



Birds



The BIRDS ‘n BITES program is a monthly gathering (except for June through August plus December) that offers informative and entertaining content for the bird enthusiast. These programs are free and open to all. Each begins at 6:30 pm for socializing with snacks and drinks prior to a relevant presentation at 7:00 pm.

Due to covid-19, all Birds ‘n Bites programs will be held via videoconferencing until further notice

Tuesday, January 19th, 2021, 7:00 - 8:30 pm

“The Evolution of Birds: From Dinosaurs to Doves” Kitty Coley, Geologist, Wildlife Naturalist and Natural History Expedition leader for National Geographic, Smithsonian, and Victor Emanuel Tours

The hunt for the ancestors of living birds began with a specimen of Archaeopteryx, the first known bird, discovered in 1861. Biologist Thomas Huxley, Darwin’s colleague, was the first to propose that birds might be related to dinosaurs. With the discovery of fossils from China in the late 1990s and more recently from other countries, as well as by looking at old museum specimens from new perspectives and using new methods, we have discovered birds evolved from small carnivorous dinosaurs during the Late Jurassic (around 150 million years ago). Over tens of millions of years of evolution rather than in one burst of innovation, birds’ classic small, lightweight, feathered, and winged body plan was pieced together gradually. This talk presents some of that amazing story.

Tuesday, February 16th, 2021, 7:00 - 8:30 pm

“Wildlife of the Arabian Peninsula” Joseph B. Platt, Ph.D., Environmental Biologist, Adjunct Professor at Dixie State University, and former environmental advisor to the Ruler of Dubai

The Peninsula of Arabia is the size of the western US but remained largely unknown to the West until the 20th Century. It is a land of harsh contrasts but it is more than
(continued on page 7)



Recurring Information

Board Highlights	2
GSLA Chapter Details	2
Calendar of Events & Field Trips	4-5
Dues and Donation Form	8

**I
N
S
I
D
E**

Article Topic

Page

Becoming a Bird Watcher	3
Navigating the 2021 Utah Leg	6-7
Stop the Polluting Port	7

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.

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Please see the website for a listing of positions and responsibilities. If you desire a printout of a current listing, call the office number to request one by mail.

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 published six times a year. The submission deadline for the JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2021 issue is December 10, 2020.

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AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Local: GSLA chapter-only membership is \$30 a year. Local membership is very 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. In addition, you will receive a courtesy subscription to our newsletter, The Pelican, for one year.

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

BOARD HIGHLIGHTS - NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

By Leah Richardson, Secretary, GSLA

The Board wishes everyone Happy Holidays. We hope you have had time to relax, unwind, and watch birds over the past few weeks. I am grateful that birdwatching is one of the few activities I can still participate in during this pandemic. Is anyone else obsessing over their feeder birds lately?

GSLA has tried to get creative during the pandemic so that we can still bring you events and activities. Heather Dove continues to send out emails with links to interesting articles, podcasts, and events. There are so many pressing environmental issues right now, and Heather is great about bringing these to our attention and relaying what we need to know and can do to help. The fight to 'Stop the Polluting Port' continues, as do other environmental issues in the state. The Coalition is now initiating a Human Health Risk Assessment in order to ascertain the detrimental impact the Utah Inland Port will impose on human health, life expectancy, and premature death rates along the Wasatch Front. Thanks to her excellent work in helping us all stay informed and aware!

In other Board news, we would like to welcome Lisa Jasumback to the Board. Lisa will be in charge of the GSLA Pelican Newsletter. We want to thank Arlene Hamburg for her excellent work in this position and wish her luck with all her future endeavors. Also, GSLA was able to hold the Christmas Bird Count this year, so thanks to all those who participated. We will have an article summarizing the results in a future newsletter.

If you are looking for more stay-at-home birding activities, I invite you to explore National Audubon's monthly podcast 'I Saw a Bird'. There are some great episodes there. Tracy Aviary also has been creative in their planning and has a lot on their website. I am sure you will find interesting articles and activities there. Happy Birding to everyone!



BECOMING A BIRD WATCHER

By Jeanne Le Ber & Linda Johnson, Member, Board of Directors, GSLA

Jeanne Le Ber: The Class

I have been a bird enthusiast and involved in the local birding community for a long time. In July 2015, I was recruited by the University of Utah's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute to develop a class for beginning birders or birders wanting to improve their birding skills, called *Becoming a Bird Watcher*. Taught in the spring, the class is structured with three classroom sessions and three field sessions and is perfect for those just getting started with this captivating outdoor activity.

Classroom lessons focus on identifying birds based on plumage, song, behavior, habitat and season, selecting good equipment, getting involved in local birding groups, participating in community science activities, and selected online and print resources for self-learning. Field trips provide the opportunity to practice using binoculars to advantage, getting on the bird quickly, and taking time to distinguish the bird's unique characteristics. By the end of the course students have identified at least 30 bird species based on characteristics studied in the classroom. Students also learn about birding hotspots in northern Utah.



Brown Creeper

Photography by Linda Johnson

Linda Johnson: A Student Perspective

My bird watching has taken place mostly in my Minnesota backyard and at the Great Salt Lake Bird Festival. Deciding it was time to really learn about these colorful and musical creatures, I enrolled in Jeanne's *Becoming a Bird Watcher* class in 2018. Immediately I knew I had a lot to learn when I couldn't even accurately color a robin! The structure of combined classroom and field sessions allows students to immediately apply what they have learned, so important in a class like this. In addition to this class, Jeanne has offered fall field trips, providing yet another opportunity to build birding skills. While Jeanne is not a trained ornithologist, she is knowledgeable and she has the patience of a saint, an important quality for engaging beginners. This led me to enroll in her 2020 fall field trip class.

Jeanne's introduction to the amazing world of birding has given me confidence in my skills and a desire to continue to hone them. It's led me to participate in Community Science projects with Tracy Aviary and Great Salt Lake Audubon, and using birding apps like eBird, and improved observation skills I use when walking the Jordan River, exploring City Creek, or just strolling to the mailbox. It's a great way to get outside and – bonus – you don't have to be an athlete to bird. These photos are a small sample of what we saw in Jeanne's class. Consider trying Jeanne's class in 2021.



Ruby-crowned Kinglet



Red Tailed Hawk Adult

Photography by Linda Johnson



Calendar of Events and Field Trips
for January/February 2021
GSLA: (385) 313-0608; Website: greatsaltlakeaudubon.org



Unfortunately, our group field trips have been suspended until further notice because of the need for social distancing due to covid-19. Until it is safe to return to these field trips, Ian Batterman, our Field Trip Coordinator, has suggestions for places to bird on your own for January and February.

January/February Hotspots for Birds

Winter may have sent many Utah bird species southward, but that doesn't mean that there are fewer birds to be seen. Winter brings about a new group of migrants that call Utah "warm" such as Rough-legged Hawks, Tundra Swans, and a slew of many duck species. Also, depending on the year, some of the mountain species come down into the valley to find food and warmth such as Hairy Woodpeckers, Evening Grosbeaks, and Steller's Jays. So bring your binoculars, a warm jacket, and some hot cocoa to enjoy the "new birds".

Farmington Bay

Where: At the southeastern corner of the Great Salt Lake lies one of the most famous areas to see waterfowl in Utah, for both birders and hunters alike. Almost every Western US duck species can be seen here, as well as many other water-loving birds (and waterfowl-eating birds).

What: Bald Eagle, American White Pelican, Tundra Swan, Lesser Scaup, Ruddy Duck, American Coot, Eared Grebe, Barn Owl, Song Sparrow, Marsh Wren, Great Blue Heron, Peregrine Falcon, Killdeer, American Kestrel, Northern Harrier. (If you go early enough, you may even find some Short-eared Owls.)

Oquirrh Lake

Where: In the subdivision of Daybreak along the western end of 11400S in South Jordan lies a great place to see plenty of waterfowl, gulls, and raptors. There are walking trails galore around the labyrinth of interconnected ponds as well as some bare fields and marsh reeds for the occasional songbird.

What: Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, California Gull, Herring Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Canvasback, Redhead, Ruddy Duck, Canada Goose, Mallard, Pied-billed Grebe, Say's Phoebe, Red-winged Blackbird, Brewer's Blackbird, Common Merganser. (There were scoters and Long-tailed Ducks seen here back in November.)

Willard Bay

Where: On the southern outskirts of Box Elder County before you get to Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge (also a great place to go any time of year) is another wetland hideaway known as Willard Bay. During the winter, Bald Eagles tend to congregate in large numbers here. Like other state parks, a fee is required.

What: White-crowned Sparrow, Bald Eagle, Tundra Swan, Red-breasted Merganser, Rough-legged Hawk, plenty of gulls and other waterfowl. (Recent rarities include White-winged Scoter, Yellow-billed Loon, and Red-throated Loon.)



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Big Cottonwood Park

Where: At 1500E & Murray-Holladay Rd lies a lovely suburban park that holds many bird species any-time of year, but winter is where this park shines, thanks to a mix of wetland and riparian habitat.

What: Evening Grosbeak, Spotted Towhee, Dark-eyed Junco, American Robin, Cooper’s Hawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Merlin, Black-capped Chickadee, Brown Creeper. (A Harris’ Sparrow has been seen here in recent weeks.)

Lee Kay Ponds

Where: Near the Salt Lake County Landfill lies a wonderful oasis for many species of birds...especially gulls. Though you may not always be able to get close to the birds, you can get a great view from the backroads; just be mindful of all the trucks and landfill traffic.

What: Bald Eagle, Canvasback, Double-crested Cormorant, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Red-winged Blackbird, Herring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Iceland Gull, and hundreds of California and Ring-billed Gulls. (Glaucous, Glaucous-winged, and Western Gulls are sometimes seen here in winter.)

Jordan River Trail

Where: Anywhere the Jordan River runs is a great place to see different bird species as the water and the riparian habitat are ripe with birds. Though walking/biking trails are present for most of the river, there are certain areas to focus on as they are more popular for birds and bird watchers such as the areas near 2100S in West Valley, 4800S in Murray, 7800S in Midvale, 12600S in Riverton, Powell Lake in Lehi,

Friday, January 1, 2021, All day
2020 Jordan River Christmas Bird Count
Coordinator: Jeanne Le Ber, 801-532-7384 or 801-230-4373 (talk & text), jeanne.leber@utah.edu

Tuesday, January 19, 2021, 7:00 - 8:30 pm
BIRDS ‘n BITES: The Evolution of Birds: From Dinosaurs to Doves
Zoom Videoconferencing
Speaker: Kitty Coley, Geologist, Wildlife Naturalist and Natural History Expedition leader for National Geographic, Smithsonian, and Victor Emanuel Tours
See page 1 for the presentation abstract. Also, watch

for an email message from Heather Dove with video-conference details for the presentation.

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NAVIGATING THE 2021 UTAH LEGISLATURE

By Steve Erickson, Utah Audubon Council Policy Advocate

At the time of this writing, Legislative leadership hasn't determined just how it plans to conduct a full General Session during the pandemic. Will it all be done remotely? Will there be regular committee meetings and floor time held with legislators attending in person? Will staff, agency representatives, lobbyists, and the public be allowed to attend? What will be the safety protocols? All of these questions, like the coronavirus, are up in the air for now. No matter what is decided, we are surely in for a unique session, one with many uncertainties, large challenges and much trepidation.

The shape and size of the State's pandemic response will be the dominant theme heading into the earlier-than-usual January 18 start, just as it will be for the January 20 start of the new Biden Administration. Budget uncertainty prevails for now as we await decisions by the Congress on a COVID-19 relief package, and that will continue until the next Congress acts on additional relief funding.

After the coronavirus hit Utah, three Special Sessions were held to appropriate \$1.25 billion in federal CARES Act money, and Utah adjusted its budgets significantly, with cuts to a number of programs. Similarly, the size of the relief package that emerges in early 2021 likely will have a dramatic impact upon the state budget and spending decisions.

That said, we anticipate that there will be few major changes in the dependably stable budgets for the Departments of Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environmental Quality, which rely heavily on user fees and dedicated federal funds.

Sixteen members will be new to either the House or the Senate (15% turnover), one leadership change will occur in the Senate, and there will be some minor committee assignments reshuffled. So far, there is a relatively small number of bills in our ballpark of issues. All are as yet unnumbered. Additional bill requests are certain to come out as we get closer to the start date and through the last day to file bills on January 29.

The bill drafts of most concern, "Lake Powell Pipeline Costs Repayment Amendments", "Municipal Water Jurisdiction Amendments", "Colorado River Basin Water Amendments", "Water Distribution Efficiency", and "Public Entity Water Development Amendments", have all been abandoned for this year. Additional water bills I will be following include a resolution to study the release of water from Flaming Gorge Reservoir, "Statewide Aquatic Invasive Species Emergency Response Plan", and "School and Child Care Center Water Testing".

Other bills of interest or concern include "Tax Credit for Alternate Fuel Heavy Duty Vehicles", "Clean and Renewable Energy Requirement Amendments", "Concentrated Animal Feed Operations", and "Integrated Plan Amendments" (a Dominion Energy special which would deprive cities of choice in electrical energy sources).

We may be initiating legislation to raise issues and opposition to the Promontory Point Resources hazardous waste dump. Great Salt Lake advocates need to galvanize the public to fight this dangerous and unnecessary project, as we are running out of legal options.

We will be watching carefully to oppose any move to aid and abet the Pine Valley pipeline project, aka the "Cedar City Water Grab", such as adding it to the list of projects (Lake Powell Pipeline, Bear River development) that could receive sales tax money through the Water Infrastructure Restricted Account (WIRA).

Lastly, we will support Downwinders' resolution to extend and expand coverage under the federal Radiation Exposure Compensation Act of 1981, to be sponsored by Rep. Doug Owens, whose father Wayne sponsored the original bill.

As usual, you can follow the legislative action and participate remotely by visiting www.le.utah.gov. And I will be compiling the Conservation Community Legislative Update each weekend throughout the Session, which GSLA President Heather Dove graciously distributes as a link to members. Be engaged! Legislators need to hear our concerns and opinions – collectively we can influence decisions and make a difference!

Stop the Polluting Port is Raising Funds for a Human Health Risk Assessment

By Heather Dove, President, GSLA

If you have been reading my emails over these last three years, you will be very familiar with the Utah Inland Port, a huge project encompassing 16,000 acres on the south shore of Great Salt Lake. GSLA has been opposed to this project, as it will create greater carbon emissions, air pollution and will destroy wild-life habitat.

Stop the Polluting Port Coalition, which GSLA has been a member of since its inception in 2018, is now asking for donations to commission a Human Health Risk Assessment. This study will ascertain the detrimental impacts the Utah Inland Port will impose on human health, life expectancy, and premature death rates. We shouldn't have to pay for and commission this study, but the powers that be have been completely derelict in their duties to protect us and our environment and are plowing ahead with this boondoggle that the public doesn't want. A group of concerned residents, community associations and environmental groups is stepping up to commission this study, which will use traffic patterns, science and projections to evaluate the full impact that the inland port will have on our future. We will be engaging professionals in these fields to do the study.

Please consider donating whatever you can so we can complete this important study. The estimated cost is \$20,000. We have raised approximately half that. No amount is too small. Go to UPHE.org, click the red DONATE button, select "Stop the Polluting Port Campaign" in the Designation drop-down menu to make sure your donation is restricted for this purpose. This is a tax-deductible donation as applicable by law.

If you care about quality of life in Salt Lake City and the Wasatch Front, this is your chance to make a difference.

BIRDS 'N BITES *(continued from page 1)*

sand and heat. Because it is an ancient environment, diverse forms of wildlife have successfully adapted to the conditions in ways that allow them to survive and to thrive.

We will visit three regions: the sand seas, marine coastlines, and the mountains of the Arabian Peninsula. We will look at the plants, reptiles, birds, and mammals found in these habitats.

For twenty years Joe and his family lived on the Arabian Peninsula. For seven years he served as a personal advisor to His Majesty, Shaikh Hamed bin Essa Al Khalifa, King of Bahrain. He then moved to Dubai to work with its Ruler, His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum. For 14 years, he advised His Highness on conservation and wildlife management issues of concern.



THE PELICAN
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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

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

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