



The Mountain Chickadee

Newsletter of the Wasatch Audubon Society
Volume 44, Number 2 ~ March - April 2025

President's Message

by Jen Hitt

I am honored to serve as the new president. I love being part of this wonderful group.

I hope that your 2025 is off to a great start. While I'm writing this letter during a cold snap, the days are getting longer and scattered bird song is starting to fill the air, which means that the spring migration is coming soon. Between our weekly Wednesday bird walks and our monthly field trips, Wasatch Audubon offers many opportunities to get out and enjoy the migration season with other enthusiastic birders.

I'd like to draw special attention to our April field trip, when we will be visiting a greater sage grouse lek to watch their incredible courtship display. It's a really unique experience that we are so fortunate to have nearby, and I invite you to join us if you are able. Please see the calendar for more details.

If you are looking for an opportunity to be more involved, we are still looking for a new program director. The program director is responsible for scheduling speakers for our membership meetings every other month. If you are interested in this position, please contact me at jenhitt@hotmail.com. Alternatively, if you've got suggestions for speakers you'd like to invite to an upcoming meeting, please let me know.

Looking toward the future, please mark your calendars for the Great Salt Lake Bird Festival, which will be May 15-18. There will be some great field trips and workshops. Wasatch Audubon will have a table set up, so stop by and say 'hi.'

I look forward to birding with you soon!

Jen Hitt

Morgan Eagle Field Trip

by Jen Hitt

On February 22, eight brave participants braved the cold (19 degrees F) to join our Morgan Eagle field trip. Despite the frigid temperatures, the sun was out and it was a beautiful day. We counted 25 eagles, 19 bald and six golden. We saw a bald eagle on the ice at East Canyon staring down the ice fishermen, hoping for a fish. We also watched a bald eagle soar in to join its mate in its nest.

Other highlights were a great horned owl, American dippers, a Lewis's Woodpecker, a peregrine falcon and a northern shrike. It was a great trip, and we hope you will join us next year.

(See the photos on the next page.)

Conservation Corner

Dangers of Data Centers

by Lynn Carroll



Lewis's Woodpecker in Morgan. Photographer: Jen Hitt.



American Dipper in Croyden. Photographer: Jen Hitt.

A data center is a collection of computer servers in a network that supports computing, data storage, the internet—everything that's done online. They are proliferating across the country, due to rapidly increasing demand for computing power, led by artificial intelligence and crypto-currency. Data centers are dangerous because of the resources they gobble up and the lack of regulation and centralized planning.

Energy. Data Centers are huge consumers of energy. First, there are all the electrons running around the stacks of servers, doing the work. This produces a great deal of heat, which must be removed or the work stops. Typical data centers have use massive air conditioners consuming over 40% of the total energy diet. Then there are the layers of redundancy in every system—back-up diesel generators, back-up servers, coolers, etc. humming idly until needed to prevent interruptions to service. Moving all that electricity requires power grid upgrades.

The majority of this energy is fossil-fuel generated. As of 2022, the carbon footprint of the Cloud had surpassed that of the airline industry. Fortunately the move to advanced, "hyperscale" data centers, with better insulation and systems, has increased their efficiency. Part of that efficiency comes from moving away from air conditioning to piping chilled water through the latticework of server racks.

Water. Evaporative cooling is one of the ways that data centers use large amounts of water. We're talking millions of gallons per year, varying by size and system. Some new centers use a "closed-loop" cooling system to recycle some of the water, but much of it still evaporates. Facility owners have been reluctant to disclose their water consumption, but we

know that the thirstiest data center in Utah, built some years ago in Bluffdale by the NSA, drinks over 120 million gallons (368 ac.ft.) per year. Meta’s facility in Eagle Mtn. uses less than 1% of that amount so far. Additional water is required to generate their electricity (fracking for gas or cooling coal plants). It’s clear that predicted growth of this industry won’t be sustainable, especially as the planet warms.

Land. The hyperscale data centers require considerable space. Numbers I’ve read range from 22-300 acres. That’s surely why so many are being built in the West, in spite of widespread drought. Data centers are on the short list of industries the Inland Port Authority wants to attract. Although they employ few people, they generate millions of dollars in state taxes and fees.

Metal. Copper is required for wiring data centers. Global demand is projected to triple between 2023 and 2030. When components of data centers malfunction or become obsolete, I’ll bet the copper is recycled, unlike most e-waste.

Noise. Living near a data center can be nerve-racking. A constant mechanical whine or drone that doesn’t exceed the decibel limits in local ordinances can nevertheless cause anxiety or high blood pressure in some people. I have no data on how it affects birds.

The Governor’s Plan. Last October, Governor Cox announced a plan, Operation Gigawatt, to double Utah’s power production over the next 10 years. Data centers were a driver of the plan. In a speech the next month, Cox pointed to a proposed data center that “would use 1.4 gigawatts of power... Utah currently runs on 4 gigawatts of power. That means that one

campus would need more than 25% of all of the power that we use in Utah.” After discussing parts of the plan, he added, “Probably the most important... is nuclear.”

I would add, outlaw crypto-currency!

The Christmas Bird Counts

by John Bellmon

This was the 125th Christmas Bird Count (CBC) for Audubon and the 45rd CBC for Wasatch Audubon (This is how we got started.). Our Christmas Bird Counts went off well this year. Thank you to all who participated and made it such a success. All of the information and data are very important to understand population trends of wintering bird species. This is possible only because of all your support.

On the 45th Ogden Christmas Bird Count we all had an exciting time. The weather was cloudy and cold, but a good day for birding. We counted 90 species. Some of the highlights were 34 Bald Eagles, 58 Red-tailed Hawks, along with Rough-legged Hawks, Wilson’s Snipe, Merlin, Prairie Falcon, Orange-crowned Warbler, and Lincoln’s Sparrow.

On the Bear River Refuge Christmas Bird Count it was again cloudy and cold, but a good day for birding. We counted 65 species. Some of the highlights were Snow Geese, Trumpeter Swans, and Bonaparte’s Gull. There were likely many more Snow Geese and Trumpeter Swans in the area, but we just could not get to them.

On the Antelope Island Christmas Bird Count it was again cloudy and cold with some wind, but it was another good day for birding. We counted 61 species. Some of the highlights were Black Scoter, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Bonaparte’s Gull, Canyon Wren, Bewick’s Wren, and a Sagebrush Sparrow. We had the most observers that we have ever had for the Antelope Island CBC. A big “thank you” to all 26 observers.

Youth Corner

Building a Bird Sanctuary

by Leah Johnson

Hummingbirds. I am sure that we all in some way have seen this wonderful species of bird. I personally love seeing their colorful bodies and long bills. There is only one problem: I don't see them often enough!

But, don't worry! There is a good solution to my problem. In our yards, we can plant different flowers and plants that attract hummingbirds. And, not only will you get more hummingbirds in your yard, you can have a beautiful flower garden at the same time! When creating this bird sanctuary, use native plants and flowers. Perks of using native plants include:

- Provide nectar for pollinators
- Provide shelter
- The native nuts, seeds, and fruits are important for feeding many animals
- They require less water
- Help combat climate change
- Store carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas

The link below has 10 good plant recommendations for you to plant in your yard, to make it a bird sanctuary. The article talks about good plants for hummingbirds too! The article also covers other plants for a variety of different bird species. If you want to see more birds in your backyard, this is a good first step!
<https://www.audubon.org/news/10-plants-bird-friendly-yard>

When you plant your bird sanctuary, you can even get a sign from Audubon that can advertise planting native plants, and encourage others to do the same! To learn more visit this article by National Audubon Society.

<https://www.audubon.org/conservation/post-your-plants-birds-sign-and-spread-word>

Have you considered flipping your strip? Maybe you decided against it because

you love your plants or grass. Don't worry, native plants can save the day! When you flip your strip, you can plant native plants, because they require less water. Now, you can have a beautiful flipped strip, and you won't miss your grass!

In conclusion, you have a way that you can see more hummingbirds, and other bird species. Planting native plants, and creating a bird sanctuary in your own backyard, front porch, or garden. You can also flip your strip, and help our earth while helping our birds. Its a win for everyone!

Resources:

- National Audubon Society article "Why Native Plants Matter"
- National Audubon Society article "10 Plants for a Bird Friendly Yard"

Field Trip Report

by Laura Johnston

Our January trip was enjoyed by 14 birders. We went north, first to Golden Spike National Monument where we watched a Prairie Falcon harassing a Common Raven for about half an hour. Two flocks of Chukars were spotted on the road to the Monument, along with two Golden Eagles. Next, we went to a snowless, windy and cold Howell Valley and closely inspected a large flock of nervous Horned Larks, but we were unable to see anything unusual in their midst. At Salt Creek Wildlife Reserve, the water was mostly frozen over, but we saw a few Common Mergansers, American Wigeons, and about twenty Great Blue Herons in a small area of open water. Our winter outing was enjoyed by everyone.

Rare Visitor

Here are some photos of a rare Black-Headed Gull, a European species, at Lee Kay Ponds. It is recognizable by its dark red legs and bill. This bird was originally found by Bryant Olsen on 25 January 2025 and will be the second state record of this species!



Photographed by Colin Maguire on 25 January 2025.



March/April 2025

Upcoming Events

Meetings and Talks

April 15

The April program meeting will be on April 15 at 7 pm. Our speaker will be Heidi Hoven, Senior Manager of Audubon’s Gillmor Sanctuary, on the south shore of Great Salt Lake. She will talk about a community science program that is monitoring light pollution associated with development across the Salt Lake Valley. Join us in person at the Ogden Nature Center, 966 W. 12th St., Ogden or on Zoom.

Field Trips

March 22 - Antelope Island 8:00 a.m.

Meet at the parking lot before the gate. We will bird the Causeway, north end, and Garr Ranch, looking for shorebirds, Rock Wren, Borrowing Owl and Great Horned Owl. Mostly done in vehicles. Take lunch and water. Accessibility: R Leader - John/Dan

April 19 - Lek and Loon Trip 6:00am

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 displaying from inside our vehicles. Target birds: Greater Sage Grouse, Bald Eagle, Common Loon, American Dipper. Take lunch and water. Accessibility: Minimal walking, stop for restrooms. Leader - John/Dan

Great Salt Lake Bird Festival

The Great Salt Lake Bird Festival will be held this year at the Western Sports Park. Registration begins in March – keep checking the website for registration details: www.daviscountyutah.gov/greatsaltlakebirdfest

You will also find the schedule, information on trips, speakers, workshops and vendor fair.

Bird Walks

March 12 - **Clinton Ponds / Ogden Bay South:**

7:00 AM Breakfast at Moore's Family Restaurant, 2490 S. 1900 W., Ogden
8:00 AM Meet at Clinton Ponds at 2415 North, between 2800-2900 West Clinton, UT 84015, later proceed to Ogden Bay South if time allows. **R at Ogden Bay, L, U**

March 19 - **Kay's Creek Trail:**

7:00 AM Breakfast at Ramblin Roads 1765 E. Skyline Dr., South Ogden
8:00 AM Meet at the trailhead located at 2721 N 2125 E, Layton, UT 84040. Meet at the parking lot which can be reached off Hwy. 193. **R P B**

March 26 - **Croydon Lost Creek Area:**

7:00 AM Breakfast at Ramblin Roads, 1720 W. 12th St., Ogden
8:30 AM Meet at Croydon City Park. 1801 N 6900 E, Croydon, UT 84018 **no applicable accessibility codes**

April 2 - **Antelope Island Causeway (this is a fee area):**

7:00 AM Breakfast at Warren's Drive In, 1778 S. 1000 W., Syracuse
8:00 AM Meet at the parking lot at the toll booth **R, L**

April 9 - **Fort Buenaventura river trail to Kingfisher Loop:**

7:00 AM Breakfast at Moore's Family Restaurant, 3558 Wall Ave., Ogden
8:00 AM Located on A Avenue in Ogden. Meet at the entrance to the park, walk the trail that goes along the river to Kingfisher Pond. **P L B**

April 16 - **Willard Bay (this is a fee area):**

7:00 AM Breakfast at Ramblin Roads 1720 W 12th S Ogden
8:15 AM Meet at Flying J Parking Lot and travel to Willard Bay from there. **R P/U L B**

April 23 - **Bountiful Pond:**

7:00 AM Breakfast at Ramblin Roads, 544 W. 400 N., Bountiful
8:00 AM Take the 500 South exit off Legacy Highway, turn west; then follow the frontage road around and back to the north. Meet in the parking lot. **R P/U L B**

April 30 - **Buffalo Ranches Pond:**

7:00 AM Breakfast at Dylan's in Kaysville
8:00 AM Meet at large white (ball) radar station by the GSL Nature Center, walking to the Ranches ponds from there (over 3 miles round trip). **U L B**

May 7 - **Garr Ranch, Antelope Island (this is a fee area):**

7:00 AM Breakfast at Warren's Drive In, 1778 S. 1000 W., Syracuse
8:00 AM Meet at the parking lot at Garr Ranch **R, L, U**

Accessibility Codes for walks and trips

R - Restrooms available

P - Paved trail **U** - Unpaved trail

P/U - Combination

L - Level trail **M** - Moderately level trail

B - benches available

Announcement

By Susan Snyder

Wasatch Audubon is looking for a new program director! This is a fancy title for the person who schedules speakers for our monthly membership meetings. In 2025, we will be meeting in February, April, June, August, October, and December. The August meeting is our annual picnic. Speakers have already been scheduled for February, so that's not very many months left to find speakers. It's a fun position, and allows us to bring diverse topics to our members. Anyone who is interested should contact WAS President, Jen Hitt jenhitt@hotmail.com.

New/Rejoined Members (December, 2024)

Welcome to our new members, and to those who have joined again after an extended absence! We look forward to seeing you at a meeting or on a birding trip.

- Malorie Alsup
- Jerrica Archibald
- Renee Beard
- Beck Family
- Zoey Bee
- Rainilee Burton
- Jake Cox
- August Dickens
- Joe Giarrusso
- Chris Hansell
- Suzanne Hogan
- Dustin Kearl
- James Kukula
- Diane Luke
- Tamra Mendenhall
- Anna M Miera
- John Mull
- Caitlin Nash
- Justin Owen
- Katherine Partida
- Gene L Peterson
- Thom Rockwell
- Rema Sadak
- Sam Shearer
- Ardell Spiers
- David Suehsdorf
- Clive H. Walker

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 outdoors 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. Visit our website at: <http://www.wasatchaudubon.org>

Wasatch Audubon Society

Officers		
President	Jen Hitt	801-540-5091
Vice President	Dan Johnston	801-645-8633
Secretary	Sharen Perry	801-392-9554
Treasurer	Jay Stretch	801-721-9432
Past President	John Bellmon	801-814-7544
Board		
2024/2025	Lynn Carroll	801-392-8216
2024/2025	George Muller	801-745-4035
2024/2025	Ruth Carmona-Murray	703-258-2652
2025/2026	Abigail Johnson	
2025/2026	Leah Johnson	
2025/2026	Laura Johnston	801-458-9558
2025/2026	Dallin Henderson	801-309-7285
Committee Chairpersons		
Conservation	Lynn Carroll	801-392-8216
Conservation	John Bellmon	801-444-3704
Education	Dennis Collins	801-393-1115
Feeder Projects	Laura Johnston	801-458-9558
Field Trips	Dan Johnston	801-645-8633
Bird Walks	Ben Johnson	801-231-7008
Membership	Lynn Carroll	801-392-8216
Programs		
Historian	Ruth Davis	801-309-0425
Publicity	Arnold Smith	801-829-338
Hospitality	Jeane Taylor	801-394-2813
Newsletter	Steve Aird	even.d.aird@gmail.com



Owl Pellets

Thanks to all who collected owl pellets during the last school year. I was able to present my owl program in third, fourth, and fifth grade classes in three school districts. I never have enough owl pellets, so please keep them coming. The larger barn and great horned owl pellets are best. If you know of a good location to collect them, please give me a call. Thanks again, and happy birding!

Dennis Collins (801) 393-1115