



The Stilt

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Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

Conservation easement signed for Bear River Bottoms

On April 22 at its annual banquet, Bridgerland Audubon Society and Rocky Mountain Power signed a Conservation Easement for approximately 500 acres of Bear River bottomlands near Trenton, Utah.

Rocky Mountain Power, a division of PacifiCorp, acquired these lands in 1981 as part of a settlement agreement following unusually high spring runoff in the late 1970s. The property is part of the Bear River Bottoms, which totals almost 1,900 acres of riparian and wetland habitat along the Bear River in Cache County.

“We thank PacifiCorp for working through the myriad details of a conservation easement,” said Val Grant, president of Bridgerland Audubon Society. “Our members and volunteers dedicated thousands of hours to record existing conditions in preparation for the easement. Their work led to a management plan that will guide us in controlling noxious weeds, restoring oxbow wetlands and improving habitat for birds. We certainly couldn’t have gotten this far without the excellent scientific help provided by The Nature Conservancy and our own knowledgeable volunteers, and we look forward to more partnerships with Utah State University, agriculture, and other conservation groups.”

Plans for the property include further studies on habitat richness, wildlife populations and weed control.

“One of our key objectives is to continue working with private landowners, especially our agricultural neighbors,” Grant said.

Bridgerland Audubon has been actively working with The Nature Conservancy to secure and protect these lands as habitat for birds and other wildlife, and has asked The Nature Conservancy to help them manage the property.

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Donation for the Barrens

The Living with Wildlife class, under the directions of USU’s Robert Schmidt, recently completed a semester project. The project included the building and installation of bluebird boxes for the USU organic Farm. The plans they used made extra boxes, three of which were generously donated to Bridgerland Audubon.

The three bluebird boxes will be placed at the Barrens sanctuary. Try to make several trips out to the Barrens this Summer to see what decides to take up residency in our new donations.

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“This kind of riparian habitat is really very rare in the western United States, but it is rich in its wildlife values”, said Joan Degiorgio, Northern Rocky Mountains Regional Director for The Nature Conservancy. “Riparian zones are critical for 75 percent of Utah’s bird species, but account for less than one-quarter of one percent of the land in the Great Basin.”

Dean Brockbank, vice-president and general counsel for PacifiCorp Energy agreed. “As a public utility, our company explicitly includes environmental protection as part of our mission and we recognize that the Bear River Bottoms are a natural treasure,” Brockbank said. “However, we are limited in what we can do to enhance these kinds of lands if they aren’t directly tied to a hydroelectric project. That’s why we’re so excited about turning over management to a local conservation group like Bridgerland Audubon Society.”

“We’ve had a great relationship with Bridgerland Audubon Society over the years and completed some wonderful projects for Cache Valley as a result. We’re really looking forward to working with them to try some new approaches along the Bear River,” added Eve Davies, principal scientist and Bear River Bottoms manager for PacifiCorp Energy.

Dave Rayfield, chairman of the Cache Critical Lands Task Force, praised Audubon.

“They’ve worked through all the details to make this easement possible, but we hope this is only the beginning of a concerted effort to protect the entire river corridor. This is one of many properties that are critical for Cache Valley’s future,” Rayfield said.

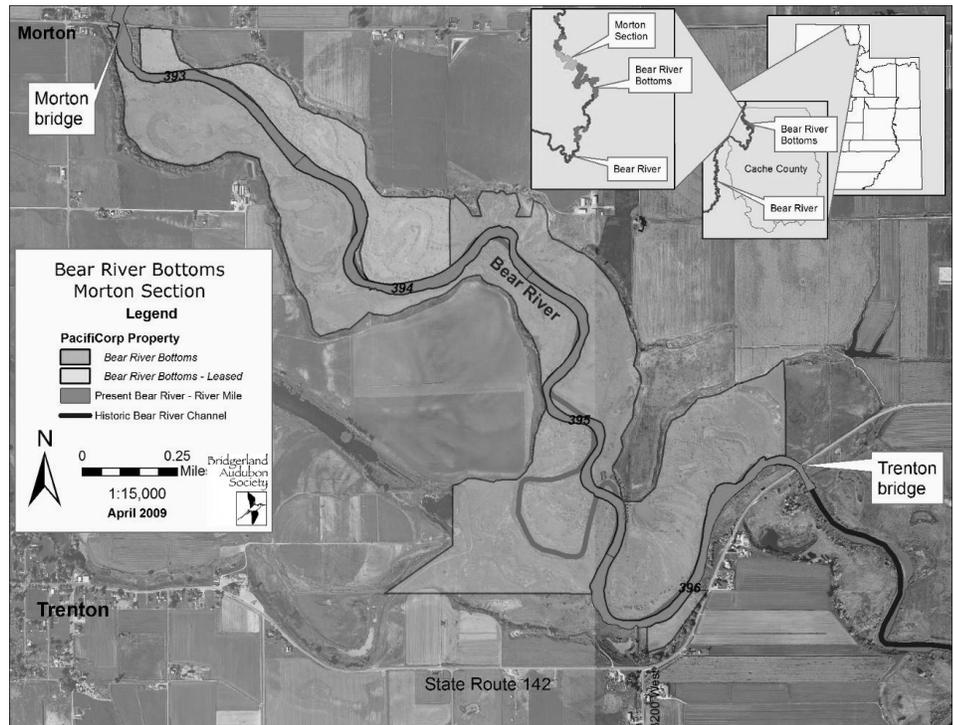
About Rocky Mountain Power

Based in Salt Lake City, Rocky Mountain Power is one of the lowest-cost electric utilities in the United States, providing safe and reliable service to more than 988,000 customers in Utah, Wyoming and Idaho. The company works to meet growing energy demand while protecting and enhancing the environment. As part of PacifiCorp, Rocky Mountain Power and Pacific Power serve some 1.7 million customers in seven Western states. The company has more than 10,000 megawatts of generation from coal, hydro, natural gas-fueled combustion turbines, and renewable wind and geothermal power.

About The Nature Conservancy

The Nature Conservancy is a leading conservation organization working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. To date, the Conservancy and its more than one million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 135 million acres worldwide. In Utah, the Conservancy has helped to protect nearly 900,000 acres, and has long supported the protection of critical lands and waters in Cache County. Visit www.nature.org/utah.

In the coming months, BAS will be forming a management committee and beginning to implement the management plan. If you’re interested in helping out, contact: Bridgerland Audubon Society’s Conservation Chair, Richard Mueller, 435-752-5637, rmueller@biology.usu.edu, or Bryan Dixon, 435-752-6830, bdixon@xmission.com.



Audubon Calendar

June 2009

- 6 Birding Green Canyon** Meet at 6 p.m. in the parking lot between Caffe Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 East 150 North) and return into the night. Bring a flashlight and a drink. We will spend the evening listening and watching for our summer canyon residents. We will also be birding into the night in search of owls.
- 13 Riverside Trail: Adopt-a-Trail work day** Meet at the Logan Ranger District Office (1550 E Hwy 89) to car pool or join us on the Guinavah-Malibu side of the trail at 1 p.m. Plan to wear long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, boots, and work gloves. The fun will end around 4 p.m.

July 2009

- 4 Birding Sink Hollow** Meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot between Caffe Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 East 150 North) and plan on carpooling. We will be hiking up to Sink Hollow and Gibson Basin, botanizing along the creek. It is an easy to moderate 4.5 mile hike. Bring water and a snack. We will be back around noon.
- 11 Birding Tony Grove Lake** Meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot between Caffe Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 East 150 North) and plan on carpooling. We will be hiking around Tony Grove Lake, botanizing and birding. Bring water and a lunch as we will have a picnic afterward. We will be back around 1 p.m.
- 14 Riverside Trail: Adopt-a-Trail work day** Meet at the Logan Ranger District Office (1550 E Hwy 89) to car pool or join us on the Guinavah-Malibu side of the trail at 7 p.m. Plan to wear long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, boots, and work gloves. The fun will end around 9 p.m.

August 2009

- 1 Ride in the Mountains** Meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot between Caffe Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 East 150 North). We will be biking up to Beaver Creek, Logan Basin, and Franklin Basin on this adventure. Birding and botanizing will occur as well. Bring plenty of fluids and a snack or lunch. We will be back in the afternoon.
- 11 Riverside Trail: Adopt-a-Trail work day** Meet at the Logan Ranger District Office (1550 E Hwy 89) to car pool or join us on the Guinavah-Malibu side of the trail at 7 p.m. Plan to wear long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, boots, and work gloves. The fun will end around 9 p.m.

Book Presentation

Author James M. Aton will show slides from and speak about his new book, "The River Knows Everything: Desolation Canyon and the Green," on Thursday, June 25, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. at The Trailhead in Logan (31 N. Main St.).

The book is a history of the canyon and all the people who have lived along the river—Fremont and Ute Indians, ranchers, sheep herders, ferrymen, and moonshiners. Aton's PowerPoint presentation will show photographs, both historic images and original photography work from Cache Valley's Dan Miller.

The Secret Life of Penguins Revealed

Famous for its cuteness and comic gait on land, the penguin also has an enigmatic life at sea, sometimes spending months foraging in the ocean before returning to its breeding grounds.

Zoologists have long wondered where the flightless seabird goes during these long spells away from land – and now French scientists, in a study published in Wednesday, believe they can supply the answer. A team from National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) attached monitoring devices to a dozen male and female macaroni penguins (*Eudyptes chrysolophus*) at the onset of winter on the French Indian Ocean territory of the Kerguelen Islands.

Weighing just six grammes (a fifth of an ounce) each, the gadgets were attached to the penguins' legs by a harmless plastic strap.

The tufty-headed birds headed out to sea a few days later for their annual forage and the tiny recorders logged the location, ambient light and water temperature wherever they went.

The following spring, roughly six months later, the penguins returned to Kerguelen to breed. The scientists recovered the devices and downloaded the data, and also took blood samples to get a chemical signature of what the birds had been eating.

Once at sea, the birds swiftly swam away from Kerguelen, heading eastwards into the southern Indian Ocean, the investigators found. They dispersed widely, spending more than 80 percent of their time in a long geographical band between 47 and 49 degrees latitude south.

The rest of the time was spent farther south, closer to the fringes of the Southern Ocean. They did not cross this limit, though, nor did they forage in pack ice.

crustaceans during their time at sea.

Contrary to expectations, they had not tucked into the major species of Antarctic krill, *Euphausia superba*, which only occurs farther south in colder waters.

The study is important as it pinpoints the penguins' key feeding grounds in the sub-Antarctic Indian Ocean, and thus helps conservation efforts, say the authors, led by Charles-Andre Bost.



Macaroni penguins are the most numerous penguin species, but their population is thought to have declined over the last two decades. Climate change also poses a threat, as warmer waters and shifting ocean currents will affect food availability.

The paper appears in *Biology Letters*, a journal of the Royal Society, which is Britain's de-facto academy of sciences.

The birds swam astonishing distances, clocking up 10,430 kilometres (8,930 miles) on average during their six months away. The most adventurous swam up to 2,400 kms (1,500 miles) from Kerguelen. In the final weeks of the migration, the birds rushed to get home, covering a massive 1,743 kms (1,108 miles) in just one month.

Foodwise, the blood test showed that the penguins had gorged on

Original article was found at http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20090513/sc_afp/scienceanimalspen-guins_20090513114543.

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Birds in Education

On April 23rd, Box Elder High School sponsored its second annual Green Day event. Mr. Brandon Spencer's Advanced Placement Biology class hosted 103 first grade students from Discovery Elementary in Brigham City. The event focused on environmental themes ranging from the water cycle to predator/prey relationships, from recycling to food chains and webs.

"It's a great way for my AP students to really learn the ecological topics they choose" Mr. Spencer said. "By studying and preparing, and then presenting those topics, my students learn much more than what I can teach them. And the elementary students get to have an activity filled ecology day that is as hands-on as they can get!"

A special treat since Green Day was instituted has been a visit by Jen Hajj from HawkWatch International. She brought a raptor for the kids to enjoy and to enhance her portion of the day. This year, she brought Yaki, a female American Kestrel. They kids loved the small raptor and were sad at the end of the day to have to say good-bye.

"It's a great day for kids to learn that science can be entertaining and fun" said Spencer.

Dear Educator,

We're closing in on the end of another school year. With visions of long, fun-filled vacation days ahead, no doubt your students are squirming in their seats and maybe a little distracted. Why not give them wings for the summer? Take your classroom outdoors to burn off some of that restless energy and pass along skills youngsters can use all summer long—watching and identifying birds, even contributing their observations to scientists at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

How? By using the BirdSleuth curriculum designed by the Cornell Lab. These standards-based lessons are specifically geared toward middle-school students. Each module focuses on a specific aspect of bird biology or behavior. Each is designed to help students ask, and answer, their own questions about birds—true scientific

inquiry achieved through engaging activities and a healthy dose of fresh air. Each module comes with teacher materials, a student journal, a resource DVD, and more. The curriculum is also a perfect fit for after-school programs, nature centers, youth programs such as scouting, and homeschool families.

To learn more about BirdSleuth, visit www.BirdSleuth.net or drop me an email. I'll be happy to answer any questions you may have. I've also attached a flyer with information about the curriculum.

In these waning days of the school year, why not get up, get going, and get your kids outside? You may spark an interest in the natural world that lasts a lifetime!

White-faced Ibis Rookery Counts

Several years ago we started counting the white-faced ibis in the rookery at Cutler Reservoir. At one point, we counted well over 5 percent of the world's population of ibis in that one rookery. Those kinds of numbers helped secure Cutler Reservoir as an Important Bird Area.

Since that time, the rookery crashed – to zero – in 2007, but rebounded in 2008. This year there seem to be even more ibis about than normal, and so we're hoping they're really come back.

Counts take place every other weekend in May and June, from 7-9 p.m. to catch the birds returning to the rookery at dusk. It takes four people to do the count properly – two observers and two recorders – but they don't have to be birding experts. Good eyes and steady hands are sufficient for monitoring the skies and counting. Count dates remaining are Tuesdays, June 12 and 26. If you're interested in helping out, contact Bryan Dixon, 752-6830, bdixon@xmission.com.

Soggy Barrens Sanctuary

It has been a cool, late, sodden spring in our Cache Valley, which has been just ducky for waterfowl at our Amalga Barrens Sanctuary. I was struck by the large numbers of Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintails, and Tundra Swans in addition to the usual diversity. Truly a lot of birds consider our place in the Barrens a sanctuary. Our seeded grasses are back up again, and of course attendant broadleaf weeds where the grass is sparse. The surviving shrubs from last spring's planting are few but robust, particularly the golden currents (look for them around the Barrens sign). There you will also see a trial row of tapertip onion that is soon to bloom. Several of the globe mallows that I transplanted out there last fall are robust too. Their vigorous growth suggests to me that day will be a good native species to add out there. Watch your step out there this spring, for ground-nesting birds (including the short eared owls) have commenced nesting. And bring your wildflower guide, for there is a surprising diversity of natives around the little uplands by the road in the northwest corner (stop at the big sagebrush) and again a little ways south down that west side. See if you can find the delphiniums and yellow fritillarias!

— by Jim Cane
Sanctuary Manager

Bridgerland Audubon contacts

Trustees

- 2007-2010 Chris Cokinos, 245-7769; Jack Greene, 563-6816; Reinhard Jockel
- 2008-2011 Jim Cane, 713-4668; William Masslich, 753-1759; Richard Mueller, 752-5637; Brandon Spencer, 753-2790
- 2009-2012 Ron Goede, 752-9650; Frank Howe, 787-1859; Robert Schmidt, 755-9262; Bret Selman, 257-5260

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Webhost www.xmission.com

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

National Audubon Society
PO Box 422250
Palm Coast, FL 23142-2250
Membership Source Code: C9ZW520Z

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*.

Our native squash bees

Please clip or save article for July reference

Cache valley gardeners grow all manner of squashes: zucchini, crookneck, banana, butternut, and later, the pumpkins for Halloween plus outlandish gourds. All these require pollinators, every one. Foraging bees inadvertently move the pollen from the male flowers to fertilize female flowers. Such pollination by a bee will result in the many hundreds of seeds you encounter when you slice open your squash. Without developing seeds, no squash will form, so pollination by bees is vital.

Pollination of your squashes, gourds and pumpkins is worth your attention because here, and all around the Nation, most of it is done by a native, ground-nesting non-social, specialist bee, the so-called squash bees. They are only visit squash, gourd and pumpkin flowers, as these bees are strict floral specialists. Beginning at dawn, male squash bees can be seen darting among squash flowers, seeking receptive mates and the odd sip of nectar to fuel their flight. Their females load up on nectar and the bright orange pollen of squashes to cart back to their nests.

Unlike honeybees, each female squash bee has her own nest, consisting of a simple underground burrow. She provisions each of her offspring with a cache of pure squash pollen and nectar. By late morning, their frenetic morning of foraging complete, female squash bees head home to rest and work on their nests. Through their early morning foraging activities, they daily pollinate each day's new flush of flowers. Early in the season, your first squash blooms may pre-

cede these bees' annual emergence, in which case you will want to play the role of matchmaking bee, manually brushing pollen from male flowers onto the receptive stigma surface of the female flower.

If you grow squashes, saunter out in the garden in your bathrobe, mug of tea in hand, to look for these bees between sunrise and 8:30 or 9AM in Cache Valley. They fly more quickly and deliberately between flowers than the slightly larger, later-flying honeybees. Unlike honeybees, female squash bees carry their pollen *dry*



in a brush of hairs on their hind legs. Later, you may discover sleeping male squash bees by pinching the wilted, closed flowers. A drowsy buzz from within reveals a defenseless (no sting!) male squash bee sleeping within. There he snoozes the day and night away until dawn, which brings a new flush of flowers at which to patrol for a mate.

—by Jim Cane



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