

# THE STILT

BRIDGERLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY

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JANUARY 2000

## Christmas Bird Count Pretty Cush

Looking back on last year's notes I'd say this year's CBC was pretty "cush." Last year, remember, it never got above 10° F, but this year the temps were well into the 40's with sunshine poking out of the clouds and only a mild breeze. And that, following a particularly mild fall, may explain some of the results.

For newcomers, the CBSs are held each year throughout the Americas to count *every bird* within the same local 7.5 mile radius. We send those results to the National Audubon Society, which tallies the data. Last year on the 99th CBC, 48,186 bird watchers in the U.S. and Canada reported on 1,780 count areas, and totaled 57,756,147 birds of 659 species. One CBC in Texas counted 230 species alone. Then, there are the counts in the Caribbean, Central and South America, and the Pacific Islands. Whew! Wouldn't it be fun to take a Christmas vacation to join one of those other CBSs?

This was the Logan CBC's 24th annual count, and on December 18, 66 birders took to field and feeders within a circle centered in Hyde Park. While we posted good numbers this year, we didn't surpass our record of 97 species in 1983 and 1987, or 23,610 individual birds counted in 1996—but we came close!

Comparing last year and this year:

	1998	1999
Total # Species Seen	92	94
Total # Individuals	15,844	22,898
# Observers	69	66

This year we had a number of new record high counts:

Species	1999 Record	Old Record	Old Record Year
Northern Shoveler	1,111	639	1981
Gadwall	2,911	806	1997
Canvasback	15	14	1978
Lesser Scaup	180	86	1991
Osprey	1	New	
Northern Harrier	260	163	1996
Sharp-shinned Hawk	12	11	1983
Red-tailed Hawk	228	204	1996
Golden Eagle	21	15	1991
American Kestrel	77	56	1996
Prairie Falcon	12	11	1996
Wilson's Phalarope	1	New	
Common Barn Owl	16	7	1998

Other unusually high numbers included Pied-billed Grebe, Barrow's Goldeneye, Gray Partridge, Ring-necked Pheasant (2nd highest ever), Virginia Rail, and American Crow. In "Count Week" (three days on either side of the count day), we also found a Common Grackle and Wild Turkeys. There were 10 species where only one individual was seen (about average).

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# January Calendar

## Meetings

**Thursday, January 6, 5:30 p.m. Board of Trustees Meeting**, at the home of Jim Cane, 1710 East 1140 North, Logan. This month we start planning for new officers and the spring banquet. All BAS members are invited to join us as we review ongoing projects, priorities and issues.

**Tuesday, January 11, 7:00 p.m. Audubon Council of Utah Legislative Update** meeting at the Ogden Nature Center. The primary responsibility of the ACU is directing the Audubon lobbyist in Utah. This will be an important meeting to learn about bills coming up in the legislature that help or threaten the environment. We often have opportunities to sway our legislators toward our way of thinking by providing timely information and helping to dispel the myths of pro-development forces. Carpooling will be available, leaving from Logan at 6 p.m. Call Bryan Dixon, 752-6830, for more information.

**Thursday, January 13, 7:00 p.m. General Meeting, 2nd Floor of Chapter Two Books, 130 N 100 E, Logan: HawkWatch International - A History of the Wellsvilles HawkWatch.** Over twenty years ago while a graduate student at USU, Steve Hoffman started observing the fall migration of hawks along the Wellsville Mountains. This led him to search for other sites that channeled migrating hawks along narrow corridors. Finding several, he founded HawkWatch International to research hawk migration patterns as a means to understand population dynamics. HWI has since organized annual hawk monitoring stations throughout the western U.S. and even into Central America to promote greater understanding and conservation of raptors. This month, we're pleased to have Howard Gross, Executive Director, and Jeff Smith, Science Director, share the findings from the Wellsville observation site and explain the significance of this site for national migration trends. The public is invited; refreshments following.

**Thursday, January 27, 5:30 p.m. , Room 338, Old Main Building, USU, Annual Board Meeting of the Allen and Alice Stokes Nature Center.** Everyone's invited to attend this annual meeting, where the SNC Board will present their past year's accomplishments, and their hopes and plans for the coming year. This is also a great time to meet the new board members and staff. Refreshments will follow.

E-mail service provided by XMission. Use the following addresses to contact your BAS leadership:  
stilt@xmission.com – for newsletter items

## Field Trips

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

**January 15, Tour de Feeders.** Wanna see some great feeder activity? Join us as we visit several of the best feeder setups in the valley. This is a great chance to study some of the "old familiars" in detail. Do you know how to tell a female House Finch from a female Cassin's Finch by bill shape...hmmm? Well, here's a chance to learn. If we're lucky we might find a feeder being frequented by a Harris' or White-throated Sparrow. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the parking lot north of the Straw Ibis at 150 North 50 East, Logan. Carpooling will be available. For more information, call Keith, 752-8258 or Bryan, 752-6830.

**Saturday, February 12. Wetlands in Winter.** Take an easy walk among the reeds and rushes of the Cutler Marsh to look for tracks and signs of wildlife in winter. Meadow voles, beaver, and muskrats, cattails, rushes, and willows; all have to make it through the winter. Their tracks and trails tell the tales of their life – and death – in the marsh. Depending on the weather, we may venture into the Bud Phelps Wildlife Management Area or the marshes near Benson. Either way, we'll enjoy a winter day in the Valley. Meet 9:00 a.m. at the parking lot north of the Straw Ibis at 150 North 50 East, Logan. Dress warmly; back by noon. For more information, call Kayo, 563-8272.

**Found: Nikon binocular case at the Oxbow overlook on Sam Fellow Road near Benson. To claim, call Bryan at 752-6830.**

## Legislative Email Alerts

Please let us know if you're willing to help with calling legislators on important issues. Send an email to [stilt@xmission.com](mailto:stilt@xmission.com) and ask to be put on the environmental alert. We **DO NOT** distribute the list.

## 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.

## Email Alerts

Want to receive late breaking trip announcements, environmental alerts, local conservation news? Send an email to [bdixon@xmission.com](mailto:bdixon@xmission.com). We're trying to consolidate email lists for local environmental



# Christmas Bird Count

Continued from page 1.

On the downside, we posted unusually low numbers for Common Goldeneyes (what's different about Barrow's and Commons?), Common Mergansers, or any of the gulls (especially given the warm weather), Western Screech Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Green-tailed and Spotted Towhees.

So, what to make of this? Open water and warm weather probably accounted for the high waterfowl numbers, mostly found at the Logan Sewage Lagoon, where they were milling around together for comfort and companionship. There were some puzzles here, though. For example, we usually see twice as many Barrow's Goldeneyes as we see Commons (consistent with the range maps), but this year the ratio was reversed. Is it our particularly fine sewage?

It was a warm day, so we expected to find gulls. But we also had a thin layer of snow on the ground which one participant thought would explain their absence. Are gulls really so wimpy that we found NONE?

Raptors were everywhere. At the Barrens, we stood in one place and counted 63 Northern Harriers in the air at once. There must be one heckuva mouse and vole population explosion! The last time this happened was 1996, and we enjoyed watching the hawks hunt the fields all winter long.

Other birds that feed on small rodents were also abundant. We looked for Common Barn Owls in haystacks by searching for pellets lying beneath, and we probably could have doubled our count if we'd searched every haystack. We even saw crows chowing down on mice.

Oddly, while we had an abundance of rodent eating raptors, we missed seeing many of the smaller owls, such as Northern Pygmy Owl and Northern Saw-whet Owl. We only found one Western Screech Owl, whereas we've often found a half dozen.

Another interesting note was a record number of Ring-necked Pheasants. Those critters are everywhere – someone ought to have a hunting season on them! Oh, right, they do. And now, maybe DWR will stop trying to “study” the effect of wiping out all the pheasant predators to see if they increase, because they're increasing everywhere. One person even reported them at Hardware Ranch!

Passerines were about normal – a smattering of sparrows, woodpeckers, thrushes, etc. with an over abundance of House Sparrows, European Starlings, and blackbirds. But we had a surprise or two – a Chipping Sparrow and Loggerhead Shrike, and later in the week just outside of the count area, a birder found a White-throated and a Harris' Sparrow in the same tree!

And then, ahhh, there was the potluck. Once again, Dave and Susan Drown generously opened up their house for a tasty food fest. At the compilation we went through the entire list, species by species, for count leaders to read off their findings and one member to comment on how each species count compared with highs and lows in years past.

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: Clifton Alston, Keith Archibald, Bob Atwood, Jonathan Atwood, Dennis Austin, Jared Barnes, Jessie Barnes, Terry Barnes, Mike Becker, Edna Berry, Gladis Berry, Jim Bilske, Gordon Bosworth, Jim Cane, Allen Christensen, Mary DeByle, Norb DeByle, Bryan Dixon, David Drown, Susan Drown, John Ellerbeck, Barbara Farris, Debbie Gessaman, Jim Gessaman, Jake Gibson, Val Grant, Jack Greene, Adair Holden, Joanne Hughes, Dick Hurren, Jamie Jepson, Reinhard Jockel, Liz Josephson, Linda Kervin, David Kotter, Kurt Kotter, Joan Labby, Caitlin Laughlin, Jonathan Laughlin, Jessica Liddel, Alice Lindahl, Jean Lown, Merrilyne Lundahl, Bill Masslich, Jake Masslich, Zane Masslich, Ryan Michelsen, Sherie Mitchell, Ann Mull, John Mull, Joan Nielsen, Keith Nielsen, Sky Olson, Bruce Pendery, Robin Pedery, Liz Ramsey, Larry Ryel, Ron Ryel, Frank Smith, Alice Stokes, Nick Strickland, Cora Sullivan, Kim Sullivan, Rob Swallowood, Dennis Welker, and Dusty Wheeler.

Please join us next year, whatever your birding skills. If you'd be interested in analyzing the results for yourself, (data for the Logan Christmas Bird Counts is available back to 1976) send a SASE (with two stamps) to BAS, P.O. Box 3501, Logan, UT 84323-3501. We'd be interested in publishing your observations in the *Stilt*.

— Keith Archibald and Bryan Dixon

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

*Environmental Education* – If you weren't at the December general meeting, well, you missed some scrumptious goodies. Oh, yeah, there was a program, too! And it was fun. Lois Olson and Kim Kuta gave us a workshop much as they would for the classes that visit the Stokes Nature Center, but “jacked up a bit” for adults. This program was about forces that wildlife (and “tamelife” like us) face in winter. For one of the exercises, they divided us into three groups, giving each person a nametag with an animal species on it, and we were charged with figuring out what was common among our group of animals. What amazed me – and I mean really amazed – was how much collective knowledge there is among Audubon members regarding nature and wildlife. There were so many good ideas and shared observations from so many different perspectives. If we could ever harness all that knowledge we'd have a veritable encyclopedic resource. The answer to the question of common traits



within each group was that one group migrated in winter, one group hibernated in winter, and one group toughed it out. Ah, but then there were the other answers! Well, you had to be there.

If you want to know more about the activities of the Stokes Nature Center, come to their Annual Board Meeting, January 27 (see announcement in Meetings section).

**Conservation** – Remember the alert we issued in late November about the Forest Service Planning meetings? Well, it worked. You came and you articulated your concerns. The FS did an excellent job in preventing antagonism between user groups at the two meetings, Tuesday, November 30 and Thursday, December 2. You got the feeling that they sincerely listened to citizens' ideas about what uses should be allowed where in our local national forests despite attendance that was phenomenal and far beyond what the FS expected. Over 250 people attended the first night and the second night was nearly the same. The great part, however, was that at least half of the attendees were environmentalists – real environmentalists, not the Jim-Bob Hansen type. And they made their voices heard. While the motorized recreationists and grazing permittees kept whining about how the forest should protect their special interests, the environmental community called for more protection for wildlife, habitat, watersheds, and healthy, intact forest ecosystems – not just for us, but for generations to come of both people and other species. It was beautiful to watch. We are demanding more non-motorized areas, more controls on grazing, an end to needless road building, and even closing some areas to any humans during critical winter periods to safeguard the larger wildlife species. We're also asking the FS to adopt an apparently novel concept, to wit: include implementation considerations in the plan. Plans should try to achieve noble objectives such as allowing multiple uses, but if personnel and resources can't control the ORV and livestock damage, they can close larger and larger areas until they can control them. These users were given plenty of opportunity to police themselves, and they've failed.

Now, we'll see if the FS has the courage and foresight to make changes – the status quo won't do. Look for draft alternatives in late winter, and a draft DEIS in summer. Both documents will be open to public comment as we try to move closer to an intelligent management plan for the long term.

Concurrent with our local FS rewrite of the management plan for the Wasatch-Cache National Forest, the FS at the national level is undertaking a roadless area review. Dombeck, the head of the U.S. Forest Service is proposing no new roads on much of the forest, and we heartily concur. BAS has submitted comments twice this year having to do with roadless area management in the northern Wasatch Cache N.F.

This is a national effort, and they need comments from all of us. To check out the proposals, look over your December *Stilt* and review our comments and maps, then check out the FS website:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/wcnf> for more information.

Also ongoing is the Utah Northern Goshawk Project Environmental Assessment (EA), with comments due by January 10, 2000. Please take a moment and send a short letter. Your letters make a BIG difference. We've definitely gotten the attention of the Forest Service and we need to keep up the pressure. Important points to make in comments concerning the goshawk policy include: habitat fragmentation due to roads and timber clear cuts, livestock impacts that deplete forage for the goshawk prey base, and poor forest understory habitat. Send your comments to:

Utah Northern Goshawk Project  
Uintah National Forest  
P.O. Box 1428  
Provo, UT 84601  
Ph#: 801-625-5897  
e-mail: [goshawk3/r4\\_uinta@fs.fed.us](mailto:goshawk3/r4_uinta@fs.fed.us)  
website: <http://www/fs.fed.us/r4/goshawk>

Although our comments are being sent to the Uintah N.F., this program will affect ecosystems all the way north into the Yellowstone ecosystem. If you would like to be on their mailing list please make a request. You may request the EA or look it up on their website.

On the water resources side, we've learned that the 20-20 ponds owned by Duane Cox, a long time member of BAS, have been severely polluted, leading to the death of fish and fowl. We're still investigating the details, but the Utah Division of Environmental Health has taken water samples and the Division of Wildlife Resources has documented wildlife damage. It appears that the main contaminants are nitrates and similar compounds, perhaps associated with failing septic systems, excessive agricultural fertilizer, or agricultural waste. The 20-20 ponds are located at about 20th South and 20th West in Cache Valley. They are critical for wildlife because the springs provide open water all winter. If you're interested in jumping into the fray and learning more about this very serious problem, call Teri Peery, the Board member who's taken on the task of gathering some preliminary details (753-3249).

On other wetland issues, we're waiting to hear from our lobbyist about bills that might be introduced regarding the Amalga Barrens reservoir. There was an article in the December 20 issue of the *Salt Lake Tribune* describing how Las Vegas has achieved such positive results with their water conservation efforts, and how even the goals of our Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District pale in comparison (not to mention their lack of accomplishments). We applaud the JWCD for seeking experience on water conservation and hope they take these findings to heart and begin to develop a sincere



and provocative approach to encouraging water conservation on the Wasatch Front. We just can't build dams forever. Sooner or later we've got to learn to live within our water means.

**Outings** – Hey, have you seen the new recreation site on Sam Fellow Road overlooking the Oxbow on the Bear River? This overview was established because wildlife watchers asked for a safe place to observe spring and fall migrations of waterfowl and shorebirds. Look for railings to support spotting scopes and even wheelchair access in the spring. Pacificorp will be building another site on the Mendon road to accommodate 4-5 cars and provide access for launching canoes on the Little Bear River (no ramps for motorized craft will be built). These small projects are a continuation of their implementation of the Cutler Marsh Resource Management Plan and we applaud them.

As a result of some of our great outings (hey, we'll take a little credit) and not a little skill and diligence on their parts, two females have been "inducted" into the Cache County 200 club. The 200 club is a relatively obscure, small and boringly unpretentious group of (formerly) fellows who work their fannies off to identify over 200 avian species within Cache County each year (dead birds don't count, and they have to be wild). Just a month ago, there were but five members. To them, we now add Susan Drown and Jean Lown.

Congratulations to these fine birders! (Fortunately, there are no bizarre initiation rites.)

Also of note, the records for birds identified in Cache County in one year have been blasted apart. Ron Ryel broke his own former record of 229 species with a count at this writing of 235. Larry Ryel also broke the old record with a current count of 232. And not far behind is Bob Atwood, with a count of 228, and the possibility of reaching 230. The former record for a year list in a Utah county was 231, so you can see how rich our valley and mountain habitats are – and that's why we work so hard to protect them.

The problem with year lists, though, is that on January 1 they get reset to zero. The really great thing about year lists, however, is that on January 1 they get reset to zero, so you have to – just HAVE to – get back out there and see some stuff, any stuff. Isn't it time for you to start working on a year list of your own? Join us on some of our outings and we'll help you out.

— Bryan Dixon, President

## Banquet Birding Bonuses

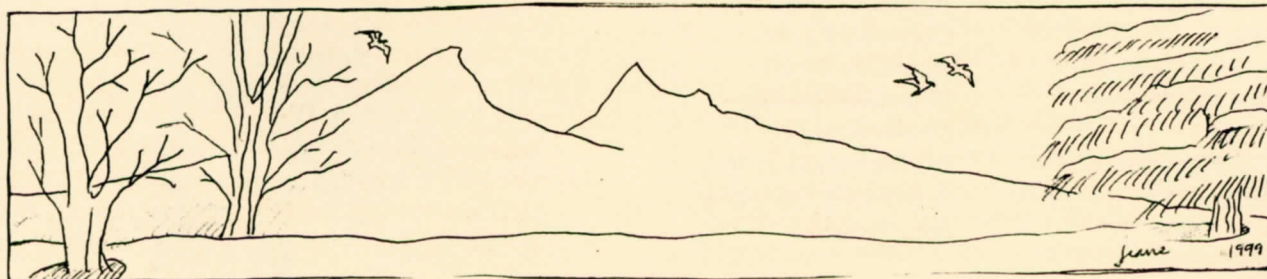
We stated earlier this year that we wanted to reinstitute the BAS awards for listing. In years past, Allen Stokes used to present patches for having seen 150 species in Cache County and hats for reaching the 200 level. Earlier this year we announced a similar program for year lists, but we want to open it up. At this year's banquet, we'll recognize all those members who have identified 100, 150, and 200 total species within Cache County – not just in 1999. We'll be presenting awards, so get your lists in to us as soon as possible. You can mail them to our P.O. Box or send them in via e-mail to [stilt@xmission.com](mailto:stilt@xmission.com).

## New Members

Brett & Cheryl Adams  
Glenn E Bayfield  
Jeri Crawford  
Susan Grey  
Glenn Jarrell  
Doug & Shawna Johnson  
Teri & Corey Johnson  
Mrs C L Johnson  
Dean Liechty  
Don McIvor  
Connie Schultz

## Renewing Members

Michael C Amacher	Karen Lindsey
R K Archibald	Audrey McElrone
Patricia Bahler	Wally & Sammie MacFarlane
Martha H Balph	James D Morgan
Leroy B Beasley	Ann & John Mull
Norbert V Debyle	Mary Palley
Judith Drevenstedt	Robert H Peterson
Deborah Eshelman	R Ratliff
Chris & Wendy Gaddis	John N Ream, Jr
James Graham	Sandra Romesburg
Barbara S Hale	Philip R Stafford
Joanne Hughes	Alison Thorne
G Hunter & D Bronson	F H Wagner
Linnea Johnson	Rebecca Wallace
David Kirby	Nancy Williams
Frederick F Knowlton	Nina B Wilson
David & Kim Lewis	Davis S Winn
Gary C Lewis	Karen Wood
William & Marjorie Lewis	





## Birding the Lagoon

On December 4, 1999 I went on another field trip with the Bridgerland Audubon Society to the Logan Sewage Lagoon, also called "Square Lake." It was a very cold day, 12°F when we were gathering at the Ibis parking lot. But we were all dressed for it and because it was sunny it did not seem so bad, unlike some other times when it was windy and cloudy and we were all chilled to the bones. Part of the lagoons were ice covered, but mostly open water where thousands of ducks and other kinds of birds were sitting, some sleeping, others diving and swimming. On one of the lagoons a Marsh Hawk was feeding on a freshly killed bird only a few feet away from the live ducks. Some Great Blue Heron were standing like statues on the dike.

I have been on many field trips to this place from 1984 on. This is a great place to see practically all the duck species that live in Cache Valley. Ron Ryel told me he has even seen Wood Ducks here. With his help and other experts, I have seen Trumpeter Swan, Greater Scaup, White-winged and Surf Scoters, Herring, Thayers, and Bonaparte's Gulls, Red-necked Phalaropes, and Black Terns. A list of all the birds I have seen here over the years is included. One could use this as a checklist for future trips to the sewage lagoons.

Horned Grebe  
Eared Grebe  
American White Pelican  
Double-crested Cormorant  
Black-crowned Night Heron  
Great Blue Heron  
Trumpeter Swan  
Tundra Swan  
Snow Goose  
Canada Goose  
Mallard  
Gadwall  
Green-winged Teal  
American Widgeon  
Northern Pintail  
Northern Shoveler  
Cinnamon Teal  
Ruddy Duck  
Canvasback  
Redhead  
Ring-necked Duck  
Greater Scaup  
Lesser Scaup  
White-winged Scoter  
Surf Scoter  
Barrow's Goldeneye  
Common Goldeneye  
Bufflehead  
Common Merganser  
Red-breasted Merganser  
American Coot  
Sandhill Crane

Killdeer  
Common Snipe  
Spotted Sandpiper  
Baird's Sandpiper  
Marbled Godwit  
American Avocet  
California Gull  
Herring Gull  
Thayer's Gull  
Ring-billed Gull  
Bonaparte's Gull  
Wilson's Phalarope  
Red-necked Phalarope  
Black Tern  
Turkey Vulture  
Golden Eagle  
Bald Eagle  
Northern Harrier  
Red-tailed Hawk  
Rough-legged Hawk  
American Kestrel  
Tree Swallow  
Black-billed Magpie  
American Crow  
Common Raven  
American Pipit  
European Starling  
Marsh Wren  
Western Meadowlark  
Red-winged Blackbird  
Song Sparrow

## Nature Center Workshops



### Winter Safety for Adults

Friday, Feb. 11, 5:30-8:30 p.m.  
Saturday, Feb.s 12, 8-4 p.m.

This workshop is specifically designed for scout leaders, youth group leaders, or anyone involved with kids and winter outings. Join safety educators to learn a wide

variety of skills and safety practices used outdoors in the winter. Friday, meet at the Stokes Nature Center where indoor instruction will take place. Topics include: snow crystals, how avalanches are formed, and the tools used for safely reading terrain and snow in the winter. Then on Saturday we'll spend a few hours at the Nature Center before heading out for the rest of the day "in the field" using the information covered in the workshop.

### Winter Safety for Kids Grades 9-12

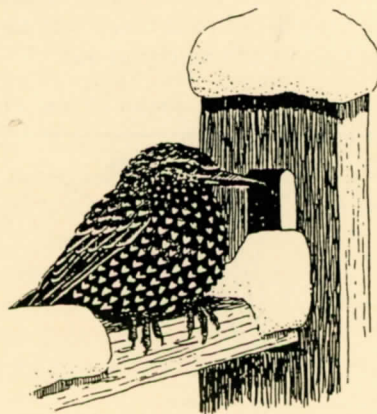
Friday, February 18, 5:30-8:30 p.m.  
Saturday, February 19, 8-4 p.m.

If you enjoy winter activities such as skiing, tubing, snow shoeing, and sledding, this two day workshop is for you. Join safety educators and learn more about the "layering system," essential equipment for safe winter experiences, building shelters and surviving emergency situations. Meet at the Stokes Nature Center where indoor instruction will take place on Friday, then on Saturday we'll spend most of the day "in the field" gaining hands on experience digging a snow pit, looking at snow crystals and more!

Friday night bring a sack dinner; drinks will be provided. On Saturday breakfast and drinks will be provided. Please bring a sack lunch and warm clothing.

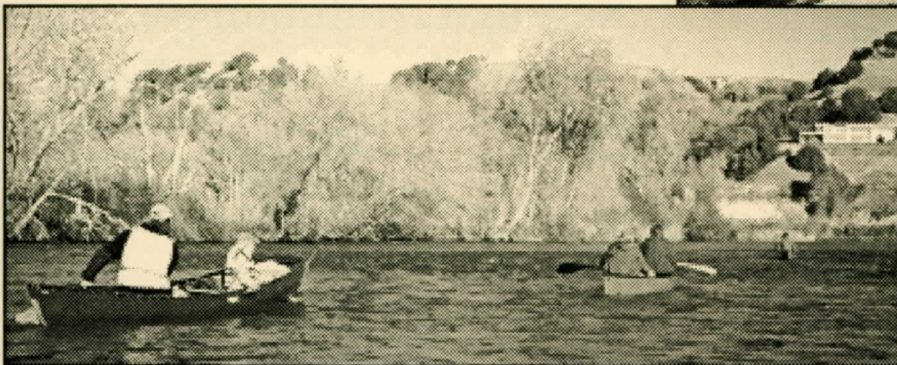
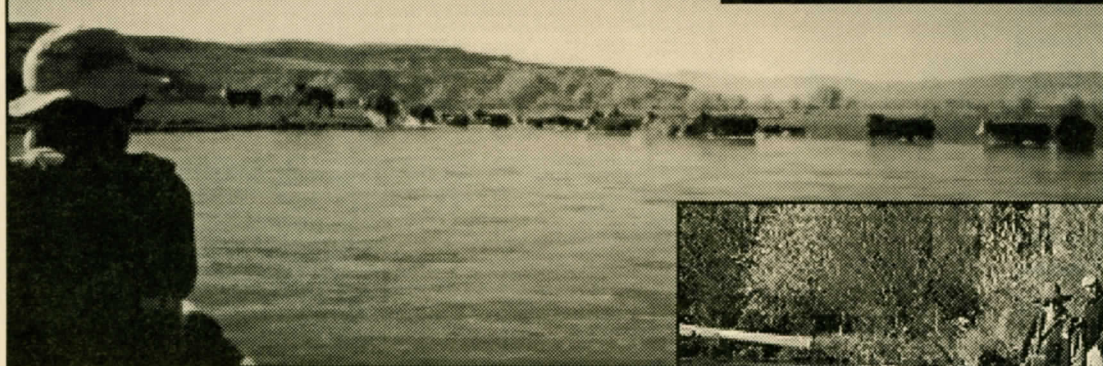
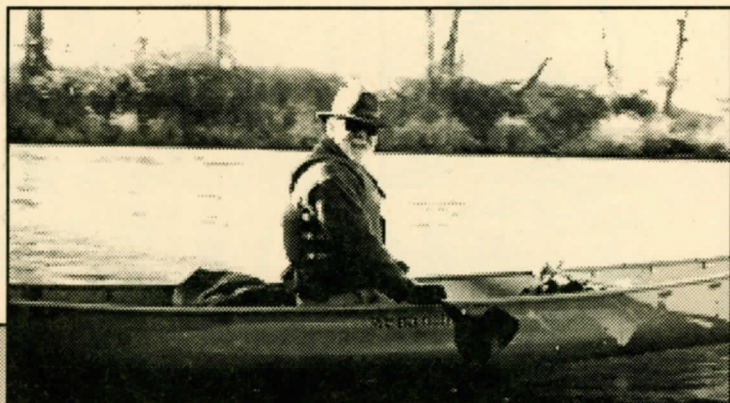
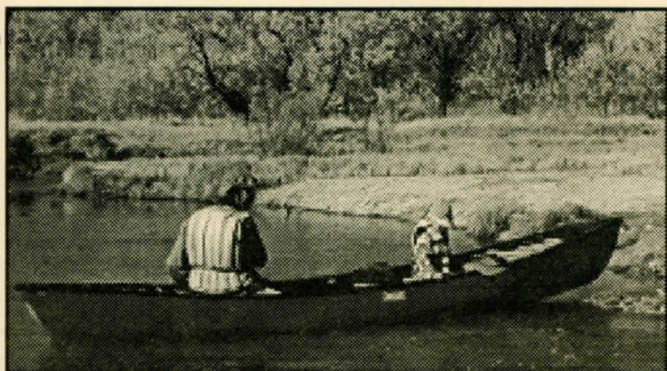
Participants will be provided with snowshoes. The cost for each workshop is \$25. Transportation to the field site will be provided by SNC.

To register contact the Nature Center at 435-755-3239 or visit our website at: [www.logannature.org](http://www.logannature.org). Register now, space is limited.

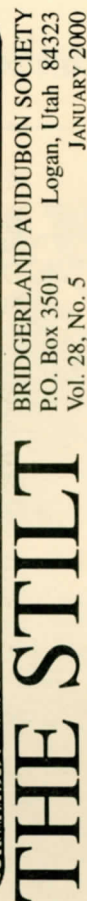




*A Glimpse of the October 30 Bear River Canoe Trip*







Subscriptions to *The Stilt* are available to non-members for \$10.00 per year. Call Susan Durham, 752-5637. Also, call Susan for new subscriptions or address changes.