



# The Stilt

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Newsletter of Bridgerland Audubon Society

## Do You SeeGulls? 107th Christmas Bird Count Results

By Bryan Dixon  
and Keith Archibald

Al was right: global warming is upon us...or something. Mr. Gore insisted that warming would bring some unusual phenomena and here we are. The Madam of Gulls, Sue Drown, found 56 herring gulls at the landfill. There were also glaucous and glaucous-winged gulls! And they were there for weeks in December! Where are we????

December was relatively warm, all right. (Drool, you Arizona refugees!) But the very day we did our Christmas Bird Count, the temperature dropped and winter finally arrived. Fortunately, the birds didn't really take much stock in that pattern, and generally hung around. So, we broke more than a few records (See table, p. 4).

Species with unusually high counts (one standard deviation above the mean over the last 15 years) included: cinnamon teal, barn owl, belted kingfisher, northern flicker, ruby-crowned kinglet, American

robin, American pipit, yellow-rumped warbler, white-throated sparrow, dark-eyed junco, western meadowlark, and red-winged blackbird. There were some low numbers, too, of course, including pied-billed grebe, redhead, lesser scaup, bufflehead, ruddy duck, rough-legged hawk, ring-necked pheasant, killdeer, great horned owl, cedar waxwing, and Brewer's blackbird. And, some outright misses: northern pintail (first miss in 11 years), common merganser (last miss 1999), merlin (we KNOW that guy was hanging around USU somewhere...), gray partridge (that bunch can be anywhere - anywhere but where we looked, that is), and golden-crowned kinglet (last miss 1985).

### Analysis by Group

Most ducks seemed a bit low, except for high numbers of wood ducks, green-winged teal (the latter setting a record), and (although not actually a duck) American coots. There was plenty of open

water; so perhaps the northerners hadn't made it down and our summer ducks were reluctant to be late for southern marsh reservations.

A similar pattern seemed evident in the low numbers of red-tailed and rough-legged hawks, although the record number of American kestrels (again this year) demonstrated a real proficiency at rodent catching in our snow-free fields. Kim Sullivan opined one explanation - the increasing number of housing developments in our count circle, which makes it hard for buteos to find groceries, but which seems to have less effect on the smaller falcon.

Grouse numbers were about normal, thanks to some intrepid hiking on the part of one young Barnes woman, who tramped high north of Smithfield Canyon to find the only bunch of sharp-tailed grouse.

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# National Notes

## USFWS Launches Birding Initiative

By Bill Fenimore  
Utah Audubon Policy Advocate

The US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) has begun a National Refuge System Birding Initiative to foster a conservation ethic, recognizing the importance of these refuges for future generations of birds and birders. There are 546 refuges throughout America today. These refuges provide habitat for breeding, wintering and staging areas for over 700 species of migratory birds. One-third of the globally significant Important Bird Areas (IBAs) are on refuges. Our own Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge is one example. Local birders understand the importance of the Great Salt Lake, as a staging area for migratory waterfowl and shorebirds in the Western Hemisphere. I have been honored to be asked to join this national group representing the Intermountain West.

These refuges are magnets for the country's 46 million birders. The Refuge System Birding Initiative effort aims to

strengthen the relationship between the birding community and the Refuge System and to increase opportunities for quality bird watching on refuges. To carry out this initiative, the Refuge System and Migratory Bird Program will be collaborating with a newly appointed 14-member Birder's Team—a panel of well-known authors, editors, educators, conservationists, and members of the business community. My good friend, Kenn Kaufman, speaking on the Birding Initiative said, "Many of my best birding experiences have been on national wildlife refuges, starting with my first visit to the Great Salt Plains NWR in Oklahoma when I was 11 years old. I saw more than a dozen new birds that day, and decided immediately that refuges were magical places. It's only natural that the birding community should be more involved and more supportive of the Refuge System." The team is chaired by Jon Andrew, Refuge Chief for the Service's southeast region. "The Birding Initiative is

long overdue and a welcome chance to learn more about what birders would like to see happen on refuges," remarked Andrews. "It is also a great opportunity to help make the broader birding community aware of how to help conserve and protect refuge lands and other important bird habitats."

This effort is a very real and great opportunity for the local birding communities throughout the country to provide feedback to make the refuges more birder friendly and accessible. It is an effort to foster a conservation ethic and get those who are on the couch out of the house and outdoors. If we can get more people involved in the work of conserving the nation's birds and other wildlife, as well as participating in quality family-oriented recreation—we can develop in them a deep sense of wonder for the natural world and a passion for protecting and restoring it for future generations.

# Audubon Calendar

## February 2007

**1 BAS Board of Trustees.** Bridgerland Audubon's Board of Trustees meets at 7 p.m. this Thursday at Cache Valley Learning Center, 75 S. 400 West, Logan. Enter through the building's west doors. All are welcome to attend.

**3 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 Caffé 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. The walk typically lasts two hours. For more information call Buck Russell (435) 512-9641.

**8 BAS General Meeting-Speaker Frank Howe, UDWR – Ribbons of Life to the Sagebrush Sea: Riparian and Shrubsteppe Bird Research in Utah.** Riparian and shrubsteppe habitats are two of THE most important bird habitats in Utah; but, they are important for very different reasons. Riparian zones make up less than 1 percent of the Utah landscape but three-quarters of our bird species depend on them during some part of their annual cycle. Join us this Thursday at the Cache Valley Learning Center (75 S. 400 West) as Howe discusses why riparian habitats are so important to a wide variety of birds, and how we are gaining a better understanding of riparian systems in order to better protect and conserve these ribbons of life. Our bird identification workshop will present a study on local woodpeckers.

**10 Learn How to Attract and Feed Winter Birds.** See the various types of feeders, feeds, and water devices in use locally as we visit some people who have really elaborate bird feeding and attraction setups. Bring binoculars and dress for the season. Most of the observing will be done outdoors. Leave at 9 a.m. from the parking lot between Caffé Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 E. 150 North). Carpooling will be available; beginning birders are welcome. For more information call Buck Russell (435) 512-9641.

**16 10th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count.** Tens of thousands of people will be outside (or looking through their window), counting birds February 16-19. You can be one of them! Which birds are spending their winter with you this year? Take part in the tenth annual Great Backyard Bird Count to see how your local birds fit into the landscape of North America. No fee or registration required. Go to [www.birdsource.org/gbbc](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc) for more information.

## March 2007

**3 Waterfowl in Winter: The Logan Sewer Lagoons.** We will go to the best places for waterfowl based on the weather. Our focus will be on gulls. During the Christmas Bird Count we found six different types of gulls in the valley. Meet at 9 a.m. at the parking lot between Caffé Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 E. 150 North). Dress very warmly, bring binoculars, and a spotting scope if you have one. Carpooling will be available; beginning birders are welcome. For more information call Buck Russell (435) 512-9641.

# Chapter Notes

## CBC Results

(Continued from p. 1)

Species	2006 Count	Previous High	Year of Previous Record
Great Egret	1	-	-
Green-winged Teal	130	42	2005
American Kestrel	107	80	2005
Herring Gull	56	3	2004
Thayer's Gull	3	2	2002
Glaucous-winged Gull	1	-	-
Glaucous Gull	1	-	-
Eurasian Collared-Dove	30	1	2004
Belted Kingfisher	14	12	1994, 1996
Northern Flicker	142	114	2001
Marsh Wren	14	13	1982
Vesper Sparrow	1	-	-
Red-winged Blackbird	4,199	3,563	1987

It was interesting to note the explosion of Eurasian collared-doves – 30 on this year's count – after seeing them dribble into Cache Valley the last few years and watching email reports of this species from areas south in Utah.

We were delighted to “owl-out” this year, with all seven species reported, including a new location for the elusive long-eared owl at the DWR Fish Hatchery on Valley View Highway (Dick Hurren's keen observation skills come through again!).

Also at the Fish Hatchery were the ever-present belted kingfishers, who contributed to a record number of 14 for our count circle, sharing the pond with the never-before-seen-on-our-CBC great egret (still there as of this writing, keeping a greater yellow-legs company).

Woodpecker numbers were robust, as were the common Corvidae (family that includes jays, magpies, crows, and ravens), the latter providing some comfort that West Nile Virus may

not have hit us quite so hard.

The micro birds (chickadees, nuthatches, wrens, etc.) were about average, except for high numbers of marsh wrens (record of 14) and ruby-crowned kinglets, the latter puzzling because of a total absence of golden-crowned kinglets!

American robins were high and Ron Ryel even found his buddy, the varied thrush, along the familiar canal north of the Logan Country Club golf course.

There were explosions of American pipits, a dearth of waxwings, and unusually high numbers of yellow-rumped warblers. Buck Russell had fun writing up the required documentation on the vesper sparrow (a first, requiring a detailed report complete with hands-on-good-books, affidavits, and genetic analyses). A few (three) white-throated sparrows proved the value of our feeder watchers, though other sparrows were average. Of interest were the record numbers of both red-winged and yellow-headed blackbirds, BUT – get this – low numbers of Brewer's! And, while we note the high numbers of some seed eaters, American goldfinches were scarce with the lowest numbers in over 20 years.

This year we found a total of 96 species, with 29,983 individual birds, with 14 species represented by only one individual, including five that were firsts for our count circle.

Once again Sue and Dave Drown offered their home for the potluck and compilation, and many of the day's counters came to relax and hear the totals.

The CBC is the longest running example of citizen science. This was the 107<sup>th</sup>

year for the CBC, and our 47<sup>th</sup>. Our data have been submitted to the national database where researchers and the public can access them online:

<http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/index.html>

Our local CBC results go back to 1956 and are available electronically (MS Excel spreadsheet) or by hard copy (\$1.00 to cover postage and printing). Contact Bryan Dixon at:

[bdixon@xmission.com](mailto:bdixon@xmission.com) or 10 Heritage Cove, Logan, UT 84321.

We are grateful to the many landowners of our valley, who year after year graciously allow us to tromp around their properties, looking for birds. Often they are responding to an annual phone call from someone they may never have met. We must be a trustworthy bunch!

## 2006 CBC Participants

Thanks to this year's 46 participants! Jim Akers, Laura Anderton, Judy Archibald, Keith Archibald, Robert Atwood, Dennis Austin, Jessie Barnes, John Barnes, Terry Barnes, Eddy Berry, Gordon Bosworth, Jim Cane, Allen Christensen, Maureen Correll, Peter Daniels, Dorothy Eagan, John Ellerbeck, Barbara Farris, Jonathan Felis, Taylor Howard, Richard Hurren, Reinhard Jockel, Linda Kervin, Jim Kingsland, Caitlin Laughlin, David Liddell, Alice Lindahl, Jean Lown, Bill Masslich, Jake Masslich, Eric Meyer, Ron Munger, Bill Oblock, Hanna Oblock, Ryan O'Donnell, Bruce Pendery, Stuart Reynolds, Lizbeth Rodriguez-Ortiz, Buck Russell, Cindy Russell, Ron Ryel, Brandon Spencer, Melanie Spriggs, Kim Sullivan, Steve Walker, Dan Zamecnik.

## Our Generous Donors

Thanks to many of you who responded to our end-of-year solicitation letter, including Alice Stokes, Gary Muenier, David R. Lewis and Kim Corbin-Lewis, John Carter, Ivan G. Palmblad, Chris Cokinos and Kathleen Lison, Jim and Sara Sinclair, Kim Sullivan and Bruce Pendery, Miiko Toelken, Ted Kindred, and Dennis Austin. It's hard sometimes to ask for money from our friends, but we can do so much more good with it. The December solicitation has yielded \$1,825 so far, to be spent on a variety educational and conservation initiatives. If you haven't contributed yet, it's not too late. Send your tax-deductible donation to BAS, PO Box 3501, Logan, UT, 84323-3501.

# Chapter Notes

## 200 Club Kicks Off a New Year

By Reinhard Jockel  
BAS Board Member

A group of about a dozen people went out to see how many birds we could see in a few hours on the first day of the new year 2007. We had fairly good weather – cold and partly cloudy – then milder, in the 30s.

Some of the best birds we saw, with the help of Buck Russell's Ipod were the winter wren, which came out of the bushes to look for "rival" singing. We all got good looks at this tiny very active brown bird with a tail standing straight up. That species was also present on the 2006 Christmas Bird Count in the same area. Then in the marshes by the big bridge across the Little Bear River on Valley View Highway we got two marsh wrens to show themselves.

We also saw a western screech owl sitting in a hollow of a box elder tree by the Canyon Road canal just off Crockett Avenue. I have seen it there several years in a row in winter.

Two cinnamon teal males at the 20-20 Pond were a surprise (but had been seen there on the Christmas Bird Count). They are normally not here in the winter! The best bird we saw and one that is rarely

encountered here is the great egret seen in the water with a flock of ring-billed gulls west of the old fish hatchery on 200 North. This is the symbol for National Audubon Society that goes back to the history of the establishment of Audubon Society.

Another great bird to see was the great horned owl – we got great looks at it at the Benson Marina. Some goldfinches were above it, keeping an eye on the owl.

The goal of the 200 Club of BAS is to see as many bird species as one can and eventually to try to find all 300 or so species that have been seen in Cache Valley and surrounding mountains. I don't think there is anyone here who has seen that many. One well known birder has seen 289 species. I have seen 268 so far.

What one needs to do this:

- Lots of time and good luck.
- A good set of binoculars and even better a good spotting scope.
- Good field guides (Peterson's, National

Geographic, Sibley's or Stokes)

- List of local birds (Birds of 2002 Cache Valley, Utah Checklist and Site Guide by BAS)
- To keep in touch with latest information (the hotline by Nancy Williams, 757-0185)

If you want to be part of the 200 Club:

- Go on trips sponsored by BAS and get out as much as possible with friends, etc.
- Make of list of birds seen on each trip (Name of species, where seen, what habitat, date seen)
- Give me a list of all the birds seen at end of 2007. Send the list by mail to: Reinhard Jockel, 123 N. Main St. #10, Logan, UT 84321

Or bring it up to me – I live above The Sportsman in downtown Logan.

If you have any good ideas about the 200 Club, talk to me or call Buck Russell, 755-6534, who is in charge of the field trips in 2007.

# Welcome to BAS

**New Members**

Jonathan Felis  
 Martha R Hansen  
 Jeanine Hewitt  
 Ardelle King  
 Mr. William K. Michaelson  
 Richard Olsen  
 Leah Waldner

**Renewing Members**

Barbara Farris  
 Lu Georgi  
 Marilyn Hammond  
 David Hewett  
 Norman & Marcia La Barge  
 E H Berry Laughlin

Jennifer MacAdam  
 Meredith Matlack  
 Nancy Mesner  
 Stephen Peterson  
 Craig Reger  
 W E Saul  
 Jim Sinclair  
 David Wallace  
 Karen Wood

**Transfers Into Our Chapter**

Patricia Holmgren  
 Marion Murray

## Bridgerland Audubon contacts

**Trustees**

2004-2007 Dave Drown, 752-3797; Jack Greene, 563-6816; Reinhard Jockel; Stephen Peterson, 755-5041  
 2005-2008 Jim Cane, 713-4668; Richard Mueller, 752-5637; Dick Hurren 435/734-2653; Jennifer Hoffmann, 713-4935  
 2006-2009 Ron Goede, 752-9650; Bret Selman, 435/257-5260; David Liddell, 245-2705

**Bridgerland Audubon Contacts**

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**Webmaster** Stephen Peterson 755-5041, cilslp@msn.com  
**Sanctuary** Jim Cane, 713-4668, jimcane@cc.usu.edu  
**Conservation** Bryan Dixon, 752-6830, bdixon@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 15<sup>th</sup> of each month. Send to stiltnews@hotmail.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 Bridgerland Audubon Society***

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