



THE STILT

BRIDGERLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY

VOLUME 28, No. 2

OCTOBER 1999

Some Observations on Feeding Hummingbirds

Although most hummingbirds have already headed south for the winter, autumn, nonetheless, is an excellent time to plan and plant a hummingbird garden for next year. The purpose of this article is to pass on to you some personal observations about artificial hummingbird feeders/nectar and, more importantly, about flower types particularly attractive to hummers.

Regarding artificial feeders/nectar, the most important thing to remember is hygiene; unsanitary feeders have probably killed more hummers than clean feeders have saved. Home-made nectar solutions in my view are far superior to packaged ones; they contain no dyes or other artificial additives. The recipe I use is as follows:

Bring 22 ounces of water (or multiples thereof) to a boil; add 2/3 cup of granulated sugar (or multiples thereof). Stir well and allow solution to cool. After the nectar solution has cooled, pour into hummingbird feeder. Any leftover nectar should be immediately refrigerated. Do not add any food coloring, artificial sweeteners, or honey.

In cool spring and fall weather the solution only needs to be changed weekly, but in summer's heat it should be changed and the feeders thoroughly cleaned at least every third day to assure that harmful bacteria does not become established in the feeders or in the nectar solution. I find that glass feeders are much easier to clean and to keep clean than plastic ones. A weak bleach solution is adequate for cleaning; it effectively kills harmful bacteria.

It is a good idea not to place feeders in direct eye shot of one another. As you know, hummers (especially males) are extremely territorial, and a single male may monopolize more than one feeder if he can see other hormones nearby.

Although artificial feeders are used readily by hummers, more hummers can be attracted, and probably fed a better diet, if real flowers are used, either by themselves or in conjunction with the artificial feeders. Regarding real flowers, remember that hummingbirds like tubular flowers (narrow tubes seem to be more attractive to them than large, broad tubes), and that the colors they see best and seek out are in the red-orange-yellow part of the spectrum.

Continued of page 3

Inside

FIELD TRIPS	2
BOARD STUFF	4
CANOEING THE BEAR	5
NATURE CENTER	5

October Calendar

Meetings

Thursday, October 7, 7:00 p.m. Board of Trustees Meeting, at the home of Bryan Dixon, 10 Heritage Cove. All BAS members are invited to join us as we review projects, priorities and issues.

Thursday, October 14, 7:00 p.m. General Meeting, 2nd Floor of Chapter Two Books, 130 N 100 E, Logan: Exploring the Great Northwest—It's Scenic Splendors, Natural History, and Ecology—From the Redwood Forests to the Gulf of Alaska. Jack Greene, our own Education Chair and Trustee, will show slides of the field trip he led this past summer to the Pacific northwest. The group studied volcano, forest and seashore habitats and came home inspired. The public is invited; refreshments following.

Field Trips

All BAS trips are open to the public. For more information, call the trip leader listed at the end of each description.

Friday-Sunday, October 7-10. Annual Trip to Hear Elk Bugling in Jackson Hole. This trip is scheduled for Utah Educational Association weekend to give us a bit more time to explore the Tetons area. Most people arrive Friday, but you can arrive on Thursday, as trip leaders will be there early to spot the animals. Spend Saturday looking for bison, pronghorn, elk and other wildlife. After supper, go out to listen for elk bugling. Sunday is free for various hikes. Return by suppertime Sunday. This was one of Allen Stokes' favorite BAS trips, and we always remember him around the campfire. Call Terry Barnes at 563-3910 (evenings and weekends) for information on camping and activities, and to reserve your spot. Terry will also help with carpooling arrangements. Bring your own food and camping gear. Though the weather can be quite pleasant, you should be prepared for freezing temperatures at night.

Saturday, October 23. Birding the Sewage Lagoons. Why, you ask, would we want to bird the Logan Sewage Lagoons? Because the birds are there! Why are the birds there? Because they're safe as hunting season pushes the ducks to havens like the sewage lagoons where we can see the "regulars" in large numbers and usually find some "irregulars," too. Meet at 10:00 a.m. at the parking lot north of Straw Ibis, (about 55 East and 150 North in Logan); carpooling will be available. We're usually finished within two hours, but those who want to bird longer can head out into the valley looking for other critters. For more information, call Keith Archibald, 752-8258.

Saturday, October 30. Stone Soup Canoe Trip. The first ever BAS canoe trip with potluck cooked lunch. Enjoy one of the most scenic stretches of the Bear River

from Riverdale to the Preston-Dayton Bridge, a total of 12 river miles. LeRoy Beasley will be leading this trip and, since it might be cool on the river, he has offered to cook up some soup for lunch. Folks can bring something to toss in the soup, or some other grub to go along with it, such as (but not limited to) cookies, bread, fruit, cookies, hors d'oeuvres, cookies, hot chocolate, or cookies. Bring your own soup mug and spoon. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the parking lot north of Straw Ibis, (about 55 East and 150 North in Logan). You should provide your own boat, but if you have a boat and need a partner or want to be a partner for someone else, call LeRoy, 753-7491.

Saturday, November 13. Stokes Nature Center Open House and Fundraising Dinner. Spend the day at the SNC exploring the natural world in one of their exhibits or just sitting with others in the woods outside. Then return to town for dinner at the Coppermill Restaurant with silent and live auctions for some of the most interesting offerings around—raft trips, birding trips, Christmas decoration services, Italian dinners, wine tasting evenings, as well as beautiful art work and myriad other items. Tickets will sell out, so get yours early by calling the Stokes Nature Center at 755-3239.

Saturday, November 20. Pre-winter Birding for Hawks and Things. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the parking lot north of Straw Ibis (150 North 50 East in Logan). We'll head out in the valley searching for late migrating waterfowl on the reservoirs and hawks hunting the fields. We might find a short tail along the Bear River to search for those elusive "dicky birds." We should see Ferruginous as well as Rough-legged Hawks, and, who knows, we could see loons and Oldsquaw or a scoter! Beginning birders welcome—this is a great way to work on your Cache Valley Bird List. We'll return around lunchtime—unless we find Gyrfalcons, that is. For more information, call trip leader, Keith Archibald, 752-8258.

Remember:

<http://www.audubon.org/chapter/ut/bridgerland>
Check it for late breaking information and trips that were put together after the *Stilt* was published.

Wanted: Rodent-proof Storage

Needed approximately 8' x 8' x 8' of storage space secure from rodents for our annual bird seed program. Alternatives include simple secure space with plywood laid on top of upside down metal garbage cans. If you know of suitable space or arrangements, please contact Allen Christensen, 258-5018.

Some Observations on Feeding Hummingbirds

Continued from page 1

The most versatile genus of flowers I have found for attracting and feeding hummers is *Penstemon* (Beard Tongue). I have over a dozen different species of *Penstemon* growing in my gardens, and all of them are used by the birds. Some of my favorites are as follows:

(A) *Penstemon pinifolius* (Pineleaf penstemon). It is a fairly low grower (to about 12 inches high) but this does not seem to inhibit the hummers from going down to feed on it. It comes in both reddish-orange and yellow cultivars and blooms over a long period beginning in mid-spring. The reddish-orange cultivar is most attractive to the hummers, but both cultivars are visited regularly. Unlike many penstemons it is a long-lived perennial. Under optimal growing conditions (lean soil and not too much water) it will reseed; the seedlings can be used to increase your plantings or you can give them to others.

(B) In late spring *Penstemon strictus* (Rocky Mountain Penstemon), *Penstemon eatonii* (Firecracker Penstemon), and *Penstemon barbatus* (Scarlet Bugler) begin to blossom and all three are very attractive to hummers. The Rocky Mountain Penstemon is blue-purple and the other two are scarlet. The Cardinal Penstemon is at least three feet tall while the other two are two to two-and-a-half feet tall. All are well behaved plants that live many years.

(C) My favorites for summer are *Penstemon palmerei* (called Pink Wild Snapdragon) and *Penstemon pseudospectabilis* (Desert Beardtongue). Both of these species are xeric and, once established, require very little, if any, watering. The Pink Wild Snapdragon sends up pale flower spikes at least five feet high. It is thus ideal for the back of a tall xeric perennial border.

Most penstemons rebloom nicely if promptly deadheaded.

As the earlier penstemons begin to fade those rampant growing vines, *Campsis radicans* and *Campsis grandiflora* (the Trumpet Creepers), begin to open their big, long, broad tubed orange, red or yellow flowers. They continue blooming almost until frost and, despite the large size of the flower tube, are irresistible to hummers. They are large, heavy vines that need strong support structures on which to grow (something like an ugly telephone pole that you want to cover up). They are easy to grow and are not invasive unless grown in wet soil; their seed pods will fall and germinate.

Other good summer attractants are *Monarda didyma* and *Monarda hybrids* (called Bee Balms). Not only are they a balm to bees but also to butterflies and

hummingbirds. Their only drawback is that some are quite susceptible to powdery mildew. Planting them in a place that has good air circulation usually avoids this problem.

Still another good summer attractant is *Buddleia davidii* (Butterfly Bush). It is indeed loved by butterflies but is also loved by hummers. It is a bush that should be cut back to about eight inches from the ground in the spring just as it begins to show signs of growth; otherwise it becomes leggy. It will grow to a height of five to eight feet by autumn. It is literally covered with long panicles of small tubular flowers from mid-summer to frost.

In late summer and going into fall some of the best hummingbird attractants begin to bloom. My overall favorite hummingbird flowers are the *Agastaches rupestris* and *cana* (these are called Sunset Hyssop and Texas Hummingbird Mint). They are incredible hummingbird magnets, every part of them is fragrant, the flowers seem to be the perfect size and shape for hummers, they are xeric once established, and they bloom like crazy from early August until the first frost. Under good growing conditions they increase by putting out seedlings.

The other great flower for late summer and autumn is the Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis* and *Lobelia siphilitica hybrids*). These flowers need plenty of moisture but are otherwise easy to grow. The species is most attractive to the hummers, but the hybrids are tougher and less prone to disease or winter die out.

One would think that lilies (*genus Lilium*) and day lilies (*genus Hemerocallis*) would be good hummingbird flowers, given the shape of the flowers, but I have not found that to be the case. They are not completely ignored by the hummers, but are clearly not favorites.

All of the flowers described above overwinter without problem here in Brigham City and should do the same in Cache Valley, although you may want to provide them with two to three inches of winter mulch to protect the roots during winter. If your favorite nursery does not stock any of these flowers, please let me know and I can provide you with sources for them.

I'm sure many of you have had good luck with other flowers. We'd like to hear of your successes so we can expand our knowledge of how to assist our little humming jewels and enjoy them even more than we do now.

— Dick Hurren
(435-734-2653)

E-mail service provided by XMission. Use the following addresses to contact your BAS leadership:

stilt@xmission.com – for newsletter items
audubon@xmission.com – for anything else

Board Stuff (As opposed to bored stiff . . .)

BAS is governed by a Board of Trustees that meets once a month (see *Calendar*). All BAS members are invited, of course.

I hiked up the Wellsvilles recently to visit the hawkwatchers. On approaching the col at the top of the Deep Canyon Trail, I smelled smoke. Arriving at the ridgeline, I found five young fellows ensconced right on the trail, two of them still in sleeping bags at 10:00 a.m., with a smoking campfire, beer cans and an empty 1/2 gallon of whiskey lying nearby. The wind was honking, threatening to blow burning embers into the dry bush. Not a pretty sight. Having been up the Wellsvilles quite a bit recently and having already packed out litter from several camps and torn up several fire rings, I was not happy. "Gosh, you guys must have packed up a lot of water." "Uh, no. Actually, we're a bit short. We heard there was a spring around here but couldn't find it." "Yeah, there is one but it's two miles down the ridge. So without water, just how, exactly, are you going to ensure this fire is out?" "Duh?"

What do you say? What do you do? These are not examples of superior intelligence, I thought. However, rather than rant and rave, I collected my most calm voice and explained how it's important to leave a clean camp. That I had already packed out a lot of garbage this year, and "remember that fire in Card Canyon just a week ago from a campfire left thoughtlessly smoldering?" One of the young men (do I sound old or what?) promised solemnly to leave the site clean. I continued on to the HawkWatch observation point, muttering to myself curses on all of the testosterone-laden bozos who wreak such havoc on our mountains.

I spent several hours counting and identifying hawks zooming south on the western winds of the ridge. Mixed with the Red-tailed and Swainson's were some unusual ones, including an Osprey, a Peregrine and even a Merlin! I let myself get a bit dehydrated, saving extra water for the fire I knew would be still hot. I had wanted to descend over Mendon Peak since it was a lovely day with spectacular views of red oaks and maples on the hillsides, but I knew I'd have to pack out glass and cans left from those jerks.

Well, I had to eat words and thoughts. When I finally walked down the ridge to the col, the campsite was spotless! The fire ring was still there, but the stones were cool. There was dirt thrown into the pit to keep the ashes from blowing around and not a speck of paper or glass shard could I find. Amazing, simply amazing!

I still curse the testosterone bozos—they still wreck havoc. But there is hope. We can communicate with some of them. We can share our love and concern for wild places. People already appreciate the wild places—that's why they go there in the first place. They

just don't appreciate them enough. Our task—and the ultimate challenge—is to move them to understanding the beauty and fragility of these places so they will guard and preserve them for others to follow. It takes patience, endless patience, and it takes action, thoughtful action. Don't give up. Look for opportunities to communicate rather than throwing in the towel. Get involved, make time to establish conversations with "the dark side." We'll win in the end because the beauty is there for all to see.

Outings – Boy, have we had some great outings lately. Roy Ryel's fall warbler hike attracted 15-20 folks and, though not finding many warblers, was wildly successful because we found a Northern Pygmy Owl. Actually, he found us. Dick Hurren was whistling an owl imitation in order to attract some chickadees and nuthatches, when lo and behold, an owl started whistling back! Dick gently coaxed it closer until it flew up into a tree downhill from us so it was in clear view of the entire group. It stayed there calling to us for at least 10-15 minutes and everyone got a good look. The rest of the walk was also beautiful with vistas across the Bear River Range, and topping out on a ridge overlooking Tony Grove Lake. Ron promised to lead the trip again, but a little earlier next year, perhaps the last week in August.

The Monday night canoe trips started off just right. Twenty-six of us launched from the farm of Jim and Barbara Watterson in Benson. In the evening light, we headed out into the islands and labyrinth of the Bear River delta. Not lots of birds, but we did have a Barn Owl take off from a perch in shrubs and fly along just above our heads. The Wattersons are starting a canoe livery on their shore-front property and hope to be operational next spring. Folks can rent canoes and explore the marsh on their own, or let Jim drop you off upstream and come floating back to the farm. Several of our participants rented canoes and we paddled until dark drove us in.

More trips coming up in October and November. If you haven't (and even if you have) been on the elk bugling trip to the Tetons, you'll find it a memorable experience. Fall birding will continue in late October as we go into the Sewage Lagoons—a great place for migrating waterfowl.

Environmental Education – Jack Greene just finished the introductory workshop for a new program he's starting with teachers along the length of the Bear River. The idea is to train the teachers about the details of river science and get their classes to gather critical data which will help regulatory agencies address water quality and habitat problems. Approximately 15 teachers met for three days and visited parts of the Bear River system, including Bear Lake and Cutler Marsh. Friday evening found them at the Stokes Nature Center sharing writings about the river and listening to two students, Jake Gibson and Jenny Wolfram, who spent

three inspired weeks paddling and living with the Bear River from Evanston to the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge. Go, Jack!

Don't forget the Stokes Nature Center fundraising dinner and auction scheduled for November 13. Tickets go on sale October 1.

Conservation – I'm afraid I don't have much progress on the conservation front to report. I do want to thank the anonymous donor from Salt Lake City who gave us \$500 to help publish a brochure on the Amalga Barrens. Alice Lindahl, Bruce Pendery and Nadene Steinhoff (among others) are working hard on this piece which will help educate the public about the values of this rich resource. This donation will make it possible to print many more copies and get a much wider distribution. Thanks, you know who you are!

So far, Cache Valley is serving up a spectacular fall. There's a lot going on as creatures wind down their own hectic summers. So, get out there before I start harping on the beauties of winter!

— Bryan Dixon, President

A Canoeing Trip on the Bear River

Early Saturday morning, September 11, 1999, some members of my family and I started off to Logan to go canoeing. When we got there we met with our group that we were going with at a parking lot near the Straw Ibis. We planned what we were going to do. Then we drove to Preston, Idaho. When we got there we put in the canoes and started down the drifting river. We canoed for awhile then stopped and got out. The leader showed us our route and we had a mid-morning snack. Then we were off again canoeing downstream.

As we paddled down the river we started identifying and counting birds. Here are 21 birds we saw: Turkey Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk, Swainson's Hawk, Brewers Blackbird, Great Blue Heron, Sandhill Crane, robin, magpie, Canada Goose, Solitary Sandpiper, Pheasant, Kingfisher, Bank Swallow, Killdeer, Mallard, Barn Swallow, Marsh Hawk, Darkeyed Junco, Franklin's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Starling, House Sparrow, and lots of other Dickie Birds and ducks.

We stopped for lunch along the rivers edge. After lunch my sister, Loni, and I found a beach-like place (sandbar) and played there in the water till it was time to go. Once again we were off downstream and I got to paddle; it was fun. We paddled for a long time and finally we got to cornish and went home.

The people that we canoed with were LeRoy B. Beasley (our leader), Alice Stokes, Mark Turner, Kevin Karras, Susan Karras, Jonathan Karras, Alex Karras (that's me), and Loni Karras.

— Alex Karras, age 10

Wanted: Assistant Editor for the *Stilt*.

Need another volunteer to help put our monthly newsletter out. Requires an interest in conservation, collecting stories and attention to timely and regular publication. If this interests you, contact Bryan at bdixon@xmission.com, or Lois at stilt@xmission.com.



Stokes Nature Center

Join us on the second Saturday of each month for fun programs and learning adventures designed for all ages.

Saturday, October 9. Birds of Prey – 10:00 a.m.

HawkWatch International will visit the Nature Center to present a program on eagles, hawks, falcons and other birds of prey. The program will include an opportunity to meet a live hawk!

Saturday, November 13. Stokes Nature Center Second Annual Open House. Join us as we celebrate our second anniversary. Activities, demonstrations, and free programs will be ongoing throughout the day.

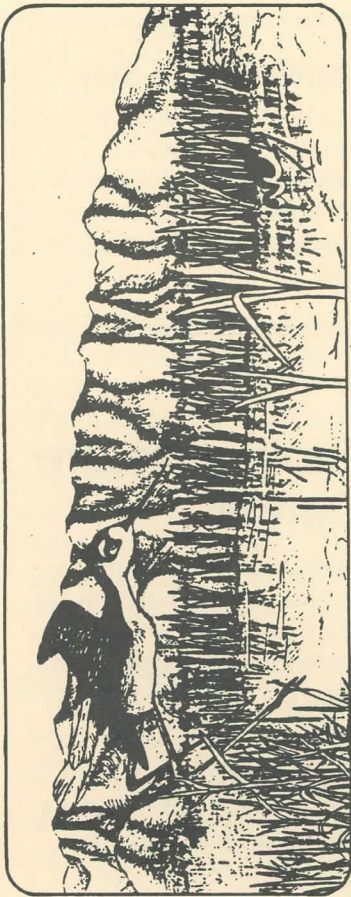
Second Annual Dinner/Auction Fundraiser

Mark your calendar—Saturday, November 13, Call SNC at 755-3239 for ticket locations.

We need your help! Last year, we raised over \$13,000 for Nature Center programs! Our goal this year is to raise \$20,000! You can help us by donating an item or service.

Can you cook an Italian meal? Do you enjoy decorating for the holidays? Can you offer expert computer advice? Do you have a cabin in the woods that you would donate for a weekend? Get the idea ...? Please consider donating a service to the 1999 Auction! Need an idea? Here are a few, or you can come up with your own unique service!

A picnic in the park for eight . . . Dessert-A-Month for a year . . . pet sitting . . . Y2K garden planning . . . window washing . . . airport shuttle service . . . baby sitting . . . leaf raking . . . paint a room . . . lead a hike, boat trip, wildlife outing . . . offer a cabin or vacation . . . house sit . . . an authentic Korean, Mexican, Indian, Thai meal for six . . . Christmas present wrapping . . . decorate a tree or room for the holidays . . . help prepare a will . . . computer advice . . . tax advice . . . tutor school children . . . splitting and delivering wood . . . vehicle maintenance . . . horseback riding



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THE STILT

Nonprofit Organization
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 Permit No. 104
 Logan, Utah

The Bridgerland Audubon Society meets the second Thursday of each month, September through June, in the upstairs of Chapter Two Books, 130 N. 100 E, Logan. Meetings start at 7:00 p.m. The BAS Planning Committee meets at 7:00 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month, September through June. Locations may change monthly. Check calendar page. Everyone is welcome to attend.

- | | |
|----------------|---|
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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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