



The *Stilt*

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Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

Bridgerland Audubon Weighs in on Logan Canal with Letter to Cache County

29 August 2010

To Whom It May Concern:

Bridgerland Audubon Society offers our assistance to decision makers regarding the Environmental Impact Statement on the proposed canal system to replace the North Logan Canal that recently ruptured and seeks further participation as an interested stakeholder.

Bridgerland Audubon represents some 300 community members in southern Idaho and northern Utah with an interest in conserving habitats of all kinds, including protecting agricultural lands from development. We have a good history of working with private landowners on issues of shared concern. Our stated mission is: "To conserve, enhance, and enjoy the natural environment with special emphasis on birds and their habitats for the benefit and education of humanity and for the biological diversity of the Earth." We are a chapter of the National Audubon Society.

We are concerned with dewatering the abandoned canal and the loss of trees and shrubs on both the new and old waterways. We are also concerned with diverting water from the Logan River into the upper canal and dewatering the river below Second Dam in order to supply water to acreage whose extent apparently has not been determined—3500 acres or 7000 acres? This diversion will also decrease hydro-power to the citizens of Logan, as well as affect the function of the Water Research Laboratory. We formally ask to be included in the decision-making process. We formally ask for notices of stakeholder meetings, public forums and any other relevant meetings and/or information. We do so as an interested party.

We can provide you with data concerning plants and wildlife along the proposed routes, data that we believe will help all involved arrive at an acceptable solution.

As well, some of our members have years of experience in National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation and process, a process that, in regards to proposed changes in the Logan Canal, appears to have been, at the least, flawed.

There appear to be many facets of the current NEPA process that are subject to legal action. We raise this as a concern not a threat. The most obvious is not allowing comments that disagree with a predetermined outcome as occurred at the last Scoping Meeting. The only way disagreement was voiced was talking to a Recorder who wrote down the complaint. Since these complaints were not permitted a public voice (there was no allowance for public discourse), the process has already violated legal NEPA precedents. There is a distinct taint of "the old boy" network being in play; for example, there is still water (a few cfs) running in the ruptured canal to a location above some newly constructed garages on Canyon Road where the water then flows

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under Canyon Road into a recently built residence. There may be some problem with this use, and it speaks to the need to strongly consider repairing the canal and continue to supply long-time users with their water while at the same time taking conservation matters into serious consideration. It appears for all intents and purposes that the conclusion to the process was made some time ago, and that, for some, public input is merely a nuisance, causing untimely delays to a goal not everyone in the community accepts. NEPA requires public input and does so in very particular ways. While this may be an irritation to some in the public and private community, this law must be respected, and we trust that the appropriate actions to rectify a flawed process will be undertaken swiftly and with a sense of civic engagement rather than expressions of irritation or even hostility.

We request formal written notification of the receipt of this letter as well as written acknowledgment that this letter will be placed in the public record for the ongoing NEPA process.

We look forward to working with all stakeholders in a congenial fashion in order to both follow the law and arrive at a mutually satisfactory solution.

Sincerely,

C. Val Grant, President
Bridgerland Audubon
P.O. Box 3501
Logan, UT 84323-3701

Of Ghost Birds and Fake Trees

Bridgerland Audubon's September kick-off event—the first of our quarterly programs—was a huge success. The film “Ghost Bird,” about the alleged rediscovery of the ivory-billed woodpecker in Arkansas, attracted nearly 90 people to the Logan Arthouse and Cinema. Donations raised almost \$300 for conservation projects in Cache Valley. Plus, the film was powerful, poignant and often quite funny. A special thank-you to Dick Mueller for suggesting the film and making all the arrangements to get this very special movie to Logan. And we hope Audubon members will continue to support the Logan Arthouse and Cinema, information about which can be found on the web at www.loganarthouse.com.

Our second fall event will feature world-renowned climate scientist Tom Wigley speaking about “geoengineering”—the deliberate technological intervention into climate processes in order to cool the planet. Research into this previously “fringe” science has gone mainstream, with scientists and policy-makers looking at everything from artificial trees that

would suck more carbon dioxide out of the air to spraying sulfur aerosols into the upper atmosphere in order to reflect more sunlight into space, thus counter-ing the warming effect of increased greenhouse gases... at least for awhile.

Is geoengineering just science-fiction hubris? Or is it a way to buy us more time as we try to lurch toward a carbon-neutral civilization? Is it hope or peril? Come find out.

Wigley, with the National Center for Atmospheric Research, will speak on the USU campus on Thursday, Nov. 4, in the afternoon. Time and place will be announced soon, and the event will be part of USU's Sustainability Week.

Look for more information in the November newsletter, but mark the date on your calendar. You won't want to miss Wigley's bracing overview of where we stand relative to global warming right now—and what geoengineering might do in the future.

Correction: In last month's *Stilt*, we inadvertently listed Bear River Bottoms conservation donors Robert and Betty Taylor as Robert and Helen Taylor. We appreciate their support and apologize for the error!

Audubon Calendar

October 2010

2 **Bear River Bottoms Work Day** 8 a.m. at Caffe Ibis. Another day of wholesome work at the Bear River Bottoms (now, exactly, how is barbed wire wholesome???) On our last work day, we put in 19 wood posts to finish off a fence protecting the wetlands from livestock. This time, we need to put in the cross-bracing and string the wire to finish it off. You'll need long sleeves, long pants, boots, and sturdy gloves. We'll provide the necessary training. This is a good opportunity to visit an area in the BRB that is hard to access (we have special permission to cross a neighbor's land for this work). If you'd like to join us, please contact Bryan Dixon (760-0691 or bdixon@xmission.com) so he can plan tools and logistics.

16 **Birds of Big Water** October is the time of year when many of our wintering birds arrive from the north. Join us as we seek out some of these species on the big water of Cache County, including Hyrum Reservoir and Cutler Reservoir. We'll be looking for new arrivals of the season such as Common Loons and Red-breasted Mergansers, and also trying to find some local rarities such as Pacific Loons, scoters, and Horned Grebes. Bring a scope if you have one. Meet at 8 a.m. at the parking lot between Caffe Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 East 150 North). Bring a snack or small lunch and warm clothes, too. We'll be back by afternoon. For more information contact trip leader and ace birder Ryan O'Donnell at ryan@biology.usu.edu.

Bear River Bottoms Work Day

Ten volunteers hit it hard on Saturday, September 4, to finish the hardest part of the last section of fencing needed to protect the wetlands from livestock grazing—digging and tamping in 18 fence posts into rock-hard soil.

Cache County is a "fence-out" county, meaning if we don't want livestock in our wetlands we have to fence them out. In 2008, The Nature Conservancy helped us win a grant to protect water quality by constructing 6,000 feet of fence on the west side. This year, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Survey provided funding through their Partner's Program for Wildlife to cover materials for the east side fence. In June and July, crews from

the Youth Conservation Corps and the Utah Conservation Corps built another 2,400 feet. The remaining 550 feet of fence had to await a new survey to determine final boundaries, but BAS is responsible for actually building it. With the heavy wood posts now installed, all that's left is to build the cross-bracing at the corners, pound in the metal t-posts, and string the wire. A field day is scheduled for October 2 to finish it off. See the calendar above for more information.

Thanks to Debi Evans, Ted Evans, Nathan Hult, Adam Liberatore, Jean Lown, Jim Milleson, Dick Mueller, Carlos Munoz, and Dan Zamecnik for a job well-done! (May their weary bodies recover quickly!)

Answers to Bird Quiz (on back cover)

Red-necked Grebe, Snowy Egret, Tundra Swan, American Wigeon, Long-tailed Duck, Common Merganser, Peregrine Falcon, Red-necked Phalarope, Boreal Owl, Wilson's Warbler.

Local Bird Spotlight

Cartoon Birds and Cache Valley

After mentioning the iconic cartoon bird, Woody Woodpecker in last month's *Stilt* it was suggested to further explore the subject of cartoon bird icons, especially as they relate to Cache Valley. So after a little research on the internet, and a stroll down memory lane, I think I can provide a bit of insight on iconic cartoon birds and how they relate to Cache Valley. To remind or inform you, Woody Woodpecker was most likely modeled after the Acorn Woodpecker, which is not a bird found in our lovely valley. However other woodpecker species can be found in Cache Valley. See last month's *Stilt* for more detail.

Upon diving into my research for this article, I found that it is not always easy to put a species name on a cartoon bird. The Roadrunner would be the exception to this. The Roadrunner is a very cool bird and lovable cartoon character. It does occur in Utah in the Mojave Desert but has never been seen in Cache Valley, although its frustrated nemesis Wile E. Coyote has.

The species of other cartoon birds are not so clear cut, but fun to contemplate. Several of the most popular cartoon birds are domesticated species and will not be discussed at length in this article. These birds would include famous characters such as Foghorn Leghorn (a chicken), Tweety (a canary) and Chicken Little (self explanatory) to name a few. There are two very famous cartoon

ducks, Daffy and Donald. Good luck trying to identify these two birds to the species level with any confidence. Because Elmer Fudd hunted Daffy, I am reasonably sure it is some type of wild duck. Donald seems more domesticated to me. Both wild and domesticated ducks do occur in Cache Valley. Another iconic waterfowl of days gone by was Gandy Goose. If you recognize this cartoon bird, you are probably from the "Greatest Generation" and do know that geese also occur in Cache Valley.

Woodstock is a tougher nut to crack. Let me know if you have any ideas on species. Apparently, there was a time when Snoopy tried to use his bird book to identify his buddy Woodstock but without much luck. Apparently some of the birds that were considered (and imitated by Woodstock) included the crow, American Bittern, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Canada Goose and Mourning Warbler. Several of these species do occur in Cache Valley.

The species identification of Big Bird is also elusive. Since most people think of Big Bird as a Muppet rather than a cartoon bird, I decided to avoid a complicated treatise of puppet bird taxonomy in this article.

Probably the closest connection between cartoon bird icons and Cache Valley has to be with a mischievous pair of magpies named Heckle and Jeckle. I must admit that I do remember watching

the antics of these fun-loving birds along with episodes of "Woody Woodpecker" during my formative years. This pretty much dates me and may also explain my love of birds. If you look closely at the bill color of Heckle and Jeckle it is likely that they are Yellow-billed Magpies (*Pica nuttalli*), closely related to our local resident species the Black-billed Magpie (*Pica hudsonia*). Black-billed magpies are very common, conspicuous, year-round residents of Cache Valley.

So there you have it, cartoon birds and how they relate to Cache Valley. I have probably missed a few, but think I have addressed the most famous. It must be noted that only three of the birds above, Donald Duck, Woody Woodpecker and Big Bird have a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

—Bill Masslich



Welcome to BAS

New Members

Richard Baird
Marilyn Jones
Ruth Little

Rejoining Members

Anne Hunt
Marcia M. Smith

Renewing Members

W. Bryan Dixon Richard Olsen
Patricia M. Lambert M. Coburn Williams
Connie McManus

Bridgerland Audubon contacts

Trustees

2008-2011 Jim Cane, 713-4668; William Masslich, 753-1759; Richard Mueller, 752-5637
2009-2012 Ron Goede, 752-9650; Frank Howe, 787-1859 Robert Schmidt, 755-9262; Bret Selman, 257-5260
2010-2013 Chris Cokinos, 245-7769; Jack Greene, 563-6816; Reinhard Jockel; Ryan O'Donnell, 232-8146

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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 10th of each month. Send to chris.cokinos@usu.edu.

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 32142-2250
Membership Source Code: COZW520Z

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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Bird Quiz by Ryan O'Donnell

This summer, the American Ornithologists' Union announced several name changes in the 51st supplement to their "Check-List of North American Birds". Some of these changes affected the names of birds that occur in Cache County, including a split in the Winter Wren (ours are now "Pacific Wrens"), and a split in the Whip-poor-will (Cache County's only record is now considered a "Mexican Whip-poor-will"). Splits, lumps, and name changes are certainly not new to the study of birds, although they seem to be occurring at a greater rate in recent years due to advances in genetics.

The species listed below have all occurred in Cache County at least once, and most are found here regularly, but the names are taken from the 1941 first edition of Roger Tory Peterson's "A Field Guide to Western Birds." Some of these names refer to species that were lumped with others to form the current names, others have been split, and a few changed for other reasons. How many of these old names can you match to the species' current name? See the answers on page 3.

Holboell's Grebe
American Egret
Whistling Swan
Baldpate
Old-Squaw
American Merganser
Duck Hawk
Northern Phalarope
Richardson's Owl
Pileolated Warbler