

THE PELICAN

Newsletter
January–February 2024



Great Salt Lake
AUDUBON



The *Birds 'n Bites* program is a monthly gathering (January to May and September to November) that offers informative and entertaining content for the bird enthusiast. Programs are free, open to the public, and presented via Zoom.

All *Birds 'n Bites* programs are held via Zoom. Program link is sent via email.

Tuesday, January 16—7:00–8:30 PM

Birds 'n Bites: Birds in the City: A Look into the Urban Ecology of Birds



Ramírez and Johnson
Photo by Elias Johnson ©

Please join us on Tuesday, January 16 at 7:00 PM for a virtual presentation with Elias Johnson, undergraduate student at Brigham Young University, and Gonzalo 'Gonz' Ramírez, Postdoctoral Research Scholar at Arizona State University.

Explore the lives of city birds. Learn how they survive, adapt, and deal with challenges in our urban environment. Discover what we can do to support them.

Johnson is studying biodiversity and conservation and has worked with multiple environmental advocacy groups throughout Utah.

Ramírez's academic interests are morphometrics, vertebrate biology and urban ecology. Prior to his appointment at ASU, he studied biology at *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* where he started his career as a paleontologist and later accomplished his dream of studying bird populations in the Pedregal de San Ángel. Ramírez has published articles related to native and exotic species dynamics, as well as the effect of migratory birds on resident bird populations.

Tuesday, February 20—7:00–8:30 PM

Birds 'n Bites: The Food Chains of Great Salt Lake: An Update



Please join us on Tuesday, February 20 at 7:00 PM for a virtual presentation with Bonnie Baxter, PhD, Professor of Biology and Director of Great Salt Lake Institute at Westminster University.

Professor Baxter will update us on the

conditions of the Great Salt Lake (GSL) and how current conditions are impacting the biology of the ecosystem.

Professor Baxter's research focuses on the lake's extreme biology, leading to projects on the lake ecosystem and the limits of life in salt. Baxter has published dozens of scientific articles, the first academic book on the biology of GSL, and the first children's book about the lake.

Spring Grant Applications Due March 1
by Kandy Richards, GSLA Treasurer

The Great Salt Lake Audubon Grant Committee is accepting applications for the Spring Grant Cycle. Applications are due Friday, March 1, 2024. Qualifying applicants will be a non-profit organization with 501 (c)(3) status or a governmental/non-profit educational institution (i.e., university, school district, elementary school, etc.).

Successful applicants will demonstrate that their request aligns with the GSLA mission, and projects should focus on areas such as conservation, education or academic research. While we will consider all applications, our preference is to fund hard costs such as equipment or supplies. In general, we do not fund salaries for existing organization staff except for rare circumstances.

An applicant organization may apply only once per year and grants have an upper limit of \$2,000.

Please see our website to download the application.
<https://greatsaltlakeaudubon.org/grant-program>.

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THE PELICAN NEWSLETTER

GREAT SALT LAKE AUDUBON MISSION

Great Salt Lake Audubon is dedicated to protecting and enhancing habitat for wild birds, animals, and plants and to maintaining healthy and diverse environments for wildlife and people throughout the state.

CONTACT GSLA

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SUBMISSION GUIDELINES FOR THE PELICAN

Original articles and photos are welcomed. The editor reserves the right to choose and edit as needed. Email articles to newsletter@greatsaltlakeaudubon.org. *The Pelican* is printed on recycled paper and published six times a year. The submission deadline for the March-April issue is Friday, February 9, 2024.

AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Local: GSLA chapter-only membership is \$30 a year. Local membership is important as GSLA is primarily self-supporting. Join on the website or use the form found on page 8 of this issue of *The Pelican*.

National: To join the National Audubon Society (NAS), use the link on page 8. The NAS website details the benefits of national membership. You will receive a subscription to the Audubon magazine and a one-year courtesy subscription to our newsletter, *The Pelican*.

Both: You may join both GSLA and NAS if you wish to support both local and national activities.

Board Highlights for November–December

by Leah Richardson, GSLA Secretary

I hope everyone enjoyed the holiday season and are ready to do more birding in the New Year. Even though the days are colder and shorter, bird watching can be so rewarding this time of year. Just looking out my window, I easily spotted birds fluttering in the leafless trees. On one of my nightly walks this week, I heard a Great Horned Owl hooting and it was only 6:00 PM—what a treat!

The Great Salt Lake Audubon Board has been busy planning winter field trips, scheduling Birds ‘n Bites presentations, and working to keep our members updated on local environmental issues. One person who has made a huge contribution on local issues, is our long-time lobbyist and legislative bill tracker, Steve Erickson. We thank him for his many years of service as he has decided to retire this year. He will be greatly missed!

Thanks to everyone who participated in the GSLA Sunflower Seed Fundraiser this year. We provided over 150 bags of high-quality seed at a great price. Also, thanks to Kelli Frame and her staff at Wild Birds Unlimited for facilitating the acquisition and distribution of the seed, and to Jeanne Le Ber and Ray Smith for organizing the event.

We look forward to seeing you on a field trip or at an event this winter. Make sure to check our calendar for all the upcoming winter events and trips. Thanks for all YOU do. Happy Birding!

From the Editor

Dear Reader,

2024 holds promise for many exciting birding adventures.

The **Great Backyard Bird Count** is scheduled for February 16-19. Last year there were 181 species recorded in Utah. Can we increase that number? See page 7 to learn more.

John Middleton has a robust lineup of field trips. Join one or more of these outings to learn about wintering birds. See pages 4-5 for a complete list.

Put the Basin & Range Weekend Seminar on your calendar. We will be gathering June 7-9 in East Canyon. We have an excellent selection of field classes, and Lianna Lopez is planning a program just for kids. See page 3.

Review a list of bird festivals on the Cornell Lab of Ornithology [website](https://www.cornell.edu/ornithology). Lots of exciting opportunities for travel and birds either locally or nationally.

If you have contributions to, or questions, concerns, or suggestions about the newsletter, contact me at newsletter@greatsaltlakeaudubon.org. Enjoy the read.

Jeanne

Purchase Great Salt Lake License Plate

The 2023 Utah Legislature General Session created SB 92 in support of preserving the Great Salt Lake. By purchasing a special license plate you are contributing to a fund managed by the Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands which will be used to benefit and conserve the Great Salt Lake watershed and ecosystem. For more information visit the [website](#).



Apply for your Special Great Salt Lake License Plate today and be part of a movement that supports the ongoing conservation efforts for this irreplaceable natural gem.

Save the Date For Basin & Range 2024

Great Salt Lake Audubon is hosting the 40th Annual Basin & Range Weekend Seminar **June 7 to 9** at **East Canyon Reservoir**. We have reserved a group campsite with one large and one small pavilion. There is space for self-contained camper vans, but no hookups. A large field provides space for tents. We currently have three instructors with sessions focused on birds, and a reptile expert. We are looking for a plant instructor and a geologist. Let us know if you are interested.

Please put this date on your calendar and plan to attend. Details will be provided in upcoming newsletters and GSLA email blasts.

B&R Coordinators:

Jeanne Le Ber (jeanne.leber@utah.edu)

Nancy Lombardo (n.lombardo@comcast.net)

Education News

by Lianna Lopez, GSLA Board

Get the kids involved!

It's that time of year where our resident bird friends need a little extra help finding food as the days get shorter. Feeding birds in the winter is a fun activity to do with kids. Create pinecone feeders for the birds, or string unsalted popcorn and fresh cranberries, or make homemade suet cakes. It's also a great time to have conversation with children about why we see fewer birds in winter. Check out ideas for activities on the GSLA website on the [GSLA Fledglings Club](#) page available under the Resources tab.

Basin & Range 2024

In other exciting news there are plans to develop some fun kids-friendly activities for this year's Basin & Range Weekend Seminar! This year, consider bringing your children or grandchildren to this outdoor weekend event. More details to come in future newsletters.

Dark Skies Passports

If you are looking for a way to enjoy the night skies this winter with the children in your life check out Utah State University's [Dark Skies Passport](#)! We have recently ordered passports to share with our members and provide educational materials about reducing light pollution. If you'd like to learn more, or be sent a passport for a special young person in your life please reach out to the education committee (education@greatsaltlakeaudubon.org) and we will send you one free of charge!

DIY Pinecone Bird Feeder

If you don't have a lot of trees and plants in your yard, you can attract birds with a bird feeder. Reusable feeders should be cleaned and maintained to reduce the risk of spreading disease and bacteria. Although there are LOADS of beautiful, creative, bird feeding devices available, there are several DIY designs you can make with materials you already have.

One of my favorites is this **Pinecone Bird Feeder**.

Materials

- String
- Pinecones
- Peanut butter or sun butter
- Bird seed

Steps

1. Tie string to pinecone
2. Cover pinecone with peanut or sun butter
3. Roll the pinecone in a bowl of bird seed
4. Hang outside and enjoy





Calendar of Field Trips & Events for January–February 2024

GSLA: 385.313.0608; Website: <https://greatsaltlakeaudubon.org>



GSLA field trips are conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation between leaders and participants. Participation in any field trip is at the discretion of the leader. **NOTE:** Field trips may be re-scheduled or canceled due to COVID, weather, or other factors. Contact the leader to determine if trip is a go.

Accessibility codes: B-benches available; E-easy; L-level trail; M-moderately level; P-paved; P/U-paved-unpaved; R-restroom available; S-strenuous; U-unpaved

Monday, January 1—All Day

Jordan River Christmas Bird Count

Count Coordinator: Jeanne Le Ber

Email: jeanne.leber@utah.edu

Contact Jeanne Le Ber if you plan to participate or if you need more information about joining a team.

Saturday, January 6—8:30–11:00 AM

Bountiful Pond—B E P/U R

Leader: Dan Strauch—385.488.3303

Email: strauchmail@yahoo.com

Map: <https://goo.gl/maps/2HD2LjQQqTFcV1Zn7>

Meet at the main pond parking lot at 1275 West 1600 North in Woods Cross. Expected species include raptors, sparrows, waterfowl, gulls, and more!
Contact Dan if you plan to attend.

Sunday, January 14—8:30 AM–Noon

Utah Lake Parkway Trail, Saratoga Springs E P/U L

Leader: Charles Hurd—801.502.9498

Email: charlesehurd91@gmail.com

Map: https://maps.app.goo.gl/8ab6hRfWYJiKcCjc6?g_st=ig

Meet at Saratoga Road and 7200 North to walk the lakeshore trail. Expected birds are eagles, owls, kestrels, ducks, gulls, and sparrows. Dress warmly.
Contact Charles if you plan to attend.

Tuesday, January 16—7:00–8:30 PM

Birds 'n Bites—Birds in the City: A Look into the Urban Ecology of Birds with Elias Johnson and Gonzalo Ramírez. See page 1 for details.

Sunday, January 21—8:30–11:00 AM

Redwood Trailhead Park—E L P

Leader: Cooper Farr—785.764.9592

Email: Cooperf@tracyaviary.org

Map: <https://tinyurl.com/4a944xbp>

Bird along the Jordan River. Expect waterfowl, wintering songbirds and raptors. The trail is mostly paved and flat. Park on 2320 South just east of 1070 West and meet the group at the park entrance.
Contact Cooper if you plan to attend.

Saturday, January 27—8:30–11:00 AM

Lee Kay Ponds—E M P/U

Leader: John Neill—801.231.2019

Email: neilljc@yahoo.com

Map: https://maps.app.goo.gl/YnxfczptMyKJppAA?g_st=ig

Meet DWR biologist John Neill at 6601 West California Avenue on the north side of the ponds, near the viewing platform. These freshwater ponds have a variety of waterfowl, raptors, open-land wintering birds, and gulls. Contact John.

Monday, January 29—Dawn–2:00 PM

Antelope Island Causeway & Farmington Bay—E L P/U R

Leader: Bryant Olsen

Register: <https://tinyurl.com/496neaa8>

Registration is required to receive trip details via email the day before your scheduled trip.

Tuesday, January 30—Dawn–1:00 PM

Inland Sea Shorebird Reserve Survey—E

Leader: Bryant Olsen

Register: <https://tinyurl.com/496neaa8>

Registration is required to receive trip details via email the day before your scheduled trip.

Saturday, February 3—8:00–11:00 AM

Big Cottonwood Regional Park, B E P/U L R

Leader: John Middleton—801.707.9182

Email: john.middleton0@gmail.com

Address: 4650 South 1590 East

A wetland, Russian olive thickets, other trees and open space harbor passerines and raptors.
Contact John if you plan to attend.

Tuesday, February 6—All day

Winter Raptor Tour: Box Elder County—E

Leader: Bryant Olsen

Register: <https://tinyurl.com/496neaa8>

Registration is required to receive trip details via email the day before your scheduled trip. Subject to cancellation due to weather.

Sunday, February 11—8:30–11:00 AM

Redwood Trailhead Park—E L P

Leader: Cooper Farr—785.764.9592

Email: Cooperf@tracyaviary.org

Map: <https://tinyurl.com/4a944xbp>

Bird along the Jordan River. Expect waterfowl, wintering songbirds and raptors. The trail is mostly paved and flat. Park on 2320 South just east of 1070 West and meet the group at the park entrance.
Contact Cooper if you plan to attend.

Wednesday, February 14—8:30–11:00 AM

Jordan River Day-Riverside Library—B E L P/U R

Leader: Jeanne Le Ber—801.230.4373

Email: jeanne.leber@utah.edu

Address: 1575 West 1000 North

Bird along the river on paved and unpaved paths.

Meet in the parking lot.

Contact Jeanne if you plan to attend.

Saturday, February 17—8:30–11:00 AM

City Creek Canyon—B M P/U R

Leader: Charles Hurd—801.502.9498

Email: charlesehurd91@gmail.com

Map: <https://tinyurl.com/7x7wyxwp>

City Creek Canyon birds include wintering passerines, raptors, and more. Meet at the gate to the upper canyon off of Bonneville Boulevard.

Contact Charles if you plan to attend.

Tuesday, February 20—7:00–8:30 PM

Birds 'n Bites—*The Food Chains of Great Salt Lake:*

An Update with Bonnie Baxter. See page 1 for details.

Saturday, February 24—8:00–11:00 AM

Ophir Canyon, Tooele County—B E L P/U R

Leader: Max Malmquist—801.554.8574

Email: max.malmquist@audubon.org

Map: <https://goo.gl/maps/UDj577sVRX1ihdxG8>

Meet in the Subway Parking Lot at the International Center near the intersection of Amelia Earhart Drive and Admiral Byrd Road. Ophir Canyon is a birding gem that offers a unique combination of Pinyon-Juniper and Montane habitats. Unique species include bushtit, finch, jay, nutcracker, eagles, etc.

Contact Max if you plan to attend.

Monday, February 26—Dawn–2:00 PM

Antelope Island Causeway & Farmington Bay—E L P/U R

Leader: Bryant Olsen

Register: <https://tinyurl.com/496neaa8>

Registration is required to receive trip details via email the day before your scheduled trip.

Tuesday, February 27—Dawn–1:00 PM

Inland Sea Shorebird Reserve—E

Leader: Bryant Olsen

Register: <https://tinyurl.com/496neaa8>

Registration is required to receive trip details via email the day before your scheduled trip.



Not So Odd After All

Story and Photos © by Klaus Bielefeldt, Birder

The Northern Flicker resides in Utah year-round. A large woodpecker, they often take off from grassy areas, where they look for their typical food such as ants (its main diet), beetles or other insects.

Checking out the diverse wildlife in the many non-native Russian olive trees along the Jordan River, the flicker taught me another lesson, as I saw two of them picking the *olives* in these trees.

When I looked into it a bit more, I learned that berries and other plant materials make up about one third of their diet. And they are not alone, as this is also the case for the other woodpeckers we see in Utah.

Not surprisingly, there are seasonal differences. Fall and winter come with a higher relative contribution of plant materials to the woodpecker diet. This may account for close to half of the food the Lewis's Woodpecker (less commonly seen in Utah) consumes during this time of the year.



Thank You to Ella Sorensen

by Heather Dove, GSLA President



Ella Sorensen, longtime manager of National Audubon's *Gillmor Sanctuary*, has resigned from this position after twenty-nine years of dedicated service.

The Gillmor Sanctuary is a large tract of land, some 4000 acres in size. Located on the south shore of Great Salt

Lake, the sanctuary is a mix of uplands, wetlands, playas, and mudflats that are ideal habitat for shorebirds and other avian guilds. The area is actually the ancient delta of the Jordan River, whose course has shifted over millennia and whose current course has been dramatically altered by humans in the last 170 years.

Ella's brilliant vision for the area led to utilizing those ancient waterways to water natural depressions to create the ephemeral ponds that shorebirds rely on, rather than the usual very expensive and labor-intensive approach of creating man-made waterways and ponds with heavy earth-moving equipment.

The sanctuary is managed primarily for the benefit of the shorebirds and is not open to public visitation, except for the *Lee Creek Natural Area* closer to Saltair.

Ella was involved with the Gillmor Sanctuary from its inception in 1992. She is most responsible for the sanctuary being as large and contiguous as it is today. Over the years she has worked continuously to build relationships of trust with local ranchers and other landholders in the area. This effort has resulted in many sizable land and water donations.

Ella worked closely with other conservation organizations such as The Nature Conservancy as well as Salt Lake City Airport Authority to insure that as much land as possible along the south shore be placed under conservation for the preservation of the environment and the protection of the birds that have used the area for millennia.

Ella, who has been a student of birds and nature since childhood, has made a close study of the Great Salt Lake and its fluctuating cycles of more and less water, season over season and year over year. She, more than almost anyone else, has an intimate knowledge and understanding of this body of water and the creatures that rely on it for their survival.

Ella worked to mimic the natural cycles of water to the Lake in order to maximize the food sources for the birds and to make sure that the insect blooms occurred when the birds needed them most.

Ella has contributed significantly to the scientific understanding of birds at Great Salt Lake. In 1985, she collaborated with the eminent local scholar Dr. William Behle to produce *A Revised Checklist of Utah Birds*. She also founded and chaired the Utah Rare Birds Committee for ten years. For 15 years she authored an award-winning monthly bird feature in the *Salt Lake Tribune* and additionally published many articles in *Bird Watcher's Digest*, *Birding*, and *Audubon*, as well as numerous local publications.

In 2020, she was the principal author of a chapter entitled "Great Salt Lake Shorebirds, Their Habitats and Food Base" in the seminal book, *Great Salt Lake Biology*, edited by renowned Great Salt Lake experts Bonnie Baxter and Jaimi Butler.

Perhaps equally important to all these contributions, Ella shared her love and knowledge of Great Salt Lake and its 12 million birds with many bird lovers over the decades and nurtured our understanding of and passion for this unique biological treasure.

Gillmor Sanctuary will live on under the oversight of the new manager Heidi Hoven and her assistant Alison DeNittis.

Great Salt Lake Audubon and the entire Utah birding community express enormous gratitude for Ella's efforts and plan to hold a celebration in her honor in the spring.

What is Skyglow

by Jacqueline Sundstrand, GSLA Dark Sky Initiative

Winter is upon us, which is our yearly reminder that our extended nights are no longer truly dark. I have black-out curtains in my bedroom to help me sleep, but the light that peeks out from the top of the curtain rod tricks my mind into thinking it's perpetually dusk, and not midnight.

What we are experiencing is called skyglow: the brightness of the night sky as a result of light pollution. Unfortunately, skyglow becomes worse on a winter night with a fresh blanket of snow, cloudy skies (or inversion), and a full moon. We humans, along with birds, plants, insects, mammals, and most living creatures rely on the rhythm of night and day as a basic part of life. Studies show that excess exposure to artificial light at night increases risks of sleep disorders, depression, obesity, and diabetes in humans. We also know that light pollution increases the bird migration mortality rate substantially.

You can help yourself and birds by assessing your own home and making the switch to dark sky and bird friendly lighting. For more information on the five principles of proper dark sky lighting and to become self-certified as a Dark Sky Home, visit [the website](#).

Great Backyard Bird Count Challenge

by Jeanne Le Ber, GSLA Board

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is an annual event sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, National Audubon Society, and Birds Canada. These groups work together to bring the joy of bird watching to the public and to engage local communities to collect data on resident birds. You can be a part of this year's event which is scheduled for February 16-19, 2024.

Launched in 1998, the GBBC was the first online citizen-science project to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real time.

The goal for the Great Backyard Bird Count is to help scientists better understand global bird populations before their spring migration. This is where you, the local birder, can contribute to this world-wide effort. Spend time in your favorite places watching birds—then report what you see. You can spend as little as 15 minutes or an hour, or all day for four days watching birds. Identify, count, and submit the birds you observe to help scientists better understand and protect birds around the world.

Accept the Challenge to Participate

Last year 96 Utah birders counted 181 species. Utah ranked 16th out of the 50 states with the highest number of species recorded. The top Utah contributor was Bryant Olsen with 88 species and 15 checklists.

Please consider accepting the challenge to participate this coming February in the GBBC. There is an opportunity to increase the number of species seen in Utah and you could potentially be listed as one of the top listers on the GBBC website.

For more information about the Great Backyard Bird Count visit the website, put the dates and your calendar and report the birds you see and hear.

Upcoming Events for Your Calendar

January 20, 2024—Save Our Great Salt Lake event at the Utah State Capitol at 3:00 PM.

March 14–15, 2024—The Stegner Center's 29th annual symposium will focus on the challenge of transitioning to a carbon neutral energy system and related sustainability, environmental, and human health concerns.

May 8–10, 2024—Friends of Great Salt Lake Issues Forum, *To Preserve and Protect in Perpetuity: How Are We Doing?*, at University Guest House and Conference Center.

Project FeederWatch

by Jeanne Le Ber, GSLA Board

The purpose of Project FeederWatch is to document and understand the distribution and abundance of birds that visit feeders in North America. The program is sponsored by Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Birds Canada. For the 2022-2023 FeederWatch season, there were 69 feeder watchers in Utah. (For comparison, there were 464 feeder watchers in Colorado. Another challenge?)

FeederWatch is conducted by people of all skill levels and backgrounds, including children, families, individuals, classrooms, retired persons, youth groups, nature centers, and bird clubs. Count your birds for as long as you like on days of your choosing, then enter your counts online. Data is collected from mid-November to April, so while the count has officially started, you can join at any time during the winter season.

The Project FeederWatch website provides a number of learning tools that help birders learn more about identifying birds, unusual birds, sick birds and disease, gardening for birds, and educator resources. *The Food and Feeder Preferences of Common Feeder Birds* is especially helpful to people who are new to the hobby of bird feeding.

Visit the Project FeederWatch website to learn more about the birds in your backyard and how to participate. See <https://feederwatch.org>.

Rare Bird Sighting at Redwood Trailhead

by Leah Richardson, GSLA Secretary



I was lucky to add a lifer to my bird list this December. Somehow a Hepatic Tanager (*Piranga flava*) made its way to Salt Lake City. Named for the male's dusky reddish upperparts (*hepatic* refers to the liver), this species' scientific name (*flava*) also references the female's yellow plumage.

Normally, this bird's range includes South and Central America and during the breeding season, it barely reaches the southwest United States. Well, it found its way to Redwood Trailhead Park and was feeding on the pears left on the two pear trees in the park.

This park and the adjacent Jordan River trail are great birding areas. I was notified through eBird alerts about this rarity. Many people record their sightings on eBird and the excitement spreads to birders around the valley. This email alert is a wonderful way to keep apprised of rare bird occurrences. You can sign up for several lists by visiting <https://ebird.org/alerts>.



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Great Salt Lake Audubon
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Salt Lake City UT 84152-0867

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GREAT SALT LAKE AUDUBON
Local Membership Form

Local membership is \$30 annually.

This fee includes a 1-year, electronic subscription (6 issues) to the GSLA newsletter, *THE PELICAN*.

1. Complete the local-membership form below.
2. Prepare a check in the amount of the membership fee (\$30) plus any desired donation amount.
3. Mail both to :

GREAT SALT LAKE AUDUBON
P.O. Box 520867

Salt Lake City UT 84152-0867

4. Or go to GSLA website to join online; click *Membership* at the bottom of website page.

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY
(National Membership)

Online Membership Form Only

Go to the following website to join and pay National Audubon Society dues.

<https://act.audubon.org/onlineactions/DH8fxTkoC0qHjXF9fZCtRw2>

By using this special webpage to join, you will also give the Great Salt Lake Audubon chapter a small monetary credit.

Membership Form

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

_____ Date _____