



The Stilt

Volume 29, Issue 3
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Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

A Grand Opening for a Marsh? O Yeah!

It was muck - serious muck. Oh, and mire, too. Lots of mire. And it was *really* fun.

Even though it had rained all week and the clouds weren't going away, over 40 souls showed up at Benson Marina on October 14 to do the manual labor thing at Cutler Marsh. It was the "grand opening" of the Wetlands Maze, and everyone was there to help plant trees, erect maps and signs and just generally enjoy the wetlands.

In 1995, PacifiCorp began to implement a new Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Cutler Marsh, required by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission as part of the hydro-power relicensure for the Cutler Hydro Plant. Much of the RMP focused on ways to improve water quality and wildlife habitat, and better access for appropriate recreation. In the process of implementing the plan, PacifiCorp hauled hundreds of old car bodies out of the marsh, established setbacks for agriculture along the shoreline, reworked grazing leases to curtail damaging livestock activities, and planted tens of thousands of shrubs and tree cuttings to help stabilize the soil.

The most recent spin-off of the RMP was a Green-Corps grant awarded by PacifiCorp to BAS in early 1999. The project objectives were to establish protective restrictions in the southern, shallow part of the marsh, put in canoe and walking trails, and create a public education program about wetlands and wetland inhabitants.

This past summer, PacifiCorp management adopted a new policy to prohibit personal watercraft and boat motors over 25 hp south of the RR pilings at Benson Marina and require wakeless speeds of all motorboats. Canoe trails (complete with marker buoys) and walking routes were established by early fall, and maps were drawn to make it easier for users to find their way in and out of the maze of wetlands. Educational information and maps were put on the Web in September (www.bridgerlandaudubon.org/wetlandsmaze/).

The last part of the effort was putting up the informational signs and planting trees at four of the major public access points. The ground was wet and the clay soil was heavy on that Satur-



day, but that didn't stop a half dozen teams from digging holes and planting over 10 narrowleaf cottonwood trees, putting up the maps and signs and spreading bark around the signs. (Bark was necessary to reduce the amount of mud users will haul away on their shoes!) The new signs can be found at the new canoe launch at the Little Bear Recreation Site on the Mendon Road, at Valley View Marina and Benson Marina, and at the western end of a new walking route that starts and ends just south of Benson Marina. (This walking trail will soon boast a bridge over the pilings at the abandoned railroad crossing.)

Maps of the area can be downloaded from the website, which also offers information on wetlands birds and wildlife, as well as links to other interesting wetlands sites (including some offering bird song recordings). Thanks to all of the volunteers who made the day - and the project - a success. Together, we've protected a big part of our local environment and established an important working relationship with a key landowner in Cache Valley.

-Bryan Dixon

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President's Message

The November Bridgerland Audubon Society board meeting mostly dealt with money issues. Jean Lown presented options for diversifying our assets and made a recommendation as to the mutual fund we should buy so as to accomplish that. Based on her information, we decided we will sell one-half of each of the three stocks we own and use the proceeds to purchase the TIAA-CREF Social Choice Equity fund. Hopefully this diversification will make us less susceptible to stock market temper tantrums, one of which hit us pretty hard last spring and caused us to take these steps toward diversification.

Alice Lindahl presented a draft of the fundraising letter and brochure you will receive soon. Bridgerland Audubon has never before approached you, the members, directly for donations. We decided to do this because last year we spent somewhat more money (about \$4000.00) than we took in. Thus, our goal is to raise at least \$4000.00. What this will allow us to do is to continue to fund a broad range of activities in the education and conservation areas. If we do not raise some additional money we will be forced to start saying "no" to a lot more worthy requests. We hope that since we have not pestered you in the past for donations you will be more willing to donate to BAS. If each member were to donate only \$25.00, we would raise over twice as much as our goal. Your donation is tax deductible, which may be desirable to you at the end of the tax year.

Concrete examples of the kinds of things we fund were also on the agenda. We provided \$1000.00 to the Audubon Council of Utah, part of which is used to pay the salary of our lobbyist at the State Legislature. While lobbying the

Utah legislature on environmental matters is obviously frustrating, we feel it is important to maintain that effort (which is about 10 years old now) so that the legislature cannot claim these concerns don't even exist. On the positive side, there will be about 4 or 5 environmental lobbyists working the legislature this year, so we believe a "critical mass" is being reached and our influence will increase. We also funded 26 "Audubon Adventure" classrooms, which cost \$1100.00. Audubon Adventures is environmental education materials that are prepared by National Audubon and which teachers can use as part of their science or biology curriculum. We also made disbursements of approximately \$500.00 in addition to previous disbursements to finalize efforts to build the "Wetlands Maze" system on Cutler Reservoir. This is a canoe trail and education effort that Bridgerland Audubon pursued in conjunction with PacificCorp.

The *Stilt* has a new newsletter editor, Georgen Gilliam, who is also our hospital chair. We are looking forward to the *Stilt* remaining your primary information source for BAS activities and events as well as continuing its tradition of presenting interesting articles of local interest. I want to thank Miriam Hugentobler, our former editor, who greatly improved the layout and appearance of the *Stilt*. It takes a lot of time and effort to make these kinds of improvements, and BAS benefits from these efforts and sacrifices.

— Bruce Pendery

"In what was as much of a surprise to me as it may be to you, I will be stepping down as Bridgerland Audubon in January, 2001."

Leaving Too Soon

In what was as much of a surprise to me as it may be to you, I will be stepping down as Bridgerland Audubon in January, 2001. My wife, Kim Sullivan, who many of you know, was invited by the National Science Foundation to spend one year in Washington, D.C. administering the NSF's program in her specialty area, animal behavior. We decided the opportunity both for us and our children to spend a year in "DC" was just too good to pass up. Given the state

of the election as I write, it may be especially interesting. In any event, we will be leaving in January and returning in about January 2002. I will plan on getting involved with BAS again when I return, and maybe I will even bring back some good ideas and contacts from the National Audubon Washington office.

— Bruce Pendery

Audubon Calendar

Thursday, December 14, General meeting.

The featured speaker is Mike Jablonski. Mike is a resident of River Heights and serves on the River Heights City Council. The topic of his presentation will be *light pollution and new municipal lighting technology designed to use lights more efficiently and aesthetically*. His presentation will include a collection of slides from the International Dark Sky Association. Mike has become an advocate of modifying current outdoor lighting upon learning of economically viable, new technologies that are available to reduce the impacts of light pollution on the night sky, and is working toward applying these technologies in our communities so we can enjoy the stars. Everyone is welcome. Logan City Building meeting room, 255 North Main, 7 pm.

Saturday, December 16 Christmas Bird Count Alert!

This is BAS's 23rd Annual Christmas Bird Count. The count is conducted every year in the same area with compilations sent to a central database for an annual report and analysis. We'll put over a dozen teams in the field and hope to find 90+ species (in December no less). A wonderful and fun-filled winter's day for birders of all levels of skill. After the count, we'll meet at the home of Sue and David Drown (1776 East 1400 North) for a potluck supper and the annual compilation. If we're lucky, someone will have seen something really unusual which means you should leave a little time the next day to go see it for yourself! If you'd like to help out, contact Keith Archibald, 752-8258. Cost is \$5 per person to cover national compilation costs. (See article on page 7 for more information.)

Saturday, January 6, Winter Birding Trip in Cache Valley.

The lives of birds go on, even through the heart of winter and despite the cold and snow. Come learn and teach others how to identify hawks, winter ducks and those mysterious little brown birds flitting through the hedge rows. Dress warmly and be prepared to take short walks through the woods and meadows. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the parking lot north of the Straw Ibis, 150 North 50 East, Logan. Return by lunchtime. For more information, call Bryan at 752-6830.

Thursday, January 11, General meeting.

Vince Tepedino, scientist at the USU Bee Lab, will talk about his research. *Pollination and platitudes: What studies of the reproductive biology of rare plants in the western United States can tell us about "pollinator decline" and coevolution*. Everyone is welcome. Logan City Building meeting room, 255 North Main, 7 pm.

Saturday, February 10, Winter Animal Tracks.

"To one who lives in the snow and watches it day by day, it is a book to be read. The pages turn as the wind blows; the characters shift and the images formed by their combinations change in meaning, but the language remains the same. It is a shadow language, spoken by things that have gone by and will come again." So said Alaskan poet John Haines. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the parking lot north of Straw Ibis, 150 North 50 East, Logan, for a field trip to investigate the stories written in snow around Cache Valley and Logan Canyon. Great trip for children and adults alike to speculate on winter wildlife happenings. Dress warmly; return by lunch. For more information, contact Kayo Robertson at 563-8272.

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— John Haines

Bird Guide Updating

The Bridgerland Audubon Society is in the process of updating the Cache Valley Species Checklist and Trip Guide. We are hoping to make a more accurate listing of the prevalence of each species, as well as adding some new trip possibilities. If

anyone has any comments on the old guide, now's the time to make them known! Please feel free to email: geogil@ngw.lib.usu.edu or mail your comments to: Georgen Gilliam, 720 N 600 E, Logan, Utah 84321.

Send Us Your Email Address

BAS is starting to send announcements of field trips and monthly meetings by e-mail. We will also send out information on other things, such as con-

servation issues. If you want to receive these personalized reminders, please send us your e-mail address at stiltnews@hotmail.com

"The Barrens reassure me that life, like landscape and the birds, must undergo transitions with the seasons."

Barrens Field Trip Report

It is curious that the Barrens are so named. The September ninth field trip was filled with avian life. While the board members met, a few Auduboners, led fearlessly by Georgen Gilliam (not Keith Archibald, who skipped town) hovered around spotting scopes and flipped through bird guides for most of the morning. We were rewarded with visions of yellowlegs, a Dowitcher, Western Sandpipers, White-faced Ibis, and Northern Harriers. Sandhill Cranes were abundant, visible, and vocal. At one point, a grundle of over sixty cranes flew over us, their gurgling

vocalizations reminding us that cranes in autumn are reason for celebration. Avocets going into their winter plumage foraged busily. They've shed their rust-colored body feathers and are almost completely white. They'll be heading south soon, for the mud/salt/sandy flats of South and Central America. There, because of their plumage, they will be inconspicuous and safe. The Barrens reassure me that life, like landscape and the birds, must undergo transitions with the seasons. The dynamics of migratory,

breeding, feeding, and morph patterns demonstrate adaptability and survivorship

There is also the uncommon, the rare, the one who doesn't necessarily belong, who might even be lost. Last Christmas bird count, it was the flamingo at Beaver Mountain. To the delight of our group, this bird came in the form of -believe it- a Black Bellied Plover. There was also controversy over the unknown, over a bird sitting in the mud. It's the first time I've ever seen birders give up, though some were ready to peg it a Red Knot.

— Merr Lundahl

Items of Regional Interest

The Other Christmas Bird Count

In addition to the Bridgerland Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count here in Cache County, you can also participate in a Christmas Bird Count in the Bear Lake Area. For the fourth consecutive year, Dennis Austin of the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources is organizing a Christmas Bird Count that will stretch from

the Idaho state line south to about Laketown on the south end of Bear Lake, and from the meadows and sagebrush at lower elevations up to subalpine forests on the Cache-Rich County Line at the head of Logan Canyon. The count will be on December 28, 2000. You can call Dennis at 245-5261 to sign

up for the count. There have been about 20 participants in past years, and you only need to commit to about half a day of counting. This is a great way to see and bird some country you otherwise might just drive through, so please consider signing up.

—Bruce Pendery



Stokes Auction a Great Success

The third annual Stokes Nature Center auction was a great success! Members of the community donated food, nature trips, art, services, entertainment, and many other items. While the official count is not quite in yet, we can safely say that

the Center will make \$23-24,000 on the auction this year. We are especially grateful for the \$5,000 gift from Western Metals Recycling. In addition, the Van Drive generated over \$1000. Thanks to all the donors, atten-

dees, organizers, and everybody else for making this a memorable and enjoyable event.

Forest Service Moving Ahead on Initiatives

The Forest Service is moving ahead with several local and national initiatives that will affect the National Forests in Cache County, both in Utah and Idaho.

The "Forest Plan" for the Wasatch-Cache National Forest, which includes the Logan Ranger District, is being revised.

A Forest Plan guides management activities in a National Forest, and all on the ground activities must be consistent with the Forest Plan. Thus, the provisions of the Forest Plan will have tremendous impact on what Logan Canyon looks like, for example. As you probably know, this process has been in the works for some time now. The Forest Service is planning to release the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Revised Forest Plan early in 2001. You will be able to comment on the plan that is selected in these documents, and it is imperative that you do this to ensure that fish, wildlife, and wilderness gets as much consideration as logging or grazing. You can get more information by calling (801)524-3900 (ask for Melissa Blackwell or Tom Scott) or visiting the Forest Service website: <http://www.fs.fed.us/wcnf>.

In a somewhat similar vein, the current Wasatch-Cache National Forest Forest Plan is being amended to help ensure that management activities do not harm the Northern Goshawk. An "amendment" of a forest plan differs from a "revision" in that an amendment is done when there is a need to "fine tune" an existing plan, whereas a revision is required when conditions have fundamentally changed and an entire re-write of the plan is needed. This effort has already been completed,

however, it is under appeal to the Chief of the Forest Service. You can follow this effort by visiting: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/goshawk>.

The Caribou National Forest in Idaho is also revising its Forest Plan.

This is the National Forest that includes all those National Forest lands just over the Idaho border, such as the Emigration Pass area. The status of this process is similar to the status on the Wasatch-Cache National Forest Draft Environmental Impact Statement and planning is the next step. Again your comments will be needed and valuable. You can get more information by contacting the Forest Plan Revision Team, Caribou-Targhee National Forests, 250 South 4th Ave., Pocatello, ID, 83201, (208) 236-7500.

On the national level, the Forest Service's "roadless area conservation" initiative is moving along. As you may know, this extremely controversial effort would prohibit road construction in many if not most areas in the National Forests that do not already have officially recognized roads in them, even though the area is not designated wilderness. Somewhere between 40 and 50 million acres of land would be protected from road building, which would have tremendous benefits for wildlife and clean water, not to mention the open space remoteness values of National Forests. A final Environmental Impact Statement and rule implementing this policy is expected in November, although experience teaches delay is likely. One

thing is certain: the Clinton Administration will want this policy on the books before it leaves in January, especially if George Bush is President. You can get more information at <http://www.roadless.fs.fed.us>.

The local Forest Service is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement that will govern management of livestock grazing in the "North Rich Allotment."

This allotment essentially covers the Sinks area south of the Logan Canyon Highway. It is home to Northern Goshawk, Flammulated Owls, and Northern Three-toed Woodpeckers, among other "deep forest" species, possibly including the Canadian lynx and wolverine. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement should be released by the end of 2000, but again, delay seems to be the norm, so it would not be a surprise if the draft is not released until later in the winter or even spring. Bridgerland Audubon has contributed toward an effort to make sure that high quality comments are submitted on this project, but your comments are needed, too. Many of you have far more expertise and knowledge of the kinds of species mentioned above than anyone else locally, including the Forest Service. Therefore, your comments are critical. You get more information by writing or calling Evelyn Sibbernson at the Logan Ranger District, 1500 East Highway 89, Logan, UT, 84321, (435) 755-3620.

—Bruce Pendery

"The Forest Service is moving ahead with several local and national initiatives that will affect the National Forests in Cache County, both in Utah and Idaho."

Carrion Clues

"The committee of birds had probably been exercising some protocol in attending to the meal – the eagle standing over the deer, in leisurely repast, and the raven patiently waiting its turn."

Walking along a cold shady trail on the way back from Boiler Bowl, we were startled by first, a Golden Eagle taking off from the ground, followed by a Common Raven and several magpies. Jean, ever the observant one, asked rhetorically "Now what do those birds have in common?" I offered, "They're flying?" She expressed thanks that no one had observed how dense her husband of two dozen years had become.

It was a cold and peaceful day in early November, after the general rifle deer hunt when the mountains were safe once again but before the snowpack demands skis. Jean and I hiked into Steam Mill Lake, intent on finding a Three-toed Woodpecker among the conifers in some old fire scars. About half way to the lake, the trail leaves the gently ascending ridgeline and cuts a level track through the conifers on the north side of the ridge. We were listening for dicky birds when at one point I noticed a musky smell strong enough for us to look around for some moose-esque ungulate intent on revenge. Not seeing anything, we breathed a sigh of relief and continued on through the snow.

After reaching the bottom of the drainage, we were distracted several times by Hairy Woodpeckers drilling in the dead wood, but, alas, no Three-toed. Following a lunch in the welcome sun, we climbed up to the ridge crest and stared at the aus-

tere beauty of the backside of Mt. Gog trying to burn the image indelibly to carry us through the weeks of office work. Finally, we were forced by a bitter wind to turn our backs on the east slopes of Naomi and headed for home.

The upper ridge is easy walking through secretive conifer stands, but lower the choke-cherry and scrub oak get thick enough to encourage hikers to seek alternative routes. Bending to the will of the bush, we headed down the north side looking for that level trail we had followed earlier, and finding it, pointed for home.

Within a hundred yards, we spooked the birds to flight. Jean immediately started looking for something dead (I didn't count). And sure enough, right where I had commented on the musky smell earlier, we found a dead two-point buck not 20

feet off the trail. Perhaps it had been shot and the hunters were unable to find it. Its carcass appeared mostly intact, except for where its frozen entrails had been tugged about by scavengers. The committee of birds had probably been exercising some protocol in attending to the meal – the eagle standing over the deer, in leisurely repast, and the raven patiently waiting its turn. The magpie, almost certainly pacing impatiently, demanding, but not receiving equal status. Thus, it was ordained that the mammal was feeding an unintended, but grateful, table. And a naturalist put two and two together interweaving the players that live in our mountains.

– Bryan Dixon

Membership Update

New members

Barbara Farris
Rosemary Anne Feinstein
Alene S Fornoff
Robert Gunn
Carol Slade

Renewing members

Bryan Dixon
Edward & Deborah Evans
Jack Greene
H Richard Hurren
Dr E H Berry Laughlin
Ann W Peralta
Elaine H Watkins

101st Christmas Bird Count, December 16th

BAS will sponsor its 25th annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on Saturday, December 16th. As with all CBC areas, ours is 7 ½ miles in radius centered at the same point each year, a point on Hwy 91 in Hyde Park.

The very first CBC was started in New Jersey in December, 1900 as an alternative to a rather perverse tradition, the "Christmas Side Hunt" where, after the Christmas Dinner, folks would choose sides, venture forth, and the winner was the side who shot the most birds. Appalled at the reckless destruction, early conservationists such as Frank Chapman, editor of *Bird-Lore* magazine, started a movement to count and study birds rather than destroy them. In the ensuing years, the CBC was adopted and organized by the National Audubon Society, and it's grown in North America to include over 51,000 participants, who last year participated in 1779 counts and together tallied over 78 MILLION birds of a total of 676 species! (There are only 850-odd species recognized in North America, so this represents an astounding accomplishment in December.) The experiences vary tremendously, however. The Mad Island Marsh (TX) count enlisted 111 observers and found 228 species of 2.8 million birds. That was some victory! But the CBC torch burns all over the Northern Hemisphere, even in the far north, where, in Prudhoe Bay (AK) Ed Burroughs, Mike Dexter, and

Dave Karr spent 3 very cold hours (in daytime darkness), only to find one species (Common Raven) and but 48 of those. You gotta admire those guys!

The data is compiled nationally, where articles, history, and data are available on the WWW: <http://birds.cornell.edu/cbc/>. Anyone may visit the site, and you can even type in your interests and get an online analysis.

In Cache County, the first CBC was conducted in 1976 and reported 78 species and 13,225 individuals. Since that time, ten years have yielded over 90 species, with a record high of 97 species in 1983 and again in 1987. Sometimes we find thousands of birds of one feather, such as in 1986 when nearly half of the 20,407 individuals were European Starlings! The most interesting reports, however, are the ones-twos, such as a single Peregrine Falcon, Osprey, Wild Turkey, Wilson's Phalarope, Varied Thrush, Northern Waterthrush, Lark Bunting, or even - a Swamp Sparrow!

We are charged with counting every bird of every species we can find in the appointed 24 hour period. Clearly though, what drives us is the search for the unusual - and the right to blurt it out in due course at the evening potluck after you just can't hold in that news (or tummy) any longer. "Well, there was this other

bird, a rather unusual one. Yes, we're quite sure. It was. Indeed. Um-hmmm. A Wilberforce's Pollyfobble. Where? Yes, we'll show you, it's just over that frozen stream. Been there all day and should be there tomorrow for you, too."

The CBC is not just for the insane-a-birders, those that will forego new winter powder for a glimpse at a faraway duck of dubious lineage. It's for everyone with a yearning to spend a day with compatriots tramping the frozen habitats of Cache Valley. We need eyeballs. Lots of eyeballs. Kids, beginners, seasoned codgers, all are welcome and encouraged to help out. A testament to how much fun we have is the fact that every year, the Logan CBC attracts more participants (77 last Christmas) than any of the other CBC areas in Utah!

So, this December get your oculars outside and participate in the Logan Christmas Bird Count (and Potluck Dinner). You must sign up in advance so we can assign you to one of the eleven sectors in the count area. For more information, call Keith Archibald, 752-8258, or Bryan Dixon, 752-6830.

— Bryan Dixon

*"A Wilberforce's
Pollyfobble.*
Where? Yes, we'll
show you, it's just over
that frozen stream.
Been there all day
and should be there
tomorrow for you,
too."*

*no photo provided
—The Editor



The Stilt

Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

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Bridgerland Audubon Society meets the second Thursday of each month, September through June, in the Logan City meeting room, 255 N. Main St., Logan. Meetings start at 7 p.m. The BAS Planning Committee meets at 7 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month, September through June. Locations change monthly. Everyone is welcome.

President	Bruce Pendery, 792-4150, bruce@n1.net
Vice Pres.	Bill Masslich, 753-1759, bmasslich@pcu.net
Secretary	Suzanne Pratt, 713-0197, suzap@cc.usu.edu
Treasurer	Susan Drown, 752-3797, sdrown@jwscpa.com
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Trustees

1998-2001	Jack Greene, 563-6816; Ron Hellstern, 753-8750 Merr Lundahl, 753-1707; Lois Olson, 752-9085
1999-2002	Jim Cane, 713-4668; Allen Christensen, 258-5018 Val Grant, 752-7572 ; Dick Hurren, 734-2653
2000-2003	Mae Coover, 752-8871; Ron Goede, 752-9650 Don McIvor, 753-2051; Teri Peery, 753-3249

Membership in the Bridgerland Audubon Society includes a subscription to *The Stilt*, as well as *Audubon* magazine. The editor of *The Stilt* invites submissions of any kind, due on the 15th of each month. Send to stiltnews@hotmail, or to Stilt Editor, Bridgerland Audubon Society, P.O. Box 3501, Logan, UT 84323-3501.

National Audubon Society Chapter Membership Application

Yes, I'd like to contribute to Audubon and receive the Bridgerland Audubon newsletter *The Stilt* and the *National AUDUBON* magazine, as a:

- New member of the National Audubon Society and Bridgerland Audubon.
- Renewing member of the National Audubon Society and Bridgerland Audubon.

My check for \$ _____ is enclosed (\$20 membership dues)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____



Please make all checks payable to National Audubon Society and send with this card to:
Bridgerland Audubon Society
PO Box 3501
Logan, UT 84323-3501

W-52 Local Chapter Code: 7XCHA

Subscriptions to the *Stilt* are available to non-members for \$20/year. Contact Susan Durham, 752-5637 (email sdurham@biology.usu.edu) for new subscriptions or address changes.