

The Stilt

Volume 37, Issue 2
February 2008

Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

"Top of Utah"

Thanks to the wonderful folks at Utah Birds, we now have a new way to talk to ourselves! This new internet tool allows us to share birding thoughts, sightings, and tips with all birders in Northern Utah. It's the new regional hotline for Northern Utah—i.e. Box Elder, Cache, and Rich counties. We call it the "Top of Utah" regional hotline.

Don't you sometimes want to know what birds they are seeing over at the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge in Box Elder Co.? Maybe the Tundra Swans are in. Don't those Box Elder birders want to know when the Scoters slide in at Hyrum? Don't we all want to know what the heck is over in Rich

County? "Top of Utah" is the way, if we all use it well. The more we use it, the better it works.

For those of us over the age of 30, who were not born with an understanding of computers and networking set from birth, perhaps it would be good to discuss a short history of birding hotlines and what they do. They allow birders, even total strangers, to contact each other ASAP about bird questions and sightings of interest. In the good old days, this was accomplished by a regional hotline phone number where messages were recorded. Then came the "InterWeb". Now, the same service is performed via a system that is, essentially, email postings to an electronic bulletin board. No more expired phone numbers. No more waiting or dialing in. It's all about instant, which helps because, as you have noted, those pesky birds do move.

The Utah Birds electronic bulletin boards, of which Top of Utah is now a part, are the absolute #1 spot for all sightings in Utah.

Most serious birders from out of state know how to find them. They log into the national hotline, birdingonthe.net, and they search for the linked hotlines for the Utah region they are planning to visit. Even though I am slightly over 30 myself, I have been able to plan many a good vacation and a few out-of-town BAS outings using birdingonthe.net in just that way. Try it!

Birding hotlines are for bird reports and photos. They are NOT for buying and selling things, or even for so-tempting electoral politics. Folks who violate this code of ethics are reprimanded and taken to task by the invisible Wizard Chaperone, the Webmaster of the electronic bulletin board. These hotlines ARE for the beginner new to birding or new to the area, as well as for those intimidating dedicated local birders. They are for sharing questions and answers. They help with exact locations because you can post a question as well as a sighting. For example—this is a legit posting: "Just read your sighting of a

Winter Wren in Logan Canyon's Spring Hollow. Exactly where was the Wren?" Then, a discussion develops about specific campsites or trees or other helpful details. And the fun part is that all kinds of birders from all over Utah or even from New Jersey can read the postings if they log onto the Utah Birds site. Then, they too can find the Winter Wren on their upcoming trip to Cache Valley.

So here's what you do: on your web toolbar, type in "utahbirds.org". Once there, read the bar at the left, find "Birding Information", under which you'll see "sign up for hotlines". Click that and follow the instructions. The Statewide hotline is first on the list. "Top of Utah" is the fifth one down. Once there, just register your email address with Utah Birds. Then sit back and enjoy the emails that come to you. When someone emails a report or photo to topofutah@utahbirds.org, it gets sent to your personal email at the same moment it gets posted to the regional Top

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Audubon Calendar

February 2008

7 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.

9 It is Eagle Day in Utah. Join us and watch the magnificent Bald Eagles that winter at Farmington Bay. Bring the family; a bird walk is a wonderful way to introduce children to the world of nature. Dress for the weather and bring binoculars. In past years, more than 300 eagles were seen during the trip and we had access to areas normally closed to the public. We will leave at 8:30 a.m. from the parking lot between Caffe Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 E. 150 North). Carpooling will be available; beginning birders are welcome. The Nature/Bird Walk cost is enthusiasm. Typically the walk lasts two hours. For more information call Buck Russell at (435) 512-9641.

14 General Meeting Join us at our same great location, the Cache Valley Learning Center (75 S. 400 West), as Bridget Olson will be presenting on the Shorebirds of the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge. Bridget works as a wildlife biologist at the refuge. The meeting will start at 7 p.m. Enter through the building's west doors. All are welcome to attend and refreshments will be provided by Crumb Brothers and Caffe Ibis. Enter through the building's west doors. We hope to see you there.

15-18 11th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count Tens of thousands of people will be outside (or looking through their windows), counting birds. You can be one of them! Which birds are spending their winter with you this year? Take part in the 11th annual Great Backyard Bird Count to see how your local birds fit into the landscape of North America. No fee or registration is required. Go to www.birdsource.org/gbbc for more information.

March 2008

1 Delta Snow Goose Festival. Come see thousands of Lesser Snow Geese during their annual migration through Delta, Utah. The sight and sound of thousands of snow geese is an incredible wildlife experience. We will leave at 7:00 a.m. from the parking lot between Caffe Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 E. 150 North) and will return to Logan late afternoon. Carpooling will be available; beginning birders are welcome. If you travel as part of a carpool we ask you to help share the fuel expense. For more information call Buck Russell (435) 512-9641.

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!

HWI Report

It has been 20 years since HawkWatch International (HWI) began annual fall migration counts atop the Wellsville Mountains and 31 years since Steve Hoffman, founder of HWI, and Wayne Potts identified the site as one important to migrating birds of prey.

This year's count of 3,274 migrants by observers Laurel Ferreira and Aaron Viducich included 17 species. The 2007 count was slightly below the long-term average of 3,527, but was well ahead of last year — fewer than 2,000 birds— when weather conditions greatly reduced the number of counting days. Four species (Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, American Kestrel, and Red-tailed Hawk) accounted for 76% of all individuals counted. Sharp-shinned Hawks alone were nearly a third of the total count. These four species are typically the most commonly counted birds on the Wellsvilles.

As usual, the count ran from late August through late October. Support observers assisting Laurel and Aaron at different times during the season included Keith Archibald, Bryan Dixon, Jean Lown, Wendy and David Tidhar, as well as HWI staff scientist Steve Slater. Other support critical to the project included the packing in of supplies for the observers and housing them on their days off the ridge. These services were generously supplied by Caroline Barcus, Randy and Julie Stacey, and Maureen Wagner. The year-to-year operation of the project would not be possible without such volunteer backing.

For information on Wellsville counts from previous years or on counts at the other 13 sites currently operated by HWI, please visit its website at www.hawkwatch.org and click on the "Conservation Science" link.

The full species tallies for 2007 are listed to the right.

Note that these numbers have not been proofed, so the final numbers in our annual report might be slightly different.

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Salt Lake City, UT 84106-2327
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| | | | |
|--------------------|-----|-------------------|----|
| Sharp-shinned Hawk | 958 | Northern Goshawk | 15 |
| American Kestrel | 630 | Merlin | 10 |
| Cooper's Hawk | 462 | Prairie Falcon | 10 |
| Red-tailed Hawk | 443 | Large Accipiter | 6 |
| Northern Harrier | 222 | Large Falcon | 5 |
| Small Accipiter | 141 | Unknown Accipiter | 4 |
| Golden Eagle | 128 | Broad-winged Hawk | 3 |
| Swainson's Hawk | 69 | Ferruginous Hawk | 3 |
| Turkey Vulture | 39 | Rough-legged Hawk | 3 |
| Osprey | 35 | Unknown Falcon | 3 |
| Unknown Buteo | 28 | Bald Eagle | 2 |
| Peregrine Falcon | 27 | Small Falcon | 2 |
| Unknown | 26 | | |

Help Wanted for BAS Conservation Committee

As most of you know, Audubon was founded as a conservation organization. This emphasis continues today and is reflected in National Audubon's mission statement: *"...to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity."* Conservation has also been an important part of Bridgerland Audubon's activities. For the past several years, Bryan Dixon has done a superb job of nearly single-handedly leading these efforts. To spread out the workload – while coordinating our efforts on a limited number of high priority conservation issues – we are organizing a Conservation Committee that will report to the BAS Board of Trustees. Current concerns include loss of wetlands, Bear River habitat improvement, and management of the Amalga Barrens sanctuary.

This is where you come in. Perhaps you made a New Year's resolution to become more involved in your community! If you are interested in assisting in our critical conservation and habitat preservation efforts at a time when Cache Valley is experiencing unprecedented growth and development, please contact Dick Mueller at 752-5637 or rmueller@biology.usu.edu. Your planet (or at least your local Audubon chapter) will thank you!

Local Bird Spotlight

Northern Flicker

by Nancy Williams

One raw winter day some years ago, during our endless season of dirty snow and lowered skies – in the year that the KSL-TV helicopter flew above the clouds every day to bring photographic evidence back to viewers that the sun, indeed, still existed – a bird brought me a gift.

Now this wasn't too unusual, in that birds have always lightened my heart. But this particular icy February day I glanced into the black-and-white landscape of our backyard and saw a flash of red! Warmth and color in a world of monochrome cold. At the tray feeder, it was; scattering my usual collection of house finches as it landed to snack on sunflower seeds.

It looked for all the world like a messenger in a tweed coat with a black ascot, carrying Valentines under its wings. My visitor was a Northern Flicker – the West's red-shafted variety.

Members of the Picidae family, flickers are woodpeckers. They creep up tree trunks and drill into the bark with their stout, sharp bills, looking for insects and nest holes. Flickers have adapted to suburban settings and the bird-feeder crowd better than many of their other woodpecker cousins. They are widespread across the continental United States.

The Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*) is a fairly common winter bird in Cache Valley. They live in wooded areas, including neighborhoods in the foothills, and are groundfeeders that prefer to dine on ants. We've found them to be fond of suet when the weather gets frigid and ants are scarce treats, and have seen them foraging for edibles on aspen tree bark and standing, dried corn stalks. Many other North American woodpeckers cache food for the winter, but as far as I can find out, flickers do not – which would explain why they show up at feeders when the weather turns cold. They



are the only woodpecker that regularly feeds on open ground.

According to Audubon's Master Guide to Birding, northern flickers are widespread in all habitats where they can find adequate nesting sites, "preferring spruce forests, parks, suburban trees and cactus deserts." Our valley provides three of those conditions.

Flickers are large, handsome birds, 11 - 14 inches long with brown and black barred backs and wings, a white rump patch, red "mustaches" on the males and a black crescent-shaped bib. Their bellies are light buff with black spots. Their faces and throats are clear gray or tan, their

tails are short. The flash of surprising color comes when they take flight – the undersides of their wings and tails are lined with pinkish to bright red-orange feathers. Sexes are similar, though females are usually a bit smaller with less dramatic coloring, and can have tan instead of red mustache markings.

You can sometimes hear them drumming – a rat-a-tat-tat rhythmic drilling into a tree or perhaps the shingles of your house – or hear their call, which sounds like "wik-wik-wik-wik." We see them most frequently in the morning and late afternoon at our house on the Providence bench, and it still feels like a Valentine's treat whenever we see them, especially on a frosty morning.

Nancy Williams is the
BAS Hotline Coordinator

Legislative Notes

*By Bill Fenimore
Utah Audubon Policy Advocate*

The current news is filled with the political positioning of the various presidential candidates. During many of the interviews, debates and pundit discussions, you often hear them mention “lobbyists.” Close your eyes for a moment and consider what a lobbyist represents in your mind.

What words did you consider? Perhaps your list included someone who attempts to persuade, influence, cajole, convince, coax, wheedle and or entice the favor of a politician or authority. How many lobbyists do you personally know and hang out with? My bet would be few to none.

When I was asked to become the Audubon Lobbyist, I suggested that the title be changed to Policy Advocate. Lobbyists do not generate a very good image in most folk’s minds. Many conjure up images of back room (albeit not smoke filled in Utah) deal making. Advocacy is a softer term that is better received.

However distasteful the image may be, it is an important function that works. Companies, organizations, associations, unions and assorted entities all want to make sure that their needs and wants are being heard. They also expect due attention to be received by those who have the ability to make or change policy and law.

Whether in local, county, state or federal government offices, there is a finesse and sophistication to dealing within the political and legal circles. Primarily, it is relationship building. You want to be able to reach the key decision maker who can carry your message and insert your influence into legislation that is being introduced or current law under revision.

Wayne Martinson and Debbie Goodman built a wonderful foundation for me to work from. They were both respected and knowledgeable on the issues that are of concern to Audubon in Utah. The work that they carried out has served us well. Today, I am on the Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR) Northern Regional Advisory Council and recently appointed to the Utah Wildlife & Conservation Foundation board by DWR Executive Director Jim Karpowitz. These appointments and task force assignments from DWR are tangible evidence of the influence we have made through the years in the advocacy of Audubon values.

A key accomplishment that we achieved last year was the restructuring of the license fees for DWR. DWR receives 95% of its budget from the revenue generated from the sale of hunting and angling licenses. Whenever, Audubon or other non-consumptive groups endeavored to push an initiative, the traditional consumptive groups (hunters and anglers) would point out that they put the money on the table. The Department of Natural Resources, particularly its DWR division marched to the beat of that drum. The new structure includes a Watchable Wildlife access pass for DWR Wildlife Management Areas (starting with Farmington Bay WMA). This \$10 pass will now give us a full seat at the table and remove any criticism that we do not pay our way.

Over the years, I have educated the Directors of DNR and DWR (currently Mike Styler and Jim Karpowitz) on the changing demographics of nature lovers and recreationists across Utah and the nation. The non-consumptive group is larger and spends more than both of the traditional hunting and angling groups combined. Here are some quick facts for 2006: 87 million US residents over 16 (38% of US population) participated in wildlife-related recreation. 30 million anglers, 12.5 million hunters and 71.1 million wildlife watchers. Spending reached \$122 Billion in 2006. (Source: 2006 USFWS National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated recreation). Our demographic is gaining their attention.

Audubon Advocate testimony before legislative committee’s gives Audubon a face for legislators. The Audubon profile has been raised significantly with Utah legislators over the years. Key appointments and task force assignments include Audubon. Recently, DNR Director asked the DWR Director to request that I intercede with a key legislator on a pending bill being introduced in the 2008 session. This is a prime example of the influence and importance that we have gained.

This year’s session begins on January 21st (Martin Luther King Day) and ends March 5th (a 45 day session). There are 104 legislators divided between the Senate and House. The key committees that I monitor outside the session are the Senate and House Natural Resources Standing Committees, Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee and Executive Appropriations Committee.

I currently sit on the Wildlife & Habitat Legislative Coalition, a group of 24 different organizations in Utah interested in Wildlife & Habitat. This coalition gives us added strength. During the session, I provide updates (via E-mail) to key contacts at each Audubon Chapter. If you would like to be included on the update list, contact me at birderb@aol.com or your Chapter President.

Bear Lake Valley Christmas Bird Counts

The higher elevation valleys of the Intermountain West are usually colder, contain limited winter habitats, and consequently maintain fewer bird numbers and species. Some of these mountain valleys include Star Valley, Heber Valley, Jackson Hole, Sniderville Basin near Park City, Fremont River Valley, and the Bear Lake Valley. Many of these valleys maintain often challenging CBCs, including the Utah and Idaho Bear Lake Counts.

The Idaho Bear Lake count was run from 1995-1999, and restarted in 2007. The count is centered in the Bear Lake National Wildlife Refuge and is counted after Dec 28. The circle includes the northern tip of Bear Lake to Montpelier and Bloomington to Dingle. The circle is divided into 5 sub-areas.

The Utah Bear Lake count, date set on Dec 28 regardless of weather, has been run annually since it was established in 1997. The count is centered in Bear Lake and includes Laketown to the Utah-Idaho border, and from the summit in Logan canyon to the east Bear Lake plateau. This count includes all the southern drainages into Bear Lake, and is divided into 11 sub-areas. Access and habitat are limited on both circles due to water, expansive flat and grazed agriculture lands, frozen marshes, low productive big sagebrush steppe habitats, and few roads accessible during winter. To obtain minimum daylight coverage, the Idaho count requires about 5 teams and the Utah count 6 teams; both circles require about 40-50 party hours.

The core group of observers for the Utah count over the last several years includes Bridgerland Audubon members' Eddy Berry, Barb Ferris, and John Barnes, USU PhD candidate Chris Peterson, retired Bear Lake fishery biologist Bryce Nielson, and my conscripted children and their spouses. Numerous other individuals have participated for one or more years. Although the circle is reasonably covered most years, a few additional observers would be beneficial. In particular, the sub-area along the south-sinks road managed by the USFS, and accessible only by snowmobile or long distance cross-country skis, has received very limited survey. As incentive (or as my mentor Keith Archibald may say — a bribe), I will continue to offer a dinner for two for anyone who can turn-up a dusky (blue) grouse or an American three-toed woodpecker, both of which are found in the circle; both of which have not been recorded on count day.

The observers for the Idaho count will likely be mostly found from within the local communities of Montpelier, Paris, Bloomington, Dingle, etc. From a recent December article in the local Montpelier newspaper, several people expressed interest although only about half were available for the count this year. Hopefully, enough interest will be generated to have plenty of volunteers next year. Nonetheless, one or two experienced birders from Bridgerland Audubon with each of the new Idaho teams would be very helpful.

On both of the Bear Lake counts, a total of about 50 species and 2,500 individuals may be expected under average weather conditions. The long-time Logan count goal of 100 species is simply not possible in the Bear Lake Valley. Indeed the total number of species observed since 1995 totals just over 100.

Most, if not all, of the species found in the Bear Lake Valley are potential for the Logan count. However, because of the colder climate, the open waters of Bear Lake (usually open until at least the middle of January), and the later count dates, there are a number of species which are more likely found in Bear Lake Valley, some of which have eluded the Logan observers. These species include the bald eagle (observed annually by almost every participant with 43 recorded in 2007 on the Bear lake Valley counts), trumpeter swan (observed almost every year and usually with one or more birds having neck collars), gray-crowned rosy-finch (the highest count in the Nation in 1998 at 3,216), snow bunting (8 observed in 2007), common loon, Lapland longspur, common redpoll, greater sage grouse, horned grebe, and osprey.

Whereas the Logan, Ogden, Provo counts represent the birds found in the lower valleys along the Wasatch Front and the Intermountain West, the higher elevation valleys also add to the breadth of the data.

— by Dennis Austin

Continued-From Page 1

of Utah Web bulletin board. I recommend you also sign up for the statewide bulletin board. It works the same way for sightings of interest to the entire state. I peruse the statewide postings to give me a heads-up on seasonal firsts as they move northward through Utah. Why shouldn't I repay the favor by letting more southerly Utah birders know what is at the Top of Utah moving south?

If you don't want the sightings in your overcrowded email inbox, try just bookmarking the web page. With that, you can check in at your convenience. Or try subscribing to the digest version email. For the digest, you do not get each email. Instead, you get an "executive summary" of posting topics for the day that you can pursue or disregard.

Many thanks to Milt Moody, the awesome Utah Birds Webmaster, for keeping the entire site so hot and so user-friendly. I love the postings there, and I recommend and hope that all BAS members contribute to the success of the Top of Utah portion of this great birding site. Good birding!

— by Sue Drown

Welcome to BAS

New Members

Mr. & Mrs. Allen Bair
 Ms. Annette Rose Deknijf
 Mr. Adam Hoglund

Mr. Fred Baker
 Mr. & Mrs. John Barnes
 Ms. Janice Bowen
 Mr. Gerald A. Brunner
 Glen Gantz

Renewing Members

Ms. Molly Hysell
 Joyce Kinhead
 Mrs. Meredith Matlack
 Masako Nakashio
 Ms. Diane Browning Oblock

Mr. Jason K. Pietrzak
 Mr. William E. Saul
 Mr. Eugene W. Schupp
 Ms. Joan K. Shaw
 Mr. Jim Sinclair

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

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Webmaster Stephen Peterson, 755-5041, cllslp@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 _____



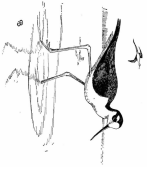
Please make all checks payable to National Audubon Society and send with this card to:

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: birdnerdute@gmail.com

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

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Ballot BAS 2008 Election of Officers

Officers (Two-Year Term)

President

needed

Vice President

Jason Peitzak

Secretary

Lyle Bingham

Treasurer

Jennifer Hoffmann

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 17 or 24. All ballots must be received by April 17, 2008.

