



The Stilt

Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

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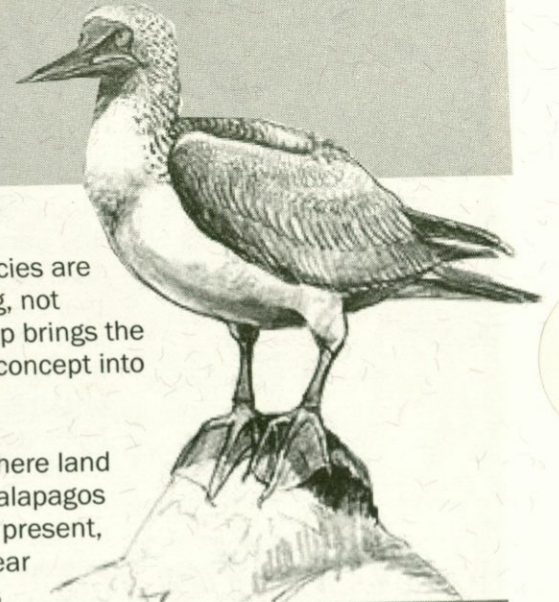


The Stilt

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Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

Finding that Mystery of Mysteries



Logan Birders Visit
the Galapagos

Charles Darwin sailed into the Galapagos in 1835 seeking to collect and identify plants and animals, get over his seasickness and return to England before his cousin, Emma, forgot all about her promise to marry him. Considering the comfort of our boat, the *Liberty* this June 2004, it is hard to imagine how uncomfortable the *Beagle* must have been. It isn't hard to imagine the excitement Darwin must have felt when he looked closely at the plants and animals which inhabit these volcanic islands. They aredifferent on the individual islands and very different from the mainland 600 miles away. But to say that each island has its own distinct species is not correct, the reality is subtle and

complex. Species are ever changing, not static. This trip brings the evolutionary concept into focus.

On islands where land iguanas or Galapagos tortoises are present, the prickly pear cacti species form tall "trees" with orange "trunks." The fleshy cactus pads are well out of the way of the jaws of the two reptiles. On islands that lack the vegetarian reptiles, the prickly pear looks like it does in Arizona, a heap of pads on the ground. On the island of Genovesa, which lacks the reptiles AND lacks the cactus finch, the spines of the low sprawling prickly pear are as soft as the down on a kitten.

The adaptation for fending off predators is too expensive to keep up if it is not needed.

There are four mocking-birds in the Galapagos, all endemic to the islands. One is on most of the islands (divided into numerous subspecies) and three are endemic to individual

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Local Notes



A Wildlife Mecca

By Jack
Greene

I looked on with disbelief as the final canoe was launched with no more than two inches of draft at the bow. The slightest ripple and they would surely swamp! In the front of the canoe was Ron, a beefy 275-pound USU football lineman. In the rear was Steve, weighing in at a hundred pounds less I figured, thus an awkward, highly unstable situation. They were participants in my USU workshop, "Ecology & Natural History of Northern Utah," a one-week event where I attempt to connect USU students with our greater, nonhuman Cache Valley community. And no better place to do so than Cutler Marsh, a veritable Mecca for birds and other wildlife.

A few days after the workshop, I visited Olympia Bay's Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge on Puget Sound. Although a wonderful place, especially the estuarine delta where fresh water meets the sea, it was no match for the richness and uniqueness of our very own Cutler Marsh. Few places on our good

Earth offer greater diversity and excellent viewing opportunities of water birds than central Cache Valley. Add to this breathtaking scenery as one encounters scintillating reflections of the surrounding Bear River & Wellsville Mountains.

My students were amazed by constant interruptions as someone would call out yet another white pelican, ibis, grebe, great blue heron, and so on. Our own BAS board member Andree Walker and assistant Kyle provided us with 4-H canoes and accessories. Andree is the Utah Project Wet coordinator and has helped my students and me on many occasions, and we reciprocate by performing water monitoring activities to provide her with data used to help ascertain the health of our Bear River watershed.

In mid-August we were well beyond the peak of bird activity, but I didn't tell them so as they continued having a grand old time manifested by the shrieks of delight and inquiries as yet another wildlife encounter was recorded. Somehow, without my notice, Ron and Steve had managed to change positions without capsizing (sorry I missed it!) and were much better for it.

We finally worked our way out to the "big water" of the open Benson backwaters and paddled our way to three small islands which had many birds constantly coming and going. Flock after flock of Canada geese lifted off the water, legions of white pelicans paddled about along with gulls and terns. As we drew near the islands it became apparent that nesting activ-

ity was still underway, so we kept our distance and were overwhelmed by the quantity of birds these tiny islands held. The islands were segregated according to their kind, one with cattle and snowy egrets, the second with white faced ibis, and the last with black crowned night herons. Were these second or third broods, or late comers (juveniles perhaps with unsuccessful earlier attempts)? Then we swung west to visit other islands with terns and gulls, also with young birds. The students were a bit tentative as they watched our lead canoe under attack by fearless Forester terns, but stayed the course to experience these audacious birds.

On our return some of my students—Dane and D.J.—pulled more purple loosestrife, an exotic, invasive species that has become established in the area. Andree suggested that we present the idea at the next BAS Board meeting of offering a field trip for further eradication. I volunteered to present her offer as she wouldn't be with us. This very attractive plant has invaded thousands of acres of wetlands across North America, so it's a definite threat here.

All seven canoes returned without incident—amazing for a bunch of rowdy USU students, and all were deeply moved by what they had experienced on the marsh that lovely, late summer day. "When can we do it again?" by some, "I will definitely be returning for more!" by others. I suggested a moonlight trip on the next full moon, one of my favorite times to be out. We will return to this wondrous, magical place!

You Too Can Canoe

Always wanted to canoe Cutler Marsh, but didn't want to go it alone? Join us for our Autumn Splendor Canoe Trip on Wednesday, September 22 (see field trip announcement in the Audubon Calendar, p. 5). Can't make it that day but don't know your way around? There are marked canoe trails leading from Cutler Marsh Marina that can be explored by beginners, using caution. To follow a marked trail, watch for floating buoys: white bowling pins with two orange stripes.

North Marsh Canoe Trail

Now covered by the reservoir, the channel of the Little Bear River can still be followed by watching for slowly moving water. Follow this trail from the Cutler Marsh Marina beneath the Valley View Highway and through a maze of islands into the open water, and north to Benson Marina.

Logan River Canoe Trail

From Cutler Marsh Marina go south a few hundred yards, then follow the moving water east and upstream to eventually enter the Logan River (also marked by buoys). You can paddle several miles upstream against the slow moving water.

Little Bear River Canoe Trail

An alternative route between the Mendon Road and Cutler Marsh Marina that avoids the heron rookery in the Little Bear itself. The easiest strategy is to put in at the Little Bear River Recreation site on the Mendon Road (or look for buoys going upstream from the Cutler Marsh Marina). The current is slow, but look out for overhanging branches of the willows along the way. In some years, there may be no way to paddle beneath the trees and you will have to portage around them. Eventually, this channel finds the confluence with Spring Creek and you can paddle downstream and north to the Cutler Marsh Marina through a maze of islands.

For more information on these trails, (and maps!) visit the Wetland Maze portion of Bridgerland Audubon's website: www.bridgerlandaudubon.org.

Galapagos Cruise for Nature Lovers

May & June 2005

Designed with Audubon chapter members in mind, we have booked two sailings of the new catamaran cruiser *Archipell II* for birders, botanists, and nature lovers. A special guide will be hired who has in-depth knowledge of the ecological and evolutionary significance of the animal and plant species on each island. In other words, it will be much more than the usual cruise, featuring breathtaking close-up views of birds behaving as if humans were not there. The dates were chosen in an attempt to provide the best opportunities for seeing breeding birds (both land and sea birds) while experiencing warm water and calm seas. This year we saw 52 species of birds, including 25 endemic species and 20 endemic subspecies. That is almost all of them on the islands. Finding and identifying the Darwin's finches is not that hard!

Here are the specifics of the two separate trips:

Dates: Trip 1 — May 30–June 6, 2005
Trip 2 — June 6–June 13, 2005
8 days, 7 nights

Boat: The ship *Archipell II* holds 16 passengers in eight cabins. All electricity on board is provided by solar panels on the top deck, making the evenings much quieter than other boats can offer, and eco-friendly as well. The catamaran design minimizes pitch and roll in ocean swells, making it one of the most stable small boats in the Galapagos.

Islands to visit: San Cristobal (home port), Espanola, Fernandina, Isabella, North Seymour, Santiago and Floreana.

Activities Include: Hikes, birding, photography at the national park landing sites, panga rides along cliffs, and snorkeling. The itinerary includes a visit to the Charles Darwin Research Center in Puerto Ayora with visits to research labs and opportunities to talk to the scientists. We will also visit the highlands of Santa Cruz to see the cloud forest and tortoises in their natural environment.

Cost: \$2005.00. This includes all meals and activities aboard the Archipel, round trip airfare to Quito or Guayaquil, as well as the entrance fee to the Galapagos National Park. A proportion of the cost to each traveler goes towards the efforts of making arrangements and providing information for the trip. Booking fees for this trip will be donated to Bridgerland Audubon Society in Logan, Utah, for providing advertisement and endorsement of the trip and the Charles Darwin Research Station for their efforts to preserve this valuable treasure.

If you would like to sign on or have questions regarding the details of this trip, please contact Alice Lindahl email: alindahl@bridgernet.com; phone: (435) 753-7744; address: 1738 Country Club Drive, Logan, UT 84321.

The last date to sign on is October 15th, 2004. That is when the first deposit of \$500.00 is due. The trips may fill up before that, so please contact Alice as soon as possible if you are interested.

Audubon Calendar

September 2004

8 BAS Board of Trustees Meeting. Bridgerland Audubon's Board of Trustees will meet this Wednesday at 7 p.m. at the offices of Bio-Resources, 135 E. Center. All interested are invited to attend.

9 General Meeting & September Social. Join us this Thursday at 7 p.m. for a casual get-together at the home of Bill Masslich and Penny Trinca. We'll be catching up after our summer off and discussing plans for the coming year. Bill and Penny's home is at 136 W. 3200 South in Nibley. Refreshments will be served. For more information, call Bill at 753-1759. See you there!

11 A Trip to Some Beautiful High Country. Join us as we drive up to Hardware Ranch and then follow the gravel road along the stream that comes in from the south to the beautiful high sagebrush and aspen steppe that runs for many miles. We will make stops at various places along the route to walk a little and observe the beautiful flora and fauna. This area contains a great diversity of habitats ranging from quite dry to small marshes and ponds. We hope to see some lingering sage thrashers, lark sparrows, loggerhead shrikes, Brewer's sparrows, and other birds. We also usually encounter deer and elk, and occasionally a moose. Meet at the parking lot between Caffé Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 East 150 North) at 8:30 a.m. Saturday. Carpooling will be available. Bring a lunch or some snacks, because we will not be back until early afternoon. Bring binoculars and dress appropriately for the season. For additional information call Dick Hurren, (435) 734-2653.

18 Annual Kokanee Salmon Run. Come with us and local fish expert Ron Goede to view and learn the spawning habits of this inland salmon variety. Ron will explain the ecology and natural history of this unique fish and will take us to places where we can view them up close and personal. This should be an excellent trip for families. Birding in this area is also good, so bring your binoculars and plan to have fun. Last year there were both bald eagles and ospreys on hand to get their share of the fish. We will leave at 8:30 a.m. Saturday from the parking lot between the Logan Fire Station and Caffé Ibis (50 East 150 North). Carpooling will be available. Bring a snack and binoculars if you have them. We plan to return in early afternoon. For more information, call Ron Goede, 752-9650 or Dick Hurren, (435) 734-2653.

22 Autumn Splendor Canoe Trip. Spend a relaxing evening on the Cutler Marsh and let your troubles float away behind you. Dr. Jean Lown, one of the area's more ardent paddlers, will lead this evening trip. Bring your own canoe (or rent one from Trailhead Sports or USU's Outdoor Recreation Center) and meet at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday at the parking lot between the Caffé Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 East 150 North). For more information call Jean at 752-6830.



If you'd like to come along on a field trip but do not have binoculars, call Dick Hurren (435) 734-2653. He'll try to find a pair for you to use.

25 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. Thousands of raptors (hawks, eagles, etc) migrate along the Wellsvilles during the fall migration season. On a good day we'll see over 100 raptors of different species. With Jim Sinclair as our guide, we'll hike up Deep Canyon to a station monitored by Hawkwatch International and get a report from this year's monitors on how their count is progressing. The trail gains 3000 feet in approximately four miles, so be prepared, and be sure to wear appropriate footwear and bring plenty of water. We like to sit on top of the ridge for a couple of hours to watch the birds drift by. Since it is usually cool and windy up on top, a change of layers, a warm sweater, and a good wind shell make the experience more comfortable. Bring binoculars, lunch and water. Leave at 8 a.m. from the parking lot between Logan Fire Station and Caffé Ibis (50 East 150 North). Carpooling will be available. For further information call Jim Sinclair, 752-0061 or Dick Hurren (435) 734-2653.

Utah Audubon Council Retreat. BAS is sponsoring the fall Utah Audubon Council retreat, September 25 and 26, to coincide with the Hawkwatch hike up the Wellsvilles. After the hike, there will be a dinner/business/fun meeting Saturday evening from 6 to 9 p.m., then a continuation of the meeting (including breakfast) Sunday morning from 8 a.m. to noon at the Stokes Nature Center in Logan Canyon. The meals will be potluck. All are invited. This is a great opportunity to confab with fine folk from the other Utah Audubon chapters, share ideas and stories, get an update on Utah wildlife issues from our wonderful lobbyist Debbie Goodman, and have an all around good time! Don't miss this one! Questions: contact Jack at jgreene@lhs.logan.k12.ut.us or (435) 563-6816.

Logan Birders Visit the Galapagos

Side Trips to the Napo Wildlife Center and Tandayapa Bird Lodge, Ecuador

The Napo Wildlife Center (NWC) in the Amazonian Rain Forest is reached by a brief flight from Quito to Coca, followed by a 2.5-hour ride on the Napo River in a motorized, covered boat, and then via a creek for 2 hours in a dugout canoe. The canoe ride ends at Lake Añangu, where we were greeted with welcome drinks and shown to charming cabanas for our five-day stay in this remote location on the northern edge of the Yasuni National Park.

The Napo adventure was part two of a South American odyssey organized by biologist Alice Lindahl, part one being an 8-day tour of the Galapagos Islands. A group of 32 engaged on that wonderful trip, which Alice has described for *Stilt* readers. Our purpose here is to describe two extensions of the trip: 1) the Amazon Rain Forest and 2) the Cloud Forest Reserve. Both of these venues offered unparalleled bird and wildlife sightings.

To return to NWC, the lodge is a model of eco-tourism. Supported by generous grants from the Tropical Nature Foundation and EcoEcuador and geared to preserve the rich and diverse flora and fauna, the members of the local community chose to undertake this project, which offers sustainable economy for the indigenous peoples in the form of employment and profit-sharing with the foundations.

Six of the 32 who went to Galapagos chose the Napo Wildlife Center while others stayed at one of the half-dozen lodges on the lower Rio Napo. Among our part was another Logan citizen, Michael Jablonski, who was a crucial oarsman on the trip up the creek.

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Side Trips

(Continued from P. 6)

Although the lodge features 10 comfortable cabanas that can house up to 30, our group was practically alone with the exception of two French travel agents investigating NWC for tours.

The value of our two guides, one a naturalist and one a local guide, was immediately apparent on the canoe ride as Renato and Jorge pointed out nests of zig-zag herons and cued us to the capuchin and squirrel monkeys crossing the creek in the overhanging jungle canopy.

Logan Birders Visit the Galapagos

Because of the restrictions against motorized craft, the creeks around NWF offer a wealth of birds. The second site, a bit farther up river, requires a 40-minute walk to the blind. Our bird list from Napo Wildlife Center is too extensive to note here although we cannot fail to mention the white-throated toucan. The showy bird is easy to spot by its oversized bill. Bird-spotting is enhanced by a 45-foot high observation tower that also allows better observation of the

red howler monkeys, whose eerie cry sounds like a prairie wind; the howlers are usually seen at a distance perched in treetops. NWC will have by the end of the year a canopy platform reached by crossing the lake.

Observations could be made from the tower, the lodge, or the hammocks on the porch of each cabana. Although luxury is not easily attainable in the jungle, we felt pampered by excellent, healthy meals; king-size beds fitted with mosquito nets at night; and ceiling fans. Sleeping was remarkably comfortable, given that June nights can be quite cool.

By the end of our two-night stay at Tandayapa Bird Lodge just two hours northwest of Quito, we had checked off 70 species of birds. The Cloud Forest, a haven for bird watchers, is cousin to the rain forest, but its high elevation at 4500-9000 feet results in clouds that seem to hang on the dense forests, mountain ridges, and valleys. The Cloud Forest excursion was the third and final phase of our Ecuadorian trip.

Two private reserves are located in Tandayapa Valley. We chose Tandayapa Bird Lodge, comfortable accommodations at about the same elevation

as Logan. Rooms range from private doubles to dormitory style, providing access for a wide range of guests. Meals featured such delicacies as farm-raised trout from the rushing mountain stream in the valley. The second option is Bellavista Cloud Forest Reserve with similar arrangements but includes additionally a 4-story geodesic dome that serves as lodge, restaurant, and observation tower. In addition to watching birds, some guests take Spanish classes.

Both lodges feature superb opportunities for hummingbird sightings as they have several feeders. And what hummingbirds! The lodge provided a comprehensive bird list, including more than 30 species of hummers. But hummingbirds comprise only a small portion of the 300+ species. Well-marked trails and blinds at both lodges offer panoramic views and sightings of birds that range from large to small.

The highlands provided yet another window onto Ecuadorian birds and animals, a country that ranks at or near the top for biodiversity and for its endemic species—found no place else on the planet.

—Joyce Kinkead
BAS Member

On the Web:

Napo Wildlife Center:
www.tropicalnature.org

Tandayapa Bird Lodge:
www.tandayapa.com

Mystery

(Continued from p. 1)

islands, some of which are only a few hundred acres in size.

If you paid attention in your biology class, you remember that natural selection works on variation that is always present in a population of organisms. Beginning birders have the idea that there is no variation, and each individual bird is the same as every other individual bird. The bird ID books reinforce this idea. The Galapagos turns that notion upside down. For example, we were watching a colony of flightless cormorants, the only flightless members of this group in the world. They scrambled out of the water and did what cormorants everywhere do, they hung their wings out to dry. Some individuals had little stubs about 4 inches long with three or four pathetic feathers hanging off of them. Others had wings long enough that you could easily imagine them at least gliding a little way.

Darwin keyed in on the mockingbirds and the giant tortoises to work out the mechanism of evolution by natural selection. This was his "Mystery of Mysteries": how species evolve from previously existing species. He collected some little black and brown finches and popped them all into a bag to-

gether, no doubt muttering about the "lby"s, the "little brown jobs" that are such a bother to work out. These 13 species of finch, now known as Darwin's finches have proven to give more insights than any other species regarding the mechanism of natural selection. The serious birder has to be very focused indeed to work out the identities of these birds on a particular island because the size of the beaks can depend on what other species of finch are also resident on that island. Birders need a challenge.

One of the most eye-popping birds to me was the endemic subspecies of the yellow warbler. It has a bright red streak on its crown, red streaking on the sides, and it was commonly seen at the edge of the ocean working over the intertidal rocks. It breaks barnacles and picks out the tiny amount of flesh found there. Our yellow warblers would never consider such an outlandish dinner.

The biggest mystery to me is why all of the birds, mammals and reptiles still are not afraid of people even though they had several hundred years of pre-National Park Service treatment by humans. Blue-footed boobies along the South American coast don't allow tourists to gawk at them from a few feet away. Still, it's wonderful that they do allow

this here. Even the most amateur photographer can get National Geographic-quality photos.

We spent seven nights on a 16-passenger boat this summer. Nights were spent cruising to the next island and days were spent exploring the national park landing sites and snorkeling in the lagoons and channels. Our nightly entertainment was the brilliant bioluminescence that we could see by hanging over the bow of the boat. Jellyfish flashed blue and green, the plankton gave off sparks like a gigantic sparkler sprinkler. Fish zoomed by making a torpedo shape of brilliant flashes. One night we went through a gigantic school of flying fish that were being grabbed right and left by the endemic Galapagos swallow-tailed gulls. The next morning, at Genovesa Island, we were treated to the sight of this same gull species feeding a huge flying fish to its chick.

You can experience these wonders and find many more for yourself by booking a cabin in the boat that we have chartered as a fund-raiser for Bridgerland Audubon. Join other birders and see how many of the endemic birds you can find. You will be caught up in the excitement of seeing evolution in action.

—Alice Lindahl
BAS Fundraising
Committee Member

Welcome to BAS

New Members

Coralie M Beyers
C Carson
Mr & Mrs Tom Clements
Star Coulbrooke
Rosemary A Feinstein
Cindy A Hall

Carolee Hammel
David Hewett
Sally Maxwell
Bruce Pendery
Sue Sanborn
Richard & Jill Wood

Renewing Members

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John W Devilbiss
Rebecca S Echols
Lyle Henderson

Frederick F Knowlton
Austin & Krista McHugh
D Obray
Don Standing

Bridgerland Audubon contacts

Trustees

2002-2005 Jim Cane, 713-4668; Richard Mueller, 752-5637; Dick Hurren 435/734-2653
2003-2006 Ron Goede, 752-9650; Kate Stephens, 755-0608; Andreé Walker, 755-2103
2004-2007 Dave Drown, 752-3797; Jack Greene, 563-6816; Melanie Spriggs, 245-4376; Reinhard Jockel.

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Sanctuary Jim Cane, 713-4668, jimcane@cc.usu.edu, or Bryan Dixon, 752-6830, bdixon@xmission.com

Membership in the Bridgerland Audubon Society includes a subscription to *The Stilt*, as well as *Audubon* magazine. The editor of *The Stilt* invites submissions, due on the 15th of each month. Send to stiltnews@hotmail.com.

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:
National Audubon Society
Membership Data Center
PO Box 51001
Boulder, CO 80322-1001
W-52 Local Chapter Code: 7XCHA

Note to new National Audubon members: To get on *The Stilt* newsletter mailing list without the usual 8 week delay, contact Susan Durham, 753-5637, sdurham@cc.usu.edu.

Prefer the local newsletter only? Send \$20 and this form to: Bridgerland Audubon Society, PO Box 3501, Logan, UT 84323-3501 for a subscription to *The Stilt*.

National Audubon occasionally makes its membership list available to selected organizations. To have your name omitted from this, please check this box.