

The Mountain Chickadee

Newsletter of the Wasatch Audubon Society

Vol 36, Number 1

Jan/Feb 2017

WAS Meeting and Happenings

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

WAS Meeting 7:00 p.m.

The Great Salt Lake ecosystem is unique, vast, and very important to a wide variety of wildlife. Its saline waters are home to brine shrimp, a valuable economic resource harvested commercially, and brine flies. Both are important food sources for resident and migrating birds. The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources has had a team of biologists studying this ecosystem for many years. Ms. Ashley Kijowski will bring us up-to-date on research findings from this valuable habitat and its wildlife.

Tuesday, February 21, 2017

WAS Meeting 7:00 p.m.

Bob Walters, Division of Wildlife Resources Biologist, has had an interesting career working for the welfare of Utah's wildlife. One of his duties has been to coordinate efforts to provide large nesting bird species with artificial nesting platforms when nests have been destroyed or otherwise are not available in suitable habitat. Bob has worked with our Chapter on a number of installations that have provided successful nesting sites for Ospreys and Bald Eagles. Bob will be retiring soon, so let's take this opportunity to hear about some of his experiences.

Both meetings are at the Ogden Nature Center,
966 West 12th Street, Ogden

Please join us and bring a friend!

My Enlightening Screech-owls

by Kristin Purdy

After spending most of 2015 thinking wishfully that a pair of Western Screech-owls would find a newly-installed nest box in my yard, the happy day occurred and greatly expanded my opportunities to watch this species. I learned a lot! Here are some of the highlights:

Screech-owls can be Christmas presents. I first saw the female screech-owl in my nest box on Christmas morning, 2015, lending credence to my story that Santa brought her because I had been a very, very good girl.



My infra-red night vision scope didn't work well on my owls. I started using a 5 x 50 night vision scope to see more and discovered that it didn't help. While I could see the birds moving as gray shapes among everything else in the night that turned into gray shapes, an owl's feathers are so insulating that the bird didn't show as a bright hot object in the scope. Only the eyes showed as bright pinpoints when one of the owls faced me, and that was rarely for long.

Males sing tenor while females sing soprano. The male was much more vocal than the female and sang the bouncing ball trill or double trill predictably. The female's usual call was a single-note, squeazy little shivery sound. But when she trilled, her voice was easily identifiable because it was so much higher-pitched than the male's.

Screech-owls have no problem attacking magpies, even flying from cover during daylight to fight. One or both owls got into scrapes with the magpies that nested in the trees behind the owl nest box. In late March, an owl flew out of the entrance hole to the wooded clump behind the box where the owl appeared to brawl with a magpie. Then, the owl flew back to the box and disappeared inside. Two days later, I noticed the owl sitting in the hole had either lost some feathers from its facial disk or its eye was weeping. On a bright May evening after twice hearing a ruckus from robins and magpies near the nest box, I found owl feathers tumbling over the grass as I approached the nest box. Two magpies flushed from the ground where the female owl was perched, eyeing me fiercely. It was still an hour and a half before dusk, when she would normally emerge.

(Continued on page 3)



Wasatch Audubon Society

Website: wasatchaudubon.org

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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>

President's Pipeline

by Dan Johnston

I was visiting my Dad in Pima, Arizona, when I heard an unusual tapping on the power pole in front of his house. I searched and found a Ladder-backed Woodpecker working the pole. Later he flew into the trees behind the house, a cute little guy and the Bird-of-the Month for November.

The Ladder-backed Woodpecker has been termed the "Cactus Woodpecker," since it nests in cactus plants. A sedentary, non-migratory species, the Ladder-backed can be viewed year-round in its desert environment. Although it dwells mainly in arid places, it can also be found in the pinelands of Central America. This desert bird has an extensive range, established from Central America to the southwestern United States. It has been spotted in the southern areas of Utah, Nevada and Colorado, The Ladder-backed Woodpecker is often observed in dry, brushy areas and thickets. Its favorite residences include wooded canyons, cottonwood groves, pine and pine oak woodlands, desert scrub, and desert grasslands dominated by mesquite shrubs and dense cacti. It prefers the dry desert woodlands which support yuccas, agaves, piñon-juniper foothills, and riparian corridors; and it is a frequent visitor to the southwestern towns



This is one of the more diminutive woodpecker species, with a length of only 6-7 inches. The Ladder-backed Woodpecker and the Nuttall's Woodpecker are strikingly alike in their plumage; the main difference is on the head and scapular areas.

Like most other woodpeckers, the Ladder-backed bores into tree-trunks and limbs with its chisel-like bill, flicking bark about as it searches for insects and larva. It also feeds on the ground, not just for the arthropods, but for the cacti fruit which falls to the ground. It doesn't excavate as much as other woodpeckers do for food; rather, it probes, taps and pries off bark during foraging. The consumption of wood-boring beetles and other destructive insects aids in the control of insect populations, thus rescuing many trees from disease.

The Bird-of-the Month for December was viewed on some of local Wednesday Bird Walks. The Hairy Woodpeckers are a commonly occurring species in almost all kinds of forest habitats found throughout the United States and some parts of Canada and Mexico. However, they also frequent urban surroundings in search of grains and suet commonly found in backyard feeders.



CALENDAR

JANUARY

4 Wednesday 8:30/9:30am Bird Walk

Fort Buenaventura Park: Meet at Moore's Family Restaurant (3558 Wall Ave) for breakfast: at 8:30am or at the entrance to the park at 9:30am

11 Wednesday 8:30/9:30am Bird Walk

South Ogden Nature Park: Meet at Village Inn (1765 E Skyline Dr, South Ogden) for breakfast 8:30am or at 9:30am at the parking lot and trailhead.

17 Tuesday 7:00pm WAS Meeting

The **Great Salt Lake ecosystem** is unique, vast, and very important to a wide variety of wildlife. The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources has had a team of biologists studying this ecosystem for many years. Ms. Ashley Kijowski will bring us up-to-date on research findings from this valuable habitat and its wildlife. Ogden Nature Center, 966 West 12th Street, Ogden

18 Wednesday 8:30/9:30am Bird Walk

West Extension (West of 1900 W) of West Haven Hiking and Biking Trail: Meet at Moore's Family Restaurant (2400 S 1900 W, West Haven) for breakfast at 8:30am. We'll then drive to the West Haven Cemetery (West on 1800 S off 1900 W. Make a right at 2350 West and proceed north into the Cemetery. We'll park on the NW corner of the cemetery).

21 Saturday 9:00am Field Trip

Loveland Living Planet Aquarium: Meet in the large parking lot at Wendy's (1900 W 5600 S, Roy) at 9:00 am. The Aquarium opens at 10:00 am. The cost is \$14.95 for those 65 and over. For those under 65, the cost is \$17.95. They do have a concession so we will be able to purchase food there. This will be an all day trip since the aquarium is in Draper.

25 Wednesday 8:30/9:30am Bird Walk

Beus Pond and Glasmann Pond: Meet at Denny's Restaurant (5805 S Harrison Blvd) for breakfast at 8:30am or at Beus Pond parking lot at 9:30am. If time permits, we'll check out Glasmann Pond near McKay Dee Hospital.

FEBRUARY

1 Wednesday 8:30/9:30am Bird Walk

Antelope Island: Meet at Warren's (1778 S 1000W, Syracuse) for breakfast at 8:30am or at 9:30 at the parking lot to the entrance to Antelope Island.

7 Tuesday 7pm Board Meeting

All members welcome. Ogden Nature Center, 966 West 12th Street, Ogden UT

8 Wednesday 8:30/9:30am Bird Walk

Robert N. Hasenyager Great Salt Lake Nature Center at Farmington Bay: We'll meet for breakfast at 8:30 am at Dylan's (185 Main Street, Kaysville); then drive to the Nature Center.

11 Saturday 10:00am–3:00pm DWR Eagle Day

Eagle Day at the Division of Wildlife Resources Salt Creek Waterfowl Management Area: located 4 miles west of Corinne on UT-83. Go to 6800 West, follow signs to the landfill. For many years, Wasatch Audubon members have volunteered at the Salt Creek WMA, providing scopes and talking to visitors about eagles, other local birds, and conservation. **FREE!** Please join us.

15 Wednesday 8:30/9:30am Bird Walk

Two Rivers Trail: Meet at Denny's (North on 1100 W from 21st street in Ogden the Flying J Plaza) for breakfast at 8:30am; then drive to parking lot off 17th Street. Note: this is a new parking location which will afford us a bit more time to explore the edges of the 21st street pond. To get to the new parking location, take 17th Street west off Wall Ave. Drive approximately 1.4 miles to parking lot on south side of 17th, next to a pallet company.

17-20 Friday thru Monday GBBC

20th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count: Count for as little as 15 minutes in your own backyard. Visit website for more information: birdcount.org

FEBRUARY (cont)

21 Tuesday 7:00pm WAS Meeting

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22 Wednesday 8:30/9:30am Bird Walk

Ogden River Parkway: Meet at Dylan’s (12th and Monroe) for breakfast at 8:30am or at 9:30am at the MTC Park on the Ogden River off Monroe. Note: this is also the Ogden Botanical Gardens.

25 Saturday 7:30am Field Trip

Annual Morgan County Bald Eagle Trip: Meet at the DWR office (515 E. 5300 S. in Ogden) at 7:30am. We’ll carpool from there. We will have breakfast at Larry’s Spring Chicken Inn in Morgan. This is an all day trip. We usually don’t finish until 4:00pm, so bring a lunch and drinks.

March 2017

1 Wednesday 8:30/9:30am Bird Walk

Jefferson Hunt Camp Ground: Meet at Dylan’s (12th and Monroe in Ogden) for breakfast at 8:30am or at Smith’s parking lot (12th and Harrison in Ogden) to arrange carpools. Depending on weather, we may alter the location.

11 Saturday 11:00am–3:00pm BRMBR Swan Day

Swan Day at Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge: located at the viewing platform on the southeast corner of the auto loop. Wasatch Audubon members will provide scopes for viewing swans and other birds

Contact Persons for WAS Outings

Wednesday Walks - Paul Lombardi
pslombard@gmail.com

Saturday Field Trips (the Saturday after the WAS Tuesday Meeting) - Les Talbot 801-731-4925

Other Field Trips - Mike Hearell 801-529-8693

Upcoming events at the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge

January 14, 2017 - **OWL DAY**

11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Live owl viewing between 1:00 and 2:30 p.m.

February 11, 2017 - **EAGLE DAY**

11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Live eagle viewing between 11:15 a.m. and 12:00 p.m.

March 11, 2017 - **SWAN DAY**

11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

All events are FREE to the public.

Check the Refuge’s website for more information:

<http://www.fws.gov/refuge/>

FUNDRAISER

By Betty Evans

A big “thank you” to everyone who joined The Big Sit on October 8, 2016. A total of 27 bird watchers found 47 different species from inside the 17-foot clearly marked circle (thanks to Susan Snyder and John Bellmon) at the Robert N. Hasenyager Great Salt Lake Nature Center in Farmington Bay. For the third year in a row, generous support and participation in this event helped to make our annual fundraiser a great success. To date, donations totaling \$1,798 have been received, and it’s not too late to make a donation to our 2016 The Big Sit.

As you know, this is the main Wasatch Audubon Society fundraiser and funds raised during this event are used to provide support to local area educators and school children, as well as free programs, field trips, and special events throughout the year. Everyone had a fun time sharing stories and experiences while tallying the various bird species visiting the area around the Nature Center. We are looking forward to 2017 and hope you will join us.



FIELD TRIP REPORTS

By Les Talbot

Antelope Island Trip - October 22, 2016

The trip turned out to be a typical Antelope Island trip for this time of year.

There were several thousand Northern Shovelers on the South side of the causeway. We saw several Chukars near the road that leads to the ranch. It was the first day of the Buffalo round-up. We were not able to go to the corrals because of this.

The part of the island that burned was greening up and it was hard to see where the fire was. The windstorm that caused damage at the ranch had peeled the roof, of the barn. We were not able to go into the grove, east of the ranch house, due to several broken limbs on the trees. They were precariously attached to the trunk and it was not safe to be around them. On the way out we ran into quite a bit of traffic of people hauling their horses off of the island.

The highlight of the trip was a young Golden Eagle that was soaring in the sky north of the ranch.

The Ponds - November 19, 2016

Eight of us met at Wendy's in Roy for the trip. Jose Escobero joined us for the trip. He is from Spain. He is teaching in a Charter School. He had a Kaufman field guide, which was printed in Spanish, with him. It was interesting to see what the Spanish names were, for the birds that we saw. For example the Magpie is known as the "Nun" bird in Spanish since its appearance resembles a habit which is worn by the Nuns.

The resting pond had thousands of Shovelers and Pintails on it. Also there were Wigeon, Gadwall, Mallards, Bufflehead, Common Merganser, and Ruddy Duck mixed in with the Shovelers and Pintails. We did see one Bald Eagle and one lone Tundra Swan.

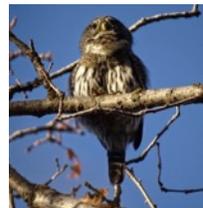
It turned out to be a productive trip. We visited Meadow Creek Pond (11 spp.), Clinton Pond (5 spp.), Jensen Pond (9 spp.), Glover Pond (4 spp.), Farmington Bay resting pond (24 spp.), and Kaysville Ponds (10 spp.) Altogether we saw 39 different species. We did not see any Great-tailed Grackle at Jensen Pond which is unusual. At Kaysville Ponds we watched a Kingfisher dive and bring up a fish.

This was the first time that Mr. Escobero had seen a Bald Eagle and a Kingfisher. This trip is definitely a worthwhile trip and should be done each year during this time of the year.

Searching for the Northern Pygmy Owl

By Billy Fenimore

Needled by the melodic notes of the feathered crooner hinting at its presence as we retreated, an earlier attempt to spy the Northern Pygmy Owl proved unproductive. We returned to the big mountain pass in hopes of coaxing the teeny mountain owl out of its hiding place to glimpse the feathered phantom haunting the lonely overlook. The perseverance of our observant band would be satisfied on this opportunity.



Like a glider slipping silently through the skies, the pale-billed phantom sailed in, riding the rising currents and descending abruptly atop the oak brush canopy, disbanding the open-air convention of caroling apricot breasted Robins. Radiating amber eyes peered at us through the convoluted limbs. A

cautionary warble, chased closely by several hoots, was broadcast across the valley, asserting its influence over the basin's aerial inhabitants. Before quietly retiring into the tangle of chaparral, the fiery mountain owl cast one final challenging glance in our direction. The abbreviated rendezvous left a lingering sense of appreciation of all things wild upon the group. A narrative sure to be cataloged away and later recalled like chicken soup for the soul.



19th Great Salt Lake Bird Festival

May 18-22, 2017

Registration will begin on February 27, 2017, at 9:00 a.m. More information is available at <http://www.greatsaltlakebirdfest.com>. Plan to register early, since many field trips fill very quickly.

Hope to see you there!



Conservation Corner

by Lynn Carroll

Steve Erickson Gives Voice to Our Views

Are you worried about the shrinking Great Salt Lake and what will happen if the Bear River is dammed? Do you wish the Utah legislature would stop fighting against protections for endangered species? Would you like the state to spend more on wildlife and clean air and less on suing the federal government? You are not alone. In order to have a chance of changing anything, however, we must follow what's happening in our government and coordinate our responses. That is why Utah's Audubon societies got together and decided to look for a lobbyist who would hang out on Capitol Hill during the annual legislative session, learn which bills being introduced would affect birds or bird habitat, talk with lawmakers, and alert the chapters when messages from lots of members to their legislators might have an impact. The lobbyist would speak for us before legislative committees, coordinate with other organizations, and more.

Between 1989 and fall of 2009, four different people served in this position, now called Policy Advocate. While searching for a fifth, we met Steve Erickson, an experienced lobbyist (a first for us!), and we happily offered him a contract. Steve had to do some cramming before the 2010 legislature met in January, learning about our priority issues. Luckily he was already familiar with water issues, being involved with the Great Basin Water Network that is challenging the southern Nevada plan to pipe water from the northeastern valleys.

Steve has done a fine job for us. In addition to the activities mentioned above, he looks for ways a bill can be amended to make it better from our point of view. He discusses policy with managers of divisions of the Department of Natural Resources and other state agencies, attends interim legislative committee meetings, and meets regularly with other environmental and wildlife groups during the legislative session. Each week of the session, Steve sends out a "legislative update" that shows the status of the bills he is tracking and highlights the most significant happenings of the week. Most weeks, he includes an "Action Alert" telling how you can make a difference with a timely letter or call to your legislator or other action.

Of course, our advocates haven't worked miracles in a legislature so eager for growth, but we welcome the small victories. For instance, in 2015, several air quality bills were proposed and most failed; but an important one passed, allowing Utah to set air quality standards that are tougher than federal ones.

Extra funding for Phragmites control was removed from the budget but put back at the last minute, possibly helped by duck hunters contacting legislators. Several other organizations have begun contributing toward expanding Steve's role as advocate for the conservation community. Wasatch Audubon board members have repeatedly concluded that our share of his compensation (currently \$1500 per year) is money well spent, because wildlife and conservation should have a voice in Utah.

Given the uncertain future of federal environmental protection, 2017 is a good year to step up and make ourselves heard on behalf of the birds, all of nature, and the quality of life in Utah's future. Send me an e-mail (bradlynncc@comcast.net) soon to have me forward legislative updates to you. Pay attention. Make sure you know the names of your state representative and senator—check at www.le.utah.gov. Let's make a difference together.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

by Katie McVey

Please join us in welcoming those who recently joined or rejoined National Audubon:

**Alice Clymer
Bryon Saxton
Claudia Petersen
Genevieve Coleman
Gerald Mayer
Jane Poelman
Karen Pijuan
Kathy Poulson
Michael Maez
Morey Haymond**

**Natalie Little
Nicole Culbertson
Pat Ziegler
Richard Austin
S. Harley
Steve Knight
Terra Smith
Terrie Griffith
Wendy Luker**



Wasatch Audubon Society

P.O. Box 3211
Ogden, Utah 84409



**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.

NAME _____

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CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

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

National Audubon Society
P.O. Box 422250
Palm Coast, Florida 32142-2250

Local Chapter: **Wasatch Audubon Society C9ZW540Z**



**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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