



# THE STILT

BRIDGERLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY

Vol. 16, No. 6

April 1988

## MEETING CALENDAR

Wednesday, April 6: Conservation Committee meeting, 7:30 p.m. in room 112B, Biology/Natural Resources Building, USU campus. Note that this is a different meeting night than usual.

Thursday, April 7: Regular BAS monthly meeting, 7:30 p.m. in the Logan Library meeting room, 255 North Main Street, Logan. This will be a joint meeting with the Cache Group Sierra Club. Biologist Dave Lockman will be the featured speaker, and he will present a program on Rocky Mountain Trumpeter Swans. Lockman has a bachelor's degree in wildlife biology and a master's degree in avian biology from Colorado State University, and has been a waterfowl biologist with the Wyoming Department of Game and Fish for 18 years. He has worked extensively with trumpeter swans since 1981.

Note that April's meeting will be the first Thursday of the month, not the second.

Wednesday, April 20: BAS planning meeting, 7:00 p.m. in the Logan Library conference room, 255 North Main, Logan.

Thursday, April 21: Annual BAS banquet, 6:00 p.m. at the Bluebird Restaurant, 19 North Main Street, Logan. William Platts, PhD, the head fisheries biologist for the U.S. Forest Service in this region, will present a talk and slide show entitled "Good Beaver, Bad Beaver." See the related article elsewhere in this edition of the *Stilt*. For more information on the banquet, contact Ron Ryel, 753-6077.

## FIELD TRIP CALENDAR

Friday-Saturday, April 8-9: Grouse courtship. Overnight camping trip to Curlew National Grasslands in southern Idaho to observe both sage and sharptailed grouse on their dance grounds. Camp at historic Twin Springs campground. **YOU NEED RESERVATIONS FOR THIS TRIP;** call Al Stokes at 752-2702.

Saturday, April 16: Marsh and water birds of Cache Valley. Leave at 8:00 a.m. from the Fred Meyer parking lot SW corner, return by noon.

Saturday, April 30: Shorebirds at Amalga Barrens. The best place to see 12 or more species of shorebirds as well as many other birds. Leave at 8:00 a.m. from the Fred Meyer parking lot SW corner, return by noon. Bring a spotting scope if you have one.

## NORTH LOGAN CITY CLEANUP

North Logan City will be cleaning up litter in the town between April 15 and April 25. Saturday, April 23 is the big day, with numerous cleanup activities planned, followed by a celebration in the city park. For information, call Lynne Pettit, chair of the North Logan Beautification Committee, at 752-0372.



## BEAVER SUBJECT OF BAS BANQUET PRESENTATION

William Platts, PhD, the featured speaker at the Bridgerland Audubon Society annual banquet, will present a slide show and talk entitled "Good Beaver, Bad Beaver" which will discuss how beaver and watershed managers can work together to preserve and improve riparian habitat.

Platt received his PhD at Utah State University, where he studied cutthroat trout spawning habits at Strawberry Reservoir. This study showed that because of limited spawning habitat, late-spawning fish displaced the eggs of those that had spawned earlier, causing considerable egg wastage.

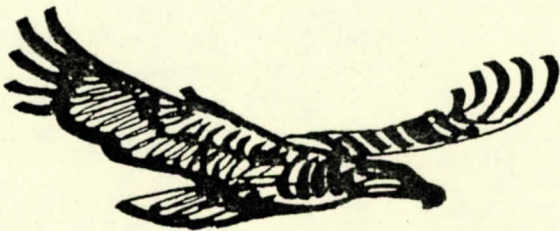
After receiving his degree, Platts became an important U.S. Forest Service spokesman for proper management of riparian habitat which, although it constitutes a small percentage of federal lands, receives a high percentage of wildlife use. His research into management problems and grazing systems has led to changes in grazing practices to maintain and improve riparian habitat. Currently he is investigating elk management practices as they affect riparian habitat in Yellowstone National Park.

Platt's interest in riparian habitat underlies his interest in beaver and their management. Given the proper construction materials, beaver will build dams that resist flooding and stabilize streams and valleys—something all watershed managers like. In the absence of suitable building materials, however, beaver will use small willow, sage, and the like for their dams. Dams made of these materials are subject to erosion and washouts, which can be extremely destructive to riparian habitat. Platt will address these and other issues in his "Good Beaver, Bad Beaver" presentation at the BAS annual banquet.

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Special thanks this month to Scott Cheney who, in addition to handling the Birders' Hotline, is helping get the *Stilt* out in a timely manner. His sweat and blisters are enabling me to go away and wander around Grand Gulch as if I hadn't a care in the world, and I appreciate it!

— TJG



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## WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Leon Astle, Logan  
Dan Binkerd, Logan  
Jeanette Blake, Logan  
Levell Bradley, Logan  
Bonnie Chambers, Smithfield  
Susan Crook, Logan  
Wendy Green, Smithfield  
Marilyn Hammond, Logan  
A. Hoffmeister, Logan  
Robert Hutchinson, Logan  
Scott Jacoby, Logan  
Isabel Katana, Logan  
Allan Keller, Preston  
Loretta Lockett, Smithfield  
Rebecca Maesato, Logan  
Joseph McTague, Lewiston  
Gary Pedersen, Richmond  
Ann Peralta, Providence  
David Price, Logan  
Linda Rawlins, Logan  
Rebecca Ream, Dingle, ID  
Larry Shulsen, Franklin, ID  
John Sigler, Logan  
Grace Smith, Providence  
Jay Stegner, Mendon  
Diana & Richard Toth, Logan  
Victoria Weber, Georgetown, ID  
Laretha Wickham, Newton  
George Wilson, Hyrum

## THANKS, RENEWING MEMBERS

Robert Atwood, Logan  
Shirley Badame, Logan  
Jeanne Chambers, Logan  
C. D. Cheney, Logan  
T. W. Daniel, Logan  
Paul Holden, Providence  
Carol Loveland, Logan  
Craig McGregor, Thatcher  
Ann Peralta, Fayetteville, AR  
William F. Sigler, Logan  
Donald Squibb, Logan  
Merlin Tams, Wellsville  
Kathryn C. Wanlass, Logan  
James Ward, Salt Lake City  
Nancy Warner, Logan  
Mrs. Howard Whelan Jr., Logan  
Bill White, Santa Fe, NM  
Dr. Gar Workman, Logan



## OBSERVATIONS OF WINTER FINCHES

On December 19, the day of the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count, I went up Dry Canyon with Tom Lyon and the Lewises of the Sierra Club. Despite snow flumes and limited visibility, we managed to see about 10 species of birds. Among these were several large flocks of winter finches: pine siskins, Cassin's finches, evening grosbeaks and pine grosbeaks. As we got up high in the canyon, we could see flocks of birds flying over and settling down in some trees. The evening grosbeaks were working over a subalpine fir so enthusiastically that we could see the cone scales flying and hear the crackle of the cones being ripped open. Still further up, as we got into deep snow, we were cheered up by the sight of about 40 pine grosbeaks all around us in the aspen and subalpine fir, on the snowberry bushes and in the snow.

Later on in the winter I saw a flock of pine grosbeaks in Central Park. Also I noticed the evening grosbeaks eating the box elder samaras, and the Cassin's finches on the ash fruit, which are one-winged samaras (maple fruit are 2-winged samaras). It appears that they have plenty of food, even if the sunflower seed supply runs low.

— Reinhard Jockel

## ESKIMO CURLEW EXTINCTION REVERSED

(Editor's note: the following story is printed verbatim from the *Endangered Species*, Technical Bulletin, Vol. XII, No. 8, published by the U.S. Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service.)

The eskimo curlew (*Numenius borealis*) has been thought by some people to be extinct or nearly so. A flurry of observations in coastal Texas in early 1960 raised speculation that the bird still survived at that time. But few observations were made in the following years, and hopes again diminished. In 1980, however, there were several observations of this species on migration in the central and southern United States and in several areas of Canada. One bird was reported on the Platte River in Nebraska in mid-April 1987. At least two more were reported along the Texas coast in late April and early May 1987. Finally, in late May, Canadian Wildlife Service biologists found a pair in the Canadian Arctic. Preliminary reports indicated that a nest may have been located.

In response to the increased number of observations of eskimo curlews, a group of shorebird specialists from the United States and Canada at the recent American Ornithologists' Union meeting in San Francisco met to discuss ideas for recovering the species from the brink of extinction. Among the ideas mentioned were increasing public awareness that the species is not extinct; characterizing migration, winter, and nesting

habitat; and protecting and managing known migration stopover areas.

## DENVER AUDUBON'S INSTITUTE OF RIVER ECOLOGY

The Denver Audubon Society and the Colorado Division of Wildlife invite you to experience the Institute of River Ecology, now in its second year. Explore the ecological diversity, wildlife and cultural heritage of the South Platte, one of Colorado's major rivers. Discover how many fish there really are on a secluded stretch of the river as you accompany fishery biologists using advanced sampling techniques. Find the birds that frequent streamside habitats in the mountains and on the plains. Do you want to know the latest on some of the major grazing, wildlife protection and water issues affecting our streams and rivers? Then join the Institute and discuss these topics with top experts on all sides of the issues. This is an exciting learning opportunity—one that you will remember for many years.

The Institute will run from July 10 to July 15, 1988, at Buffalo Creek, Colorado. Total cost is \$350, due by May 1; university credit is available for an additional charge. For registration and further information, contact Susan Q. Foster, Director, Institute of River Ecology, P. O. Box 243, Jamestown, CO 80455 (303-442-6333).

— TJG

## CRESTED BUTTE WILDFLOWER FESTIVAL

The Crested Butte Wildflower Festival is dedicated to sharing a universal appreciation of wildflowers, to assisting in their propagation, and to preserving this priceless natural resource for future generations.

Each summer for thousands of years the mountains and valleys around present-day Crested Butte, Colorado, have blossomed in a proliferation of countless species of wildflowers in every shape and hue imaginable. You are invited to view and enjoy this profusion through short informative courses in natural history, landscaping, propagation and photography. In addition, join in such festival activities as bicycling, hiking and horseback riding through the enchanting mountains and valleys. Participate in workshops covering natural history, photography and other activities. But most of all, enjoy the wildflowers!

For complete information on festival activities, registration and workshop fees, contact Crested Butte Wildflower Festival, % Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 1288, Crested Butte, CO 81224.

— TJG



## PROJECT FEEDERWATCH A CONTINUING SUCCESS

Last November's *Stillt* carried a story about Project FeederWatch, sponsored by Cornell University's Laboratory of Ornithology. This project relies on volunteers nationwide to observe and report the birds appearing at their feeders for one or two days every two weeks between October and April. This year we have had five cooperating observers in Cache Valley, and Cornell is seeking to add to its current enrollment of 4,000 volunteers. The charge to participate in the program is \$9.00 per year. Volunteers receive a newsletter reporting on the major findings gathered from their reports. This year, for instance, it comes as no surprise that juncos and house sparrows are the most frequent visitors at feeders . . . but who in Utah would have guessed that the mourning dove ranks third, being seen at 57% of all feeders across the country? The two tables below summarize the Project FeederWatch results for the period from November 14 through December 31, 1987.

Those interested in participating in Project FeederWatch should send a check for \$9.00 to Project FeederWatch, Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology, Sapsucker Woods, Ithaca, NY 14850.

— Al Stokes

(From *FeederWatch News*, Spring, 1988.)

Table 1. Species present at 25 percent or more of all feeders  
November 14, 1987 to January 1, 1988

Species	Percent of feeders visited*	Comments
Dark-eyed Junco	73	More common N than S
House Sparrow	61	Fewer in the SE
Mourning Dove	57	Especially E, more in NE than SE
House Finch	57	About equal in N & S, only slightly more in W than E
Northern Cardinal	55	Mostly E, more in SE than NE
Blue Jay	54	Mostly E, about equal in NE & SE
American Goldfinch	52	Mostly E, about equal in NE & SE
Tufted Titmouse	43	Mostly SE
Downy Woodpecker	42	Mostly E, more in N than S
Black-capped Chickadee	39**	Mostly N, slightly more E than W
White-breasted Nuthatch	37	Mostly NE
Pine Siskin	36	Quite evenly distributed
Carolina Chickadee	32**	Mostly SE
European Starling	29	About equal E & W, more in N than S
White-throated Sparrow	29	Mostly SE
Purple Finch	28	Mostly E, slightly more in S than N
Red-bellied Woodpecker	27	Mostly SE

\* Percent is the average of the values for the four regions, to avoid biasing results in favor of the region with the most feeders.

\*\* We may combine Carolina and Black-capped Chickadee in the future because they are very difficult to tell apart. If we do, the chickadee total will rise considerably.

Table 2. Most frequent visitors by quarter continent  
Percent of feeders visited

NORTHWEST		NORTHEAST		SOUTHWEST		SOUTHEAST	
Dark-eyed Junco	82	Blue Jay	88	House Sparrow	75	Northern Cardinal	92
House Finch	68	Dark-eyed Junco	79	Dark-eyed Junco	64	Tufted Titmouse	85
House Sparrow	63	Black-capped Chickadee	78	House Finch	59	American Goldfinch	76
Black-capped Chickadee	53	Northern Cardinal	77	Mourning Dove	54	Carolina Chickadee	76
Rufous-sided Towhee	40	Downy Woodpecker	76	Northern Cardinal	44	Blue Jay	74
Pine Siskin	39	American Goldfinch	75	Scrub Jay	37	Mourning Dove	74
Steller's Jay	37	Mourning Dove	75	Tufted Titmouse	33	Dark-eyed Junco	67
Northern Flicker	36	White-breasted Nuthatch	69	American Goldfinch	33	Carolina Wren	66
Downy Woodpecker	34	House sparrow	67	Blue Jay	33	Red-bellied Woodpecker	60
Song Sparrow	33	House Finch	59	Carolina Chickadee	33	Purple Finch	56
Scrub Jay	32	Tufted titmouse	51	Pine Siskin	31	White-throated Sparrow	54
European Starling	32	European Starling	51	Anna's Hummingbird	28	Downy Woodpecker	46



The eagle swoops down,  
Squawking and stretching  
Its claws.  
It splashes through the water  
As it grabs its prey.  
Flying high up to the cliff  
It finds its nest and  
Devours its morning meal.

— Crystal Schnell  
South Cache Middle School  
7th Grade English  
(with thanks to Margaret Pettis)

## WFRC NEEDS SUPPORT

Birds of prey such as eagles, falcons, hawks and owls are increasingly threatened by human-caused changes to the environment including logging, contaminants and both agricultural and urban development. The Western Foundation for Raptor Conservation (WFRC) needs financial assistance to assess the impacts of these activities on western American raptors, and to help reverse population declines. WFRC studies in Nevada, Utah and New Mexico, for instance, suggest that Cooper's hawk populations in the west may be declining rapidly. The cause of this decline is unknown, but it may arise from habitat loss, contaminants or persecution. Additional research is necessary to better define population trends and to investigate the cause or causes of population declines. These and other programs, unfortunately, are limited by the availability of funds. WFRC needs support for volunteer subsistence, travel, supplies, and to expand educational programs. WFRC invites you to join them and help support their valuable work. Membership brings a semi-annual newsletter, discounts on selected bird books—and, most importantly, the knowledge that you are supporting a most effective research and conservation program.

Membership begins at \$15 per year. Please send your check to WFRC, Inc., PO Box 304, Albuquerque, NM 87103 (505/291-9224).

—TJG

## BURR TRAIL VICTORY IN LOGAN

Logan conservationists won a victory over Garfield County in January when the Cache County Council rejected Garfield County's request for \$5,000 to support their legal costs in the Burr Trail lawsuit. Conservationists seek to prevent Garfield County from grading and paving the historic Burr Trail. Despite a plea from First District Congressman Jim Hansen (R) before the vote, the Cache County Council voted against supporting Garfield County.

The Council had debated the issue in several earlier meetings, including a public hearing in November; at the hearing, nobody spoke in favor of Garfield County.

The battle over Burr Trail is now before the Federal Appeals Court in Denver. Conservationists from the Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society, the National Parks and Conservation Association and the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance lost the first court round in Salt Lake City last November. An injunction is preventing Garfield County from continuing development until the case is reviewed in Denver.

— Adapted from the *Utah Sierran*, March 1988/TJG

## BAS PLANNING MEETING: MARCH

The BAS planning committee met March 16 and heard reports from the education and conservation committees and the 1987 financial report from treasurer Betty Boeker.

The committee agreed to begin asking for small donations from private groups when the BAS education committee provides slide shows and other presentations. Bruce Pendery agreed to write a letter to the Bureau of Reclamation supporting a move to turn land adjacent to the shores of Newton Dam over to the Department of Fish and Wildlife for management. Such a move would improve the quality of shoreline property and reduce erosion and sedimentation into the reservoir.

The planning committee also agreed to call a special meeting to discuss and learn about issues regarding the current municipal golf course plans. The meeting time and place will be announced.

In financial matters, the committee approved donating \$100 to the National Audubon Society in support of Audubon Action. Other money was donated to help Bruce Pendery, BAS Conservation Chair and longtime activist, to attend a week-long lobbying and environmental affairs training workshop in Washington, D.C. Bruce will in turn hold workshops, teaching what he learns to BAS members.

It was announced that the position of BAS vice-president is now open for nominations. Under an increasingly heavy work and school load, Jill Smith has decided to turn over the reins to someone else. Turn in or telephone your nomination to Cindy Kerbs.

— Scott Cheney



# TREASURER'S REPORT: 1987

Bridgerland Audubon Society lost \$200.13 in 1987, ending the year with a bank balance of \$9,409.39. Summaries of income and expense with supporting details appear below.

— Betty Boeker

## Income and Expense Summary

### Income

Dues	\$ 1464.50
Seed sales	3571.50
*Donations	1533.62
*Resale Items	1329.45
To print Cache Trails	1833.00
Cache Trails Sales	798.00
Holly Faire	512.88
Banquet	480.00
Dividends	445.95
Rentals	220.90
Recycling	517.20
Slide Shows	40.00
Stilt Subscriptions	25.00

Total Income	\$12,772.00
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### Expenses

*Stilt	\$ 1453.93
Seed & Bags	2200.00
*Donations	967.75
*Resale Items	1201.17
Print Cache Trials	2444.00
Cache Trail Shares	529.20
Holly Faire	95.17
*Banquet	759.21
Taxes	394.43
Rentals	160.25
Recycling	143.43
Slide Shows	19.35
Lobbying Expense	60.06
Club Expense	233.58
Meeting Expense	298.60
Scholarships	1350.00
Trail Guides	662.00

Total Expense	\$12,972.13
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### NET INCOME

(\$ 200.13)

\*Detailed breakdown appears below

## Change in Bank Accounts

	Checking	Savings	Total
As of 31 Dec 1987	\$ 3590.18	\$ 5819.21	\$ 9409.39
As of 1 Jan 1987	6067.86	3541.66	9609.52
Net Change	(\$2477.68)	\$ 2277.55	(\$ 200.13)

## Itemizations

### Income Itemization

#### Donations to Bridgerland Audubon Society

Campbell Scientific	601.62
Pepperidge Farms	300.00
For Recycling	452.00
For ecology camp	125.00
For Audubon Adventures	50.00
Miscellaneous	5.00

Total Donations                      \$ 1533.62

#### Resale Items

T-Shirts	\$ 751.00
Note Paper	313.70
Guides	242.50
Checklists	15.25
Patches	4.00
Feeders	3.00

Total Resales                      \$ 1329.45

### Expense Itemizations

#### Donations by Bridgerland Audubon Society

CPCL	253.10
UWA	200.00
Books	65.78
KUSU-FM	120.00
Audubon Adventures	300.00
Goshute Project	28.87

Total Donations                      \$ 967.75

#### Purchases for Resale

T-Shirts	\$ 401.74
Note Paper	799.43

Total Purchases                      \$ 1201.17

#### Banquet Expenses

Transportation	\$ 158.00
Food	530.80
Other	70.41

Total Expense                      \$ 759.21

#### Stilt Expenses

Printing	\$ 944.55
Mailing	509.38*

Total Expense                      \$ 1453.93

\*Includes most of 1986 costs

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## Income and Expense History

<u>Year</u>	<u>Income</u>	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Net</u>
1983	\$ 5489.81	\$ 4746.96	\$ 742.85
1984	7261.08	6388.16	872.92
1985	7968.26	7539.51	428.75
1986	10739.61	7760.81	2978.80
1987	12772.00	12972.13	(200.13)



## BAS PLANNING MEETING: FEBRUARY

Newly elected and appointed members of the BAS planning committee met on February 17, 1988, for their first gathering. Committee members discussed terms of their positions and job descriptions. The committee appointed Ron Ryel to head up this year's Annual Banquet, to be held April 21 at the Bluebird. John Sigler will chair the conservation award committee.

In other business the committee approved using BAS funds to purchase a slide projector and screen for the chapter. Larry Ryel is in charge of selecting and purchasing the equipment. The committee also agreed to donate up to \$50 towards a "Save Logan Canyon" benefit dance, which will be sponsored by a number of Cache Valley organizations.

Newly elected BAS president Cindy Kerbs jumped head first into her position by agreeing to write several letters. She will write to Governor Bangerter expressing BAS views regarding Logan Canyon, to the Utah Wildlife Leadership Coalition authorizing BAS board member John Barnes to vote by proxy on behalf of BAS, and to County Exec. Bruce King nominating John Barnes, Chris Call, and Oliver Grath to serve on the Cache County Weed Board.

The meeting ended with committee members agreeing to prepare summaries of their 1987 accomplishments.

—Scott Cheney

## HOTLINE NOTES

John Flannery has taken advantage of the clear skies lately, cruising the valley in his plane. In the past few weeks his aerial surveys have verified the spring migration. John reports close to 10,000 ducks along the Bear River from Swan Lake south. Over 5,000 Canada geese, and 300 swans are resting along the river banks and in fields throughout the valley. John also reports several white pelicans and possibly a snow goose. Other birds on the hotline this month include a pair of wood ducks along the Logan River, south of Willow Park, and mountain bluebirds near Pelican Pond. The most confusing report this month is of a pale, whitish bird feeding with siskins at local feeders. The consensus has been it is probably an albino siskin, but may be an albino Lawrence's goldfinch. If you see this bird, call the hotline.

Thanks to all of you who keep the hotline ringing. Keep it up as migration gets better. 753-1893.

— Scott Cheney

## BOOK REVIEW

Reilly, Edgar M. and Gorton Carruth. *The Bird Watcher's Diary*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 218 pp. List price, \$12.95, hardbound with flexible covers.

This is an unusual book. It seems to have a split personality. The title implies a journal for daily record keeping, but only about one-fourth of the pages are designed for this purpose.

According to the authors, the objectives of the book are two-fold: (1) to provide beginning bird watchers with answers to their most frequent questions about birds, and (2) to encourage regular record keeping. The book's organization is based on weeks. For every generic week of the year, there is one page for notes (22 lines), as well as an article on some aspect of birding or bird biology. Individual articles range in length from one to several pages. Surprisingly, the shortest write-up is "Keeping Records," and it doesn't occur until page 166.

There is a wealth of fascinating bird lore here. I found it well written in a lively style. Unfortunately, I also found several instances of misleading information and even misinformation. For perhaps a third of the weeks, the topics covered are timely and relate to the season. The remaining topics are assigned to weeks with little regard to time of year. As a reference book, it falls short because related subjects are often widely separated. For example, there are five units that deal with the general subject of feeding and attracting birds scattered throughout the book. Furthermore, there are no references given for the material presented and only a very limited bibliography.

To sum up, nearly everyone will learn something from the text, especially beginning and intermediate birders. But I feel the authors could have provided a more useful contribution if they had abandoned the diary aspects and written a more complete and documented source book for their intended audience.

— Larry Ryel

## A RAMBLE ALONG THE BEAR RIVER

February 26, 1988

Clear, calm—temperature in 40's

I enjoy walking along stretches of the Bear River. This morning I started at the old Benson School and cut down across the ice of the large oxbow there to the river. It was easy going on the ice and I didn't need to force my way through the dense cockleburs that have come in there so thickly since the high waters of two years ago. While momentarily resting I heard unmistakable soft tapping of a downy woodpecker above me. I moved off some 30 feet and sat down on a log recently felled by a beaver to



observe it. The downy was working on a nest cavity in a dead willow, making the hole in a slanting limb about eight inches in diameter and working on the underside, undoubtedly of some value, a protection from rain. The opening of the hole was almost a perfect circle about three inches in diameter. He would make anywhere from four to six rapid pecks, then withdraw his head, letting the chips fall but sometimes giving a rapid sidewise jerk of his head to free the chips from his beak. He worked without rest for the 20 minutes that I was there.

I wondered how a woodpecker knows how wide a hole to make? A carpenter merely chooses the right size auger for his design and drills the hole accordingly. I suspected that the downy might use another method. Could he use the contour of the widest part of his body—just back of its shoulders—as calipers? In this way as the hole went deeper the downy should enlarge the hole as he was able to put his head and shoulders farther into the hole. My downy was just at that stage. As I ponder this question the downy started pecking at the upper rim of the hole and then a little at one side. This happened twice during the course of the 20 minutes. I didn't have to look up to tell when the downy shifted from pecking at the soft rotted heartwood to the harder surface layer. For the pecking sound became very much louder. The downy seemed oblivious of me sitting just 30 feet away. But between every second or third pecking bout he stopped to look about for a few seconds. When I returned to the site an hour later the downy was gone. This didn't surprise me, for in most birds nest-building is concentrated in morning hours.

After leaving the downy still at work I headed westward still hoping to spot a horned owl in the tall old willows growing along the river. Just as I was tempted to walk on the ice of the large oxbow I spotted a well-beaten path some three feet wide and for once was thankful for the work of a three-wheeler. This had opened up a fine path through dense cattail, hardstem bulrush and the ubiquitous cocklebur, enabling me to penetrate into parts of the marsh I had never before explored. I came out onto the bank of the Bear River at a place where the vegetation had been well matted down, the work of beaver where they had been cutting willow trees and hauling sections down into the water. The basal 10 to 15 feet of the five willow trees that had been felled remained more or less horizontal to the ground. By examining the successive piles of chips the beaver had left as they had cut the fallen tree into sections I could tell that they had hauled off the entire terminal segment of the tree. The rest had been cut into five-foot sections. But at one place the beaver had run into trouble trying to pull a segment beneath a fallen branch; so it had cut the segment into three smaller pieces which were still lying there.

For the most part the beaver had gnawed on the trees right where they had fallen. Unlike the smooth-barked aspen, willows have a rough thick bark which beaver will not eat. Instead, they strip off the tough outer layer of bark to get at the soft inner bark. Where the bark did not readily strip off the beaver had made mincemeat of this outer bark and left the rust-red chewings beneath the log as it chewed along. Only after "clearing the decks," so to speak, was the beaver able to chew the moist, light-colored inner bark, its tooth marks clearly visible.

Beaver are now plentiful along the Bear River in Cache Valley. But they seem bent on cutting down most of the large willows along the banks. Fortunately for the beaver the high-water conditions of the past several years created ideal seedbeds and willow seedlings six to eight feet tall now form an almost impenetrable thicket for 50 feet back of the river banks. These should provide food for beaver for many years to come.

— Al Stokes

## **WHAT'S HAPPENED TO THE EAGLES AT WILLARD CANYON?**

Spring fever, cabin fever, or sheer fascination with eagles—no matter the reason, some 70 persons turned out for the annual eagle watch on March 5 at the mouth of Willard Canyon. Eagles were disappointingly scarce, perhaps partly due to the overcast skies and poor soaring weather. Most appeared far up the canyon. But a more logical explanation for the low numbers is that the Bear River marshes no longer provide the once-abundant food for them. Now it seems that a new, rich food source is where the Jordan River empties into Great Salt Lake. The Jordan has overflowed its banks making the shallow waters attractive to carp. Bald eagles have discovered this place. In the last week of February towards sunset 109 were counted as they came in to roost in the large trees along the Jordan River. One of these had a red tag, almost certainly a bird banded in Glacier Park. The staff of the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources had spotting scopes set up so that the several hundred visitors could get good views. Bridgerland Audubon will probably go there next March if this pattern continues.

In the meantime bald eagles are still in Cache Valley. A good place to look for them is on the Mendon Road along the Little Bear River.

— Al Stokes



## SPIDERS ON THE MOVE

While walking across a large ice-covered oxbow of the Bear River one sunny February day with the temperature inching into the 50s, I caught sight of what I thought was a tiny leaf drifting down past me. As it struck the ice it began to move. This "leaf" was a spider, floating on its gossamer thread to wherever the breeze might take it. What a hazardous way to change domicile, placing itself at the mercy of the wind and alighting in an unknown world. I watched the spider make one false move then head straight away from the sun. It moved at a good clip for a spider for perhaps six to eight inches, then stopped abruptly. But not just stop. It immediately straightened all eight legs, raising its body well clear of the ice, and turned its abdomen upwards at about 45°. Smart, I thought. If it needed to stop to regain its body temperature and energy after that 8-inch run, that was an adaptive way to keep its body well above the icy substrate. With each stop the spider rested for about 15 seconds and then made a straight move of another eight inches. It had covered about six feet when it suddenly disappeared. After a few minutes I walked slowly up towards it, at first not seeing any signs of it. Then I spotted a tiny dark spot beneath the loose, flaky ice crystals covering the more solid ice beneath. The spider had burrowed down well out of sight of any bird passing overhead. I used my finger to bring the spider to the surface, but it only buried itself deeper. It seemed in no mood for escape across the ice. I left it alone, marveling that the spider, dumped in this hostile environment, had found this means of protection. Would it resume its journey after dark?

As I continued my walk across the ice I spotted other spiders, about one every 10 feet. All were buried beneath the ice. There must have been hundreds and hundreds in that vast open ice field. Perhaps most of these would die, and only those lucky ones that had parachuted safely to solid ground would survive. What a wierd way for an animal to change its domicile. Climb up onto some raised plant stem, pay out a long silken thread to float downwind in the breeze and then launch out into the air, using the silken thread to stay aloft. Do spiders launch themselves at certain times of night or day or certain temperature to enhance their chances of finding a suitable landing? I had thought from my reading that it was only the very tiny, young spiders that ballooned in this fashion to disperse from their birthplace. But these spiders seemed well-grown, about 3/16 inch body length. I neglected to check their sex. Might they all be males in search of mates with the start of another growing season?

I thought these were wolf spiders, a carnivorous group that have better eyesight than most spiders, strong legs and ability to move about readily on land and even water. But these were brown rather than black. Nevertheless, my spiderman, Jim MacMahon, confirmed that these were

indeed wolf spiders. It seems that wolf spiders over-winter as adults. Moreover, they may breed in any month of the year. On a warm day the spiders are stimulated to move. They hold the abdomen up, just as I had noticed, to pay out a foot or two of gossamer and then launch into the air when a breeze comes up. Perhaps down on the ice there wasn't enough wind to relaunch the spiders. And of course, they had nothing to climb up on.

— Al Stokes

## A THANK YOU TO NONGAME WILDLIFE SUPPORTERS

Utah's nongame wildlife program has achieved considerable progress since 1980 when the state Legislature provided for a voluntary contribution checkoff on the individual income tax return. With this public support, development of better information for protecting and managing Utah's more than 600 nongame species is well underway.

Currently, comprehensive plans for nongame programs are being developed. These plans include cooperative input from individuals representing scientific, land management, wildlife management, and public interests. The plans identify nongame management objectives for the next five years. They will be available for public review in 1988.

Nongame work programs emphasize wildlife habitat protection; endangered, threatened, and sensitive species conservation; determination of nongame species status and distribution in Utah; urban nongame wildlife enhancement; public enjoyment of nongame wildlife species; and public education regarding nongame wildlife issues.

The Division of Wildlife Resources expresses appreciation to everyone who contributes to and supports the nongame wildlife program. Your contributions help assure that nongame wildlife and their habitats are given the attention they deserve. Your input and interest strengthen our ability to accomplish this important work.



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## CONTRIBUTION REMINDER

Checking the box on your state income tax form can be your way of "Doing Something Wild" for Utah's nongame wildlife. All donations are tax deductible for the next year. An explanation of the nongame income tax checkoff appears in the instruction booklet of your income tax form. *If you do not receive a tax refund, you may still help* by sending a check to the Nongame Wildlife Fund, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, 1596 West North Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah 84116.

**DO  
SOMETHING  
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## UTAH'S PEREGRINE FALCON POPULATION GROWING

Utah's peregrine falcon breeding population is now larger than many people ever dared imagine: 55 pairs statewide. Five pairs, including the most famous pair at the former Westin Hotel Utah, live within the Wasatch Front reintroduction area. The rest are scattered throughout the southern half of the state. There is little doubt that many more peregrine falcons have yet to be discovered in more remote areas of Utah.

Nongame personnel are elated with these numbers but remain concerned about the absence of nesting pairs along the Wasatch Front where 47 young peregrines have been released since 1979 and about the significant thinning of eggshell fragments collected from nest sites statewide. An intensive nest survey along the cliffs of the Wasatch Front has been planned for the spring of 1988.

Eggshell thinning is a problem not easily resolved. The pesticide DDT, believed to be the primary factor in the decline of peregrine falcons, continues to be used south of the United States where peregrines migrate during Utah's winter months. Biologists suspect the falcons ingest DDT by eating contaminated prey. Even after migrating back to Utah, peregrines run the risk of continued exposure to DDT by eating birds which carry the chemical in their bodies.

The recovery of the peregrine falcon in Utah appears promising, but much work remains to be accomplished before we can call the program a total success.

## A BIRD FOR THE BOOKS

When a Cox's sandpiper was identified in Duxbury, Massachusetts, on September 15, 1987, it caused a sensation among birders that has not yet subsided. According to Susan Roney Drennan, editor of *American Birds*, Audubon's ornithological field journal, "This was the first New World occurrence of this bird, and it was seen in juvenal plumage, which is not yet even described in the literature." The magazine will carry the first—and exclusive—details of this historic sighting in its forthcoming Winter Issue, along with all-new color photographs and a painting of the bird.

The little-known gray and brown bird, similar in appearance to several more common shorebirds among which it was found, was first described in 1982, from only two specimens of adult birds found in Australia. "That the Cox's sandpiper showed up in America so recently after having been discovered is amazing," says Drennan.

Rarities (even if not once-in-a-lifetime rarities like the Cox's sandpiper) add spice to a birder's endeavors. Rarities are the reason a birder carefully looks over every bird in a flock, meticulously contemplating every detail...until, one day, he or she spots the one with the slightly longer bill, some extra shading here, a telltale mark there.

Consider the Cox's: It took people who have looked at hundreds of thousands of shorebirds to be able to pick out the bonus bird, according to Drennan. But such abilities are not beyond the amateur who is willing to dedicate time to working on identification skills. And, Drennan advises, "always take notes and pictures in the field."

Reporting rarities is an important function of *American Birds*, the only journal that lists contributors' sightings each season along with their names. The magazine's regional reports provide a continent-wide picture of trends in bird populations, and give birders an excellent idea of what to look for, when, and where. With the upcoming Winter Issue, birders everywhere will be on the lookout for the birding world's latest "mega-rarity."

A sample issue and subscription blank can be obtained by writing: *American Birds*, National Audubon Society, 950 Third Ave., New York, NY 10022.



The Bridgerland Audubon Society meets the second Thursday of each month, October through May, in the Council Room of the new Logan City Building, 255 N. Main. Meetings start at 7:30 p.m. The BAS Planning Committee meets every third Wednesday, October through May, in the Logan Library at 7:00 p.m. Everyone is welcome to attend.

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Membership in the Bridgerland Audubon Society includes a subscription to *The Still*, as well as the *Audubon* magazine. The editor of *The Still* invites submissions of any kind, due on the 15th of each month. Send to 718 N. 200 E., Logan, UT 84321.

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# National Audubon Society

## CHAPTER

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

#### HOW DO I JOIN?

Complete the following application and enclose a check for the amount for the appropriate type of membership. Send it to:

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY  
Chapter Membership Data Center  
Box 2664  
Boulder, CO 80321  
Credit Bridgerland Audubon W-52

Check membership category desired:

- ☐ Introductory one year / \$20
- ☐ Individual / \$30 (H)
- ☐ Family / \$38 (J)
- ☐ Student / \$18 (K)
- ☐ Senior Citizen Individual / \$21 (N)
- ☐ Senior Citizen Family / \$23 (P)
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