During the summer of 1992, Briggly Thomas began looking at the resident population of Cache Valley's sandhill cranes, Grus canadensis. She was beginning a study to obtain a population, abundance over time. Ten years later I find myself doing the same thing. It's 6:30 a.m. as I creep along 3600 West, all my windows down, the heat running. "Morning Edition" mumbling, mosquitoes beginning to buzz and bite. "What's it all for?" I wonder. About then, I hear the distinctive call of cranes, and after some searching, find a group of four in a plowed field. "Ahah!"

I count cranes on five different routes, one in Mendon, one in Young Ward and Hyrum, Benson, the Barrens, and Lewiston. I record the number of adults and juveniles, the type of habitat selected, and the birds' activity. Driving Cache Valley, seeing open space and birding, isn't a bad way to spend one's summer vacation.

This is my second summer of crane counting, and, well, it's been a rough summer. Whether I project circumstances of my own life onto the cranes, or whether the state of the world is reflected in personal life, I'm not sure. Either way, the Cache Valley crane population seems somehow less abundant this year. My notes bear witness to this: "June 10: Did the Mendon route. Almost always see cranes on 3600 West but not today. "August 7: Did route three. Nada." My route totals don't even begin to approach Briggly's for the same place and time a decade ago.

The relative rarity of cranes makes finding them more meaningful. The encouraging thing, after all, is that I do find cranes. Take today, for example. I sat on the hood of my car, in the mist of sprinklers, in a Utah Department of Transportation parking lot overlooking the Barrens. A contrast of green and gray in alfalfa pastures, and the gray takes shape into 18 cranes. Nirvana.

The purpose of counting cranes, however, isn't really about me. Though sighting the birds gives me the wake up thrill I need, it's the discrepancy between my numbers and Briggly's that most interests Bio-Resources. If the crane population is indeed decreasing, somebody should be taking note. Ideally, Bio-Resources and Bridgerland Audubon can give input on how the crane population is managed. The drop in numbers should concern state officials, especially as they increase the number of hunting permits allocated each year. It might even spur them to rethink hunting and land use policies. Why should the state—or anyone for that matter—care about cranes? Anyone who has watched cranes fly over...
BAS Plays Host to State Council's Fall Meeting

BAS wishes to welcome you to the fall Utah Audubon Council meeting that will be held September 28-29 here in beautiful Cache Valley!

The fun will begin at 9 a.m., when we meet at the parking lot immediately north of the Café Ibis on Federal Avenue in downtown Logan. From here we will carpool to various locations around Cache Valley including our newly acquired Arnaiga Barrens property where shorebirds will be wheeling about on their sojourns to points south.

The afternoon will include a color tour up Logan Canyon with birding stops along the way; so do bring a lunch, trail snacks, water, and other comfort requirements. We will lunch somewhere in Logan Canyon, perhaps Woodchuck in the midst of fall splendor.

Evening will include a catered meal at the Allen and Alice Stokes Nature Center in Logan Canyon with leisurely hikes out from there. If anyone needs a place to spend the night, BAS board members will be happy to accommodate you.

Sunday from 8 a.m. until noon we will conduct our business meeting, again at the Stokes Nature Center. Breakfast snacks and drinks will be provided.

The agenda will be similar to spring’s St. George meeting with brief reports from each chapter, further discussion on the quest for a state office, a legislative report from our wonderful lobbyist, and other business.

If you have any other items you wish to see on the agenda, please send them to me. Also, this weekend should be the peak of hawk migration in the Wellsville mountains, so if you’re interested in details, please contact me. RSVP by September 21 for the Saturday evening meal. Looking forward to seeing all of you!

Audubon Calendar
September 2002

Board of Trustees Meeting. The BAS Board of Trustees will hold its first fall meeting at 7 p.m. Thursday, September 5 at Bio-Resources, 135 E. Center, Logan. All interested are invited to attend.

Evening Canoeing on Cutter Marsh. Cool down and let your troubles float away with a leisurely Monday evening paddle around part of Cutter Marsh. Join canoeing and marsh expert Jean Lown for this relaxing tour. Meet at 6 p.m. at the parking lot between Logan Fire Station and Café Ibis (50 E. 150 North) in Logan. Bring your own canoe or call Jean, 752-6830, for suggestions on where to rent one.

Fall Hawk Watch for Beginners. By this time there should be lots of migrating hawks around Cache Valley, so join us Saturday for a mostly driving trip around the valley to learn to identify the various species passing through. Bring a field guide and binoculars if you have them. If you need to borrow binoculars, call Dick Hurren (435) 734-2653 before the trip. Meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot between Logan Fire Station and Café Ibis (50 E. 150 North) in Logan. Carpooling will be available. We’ll be back around noon.

On the Trail of the Meercat: Two Utahans in the Namib Desert of Africa. Bridgerland Audubon member and biologist Alice Lindahl and her husband Jim Haefner took a photo safari to Namibia and Botswana and brought back some photographs that could be from another planet. Etoxa National Park and the Namib desert have creatures found nowhere else on earth. The campers caught up with meercats in the Kalahari National Park in Botswana. Teaming up with their friend and guide, Godfrey Mbhe, they explored the Okavango Delta and Chobe National Park. If you have never seen elephants using their trunks as snorkels to cross a deep river, then come to this 7p.m. talk (and BAS’s monthly general meeting) at the Logan City Building, 255 N. Main.

A Wild Ride to the Wilds of Western Box Elder County. If you’ve never been to western Box Elder County, you owe it to yourself to come on this one—it’s crazy country. We’ll be putting in quite a few driving miles, so be prepared—it’s worth it. We’ll head out Saturday to Locomotive Springs via the Golden Spike National Monument. Then we’ll come back northeast to Snowville and have lunch at Molly’s Restaurant before returning to Cache Valley mid-afternoon. Bring binoculars and plenty of water. Meet at 8 a.m. at the parking lot between the Logan Fire Station and Café Ibis (50 E. 150 North) in Logan. Carpooling will be available. For more information, call Allen Christensen, 258-5019, or Dick Hurren, (435) 734-2653. Al and Dick have done this one several times and have always come back alive.

Annual Trek to the Top of the Wellsvilles. Hike up to the crest of the Wellsville Mountains to witness one of the wonders of the avian world. Over 6,000 hawks migrate along the Wellsville mountains in the mid-August and mid-October. On a good day, we’ll see over 100 raptors, including golden eagles and falcons. We’ll hike up Deep Canyon Saturday to a station monitored by Hawkwatch International and get an update from this year’s watchers. The trail gains 3,000 feet in approximately 4 miles and is quite steep in some places, so wear sturdy footgear. We like to sit on top for a couple of hours to watch the hawks, and since it usually is cool and windy on the ridge, a change of layers, a warm sweater and a good wind shell makes the experience more comfortable. Bring lunch and water. Leave at 8 a.m. from the parking lot between Logan Fire Station and Café Ibis (50 E. 150 North) in Logan. Carpooling will be available. For further information, call Jim Sinclair, 752-0061.
Logan High Students Compete at National Envirothon

On May 4, 2002, the Logan High School Envirothon team took 1st place at the Utah State Envirothon competition. As winners, the team qualified to represent the state of Utah at the Canon Envirothon held in Amherst, Massachusetts July 29–August 4. This was the 3rd year in a row that Logan High School has qualified for the Canon Envirothon.

The Canon Envirothon, like the state competition, consisted of testing on five different areas of ecology: aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife and the introduction of non-native species and their effect on biodiversity. As well as taking written tests, the team was also required to prepare an oral presentation.

The oral presentation consisted of 200 of the 700 points awarded overall in the competition. For the oral presentation, there were only 6 hours of work time allotted for preparation. Following the announcement of the oral presentation scenario, teams were given 4 hours of preparation and clarification on the topic. With an apple basket full of materials and 6 hours ahead of them, the team set out to prepare an in-depth presentation. The presentation consisted of explaining at a "town meeting" how to spend a budget of $252,000 for the town of Amherst. Particular emphasis on preserving the biodiversity of the area while still appeasing the different interest groups in the community was a big part of the presentation. To a panel of four judges, the team was awarded points accordingly for the 20-minute presentation.

The Logan High School Team did very well overall placing 16th out of the 49 states and provinces represented. Areas that the team scored particularly well on include the aquatics test, 2nd overall, and the oral presentation, 8th overall.

Although competition was the main objective, teams were also given a chance to learn about the ecology, history, and community of Amherst. "Learning Day" and "Field Trip Day" were set aside during the week to immerse the teams in knowledge. On Learning Day, team members were separated from their teammates to learn about different aspects of ecology and much of the information appeared on tests taken the following day. Field Trip Day consisted of learning about the history and community of Amherst. Hiking, canoeing, and riverboating were some of the activities offered. However, the trips weren't just fun and games, for the participants were asked to complete community service projects as well. For example, the participants who went on the canoe trip were asked to remove Chinese waterchestnuts from a local waterway, and during the course of the day, over 3 tons of plant material were removed.

Socializing was also a major aspect of Canon Envirothon. Many of the team members networked with people from all over the United States and Canada. During one of the nights, round-tables were held where each team could share the work that they had been doing to better their school or community. Other activities were planned to help the teams loosen up and have fun. Games, water fights and dances were some of the many activities that helped team members make friends during the week.

Emerging from the competition with newly acquired knowledge and many friends, the team enthusiastically stated, "Envirothon is the best high school competition ever!" The team thanks organizations like the Bridgerland Audubon Society and Utah Soil Conservation District for supporting such noble causes.

-Katie Triu

Ed. note: Our congratulations to Logan High's Envirothon coach Jack Greene, who is