



# The Stilt

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Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

## Sharp-tailed Grouse Strut

"Who would get up at four in the morning to go look at birds?" was the question posed to me by my slumbering brain, as I stumbled bleary-eyed and coffee in hand to the lbis.

My question was answered when I saw approximately 25 other insane birders out early for the annual BAS trek to the Selmans' ranch to witness sharp-tailed grouse strutting their stuff. The Selman family was recently awarded The Allen W. Stokes Conservation Award for 2004, in recognition of their conservationist approach to grazing and ranching.

After a drive out to the Avon area, in the southern portion of the valley, we hiked over a western ridge of the Selman property to a large grazing area that is used by the grouse as their 'lek'. For those not familiar with the word 'lek', it is associated with an extreme form of polygyny (lekking) in which males gather in tiny territories to display to visiting females, who select males for copulation. A lek can refer to the group of males or the piece of

ground where the territories are located.

Spotting scopes were set up, as we listened to the males cackling their low coo sounds, which are made by deflating the purple neck air sacs. The object of the game for the sharp-tailed grouse males is to control the central area of the lek by displaying purple air sacs on the neck, with tail pointed skyward and bent over, chasing off competing males and allowing only attracted females to enter their circle of conquest. The females then mate with the dominant male and then go off to nest, taking care of the young by themselves.

The group of birders watched this interesting, but bizarre behavior for over an hour, observing many males displaying and females turning to jelly in their hands, err, wings.

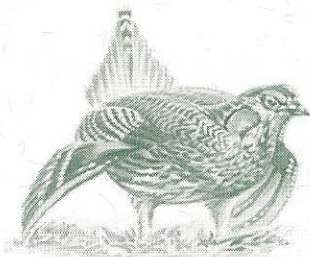
As the sun started to peak above the mountains to the east, vesper sparrows were seen, sitting on top of sagebrush and calling to each other. The care that has been taken by the Selman family in managing this area was apparent in

the beautiful, intact landscape. After everyone had their fill of sharp-tailed grouse breeding antics, we headed back down the ridge, where a lark sparrow was spotted. Grasshopper sparrows were heard buzzing away and a lazuli bunting was observed with its bright turquoise above and cinnamon breast.

Other birds spotted at the ranch area included yellow warblers, a black headed grosbeak, a lone spotted sandpiper and the sound of a green-tailed towhee that Reinhard Jockel, Richard Wood and myself chased after, up a sagebrush slope.

I got to wonder what had prompted so many people to come on this field trip. Was it the chance to watch a unique display of nature or was it for the FREE breakfast that the Selmans treated us to afterwards? Many thanks go to Brett, Laura, Fred and the rest who cooked us an incredible meal and invited us to a very bird-friendly area of the world.

—Stephen Peterson



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# Chapter Notes

## Audubon Recognizes Ten New 'Important Bird Areas' In Utah

Salt Lake City, UT—The Utah Important Bird Areas (IBA) program, operating under the auspices of the National Audubon Society, has added ten new IBA sites in Utah: The five major bays on Great Salt Lake - Farmington, Ogden, Bear River, Gilbert (or South Arm), and Gunnison (or North Arm); Provo and Goshen Bay on Utah Lake; Cutler Marsh-Amalga Barrens in Cache County; the Upper Strawberry Watershed in Wasatch County; and Lytle Preserve in Washington County. This announcement, which comes on the even of International Migratory Bird Day (Saturday, May 8, 2004), brings the total

number of IBAs in the state to 15 sites.

Important Bird Areas are sites that provide essential habitat for one or more species of bird, and meet criteria established by Utah's IBA Technical Team, which includes many of the state's leading ornithologists. "The IBA program is an excellent way to identify critical areas for birds across the world and in Utah," declares Val Grant, president of Bridgerland Audubon Society and chair of Utah's IBA Technical Team. "The inclusion of specific properties grants no management authority, neither does it enable any land-

owner restrictions from the IBA program; but, by working cooperatively with landowners, these areas can continue to be monitored and protected for the future."

The IBA Program is designed to be proactive, voluntary, science-based, and credible. The Utah program connects to other IBA sites throughout the U.S. through the National Audubon Society, and the world through BirdLife International. For more information, visit [http://www.audubon.org/news/press\\_releases/index.html](http://www.audubon.org/news/press_releases/index.html)

—Audubon Newswire

## Avian Monikers

Avian taxonomists, being a humorless lot, there is no Left Tern nor any Right Tern. Norseman gave them the name *taerne*, which probably was applied specifically to the Sandwich Tern (which in tern, ah, *turn*, has nothing to do with the pastrami on rye, but rather a certain

British nobleman). Other terns were termed "sea swallows", an evocative if taxonomically misleading name. So eventually the name was spread to the entire group, as one good tern deserves another!

—Jim Cane

Isotope: A Journal of Literary Nature and Science Writing at Utah State announces its 2005 Editors' Prizes in Nonfiction, Fiction and Poetry. Submissions must be postmarked August 1 - November 15, 2004, and winners will receive publication and \$500. See our website for submission guidelines: <http://websites.usu.edu/isotope>

# Audubon Calendar

Summer 2004

## June

**5 Birding the South End of Cache Valley.** Birding in the canyons and meadows at the south end of Cache Valley is superb, but often overlooked. Please join us for a morning of birding up East Canyon and around Paradise and Avon. Walking will be considerable but very easy. Some unusual birds such as lesser goldfinches, calliope hummingbirds, and unusual warblers are often encountered. Last year butterflies were about in large numbers and a wide variety of species. Meet Saturday at 8:30 a.m. at the parking lot between Caffé Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 East 150 North). Please bring your binoculars. No lunch is necessary, but you may want to bring some munchies to eat along the way. For more information call Dick Hurren (435) 734-2653.

**12 A Visit to Bear Lake Wildlife Refuge.** Many of us go regularly to the Bear River Bird Refuge west of Brigham City, but very few of us get up to the Bear Lake Refuge at the north end of Bear Lake. Join us for a day trip to see the birds and other animals. They are a quite different collection from those seen in Cache Valley or at the Bear River Refuge. We will leave Saturday at 7:30 a.m. from the parking lot between Caffé Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 East 150 North). Please bring your binoculars. Bring a lunch, because we will not be back before mid-afternoon. We will, however, make a stop for raspberry milkshakes in Garden City. For more information, call Dick Hurren, (435) 734-2653.

**19 Visit Cache Valley Residences Landscaped for Wildlife.** A number of individuals in Cache Valley have gone out of their way to make their residences bird and wildlife friendly. Some of these places have used plantings to make their yards xeric (water wise) as well. Join us for a morning of visiting these places to see what wildlife they attract and what they have done to accomplish success. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the parking lot between Caffé Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 East 150 North) and plan to have a nice, relaxing morning. Bring your binoculars if you want to look at the birds. For more information, call Dick Hurren, (435) 734-2653.

**25 Visit Great Basin National Park.** Many have never heard of Great Basin National Park and few of us have ever been there. This very interesting national park sits just over the border into Nevada from Utah and on a line about parallel with Delta, Utah. It is a true oasis in an otherwise quite bleak part of the U.S. There are several species of birds that are hard to find elsewhere, and mammals such as bighorn sheep are also to be seen. One drives from desert savannah, through all the in-between zones, up to and including high alpine landscape with many interesting stops and walks along the way. There are also the Lehman Caves, which are among the best preserved caverns in the U.S. Join us for an overnigher (Friday,



*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.*

June 25 and Saturday, June 26) to enjoy the interesting sights that are there. Call Dick Hurren, (435) 734-2653, for more information and for particulars on the only motel in the area. Plan to make your reservations at least two weeks prior to the trip. We will meet at 6 p.m. on June 25 at the motel/restaurant. Plan to bring plenty of water, a lunch for Saturday, and any munchies you might want (places to eat and drink are few and far between). Also bring your binoculars and a spotting scope if you have one.

## July

**3 Tony Grove Wildflower and Bird Walk.** This is an annual event led by native wildflower expert Reinhard Jockel. Reinhard is a true expert on the native flora. If you have never been on this trip, you ought to come, and if you have already been, you will probably want to come again. We will take a slow-paced walk around the circumference of the lake. Reinhard will describe the flora and others will describe the birds and other fauna. Meet at the parking lot between Caffé Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 East 150 North) at 8 a.m. Bring binoculars and a picnic lunch, and plan to have a great time.

## August

**14 Migrating Shore Birds.** The adult shore birds that nest in and near the arctic of the far north head through very early in the migration season and begin showing up here in Utah in August. Based on observations by our experienced birders, who will act as scouts, we will go to the location in Cache Valley where the greatest concentration of the birds happens to be this year. Our first choice will be the Barrens in northwestern Cache Valley, but if our scouts find that another location is better, we will go there instead/also. We will leave at 8:30 a.m. from the parking lot between Caffé Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 East 150 North). Bring binoculars and some munchies. If you have a spotting scope, bring it also. For more information call Sue or Dave Drown, 752-3797.

**21 Antelope Island and the Causeway.** Antelope Island Causeway is a real Mecca for migrating shorebirds and the island itself is a great place for early fall birding and wildlife watching. Join us for most of a day of wildlife watching at these interesting places. Bring a lunch and binoculars and plan not to be back before mid-afternoon. Meet at the parking lot between Caffé Ibis and Logan Fire Station (50 East 150 North) at 8 a.m. Bring binoculars and a lunch (or plan to buy a burger at the island watering hole. If you have a scope, please bring it also. For more information, call Dick Hurren, (435) 734-2653.

# Welcome to BAS

## New Members

Roger Banner  
Jane Murphey  
Madeline S Thimmes  
Elizabeth Wright

## Renewing Members

Linda F Baker  
Leroy B Beasley  
Kerkman Family  
James Graham  
Douglas A Johnson  
Ardelle King

## Chapter Transfers

Travis Rapp

D Obray  
Mrs Sandra Romesburg  
Mr & Mrs Robert E Taylor  
Janice Tucker  
Nancy Williams  
David S Winn

# 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;  
Andree Walker, 755-2103  
2004-2007 Dave Drown, 752-3797; Jack Greene, 563-6816;  
Melanie Spriggs, 245-4376; Reinhard Jockel.

## Bridgerland Audubon Contacts

President Val Grant, 752-7572, biores@mtwest.net  
Vice Pres. Bill Masslich, 753-1759, bmasslich@pcu.net  
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Wetlands Alice Lindahl, 753-7744, alindahl@bridgernet.com  
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Newsletter Miriam Hugentobler, 752-8237, stiltnews@hotmail.com  
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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 15<sup>th</sup> 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* 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.