



# The *Stilt*

Volume 35, Issue 2  
February 2006

Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

## Join the Great Backyard Bird Count



The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) returns for its ninth season February 17-20, 2006. The National Audubon Society and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology encourage everyone to COUNT BIRDS WITH A BUDDY! Bird enthusiasts of all ages can share their love of birds with a friend, a child, a scout troop, a class, or a co-worker—opening new eyes to the joy of birding and the fun of creating a unique snapshot of winter bird abundance and distribution across the continent. Every pair of eyes is needed and everybirdy counts, whether in a backyard, on a high-rise balcony, in a park, or on any of the 730 million acres of public lands.

In 2005, participants sent in more than 52,000 checklists, with a record-breaking 613 species and more than 6 million birds counted. These millions of sightings generate what would be impossible otherwise—continent-wide information about where the

birds are and how their numbers compare with those of previous years. Anyone with Internet access can see the results in maps and charts as the sightings pour in.

"The level of energy created each February by Great Backyard Bird counters is phenomenal," said Dr. Paul Green, director of Citizen Science for Audubon. "What always amazes me are the new discoveries made by people across North America. Some bird watchers even send digital photos to back up their reports. Last year participants sent in more than 1,000 photos and many are now part of the GBBC web site gallery."

For nearly a decade, the GBBC has kept tabs on the ever-changing patterns of birds in winter. How far north will American robins be reported this year? Will Sandhill cranes migrate early or late? Introduced Eurasian collared-doves have been turning up in new states—where will they be this year? Native red-

bellied woodpeckers have been spreading to the northeast—will the trend continue? Scientists also want more information on declining species, such as rusty blackbirds and painted buntings. While these species are suffering due to the continued destruction of their preferred habitats, other factors, such as mercury accumulation in rusty blackbirds, and removal of painted buntings for the illegal cage bird industry, may make a bad situation worse.

"This project has become a major source of scientific information about North American bird populations," said Dr. John Fitzpatrick, director of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. "It is a classic example of the vital role citizens and the Internet now play in understanding our planet."

In 2006, for the first time, the Lab of Ornithology and Audubon are launching an

*(Continued on page 5)*

### Inside this Issue

Great Backyard Bird Count	1
Christmas Bird Count Data	2
BAS Calendar	3
Grand Opening of Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge's Wildlife Education Center	5
BAS Contacts	7

# Christmas Bird Count: 91 —You Analyze!

Ninety-one species – the lowest number since 1996! Those of you without condos in Mesa, AZ will understand. Our CBC is always on the edge of the change in weather one way or the other. For high counts, the cold has to be late enough for gulls and other summer birds to stick around or cold enough – particularly to the north – to have pushed unusual northern species into our count circle. The end of December, however, can find itself between these times, as it did this year. It was bitterly cold in early December, but apparently not cold enough in the north to have delivered snowy owls. Didn't stop us, though, we hit it hard and had a great time.

Despite the low total number of species, this year still produced eight records and eighteen high counts.

Species with unusually high counts (one standard deviation above the mean for the last 15 years) included: lesser scaup, gray partridge, sharp-tailed grouse, western screech owl, downy woodpecker, hairy woodpecker, northern flicker, horned lark, American mag-

pie, black-capped chickadee, canyon wren, winter wren, marsh wren, European starling, white-crowned sparrow, Brewer's blackbird, house finch, and American goldfinch. Misses – birds that were probably here but weren't found included blue grouse and red-breasted nuthatch.

#### Analysis by Group

Most ducks – dabblers and divers – were low, notwithstanding the record high count of lesser scaup. Hawk counts have been generally lower in recent years. This year's record American kestrel numbers could be due to that bird's broad prey base and a particularly successful breeding season, for they were abundant all summer. High counts of two of the "chicken birds" – gray partridge and sharp-tailed grouse – could be due to just

being in the right place at the right time. The record number of wild turkeys represents the huge success this species has enjoyed since introduced by the Division of Wildlife Resources so hunters would have something else to shoot. (Tirade: I still wonder if DWR did ANY analysis of what those birds may be pushing out, or were just over-anxious to supply targets. Turkeys were never native in Utah.) Rails were average, as expected in a winter with some open water. Most of the gulls left the valley during the intense cold of early December, but a few made it back, undoubtedly due to our gourmet garbage. Owls were about average overall. The peck of woodpeckers was interesting all were higher than normal any theories out there? (Send them to Nancy Williams' hotline – nanwill@cc.usu.edu).

(Continued on page 6)

Species	2004 Count	Previous High	Year of Previous Record
Green-winged Teal	42	34	1982
American Kestrel	80	77	1999
Wild Turkey	134	71	2003
Mourning Dove	103	47	1987
Hermit Thrush	4	2	2002, 2004
Yellow-rumped Warbler	25	15	2004
Spotted Towhee	37	32	1997
House Sparrow	5,515	3,276	2003

# Audubon Calendar

February 2006

**1 BAS Board Meeting.** The BAS Board of Trustees meets Wednesday at 7 p.m. at the offices of Bio-Resources, 135 E. Center, Logan. All are welcome to attend.

**4 Antelope Island in Winter.** Meet at 8:30 a.m. Saturday in the parking lot between Caffé Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 E. 150 North) for a morning and early afternoon of nature watching at Antelope Island State Park in the Great Salt Lake. At this time of year the bison and pronghorn are usually easy to see up close. Coyotes are almost always seen and bighorn sheep are a possibility. Unusual birds are often seen both from the causeway leading to the island and on the island itself. In past years such oddities as snow buntings, black rosyfinches and Lapland longspurs have been sighted on this trip. Unusual waterfowl are often seen in the lake, and falcons are often seen chasing them to try to have them for dinner. Bring warm clothing, binoculars and a lunch (or be prepared to buy something at the snack bar on the island). We'll plan to be back by mid-afternoon. For more information, call Dick Hurren (435) 734-2653.

**9 BAS General Meeting.** This month's sustainability discussion, part of our continuing series of joint meetings with Stokes Nature Center and Utah Conservation Corps, will focus on Exploring Nature: Connecting Kids to the Natural World. Megan Barker, Director of Education at Stokes Nature Center, will present a synopsis of recent discussions in the environmental education community on what has been termed the extinction of experience—a growing lack of connection between kids and the natural world. Richard Louv, in his book *Last Child in the Woods*, goes so far as to coin the term Nature Deficit Disorder. Join us this Thursday at 7 p.m. in the northeast meeting room in Logan City/Library building, 255 N. Main Street, and we'll work together to generate ideas to ensure a strong connection between kids and nature. All are welcome.

**11 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 horse-drawn sleigh ride out among the elk as they are being fed, and we will do quite a bit of birding on the way up to the ranch and 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 at the parking lot between the Logan Fire Station and Caffé Ibis (50 E. 150 North). Dress for the season and bring binoculars and a snack. We will plan to be back by 1 or 2 p.m. For more information call Dick Hurren (435) 734-2653.

**17 Great Backyard Bird Count.** The 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Great Backyard Bird Count will be held over the President's Day weekend, February 17-20. This event essentially takes a snapshot of North American bird populations and the data collected become more important each year. During last year's count, over 45,000 checklists from across the continent were sent in, reporting over 550 bird species and well over 4 million individual birds. The GBBC data compliment those from the Christmas Bird Counts. Go to [www.birdsource.org/gbbc](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc) or call 1-800-843-BIRD (2473) to participate. You can also check out the results of last year's (and other year's) counts at the website.



*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 Birding in and Around Smithfield.** Smithfield and its environs often contains some very interesting birds during this late winter period. We are hoping that John and Terri Barnes, locals who really know where the best birding is around Smithfield, will be able to accompany us. We often see three or more species of owls and some songbird rarities. Meet at 9 a.m. Saturday at the parking lot between Caffé Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (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 at 752-3797 or Dick Hurren at (435) 734-2653.

*March 2006*

**4 A High Class Pigeon Loft (with Winter Birding Afterward).** Come join us for something we have never done before. We will be visiting the incredible pigeon loft of well-known pigeon racer and breeder Brad Hoggan. Many of us think of pigeons as, "those dirty, smelly birds that hang around public parks." This trip will show you that some pigeons work for their living and, by doing so, live a life of luxury. We will meet at the parking lot between Caffé Ibis and the Logan Fire Station at 10:15 a.m. Saturday and travel straight to the loft. Afterwards, there will be winter birding, particularly for raptors, for those who have interest. Dress warmly and bring binoculars if you intend to do the birding afterwards.

*A Heads Up*

The dates for this year's Texas Gulf Coast trip are now set. Participants will be expected to arrive by late afternoon on Wednesday, April 19 and the formal trip will continue through the morning of April 23. Some of us intend to stay a bit longer. For background information on this trip, call Val Grant 753-5370, Dave or Sue Drown at 752-3797, or Dick Hurren at (435) 734-2653.

We will be making a return trip (with significant additions) to Hawaii in early January 2007. For more information on this trip contact Dick Hurren (435) 734-2653.

If you have ideas on other extended forays you would like to see Bridgerland Audubon Society take, please let us know at any of the telephone numbers noted above.

—Dick Hurren

## We've Still Got Birdseed!!!!

Bridgerland Audubon once again has birdseed for sale! Our regular local seed grower got hit with a crop failure this year, so we've had to scramble to find seeds. The good news is we've succeeded, thanks to the heroic efforts of Allen Christensen and a good-hearted local seed store.

Please order your 50-pound bag (or bags) of black oil sunflower seed by phoning Allen at 258-5018 and leaving him a message. He will deliver the seed to your door! The cost this year will be \$18 per bag.

Thanks for helping BAS and the birds thank you, too!! Sunflower seed is their favorite!

—Sue Drown

## GBBC

(Continued from p.1)

element of friendly competition. Awards will be given to localities that submit the most checklists, record the greatest number species, or count the highest number of birds. (Last year's top numbers: 433 checklists from Gautier, Mississippi, 169 species from Corpus Christi, Texas, and 291,246 birds from Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge, Missouri.) A photo contest will also be held based on bird pictures taken during the event and submitted for posting on the

GBBC gallery. Winners will be announced after all the data from the event have been submitted.

Everyone can participate, from beginning bird watchers to seasoned experts. During the count, bird watchers tally up birds for as little as 15 minutes, or for as long as they like, keeping track of the highest number of each bird species they see together at one time. People are encouraged to report birds from public lands and local parks, as well as from their backyards. Participants enter their numbers online at [www.birdsource.org/gbbc](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc) and can

explore sightings maps, lists, and charts as the count progresses.

Year-round, anyone can view results from past counts and learn how to participate by visiting [www.birdsource.org/gbbc](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc). There is no fee or registration for the event, which is sponsored by Wild Birds Unlimited. For more information, contact the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at [cornell-birds@cornell.edu](mailto:cornell-birds@cornell.edu) or (800) 843-2473 if in the United States; (607) 254-2473 if calling internationally; or contact Audubon at [citizen-science@audubon.org](mailto:citizen-science@audubon.org); (215) 355-9588, Ext. 16.

## Weekend Wing Fling

"The Weekend Wing Fling" will celebrate the opening of Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge's new wildlife education center at Brigham City, April 21-22, 2006. The building features a large exhibit hall with educational displays on birds and wetlands. It also includes meeting rooms, classrooms, a large auditorium, and a research lab. An attached observation deck will offer close-up views of wetland wildlife. An outdoor amphitheater is located adjacent to a 1/2-mile long accessible interpretive trail. The not-for-profit "Friends of Bear River Ref-

uge" will operate the Avocet Corner Book Shop within the building, offering the latest in books and other wildlife merchandise and souvenirs. Kenn Kaufman - birder, conservationist and author of the popular Kaufman Focus Guides, will be on hand to help us celebrate. Kenn will lead field trips, provide tips for shorebird identification, and share his insights on birds and migration. He'll also sign books for you. Karen Hollingsworth, noted wildlife photographer, will display many of her national wildlife refuge photographs

and give her popular, "Let's Go Wild!" program of images set to music. Events will include refuge tours, birding trips, workshops, arts and crafts, booths and demonstrations for all recreation interests. For information, contact the refuge at 435-723-5887 or via email at: [bearriver@fws.gov](mailto:bearriver@fws.gov). A schedule of events will be posted on the web site in early March, found at: <http://bearriver.fws.gov>.

—Betsy Beneke  
Bear River Migratory  
Bird Refuge

# CBC

(continued from p.2)

Corvidae numbers were robust, giving us some hope that West Nile virus hasn't hit too hard, yet. Micro birds (nuthatches, chickadees, kinglets, etc.) were about average, except that ALL of the wrens yielded high counts. Not lots of individuals, perhaps sharp observers? The four hermit thrushes were interesting – apparently much more omnivorous than we thought. Other thrushes were about average. Also of interest was the high count of yellow-rumped warblers, the only warbler we're likely to see in winter. Among the sparrow-like birds, spotted towhees recorded a record high, though others, and both song and white-crowned sparrows posted strong

numbers. Oddly, the only sparrow that didn't show itself frequently was the American tree sparrow – only two individuals this year for a bird that's only here in winter. Some of the blackbirds were low (e.g., red-winged) and others high (e.g., Brewer's), but hard to make anything out of that because one large flock can dwarf all of the other counts. We had more feeder watchers this year than in recent years, which probably accounted for the high numbers of house finches and American goldfinches.

This year 12 species were represented by only one individual, about par for the total number of species seen.

The weather kept it from being a record count, but it was fun. And once again, Sue and Dave Drown offered their home for the compila-

tion, and many of the day's counters came to relax and hear the totals.

The CBC is the longest running example of citizen science. This was the 106<sup>th</sup> year for the CBC, and our 46<sup>th</sup>. Our data have been submitted to the national database where researchers and the public can access them online: <http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/index.html>.

The results of our local CBC results 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](mailto:bdixon@xmission.com) or 10 Heritage Cove, Logan, UT 84321.

—Bryan Dixon and  
Keith Archibald

## 2004 CBC Participants

Thanks to this year's 64 participants! We always seem to have more counters than any other CBC in Utah: Jim Akers, Clifton Allston, Delos Anderson, Jamey Anderson, Judy Archibald, Keith Archibald, Robert Atwood, Dennis Austin, Gary Austin, Amanda Bakian, Jessie Barnes, John Barnes, Terry Barnes, Gordon Bosworth, William Bower, Jim Cane, Allen Christensen, Gail Christensen, Chris Cokinos, Brad Cole, Peter Daniels, Mary DeByle, Norb DeByle, Bryan Dixon, Dave Drown, Sue Drown, John Ellerbeck, Mark Ellis, Barbara Farris, Jim Gessaman, Jack Greene, River Haggerty, Kyle Hillman, Joanne Hughes, Richard Hurren, Reinhard Jockel, Linda Kervin, Jim Kingsland, Laura Lancaster, David Liddell, Jean Lown, Bill Masslich, Jake Masslich, Zane Masslich, Eric Meyer, Eron Olson, Russ Olson, Bruce Pendery, Robin Pendery, Chris Peterson, Stephen Peterson, Will Pitkin, Buck Russell, Frank Smith, Kim Sullivan, Helen Taylor, Robert Taylor, C. Val Grant, Allysa Walker, Jesse Walker, Steve Walker, Dennis Welker, Ashley Wisser, Dan Zamecnik.

We are also grateful to the many landowners of our valley, who year after year graciously allow us to tromp around their properties, looking for birds. Often they are responding to an annual phone call from someone they may never have met. We must be a trustworthy bunch!

# Welcome to BAS

## New Members

Jeff Allan  
Maydene M Baxter  
Beth Booton  
John Carter  
Dorothee Cordes  
Michele Goble  
Glen Johnson  
Joseph G Johnson  
Isabel Katana  
Kenneth Lowry

O Newbold  
Nyla Newman  
Nanette Seeley

## Renewing Members

Dennis D Austin  
Linda F Baker  
Martha H Balph  
June Budge  
Jerry Burn  
Joyce Cline

Christopher Cokinos  
John W Devilbiss  
Patrick Easterling  
Kelly L Fornoff  
Kurt A Fornoff  
Al Forsyth  
Sue & Jerry Fuhriman  
Glen Gantz  
Mr & Mrs T J Gordon  
Molly Hysell  
Norman & Marcia La Barge

Jesse Logan &  
Catherine Logan  
John G Lyne  
Renee L Payne  
Lawrence A Ryel  
Tim Slocum  
Emily Speth  
John Thatcher  
F H Wagner

# Bridgerland Audubon contacts

## Trustees

2003-2006 Ron Goede, 752-9650; Kate Stephens, 755-0608;  
André Walker, 755-2103  
2004-2007 Dave Drown, 752-3797; Jack Greene, 563-6816;  
Melanie Spriggs, 245-4376; Reinhard Jockel;  
Stephen Peterson, 755-5041.  
2005-2008 Jim Cane, 713-4668; Richard Mueller, 752-5637;  
Dick Hurren 435/734-2653

## 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, drown@cc.usu.edu  
Wetlands Alice Lindahl, 753-7744, alindahl@bridgernet.com  
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 Stephen Peterson 755-5041, cllslp@msn.com  
Sanctuary Jim Cane, 713-4668, jimcane@cc.usu.edu  
Conservation 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, as a:

\_\_\_\_\_ **New** member of the National Audubon Society and Bridgerland Audubon.

My check for \$20 is enclosed (this is a special first-year rate).

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



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

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 (make checks payable to Bridgerland Audubon Society) and this form to: Bridgerland Audubon Society, PO Box 3501, Logan, UT 84323-3501 for a subscription to *The Stilt*.



# *The Stilt*

***Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society***

**P.O. Box 3501**

**Logan, Utah 84323-3501**

**Email: [stiltnews@hotmail.com](mailto:stiltnews@hotmail.com)**

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

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