

THE PELICAN

Newsletter
November-December 2021



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 and open to the public.

Due to COVID-19, all *Birds 'n Bites* programs are being held via videoconferencing until further notice.

Tuesday, November 16—7:00–8:30 PM *Birds 'n Bites: Creating Urban Wildlife Habitats with Native Plants*

Please join us via Zoom on Tuesday, November 16, at 7:00 PM for a presentation by Kipp Lee.

With climate change upon us and an increasing population along the Wasatch Front, the need for water conservation and the creation of urban habitats for wildlife is imperative. Open land is being developed at an exponential rate, and green space is being reduced. Most landscapes presently consist of non-native, high-water-usage lawns, trees, flowers and shrubs that have shown to be of minimal benefit to our native wildlife.

Native plants, which are well adapted to our arid climate, use less water, have context in our local environments, and are proven to be heavily utilized by local native



wildlife. In addition, our native plants are worthy of a place in our landscapes due to their sheer beauty and diversity.

Kipp will discuss various native annuals,

perennials, shrubs, and trees suited to our urban landscapes, and he will explain their benefit to our native pollinators, birds, and other wildlife. Kipp studied biology with an emphasis in botany at the University of Utah where he worked in Lynn Boh's lab growing and doing pollination studies on members of the Solanum family. His home garden was awarded Choice Garden of the Month, and has been featured in local garden tours.

Zoom link for programs: Watch for an email from Heather Dove containing the zoom link a week before the presentation and then also the day of the presentation, or email Heather at president@greatsaltlakeaudubon.org

Scott Weidensaul Wow!

This year's GSLA Fall Forum featured Scott Weidensaul, author of *Living on the Wing* and most recently *A World on the Wing: the Odyssey of Migratory Birds*. The program was held Wednesday, October 13 with 100 people attending via Zoom. The program was co-sponsored by Great Salt Lake Audubon, Great Salt Lake Institute of Westminster College and The City Library.

Scott engaged attendees with several examples of the wonders and challenges of bird migration, emphasizing endurance, navigation, orientation, and distances traveled. For example, the Common Swift spends ten months on the wing without needing to land. Swifts practice unihemispheric sleep and extreme energy conservation while in the air to accomplish this feat. The Bar-tailed Godwit migrates 8100 miles non-stop over the course of nine to eleven days from Alaska to New Zealand. Godwits fatten up and atrophy their digestive organs while increasing their wing muscles and mass to make the journey. The critically endangered Spoonbill Sandpiper faces threats that include illegal netting, being caught for the pot (eaten) and loss of habitat on China's Yellow Sea.

To learn more, don't miss *A World on the Wing*. It is a great read!

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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 January-February issue is December 13, 2021.

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—September-October

by Leah Richardson, GSLA Secretary

Winter is coming and so is the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) season. Get your binoculars ready! We hope to have a wonderful SLC count this year with potluck at the Chase Mill at Tracy Aviary. Please watch your email and our website for updates as it is hard to predict if in-person, indoor gatherings will be safe by December.

The Board has been busy resuming our Birds 'n Bites programs, reviewing grant applications, improving our Education programs, and continuing in-person field trips, surveys, and counts. On September 11, several of you joined us for the International Coastal Cleanup at the Great Salt Lake State Park. This was GSLA's first time participating and it was a success with over 1700 pounds of trash removed! Thanks to those who attended.

On a sad note, we are sorry to say goodbye to Amanda Sharette-Kay, our Education Chair, as she has done an amazing job! Amanda is off to greener and wetter pastures on the east coast. We are looking for a replacement. If you are interested, please contact Heather Dove (president@greatsaltlakeaudubon.org).

GSLA continues to be involved in many conservation issues including the Inland Port, protecting our Great Salt Lake, and ensuring that we have enough water to maintain the fragile lake ecosystem. Heather Dove does a fantastic job informing all of us with her GSLA emails about all of these issues. In the last few months of *The Year of the Shorebird*, let's make it count and do what we can to protect our local birds and environment.

From the Editor

Dear Reader,

One of my favorite quotes is *if you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got*. While change is ever constant, it is also challenging to rethink and commit to new ways of doing things. As we face increasing pressures on limited resources, air, water, land, and wildlife, we need to evolve a softer approach to our planet. We can help by making small or large changes to activities that stress the environment. Think working from home versus long commutes, eating less meat and more vegetables, taking shorter and fewer showers, and washing fewer loads of laundry per week. As we enter the holiday season, how about a new tradition to replace the dead trees we decorate in our living rooms. Save a tree, use a tomato cage! (Google it!)

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

Enjoy the read.
Jeanne

Fall 2021 Bluebird Box Cleanup

by Jeanne Le Ber, GSLA Board

Nine intrepid volunteers joined Great Salt Lake Audubon on Saturday, September 18, for the annual fall bluebird box cleanup in Strawberry Valley. It was raining when we left Salt Lake City, but our weather app indicated it was clear in Strawberry Valley. We took a chance! As we gathered in the parking lot of the Strawberry Valley Visitor Center, the sky became more threatening, and it started to rain just as we started to attend to the boxes. We were not deterred!

For the most part, the boxes are in good shape. We noted that the Tree Swallows are outcompeting the Mountain Bluebirds and that the House Wrens are almost as numerous as the bluebirds. There were 36 empty boxes. The following table compares the number of nests removed from the boxes in the fall to nest use in the spring by each species.

Fall Nest removal	Species	Spring Nest Use
6	Mt Bluebird	11
53	Tree Swallow	44
5	House Wren	2
36	Empty	43
0	Missing	0
100 boxes		100 boxes



Tree Swallow nest removed from box 96 and dead adult Tree Swallows in box
Photos by Nancy Lombardo & Joy Emory ©

In addition, there were

- 11 dead Tree Swallow adults in 7 boxes
- 7 dead Tree Swallow chicks in 3 boxes
- 6 unhatched Tree Swallow eggs in 3 boxes
- 3 unhatched Mountain Bluebird eggs in 2 boxes

Each team visited 20 boxes. By the time we finished the sun had come out and it had gotten warmer. We gathered at the picnic table adjacent to the Visitor Center to eat lunch, share stories, and compare notes. Ending the day in the sun made the wet shoes, pants, and hats worth it!

Much thanks to our volunteers who went above and beyond in the rain: Paul Bernard, Joy Emory, Julie Emory, Clare Gyorke, Melanie Jones, Jeanne Le Ber, Nancy Lombardo, Ray Smith, and Susan Walker.

Merlin Bird ID App Now Has Sound!

by Ian Batterman, GSLA Board

The Merlin Bird ID app from Cornell Lab of Ornithology (see <https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/>) is a tool used to help identify birds in the field. Until recently, bird identification apps only identified birds by sight and not by sound. Merlin has updated its app to include identification help on calls and songs of birds of North America and Canada.

This revolutionary ID tool has been years in the making. The app evaluates the call or song of the bird recorded by the birder in the field and compares it to known sonograms in the Cornell sound library. This information is used to identify the species that is singing or calling.

The main challenge with having an app identify bird sounds is the enormous variation of calls and songs across individuals, species, and regions. For example, a Song Sparrow in Wisconsin may have a different *accent* to its song than a Song Sparrow in Utah. A large database with different calls and songs from all regions where the birds are found is required for the app to correctly identify the bird sound. In addition, the app must filter background noise that may interfere with the correct sound identification. This is why it has taken scientists and

researchers so long to develop this tool that identifies bird calls and songs in the field.

Just like the visual ID apps, the sound app is not perfect. There is a potential for *user error*, depending on the quality of the recording. Also, there is the possibility of the app confusing mimics such as mockingbirds and corvids. If the bird in question is a vagrant there may be some ID confusion. In addition, there are *patches* that the app uses to help narrow the bird identification. Nevertheless, this new tool is a must-have for beginner and expert birders to help them learn how to identify calls and songs of birds in the field.



Singing
Yellow-headed Blackbird
Photo by
Ian Batterman ©



Calendar of Field Trips & Events for November-December 2021

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



Wednesday, November 3—9:00 AM—12:00 PM

Mountain Dell, Parley's Canyon—MODERATE

Leader: John Middleton—801.322.2171

Email: john.middleton0@gmail.com

Check the weather forecast and come prepared.

Meet at 9:00 AM in the parking lot west of REI on 3300 South and 3285 East. This will be the last

Mountain Dell trip of the year; trips resume in March.

Contact John if you plan to attend.

Saturday, November 6—7:00 AM—12:00 PM

Wasatch Back Reservoirs—EASY

Leader: Ian Batterman—920.360.0805 (talk & text)

Email: imbatterman@gmail.com

Meet on the west side of the Smith's Marketplace parking lot on 3300 South near the I-215 entrance at 7:00 AM. Expect to see loons, scoters, swans, unusual geese and gulls, and other waterfowl. We will visit East Canyon, Echo, and Rockport reservoirs. Be prepared for muddy conditions. If there is time, we may visit Jordanelle and Deer Creek reservoirs.

Contact Ian if you plan to attend.

Tuesday, November 16—7:00 PM—8:30 PM

Birds 'n Bites: *Creating Urban Wildlife Habitats with Native Plants*, presentation by Kipp Lee.

See page 1 for details.

Saturday, November 20—8:00 AM—11:00 AM

Jordan River at 2100 South—EASY

Leader: Ian Batterman—920.360.0805 (talk & text)

Email: imbatterman@gmail.com

This section of the Jordan River between 2100 South and 3500 South is a duck hotspot during the winter. Scaup, Barrow's Goldeneye, and various dabbling ducks are seen in large numbers. Songbirds can be seen in this area as well. Meet at the Jordan River Trailhead Park on 2320 South (approximately 1060 West—just past the TRAX station) at 8:00 AM. Contact Ian if you plan to attend.

Monday, November 29—8:00 AM—Noon

Inland Sea Shorebird Reserve—EASY

Leader: Bryant Olsen

Email: bryant_olsen@yahoo.com

This mitigated wetlands is not open to the general public and features typical Great Salt Lake wetland habitats and birds. Trip includes the areas around the International Center, Saltair Marina and the Lee Kay ponds. Meet at 8:00 AM at Fairmont Park (1040 East Sugarmont Drive). There is limited space on this fast-paced trip as the purpose is counting individuals as

well as species.

Contact Bryant Olsen to reserve your spot.

Tuesday, November 30—8:00 AM to mid-day

Antelope Island & Farmington Bay—EASY

Leader: Bryant Olsen

Email: bryant_olsen@yahoo.com

Meet at the entrance to Antelope Island State Park at 8:00 AM. The group will bird along the Antelope Island Causeway and on the island. The later part of the day will be spent birding at Farmington Bay. Space is limited. Contact Bryant if you plan to attend.

Saturday, December 11—8:00 AM—11:00 AM

Christmas Bird Count Practice Field Trip—EASY

Leader: Ian Batterman—920.360.0805 (talk & text)

Email: imbatterman@gmail.com

This trip is planned for beginning birders and anyone who has never participated in a CBC. We will stroll along the Jordan River, counting and identifying all the birds that we see just like on the official CBC.

Meet at 8:00 AM at the Confluence Trailhead parking lot on 4800 South and about 600 West in Murray.

Contact Ian if you plan to attend.

Saturday, December 18—all day

Salt Lake City Christmas Bird Count—EASY-DIFFICULT

Compiler: Ian Batterman—920.360.0805 (talk & text)

Email: imbatterman@gmail.com

See page 7 for details about participating.

Monday, December 27—8:00 AM—11:00 AM

Inland Sea Shorebird Reserve—EASY

Leader: Bryant Olsen

Email: bryant_olsen@yahoo.com

See November 29 field trip description above.

Tuesday, December 28—8:00 AM to mid-day

Antelope Island & Farmington Bay—EASY

Leader: Bryant Olsen

Email: bryant_olsen@yahoo.com

See November 30 field trip description above.

Saturday, January 1—all day

Jordan River Christmas Bird Count—EASY-DIFFICULT

Compiler: Jeanne Le Ber—801.532.7384

Email: jeanne.leber@utah.edu

See page 7 for details about participating.

Ducks in Winter

by Ian Batterman, GSLA Board

During winter, many birds have flown to their southern non-breeding grounds or are in their drab, non-breeding plumage. Generally, this is not the case for one group of winter gems: the ducks. Ducks are unique among North American birds in that they molt into their breeding plumage during the winter. There are a few exceptions to this rule, such as the Ruddy Duck and the Long-tailed Duck.

Though female ducks don't start laying eggs until spring, pair bonding for most duck species begins in winter. At this time of year most migrate south into areas with unfrozen water and the males regain their breeding plumage. Unlike swans and geese (which are also found in great numbers in the winter), ducks do not mate for life and find new mates every year. As they congregate in large numbers, they look for mates and court females before they head north in mated pairs in spring.

Many ducks head to prairie pothole ponds in the northern United States and Canada or to coastal areas to nest, while others remain here in Utah.

In Utah, there are 27 species of ducks that can be seen during winter from the common Mallard, Northern Shoveler, and Gadwall to the rarer scoters, Eurasian Wigeon, Mandarin Duck, and the elusive Harlequin Duck.

The Great Salt Lake is a hotspot for winter ducks as the lake doesn't freeze (due to the higher freezing point of super-saline water) and it has plenty of food in the form of insect larvae and brine shrimp. Look for ducks and other waterfowl in open water during the winter months. You never know what you might find!



Common Goldeneye, White-winged & Surf Scoters
Photo by Ian Batterman ©

Successful International Coastal Cleanup—Great Salt Lake State Park

by Georgie Corkery, GSLA Board & Utah Audubon Council

The 2021 International Coastal Cleanup event at Great Salt Lake State Park on September 11 was a success! Despite a bit of wet weather, we had 107 volunteers attend and collected a total of 1,702 pounds of trash from the south shore! This is up from 65 volunteers and 1,507 pounds of trash from the south shore sites on the 2019 cleanup event.

After two hours of hard work picking up an array of items, from microplastics and cigarette butts to tires and boat parts, David Sheerer gave an intriguing presentation on the history of Saltair. During David's presentation, volunteers enjoyed fresh, delicious, locally picked fruit donated by Green Urban Lunch Box and, in my opinion, the best bagels in the state donated by Rich's Bagels.

This event was held in partnership with Katie Newburn of FRIENDS of Great Salt Lake and Max Malmquist of National Audubon, as part of the Western Water Grant awarded to Great Salt Lake Audubon in collaboration with Gillmor Sanctuary and Saline Lakes Program staff.

A big thank you to everyone involved for supporting the health of the Great Salt Lake ecosystem and the birds that inhabit it.



Photos taken adjacent to Saltair, east of Great Salt Lake State Park, where countless bracelet beads, cigarette butts, and other man-made objects were earnestly removed from the sand, along with two tires! Thank you to all the volunteers and sponsors who made the day a big success.

Photos by Georgie Corkery ©



Leah Richardson—Loves the Outdoors

GSLA Secretary & Program Chair



Hi all! My name is Leah Richardson and I have been privileged to serve on the Great Salt Lake Audubon Board since 2018. I am currently serving as Secretary and Program Chair. I am not sure if everyone knows this, but GSLA is an all volunteer organization and that is one of the things that really makes me proud to participate. My day job

is working at ARUP Laboratories managing the Cost Accounting Department.

My love of birds and nature comes from my Dad. When I was a child, he would take me on nature walks in the woods near our home in New Jersey. He knew all of the trees, flowers and birds, and introduced me to field guides. I have always loved the outdoors, so chose upstate New York's beautiful Cornell University for my college. And yes, I did spend time at the Ornithology Lab observation area, which was smaller then, but still awesome.

After college, while living in Washington D.C., I knew something was missing from my life. I searched for volunteer opportunities across the country and found an internship with U.S. Forest Service Intermountain Research Station in Ogden, Utah. From my first steps out of the airport in Utah, I couldn't believe the beauty and wide open spaces. I remember asking my new co-worker what that beautiful bird was—the one making all that noise. He laughed at me and said *You mean the Magpie?* I still love Black-billed Magpies.

After my stint with the Forest Service, I went back to school at the University of Utah to finally study my passion, biology. I was so lucky to find a job in Jim Ehleringer's research ecology lab. Here, I was able to do a lot of fieldwork in the southwest, including projects in Arches, Canyonlands, and Death Valley National Parks. Good times!

Now I fulfill my need for nature in my volunteer work through GSLA and RINS (Raptor Inventory Nest Survey), along with some hours spent with HawkWatch International. The wonderful thing about birds is that they are everywhere, you just have to notice them, and that makes my life much happier.

Fall Grant Awarded to HWI

Kandy Richards, GSLA Treasurer & Grants

The Great Salt Lake Audubon Grant Committee is pleased to announce that HawkWatch International was awarded a \$1,000 grant to support their Burrowing Owl Project.

The Burrowing Owl Project is a partnership between HawkWatch International (HWI) and Antelope Island State Park (AISP). HWI teams monitor 50 artificial burrows installed across the park, providing observational and banding data, and maintaining the burrows. The owls are monitored yearly from March to mid-July, following them

from courtship, to nesting, and continuing until the nestlings fledge.



Burrowing Owl in habitat
Photo by Deb Drain ©

Visitors to AISP can spot Burrowing Owls from the road. These small long-legged owls with bright yellow eyes stand outside their artificial burrows during the day. They hunt for insects and small mammals all hours of the day or night. One

interesting tactic these owls use is to arrange animal dung around their nest burrow. The dung attracts dung beetles and other insects, thereby providing a cafe of sorts right outside the front door. They also store food for later use. And, quite frankly, they are just so cute!

In Memoriam

Much thanks to Janel Callon who made a generous donation to Great Salt Lake Audubon in memory of her **Great Uncle Dan Hill**. We appreciate Janel's support and are sorry to hear of her uncle's death.

Patricia Ann Allen (Pat), a longtime GSLA member and lover of birds and nature, recently passed away unexpectedly. Pat worked for the Department of Workforce Services and is survived by her two brothers. The family asked that in lieu of flowers, friends consider a donation to GSLA. Thank you for honoring Pat with a gift. (See <https://tinyurl.com/buura5ku>)

Salt Lake City Christmas Bird Count

by Ian Batterman, GSLA Board

Every year since Christmas Day, 1900, citizen scientists have conducted a winter bird count. Between December 14 and January 5, bird watching teams from around the Americas continue to participate in the Christmas Bird Count (CBC). The Salt Lake CBC is held the first Saturday of the CBC count period; this year the count will be held on **December 18**. While CBCs have been conducted in Utah since 1904, the SLC count is of uncertain provenance but is certainly the oldest continuing count circle in Utah.

The SLC count circle is Utah's most volunteered circle. We had 134 participants last year! The circle is centered at the Salt Lake City Temple with a 7.5-mile radius that includes Bountiful to the north and Murray to the south, and from West Valley City to the Wasatch Mountain benches. The count area is split into 15 teams. This allows participants to *divide and conquer* in order to count as many birds as possible during the day. Each team has a leader who determines when and where to meet. Team size varies from 2 to more counters.

If you do not want to count in the field, you can count birds at your feeders if your yard is within the count circle.

If you want to volunteer for this count, contact Ian Batterman (imbatterman@gmail.com, or call or text 920.360.0805) for more information. The CBC is a survey and not a typical birding field trip. The goal is to count all the bird species and individuals in an area, so it is a long and fast-paced day depending on which area you count. Volunteers can participate in multiple counts and participation is free. If you are interested in other count circles, go to <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>.



Flock of European Starlings, photo by Ian Batterman © 2019

Jordan River Christmas Bird Count

by Jeanne Le Ber, GSLA Board

Get your 2022 Utah state birding list off to a great start by joining us for the Jordan River Christmas Bird Count on **Saturday, January 1, 2022**. This count circle is centered at Point of the Mountain on the Utah-Salt Lake County boundary lines and I-15 (see map below). Originally established by Joe Leigh, this circle has been birded every year since 1987.

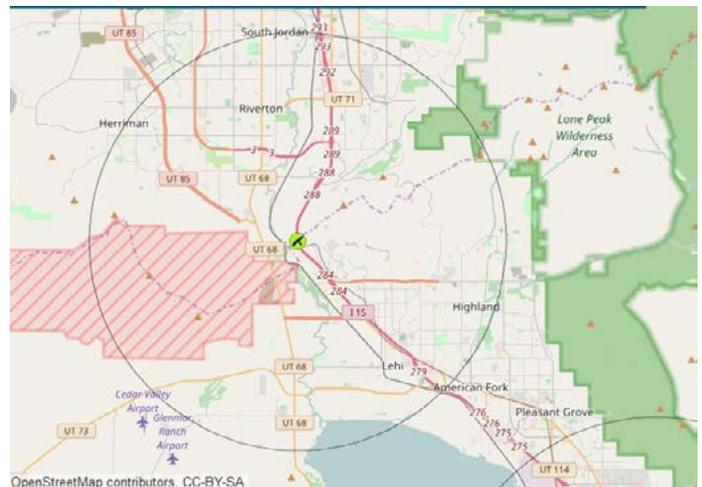
The circle is divided into 9 teams: Saratoga, Jordan River, Alpine, Herriman, Draper, Lehi, Thanksgiving Point, Jordan River-Arrow, and Camp Williams. Team leaders are each assigned a section to bird. They invite birders to join their team, they establish start and end time, and report all the data to the CBC compiler.

In mid-December, I will be reaching out to last year's team leaders to ask for their participation this year. If you are interested in being a team leader, let me know. If you want to join a specific team, let me know. And if you want to observe birds at your backyard bird feeder (it has to be within the count circle boundaries), let me know.

Thank you ahead of time for your continued support. Please direct questions to me:

- Jeanne Le Ber, JR-CBC Compiler
- jeanne.leber@utah.edu
- 801.532.7384 or 801.230.4373 (talk & text)

Please visit the Christmas Bird Count website for more information about participating. Go to <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>.





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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
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4. Or go to GSLA website to join online; click *Membership* at the bottom of the 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/DH8fxTkoCOqHjXF9fZCtRw2>

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

Membership Form

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