



The Stilt

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Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

Dr. Brian Moench - “The War on the EPA: What does it mean for your family’s health?”



It’s not news that Cache Valley’s air quality occasionally reaches potentially unhealthy levels. But according to Dr. Brian Moench, the problems may be more serious and more far-reaching than many people realize. Moench, an anesthesiologist at the LDS Hospital in Salt Lake City and president of Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment, gave a presentation at the Bridgerland Audubon Society banquet Thursday night. He offered attendees their choice of two prepared talks: One titled “Fun with Air Pollution,” the other “Oh God, Oh God, We’re All Going to Die.” The audience voted overwhelmingly for the latter.

“We’re going to talk about this recent political trend in deregulating at the federal government level. If it is ultimately successful, there will be some very profound public health consequences to that,” Moench said before his presentation. “So I’m going to try to build the case for the ramifications of pollution versus clean air and try to demonstrate to people that whatever money we’re spending is very well spent.”

In his talk, Moench reiterated what people in Cache Valley already know: On a handful of days in the winter, the local air quality is among the worst in the nation. He went on, however, to describe just how severe the effects may be, and just how long they may linger. “The physiological consequence of air pollution are very comparable to smoking cigarettes,” he said. “So you can think of our air pollution as community-wide second-hand cigarette smoke. Now, what does this exposure do to us?” The bottom line, he explained, is that air pollution causes “oxidative stress,” which in turn leads to a wide variety of other health problems. “As a cell metabolizes anything, it creates free radicals,” Moench said. “But if the cell cannot keep up with the processing of free radicals through its antioxidant capacity, things start to get out of balance. And exposure to air pollution causes oxidative stress by impairing this balance between free radical production and antioxidant capacity.”

So what does this mean in terms of observable effects on a person’s health? Quite a few things, according to Moench. “It causes a low-grade inflammation of your arteries that affects all of your arteries,” he said. “There isn’t anything in your body that doesn’t need an arterial supply, so every single organ can be affected.” And this can lead to increased rates of asthma, heart attacks, strokes, and even impaired brain function. And in the case of children, Moench continued, the effects may linger all their lives. “Exposure to air pollution in the formative years — those years when the lungs are growing, up to the age of 18 — their lungs will be stunted. They will not be able to develop their full lung function,” he said. “So they won’t have as much exercise capacity, and there are very few things that correlate more closely with long-term longevity than lung function.”

As bleak a picture as he paints, however, he added that he’s not without hope for the future. “Some days of the week, I definitely think I’m tilting at windmills,” he admitted. “But when (Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment) became organized four years ago, we calculated that active engagement in this issue might take us ten years. Four years into it, I think that’s about right. So my optimism exists, but it’s tempered.”

Also honored at the banquet was Utah State University educator Michael Butkus, who received the Audubon Society’s Carl M. Johnson Education Award for his efforts with USU’s recreational resource management department.

Logan Municipal Councilwoman Laraine Swenson was given the society’s Allen W. Stokes Conservation Award for her work in opposing the construction of a new coal-fired power plant in 2004.

By John Funk
staff writer Herald Journal News
— article reprinted with permission from The Herald Journal

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Local Bird Spotlight

Western Meadowlark

Growing up in the West, I became very familiar with and fond of the Western Meadowlark. Its sunshine-yellow breast feathers emblazoned with a black “V” are very striking and distinctive. In the spring, meadowlarks can often be seen sitting on top of fence posts singing at the top of their little lungs, a song that is not only beautiful and melodic, but is also familiar to anyone living in the West who pays attention to birds.

It was this song that brought the bird to the attention of Meriweather Lewis, who was the first to describe the bird in 1805 during the famous expedition of the Corps of Discovery. He described the bird as being “very similar to the old field lark,” probably referring to the very similar Eastern Meadowlark. In fact, the best way to tell these species apart is by their songs. The bird went unnamed until 1840 when John James Audubon, noting that the bird had gone basically unnoticed since being first described during the Lewis and Clark expedition, gave it the species name of *neglecta* (Latin for neglected). It has been reported that Audubon went on to comment that the flesh of the Western Meadowlark tastes similar to that of the Eastern Meadowlark and is “indifferent eating”!

Meadowlarks belong to the Icterid Family, which also includes blackbirds, grackles, cowbirds and orioles. Their genus name, *Sturnella*, means “starling like,” which when you really take notice is quite accurate in regards to their general body shape. They are territorial ground nesters, with males often defending up to 15 acres of open country. The male breeds with one to three females (usually 2), that will nest within its territory. Three to six eggs are laid in a nest often covered with grass that can have entrance tunnels one to two feet long or not be covered at all.

Meadowlarks feed mostly on insects but will also eat seeds, often probing the ground with their long slender beaks. In the winter they tend to flock up. Groups of up to 100 birds are often winter residents within much of their range, but may migrate depending on weather and availability of food.

The Western Meadowlark is the state bird of six states, the most for any bird except the Northern Cardinal, denoting the widespread nature and popularity of this animal. The best place to look for meadowlarks in Cache Valley is in sagebrush/grass habitat, which is most common along the edges of the valley, on or near the benches. Listen for the song of the Western Meadowlark which is as much a treasured part of springtime as seeing the first daffodil blossoms or eating the first spinach from the garden.

—Bill Masslich



Audubon Calendar

May

14 Green Canyon. Reinhard Jockel will lead a bridging trip up Green Canyon on Saturday May 14. Meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot between Caffe Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 East, 150 North). Come prepared to stand outside or take short walks, and bring a spotting scope if you have one. All skill levels are welcome. We will be back by about noon.

20-22 Washington County Expedition. May is the peak of migration and there is no better place to observe the spectacle than Washington County, Utah, the hotbed of avian diversity in the state. We will hit several hotspots in the county, including Tonaquint Park, Beaver Dam Slope, and Lytle Ranch, among others. Target species include Washington County specialties like Phainopepla, Greater Roadrunner, Black-chinned Sparrow, Verdin, and Cactus Wren, plus any migrant birds drawn to the oases in the desert. We will also take some time to look for amphibians and reptiles of the area. This will be an all-weekend trip, leaving at 2 p.m. on Friday, May 20th and returning to Logan in the evening on Sunday, May 22nd. Most of us will be camping, but we can coordinate with people who would prefer to stay in hotels. This trip will be limited to 12 people. RSVP to Ryan O'Donnell (Ryan.ODonnell@usu.edu) by Wednesday, May 18th, to save a spot and to arrange carpooling other details.

Around the Valley

Participate in Endangered Species Day Celebration – May 20

There are many ways for Audubon Chapters to get involved with Endangered Species Day and help promote the importance of endangered species conservation. For example:

- * Plan special Endangered Species Day program for upcoming membership meeting.
- * Lead Endangered Species Day field trip/bird hike.
- * Assist with habitat restoration project.
- * Provide special tours, exhibits at your headquarters and/or nature center/sanctuary.
- * Partner with local zoo, aquarium, wildlife refuge, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service office, or botanical gardens to host an event.
- * Host speaker/presentation/film showing at library, school, community center, other location.

The Intermountain Herbarium in association the Cache Chapter of the Utah Native Plant Society, Bridgerland Mushroom Society & Mushroom Society of Utah, is pleased to announce the following events:

Saturday May 14: 10:00 am: Aquatic Plants (\$25)

Friday/Saturday May 20-21: 6:00 pm: Introduction to Mushroom ID (\$40)

Tuesday June 7: 6:30 pm: Richard J. Shaw Memorial Wildflower Walk

Saturday/Sunday June 11-12: Standardized Photography for Plant Identification

Tuesday/Thursday July 5-7: 10:00-4:00: Introduction to Bryophytes (\$50)

Further details can be found on herbarium's website (<http://www.herbarium.usu.edu/>) and on our Facebook Page.

Two new studies link hunting to lead in scavenger birds

Two new UC Davis studies add scientific evidence that hunters' lead ammunition often finds its way into carrion-eating birds, such as eagles and turkey vultures. These scavenger species often take advantage of animal remains left behind when a hunter cleans a kill or when a shot deer or wild pig escapes the hunter but dies later. However, when the remains contain lead shot pellets or bullet fragments, the scavenger birds can develop lead poisoning, which can cause inability to fly, starvation, anemia, blindness, seizures and death.

In 1991, to protect bald eagles, lead ammunition was banned in the United States for hunting waterfowl. In 2008, to protect California condors, lead ammunition was similarly banned in California condor range for most hunting activities.

One of the new UC Davis studies found direct evidence that lead levels rose in turkey vultures during deer hunts and in areas with wild pig hunts. This was the first-ever investigation of blood lead levels in free-flying turkey vultures.

The other study, the first to examine the effects of the 2008 [California] law on any wild animals, found that the lead-ammunition ban in California condor range reduced lead exposure in golden eagles and turkey vultures in 2009. The studies were led by Christine Johnson, a UC Davis associate professor of veterinary medicine and an expert on wildlife health, and her doctoral student Terra Kelly, a wildlife veterinarian earning a Ph.D. in epidemiology.

"Hunting is an irreplaceable tool for wildlife management," said Johnson, "especially now that we have fewer large predators but more invasive species like wild pigs. Yet we know that accidental consumption of lead can make animals and people sick.

"It just makes good sense to use non-toxic ammunition, wherever it is available, to protect wildlife as well as eliminate any potential risk to hunters and their families," she concluded.

Next month, Johnson and Kelly (who is now a UC Davis Wildlife Health Center veterinarian) will begin a similar study to investigate the impacts of ongoing lead exposure on the endangered California condor population. They will collaborate with researchers at UC Santa Cruz; Ventana Wildlife Society; California Department of Fish and Game; and the United States National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Geological Survey. The study will be funded by a \$750,000 grant from the Fish and Wildlife Service's Endangered Species Act (Section 6) Program to the Department of Fish and Game -- the largest Section 6 grant in the state's history.

—American Bird Conservancy

U.C. Davis press release:

http://www.news.ucdavis.edu/search/news_detail.lasso?id=9824

Don't Forget! The Birds in Your Yard Need This!

Local black oil sunflower seed in a 50-pound bag for \$25—and personally delivered with a smile. Call Allen Christensen 258-5018. The quality is really high again this year. A big thank-you to all those who purchased seed already.

—Allen Christensen

Welcome to BAS

New Members Rejoining Members

Cheryl Felsted
 Julie Hatch
 Catharina Kang
 Virginia M. Brasfield *
Transferred In
 Elizabeth Wilkes

Leroy B. Beasley
 Carl Cheney
 Lu Georgi
 Glenn Lackey
 Richard Olsen
 Gardiner S. Stiles

Gordon W. Allman
 Carl Cheney
 Lu Georgi
 Glenn Lackey
 Richard Olsen
 Gardiner S. Stiles

Renewing Members

Michael C. Amacher
 Phyllis Conover
 Dawn Holzer
 Mr. & Mrs. David & Kim Lewis
 Bruce Pendery
 Earl Sullivan
 Nancy Williams

Leanna Ballard
 John Ellsworth
 Nathan & Chris Hult
 Diane Browning Oblock
 Mrs. Sandra Romesburg
 Von Taylor
 Michael L. Wolfe

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;

Bridgerland Audubon Contacts

President Val Grant, 752-7572, biores@mtwest.net
 Vice Pres. Open:
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 Treasurer Linda Kervin, 713-4668, lkervin@earthlink.net
 Asst. Treasurer Susan Drown
 Outings Reinhard Jockel, birderjockel@gmail.com
 Conservation Richard Mueller, 752-5637, rmueller@biology.usu.edu
 Education Jack Greene, 563-6816, jackisgreene@yahoo.com
 Newsletter Chris Cokinos, 245-7769, chris.cokinos@usu.edu
 Circulation Susan Durham, 752-5637, sdurham@cc.usu.edu
 Sanctuary Jim Cane, 713-4668, jimcane@cc.usu.edu
 Hotline Nancy Williams, 752-4780, nanwill@cc.usu.edu
 Webmaster Bridgerlandaudubon@gmail.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

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*.

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P.O. Box 3501

Logan, Utah 84323-3501

Email: birdnerdut@gmail.com

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

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Bear River Bottoms – Way to Grow!

Work Continues

In April, volunteers planted 900 trees and shrubs in the Bear River Bottoms! WAY TO GO!

In June, we'll continue working on removing invasive plants and planting willows, instead. Work days are still being planned, but if you'd like to spend a day or two out in a beautiful part of the valley doing good deeds for wildlife and earning great karma in the process, contact Bryan Dixon, bdixon@xmission.com, to get on the email notification list or call him at (435) 760-0691.

