



The *Stilt*

Volume 37, Issue 4
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Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

Birdie Day

For the seventh year, we have been graciously invited by our great rancher friends, the Selmans, to visit their property in extreme southern Cache Valley and observe Sharp-tailed Grouse doing their courting ritual. Following the grouse viewing, the Selmans will provide us with a wonderful ranchers' breakfast. Past participants on this trip have given it rave reviews and we are very grateful to the Selmans for affording us this opportunity. Besides viewing the birds, it is an opportunity to see how truly responsible stewards of the land (the Selmans) carry out their ranching operations in a way that makes the land more and more productive and beautiful for both man and wildlife. This trip is suitable for both novice and experienced birders. Meet at 5 a.m. at the McDonalds parking lot in Hyrum. Carpooling will be available and mandatory from there. We plan to be back about 1 p.m. You must let Dick Hurren know in advance if you plan to attend (435)720-7074.

Inside this Issue

Spring Banquet	2
Audubon Calendar	3
Local Bird Spotlight	6
Audubon Contacts	7

Sharp-tailed Grouse

Since my time began and it's been quite a spell,
The Great Basin's been home and I'm here to tell.

I thrived and I flourished with all critters there,
And provided strength to mankind as a main tablefare.

Now my numbers are down, My future is weak,
My mere existence is all that I seek.

My onetime home, which covered this land,
Has been reduced to only 4% by this thing called man.

He makes roads and he tramples, he tromps and he plows to just get a thrill
Of ripping and tearing, and abusing that hill.

But the thing he hurts most, and I'll tell you by heck,
Is my main place of action, they call it a "lek".

It's here that we gather to put on a show,
A courting ritual the rest you should know.

My once numerous numbers that now are so few,
could soon be all gone – depending on YOU.

By Fred Selman

Photo by Brandon Spencer





Spring Banquet



Bridgerland Audubon's Spring Banquet will be held Thursday, April 24th at the Copper Mill Restaurant, 55 N. Main. Social hour with cash bar will begin at 6:00 PM followed by dinner and presentation by Dr. Rob Davies titled – "Pulling the Trigger on Climate Change Solutions: The Cache Valley Tipping Point." Rob's presentation will focus not on the state of the climate science, but the state of the social science, touching on elements of technology, economy, morality and triggers and feedbacks in our own Cache Valley Community. Tickets are \$25 and available at Caffe Ibis, Fuhrmans Framing and Fine Art, and Crumb Brothers Artisan Bread or any Bridgerland Audubon Board Member.

Dr. Davies' Bio

Dr. Robert Davies is a Utah-trained physicist and educator. Arriving at USU in 1991, Rob studied upper atmospheric physics and electrical interactions between spacecraft and the near-Earth space environment. He has worked for NASA as a U.S.-Russian scientific liaison on the International Space Station project; as project scientist for USU's Space Dynamics Laboratory; and taught on the faculty of three universities. He has published work in the fields of spacecraft-environment interactions and quantum optics.

Most recently, Rob spent two years in a research post at Oxford University, England, studying the fundamental nature of light and information. While there he also renewed his interest in climate physics, spending time with researchers at the university's Environmental Change Institute and delving into the primary scientific literature. Impressed with the sheer volume and diversity of data, with dramatic improvements in modeling—and with the sharp contrast between science's broad consensus and the public's near-extreme confusion—Rob decided to return to Cache Valley and help the community he calls home better understand the critically important issue of climate change. Dr. Davies' efforts in the field of climate change are nonpartisan and nonprofessional; he is not affiliated with any political or environmental organizations, nor is he paid for his work. He seeks to serve as an objective and informed scientific voice to the public, free of professional or financial motive.



Two years ago, I was only dimly aware of the state of environmental crisis facing humanity. A year ago, having spent a year examining the science of climate change – and overwhelmed by the level of public confusion – I made a snap decision to get involved. Fourteen months hence, having logged countless hours talking through the science of climate with the people of northern Utah, I'm delighted to discuss with you not the state of the *climate* science, but the state of the *social* science. In this time with Bridgerland Audubon, comprising Cache Valley's most committed and knowledgeable environmental minds, I will stray from the science of climate, because you already know the science of climate. Instead, I'd like to review aspects of our forward path. We'll discuss: technology; economy; morality; and triggers and feedbacks in our own Cache Valley community.

Audubon Calendar

April 2008

3 Board of Trustees Meeting BAS Trustees meet at 7 p.m. at the Cache Valley Learning Center, 75 S. 400 West, Logan. Enter through the building's west doors. All are welcome to attend.

5 Logan Sewage Lagoons and Polishing Ponds Join us for another trip to the Logan Sewage Lagoons, the nearby polishing ponds, and other valley waterfowl habitats with expert birder Keith Archibald. We will meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot between Caffe Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 E. 150 North). Bring binoculars and a spotting scope if you have one. Wear clothing appropriate for the season; there is often a cold wind blowing through the lagoons. We should finish around noon. Carpooling will be available; beginning birders are welcome. For more information, call Keith at 752-8258 or Dick Hurren at (435)720-7074.

15 Bird Walk Along Logan Golf Course Trail We want to try a mid-week outing to see whether there is sufficient interest for others. If you are free during this time period, come and join us. We will meet at our familiar spot (in the parking lot between Caffe Ibis and the Logan Fire Station at 50 E. 150 North) at 9:00 a.m. and will carpool down to the Logan River Golf Course trail. We will walk the trail, which is a pretty nature walk with birds and other wildlife, and then, if we still have plenty of energy, we will visit another couple of birding hotspots nearby. Wear shoes appropriate for walking and bring binoculars. We will finish up around noon. For more information, call Dick Hurren at (435)720-7074.

24 Bridgerland Audubon Society Annual Banquet Please see the announcement on page 2 for further information regarding the banquet and the keynote speaker.

26 Birdie Day Please see page 1 for information on this, the 7th annual Birdie Day. Call Dick Hurren at (435)720-7074 for any other questions regarding Birdie Day.

May 2008

3 Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge Lyle Bingham, Dorothy Egan, and Dick Hurren have been serving as tour guides at the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge west of Brigham City and would like to host a Bridgerland Audubon tour there. Join us to see large numbers and different kinds of birds, particularly shore birds. We will meet at the parking lot between Caffe Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 E. 150 North) at 8:00 a.m. We will then carpool to the refuge and back. We will plan to return by early to mid-afternoon. Bring binoculars and a snack. If any wish to stay for lunch, Dorothy and Dick will take them to a cute, new, very moderately priced restaurant in Corinne.



If you'd like to come along on a field trip but do not have binoculars, call Dick Hurren (435)720-7074. He'll try to find a pair for you to use.

Citizen Science Opportunities for Local Birders

Bridgerland Audubon Society volunteers provided the bird monitoring data that led to designation of the Cutler Marsh - Amalga Barrens Important Bird Area. Volunteers are now needed for two other habitat protection efforts.

The first project involves 490 acres along 4 miles of the Bear River Bottoms near Trenton. PacifiCorp is giving a conservation easement to The Nature Conservancy, and censuses of bird species will help develop a better management plan for riparian and wetland habitat protection and enhancement.

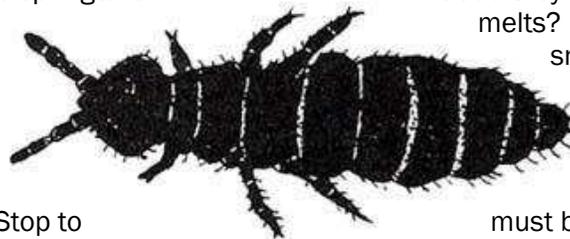
The second project involves private land belonging to members of the Little Bear Conservation Alliance (LBCA) (of which BAS is a member), to establish a baseline for species richness. The LBCA includes almost 40,000 acres of private ground in the mountains and foothills south of Avon. Landowners there want to work with conservation groups like BAS to protect and improve wildlife habitat. This is a special opportunity to visit habitat that is off limits to most people.

For both projects, birders will follow a protocol similar to that used in Breeding Bird Surveys where observers follow an established route, stopping at predetermined points to listen and watch for species. Ideally, surveys will be conducted in two-person teams, at least three times from May to early June. At least one member of the team should be an experienced birder. The Bear River project will be easier from a canoe or small paddle craft. The LBCA project requires only binoculars and boots.

For more information and to volunteer, contact Bryan Dixon, 435-752-6830, or Val Grant, 752-7572.

Snow fleas in the Barrens

Back in March, the snow surface at our Barrens Sanctuary was peppered by tiny black flecks about the size and shape of a printed comma. They weren't seeds, but snow fleas (*Hypogastrura nivicola*) of the order Collembola, the springtails. Springtails get their name from a fork-shaped appendage, the furcula, folded beneath the animal's abdomen that it can snap open like a barrette clasp, catapulting the wee creature several inches forward through the air. Stop to watch and you can see their miniscule acrobatics. These closest relatives of insects are ubiquitous, but rarely noticed unless you have something white against which to see them (a piece of paper on the forest floor, or the white warmed surface of the late-



winter snowpack). Atop the snow, they are apparently grazing for algae and fungal spores, but really, how would anyone know? In turn, are there predators from which they must, well, "flee" in this chilly habitat? And what do they do out there after the snow melts? Collectively we have a lot of snow fleas out at our Barrens Sanctuary, some 8 *billion* on the snow surface by my estimate! Fortunately, each snow flea's ecological furcula-print must be very small indeed, so I suspect that 8 billion of them is ecologically sustainable, just part of the food web that we overlook but have preserved at our Sanctuary.

— by Jim Cane



Bear River Watershed Council

Leaders in Conservation Issues within the Bear River Basin

Richmond, Utah

The Bear River Watershed Council is proud to partner with Utah Backcountry Volunteers (<http://www.utahbackcountry.org>) and the Wasatch-Cache NF to tackle the motorized impacts to wildlife habitat in the Millville Canyon. This is a three-day weekend (May 30-June 1) volunteer opportunity and open to 20 volunteers. Trip fee is \$100 with meals provided.

Volunteers will rehabilitate and restore the damage caused by irresponsible off-road vehicle riding in Millville Canyon southeast of Logan. The project addresses damages by blocking social trails with barriers, as well as rehabilitation and reclamation by cutting water bars and distribution of native seed.

This is a three-day trip starting Friday morning and ending Sunday afternoon, with



UTAH BACKCOUNTRY VOLUNTEERS

*-serving Utah's spectacular public lands
through concentrated volunteer projects*

a backpack up Leatham Hollow to the worksite. It is rated vigorous due to the short backpack into the work site and for the work itself using hand tools. To sign up go to Utah Backcountry Volunteers Web site for pre-registration or call Dave Pacheco at: (435) 785-8955

BRWC also is working with the Utah 4-Wheel Drive Association (<http://www.u4wda.org>) and Camp Chef (<http://www.campchef.com/>) to drive additional (non-paying) volunteers to the worksite on Saturday and culminate that evening with a Dutch oven cook-off for all the volunteers.

Anyone interested in participating on Saturday or helping plan the event contact Dan Miller at: dmliller@brwcouncil.org or 258-44232

New Indonesian Species

Shown to the right is an undated artist's rendering of the *Zosterops somadikartai*, or Togian white-eye. The small greenish bird that has been playing hide-and-seek with ornithologists on a remote Indonesian island since 1996 was declared a newly discovered species on March 14, 2008 and promptly recommended for endangered lists.

For more information and the complete story, visit http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20080314/sc_nm/bird_indonesia_dc

(Agus Prijono/Handout/Reuters)



Local Bird Spotlight

The dew is heavy on the grass, and the moon still hangs in the frigid early morning air as I watch through fogging binocular lenses, one of the most fascinating and comical spectacles in nature. It is mid-April and male Sharp-tailed Grouse are stomping their feet, rattling their upright tail, creating guttural clicking and gobbling sounds, ending with what sounds like a bottle of morning champagne being uncorked, all in a critical attempt to attract the attention of female mates.

I am standing sixty yards away from one of Cache Valley's most long-lived, active grouse leks. Taken from the Swedish word, *leka*, meaning to play, a lek is a traditional area where males gather to show off their garish breeding displays, hoping to pass on their genes to the next generation of grouse.

Sharp-tailed Grouse are chicken-like birds that are distributed from Alaska to central Saskatchewan and Manitoba, south to eastern North and South Dakota, parts of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Montana, eastern Wyoming, and patches in southern Idaho and northern Utah. Other groups of

this grouse are found in scattered areas throughout other parts of Canada, Washington, and Colorado.

Males are usually larger than females, especially during the breeding season, and are identified by light-purplish air sacs on each side of the neck, that are inflated only during lek displays. Both males and females have a whitish, pointed tail, most obvious in flight and both have a yellowish-orange eyebrow.

Year-round residents of Cache Valley, Sharp-tailed Grouse usually move to woody areas during the winter, often at higher elevations, and then move back down to breeding sites starting in early March. Lek sites are normally found on elevated grassy areas, with little or no woody vegetation, and may be found on disturbed

sites, where the vegetation is much shorter than the surrounding area.

A polygynous species, male Sharp-tailed Grouse will mate with multiple females, which normally only takes place on the lekking grounds. Only the female makes nest site selection. The male has no involvement in raising the brood, which may consist of 4 to 12 chicks. Nest sites are separate from the lek areas, where there is plenty of heavy, tall vegetation. Nests are normally found on the ground, underneath shrubs and made up of various vegetation, lined with grasses and the females breast feathers.

There has been a sharp decline in population numbers within two subspecies, *T. p. campestris* and *T. p. columbianus*, most likely attributed to

habitat degradation and loss (conversion to agriculture). Disturbance to leks may lead to further population declines, so it is extremely important to keep a safe distance from areas when viewing the lek during the breeding season, and to wisely manage livestock grazing during this period. As a game species, Sharp-tailed Grouse numbers do not seem to be negatively affected by hunter harvests. In fact, Hart et al. (1950) suggested that population numbers continued to decrease in Utah despite closing the season on the grouse for 25 years. There is still much empirical evidence that must be collected in examining the effects of harvesting this bird.

Bridgerland Audubon Society will be hosting a trip to the Selman's Ranch April 26th to view an active Sharp-tailed Grouse lek. It is a great opportunity to witness the interesting breeding display of this bird and to learn and see how this area has been managed correctly for grazing and wildlife.

— by Stephen Peterson



Photo by Brandon Spencer



Sunflower Seed

Bridgerland Audubon Society is still selling Black-oil Sunflower Seed. Allen Christensen is willing to deliver 50 pound bags for \$20. Why would you want to buy this seed? This high quality seed is provided by a local grower and is guaranteed to be cleaner than other seed. It is also a great buy: 50 pound bags are only \$20! So, contact Allen and buy your Winter supply while supporting a local grower!

Bridgerland Audubon contacts

Trustees

- 2005-2008 Jim Cane, 713-4668; Jennifer Hoffmann, 713-4935; Dick Hurren, 720-7074; Richard Mueller, 752-5637
- 2006-2009 Ron Goede, 752-9650; David Liddell, 797-1261; Bret Selman, 257-5260
- 2007-2010 Dave Drown, 752-3797; Jack Greene, 563-6816; Reinhard Jockel; Stephen Peterson, 755-5041

Bridgerland Audubon Contacts

- President** Val Grant, 752-7572, biores@mtwest.net
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Webmaster Stephen Peterson, 755-5041, cllisp@msn.com
Sanctuary Jim Cane, 713-4668, jimcane@cc.usu.edu

Membership in the Bridgerland Audubon Society includes a subscription to *The Stilt*, as well as *Audubon* magazine. The editor of *The Stilt* invites submissions, due on the 15th of each month. Send to birdnerdut@gmail.com.

National Audubon Society Chapter Membership Application

Yes, I'd like to contribute to Audubon and receive the Bridgerland Audubon newsletter, *The Stilt*, and the *National AUDUBON* magazine, as a:

_____ **New** member of the National Audubon Society and Bridgerland Audubon.

My check for \$20 is enclosed (this is a special first-year rate).

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____



Please make all checks payable to National Audubon Society and send with this card to:
 National Audubon Society
 Membership Data Center
 PO Box 51001
 Boulder, CO 80322-1001
 W-52 Local Chapter Code: 7XCHA

National Audubon occasionally makes its membership list available to selected organizations. To have your name omitted from this, please check this box.

Note to new National Audubon members: To get on *The Stilt* newsletter mailing list without the usual 8-week delay, contact Susan Durham, 752-5637, sdurham@cc.usu.edu.

Prefer the local newsletter only? Send \$20 (make checks payable to Bridgerland Audubon Society) and this form to: Bridgerland Audubon Society, PO Box 3501, Logan, UT 84323-3501 for a subscription to *The Stilt*.



The *Stilt*

Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

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Logan, Utah 84323-3501

Email: birdnerdut@gmail.com

Visit our website: <http://www.bridgerlandaudubon.org>

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Ballot

BAS 2008 Election of Officers

**Board of Trustees
(Three-Year Term)**

Vote for Four:

- Jim Cane
- William Masslich
- Richard Mueller
- Brandon Spencer
- _____

Only BAS members may vote and each membership is entitled to one vote. To vote, clip this ballot and mail to Bridgerland Audubon Society, P.O. Box 3501, Logan, UT 84323-3501. Alternately, you may vote at the banquet, Thursday, April 24. All ballots must be received by April 24, 2008.

