to the Buffalo Ranches ponds on the west side of the new highway. Leader-Ben/Colin **U—rough surface**

Accessibility Codes		CONTACTS FOR WALKS AND TRIPS
R - Restroom available		Dan Johnston:
P - Paved trail		801-645-8633
U - Unpaved trail		John Bellmon:
P/U Combination		801-444-3704
L - Level trail		Ben Johnson:
M - Moderately level trail		801-231-7008
B - Benches available		

Behind-the-Gates Shorebird Opportunity

by Kris Purdy

Sageland Collaborative is spearheading a large-scale shorebird monitoring program over the next 3 years by surveying Great Salt Lake wetlands, Utah Lake wetlands and Fish Springs National Wildlife Refuge. Partners in this effort include the Utah Division of Natural Resources, National Audubon and Point Blue Conservation Science. Volunteer surveyors (like you!) are critical to the effort's success.

Great Salt Lake wetlands have not been widely surveyed since the 1990s while the lake has changed dramatically over that time. Wetland managers who make water use decisions on behalf of many species are hampered by not having data on which to base management plans. The Wetlands and Waterbirds survey project seeks to change that by surveying prescribed routes once each spring and fall migration, each year. Virtual training for the upcoming fall survey is scheduled for July 26 while the survey day is Friday, August 12.

Surveyors in teams of 3-4 people will drive into managed wetlands closed to the public in April and August to document shorebird use. Some of the areas familiar to Wasatch Audubon are Farmington Bay; Howard Slough; Ogden Bay; Harold Crane; Public Shooting Grounds and Salt Creek WMAs, and The Great Salt Lake Shorelands Preserve. Deep into these areas are not open to vehicles even during waterfowl season, and so volunteers will truly get to experience portions of the lake's wetlands normally open only to staff or on foot.

To learn more about the project and to volunteer, please go to sagelandcollaborative.org/shorebirds.

Save the Date: Sat. Oct. 8
Wasatch Audubon's annual fund-raising bird-a-thon. From a 17-foot circle, we tally all the bird species we see or hear. Enjoy the company of new and old birders. More information in the next edition of The Chickadee.

LearnID by Connor Johnson

Flycatchers??!?

Flycatchers are infamous for being VERY DIFFICULT to identify. Here in Utah, we get several major groups of Flycatchers in the family Tyrannidae. The Genus *Tyrannus* is simple with our Western and Eastern Kingbirds, as well as *Sayornis* with the lovely Say's Phoebe, and we only get the distinctive Ash-throated Flycatcher from *Myiarchus*.

So what's the big deal? Well, our headache comes from the dreaded *Empidonax* flycatchers (Empids for short). The visual differences are so subtle that many are best left unidentified without vocalization. If I tried to make a section on Empids, it would take up the whole newsletter. Instead, there is one last group of flycatchers named *Contopus*. This genus gives us a tricky pair: Olive-Sided Flycatcher, and Western Wood-Pee-wee. Not only are they hard to tell from each other, but they can be hard to tell from the Empids! Below are my favorite ways to tell *Contopus* from *Empidonax*. To learn Western Wood-Pee-wee vs Olive-Sided, check out the next issue!

Contopus Flycatchers

- Western Wood-Pee-wee (Pictured)
- Olive-sided Flycatcher

What to look for

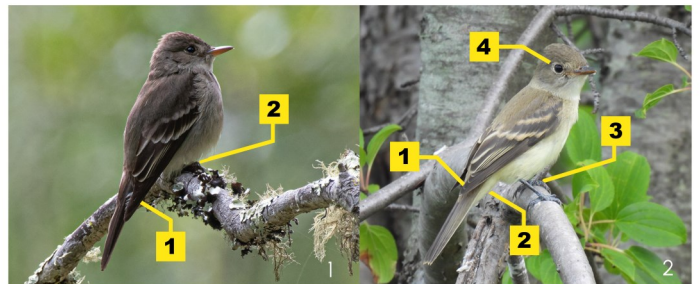
- Long, pointed primary projection [1]
- Smudgy undertail coverts
- Short legs [2]
- Typically have dark "vests"

Empidonax Flycatchers

- Too many to list
- Willow Flycatcher (Pictured)

What to look for

- Short, rounded primary projection [1]
- Clean undertail coverts [2]
- Longer legs [3]
- Typically have obvious eye-rings [4]



Have an ID problem? Send your suggestions to: johnson.connor.pro@gmail.com

All photos used are in the public domain.

Pulled from inaturalist.org

Photo ID is next to name.

1. Claude Lyneis 129766551

2. Jay Solanki 90175021

Avian Influenza Update by Laura Johnston

Bird Flu is still present in our area. Weber County wild bird cases include 3 owls, 2 hawks, a goose and a vulture. The most recent were reported on June 9. Davis has reported no cases. Utah has had a total of 31 cases. The CDC recommends avoiding direct contact with wild birds. If you find a sick or dead wild or domestic bird, contact Utah Division of Natural Resources.

Welcome New and Rejoined Members

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Shelley Blundell | Eileen Johnson |
| Pat Bowers | Therese Luzitano |
| Lowell S. Capener | Wendy Miller |
| Suzanne George | Scott Parkinson |
| Susan Hafen | Richard Skiles |
| Eugene H. Halverson | Shauna Whitson |
| Cynthia Jeppson | Doug Woolf |

LISTS

by Jay Hudson

Life is lists! Everyone makes lists. We make them in our heads, on the palm of our hand, in our computers. We stick them on the refrigerator. The Sumerians made shopping lists on clay tablets and I've made bird lists on the back of scrap paper while sitting out the weather in some distant café. If you take a guided birding tour you will spend every evening with your printed check list listening to the guide tell you what the group saw so you can check off the ones you witnessed. I once saw a lady on a birding trip check every bird the guide said was seen that day, whether she saw it or not. This leads me to wonder about the ethics of bird lists. Should you check off a bird if you only heard it? What about a fly-by with little time to see any distinguishing features? How about the guide aboard the boat that calls out the name of a bird bobbing on the waves a quarter of a mile away. Sure you saw all those fleeting flitters but is it fair to check it off?

If you are serious about listing you will be doing trip, state, country, backyard, international, special event, species and "want" lists. Here's a question: if you see a bird in Mexico in the winter that summers in the U.S., can you count it as a U.S. bird?

Once you say you're a "birder," be it level 1 or 10, you need to set personal standards. I'm comfortable with mine and although they may not be as high as they could be (perhaps the Chickadee could publish the "official" sighting rules), I know that a

glimpse is good enough for my life list but not good enough to describe the bird to a friend. Quite frankly, I enjoy the story behind the hunt, describing the topography, the unusual circumstances involved and the fact that, in many cases, I will probably never again get a better glimpse of that species. I stand in awe of those who can describe a birds color patterns, habitat requirements, nesting techniques, hunting strategies and mating prowess but my sights are set a bit lower only because I'm lazy.

I know birders who have never kept a written life list but if you named a bird, they can tell you if they have seen it, where, when and under what circumstances. These are birders with passion, with libraries, the latest optics and go anywhere vehicles. But they still list; written or not. They can tell you the books in their library, the binoculars they have had and the vehicles they have had over the years. I hope that novice birders look forward to acquiring this wisdom, this experience, this story telling potential.

I will never reach the level of that medical doctor who reveled in lists and wound up having a book named after him (Roget's Thesaurus), but I love going over my list of birds and remembering the circumstances under which I saw the bird, be it a glimpse or a long studied look.

Song of the American Robin

During the day, an American Robin sings a lovely, familiar song of rich phrases. The phrases vary, and ring forth with a lilting quality.

But as the sun begins to set, Robin song takes on a new and exquisitely different character. From sunset until dark, a Robin adds ethereal whispered notes to its carol, creating a song of remarkable grace and complexity.

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From Audubon Bird Note, April 4, 2022



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

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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.

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