

THE STILT

BRIDGERLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume 25, No. 7

February 1997

21st Annual Christmas Bird Count Results

"It was a dark and stormy night..." No kidding, it was dark in the wee hours of the winter solstice as we went looking for owls. And "stormy" just doesn't quite describe up to two feet of fresh snow in the canyons. Nevertheless, the intrepid (nutso?) birders headed out once more to tally all of the birds within the 7.5 radius of Hyde Park, our 21st annual CBC. This was the 96th count nationwide, and although it was close to Christmas and most university students had already departed for the holidays, over 40 souls couldn't contain themselves any longer, and just had to go out and see for themselves what feathered friends were about. By the end of the day, our group had identified and counted 91 different species and 23,610 individual birds.

"Firsts" for our CBC included bushtits and green-tailed towhees. While the latter are common in summer, this was the first record for bushtits in Cache Valley since 1946.

Though not records, we found other notable highs. Many people have commented on the abundance of certain prey species in the valley, and accordingly we saw a high number of mousers, such as red-tailed and rough-legged hawks, and American kestrels. We even have reports of American crows taking mice. One farmer commented on the havoc the prairie falcons were wrecking on the ring-necked pheasants. Feeder watchers noticed an increase in finches and grosbeaks,

although pine siskins were low. We also noticed many more mountain chickadees than usual in the valley.

The detailed numbers were:

	1995	1996
Total # species seen	89	91
Total # individuals	22,983	23,700
# Observers	52	45
# Parties		17
Party hours by foot	70	71
Party miles by foot	70	44
Party hours by car	67	83
Party miles by car	603	566

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February Calendar

Meetings

Thursday, February 13, 7:30 P.M. General Meeting, Logan City Offices, 255 North Main, Dick Carter, former director of the Utah Wilderness Association will introduce a new organization, the **High Uintas Preservation Council**. Dick will show us slides of the Uintas and explain why they are threatened and what the HUPC is doing to protect them. Refreshments will be served and the public is invited.

Wednesday, February 19, 7:30 P.M. BAS Planning Meeting at the home of Robert Schmidt, 1665 East 1350 North. Officers, Chairpersons, and Trustees meet to discuss issues and make plans for meetings, activities and projects. General members are always welcome.

New Board Members Appointed

Welcome to Jack Greene and Lois Olson who were recently appointed to fill vacant positions on the Board of Trustees; their terms will end in May, 1998. Trustees are generally elected for three year terms, but the Bylaws of BAS allow the Board to appoint members to fill empty seats. They have both put in untold hours over the years, Jack as education chair and Lois as Newsletter chair. Thanks to them both, especially as they plan to continue their other responsibilities.

Tom Wharton to Be Speaker at April 8 Annual Banquet

Due to conflicts with spring breaks and limitations on space, **both the date and venue of the annual banquet have been changed a bit**. Then the new date is Tuesday, April 8 at the Zonavoo Restaurant a few miles up into Logan Canyon. This year's speaker is Tom Wharton, Recreation Editor for the *Sale Lake Tribune* and advocate for wildlife in Utah, speaking on "Finding a Voice for Nonconsumptive Wildlife Users in Utah." The annual Conservation and Education Awards will be presented, and election of new officers and trustees will take place. It's always wonderful to visit with good friends and make new ones, so plan to join us. Social hour begins at 6:00 P.M. with dinner starting at 7:00. Look for tickets at Sunrise Cyclery, In the Company of Friends, and the Straw Ibis, with prices at \$15 (\$11 for students). More details in the March *Stilt*.

E-Mail Network Lives!

If you're not on the Audubon Alert Network, you're missing e-mail notices about the latest activities and events. Alerts are sent out on issues, outings, and rare bird sightings. If you'd like to be on the list, send an e-mail with "subscribe BAS" in the subject field, and please include your real name in the body of the e-mail message. Send it to: bdixon@cache.net and we'll put you on the list.

Boating the Bear Still Available

Jim Boone's guidebook to paddling, poling and oaring the Bear River, published by BAS, is once again available at In the Company of Friends. This book is still the most interesting and complete paddler's reference to the river that flows from eastern Utah north through Wyoming and Idaho, and finally back into Utah ending in the Great Salt Lake.

Call for Nominations

This spring we will elect officers and new members to the Board of Trustees. A nominating committee has been formed, chaired by outgoing President, Robert Schmidt, to offer nominations to be held at the annual banquet on April 8 (see story elsewhere in this *Stilt*).

Officers serve for two year terms and the positions include President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The president conducts monthly general and planning meetings and directs the activities of our various chairs (conservation, outings, etc.). The vice president arranges for and introduces speakers, and fills in for the president as needed. The secretary writes up minutes of the planning meetings, collects and distributes our mail and maintains our records. The treasurer maintains our accounts, pays our bills and generally keeps the IRS from knocking at our door.

Trustees serve for three year terms and we can elect up to four in any given year. Trustees are responsible for setting policy at the monthly meetings and they generally fill in where needed on various projects where they have an interest.

If you would like to serve in one of these positions or know of a good candidate, please contact Robert Schmidt, 755-9262; Ted Evans, 753-2259; or Peter Rube, 755-9333 prior to March 1. (Late nominations will also be taken from the floor but won't appear on the ballots.)

Christmas Bird Count

Continued from page 1

The snow prevented us from breaking the record number of species (good excuse, anyway), but for the second year in a row, we set a new record for total individuals seen. Records for numbers of individual species seen included the following:

Species	1996 Record	Previous Record	Previous Record Year
Ring-necked duck	314	278	1990
Northern harrier	163	104	1981
Red-tailed hawk	204	115	1995
Ferruginous hawk	3	1	1994
Rough-legged hawk	78	66	1985
American kestrel	56	55	1983
Prairie falcon	11	7	1992
Virginia rail	10	8	1987
Killdeer	49	47	1981
Common snipe	78	51	1987
Common raven	20	8	1994
Bushtit	5		New!
Cedar waxwing	774	624	1984
Green-tailed towhee	1		New!
Gray-crowned			
Rosy finch	2,350	1,200	1992
Cassin's finch	325	92	1989

Not to mix our phyla, but we also got skunked. We saw zero jays (sterrar's, blue, scrub or Clark's nutcracker) and no marsh wrens. While they are out usually in abundance, the last time we saw zero jays was 1980, and the last time we missed all marsh wrens was 1984. Other low numbers included American robins and black-billed magpies.

At the end of the day, we gathered at the home of Alice Lindahl and Jim Haefner for a scrumptious potluck and sharing of numbers. We certainly missed Al Stokes this year, but Alice joined us to hear the stories and fun.

It was a grand time for everybody, whether up in the mountains or out in the marsh. Special thanks to those who helped out on the count:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| Keith and Paul Archibald | Ron Houston |
| Bob Atwood | Dawn Holzer |
| Jessie, John and Terry Barnes | Reinhard Jockel |
| Mike Becker | Liz Josephson |
| Jim Bilsky | Marjorie Lewis |
| Tod Black | Alice Lindahl |
| Gordon Bosworth | Jean Lown |
| Allen & Gail Christensen | Merrilyne Lundahl |
| Mary & Norbert Debyle | Jan & Tom Lyon |
| Bryan Dixon | Dennis Martin |
| Keith Dixon | Bill and Zane Masslich |
| David & Susan Drown | Lori Ness |
| John Ellerbeck | Larry and Ron Ryel |

- Barbara Farris
- Jake Gibson
- Val Grant
- Andrew Guss
- Erika Hansen

- Bill Sedivy
- Karen Shires
- Frank Smith
- Nick Strickland
- Paul Ustach

Everyone is invited to join us next year—whether you're a proficient birder or not. (Beginners, after all, often see the most interesting species!) Data for the Logan Christmas Bird Counts back to 1976 are now available on a Microsoft Access database for those who would like a copy in electronic form. A paper copy of the totals is also available. Contact Keith Archibald, 752-8258, or Bryan Dixon, 752-6830.

The typist wishes to apologize to Kayo Robertson for misspelling his name on his poem, in the "Celebration of Memories" to Al Stokes.

Thanks Al

A strong wind passed
 Stirred our branches
 Shook dust from our leaves,
 Strengthened our roots.

A strong wind passed
 Turned our nodding heads
 To the dancing forest wholeness
 Of each sun-bathed branch.

A strong wind passed
 Gave buoyancy to eagle's wing
 Nourishment to sylvan soils,
 Renewal to those it touched.

A strong wind passed
 Listen! Do you hear it still?
 Echoing along the hillsides of our hope
 The canyons of our commitment.

A strong wind passed.
 A strong wind passes on.

Kayo Robertson

**Do you have an hour to spare?
 Bridgerland Literacy needs tutors.
 Contact Tami Colman at 753-5064.**

A Call to Support Wild Elk

The Audubon Council asks everyone to write letters or speak to your senator and/or representative. Express your feelings about elk ranching. Of course your representatives on the council hope you are opposed to permitting elk ranching in Utah, something the state has not allowed up until now.

There is an article in your September or October newsletter with information about the testimony given before the House Energy, Natural Resources and Agriculture Committee. However, your words are most effective when they express your own knowledge and experience.

I should warn you that the proponents of elk ranching tend to be impatient with those of us who are distressed about domestic elk for aesthetic reasons. I know I am repulsed by the idea of pens of elk wearing tags in their ears. I want my elk wild. Also, supporters feel that it is the individual's right to make his living any way he chooses as long as others are not harmed. Of course, it is how we define harm that defines much of the debate.

The Audubon Council is of the opinion that the danger of infecting the wild population with both diseases and foreign or unfit gene configurations is the most compelling argument. If you are a wildlife biologist, please feel a special obligation to speak out here. Most legislators are ignorant of the issue and care little about it. Please educate them. On the other hand, if you are not an expert, remember that legislators probably are not too interested in your eloquence or persuasive powers anyway. Legislators are impressed by numbers of calls or letters.

Most of you are aware the Wildlife Board has petitioned that the legislature postpone consideration of the bill and has requested a year of study. This is helpful, but the bill is still in the hopper. I predict it will go to the legislature during the session. If the bill does disappear for this year your letters and calls will not be wasted. We need to educate legislators on this issue and it is not too soon to start.

I might add that timing is not important either so don't give yourself the excuse that it is too late in the session. I predict that this will be a long, drawn out battle. Please call, fax or send an e-mail message if you do not know who your representatives are.

Address, Phone, Fax and Telegram # at the Capitol

Senate
319 State Capitol
SLC, UT 84114

Phone: (801) 538-1035
Fax: (801) 538-1414
Toll-Free: 1-800-662-3367
(During session)

TDD (801) 538-1457

House of Representatives
318 State Capitol
SLC, UT 84114

Phone: (801) 538-1029
Fax: (801) 538-1908
Toll-Free: 1-800-662-3367
(During session)

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Wolf, Return to the Forest

by
Thea B. Henney

Wolf run free, wolf run wildly
Wolf return to the wilderness
Where you will be safe from we
Who have killed off your truth and beauty
We who have covered your gentle heart
With evil stories.

Oh mighty wolf, tell me, I beg,
If your cry is still a mournful farewell
Or are you announcing your return?

Happy Homecoming for a Kansas Peregrine Falcon: New Wing Job Does the Trick

Saturday, July 29 at 8:00 A.M., *WILDCARE* volunteers released a rehabilitated peregrine falcon back into the wild at a state park near Hutchinson, Kansas. Peregrines are difficult to keep in captivity. After it was found the falcon was transported first to Dillon Nature Center in Hutchinson, and then to the WildCare facility for help. This was the first peregrine ever to be received by WildCare of the Dillon Nature Center. The falcon had had an eventful month.

The peregrine falcon was found on May 25 in a corn crib near Moundridge, Kansas. The bird was emaciated. Its wings were battered and feathers broken. The finder brought it to Jerry Almquist, a Kansas Wildlife and Parks conservation officer, who took it to Jim Smith at the Dillon Nature Center in Hutchinson. Realizing the special housing needs of this species, Jim notified Ken Brunson at the central

Wildlife and Parks office in Pratt. Within a few days, Ken delivered the peregrine to WildCare for extensive rehabilitation. We learned from Ken the bird had eaten well during its short stay at the Nature Center, it weighed in at around 940 grams upon arriving at WildCare in June. This relatively high body weight indicated that the bird was female since they typically weigh more than male peregrines. In the next week or so, the falcon ate and ate, finally leveling off at more than 980 grams. She became a large, robust female, indeed!

What an awesome looking bird. Her most striking features were her huge, round black eyes and the piercing looks coming from them. Working with so many species, one becomes familiar with the relative intelligence of animals. This was no dumb bird. She soon learned to distinguish the movements of feeding and cleaning from those involving capture. When a human would approach, she would watch carefully, holding her ground until the last moment before she was to be grabbed. Whenever we did catch her, she fought with huge strength.

Our initial excitement about receiving the bird soon turned to concern as we grappled with the simple logistics of rehabilitation. All the primary wing feathers, many of the secondaries, and the entire tail were destroyed. Although the falcon did have some flight, she would not be able to hunt with agility. She could not be released until she had new feathers.

We suspected that this falcon might have to be held for several months until she molted and grew new feathers. This could be as late as January, 1996. Keeping such a bird for that long posed two problems. First, was the problem of food. Peregrines have a strong preference for birds, their natural diet. We scavenged chickens to feed her, but we had to buy them. This could get expensive! Secondly, and even more problematic, this peregrine couldn't be kept in a standard flight cage or she would be in constant danger of re-breaking her feathers as she thrashed to release herself, as she had done in the corn crib. She would have to be housed in a room to herself, with padded walls. At a time when we were already crowded with patients, this was an unattractive solution. Also, the risk that this skittish bird might injure herself or her feathers by reacting to humans was ever-present.

Fitted for Her Wings

Seeking advice from those more experienced with a particular species is a familiar strategy for rehabilitators. We called the Minnesota Raptor Center in St. Paul. After a brief conversation with Lori Miller at the Center, we learned they might be able to "imp" our bird, or replace the damaged feathers with intact ones. Imping involves cutting each damaged feather off at the shaft. A new feather is then spliced onto the remaining shaft by gluing an insert inside. Because we had no peregrine feathers to use, this obviously wasn't an option for WildCare. The professionals at the Raptor Center,

however, handle many peregrine falcons and had enough feathers on hand to replace all of this bird's destroyed feathers with healthy ones. We sent a photograph of this falcon to Minnesota to determine whether the damage was repairable. It was. So the falcon flew—by airplane—to the Center for a "wing job."

It seemed incredible that such a process could be used to replace all the major flight feathers. Lori and others at the Raptor Center impeded the bird and kept her for some weeks. They tested the strength of her feathers and flight capacity before sending her back. On July 27, the peregrine flew back—still via Northwest—to Kansas. The following evening, Melany Sutherland and I drove her to Hutchinson near the area where she was first found. At 7:30 A.M. the next morning, coffee mugs in hand, we met Jim and Melissa Lacey from *The Hutchinson News* at the Dillon Nature Center. We then caravanned the short distance to the release site, a park just outside the city limits.

It was a beautiful, clear morning. The group hiked into the refuge area to a hill that looked out for miles in all directions. There Melany slowly lifted the lid of the carrier, and we all held our breath. The falcon peered out, paused for a fraction of a second, and lifted herself out of the carrier in a tight circle. She flew southwest with tremendous speed. She flew, and she flew. There was nothing to stop her and nothing to obscure our view. We all watched until she was just a dot in the distance, at least a mile away, still flying. She never stopped.

It was one of the most beautiful and significant releases I've ever seen. Only a handful of us witnessed it which is, I suppose, as the peregrine preferred it.

— Nancy Schwarting
WildCare, Winter 1995

The above article was sent to Mae Coover from Irma Moon who is in Texas for the winter. Irma received it from a friend in south Chicago. Irma thought this article might be of interest to Audubon readers.

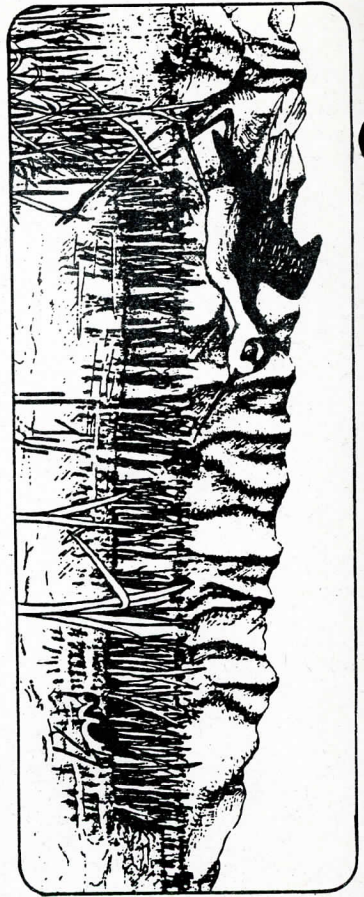
According to *Webster's Dictionary* **imp** originally meant an offspring; a mischievous child, it also means, "to implant, especially by grafting; to repair (the wing or tail of a falcon) by grafting on a feather or feathers; to furnish with wings; to help out by adding, increasing, enlarging, etc."



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THE STILT

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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 | Robert Schmidt, 755-9262 |
| Vice President | Barrie Gilbert, 752-0946 |
| Secretary | |
| Treasurer | Susan Drown, 752-3797 |
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| Education | Jack Greene, 563-6816 |
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| Trustees | |
| 1994-97 | Bryan Dixon, 752-6830; Glen Gantz, 258-2748;
Ted Evans, 753-2259; Jan Anderson, 752-2946 |
| 1995-98 | Suzanne Marychild, 755-5571; Peter Rubin; Allen
Christensen, 258-5018 |
| 1997-98 | Jack Greene, 563-6816; Lois Olson, 752-9085 |

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.

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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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