



The Stilt

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Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

Proceeds from the sale of Logan Canyon Blend Coffee will support the Bear River Bottoms Project for 2011!



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With a personal note beginning,

“[My husband] Randy [Wirth] and I, thanks in part to Allen and Alice Stokes’ mentoring, learned early on in our business to give back.”

Sally Sears announced that, for 2011, Caffe Ibis will be donating the premium from the sales of Logan Canyon Blend coffee to Bridgerland Audubon Society for the Bear River Bottoms project.

This donation will leverage thousands of dollars of much needed cash for habitat acquisition and conservation.

If you’re a coffee drinker, you can help this effort by purchasing Logan Canyon blend from Caffe Ibis. In the process, you’ll also help support a local business that is dedicated to protecting habitat locally as well as internationally through their triple-certified coffee products. The owners of Caffe Ibis have also helped support many other environmental and social justice causes in the valley.

Here's to them, and best wishes for a prosperous 2011!

Thank you, Sally and Randy!

–Bryan Dixon



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Logan Christmas Bird Count Wrap-Up: Eurasian Collared Dove Population Still Growing, Though Mostly an "Average" Count

The weeks of very cold weather preceding this year's Christmas Bird Count were not a good sign, but we started the count in the pre-dawn hours with high hopes. In the week or two before the count, some good rarities had been seen in the circle area, including two Hooded Mergansers, a Red-naped Sapsucker and a Mew Gull. As Craig Fosdick and I started crunching through the snow of Green Canyon well before the first light, knowing that other teams were hiking up parallel canyons around the circle at the same time, we talked about the potential for a high count, if the right species stuck around and a few good rarities could be found.

Despite trying for several hours, we were not able to detect a single owl in the dark. Our first bird of the day was a Canyon Wren that started singing at dawn, about the same time the snow started falling. We did not know at the time that by the end of the day, all of the expected species of owl would be detected in the count circle, with the exception of the Short-eared Owl. Other species would be more difficult to coax out of the snowy weather.

By the end of count day, the combined effort of all the teams and counters had congealed into a story of the status of birds in the count circle. This year, waterfowl numbers were about average on the whole. While we didn't have any unexpected species, we did manage to find some of the less-reliable waterfowl, including Pied-billed and Eared Grebes, while we missed others, including Northern Pintails and Wood Ducks. Numbers were down a bit across the board this year, and our total for this year was less than the 20-year average for every single waterfowl species we found, except for our eight Eared Grebes.

Raptors were detected in about average numbers, with no particularly abundant or rare species relative to previous years. Our total count of seven Golden Eagles, for example, exactly matches our average over the last twenty years, but is notable because it included a higher number of immatures than usual (four).

Gallinaceous birds told a mixed story. We completely missed Gray Partridges, Ruffed Grouse, and Dusky (Blue) Grouse this year, but that happens more often than not with these tough-to-find species. We did find six Chukars, which are not a sure thing in our count circle. Ring-necked Pheasants were slightly below the long-term average, but our count of 104 this year coincided exactly with last year's count. Our count of 135 Wild Turkeys was above average, but the 27 California Quails we found really stood out, as we often don't see any of that species. The increasing numbers of both of these species over the last few years is likely due to recent plantings by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources.

It was a decent year for gulls. Counts of our two most common species, Ring-billed and California Gulls, were both lower than average but higher than the previous two years. We found three Herring Gulls, which equals our average. The highlight of the gulls was two adult Thayer's Gulls, a species that has only been seen in three of the last 20 counts, and usually as immatures.

Among the doves, the headline story continues to be the expansion of the recently established Eurasian Collared-Dove. This year we found 201 of them, setting another new record and more than doubling our previous year's count. This species was first seen on the count in 2004 and has increased exponentially since then. Fortunately, there is no evidence that they are directly affecting our native wintering Mourning Doves; our count of 30 Mourning Doves this year is almost double our twenty-year average.

If you've noticed so far that the theme this year was "about average," you won't be surprised by the songbird totals. We found all of the expected species, but few surprises, and numbers on the whole were about average. Corvids were well-represented, seeming to indicate that West Nile Virus has not dramatically affected our local birds. American Crows and Black-billed Magpies had about average counts, and Common Ravens were a bit higher than average but a bit lower than last year. Our count of 10 Canyon Wrens was our highest since we had the same number in 2004. Two Bohemian Waxwings were found, a good find for a non-irruption year. In 2007 we counted 1,255 of them, but this year was the first year we've had them since then. Our seven Northern Shrikes were also a bit above our average of four, and noteworthy because we miss them completely in about half the years. European Starlings were up considerably this year. At almost 30,000 individuals counted, most around the pig farms on Sam Fellow Road, they made up 78% of our total birds. Proportionally and absolutely, that was our highest Starling count since 2002. Dark-eyed Juncos were down significantly this year to 229 birds, well below our average of over 600, and the Slate-colored subspecies was not observed for the first time since 2006. Lesser Goldfinches provide an interesting comparison to the Eurasian Collared-Dove pattern above, because Lesser Goldfinches have recently colonized the valley but have done it naturally from nearby native populations, in contrast to the Collared-Doves which were introduced to this continent by humans. This year we counted a record number of Lesser Goldfinches for the third year in a row with 18.

There were two very noteworthy misses in our count this year. First, we had no Virginia Rails. This is a notoriously secretive bird, but we still average six each count, and we have only missed them once in the last 20 years. Second, and even more startling, was the absence of Western Meadowlarks this year. We average 62 a year, and have not missed them on the count since 1973.

By the time we gathered at the Cache Valley Unitarian Universalists Church to compile our results, warm our bones, and fill our bellies, we had counted a total of 38,288 birds of 90 species. Ten of those species were represented by individual birds, which is a typical proportion of rarities for recent years. In all, we did pretty well, given the snowy count conditions and the cold weather in the preceding weeks. I'm already looking forward to trying to better the count next year.

For more information on our count and on the Christmas Bird Count in general, see the Audubon Society's webpage: <http://www.audubon.org/Bird/cbc>. Thanks to CVUU for providing our post-count meeting spot, to the count organizer and compiler Bryan Dixon, to all the landowners who let us access their land to count their birds each December, and to all the participants in this year's count: Robert Atwood, Dennis Austin, Dave Barber, Terry Barnes, Eddy Berry, Keith Bingham, Logan Bingham, Lyle Bingham, Kristi Bird, Jim Cane, Jason Carlyle, Allen Christensen, Gail Christensen, Norb and Mary Debyle, Bryan Dixon, John Ellerbeck, Ted and Debi Evans, Barbara Farris, Craig Fosdick, C.Val Grant, Jack Greene, Allen Hoffmann, Frank Howe, Joanne Hughes, Linda Kervin, Jim Kingsland, Peter Kung, Caitlin Laughlin, Stan Laughlin, Leah Lewis, Jean Lown, Zan Merrill, Eric Meyer, Ryan O'Donnell, Teri Peery, Stephen Peterson, Dominique Roche, Jeanne Sullivan, Tim Sullivan, Mike Taylor, Bob and Betty Taylor, Miiko Toelken, Dennis Welker, Martin Welker, Bryan Williams, Tiana Witkamp, Mike Wolfe.

To get an electronic version of the count data, either visit Audubon's CBC website, or contact Bryan Dixon, bdixon@xmission.com.

—Ryan O'Donnell



Local Bird Spotlight

American Dipper

If you spend any time along fast moving, clear streams and rivers in the West you will probably cross paths with an American Dipper. Dippers, also known as water ouzels, get their name from a conspicuous habit of dipping or bobbing their bodies up and down as they walk along a stream. They are usually pretty conspicuous if they are around, taking short flight just over the water, landing on rocks along the shore or in the middle of very turbulent rapids, often calling as they fly, which helps you to spot them. Dippers are uniformly gray colored, stocky little birds with short tails. They have a thin dark bill and relatively long legs but otherwise lack distinctive markings except for a white eyelid that is visible when they blink. Their behavior and habitat is what helps to identify this bird so easily.

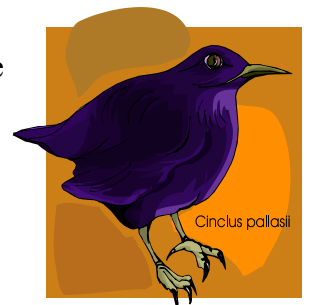


For those of you who appreciate fun and unusual bird behavior the water ouzel is a joy to watch. When in search of food, they stick their little faces down into the clear water to check out the situation and then disappear below the fast moving currents, reappearing four or five seconds later with a stonefly or small fish in their bill. I have seen them walk right into small waterfalls, completely at home in the froth and spray. It always appeared to me that the ouzel would mostly get around by walking on the bottom, but they are also good swimmers. If you have a moment check out some cool underwater video of the little bird navigating a stream at <http://free-educational-videos.com/view/104/american-dipper/>. The video gave me a much better picture of what

this little bird does when it disappears below the waves.

Dippers are found throughout western North America, with their range extending from Canada all the way through Mexico. They are almost exclusively seen close to running water and can be called North America's only truly aquatic songbird. They do not migrate unless forced to by frozen rivers, when they move far enough to find open riverine habitat. Dippers feed almost exclusively on aquatic insects but will also occasionally take very small fish and fish eggs. Around Cache Valley, dippers can be found along many of the clear, fast moving streams flowing through our lovely canyons. They can sometimes be seen farther out into the valley along streams that maintain their fast moving, clear characteristics and have rocky bottoms. One of the most consistent places to find dippers can be under or around bridges where they sometimes nest. Dippers build dome shaped nests on the ledges of bridges or cliffs above the fast water and often cover them with moss that is splashed by water from the rapids. I frequently see dippers near the highway bridge at the downstream end of the Logan River Trail and suspect they nest there. I would also recommend looking for them nesting under a bridge at the upstream end of Denzil Stewart Nature Park where I have seen them for several years. During the springtime you can often observe adult dippers feeding and teaching fledglings in the fast moving Logan River through the little park located at 100 South and 800 East in Logan.

–William Masslich



Audubon Calendar

February 2011

10 Our February event will be rescheduled for March. Look for the announcement in the March Stilt.

19 Mountain Snowshoeing. Join us as we climb up out of the inversion to discover the birds that winter in our mountain forests. We will hike slowly through the forests and meadows of the Bear River Range, looking and listening for the specialties of our conifer forests. Expected birds include Clark's Nutcrackers, Red Crossbills, Mountain Chickadees, Cassin's Finches, Golden-crowned Kinglets and Red-breasted Nuthatches. Surprises could include White-winged Crossbills, Pine Grosbeaks, a Northern Pygmy-Owl or perhaps even a Boreal Owl. Meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot between Caffe Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 East, 150 North). Bring your own snowshoes (can be rented in advance from Utah State University's Outdoor Recreation Center) and a lunch or snack, and dress for the weather. All skill levels are welcome. We will be back in the early afternoon.

A Climate Zombie Profile

House Science Vice Chair Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner, R-Wisconsin:
I think that the science is inconclusive on this. What I do say very emphatically with these massive increases in utility costs through the cap and tax scheme, we shouldn't be doing this as long as the science is inconclusive.

What the science says is that temperatures peaked out globally in 1998. So we've gone for 10 plus years where the temperatures have gone down.

I personally believe that the solar flares are more responsible for climatic cycles than anything that human beings do and our lunar, our rovers on Mars have indicated that there has been a slight warming in the atmosphere of Mars and that certainly was not caused by the internal combustion engine.

Responses from Climate Progress:

For the record, the U.S. National Academy of Sciences concluded its recent review of climate science, saying it is a "settled fact" that "the Earth system is warming and that much of this warming is very likely due to human activities."

For the record, it's the hottest decade on record and NASA noted last year, the 12-month running mean global temperature has reached a new record in 2010: "We conclude that global temperature continued to rise rapidly in the past decade" and "there has been no reduction in the global warming trend of 0.15-0.20C/decade that began in the late 1970s."

Sad, really. The number of people who believe that solar flares are the primary driver of "climatic cycles" ain't large. At least he could have said "the sun" and joined a larger group of widely debunked deniers. Skeptical Science explains "while there is no credible science indicating that the sun is causing the observed increase in global temperature, it's the known physical properties of greenhouse gases that provide us with the only real and measurable explanation of global warming."

– climateprogress.org

This Just In!

Cache Valley stargazer Christopher Cokinos reports seeing traffic jam along Martian canal through his 15,000-inch telescope, contradicting Rep. Sensenbrenner's assertions that there are no cars on Mars.

Around the Valley

Nordic United Fundraiser on Jan. 25

The event is Tuesday, January 25, 6:30pm at The Logan Art House and Cinema at 795 N. Main. The cost is \$10 and includes refreshments and the showing of the Winter Wildlands Alliance Backcountry Film Festival. There will be a silent auction also. All proceeds benefit NU.

Community Diets to Curb Global Warming

Many of us are concerned about global warming and its threat to birds, habitat and our existence as we know it. But what does it take to move from a state of concern to one of commitment? Keith Blackmore, Conservation Chair for Northwest Illinois Audubon Society (NIAS), spent years educating people about global warming, but struggled to engage them to action. Then, at a renewable energy fair several years ago, a fellow participant gave him a copy of David Gershon's book, *Low-Carbon Diet—A 30-Day Program to Lose 5,000 Pounds* (2006). Keith paged through it during the conference, was inspired to purchase additional copies for his Chapter, and then worked with his Board to launch the Low-Carbon Diet as a Chapter Program.

Using the steps laid out in Gershon's book, Keith worked with Chapter Vice-President Lynn Feaver to mentor students from the local community college's Student Leadership Program to take the program to the schools. In addition, they trained several Chapter volunteers as group leaders, who then worked with small groups of community members to assess their carbon footprint and provide them tools to help reduce it. NIAS applied for and received Audubon Collaborative Funding in FY2009 to help build several tools for the Chapter website, including a carbon footprint calculator and forms for each participating group to enter their data.

Over the past three years, participants in the Chapter's program have pledged to cut 576,950 lbs of carbon from their lifestyles. Three participants were so inspired, they traded their gas-guzzling vehicles for hybrid electric cars. Another participant had an energy assessment done on her home in preparation for installing a photovoltaic system. Keith thought her energy usage was unusually high, so he supplied her with an electricity load meter to determine where the energy sink was. It turned out the refrigerator and freezer in the garage accounted for half of the home's energy usage! After removing the energy-draining appliances, she was able to save \$15,000 with a smaller PV system—just by making that one, small change.

NIAS has reached over 5,000 people through its educational presentations on global warming and Low-Carbon Diet Program groups. In addition, the Chapter has purchased 25 electricity load meters and donated them to local libraries. Community members can borrow the meters to assess energy use at their home, office or school.

For more information, call Keith Blackmore at 815-938-3204 or visit <http://www.nwilaudubon.org/lowcarbon.asp>.

—Northwest Illinois Audubon Society

Welcome to BAS

New Members

Charles E. Carpenter

R.A. Justis

Glen Lackey

Rodger J. Vincent

Paula Watkins

Rejoining Members

Jaqueline Lowry

Kent & Ann Morrison

Renewing Members

Joyce Kinkead

Leah Lewis

Gary Meunier

Michael J. Stones

Utah State Univ. Merrill-Cazier Library

F.H. Wagner

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

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200 Club Outing

A small but hardy group of birders showed up on New Years Day for the first Bridgerland Audubon birding trip of the year. The Arctic-like conditions made it interesting and beautiful and all in all it was a successful day with a total of 48 species observed. Not a bad start on the quest for 200 species for the year in Cache Valley. The highlight of the day was seeing three Long-eared Owls along the Little Bear River. We also observed a lot of Bald Eagles, which always makes a birding trip better. The trip was not quite the same without the steady leadership of Reinhard Jockel. We all wish him a speedy recovery and hope he is back birding with us as soon as possible. Thanks to everyone who braved the elements to attend the trip.

– Bill

And speaking of Reinhardt...

As some of you may know, one of our longtime members, trustee and tireless field trip leader and naturalist, Reinhard Jockel, suffered a stroke in December. It put him into intensive care in Logan for several days, followed by a week in McKay-Dee Stroke Center. By early January, he had graduated to Sunshine Terrace Rehab center back in Logan. He's doing very well, and hopefully has minimal long term impact. He has numerous friends who have helped get him set up in a new apartment and keep him company. He's in good spirits and we wish him a speedy recovery. To find out the latest, contact Jack Greene at jackisgreene@yahoo.com.

– Bryan Dixon