



# The Mountain Chickadee



Newsletter of the **Wasatch Audubon Society**

<http://www.wasatchaudubon.org>

Volume 30, Number 2

**March/April 2011**

## WAS Meetings and Happenings

### March 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting

Nathan Darnall, wildlife biologist for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service will present Developing a Conservation Pool for the Great Salt Lake. The future existence and well-being of the Great Salt Lake may depend on it. 7:00 PM at the Ogden Nature Center (966 W 12<sup>th</sup>).

### April 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting

Carl Taylor, of the Utah Waterfowl Alliance will present Wood Ducks in Northern Utah. Wasatch Audubon introduced Wood Ducks to Beus Pond from October, 1989 through June, 1991. Following the success of this project, Mr. Taylor, in 2003, expanded nest box installation throughout many additional sites in our area. 7:00 PM at the Ogden Nature Center (966 W 12<sup>th</sup>).

**Come and bring a friend!**

**Don't forget!**  
**Tundra Swan Day**  
**March 12<sup>th</sup>**  
**10:00 to 3:00 PM**  
**Compton's Knoll at**  
**Salt Creek WMA**

## THREE CHEERS FOR SPRING



**Finally!** The arriving signs of spring are welcome events after a seemingly long winter. For many bird species, March and April represent a major long distance travel season. Spring migration is different than fall migration. In the spring, most birds are in their fresh breeding plumage and are very colorful. Plus, the birds are in a hurry to reach their nesting habitat and start

their summer activities. The fall migration is more leisurely with weather playing a bigger role as to the speed of the migration, and, there are a lot more birds in juvenile or worn plumage. With the "speed" of spring migration, birders should spend more time in the field as birds tend to stay in one location for a very short period. Not all bird species migrate at the same time, so many of us bird the same "hotspot" over and over as different species use the productive habitat on their way through the area. Even the "target" birds change with the progression of days on the calendar. Early in March, as the Bald Eagles leave Utah for their northern nesting habitats, other hawks and falcons will catch our attention. We will also be looking for the early migrating shorebirds. As we approach April, the waterfowl and sparrows become our "target" birds. When the apple and willow trees begin to bloom, we expect to be wowed by the colorful warblers.

It seems that all birders have their spring specials. Some look forward to the appearance of the Sandhill Cranes and their "wilderness" sounding calls ringing through the spring air. Some seek the bright blue of the Mountain Bluebird. Others mark their calendars for the opportunity to view a Greater Sage-Grouse lek, enjoy the bright black and white plumage of the Common Loon, or share stories around the breakfast/brunch table at the Spring Chicken Inn in Morgan. Hardcore birders will be scouting out unique habitats to locate a rare warbler or sparrow. All of us who complained about the drab plumage of many waterfowl species last fall will be impressed by the bright spring plumage. The best part is the anticipation of a different mix of species on each trip - even trips to the same location.

(Continued on Page 6)



**Wasatch Audubon Society**

Website: [wasatchaudubon.org](http://wasatchaudubon.org)

Email: [patricia@peakbusinesssolutions.net](mailto:patricia@peakbusinesssolutions.net)

801-597-1091

**Officers**

President	Paul Merola	801-731-4815
Vice President	Arnold Smith	801-829-3383
Secretary	Sharen Perry	801-392-9554
Treasurer	Betty Evans	801-476-0232
Past President	Scott Baxter	801-540-9417

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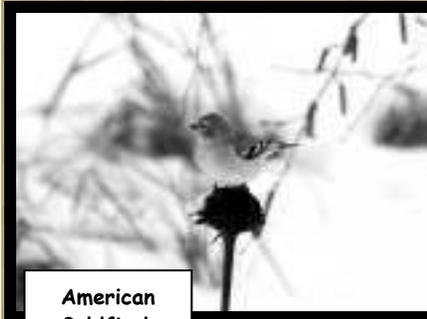
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2011	Barbara Hudson	801-479-5992
2011	Dan Johnston	801-731-4573
2011/2012	Weston Smith	801-829-4183
2011/2012	John Bellmon	801-444-3704
2011/2012	Lynn Carroll	801-392-8216

**Committee Chairpersons**

Conservation	Lynn Carroll	801-392-8216
Education	Dennis Collins	801-393-1115
Field Trips	Les Talbot	801-731-4925
Wed. Bird Walks	Paul Lombardi	801-295-7738
Fundraising	<i>Vacant</i>	-
Historian	Susan Snyder	801-388-4201
Hospitality	Joyce Overdiek	801-392-1908
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Newsletter	Susan Snyder	801-388-4201
Programs	Jack Rensel	801-399-0240
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>

**Newsletter Articles:** Items for the next newsletter are due by the 20th of the month prior to the newsletter date. Send letters, articles, or comments to Susan Snyder at: [naturescall@gmail.com](mailto:naturescall@gmail.com)



American Goldfinch

**President's Pipeline**



Belted Kingfisher



Song Sparrow



Great Horned Owl



Bald Eagle

Paul Merola  
[sfarkus@yahoo.com](mailto:sfarkus@yahoo.com)

## Thank you Mort!

In case you haven't heard, Mort Somer has decided to turn over the organization and leadership of Wasatch Audubon's Wednesday Bird Walks to Paul Lombardi. WAS members and Board would like to thank Mort for his many years of hard work ensuring we had fun and productive bird walks. Thanks for all you have done, Mort!

### CONSERVATION CORNER

by Lynn Carroll

#### At the Great Salt Lake, It's Always Something

How "great" is the Salt Lake? Well, it's great in size—the largest lake in the western US. Its depth is not so great, maxing out at 33 feet on average. It's great for birds. Five different areas of the lake with their attendant wetlands were named Global Important Bird Areas. It is greatly salty, being a terminal lake, but the saltiness is much greater in some areas than others. It's also greatly abused, and because it's greatly misunderstood, it can be hard to get people to care.

That's where *FRIENDS of Great Salt Lake* come in. Their mission is "Protecting the Great Salt Lake ecosystem through education, research and advocacy." Wasatch Audubon has taken part (with many others) in some of the group's advocacy efforts.

Our January program was a presentation by *FRIENDS* about the impact on Great Salt Lake Minerals' (GSLM's) proposed expansion on the lake's ecosystems, especially in Bear River Bay. We saw maps of the areas where GSLM holds leases from the state and where the company plans a phased expansion. We learned that the outstanding waterbird habitat of the Bear River Bay results from the shallow sheet flow that crosses parts of it, nourishing plants that support both breeding and migrating birds. GSLM's expansion in Bear River Bay, besides taking up 8,000 acres, is likely to interfere with that flow. We heard that the company has reduced its request for water from the lake by

half, to "only" 150,000 acre-feet per year. Then we learned with dismay that to stop the leakage of water through their earthen dikes, they plan to form concrete barriers extending from the top of each dike deep into the lake bottom. Talk about interfering with the flow of water in the bay ... and how would those barriers ever be removed?!

In February conservationists submitted comments about a draft permit for the Jordan River Water Conservancy District (JRWCD) to discharge polluted water at the south shore of the Great Salt Lake. The district has a big problem—what to do with the waste product of a reverse-osmosis plant that JRWCD built to clean up groundwater polluted by past mining activities. The district added a 21-mile pipeline to take the waste water, which contains dissolved salts and selenium, to the lake rather than dump it into the Jordan River.

Selenium is poisonous to birds in excessive concentrations. We are concerned, among other things, about whether the selenium will be diluted adequately in the lake water to become innocuous; about the accumulation of selenium in the lake over the long-term; and about what happens when the pipeline doesn't reach the open lake, as it hasn't recently. When the lake level is low, the discharged water will travel through transitional wetlands and may cause the growth of an "attractive nuisance," attracting birds to the very place where the water is most polluted. We advocate a "go slow" approach, in which extensive monitoring and testing warns of harm being done before it becomes very serious.

A long-term threat to the Great Salt Lake has been discharge of household and industrial waste into its waters. Fortunately sewage is now treated before it enters the lake, but treatment plants don't remove all of the problem pollutants. Farmington Bay receives inflows from seven wastewater treatment plants. The excessive nutrients they introduce have been blamed for algal blooms and oxygen depletion that lead to "lake stink." A new Willard/Perry wastewater treatment plant will remove nitrogen and phosphorus, and additional studies will be undertaken to reduce and monitor its impact on the Willard Spur.

In March, Nathan Darnall will give a program about what's **not** going into the lake—enough water. The

lake level varies dramatically depending on precipitation amounts over periods of a few years. Recently the trend has been down, and it's not just because of the drought years. Our use of water also impacts the lake level, because a portion of the water withdrawn from tributary streams never gets to the lake, and as the northern Utah population increases, the withdrawals are increasing.

I hope that you care enough about the health of Great Salt Lake and its birds to be an advocate for them among your friends and acquaintances. The FRIENDS website has a wealth of good information you can explore: [www.fogsl.org](http://www.fogsl.org)

### **Hardware Ranch Wildlife Management Area**

January 22, 2011

*by Les Talbot*

At the beginning of the trip, the temperature was 33° F and the sky was clear. The south side of Sardine Pass had some snow on it, and we ran into snow covered roads about four miles south of the ranch. At the ranch, we experienced strong winds and rather cold conditions. By the time we got on the feed wagon, the wind had stopped and it had warmed up a little. We had 19 people in the group, so the hay wagon was full. Everyone had an opportunity to throw hay to the elk.

From the ranch, we drove to the Willow Park Zoo in Logan. Much to our disappointment, the zoo was closed for the winter, so we drove to the Blue Bird Restaurant for lunch.

We saw 5 species of birds: Ring-necked Duck, Common Goldeneye, Bald Eagle, Wild Turkey and Common Raven. We also saw several mule deer and one moose in the canyon.

Everyone enjoyed the elk. There were about 400 in the pasture and another 100 in holding pens.

Trip participants were: Weston, Louise, Kalyssa, Devra, and Conrad Smith, Paul Lombardi, Shirley & Linda Lee, Claudia & Dan Cook, Amanda & Kydan Gagestein, Abigail Holbert, Lita & Mark Hilles, Annette Figuered & Richard Johnson, Jeanette & Brian Nosker, and me.

### **Wasatch Audubon Christmas Bird Counts**

*by John Bellmon*

A big **thank you** to all who participated and made this year's Christmas Bird Counts such a success. This year the weather ranged from very good to a snow storm with some roads closed. But, as always, everyone who came out had a really good time.

On the **Bear River Refuge Christmas Bird Count**, we had some of the best weather I have ever seen on a Christmas Bird Count – a sunny day with almost no wind! Everyone seemed to enjoy it very much. The big surprise was an American Bittern that flew out of some cattails. Our totals were 9,373 individuals counted and 60 species reported.

On the **Ogden Christmas Bird Count**, we struggled with the mix of rain and snow along with fog. In the western part of the count circle visibility was a problem at times. A highlight was a Mountain Bluebird sighted in the western part of the circle. Our totals were 24,984 individuals counted and 70 species reported.

On the **Morgan Christmas Bird Count**, a big snow storm hit the day before the count but some determined diehards came out to brave the weather and participate in the count. Thanks to the proud few who did show up for the count. Not all of the roads had been opened by snowplows so that we could get through on our normal routes but we continued as best as we could. Thanks also to the Smith brothers and Kris's friend who were able to add several species to our list as species seen during the count week but not on the count day. Among those seen were Greater Sage-Grouse and a Northern Saw-whet Owl. Our totals were 7,889 individuals counted 52 species reported.

On the **Antelope Island Christmas Bird Count**, the weather was clear but cold, with a wind that came up in the afternoon. With several good crews, the New Year was off to a good start. A flock of Horned Larks on the causeway had a Lapland Longspur and four Snow Buntings in it. These are birds that we are always on the lookout for during the winter. Our totals were 7,683 individuals counted and 62 species reported.

We will post the totals on our Chapter's website so everyone can see the results for all our different Christmas Bird Counts. Again, thanks to everyone for making our counts a success.

### **Morgan County Bald Eagle Count**

February 19, 2011

*by Les Talbot*

When I left home at 7:40 a.m. it was 40° F and overcast. Thirteen of us met at the DWR Office and headed to the Spring Chicken Inn. It started to rain just west of Morgan. When we came out of the inn it was snowing and continued to snow the remainder of the day.

We didn't see a lot of birds between Ogden and Morgan, but as we drove up East Canyon bird numbers began to pick up. By the time we reached East Canyon Reservoir we had only seen about 20 Bald Eagles, which is low for this trip. Most of the Bald Eagles were seen in the Croydon area, along Lost Creek

Altogether we saw: Common Goldeneye (26 - east of Henefer), California Quail (west of Morgan), Wild Turkey (96 - about 60 in Croydon and the rest in East Canyon), Bald Eagle (22 immature, 38 adult, and 4 undecided for a total of 64), Golden Eagle, American Kestrel (2), Wilson's snipe ( 2 - east of Henefer), Rock Pigeon, Eurasian Collared Dove, Mourning Dove, Belted Kingfisher, Lewis's Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Western Scrub-Jay, Black-billed Magpie, Common Raven, American Dipper, American Robin, European Starling, Dark-eyed Junco, Red-winged Blackbird, House Finch, and American Goldfinch. Mule deer and two porcupines were also spotted.

Participants were: John Bellmon, Paul Lombardi, Dan Johnston, Jack Rensel, Martha Ann Albretsen , Randy Lemon, Brian Nosker, Annette Figuered, Richard Johnson, Betty and Keith Evans, Jim Peters, and me.



### **OWL PELLETS NEEDED**

I am collecting barn and/or Great Horned Owl pellets for use in Audubon Adventures classrooms. They will be used to teach a lesson on owl eating habitats. We used pellets in two classrooms this past month and the students had a blast dissecting them. If you happen to see any owl pellets while out birding please collect them for me or let me know where they are located. I can be reached at 801 393-1115 or at [sarden4@comcast.net](mailto:sarden4@comcast.net)

Thanks, Dennis Collins

### **Members Corner**

**Editor's note:** Following are a few new columns/articles submitted by our members. Each month we will have something new in this section. Some will become regular monthly columns, while others may be a onetime treat! Please feel free to send me your ideas, photos, articles, etc. or anything you might like to share with the readers of *The Mtn. Chickadee* at [naturescall@gmail.com](mailto:naturescall@gmail.com).

Enjoy! Susan

### **HOME SWEET HOME**

*by Keith Evans*

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

**April in Shrub-Steppe.** I moan loudly when the alarm sounds at 0-dark-30. However, I look forward to enjoying the sights, sounds, and smells of the early spring sagebrush. The sights and sounds of the courtship dance of the Greater Sage-Grouse are especially rewarding. Utah is 15% shrub-steppe habitat which is considered a high priority habitat for management. Shrub-steppe habitat is important to many birds that are decreasing in numbers. Human activities like urbanization, grazing, energy extraction, and agriculture have had a negative impact on the quality and quantity of the shrub-steppe habitat throughout the west. Shrub-steppe habitat is usually dominated by sagebrush, but many other associated plant species are present in good condition habitat. High quality habitats include

native species like bluebunch wheatgrass, needlegrass, winterfat, dandelion, Indian paintbrush and more. Obligate nesting species in our sagebrush habitats include; Greater Sage-Grouse, Brewer’s Sparrow, Sage Sparrow, and Sage Thrasher. The clear notes of the ubiquitous Western Meadowlark add to the early morning experience. As the Sage-Grouse only dance at the crack of dawn, there’s a lot of daylight left for more birding and to visit nearby reservoirs to count the Common Loons as they migrate north. I’m most familiar with the sagebrush areas in northwestern Utah as I’ve visited them often. However, on this trip I ended at the area north of Vernal in the northeast corner of the state. The Diamond Mountain Bird Habitat Conservation Area (BHCA) features sagebrush as a priority habitat type and contains the largest concentration of Greater Sage-Grouse in northeastern Utah. The section of US-191 running from Vernal to Flaming Gorge offers many bird viewing hotspots. The Diamond Mountain Road is approximately 24 miles north of Vernal.

**RUNNING FOR THEIR LIVES**

*by Jay Hudson*

Australian aborigines, like the American Indians, fire the land for its health. I witnessed such a fire in the northeast tip of Australia where Black Kites gathered in the dozens to feed on fleeing lizards and grasshoppers. The Black Kite is the worlds most numerous raptor and they cover a wide variety of habitats. I had been working as a Intern Naturalist at a fly-in lodge when my mate Davie Crockett (honest) got a leg infection. We were lucky because the flying dentist was up in the town of Coen and being an outback dentist, he could take care of an infected tooth or leg. I left Croc at the clinic waiting room and went for a look about.

Much of the grassland down wind of town was on fire and the sky choked in red-black smoke. They had the situation well in hand. Flying just ahead of the fire line, Australian Black Kites (milvus migrans) circled awaiting the escaping lizards, small mammals and insects. It was feast day for these scavengers, hovering and diving feet first with wings raised high and performing beautiful talon grabs. Black Kites frequent outback town garbage sites and gather in the thousands during grasshopper

plagues. This day dozens of these wedge-tailed kites flew in on the smell of the fire and provided me with a sight not often seen.

When I caught up with my mate, he told me he was medicated and that the doc told him to lay off the beer for a few days. So we made a bee line to the bar and spent a couple of hours swapping tales and drinking beer. We left town while the fire worked its way west and Croc slept the whole affair off in the bouncing 4x4 on the way back.

**THREE CHEERS FOR SPRING**

(Continued from Page 1)

Keep the calendar in this newsletter handy and plan on several trips to enjoy the spring migrants. Highlight trips include Swan Day to look at the magnificent Tundra Swans, Snow Geese, and other waterfowl species. Another highlight is the early morning trip to watch Greater Sage-Grouse display. Every trip will provide a window to view wave after wave of spring migrants as they pass through our great area.

Keith Evans

**Welcome New Members**

*by Paul Lombardi*

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

- |                          |                     |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Taylor Abbott            | Sara Lee Neill      |
| Bobbie Barrett           | Raymond McQuain     |
| Linda Berkley            | Valerie Merges      |
| Lois Brewer              | Raymond Mestas      |
| John Conniff             | Marcia Miller       |
| Carma Dorney             | Stewart Morrill     |
| Michael & Carol Dunfield | Rebecca Nelson      |
| Rose Franklin            | Ellen Pace          |
| Sue Fuller               | Marc Robins         |
| Laurie Garn              | Margaret Rostkowski |
| Cherie Gilmore           | Jan Sheets          |
| George Hales             | Sydney Sjoblom      |
| Serena Harris            | Luezza Sottosanti   |
| Pam Harrison             | Addie Taggart       |
| Jay Hawley               | John Tanner         |
| Mark Hilles              | Robert Videto       |
| Craig Hortog             | Lynn Walker         |
| Janice Hoskins           | Doroth Wright       |
| Shirley Kenney           |                     |

Hope to see you at our next meeting and field trip.



**CALENDAR**

**All activities listed below are open to the public.  
No fees are charged for any event unless noted.**

**For further information on**  
Meetings: Jack Rensel 801- 399-0240  
Field Trips: Les Talbot 801-731-4925  
Bird Walks: Paul Lombardi 801-295-7738

**March 2011**

**2 Wednesday 8:30/9:00am Bird Walk**  
**Pineview Area:** Meet at 8:30 at Dylan’s (12<sup>th</sup> & Monroe) for breakfast or at 9:00 to carpool. Where we go depends on conditions on the ground in Ogden Valley.

**9 Wednesday 8:00/8:30am Bird Walk**  
**Kays Creek Parkway:** Meet at 8:00 at McDonald’s (5745 S. Harrison) for breakfast, or at 8:30 to carpool.

**12 Saturday 10:00am-3:00pm Tundra Swan Day**  
Come to Compton’s Knoll at Salt Creek WMA between 10:00 am and 3:00 pm. *Wasatch Audubon* members will be assisting DWR personnel there. Call **Jack Rensel (399-0240)** for more information. DWR personnel will also be at Farmington Bay WMA from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm.

**15 Tuesday 7:00pm WAS Meeting**  
Guest speaker Nathan Darnall, wildlife biologist for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service will present Developing a Conservation Pool for the Great Salt Lake. At the Ogden Nature Center (966 W 12<sup>th</sup>). (See front page side bar for details.)

**16 Wednesday 8:00/8:30am Bird Walk**  
**Perry Nature Park:** Meet at 8:00 at McDonald’s (Washington & 2600 N, N. Ogden) for breakfast or at 8:30 to carpool.

**19 Saturday 8:00am Field Trip**  
**River Lane & Utah Lake State Park:** Meet at the parking lot behind Wendy’s (1900 W & 5600 S) at 8:00 am. We will visit River Lane which is a hot spot for birds and then bird at the State Park. Bring a lunch and water.

**Save the Date: Saturday May 7 all day**  
**Utah Audubon Council Spring Meeting**  
More information in next *Chickadee* or by e-mail

**23 Wednesday 8:00/8:45am Bird Walk**  
**Two Rivers Trail:** Meet at 8:00 at the Denny’s Restaurant (Take 1100 W north from 21<sup>st</sup> St. to Flying J/Conoco Plaza on left) for breakfast or at 8:45 to carpool.

**30 Wednesday 7:45/8:15am Bird Walk**  
**Riverdale Trail (South):** Meet at 7:45 at McDonald’s (Riverdale Rd. & 900 W) for breakfast or at 8:15 at the trailhead parking lot. (From Riverdale Rd., south on 700 W. for one block, left on 4600 S to lot on right at end of road)

**April**

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

**6 Wednesday 7:30/8:00am Bird Walk**  
**Box Elder CG & Mantua:** Meet at 7:30 at McDonald’s (1838 W 2700 N, Farr West, east of I-15, Exit #349) for breakfast or at 8:00 to carpool.

**13 Wednesday 7:30/8:00am Bird Walk**  
**Willard Bay:** Meet at 7:30 at McDonald’s (1838 W 2700 N, Farr West, east of I-15, Exit #349) for breakfast or at 8:00 to carpool.

**19 Tuesday 7:00pm WAS Meeting**  
Guest speaker Carl Taylor, of the Utah Waterfowl Alliance will present Wood Ducks in Northern Utah. At the Ogden Nature Center (966 W 12<sup>th</sup>). (See front page side bar for details.)

**20 Wednesday 7:30/8:00am Bird Walk**  
**North Arm Wildlife Viewing Area:** Meet at 7:30 at Dylan’s (12<sup>th</sup> & Monroe) for breakfast or at 8:00 to carpool.

**23 Saturday 5:30am Field Trip**  
**Annual Leks & Loons by Les:** Meet at DWR Office (515 E. 5300 S.) at 5:30 am. This is our annual trip to the Greater Sage Grouse Lek. We’ll also look for loons. We’ll end the trip with brunch at the Spring Chicken Inn.

**27 Wednesday 7:30/8:00am Bird Walk**  
**South Ogden Nature Park:** Meet at 7:30 at McDonald’s (5745 S. Harrison) for breakfast or at 8:00 to carpool.

**May**

**4 Wednesday 7:30/8:00am Bird Walk**  
**Swanson Environmental Center:** Meet at 7:30 at McDonald’s (Washington & 2600 N, N. Ogden) for breakfast or at 8:00 to carpool.



*Wasatch Audubon Society*

P.O. Box 3211  
Ogden, Utah 84409



*Wasatch Audubon Society*  
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You can receive a 1-year subscription to *The Mountain Chickadee* (6 issues) for just \$6. If you would like to help support *Wasatch Audubon's* educational and conservation efforts, please indicate the amount of your contribution below and include it in your check. Thank you.

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**Audubon**  
**Membership Application**

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

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

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

Local Chapter: **Wasatch Audubon Society C9ZW540Z**