

New Mexico Chapter of
The Wildlife Society



Excellence in Wildlife Stewardship Through Science and Education

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Weeks of Friday, August 29th through October 10th 2014

Check out the chapter on Facebook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Wildlife-Society-New-Mexico-Chapter/122478411098284>

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2. First call for papers for the 2015 AZ/NM JAM – Submission Deadline Nov 7th and 15th 2014
3. Submit nominations for the NM TWS Outstanding Student Award and the Wildlife Professional Award – Due Dec 15th 2014
4. Register to compete at the student Quiz Bowl at the 2015 AZ/NM JAM – Register by Jan 10th 2015
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1. 2015 AZ/NM JAM registration is now OPEN

The registration website (www.2015JAM.eventzilla.net) for the 2015 Joint Annual Meeting (JAM) of the AZ/NM AFS and the AZ and NM Chapters of TWS is now open. The JAM will be held Thursday, February 5th through Saturday February 7th. More workshops will be added soon – including two half-day workshops related to the use of R and two half-day Law Enforcement workshops (see attached .pdf). Early registration closes January 10th, 2015. The rate at the conference hotel (Hotel Encanto) is only guaranteed through January 31st, 2015.

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2. First call for papers for the 2015 AZ/NM JAM – Submission Deadline Nov 7th and 15th 2014

The first call for papers for the 2015 Joint Annual Meeting (JAM) of the AZ/NM AFS and the AZ and NM Chapters of TWS is now available (<http://wildlife.org/nm/sites/wildlife.org.nm/files/2015JAMCallforPapersNov15.pdf>; and see attached .pdf). Wildlife students wishing to be considered for an award for an oral presentation must submit their abstracts by November 7th, 2014 according to the revised format described at the end of the call. All other abstracts are due November 15th, 2014.

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3. Submit nominations for the NM TWS Outstanding Student Award and the Wildlife Professional Award - Due Dec 15th 2014

Please submit your nominations for the NM TWS Outstanding Student Award and the Wildlife Professional Award. Nominations are due December 15th, 2014 and can be submitted to Quentin Hays, New Mexico Chapter of The Wildlife Society, 709 Mechem Drive, Ruidoso, NM, 88345 or electronically to Quentin.Hays@enmu.edu. Please see attached .pdf or the following link (<http://www.wildlife.org/nm/sites/wildlife.org.nm/files/2014Student%26WildlifeProfessionalAwardsSept2014.pdf>) for more information.

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4. Register to compete at the student Quiz Bowl at the 2015 AZ/NM JAM – Register by Jan 10th 2015

Please register your team to compete in the student Quiz Bowl at the 2015 Joint Annual Meeting of the AZ/NM American Fisheries Society and the AZ & NM Chapters of The Wildlife Society. Email Heather Bateman (Heather.L.Bateman@asu.edu) with the names of: your school, student chapter, team captain, faculty advisor, and each team member. See attached flier for more details on Quiz Bowl rules. Teams must be registered by January 10th, 2015.

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5. NM TWS Summer 2014 Newsletter Attached

The NM TWS Summer 2014 newsletter is out. Please see attached .pdf. It is also available on the chapter website:

<http://www.wildlife.org/nm/sites/wildlife.org.nm/files/2014SummerNewsletter.pdf>

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6. Saskatchewan clarifies ban on drones used for hunting

CBC News Posted: Aug 27, 2014 11:38 AM CT| Last Updated: Aug 27, 2014 11:38 AM CT

Unmanned aerial vehicles can't be used to spot wildlife

A specific ban on hunting using drone aircraft has now been added to Saskatchewan's wildlife regulations.

Unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones, are becoming increasingly popular with hobbyists, and there have been some cases in the United States where hunters have used them to locate animals.

But the Saskatchewan government, along with hunting groups, believe UAVs cross the line of what is considered a "fair chase."

"The biggest concern is that these devices would give hunters an unfair advantage," said Travis Williams, a wildlife allocation specialist with the Environment Ministry.

In addition to being used to spot moose and other game, there's also a concern the suitcase-sized flying devices might be used to flush animals out from concealed areas, he said.

Previously under the Wildlife Regulations, it was illegal to "operate or be a passenger in an aircraft" for the purpose of hunting wildlife.

According to Williams, Transport Canada already considers UAVs to be "aircraft", so the old legislation covered them.

But adding "or unmanned aircraft" to the ban makes it more clear to everybody, he said.

Saskatchewan isn't the only province to change its hunting regulations to include drones. Manitoba made a similar move in June.

There was no indication anyone is currently using drones to hunt in Saskatchewan, Williams said.

However, considering the impact UAVs could potentially have, the government thought it would be prudent to get in front of the issue now by amending its regulations, he said.

Cabinet approved the amendment on Aug. 14.

Article link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/saskatchewan-clarifies-ban-on-drones-used-for-hunting-1.2748476>

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7. Official: Mesa duck deaths could be tied to botulism

Katie Bieri, The Republic | azcentral.com 3:20 p.m. MST September 2, 2014

Game and Fish officials say avian botulism caused the deaths of more than a dozen ducks at a Mesa retirement community's pond.

Anywhere from 12 to 20 ducks died at a Mesa pond this weekend, and investigators believe the deaths are tied to an outbreak of avian botulism, according to an Arizona Game and Fish spokeswoman.

Officials are investigating the exact cause of death at Sunland Village, near the intersection of Broadway and Greenfield roads, but early reports seem to indicate that the birds died of botulism, said Anne Justice-Allen, a veterinarian for the Arizona Game and Fish Department.

Runoff from recent rainfall combined with bad temperatures to create the perfect conditions for the disease to occur, Justice-Allen said. She confirmed that incidents like this one happen pretty regularly.

According to the National Wildlife Health Center, avian botulism is caused by birds ingesting toxins from the bacteria, *Clostridium botulinum*. The disease causes paralysis, ultimately drowning birds after they lose movement of their wings, legs and neck muscles.

Sunland Village resident 80-year-old Jim Zart saw the dead birds on the grass firsthand when he visited the lake with his daughter Friday night. After seeing

what he described as dead ducks, parrots and pigeons, he and his daughter stopped by the fire department, which then instructed them to call the Game and Fish Department.

"I don't understand it," Zart said. "I've been going there for 30 years. I've never seen a dead bird."

Another neighbor told Zart that a park ranger had been by either late Sunday night or early Monday morning to pick up the dead animals.

Zart has since been driving by religiously to check on the welfare of the remaining birds.

"I feel bad about it," Zart said. "I'm an animal lover."

Justice-Allen confirmed that this was the first avian botulism incident of 2014.

Article link: <http://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/mesa/2014/09/02/mesa-duck-pond-deaths-abrk/14984467/>

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8. Badger culling resumes for second year

9 September 2014 Last updated at 12:23 ET

A second year of badger culling has begun in parts of Gloucestershire and Somerset in a bid to tackle bovine TB.

Last year, 1,800 badgers were killed in the pilot areas of west Gloucestershire and west Somerset. Just under 1,000 are due to be killed this year.

The government insists culling is necessary but protesters argue shooting is not "effective or humane".

More than 26,000 cattle were slaughtered in England last year because of the spread of TB.

Gloucestershire Police has said there had been "one encounter" between a protester and cull operator, which resulted in one badger being released from its cage.

No crime took place and the situation was "diffused", police added.

The four-year government-backed pilot aims to cull 70% of the initial population of badgers to test how "effective, humane and safe" a cull can be.

England's Badger cull:

Badgers are being shot by marksman for a second year as part of efforts to protect cattle from bovine tuberculosis (TB).

Badgers are thought to pass on the disease to cattle through their urine, faeces or through droplet infection, in farmyards or in pastures.

The pilot is taking place in Somerset and Gloucestershire where 1,000 of the animals are due to be shot.

Marksman are shooting the badgers at night after putting food such as peanuts outside their setts.

The Badger Trust claimed at the High Court this cull would take place without independent monitoring.

Defra has denied this saying experts from Natural England and the Animal Health Veterinary Laboratory Agency will be monitoring the cull.

Ministers and the National Farmers' Union (NFU) believe culling badgers will curb TB in cattle.

Andrew Guest, chairman of the NFU in Gloucestershire and spokesperson for GlosCon - the company carrying out the cull in the county - said if infected cattle were culled but not badgers it was "leaving the circle open for re-infection again and again".

Environment Secretary Elizabeth Truss claimed the government's "comprehensive strategy" was supported by leading vets.

'Discredited' arguments

But protesters have claimed independent monitoring has been dropped and attempted to have the cull halted at the High Court.

The move was rejected by judges, after which the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) said: "We have always been clear that the independent expert panel's role was to oversee the six-week pilots in the first year of the culls only.

"This year we have made changes to monitor effectiveness and humaneness and the culls will be independently audited."

An independent report by the expert panel into the first year of culls found that "controlled shooting" of free-running badgers could not deliver the level of culling needed to lower TB cases in cattle and was not humane.

Protesters, who have called for alternatives such as vaccination to be considered, said Defra had "sacked the referee".

Dominic Dyer, of the Badger Trust and Care for the Wild, said culls were "ill-conceived and incompetently managed" and called the pro-cull arguments "discredited".

"Here we have a government and the National Farmers' Union pushing ahead with a policy simply because they don't have the guts to admit that it is wrong," he added.

Article link: <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-gloucestershire-29079354>

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9. Colorado bear population much bigger than expected, new study finds

Alli Langley September 18, 2014

Putrid, slowly liquifying fish mung. Burlap strips soaked in butterscotch and strawberry extracts.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife researchers used the horribly pungent and the sickly sweet to bait bears in the backcountry north of Summit County this summer.

The two-month study was the latest addition to an ongoing project that wildlife managers hoped would give them a more accurate measure of the state's bear population and a better gauge of the bears' behavior.

"One of the big struggles with bears is they're not particularly easy to count," said Jerry Apker, Colorado Parks and Wildlife carnivore biologist. When bears aren't hiding in hibernation, they don't roam in herds like elk or deer.

So five years ago, the agency started experimenting with a new surveying method called hair snares. Here's how it works:

The researchers decide on a survey area of around 500 square kilometers, and within that area they set up around 30 hair snag sites. Each one is about 20

square feet, and they surround the site with a string of barbed wire suspended a certain distance from the ground.

In the middle, they hang the bait.

The researchers don't want their data affected by bears repeatedly coming back for more, so they ensure the bait is hung too high for the bears to reach.

Curious bears follow their noses, and in the process of crawling over or ducking under the barbed wire, they leave behind a few hairs of fur.

Once a week, the researchers check each hair snag site, collect the bears' DNA samples and then burn off any residue on the wires using a propane torch.

The samples are shipped to a lab in Canada, where they're analyzed and later used to identify each individual bear. From that genetic information, researchers can tell how many bears live in a particular geographic region and track where the bears move in set time periods.

The results from the closest study to Summit County, completed by biologists working out of Hot Sulphur Springs 30 miles north of Silverthorne, won't be available until next summer. Analysis from the bear hair snares over the last few years, however, has already shocked wildlife managers.

Researchers found that in every study across the state, in habitats that ranged from good to poor quality for bears, the bear population was double the numbers wildlife managers had been using before.

"I was expecting the numbers to be higher but not twice as high," Apker said. "We were so surprised and taken aback by the densities that we got."

The studies have also shown bears using the landscape in a dynamic way, responding to changes in environmental conditions like poor forage quality or drought, faster than expected.

"In the snap of your fingers they're not in the same areas we thought they would be," he said.

Not only are the bears moving faster, they're covering more ground than predicted in response to those habitat factors.

In areas with good-quality habitat, like near the Roaring Fork Valley, bears move around less. They tend to wander through forests following "the green line," meaning they move up or down in elevation hunting the best vegetation as the seasons change.

During the first hair snag study near Trinidad, researchers found an average of 1.2 bears per square mile. The next summer, that number dropped to 0.5 bears per square mile.

Researchers were stumped by the bear density dropping by more than half until they realized not only had most of the bears moved out of their study area, the females also had synced up reproductively that year.

Colorado's black bears normally give birth every other year or so when healthy, but after a few years of drought conditions, all the females near Trinidad gave birth to cubs at the same time. Mother bears don't move around as much, so they had lower chances of encountering a hair snare site.

The next year, all the bears returned.

For decades, Apker said, wildlife managers have relied on old studies that estimated Colorado was home to between 10,000 and 12,000 bears.

"That's what we hung our hat on for almost 15 years because we didn't have anything else," Apker said.

Since then, Parks and Wildlife have tried to estimate bear populations by mapping vegetation and extrapolating from the number of bears killed during hunting season. The hair snag method has improved the agency's estimates of bear densities in different types of habitat.

"The methodology we've got now, it's better," he said. "Is it perfect science? No, but we have to use the best we have."

The technique is more accurate and cheaper, said Kirk Oldham, wildlife biologist in Summit and Grand counties. It's also much less invasive than old surveying techniques, which usually involved trapping, tranquilizing and tagging the bears.

Oldham said he was surprised his team collected hair samples on 80 percent of the 36 sites set up in his Grand County study.

That could be just a testament to the researchers' superb bear baiting abilities. It could mean many bears wandering through the sites a few times, or a few bears stumbling through many times.

Whether the DNA analysis shows 30 bears or three, Oldham said, that will play a large role in how the agency manages bears.

He said the agency likes to space bears out according to the size of their home range. Male black bears home ranges can vary between 30 to 250 square miles, while females cover about half that distance.

With public input, Parks and Wildlife soon will put together bear management plans around the state, and the figures from Oldham's study will inform the bear management strategy for Summit and Grand counties.

Apker said a bear population much greater than expected, combined with an explosion in Colorado's human population over the last decade, means people living even in cities have good chances of encountering bears.

That means people must learn to tolerate some human-bear conflicts and learn to minimize or reduce the things that cause them, he said. Wildlife managers will be talking with communities about how many bears they want and how to achieve those goals using methods like hunting.

"We do sometimes have to make a decision," Apker said. "Is this the number of bears that we're comfortable with?"

Article link: <http://www.summitdaily.com/news/13058997-113/bears-bear-wildlife-hair>

##

10. Ten things in nature that could vanish before your kids see them

By Darryl Fears September 24

In their losing battle with television and digital devices, conservationists have urged parents to get the kiddies to the great outdoors. But even if parents managed to pull their children away from cellphones, what would they find in America's wilderness?

A new report by the Endangered Species Coalition, an alliance of 10 environmental activist groups, says they'll see fewer things in nature than their parents did. Many are listed as threatened or endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife. Here are 10 plants and animals the groups say your children might never see.

Rusty patched bumblebees

These big, fat and cute bees were once the most common bees in North America, buzzing across millions of acres in the United States, sucking nectar and moving pollen from the male to female parts of plants, making them one of America's most efficient pollinators, worth about \$3 billion per year to U.S. agriculture. Now they have lost nearly 90 percent of their range.

Monarch butterflies

When farmers spray pesticides to protect corn and soy they've planted throughout the Midwest, the chemicals also fall on a food that's cherished by monarch caterpillars: milkweed. Monarch caterpillars are creepy and black and yellow striped early in life, but eventually they become one of the prettiest butterflies to take flight. Up to a billion monarchs once fluttered about from Canada to Mexico, but lately they've been grounded; only 33 million remain.

Polar bears

Being the largest predator on land is not easy. A fully grown male polar bear weighs well more than half a ton, and has a big belly to fill. With ice melting because of global warming and the seal blubber it needs to survive drifting away, polar bears are struggling to survive. They can eat as much as 100 pounds of fat in a single meal, the report says. Many drown attempting to swim to ice floes in search of food.

Little brown bats

These little creatures are about to head back into caves for their annual hibernation. Chances are, many of them won't come back out. There's a monster lurking in those caves that attacks numerous species of bats, but kills little browns more than most. It's called White Nose Syndrome, a fungus that covers the winged animals when their hearts slow and their bodies go cold during their deep sleep, wreaking havoc on their bodies. The government count of bats killed by white nose was nearly 7 million — two years ago in the Northeast, Southeast and parts of the Midwest. In Pennsylvania, little brown bat mortality was nearly 100 percent.

Great white sharks

Great white sharks are partially warm-blooded animals that slice through the water at up to 35 mph. But their offspring, shark pups, can't outrun commercial gill nets that pull them up as by-catch — creatures caught by fishermen who are targeting something else, such as tuna. Fishing for great whites is illegal because their numbers are dwindling due to mortality at the hands of humans, but there's no limit on the by-catch in nursery areas off California and Mexico in the gulf, unintentionally killing up to 200 young sharks per year, the reports says. Great whites grow slowly and mature late on their way to living as long as 70 years, "but low reproductive rates, small populations, and by-catch keep this species at risk of extinction," the study says.

Mountain yellow-legged frogs

Frogs were so plentiful in the southern Sierra Nevada and Southern California that they hopped on anyone who hiked the gorgeous landscapes of their territory. The vast majority of those populations have gone extinct, "and the remaining colonies have only about 10 adults," the report says. "And it's all about us; we are degrading and destroying their habitats." How? Frogs are sensitive to pesticides that run from farms and housing developments into the freshwater streams they inhabit. It's a big loss because frogs eat flies, wasps and other pests that trouble humans.

North Pacific right whales

These whales are some of the most endangered animals on Earth. Some estimates say only 30 remain in U.S. waters, but there's no way of knowing for sure. Once they were plentiful, but hunting that lasted from the 1800s until the 1960s took about 30,000, and now the whales are classified as endangered throughout its range, according to NOAA.

White bark pine

White bark does a lot for nature. It provides shelter for numerous animals and birds and helps grizzlies get fat and healthy off its pine seeds. But nature isn't giving back. The species is being ravaged by a beetle that's spreading because of global warming, and it's being attacked by a fungus. In the western United States and Canada, its historic range, 85 percent of white bark has been wiped out. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service says the pine is worthy of endangered species protection but hasn't been listed because other species are a higher priority.

The greater sage-grouse

The greater sage-grouse is the poster bird of the conservationist movement. Its range, which once covered 297 million acres across more than a dozen Western states, has given way to development and natural gas exploration, and is now in the path of the Keystone oil pipeline from Canada to Texas. But federal agencies strongly disagree with conservationists over whether projects should be halted to protect the bird. "U.S. Fish and Wildlife supports efforts to keep the greater sage-grouse off the endangered species list" by managing its habitat better, an agency Web post says.

Snake River sockeye salmon

There was a time when 40,000 of these fish with a green head and red body returned to spawn in the Rocky Mountains. But that was before four federal dams blocked its path. In 1992, one fish made it back. Since that time, federal, state

and tribal fish managers have spent \$40 million in an attempt to restock 2,500 salmon in the river. U.S. Fish and Wildlife lists Snake River sockeye as threatened and endangered in Oregon and Washington.

Article link: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/speaking-of-science/wp/2014/09/24/ten-things-in-nature-that-could-vanish-before-your-kids-see-them/>

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11. WWF: Half the world's wildlife gone over last 40 years

By Tom Miles September 30, 2014, 7:36 AM|GENEVA

The world populations of fish, birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles fell overall by 52 percent between 1970 and 2010, far faster than previously thought, the World Wildlife Fund said on Tuesday.

The conservation group's Living Planet Report, published every two years, said humankind's demands were now 50 percent more than nature can bear, with trees being felled, groundwater pumped and carbon dioxide emitted faster than Earth can recover.

"This damage is not inevitable but a consequence of the way we choose to live," Ken Norris, Director of Science at the Zoological Society of London, said in a statement.

However, there was still hope if politicians and businesses took the right action to protect nature, the report said.

"It is essential that we seize the opportunity -- while we still can -- to develop sustainably and create a future where people can live and prosper in harmony with nature," said WWF International Director General Marco Lambertini.

Preserving nature was not just about protecting wild places but also about safeguarding the future of humanity, "indeed, our very survival," he said.

The report's finding on the populations of vertebrate wildlife found that the biggest declines were in tropical regions, especially Latin America. The WWF's so-called "Living Planet Index" is based on trends in 10,380 populations of 3,038 mammal, bird, reptile, amphibian and fish species.

The average 52 percent decline was much bigger than previously reported, partly because earlier studies had relied more on readily available information from

North America and Europe, WWF said. The same report two years ago put the decline at 28 percent between 1970 and 2008.

The worst decline was among populations of freshwater species, which fell by 76 percent over the four decades to 2010, while marine and terrestrial numbers both fell by 39 percent.

"ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT"

The main reasons for declining populations were the loss of natural habitats, exploitation through hunting or fishing, and climate change.

To gauge the variations between different countries' environmental impact, the report measured how big an "ecological footprint" each one had and how much productive land and water area, or "biocapacity", each country accounted for.

Kuwaitis had the biggest ecological footprint, meaning they consume and waste more resources per head than any other nation, the report said, followed by Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

"If all people on the planet had the footprint of the average resident of Qatar, we would need 4.8 planets. If we lived the lifestyle of a typical resident of the USA, we would need 3.9 planets," the report said.

Many poorer countries - including India, Indonesia and the Democratic Republic of Congo - had an ecological footprint that was well within the planet's ability to absorb their demands.

The report also measured how close the planet is to nine so-called "planetary boundaries", thresholds of "potentially catastrophic changes to life as we know it".

Three such thresholds have already been crossed - biodiversity, carbon dioxide levels and nitrogen pollution from fertilisers. Two more were in danger of being breached - ocean acidification and phosphorus levels in freshwater.

"Given the pace and scale of change, we can no longer exclude the possibility of reaching critical tipping points that could abruptly and irreversibly change living conditions on Earth," the report said.

Article link: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/chi-half-worlds-wildlife-gone-20140930-story.html>

12. Tests confirm toxic algae in Utah Lake; threat to humans, pets, wildlife

Posted 2:15 pm, October 9, 2014, by Ashton Edwards and Carly Figueroa,
Updated at 07:39pm, October 9, 2014

SALT LAKE CITY – Officials have just released the test results from the toxic blue-green algae suspected to be growing in parts of Utah Lake.

The results confirm elevated levels of the cyanotoxin from the algae in the lake.

Researchers took water samples from the Lindon Harbor Jetty for the tests.

The toxin can cause liver damage among other issues and poses a threat to humans, pets and wildlife.

“It is very difficult to predict and assess harmful algae blooms,” Walt Baker said, director of the Division of Water Quality. “But what we can control is one of the major contributing factors to algae blooms; nutrients, principally phosphorus.”

Officials said elevated levels of nutrients in the water, combined with warm temperatures, abundant sunlight and calm water, can lead to rapid growth of the bright-green blooms.

“In Utah Lake, 75 percent of the phosphorus loading comes from the wastewater treatment plants which discharge into the lake,” Baker said. “Reducing nutrient loading to our lakes and streams is our top priority and we are implementing these reductions through our Utah Nutrient Strategy.”

He said environmental scientists from the DWQ are continuing to take samples to test for the presence of cyanotoxins in other areas in and around the lake.

The Utah County Health Department and Utah Division of Wildlife Resources have issued warnings to swimmers, boaters, anglers and hunters to avoid areas with bright-green algal growth.

If you are concerned about your exposure to water or algae, officials said you should contact the Utah Poison Control Center at (800) 222-1222 or your medical care provider.

Symptoms of cyanotoxin poisoning include headache, fever, diarrhea, abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting and sometimes allergic-like reactions from skin contact.

The bloom at Utah Lake is not an isolated incident.

“Until we reduce the phosphorous and nitrogen loads into our lakes and streams, we will continue to see increasing numbers of algal blooms, not just in Utah Lake, but other areas of the state as well,” Baker said. “Some of these blooms may be toxic. We need to work together as a state to invest in the changes necessary to protect public health and our precious water resources from this pollution.”

Article link: <http://fox13now.com/2014/10/09/tests-confirm-toxic-algae-in-utah-lake-threat-to-humans-pets-wildlife/>

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