

# NEWSLETTER

# ALTA ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

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## Skiers Keep our Bird Feeders Going

If you've heard some chatter about birding at Alta, it is for good reason. Alta is home to over 100 species of birds year-round. Observing birds and understanding their habits helps us have a deeper understanding of the Alta ecosystem. Nutcracker populations tell us how productive the cone crop was from the previous year. Rosy-finch habitat locations tell us how the species is adjusting to warming temperatures. Each piece of the puzzle has a dependent relationship upon the system working successfully as a whole.

The bird feeders around Alta are one example of the incredible Alta community. Most of the feeders are not maintained by Alta Ski Area, but by skiers and employees who enjoy seeing the feathered friends enjoy a meal in close proximity. Observing them is fascinating, spurring conversation and curiosity. Although slightly difficult to find, these feeders are all placed just off groomed runs at Alta and are possible to see with beginner and intermediate skiing abilities.

## Aluminum Replacements for Plastic in Dining Locations

Step by step, we are making changes to Alta that will take us towards a more sustainable future, and one in which our impact becomes more friendly to the environment around us. With the undeniable evidence that plastic production and waste practices are problematic, we have decided to begin the push towards disposable aluminum water bottles for purchase at Alta Ski Area.

In March 2022, the ski area conducted a pilot program selling disposable aluminum water bottles to replace disposable plastic water bottles in the ski area's dining locations. We chose to work with Open Water, a women-owned, carbon-neutral aluminum water bottle company. The ski area recognizes the convenience to the customer in providing disposable water options; however, we are making an effort to reduce single use plastics, which have



an alarmingly low recycling rate and can only be down-cycled so many times before eventually ending up in the landfill. Aluminum is a highly recyclable material and can be infinitely recycled. Open Water also averages 73% of post-consumer aluminum in every bottle and can produced. Additionally, Open Water is the first and only certified carbon neutral bottling brand. All emissions created by packaging and operations are offset by the company. We are excited to try a new, sustainable product in our dining locations and look forward to providing more sustainable options in the future.

As a reminder, water refill stations are available in all our dining locations, providing our skiers with cool, clean mountain water for free if you bring your own reusable water bottle. Our recommendation is to get a flexible bladder that can be stowed in a jacket or backpack, and fill up all day long at any dining location on the mountain.

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*“In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks.”*  
John Muir

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### Food Waste Collection Expands

In March 2021, the ski area implemented a permanent food waste diversion and collection program at the ski area’s dining locations. This program was implemented in partnership with Snowbird, Momentum Recycling (waste hauler), Wild Harvest Farms (large-scale composting operation), and Wasatch Resource Recovery (commercial-scale food digester). As of the end of February 2022, it is estimated that the ski area has diverted 41,196 pounds of food waste and compostable disposables from the landfill. This represents over 41,000 pounds of waste that did not end up in the landfill and that instead was composted for fertilizer, or used to create renewable natural gas at the Wasatch Resource Recovery food digester. Based on initial calculations using the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Waste Reduction Model to estimate greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions, it is estimated that the ski area has reduced GHG emissions by over 14 MTCO<sub>2</sub>e compared to if the waste had gone to the landfill. Based on the EPA’s Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator, it is estimated that reducing emissions by this amount is equivalent to:

- Avoiding the GHG emissions from driving three passenger cars for one year; or
- Avoiding CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from consuming 1,575 gallon of gasoline.

It is also awesome to see these sustainability efforts spread throughout the Alta community. As of Fall 2021, Goldminer’s Daughter, the Alta Lodge, and Alta Java have started their own food waste collection and diversion efforts.

The environmental benefits from the food waste collection and diversion program are in the form of GHG reductions. When food sits in the landfill, it is unable to decompose due to the anaerobic environment and the lack of proper microbes to help break down the waste in this environment. Eventually, food that is unable to decompose in the landfill will release methane which is a potent greenhouse gas. When food waste ends up in the compost or anaerobic digester, the food is able to break down. While there are still some emissions associated with composting and at times with the anaerobic digester, these are generally in the form of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). However, methane’s global warming potential, or potential to warm the atmosphere, is 28 to 36 times that of CO<sub>2</sub> over a 100 year period. The ski area continues to focus on waste management as a way to reduce GHG emissions and waste generated from the ski area.



### Alta Earth Day 2022

Join Alta for its 13th annual community Alta Earth Day! Connect with sustainability-focused and local companies from the Salt Lake area, or get on the snow with Cottonwood Canyons Foundation, Tracy Aviary, or TreeUtah and gain a fresh perspective of the ecological system at work here in Alta. This event encourages environmental stewardship, responsible recreation, and awareness of the relationship between climate change and the future of the ski industry in Little Cottonwood Canyon and beyond. There will be a generous opportunity drawing - win a brand new pair of skis, cool gear, a climbing gym pass, and more! Live music to follow on the Goldminer’s Daughter Patio.

### Renewable Energy Credits

Alta Ski Area (ASA) is pleased to announce that it has committed to matching 100% of its annual electricity use with renewable energy. With this new commitment, ASA will reduce its carbon footprint by an estimated 3,567 metric tons of carbon dioxide per year by purchasing renewable energy through Rocky Mountain Power’s Blue Sky program. Electricity use makes up more than 50% of the ski area’s annual greenhouse gas emissions.



As a business that relies on snow, Alta Ski Area recognizes the impact of climate change. Reducing our greenhouse gas emissions aligns with the ski area’s mission statement to provide authentic skiing experiences within a natural mountain environment. In order to continue fostering the Alta experience for future generations, the ski area is committed to conserving and protecting the natural mountain environment in which we operate.

### Community Events

**Snowflake Festival** - Four days of winter fun hosted by Alta Community Enrichment. Learn to paint an Alta lanscape, hunt for gnomes, shoot some golf, showcase your talents in the talent show, and more!

March 23-26 | Free and For Cost events | Town of Alta | [www.altacommunity.org](http://www.altacommunity.org)

**Birds & Brew: Lights Out Launch** - Birds and Brew is back for a special evening with SLC’s Mayor Mendenhall and short presentations about Lights Out and our collision survey program on Tracy Aviary’s Mill Lawn. Join us for beer from Fisher Brewing Company while exploring Aviary grounds after hours. You’ll learn how you can help migrating birds, and learn more about our night skies.

March 24th | 6pm | Tracy Aviary

**Trees and Skis** - The trees at Alta help tell the story of Alta’s history and provide a picture of the current forest health. They are benchmarks for current and past events in their environment and much like all of us, the trees weather the seasons—from cold, windy, winter nights to dry, hot, summer days. This winter, we decided we wanted to hang out in the trees a little bit longer. The Alta Environmental Center is partnering with TreeUtah to offer an exploratory winter tour of the forest. Meet at the top of Sunnyside lift.

April 16th | 10am and 12pm | Top of Sunnyside lift | [www.alta.com/events/trees-and-skis](http://www.alta.com/events/trees-and-skis)