

# May 2018 Month of the Bird in Utah

## Frequently Asked Questions

### *How do Utah's birds compare to the rest of the United States?*

Of the 990 bird species observed in the lower 48 states, 462 have been observed in Utah. Twenty-six birds in Utah are designated as Species of Greatest Conservation Need; these are birds native to the state whose populations are declining and in need of attention. They are identified in Utah's [Wildlife Action Plan](#), a strategic tool that aims to help keep Utah native species off the Endangered Species Act list.

### *What is an Important Bird Area?*

Important Bird Areas (IBA) are identified using an internationally agreed upon set of criteria considered important for biodiversity and the conservation of bird populations. Developed by BirdLife International, Audubon helps coordinate the IBA program in the United States. [Utah's 22 IBAs](#) include 12 Global priority sites encompassing 3,479,280 acres and 10 State priority sites totaling 79,058 acres. Local Audubon organizations identified and documented these IBAs in partnership with landowners, state and federal agencies, other conservation organizations and universities.

### *Why is Great Salt Lake considered to be "hemispherically and globally important" to waterbirds?*

Great Salt Lake is the largest terminal lake in the Western Hemisphere and fourth largest in the world. The lake and its wetlands serve as a resting and staging area for millions of birds annually. An abundance of brine shrimp, brine flies, and other invertebrates are a key food source for many species. Because of its importance to migratory birds, in 1992 the lake was designated a site of "[Hemispheric Importance](#)." At that time, peak counts of shorebirds recorded over 1.4 million and a single-day count of Wilson's Phalaropes during fall migration exceeded 500,000, or 30% of the global population. As many as 250,000 American Avocets and 65,000 Black-necked Stilts were also observed. Additionally, [Great Salt Lake hosts five global IBAs](#): Gunnison Bay, Bear River Bay, Ogden Bay, Farmington Bay, and Gilbert Bay.

### *What is the difference between waterbird and shorebird?*

Waterbird is a general term for any bird species that frequents water, especially one that regularly wades or swims in water. Shorebirds are waterbirds commonly found along shorelines, mudflats or shallow water, and often seen probing their bills into the ground in search of food. Waterfowl are swimming birds (such as ducks and geese) often hunted as game.

### *How much does bird watching and game bird hunting contribute economically to the state?*

According to a 2006 study of *Economic Benefits of Hunting, Fishing and Wildlife Watching in Utah* prepared by Southwick Associates, Inc. for Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, wildlife-related recreation delivered a total economic effect of \$2.3 billion, \$1.03 billion of which came from wildlife watching. The industry supports more than 24,000 jobs and generates nearly \$127 million in state and local tax revenue.

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### *How do birds 'help balance natural systems'?*

Birds disperse seeds as well as eat harmful insects and invasive fish. Other examples include Lesser Snow Geese and Canada Snow Geese stopover in salt marshes during spring migration and trample the ground, tearing up leaf litter and incorporating it into the soil. The smaller size and increased soil contact promotes decomposition, freeing nitrogen from the leaf litter and allowing it to cycle through the ecosystem. Waterfowl also forage in flooded commercial rice straw fields after harvest, shredding and churning up pieces of straw looking for grain and invertebrates. Greater soil contact increases microbial decomposition, and prevents the need for tillage, saving farmers a substantial amount of labor and money. Across many ecosystems, birds also remove the carcasses of dead animals. Discover additional benefits of birds at: [www.environmentalscience.org/birds-ecosystem-services](http://www.environmentalscience.org/birds-ecosystem-services).

### *What is Global Big Day?*

Global Big Day is a single day event in early May where birders around the world attempt to answer the simple question, "How many birds can be seen in one day?" On May 13, 2017, almost 20,000 birders from 150 countries together observed over 6,635 (or 60% of the world's) birds species. May is an ideal month because that is when migrating birds return to most of the United States and Canada. Visit <https://ebird.org/globalbigday> and learn how you can help contribute to a new world record for the next Global Big Day on May 5, 2018.

### *What is International Migratory Bird Day?*

International Migratory Bird Day was established in 1993 by Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology as an educational campaign focused on the migratory birds in the Western Hemisphere. As of 2018, the twice a year event is now called [World Migratory Bird Day](#), celebrated on the second Saturday of May and October.

### *When and where is the Great Salt Lake Bird Festival?*

Now in its 20<sup>th</sup> year, the Great Salt Lake Bird Festival is a five-day event in May highlighting birds and other natural wonders around the lake and across Northern Utah. The 2018 festival will be held May 17-21. Displays, activities, and workshops will take place at the Davis County Legacy Events Center in Farmington. Additionally, more than 50 field trips are scheduled across northern Utah in Box Elder, Cache, Davis, Morgan, Salt Lake, Summit, Weber, and Utah counties. View the schedule and register at: [www.daviscountyutah.gov/greatsaltlakebirdfest/home](http://www.daviscountyutah.gov/greatsaltlakebirdfest/home).

### *What is the Great Salt Lake Issues Forum?*

Every two years, FRIENDS of Great Salt Lake hosts the Great Salt Lake Issues Forum with the goal of encouraging constructive dialogue about the future of the lake's ecosystem and its resources, and to highlight the complexities involved in research, management, and planning for the lake. The forum explores Great Salt Lake from many angles and contexts beyond its resource development potential, emphasizing its ecological and intrinsic value and contributions to Utah history, culture, and spirit. The next biennial forum will be May 9-11, 2018 at Fort Douglas in Salt Lake City: [www.fogsl.org/2018forum](http://www.fogsl.org/2018forum).

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### *What is the Migratory Bird Treaty Act?*

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) is America's most important bird protection law. Passed in 1918 with the support of Audubon advocates and other early conservationists, the MBTA protects nearly all of our country's native birds. The law carries out the 1916 Migratory Bird Treaty with Canada, and later treaties signed with Mexico, Japan, and Russia, in order to protect our nation's shared bird species. The MBTA is credited with saving numerous species from extinction, such as the Snowy Egret, Wood Duck, Sandhill Crane, and millions, if not billions of other birds. Learn more at:

[www.audubon.org/news/migratory-bird-treaty-act](http://www.audubon.org/news/migratory-bird-treaty-act).

2018 marks the centennial of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. In honor of this milestone, National Geographic, Audubon, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, BirdLife International, and dozens of other partners around the world joined forces to make 2018 the "Year of the Bird." Year of the Bird celebrates the wonder of our feathered friends and provides an opportunity for people everywhere to recommit themselves to protecting birds today and for the next hundred years. Everyone can help build a better world for birds by taking simple but meaningful action each month at: [www.birdyourworld.org](http://www.birdyourworld.org).

### *What other bird-related events are happening in Utah during May?*

**May 11-12** is the first International Bird Day Tour in Western Box Elder County

**May 12** is [World Migratory Bird Day at Scott M. Matheson Wetlands Preserve](#) in Moab

**May 12-13** is the 13<sup>th</sup> annual [Urban Bird Festival](#) at Tracy Aviary

Additionally, throughout May and June, residents and visitors around the west are encouraged to help document bird observations for the first ever [Western Rivers Bird Count](#).

### *How can I learn more about birds in Utah?*

Join a local Audubon chapter! Audubon is dedicated to protecting birds and the places they need. There are four Audubon chapters located in Utah and each one provides programs on bird identification, field trips, and work on bird and habitat conservation projects across the state. Contact a chapter near you:

<b>Logan</b>	Bridgerland Audubon Society ( <a href="http://bridgerlandaudubon.org">http://bridgerlandaudubon.org</a> )
<b>Ogden</b>	Wasatch Audubon Society ( <a href="http://www.wasatchaudubon.org">www.wasatchaudubon.org</a> )
<b>Salt Lake City</b>	Great Salt Lake Audubon ( <a href="http://www.greatsaltlakeaudubon.org">www.greatsaltlakeaudubon.org</a> )
<b>St. George</b>	Red Cliffs Audubon ( <a href="http://redcliffsaudubon.org">http://redcliffsaudubon.org</a> )