



# THE STILT

BRIDGERLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume 24, No. 7

March 1996

## COUNTRY ROADS

I was a lucky country kid. My job was to explore every pool and waterfall in the many little creeks around my house in northern New Jersey. We lived in the woods, two miles from a small town where I went to school. I wasn't 10 yet, so you can see why it was important that I spend my days climbing trees, turning over wet leaves to find yellow and black salamanders, catching frogs, turtles, and poison ivy, and nibbling on the fresh watercress I found in little brooks meandering from running springs on the hill.

The water in the brook by our house was crystal blue and icy cold! The large pond it fed was so frigid that a fast plunge into it, even in late summer, would loft me out of the water onto the bank like a golf ball from a sand trap. I'd stand there straight as a board for several seconds before I could move, my pinky-red body like a boiled lobster. I did it only on a date.

In June, my chums and I made our annual pilgrimage to the swamp where we gathered punk (cattails to the uninitiated). We cut the longest, fattest ones we could find. If it was a good year, they were at least a foot long and an inch or more in diameter. After drying them on a huge flat boulder in the full sun for several weeks, we would light them with wooden matches found next to Mom's gas stove. The stems were 18 inches long, allowing us to wave the smoking punk around, sometimes clenching the stem between our teeth like a pipe. The smoke made our clothes smell great and kept

the mosquitoes and gnats away after dusk as we walked down the white gravel path from our house to the lake.

Several evenings a week we would sit in lawn chairs watching the view down the four-mile lake to the trees on the other end. From our place we could see the largest of the two small islands in the lake and a few bass fishermen wishing away the sunset. No gasoline motors were allowed on the lake, so it was paddle, sail or rely on an electric motor. If no weather was coming in, the evening quiet of the lake set a peaceful mood.

The four of us spent such evenings talking about what young boys talk about, while alternating between blowing the red, hot ash on the end of the punk and trying to poke it at lingering mosquitoes. We found stars and planets, caught fireflies, watched the lights across the lake and the occasional victorious bass

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# Calendar

**Thursday, March 14.** Fish, Eagles and Elephants: A Naturalist in Southern Africa. Nick Strickland, a retired geneticist from the University of Cape Town, will share with Bridgerland Audubon Society members and guests a photographic safari of his travels throughout southern Africa. In his travels, Nick particularly focused on the many species of wild mammals and birds in this area. Refreshments will be provided. The meeting will begin at 7:30 P.M. in the Logan City Building, 225 North Main. All are invited! For more information, contact Robert Schmidt, 755-9262 (evenings).

**Wednesday, March 20.** BAS Planning Meeting. 7:00 p.m. Chair and board members join to discuss projects and funding. As a member, your input is always welcome. Brigit Burt will host this month's meeting at 1000 North 320 West #4 in Logan.

## Field Trips

Trips are an important aspect of Bridgerland Audubon's programs. They get you out the door and are guaranteed to get you into something interesting and introduce you to new friends and places! All trips are led by friendly and knowledgeable folks who can show you stuff (that's a technical term) about our environment you may not have noticed. Unless stated otherwise, reservations are not needed, trips are open to all ages, and carpooling is available. If there is a trip you would like to lead or one you'd like to see offered, please call Bryan Dixon at 752-6830.

### **Saturday, March 9.** Bald Eagles at Willard

A perfect trip to chase away cabin fever and get some exercise. This is an annual outing led by Jim Sinclair and Reinhard Jockel to observe Bald Eagles, Golden Eagles and other raptors. First stop is at Willard Bay State Park about 10 miles south of Brigham City, where eagles have been roosting all winter. From there the group will drive to the edge of the Willard gravel pit and climb up a narrow ravine to a more gentle ridge and a splendid overlook of Willard Canyon and graceful raptors soaring at eye level on their way to roosts in the firs above. We may even see some wildflowers poking up toward the spring. It's a strenuous hike, so bring good boots, warm clothes and lunch. The start is relaxed, however, as we don't leave until 10:00 A.M. from the southwest corner of Fred Meyers' parking lot. Return by late afternoon. If in doubt about the weather, call Jim at 752-0061.

**Saturday, March 30.** Amalga Barrens—Returning Waterfowl and Other Early Migrants. The Amalga Barrens are famous for their shallow ponds which attract tadpoles, aquatic invertebrates, and the critters that feed on them—namely birds! Owls are nesting, Sandhill Cranes are dancing, and all those odd ducks

are hanging out waiting for the winds north. A bit early for the shorebirds, but you never know if you don't go! The official beginning of the Spring Migration – be there! Trip leaves from the southwest corner of Fred Meyers' parking lot at 9:00 A.M. and return by lunch. For more information, call Alice Lindahl, 753-7744.

## April

**Friday Night and Saturday, April 12-13.** Grouse Courtship Camping Trip. Visit the Curlew National Grassland in southern Idaho to observe Sage and Sharp-tailed Grouse strutting their stuff. We'll camp Friday night at the Curlew Campground north of Snowville at the south end of Stone Reservoir and get together at 7 P.M. around the campfire to listen to Ken Timothy, Forest Service biologist, discuss the grouse mating rituals.

Saturday, we'll get up before dawn to watch the birds on their leks, and then return to camp for breakfast. Afterwards, we'll visit other places at the Grasslands to look for other birds and creatures. We may even get to hear a loon! Return Saturday afternoon. Carpools encouraged; reservations required; call Bryan Dixon at 752-6830.

### **Saturday, April 20.** Third Annual Trees and Trails Day.

Come out and help us weed and water previous plantings, build trails and revegetate areas. We encourage you to bring a picnic lunch and enjoy the day at the park. Everyone is invited to celebrate Earth Day by helping us help the park.

## May

**Saturday-Sunday, May 4-5.** Antelope Island Overnight. Our annual trip to see the wonders of an island in the Great Salt Lake. Leave early Saturday morning (carpooling available) and return Sunday night. We'll stop along the causeway to look for unusual shorebirds (like Black-bellied Plover, Showy Plover, etc.) and camp on the island in a special campground all to ourselves. You can go off hiking on your own or join a naturalist for guided walks. We'll see interesting birds, wildflowers, mountain goats, buffalo, and who knows what else? Reservations required. Contact Ted Evans, 753-2258.

**Saturday, May 11 and Sunday, May 12.** Annual Bear River Canoe Trips. Two one-day trips down our Bear River to explore the wildlife and riparian habitats. We're sure to see some good warblers and the occasional beaver and muskrat. One year we even had an elk swim the river just in front of us! Ponder the disappearing Great Blue Heron rookery and maybe see some owls on the nest. Reservations required; rental canoes at USU Outdoor Recreation and Trailhead Sports. Call Alice Lindahl, 753-7744.



**Annual Birdathon.** How many different species can you see in one day? This is a fund raiser for Audubon environmental education and habitat improvement projects. We ask donors to pledge per species seen. Last year the top group saw 112 species in one day – one group saw 98 species by noon! We raised over \$6,000 last year and did a lot of good. (We also had a lot of fun, but that's beside the point – or is it?)

**Mid-Week Heron Rookery Canoe Trip.** A leisurely two hour canoe trip to float under the magnificent Great Blue Heron Rookery. By then, the chicks will have hatched, and if we're quiet, we'll minimize disturbance and see some wonderful sights.

**Edible and Medicinal Plants.** Here's your chance to explore the variety of plants growing here in Cache Valley that have been found to have direct value as food or medicine for people. Yum!

## What's Happening at Stewart Nature Park?

**Dedication Ceremony:** Denzil Stewart Nature Park is the Utah Centennial project for Cache County. The Centennial funds are being used to build an information shelter and nature trail in the park. Everyone is invited to attend the dedication ceremony Tuesday, May 28. This is a great chance to meet Denzil Stewart, demonstrate your support for the park, and be one of the first to see the new interpretive signs.

**Changing of the Guard:** After two years as Chairman of the Denzil Stewart Nature Park Steering Committee, Sandra Schimmelpfennig will soon be leaving Logan. We are seeking someone to fill her shoes. The steering committee is a group of seven dedicated professionals who volunteer their time and expertise to improve the park. If you are interested in helping please let us know. For more information call Sandra at 755-3153.

Denzil Stewart Nature Park is located on 100 South and 700 East in the "Island."

## Call for New Board Members

Ever notice that list of folks on the back page of each *Stilt*? They're the people who set the direction and manage the variety of programs undertaken by BAS, from monthly meetings to banquets, public hearings, education and conservation programs, and outings. Each year some members of the group step down and are replaced by new blood.

The responsibilities vary. Chairpersons have line responsibilities, like membership, newsletter, etc. Trustees are more free-wheeling, filling in when special projects come up and representing BAS at meetings in Ogden and SLC. This group is also responsible for the \$10,000 plus annual budget including fundraising and

approving expenditures. If this sounds interesting, perhaps there's a place for you. We'll be having elections in April or May, so if you'd like to serve the environment and the community and have fun doing it with a bunch of other committed people, contact Robert Schmidt, 755-9262, or any of the current officers before the end of March.

## Country Roads

Continued from page 1.

fisherman coming home late. All the captured fireflies were released shortly after they were caught—otherwise they stopped blinking. I understood that, because people are the same way.

As the summer progressed, the evenings grew warmer and more humid and the lake water more inviting. By August, we ended hot evenings with a skinny dip before going home to bed. The warm lake and evening just hung with a sultry stillness that time of year. From a hundred yards away in the stillness we could hear sounds of swimming and laughter—confirming that a good idea is contagious.

Hot, moonless nights were the best family events. Moonlight brought out the couples, but the moonless nights brought out my parents and grandparents to wade into the lake. After they were in, they took off their bathing suits and threw them on the edge, joined by the kids. It was a funny time. The moms talked and we fought Dad and Grandpa for standing room on the underwater rock. Grandma was deathly afraid of the harmless, black water snake that lived in the wall separating the lawn from the lake. Of course, there developed a family tradition of telling her the snake was behind her as she was busting the party by heading for shore. She knew we were kidding, but the picture of it in her mind made it real. Her hasty retreat always added great comedy to what would have otherwise been a dignified retrieval of her towel in the dark. After Grandma got out, the rest would, within a few minutes, end their conversations and slowly drift to the wall by the lawn where they, too, would retrieve their strategically placed towels to wear as they headed for their beds not 50 yards away.

I walked barefoot along dirt roads all summer, knowing that someday I'd have to leave my country heaven to work in a big city like my dad. I didn't want to be like my dad. He had a poor sense of humor and was an all-business, no-polliwog type of guy. I thought the city did that to people. That was the only fear I had . . . that, and the boy-eating black bear that followed me at night when I was walking home alone. That bear taught me to sprint the finish, a virtue I have carried with me all of my life. On those occasions, the screen door slamming behind me was the best sound in the world.

—Theodore S. Wentworth  
from *Chicken Soup for the Soul Cookbook*



## The Hotline Gets Wired!

The Hotline has limped along this year despite my lack of attention. But I'm trying to reform—I desperately need your birds in my life—so starting NOW, we're putting together an e-mail Hotline list.

If you'd like to be part of this, e-mail me—[nanwill@cc.usu.edu](mailto:nanwill@cc.usu.edu)—and I'll add you to the list. Whenever anyone sends me a message about bird sightings, I'll forward it to everyone on the list. As long as you remember to check your e-mail this should work a bit faster than playing phone tag with our answering machines.

I'd like to get the Net.Hotline up and running in time for the spring arrivals check-in—which, by the way, has had its first call; Alice Lindahl spotted a sandhill crane at the Amalga Barrens on February 18, earlier than normal. I was in Albuquerque the week before and saw on the news that New Mexico's cranes had begun to leave their winter camp at the Bosque del Apache.

**Important:** If you're not "wired," don't worry! We're keeping the good old-fashioned telephone Hotline in place. The Net.Hotline is a supplement; information from phoned-in bird reports will be posted to those who are online, but we'll still call everyone who's not.

Questions? Call me, 753-6268—or send me e-mail. Your choice. Either way, I need to know which way you'd like your info.

— Nancy Williams

## USU Canoe and Kayak Club

The club promotes white water and flat water paddling and rafting and river conservation. Membership is open to the community. Benefits of membership include: the newsletter, pool sessions for roll practice, low cost rental of the club kayak and scatpacker, free loan of club videos, and the opportunity to meet other boaters and learn about local boating opportunities. Info: Tom Rivest, 753-7545 or Jean Lown, 752-6830; [LOWN@cc.USU.EDU](mailto:LOWN@cc.USU.EDU).

### Spring Activities

**Pool Sessions:** Practice your canoe and kayak strokes and rolls. A workshop will be held during the first half-hour of each pool session. Workshops will include instruction in strokes, how to roll, and river safety skills. USU HPER pool, alternate Mondays and Wednesdays 7:30-9:15 P. M.; call for dates.

**Bear River Clean-up** and planting for bank stabilization in conjunction with Audubon.

**Dream Globally, Paddle Locally:** Thursday, March 28, 7:30 P.M. Nutrition and Food Science building, room 102. Slide show of kayaking in Chile and canoeing and kayaking in Cache Valley.

## Web Page Author Needed

The National Audubon Society now has a Worldwide Web site complete with membership information, events, information on environmental causes and legislative alerts—see <http://www.audubon.org>. One page on the Web site lists the chapters throughout the country with links to their home pages. National has even offered to host home pages on their server for chapters which don't have access to their own server.

Which brings us to Bridgerland Audubon Society. We need a home page to advertise outings and events, alert locals to interesting wildlife sightings, as well as give prospective new members a way to find us. If you would be interested in developing a BAS site, send an e-mail message to Bryan Dixon at [bdixon@cache.net](mailto:bdixon@cache.net) or Nancy Williams at [nanwill@cc.usu.edu](mailto:nanwill@cc.usu.edu) and we'll get ourselves good and wired!

## Renewing Members

Fred Baker  
Jennifer & Gary Belovsky  
Ronn & Jill Carpenter  
Budge Clinic  
Brenda Cooper & Ted Pease  
Mr Windsor Copley  
Joy Dougherty  
Gail Duering  
Karen Fasy  
Kurt Finlayson  
Jerry Fuhriman & Sue Sanborn  
Katherine Gilbert  
Larry J Jacobsen/Adams Elementary  
Karen Krogh  
Gene Lee  
William & Marjorie Lewis  
Mark Malmstrom  
Barbara G McGarey  
Mark Nafziger  
John M Neuhold  
Emma K Olsen  
Sharon L Osowski  
Ann W Peralta  
Linda B Rawlins  
Devoe C Rickert  
Mrs Sandra Romesburg  
James P Shaver  
Dr R J Shaw  
Tim Slocum  
Maureen Wagner  
Homer & Elizabeth Walker  
Mr. David S Winn  
Mr James L Woodson

## New Members

Joe Shanae Ames  
Clara Barrett  
Mrs Charles Chism  
Ms Swede Dahl  
Ms M Decker  
Richard J Drake  
Chris Dufner  
John Dymerski  
Michael Fish  
Mr. Robert Hammond  
Sean Keenan  
Mark E Peplinski  
Keith Riggle  
Linda Roberts  
Wil Shynkaruk  
Thomas J Schroeder  
Jim Sinclair  
Mr Arther C Wagner  
Maureen Wilson

Cleaned Bird Seed

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10:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M.

\$16.00 for 50 lb. bag

\$1.00 off for returning bag



## REGIONAL NEWS

### Paradise of Mud, Flies Is a Gift to Utah Birds

It was beginning to snow and a frigid wind whipped the low desert shrubs northwest of Salt Lake City International Airport as a small group began hiking toward the Great Salt Lake.

But Ella Sorensen did not seem to notice. Bundled up in a parka with a hat pulled down over her ears, she happily led the way through the muck and drifting snow this week to get a look at the National Audubon Society's new 1,319-acre wildlife preserve near the lake's southern shore.

The preserve contains a stark, rarely visited landscape where desert mixes with the saline waters of the Great Salt Lake. It was part of the Jordan River delta more than 2,000 years ago, and the long-abandoned river channels now are mud flats and shallow lakes filled with salty water. Between them are low islands covered with greasewood and other desert shrubs.

"I find it absolutely the most beautiful habitat in Utah," said Sorensen. "It is desolate only to people who don't see."

Audubon is interested in this low-lying, muddy habitat because it is crucial for the survival of hundreds of thousands of shorebirds that stop at the Great Salt Lake each spring during their annual migration. They feed and rest in these areas before continuing south to breed.

Land for the refuge, valued at more than \$1 million, was given to Audubon by an anonymous donor. It has been named the Edward Lincoln Gillmor and Charles Frank Gillmor Wildlife Sanctuary in honor of two brothers who ran sheep in the area.

Sorensen, one of Utah's most skilled bird watchers and a regular contributor to *The Salt Lake Tribune*, helped arrange the gift.

"The donor doesn't want to be identified, but is a native Utahn with deep ancestral roots in the state who is giving this land with pleasure for the benefit of wildlife and the enjoyment of future generations," she said.

There is no public access to the sanctuary. It is surrounded by private lands and locked gates. "Access is an issue we'll be dealing with in the future," said Sorensen.

Meanwhile, she said, the land is protected from development and can be used for scientific research. Audubon also plans to add fresh water to some of the abandoned river channels in an attempt to attract more wildlife to the area.

A proposed road from Salt Lake City to the southern tip of Antelope Island may someday open this area to the public.

Bob Morris, government-relations coordinator for Utah Division of Parks and Recreation, said the "most practical route" from that road would follow the old conveyor belt that was used to transport dirt and rock from Antelope Island for construction of Interstate 80. The conveyor belt crossed part of the new refuge.

A bill before the Utah Legislature would provide \$200,000 to conduct a feasibility study of building the proposed road.

But Wayne Martinson, Utah wetlands coordinator for Audubon, isn't sure he wants a highway in the refuge. "Any time you have roads through a wildlife area, you will have some negative impacts on wildlife," he said.

Ty Harrison, a biologist at Westminster College in Salt Lake City, said the refuge protects an unusual and highly specialized ecosystem.

When the snow begins to melt in the spring, he said, the runoff turns the old river channels into a maze of shallow ponds. Mats of algae grow in the warm water, and snails and insects begin feeding on the pond vegetation.

Then come the shorebirds, which feast on the life flourishing in these warm pools. "I've seen 12 or 15 species of birds on one small pond," said Sorensen.

Birds that frequent the area in the spring are the American avocet, black-necked stilt, marbled godwits, snowy plovers, greater and lesser yellowlegs, and several species of sandpipers.

When the ponds begin to dry up, the fattened and well-rested birds resume their southern migration to nesting area.

Few people have seen this natural process. Access to most of the area is blocked by private land, and even when allowed inside, visitors face long walks through deep mud.

"To discover what is going on out there, you have to put on wading boots and go out in late spring," said Harrison.

In addition to the birds, Harrison said the refuge contains an "incredible" community of salt-tolerant plants, tiger beetles, and specialized spiders that feed on brine flies.

This is the second wildlife preserve in this area, and a third has been proposed. The Salt Lake City International Airport has a 425-acre wetlands site, and Kennecott is proposing a 2,500-acre preserve just north of Interstate 80.





# THE STILT

BRIDGERLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY  
P.O. Box 3501  
Logan, Utah 84323

Nonprofit Organization  
BULK RATE  
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Permit No. 104  
Logan, Utah

The Bridgerland Audubon Society meets the second Thursday of each month, October through May, in the Meeting Room of the new Logan City Building, 255 N. Main. Meetings start at 7:30 p.m. The BAS Planning Committee meets at 7 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month, September through May. Locations may change monthly. Check calendar page. Everyone is welcome to attend.

|                         |                               |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| President               | Brigit Burt, 753-2794         |
| Vice President          | Robert Schmidt, 755-9262      |
| Secretary               | Joanna Garrard, 753-2429      |
| Treasurer               | Susan Drown, 752-3797         |
| Conservation            | Nick Strickland, 750-5035     |
| Education               | Jack Greene, 563-6816         |
| Membership              | Al Stokes, 752-2702           |
| Field Trips             | Al Stokes, 752-2702           |
| Newsletter              | Lois Olson, 752-9085          |
| Circulation             | Susan Durham, 752-5637        |
| Publicity               | Beth Walden, 753-0080         |
| Hospitality             | Tim & Jackie Henney, 755-6888 |
| Hotline                 | Nancy Williams, 753-6268      |
| Legislative Chairperson |                               |

## Trustees

1992-95 Dawn Holzer, 258-5205; Val Grant, 752-7572  
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1994-97 Bryan Dixon, 752-6830; Glen Gantz, 258-2748;  
Ted Evans, 753-2258; Jan Anderson, 752-2946

Membership in the Bridgerland Audubon Society includes a subscription to *The Stilt*, as well as the *Audubon* magazine. The editor of *The Stilt* invites submissions of any kind, due on the 15th of each month. Send to 280 N. 300 E., Logan, UT 84321.

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## National Audubon Society Chapter Membership Application

Yes, I'd like to join.

Please enroll me as a member of the national Audubon Society and of my local chapter. Please send AUDUBON magazine and my membership card to the address below.

My check for \$20 is enclosed.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Please make all checks payable to the National Audubon Society.



Send this application and your check to:  
National Audubon Society  
Chapter Membership Data Center  
P.O. Box 51001 • Boulder, CO 80322-1001

LOCAL CHAPTER \_\_\_\_\_

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Subscriptions to *The Stilt* are available to non-members for \$5.00 per year. Call Susan Durham, 752-5637. Also, call Susan for new subscriptions or address changes.