



The Stilt

Volume 33, Issue 2

February 2004

Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

CBC: Under the Weather Wire

Every year, along with tens of thousands of other birders, we do a Christmas Bird Count, partly because it gets us out of the winter solstice blues, and away from shopping, but mostly because it contributes data to an increasingly important hemispheric database. We count every bird in our count circle, but though total numbers are important, at the local level we're particularly interested in number of species, for we're always trying to break our record. The most recent record was just last year, at 99 species.

We're limited by the rules of the CBC to counting on one day between December 14 and January 5. Several factors play a role in how many birds we count, including the number and skill of the birders, and the amount of time we spend in the field. The most important factor, however, is weather. If our Saturday falls, as it did last year, on the earliest day - December 14 - and the bitter

cold and snow haven't settled in yet, we have the best chance at seeing species that haven't yet migrated. On the other hand, if it hasn't been cold to the north, then those migrating species will not yet have arrived. This year, the weather was our friend. It had been a little cold, but not the record setting frigid November of last year. And it had snowed a little, but the fields and meadows were largely clear and the still water was largely open. We were very lucky, however, for the day after our count it was a blizzard! Whew!

Every year brings new records in numbers or kinds of species, and this year was no exception.

Analysis by Group

Among the water birds, the record-setting single Clark's grebe was a real surprise. Throughout November and December there were numerous western grebes on Hyrum Lake, but Clark's had pretty much disappeared. No explanation for the first-ever Ross' goose, either. In fact, there just

didn't seem to be any pattern amongst the water birds. The open water might help to account for other high counts of mallard, ring-necked duck, common goldeneye, bufflehead, and ruddy duck, but why low numbers of green-winged teal, wood duck, and Barrow's goldeneye?

Hawks were somewhat less of a puzzle. Among the buteos were lots of red-tailed hawks, very likely because the fields were mostly open and these birds feed on small rodents. As usual, the Swainson's hawks had all - to a bird - migrated to South America, but it hadn't been cold enough up north to push many rough-legged or any ferruginous hawks this far south. Three of our falcons, American kestrels, merlins, and prairie falcons, were also numerous. The high count of merlins may also be due to increased coverage of Logan City this year (three were seen in the city).

(Continued on p. 2)

Inside this issue:

Christmas Bird Count	1
Audubon Calendar	3
Audubon Contacts & Membership Information	5

CBC

(Continued from p. 1)

New Records for BAS's Christmas Bird Count Since 1980

Species	2003 Count	Previous High	Year of Previous Record
Clark's Grebe	1	--	--
Ross' Goose	3	--	--
Canada Goose	1,402	1,014	1989
Wild Turkey	71	21	2001
Thayer's Gull	2	--	--
Rock Pigeon	1,174	835	1991
Northern Pygmy-Owl	5	3	2000
Canyon Wren	18	9	1995, 2002
Varied Thrush	2	1	1997, 1999
Yellow-rumped Warbler	14	13	1987

"Chicken birds" were about normal, except for a record number of wild turkeys. Turkeys are not native to Utah, but the state wildlife agencies in Idaho and Utah apparently determined to provide yet another species to shoot, for in Idaho, many turkeys were released just north of the Utah border as late as 1995, and in Utah, the DWR has also been aggressively releasing birds, with 30 planted in Millville Canyon in 2000 and 50 more at Hardware Ranch in 2002. Apparently this is good habitat, for they're so numerous that Richmond residents are complaining about the damage to crops and yards. Whether this is a wise program is still in

debate. What other damage might these non-natives do to other species' habitats? It's a bit unsettling to have such a program when the DWR has such precious little in the way of resources to monitor the impacts.

We were especially lucky with gulls this year. The lack of a severe cold spell resulted in many California and ring-billed gulls remaining into late December. The real treat, however, were several Thayer's and herring gulls. Many years we'll see one or two of these species at the sewage lagoons, but it's rare to find more than a single individual. It provided a great study in immature gulls of common as well as these less

common species.

We found a record number of northern pygmy-owls and we also found long-eared owls for a change. Both of these species are resident year round, but are uncommon. We were probably just lucky, especially in finding the latter species in two different locations. Interestingly, we missed seeing any short-eared owls. We may just not have gone to where they were, but the records show a rather consistent 5-6 year cycle on our CBC, and this may have been just a low year.

Corvids were well represented, especially by the

(Continued on p. 4)

Audubon Calendar

February 2004

7 Antelope Island in Winter. Meet at 8 a.m. Saturday in the parking lot between the Logan Fire Station and Café Ibis (50 E. 150 North) in Logan for a morning and early afternoon of nature watching at Antelope Island State Park in the Great Salt Lake. At this time of year, bison and antelope are usually easy to see up close, and bighorn sheep may be in view. Unusual birds are often seen both from the causeway leading to the island and on the island itself. A single Lapland longspur was recently sighted along the causeway and black rosyfinches are sometimes seen near the visitors' center. Unusual waterfowl are often seen in the lake, and falcons are often seen on the island. Bring warm clothing and binoculars, and either a lunch or be prepared to buy something (a buffalo burger?) at the snack stand. We'll plan to be back by mid-afternoon. For more information, call Dick Hurren (435) 734-2653.

11 Board of Trustees Meeting. BAS Board of Trustees will meet at 7 p.m. Wednesday at the offices of Bio-Resources, 135 E. Center, Logan. This departure from the first Wednesday of the month is for the February meeting only. All interested are invited to attend.

12 General Meeting— New Observation Opportunities at Bear Lake National Wildlife Refuge. Bob Bundy, refuge manager for Bear Lake National Wildlife Refuge, has received grant money to build a mile-long, ADA-compliant walkway, hunting blind, and observation blind with kiosks and informative signs. He would very much like to partner with groups such as Audubon that might provide volunteer help to plan and build these projects. Join us for a discussion with Bob following our general meeting on Thursday evening at 7 p.m. at the Logan City Library meeting room, 255 N. Main Street, Logan.

14 Birding in and Around Smithfield. Smithfield and its environs often contains some very interesting birding during this late winter period. We plan to visit Mack Park, the Smithfield Cemetery, and other spots around the town that often contain birds of interest, including owls. Meet at 9 a.m. Saturday at the parking lot between Logan Fire Station and Café Ibis (50 E. 150 North). Dress warmly and bring binoculars and some "munchies." We will finish up around 1 p.m. For more information call Sue or Dave Drown, 752-3797; or Dick Hurren, 734-2653.

21 Elk and Birds at Hardware Ranch. Join us for a trip to Hardware Ranch to enjoy the elk and do some birding along the way. We will take the wagon ride out among the elk as they are being fed, and we will do a little birding on the way up to the ranch and considerably more on the way back down Blacksmith Fork Canyon. We always see both bald and golden eagles and often see northern shrikes and other birds of interest. Meet at 8:30 a.m. Saturday in the parking lot between Logan Fire Station and Café Ibis (50 E. 150 North). Dress for the season and bring binoculars and a snack. We'll be back by 1 or 2 p.m. For more information, call Dick Hurren (435) 734-2653.

28 Waterfowl and Raptors in Central Cache Valley. By the end of February, we usually begin to see some early movement of geese, swans, and some other waterfowl. In addition, winter raptors are often seen in very large numbers. Join us as we explore by motor vehicle the areas in central Cache Valley that are usually the hot spots for birds at this still-cold time of year. Meet at the parking lot between Logan Fire Station and Café Ibis (50 E. 150 North) at 9 a.m. Dress warmly, bring binoculars and a snack. We will return around noon for those who have had enough; for those who haven't had enough, we'll continue until early to mid-afternoon. For more information call Sue or Dave Drown, 752-3797 or Dick Hurren (435) 734-2653.

CBC

(Continued from page 2)

high numbers of Clark's nutcrackers and American crows. The latter may have also benefited from the extra coverage in Logan City this year.

Other surprises among the passerines included a record number of canyon wrens, though other "micro-birds" (chickadees, nuthatches, wrens and kinglets) were found in normal numbers. Among the thrushes, not only did the pair of varied thrushes that appeared in December hang around until the CBC, but they were joined by a Hermit's thrush. Both of these species have stayed around well into January along the canal trail east of 1600 East and just north of the Logan Golf Course. Sparrows were generally a bit low, though one feeder watcher counted a fox sparrow, very uncommon for our CBC. Finally, most of the

blackbird species were a bit low, though three introduced species – house sparrows, European starlings, and rock pigeons – were uncommonly high. Whoopee.

Though all of the CBC participants are to be commended for helping this important effort, we can't let this year go by without special recognition of two individuals who have been responsible for some of our best CBC sightings over the years – John Barnes and Ron Ryel. Between them, they found ten species this year that were seen in no other sector, and most of these species were represented by a single bird. Their skills and observations are legendary, and they've been more than generous in sharing their time and sighting information for others who also want to find these unusual birds. Thanks, guys!

As ever, Sue and Dave Drown were generous to provide their home for the post-count compilation and potluck. Great

food again, this year, everyone!

Our data will be submitted sometime in late January to the national database where researchers and the lay public can access them on line: <http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/cbc.html>

The results of our local CBC counts back to 1956 are also available electronically (MS Excel spreadsheet) or by hard copy (\$1.00 to cover postage and printing). Contact Bryan Dixon at bdixon@xmission.com or 10 Heritage Cove, Logan, UT 84321.

Postscript. The day of the CBC, temps were in the 40s; the day after our CBC, it snowed with strong winds and temps well below freezing. Those who went to find the rare birds saw very little, and had the weather come in a day earlier, the count might not have made it above 90! Our CBC made it in just under the "weather wire."

—Bryan Dixon and
Keith Archibald

2003 CBC Participants—Clifton Alston, Jamie Anderson, Keith Archibald, Bob Atwood, Dennis Austin, Jessie Barnes, John Barnes, Terry Barnes, Mike Becker, Tim Boschetti, Gordon Bosworth, Jim Cane, Allen Christensen, Sean Collins, Janna Custer, Mary DeByle, Norb DeByle, Bryan Dixon, Keith Dixon, David Drown, Susan Drown, John Ellerbeck, Kit Flannery, Jim Gessaman, John Goodell, Jack Greene, River Haggerty, Jim Hefner, Adair Holden, Joanne Hughes, Dick Hurren, Bill Jensen, Reinhard Jockel, Liz Josephson, Linda Kervin, David Kotter, Kurt Kotter, Alice Lindahl, Jean Lown, Chirs Luecke, Bill Masslich, Jake Masslich, Zane Masslich, Mark Mathews, Eric Meyer, Alison Morgan, Ron Munger, Gaia Nafziger, Brian Nicholson, Bill Oblock, Stephen Peterson, Lawrence Ryel, Ron Ryel, Charlie Saul, Grace Saul, Ann Shifrer, Frank Smith, Melanie Spriggs, Alice Stokes, Katie Tansock, C. Val Grant, Dennis Welker, John Writter, Craig Yeager, Jackie Yeager, Danee Young-Hawkins

Welcome to BAS

New Members

Gordon Bosworth
 Christopher Cokinos
 Tess & Emily Davis
 Sydney K Larsen
 D Newbold
 Mary A Waite
 J & E Wellingo

Renewing Members

Desmond & Loila Rae Anderson
 Joyce Anderson
 Leon C Astle
 Martha H Balph
 Janis Boettinger & Gene Schupp
 Debby Bronson & Graham
 Hunter

Mike Bullock
 Brian Creutzburg
 Edward & Deborah Evans
 Lyle Henderson
 Joyce Kinkead & David Lancy
 Jesse & Catherine Logan
 Ilone Long

Lana Powell
 Craig Reger
 James P Shaver
 Melanie Spriggs
 Marie & Nick Strickland
 Mrs Elaine H Watkins

Bridgerland Audubon contacts

Trustees

2001-2004 Merr Lundahl, 753-1707; Dave Drown, 752-3797;
 Jack Greene, 563-6816
 2002-2005 Jim Cane, 713-4668; Joyce McMullin, 713-4399;
 Dick Hurren 435/734-2653; Jamie McEvoy, 753-
 3559
 2003-2006 Ron Goede, 752-9650; Kate Stephens, 755-0608;
 Andree Walker, 755-2103

Bridgerland Audubon Contacts

President Val Grant, 752-7572, biores@mtwest.net
 Vice Pres. Bill Masslich, 753-1759, bmasslich@pcu.net
 Outings Dick Hurren, 435/734-2653, hurrens@aol.com
 Secretary Jamey Anderson, 881-1244, jameya@cc.usu.edu
 Treasurer Susan Drown, 752-3797, drown6@attbi.com
 Wetlands Alice Lindahl, 753-7744, alindahl@bridgernet.com
 Forest Issues Kathy Gilbert, 752-0946, gilbert@mtwest.net
 Education Jack Greene, 563-6816, jgreene@lhs.logan.k12.ut.us
 Newsletter Miriam Hugentobler, 752-8237, stiltnews@hotmail.com
 Circulation Susan Durham, 752-5637, sdurham@cc.usu.edu
 Hospitality Allen & Gail Christensen, 258-5018, gaichr@pdp.usu.edu
 Hotline Nancy Williams, 757-0185, nanwill@cc.usu.edu
 Webmaster Chris Wilson, 753-3769, cwilson@sisna.com
 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.



The Stilt

Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

P.O. Box 3501

Logan, Utah 84323-3501

Email: stiltnews@hotmail.com

Visit our website: <http://www.bridgerlandaudubon.org>

Nonprofit Organization
BULK RATE
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 104
Logan, Utah

Last Call for Spring Migration in Port Aransas, Texas!

Bridgerland Audubon is planning a trip to the south Texas Gulf Coast to see the spring migration spectacular there. This is one of the very best spots in the nation to observe huge numbers of spring migrant birds. The tentative dates for our stay are May 1-4. A \$100 deposit will be required before we include you in the reservation plans. This should be a very exciting trip, so we hope you will plan to go with us. To make your reservation or to obtain further information, call Val Grant, 753-5370; Sue and Dave Drown, 752-3797; or Dick Hurren, (435) 734-2653. Deadline to reserve your spot is February 15!