



The Mountain Chickadee

Newsletter of the Wasatch Audubon Society

Volume 41, Number 2 March/April 2022

WAS MEETINGS AND HAPPENINGS

Tuesday, March 15 - 7:00PM

Jaime Butler, of the Great Salt Lake Institute, will talk about the new book "GSL Biology: A Terminal Lake in a Time of Change." Her work on this topic updates and reframes our understanding of this valuable ecosystem. Join us on Zoom (*see below). You can view a copy of this book by Googling the title and clicking on download.

Tuesday, April 19 - 7:00PM

Join a representative from our sister organization Audubon Rockies for a presentation about the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative. This will be by Zoom (*see below). Attending will be a great way to prepare for the Greater Sage Grouse field trip on 4/23!

SEE CALENDAR ON PG. 5 FOR MORE EVENTS!

President's Corner

by Jay Stretch

Wasatch Audubon adopted the Mountain Chickadee (pictured above) as the symbol of the society. These cute little critters thus deserve our attention, and as you will see, respect.

Even though they have a brain about the size of two peas, Chickadees are highly intelligent with fantastic memories. They cache thousands of seed for winter and early summer feeding and remember where. Their brains are only 0.7 grams and the bird weighs about 12 grams. But bird brain intelligence is a misnomer; rather than mass, it is the number of neurons and synaptic connections that are indicators of intelligence and the ability to learn. Chickadees are near the top of that category in the avian world.

Birds that are born with their eyes open and ready to run and soon ready to leave the nest (Precocial), such as shore birds, have larger brains at birth, but the brain does not grow much over their life span. Birds born blind and dependent (Altricial), may have smaller brains at birth but they grow with the bird and

Continued on pg. 3

*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: 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).

WE ARE NOW ON INSTAGRAM!!

Search for Wasatch Audubon.

***Don't miss the results of
our 2021 Christmas Bird
Count on page 7!!***



**Look for accessibility
information for each
event**

Wasatch Audubon Society

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

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Treasurer	Nancy Arnett	801-388-0637
Past President	Dan Johnston	801-645-8633

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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

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Bird Walks	Dan Johnston	801-645-8633
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Programs	Susan Snyder	801-388-4201
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>.

Water Your Thirsty Birds!

by Kristin Purdy



The birds need us more than ever to provide water in our yards as our drought deepens and water probably won't be as available in natural stream flows or unnatural curb puddles from sprinklers. The water sources you provide can be simple or complex, cheap or expensive, utilitarian or objects d'art. The birds don't care. Birds like water that's WET. Birds like water that's AVAILABLE. Birds like water that's RELIABLE. Choose the method you're most likely to keep up with to be a good bird

host.

My favorites are SIMPLE, CHEAP and EASY. My most-used water source by far is a \$3.99 shallow galvanized pet dish from IFA. Nearly every species I see in my yard has used this source. I made a shelf for the dish from a piece of scrap lumber bungee-corded atop a corner of my deck railing 15 feet from my kitchen window. A watering can by the deck door helps me reliably change the water or dump the ice first thing in the morning. It's a simple four-season source, costs practically nothing and is easy to maintain. And I can see it easily, too.

I added a couple more sources in the yard as the heat climbed last June that just needed to be kept filled and fresh. One was a hammered copper bowl left over after the legs broke off, still a pretty object of garden art, which I snuggled down in the shrubbery for the towhees. They used it. I splurged on a new hammered copper bowl that could be staked anywhere. They used it. Then, I got creative. I placed two black rubber livestock bowls sitting unused in my garage at ground level each with a cheap solar fountain that would spritz water with direct sunlight. The birds used them.

The first bird I saw the day I set up one of those ground-level fountains was my Momma Western Screech-owl at 3:30 p.m. on a sunny June day. She had left her three fledglings in a nearby tree to get a drink, stayed long enough for me to snap a few pictures with a cell phone and then digi-scope a few more. I've also seen her using my deck water bowl both to bathe at dawn alone and with her mate in the bowl, and to wash the muddy night crawlers she had caught for her babies.

The entertainment value to you of water sources you can see is a huge incentive for offering water, but the birds' need for it for both drinking and bathing means you should offer water whether or not you can see it. Just make sure you're a good host and offer the water they need: WET, AVAILABLE and RELIABLE.

President's Corner cont. from pg. 1

achieve much greater functionality and diverse capability. This way the latter can better store lessons learned from their parents and for themselves, leading to a more complex life than chasing around the sand seeking floundering mollusks. Brain size is also smaller for birds that migrate than those that do not. This is not exactly reflected in the Mountain Chickadee. Even though they do not migrate in the classical sense, they may move from higher to lower elevation depending on weather and food source. Studies have shown that the Mountain Chickadee is better at problem solving than their more territorial black capped cousin.

Scientists studying the Chickadee's call refer to it as "one of the most sophisticated and exacting systems of communication of any land animal." (* pg 46) Their calls are actually a language, including syntax, which provides for vast array of information including their location, food type and spot, and predator size, whether airborne or perched, threat estimate, etc. Size is important here because the nimble little bird can easily outmaneuver larger threats like great hawks but not so smaller hunters such as smaller owls. The more 'dees' in the call the more dangerous the threat--kind of disappointing when you only get one when passing by. But then again, these smart little birds are seldom afraid of humans and even learn to recognize individual humans.

Some fun facts about our mascot:

- Females gather loose fur from mammal scat, owl pellets, clumps of fur stuck on fences, pulled directly from animals, etc. They use it to create plugs with which to cover unincubated eggs and plug the nest cavity when the female must leave the nest unattended.
- When nesting, adults and older chicks may mimic a snake by hissing while lunging/striking the side of the nesting cavity if they feel threatened.
- Only females incubate eggs--males escape this chore by not developing a brood patch (a spot of featherless skin on belly to pass warmth to eggs).
- While common across most of the evergreen forests of western mountains, particularly pine, mixed conifer, spruce-fir, and pinyon-juniper forests, Mountain Chickadees prefer conifers, typically leaving deciduous trees to the Black-Capped Chickadee. However, when preparing to nest Mountain Chickadees will seek out any aspen trees for their soft, easily excavated wood. Good knowledge for a birder! They may also rely on holes made by other birds.
- They hatch with eyes closed and come down along the spine and head—that altricial thing again.

- Juveniles form groups after fledging, but in late summer the birds create groups of up to three pairs of adults and a variety of younger birds.
- Chickadees have a distinct pecking order for feeding with males typically forcing females aside (except early in the breeding season).
- Mountain Chickadees typically spend the cold winter nights alone in clumps of foliage or under big flakes of bark
- Mountain Chickadees have accents! Calls and songs are different for birds living at different elevations--those living in lower altitudes sing the song differently when compared to those living at a higher altitude.
- In early summer, Mountain Chickadees are able to find and eat seeds hid the previous autumn.
- During cold weather chickadees need as much as twenty times more food than they do in summer.

* *The Genius of Birds*, Jennifer Ackerman, © Corsair Publishing, 2016

An Uncommon Winter Visitor

by Kristin Purdy



When you think of winter bird feeding, do you think of hummingbirds? Uh, maybe not. But an

Anna's Hummingbird (Kristin Purdy's picture above) wintered in my yard for the second time this past winter. He showed up on a snowy October 19 and stayed until December 26. He preferred two unheated feeders and so I became his slave, wrapped around his little wing tip. Once the overnight temperatures dipped below freezing, I arose in the morning to put the feeders out before dawn and I took them in at night after sunset. He was my first bird of the day around 7 a.m. and my last bird around 5 p.m. I also bought a feeder whose reservoir was heated with an incandescent light bulb plugged into an outdoor outlet for those days when the day time temperatures dropped below freezing. But he wasn't too fond of that one.

Birders report a few Anna's Hummingbirds along the Wasatch Front every fall and winter. I give myself the best chance to be one of those hosts by maintaining my feeders until about December 1. If an Anna's hasn't found my yard by then, it's unlikely that one will. But now my yard can claim two winter Anna's (the first was in 2006) and it's very rewarding to have hosted such an unlikely species in winter.

Conservation Corner

A New Threat to Endangered Hawaiian Birds

by Lynn Carroll

Hawai'i's native birds have been under siege ever since people arrived. They had evolved without any mammals or reptiles preying on them. Humans have transformed a lot of habitat and introduced threats like pigs, rats, and cats. About two-thirds of the endemic species (found nowhere else) are extinct, and 33 of the remaining 44 are threatened or endangered.

Another new threat to these birds is avian malaria. Mosquitoes were brought to the islands by sailing ships in the 1800s. Non-native birds carrying malaria were imported later, and mosquitoes spread the parasite from bird to bird, which has been catastrophic to native birds. Hawai'i's beautiful honeycreepers are particularly susceptible. An extreme example is the 'I'iwi, for which a single bite by a malaria-carrying mosquito is often fatal. These forest birds have disappeared from the lowlands where mosquitoes thrive and breed. They only survive at higher elevations where the cold keeps mosquitoes and the malaria parasite in check. Now climate change is increasing their peril.

I saw a program by the American Bird Conservancy (ABC) about the Kaua'i Forest Bird Recovery Project. The project is focused on four species endemic to Kaua'i: The Puaiohi is the sole native fruit-eating bird. The 'I'iwi was prized by Hawaiian kings. 'Akeke'e and tiny 'Akikiki are also honeycreepers; the latter numbers less than 150 birds.

On Maui ABC is focused on the Kiwikiu, or Maui Parrotbill, a critically endangered honeycreeper. There is very little forest habitat left on Maui, and the Parrotbill is currently only found on a thin high-elevation strip of forest on the windward side of Haleakala volcano. Efforts to expand its range to the leeward side of the volcano have been stymied by avian malaria.

On both islands, controlling invasive species is vital. For mosquitoes, they treat pools of water with BTI, a biological that kills the larvae. It is effective in temporarily reducing the mosquito density, but applying it repeatedly in the remote forests can't be sustained. However, there is great excitement about a new technique for "mosquito birth-control" that could be used on a landscape scale.

Many insect species have a symbiotic bacteria of the genus Wolbachia. Mosquitoes can't reproduce if a male and female harbor different strains of Wolbachia. The Incompatible Insect Technique (IIT) requires a secure laboratory, where mosquitoes with an incompatible Wolbachia strain are reared. Large numbers of lab-reared males must be released periodically to mate with wild-type females, which won't have viable eggs. The population should be reduced in just one generation. No native Hawaiian species rely on mosquitoes, so there won't be negative effects on the ecosystem.

We can help save Hawaiian birds from extinction by 1) donating to ABC or to "Birds, Not Mosquitoes," a multi-agency partnership to enable IIT; 2) asking representatives and senators to support federal funding through the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (H.R. 2773; S. 2372); 3) reducing our personal carbon footprints; and 4) advocating for federal actions that fight climate change.



NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

If you join National Audubon Society (as we hope you do, along with Wasatch Audubon) you will receive regular emails alerting you to opportunities to view and learn about a multitude of birds. One I recently received invited me to "peer inside the rocky burrow of an Atlantic Puffin." I clicked on the link and was not disappointed! Not only did I see the clip of the Puffin, I learned that explore.org has links to many cams, live and recorded. The Puffins in their burrows are off season right now and so were recorded - still a lot of fun! Sometimes the emails are to educate about specific birds or to join free learning opportunities. It's a great benefit! See back page of this newsletter for instructions to **JOIN NOW!** (Laura Johnston)

CALENDAR

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

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

MARCH**2 Wednesday 9:00 am bird walk****Antelope island Causeway and Fielding Garr Ranch:**

Meet at the parking lot just before the toll booth. This is a fee area. **R P/U L B**

9 Wednesday 8:00 am bird walk

Glassmann Pond in Ogden: Meet in the parking area by the bathrooms. The pond is adjacent to McKay Dee Hospital and is located off Oakcrest Dr. Turn left towards MKDH and then the first left as if continuing down towards the hospital's ER. The turn-off for the pond/parking is on the left. **U M**

15 Tuesday 7:00 pm WAS meeting

Join us on Zoom. Jaime Butler, of the Great Salt Lake Institute, will talk about the new book "GSL Biology: A Terminal Lake in a Time of Change." See pg. 1 for more information and how to get the Zoom link.

16 Wednesday 8:00 am bird walk

Jensen Nature Park in Syracuse: Meet in parking lot at 3176 S Bluff road, Syracuse, UT 84075 **R P**

16 Wednesday 8:00 am bird walk

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19 Saturday 8:00 am field trip

County Hot Spots: Meet at the Pilot gas station on 12th St. just west of I-15 to caravan to the hot spots. We will visit Ogden Bay North and then proceed to various hot spots in Weber, Davis and Box Elder Counties. Target birds: raptors, shorebirds and waterfowl. Bring water and lunch. **Minimal walking.**

23 Wednesday 8:00 am field trip

Kaysville Ponds in Kaysville: Meet in the parking area by USU Botanical Gardens (50 W Frontage Rd), just past 900 S, Kaysville. **P/U L**

APRIL**5 Tuesday 7:00 pm WAS Board Meeting.**

Held remotely.

6 Wednesday 8:00 am bird walk

Buffalo Ranches Trail in Farmington: Meet at the corner of Ranch Road and Prairie View Drive (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. **U-Rough surface**

13 Wednesday 8:00 am bird walk

Ogden Bay Bird Refuge South: Meet at parking lot behind Wendy's at 1900 W 5600 S in Roy. We will caravan to the Refuge. We'll proceed west on 5600 S to 7500 w, then turn north to the parking lot at the end of the road. **U L**

19 Tuesday 7:00 pm WAS meeting

Join us on Zoom. A representative from our sister organization Audubon Rockies will give a presentation about the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative. See pg. 1 for more information and how to get the Zoom link. This will be a great way to prepare for the Greater Sage Grouse field trip on 4/23!

20 Wednesday 8:00 am bird walk

Gailey Trail at Nicholls Pond in Fruit Heights: Meet at Castle Heights Playground parking lot at 1105 Nicholls Rd in Fruit Heights. **U M**

23 Saturday 5:00 am field trip

Greater Sage Grouse Trip: Meet at DWR office, 515 E 5300 S (Adams Ave.) in South Ogden. We will caravan to the lek south of Henefer to observe the Grouse from inside our vehicles. Target birds: Greater Sage Grouse, Bald Eagle, Common Loon, American Dipper, Northern Shrike. **Minimal walking.**

27 Wednesday 8:00 am bird walk

Andy Adams Community Fishery in Layton: Meet in the parking lot south of Gordon Ave. 1799 E 1000 N, Layton UT 84040.

Cont. on pg. 6

Calendar cont. from pg. 5

MAY

4 Wednesday 8:00 am bird walk

Farmington Bay: Meet at the parking area outside the gate to Eccles Wildlife Center at Farmington Bay Wildlife Management Area (Located at approximately 1700 W Glovers Lane, Farmington. **R P L B**

- Accessibility Codes**
- 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 2022 Utah Legislature Tackles Conservation

by Lynn Carroll

As I write two weeks remain in the 2022 legislative session; it ends on March 4. At this point it is looking good for the most important bill for Great Salt Lake, HB 33. It amends the present, very limited in-stream flow bill, by which a water right can be granted to increase the volume of water in a stream. HB 33 makes it easier for that to happen, and allows water rights to also be used to improve the water level in Great Salt Lake, and on other sovereign lands (e.g. Utah Lake and Jordan River) to benefit wildlife, state parks management, and the natural aquatic environment. The Division

Cont. in next column

for Forestry, Fire, and State Lands may hold a water right to benefit sovereign lands.

For those who haven't been receiving the emailed legislative updates, here are some of our Policy Advocate's remarks from week #4.

"Two turf/lawn bills (HB 121 and HB 282) and a good water planning bill (SB 110) are on their way to enactment, but a sensible water conservation bill (HB 115) was defeated ... Secondary Water Metering requirements (HB 242) has the backing of leadership and is sure bet for passage.

"Funding (\$50 m.) for Great Salt Lake efforts looks solid and money for enforcing OHV trespassing on dry GSL lakebed looks certain, and Waterbird Studies are in play." The Waterbird Studies mentioned are surveys of birds at GSL and Utah Lake.

The Requests for Appropriations were drafted and supported by Audubon.



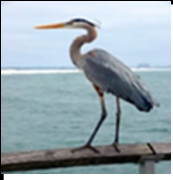
Don't Miss IT!

Wilson's Phalarope
The Festival's spotlight bird

IT'S the Great Salt Lake Bird Festival.

May 12-15

For schedule and tickets go to www.daviscountyutah.gov/greatsaltlakebirdfest



SMILE 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!

Welcome New and Rejoined Members

Friend of Aha	Lisa McCarver
Elwood Belzer	Mercedes Mueller
Shirley B. Boren	Vianne Nielsen
Myrna Burbank	Jas E. Patterson
Sylvia Carter	Joan Peterson
Anna Cordes	Beverly Quarles
Jesse De Hay	Joel Robison
Gloria Dixon	Juan Rodriguez
Robert H. Ekstrom	Sue B. Smith
Thomas Espinoza	Bill A. Spinks
Kirby Family	Paula Staker
Sue Gingrich	Lincoln Stone
Lloyd Harris	Jim & Margaret Suhr
Richard Jee	John R. Tanner
Larry Allen Johnston	Kian Thyberg
Amelia Jones	Nancy Tullis
Owen Larsen	Brenda Watkins
Claudine Martin	Cheryl Watson

Report on

WASATCH AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Our Christmas Bird Counts went off well this year, although it was cold and snowy. A big **thank you** to all that participated and made this year’s Christmas Bird Counts such a success. All this information and data is very important for the study of population trends of wintering bird species.

Wasatch Audubon now hosts five Christmas Bird Counts; Ogden, Morgan, Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, Antelope Island and now Ogden Valley. This is all possible because of all your support. Thank you all very much. (John Bellmon)

On the **42nd Ogden Christmas Bird Count** we all had an exciting time. The weather was snowy with cold temperatures. Despite the Covid restrictions that we were all under, there were 24 individuals that came out to help on the count. We counted 91 species. Some of the unusual highlights were Ross’s Geese, Trumpeter Swans, Eurasian Wigeon and Barrow’s Goldeneye. Our totals were 27,928

individuals. A big thanks to the 24 observers that came out to help in our success, despite the weather and Covid. (John Bellmon)

We had to cancel the **Bear River Refuge Count** on the scheduled date because of a snowstorm. We held it one week later. The weather was clear but cold with almost no wind. Waterfowl numbers were down because of the frozen water. The most unusual bird sighting that I experienced was a very large flock of Sandhill Cranes and a large flock of Snow Geese with a small number of Ross’s Geese. I have never seen that many Sandhill Cranes or Snow Geese on the Bear River Refuge Christmas Bird Count. The other birds that were seen were winter birds that are normal for this time of year. We did have our good arctic friends visiting for the winter, the Rough-legged Hawks. Our totals were 7,236 individuals and a total of 49 species reported. A big thanks to the eleven observers that helped in this good day of birding. Sorry for the snowstorm on our scheduled date. (John Bellmon)

The **Antelope Island Count** was held on a cold day with some wind, but otherwise a beautiful day to be out birding. Most of the birds were normal ones for the winter, with unusual sightings of a Canyon Wren, a Northern Mockingbird, Harris’s Sparrows, Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches, and Common Redpolls. Our totals were 12,831 individuals and a total of 66 species reported. A big thank you to the 16 observers that braved the weather and made this count such a success. This is always a wonderful way to start the year and get your new year bird list going. (John Bellmon)

The **Morgan Count** was completed by 12 participants who braved a light snow all day. The roads were in good shape, thanks to timely plowing. We travelled 2 miles on foot and 245 miles by car. We had a total of 60 species on county day and 8 additional during count week. Three new species were added to this year’s Morgan count – Ross’s Goose, Canvasback and Turkey Vulture. Thanks to those who joined us. (Weston Smith)



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 and click on the FACEBOOK logo on the webpage.



WASATCH AUDUBON SOCIETY MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE SUBSCRIPTION

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

___ 1-YEAR MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE SUBSCRIPTION: \$12.00

___ MY CONTRIBUTION TO WASATCH AUDUBON: _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED: _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

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