



The Stilt

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Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

Citizens, Lend Us Your Eyeballs! Our 48th CBC on December 15

Think 48 is something? Think again. That's only our count. The CBC itself has been going on since 1900. Provo was the first "count circle" in Utah, begun in 1904.

So what's a count circle? For that matter, what's a CBC?

The Christmas Bird Count was inaugurated in 1900, as an alternative to the gruesome Christmas Day Side Hunt where anything and everything was fair game. A few farsighted

folks were concerned that wildlife resources were not inexhaustible. It's now managed by the National Audubon Society and has become, by far, the largest long term source of data on bird populations in the world. And almost all of it is generated by volunteers like us.

Sponsoring groups, such as BAS, adopt a 7.5 mile radius circle in a place designed to encompass as many different habitats as possible. Each year on a day between December 14 and January 5, they count every bird in the circle within a 24 hour period. Our count is centered in Hyde Park and was begun in 1955. We now attract over 60 volunteers and count over 20,000 birds representing 95 or so species. Our record high was 85,054 birds of 99 species in 2002 (including 66,000 European starlings).

There were 2,052 count circles last year covered by

57,851 observers (1,624 and 44,965, respectively, in the United States). They counted a grand total of 69,354,406 individual birds of 1,894 species.

You can be part of it this year. Hey, it's a wonderful time of year to be out. The green of summer has left, but this means the leaves have gone, too, so it's easier to find those owls and passerines. Ducks are rafting up on sewage ponds, evading the hunters. (Knowing this, who'd want to actually eat a duck, anyway??) Snows bring mountain birds lower. Feeders attract wayward rarities where we have a chance to study them more closely. Odd gulls start appearing; hovering rough-legged hawks and prairie falcons become almost common. It's cold outside, but that just offers an excuse for warm friendship around a hot mug when it's over. Hard core birders start glassing Hyrum Reservoir for scoters, and look else-

where for vagrant varied thrushes, weird larkspurs, and hooded mergansers. And why is it that only in the depth of winter do we find long-eared owls?

As cold and bleak as December can be, we'll be sooooo not pitted by our seriously northern neighbors in Inuvik, NWT, where 7 observers inaugurated their CBC last year, spending 8 hours in -24 degree temperatures to record 478 birds of five species (466 of which were common ravens). Ack!

If we're ever going to break our 100 species barrier, however, you've got to help. We need experts and beginners, early-morning-dark-owl-watchers and afternoon-only-because-the-kids-have-morning-indoor-soccer participants. Don't want to drive? No problem, we can hook you up with someone

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Audubon Calendar

December 2007

1 Hoggan Homing Pigeon Racing Loft Bridgerland Audubon will have a field trip to visit the Hoggan Homing Pigeon Racing Loft, one of the premiere racing pigeon lofts in the country. The loft has birds in the American Racing Pigeon Union Hall of Fame and the owner, Brad Hoggan, is one of the top homing pigeon breeders in the United States. Meet at 10:00 at the parking lot between Caffe Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 E. 150 North). After visiting the loft we will do some birding around Cache Valley and will end the field trip about noon. Carpooling will be available; beginning birders are welcome. For more information call Buck Russell (435) 512-9641.

6 Board of Trustees Meeting BAS Trustees meet at 7 p.m. at the Cache Valley Learning Center, 75 S. 400 West, Logan. Enter through the building's west doors. All are welcome to attend.

13 BAS General Meeting Join us at our same great location, the Cache Valley Learning Center (75 S. 400 West), as we will be making wooden birdhouses that you will be able to take home. There will be no cost for the birdhouses. **Please bring your own screwdriver!** The meeting will start at 7 p.m. Enter through the building's west doors. All are welcome to attend and refreshments will be provided by Crumb Brothers and Caffe Ibis. Enter through the building's west doors. All are welcome to attend. We hope to see you there.

15 Christmas Bird Count Come and enjoy good company and good birding while we attempt to reach the elusive 100 species mark. In past years, we've come close. 2002 yielded 99. We need your help and extra pair of sharp eyes to be able to accomplish this goal. It does not matter if you are a seasoned veteran or someone who just learned what a bird is. We will be grouped so that we have people who are very good at identifying in every group. If you are interested in attending, please contact Keith Archibald (752-8258, archie132@comcast.net) or Bryan Dixon (752-6830, bdixon@xmission.com). The cost for participating is only \$5 (students are free) to cover compilation and publication of the national data.

January 2008

1 Two-hundred Club Birding Is it possible to see 200 species of birds in Cache County in the calendar year (January-December)? Yes, it is not only possible but several local birders do it every year. This trip will be led by local birding expert Reinhard Jockel, who is not only good with visual birding, but who is also a gifted birding by ear expert. Anyone is welcome to attend the field trip, especially those who want to set a New Year resolution to get out of the house to see 200 of the great, natural beauties in Cache Valley. Meet at 09:00 a.m. at the parking lot between Cafe' Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 East 150 North). Bring something to munch on, because the trip will run into the early afternoon. For more info call Buck Russell at (435) 512-9641.



If you'd like to come along on a field trip but do not have binoculars, call Buck Russell (435) 755-6534. He'll try to find a pair for you to use.

Local Bird Spotlight

Rough-legged Hawk

by Stephen Peterson

One of the most anticipated winter migrants to set up residency in Cache Valley is the Rough-legged Hawk (*Buteo lagopus*). Fall migration for these high Arctic breeders begins in late September, traveling approximately 3,500 miles from rocky cliff faces, overlooking treeless, windswept tundra sites to their wintering grounds in the lower 48 states, where they occupy

advantageous perches on telephone poles, fence posts, and lone trees, scanning open meadows and pastures for mice, voles and shrews. Evidence suggests that rough legs may be able to see vole urine and feces in ultraviolet light, giving them an exceptional advantage in detecting their prey from above. Hunting success is highest when rough legs can use elevated perches, but they also show success stalking prey on the wing, and being able to hover extremely well, similar to the American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), making vertical dives onto discovered prey. A variety of plumage morphs, from light to dark, can occur among

rough legs, with four subspecies recognized to date. Most individuals that we see in Cache Valley fall into the light to medium morph category and can be readily identified in flight by their large dark carpal patches on the underside of the wing. Characteristic traits include a small bill, yellow cere and bill gape, feathered tarsi, from which the bird gets its common name, usually a thin dark trailing eyeline that ends at the light nape (except in dark morphs), and most often a pale forehead in light morphs. When perched, rough legs' wings extend beyond the tip of the tail in adults. There is some degree of sexual dimorphism in adults, with a dark center belly band in females with dark flanks, and lightly streaked bib, whereas in adult males a

heavily dark mottled bib, and semi-clean belly is normal. Both sexes show a dark trailing edge to the flight feathers and females exhibit a single, wide subterminal band on the tail and in males there can be one to two, thinner subterminal bands on the tail. The rough legs flight pattern is very bouyant, with shallow wingbeats, soaring at times with a slight dihedral. Monogamous pair bonds are thought to hold from breeding season, throughout the winter. Mate selection can occur on the wintering grounds and courtship displays, consisting of high gliding flight followed by plummeting acrobatics, may be observable here in Cache Valley. Failed

breeders and unpaired males may end up pairing during the winter and returning together on breeding sites in the



spring. Most conservation issues with rough legs seems to occur on wintering grounds, where degradation and loss of habitat, due to development of agricultural lands and open spaces to subdivisions, is more than likely displacing individuals. So far, Christmas Bird Count data from Cache Valley has shown a slight decrease in the last five years, with a high of 120 individuals in 2001 and only 11 individuals counted in 2006. Fluctuations in numbers could be representative of increased urbanization, vole and mice population cycles, and global climate change, opening up new wintering grounds further and further north each year. Much study is still needed on breeding biology and wintering ground life history. Concern is increasingly high for the possible exploitation of Arctic breeding areas for gas and oil exploration. To catch a glimpse of this beautiful winter migrant you can usually find a few of them along Mendon road (700 South), perched atop telephone poles. They are somewhat tolerable of human presence, so you can get quite close before they spook and fly, so be sure to bring along a camera.

Stephen Peterson is the
BAS Webmaster

Congratulations to the Selman Family!

According to an article posted on October 30, 2007 on the Sand County Foundation's website (<http://www.sandcounty.net/newsroom/?Id=64>), the local ranching family was awarded with the Leopold Conservation Award. The award is given by the Sand County Foundation from Wisconsin, the Utah Farm Bureau Federation, and the Utah Cattlemen's Association.

According to the website, Sand County Foundation President Dr. Brent Haglund said, "The Selman family stands out among the many private landowners in Utah and nationwide who are leading the way in modern conservation."

The website also quotes Leland Hogan, President of the Utah Farm Bureau Federation as saying, "We congratulate the Selmans... This award is further proof that conservation and production agriculture are mutually-compatible in today's society."



Michelle, Bret, Laura, and Fred Selman



Continued from page 1

who does. Some of us will scour the marshes and fields; some will hike the narrow canyons and high ridges. And, we're all invited to the evening potluck at the Cache Valley Learning Center (75 South 400 West), thanks to Bill Masslich and Penny Trinca. It begins at 6:00 p.m. that night. We'll scarf copious quantities of yummy food, tally up the day's sightings, and you can keep that surprise discovery to yourself until the last moment.

The cost for participating is only \$5 (students are free) to cover compilation and publication of the national data. Don't let winter get you down – contact Keith Archibald (752-8258, archie132@comcast.net) or Bryan Dixon (752-6830, bdixon@xmission.com) to sign on to this year's winter adventure!

- Bryan Dixon and Keith Archibald

BIONEERS

Utah Bioneers Conference just keeps getting better! However you cut it – food, entertainment, exhibits, workshops, national plenary sessions, and keynote speaker – our evaluations were outstanding. An amazing collection of individuals made it all possible. A very strong planning committee combined with our best year for community financial support made it all possible.

As in the past, there was an overpowering spirit of hope, celebration, and connectivity. An argument can be made that what follows the conference is the greatest contribution to our community. Beyond getting “pumped-up” and energized, the conference is a hard sell on taking action – both as individuals and collectively. Many alliances and partnerships have been formed over the four years of the Utah Bioneers conference addressing such issues as air quality, water, social justice, quality growth, renewable energy, local food production, climate change, and many more.

Bridgerland Audubon’s contributions are always felt which include a generous cash donation and a fine exhibit. Board members are active on the planning committee, presenting workshops, and rallying students to become involved. Both university and high school students play significant roles before and during the conference. Their energy and creativity are essential.

One of the highlights for this year’s conference were the 4-H multicultural youth dancers who brought us to our feet with a standing ovation. Other entertainers included the “wine bottle tooters”, Wade & Cara folk singers, West African drummers, and some very talented high school and college singer-songwriters.

Lovely decorations in a fall motif were provided by Mary Laine. Many other photos and pieces of art were

contributed by local artisans and students to accompany our best ever exhibits hall. Thanks so much to a splendid effort by Sue Zollinger who orchestrated it all!

Our wonderful keynote speaker- Cheryl Charles, spoke eloquently and passionately on the need to get out youth outdoors on a regular basis to explore their natural surroundings through unstructured play. The plethora of research suggests that interaction with nature, especially in our youth, is vital in all areas of child development- physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. Of equal importance, our most passionate and reasoned nature advocates attribute their interest and commitment to early childhood experiences in natural settings. Visit www.cnaturenet.org for the full story.

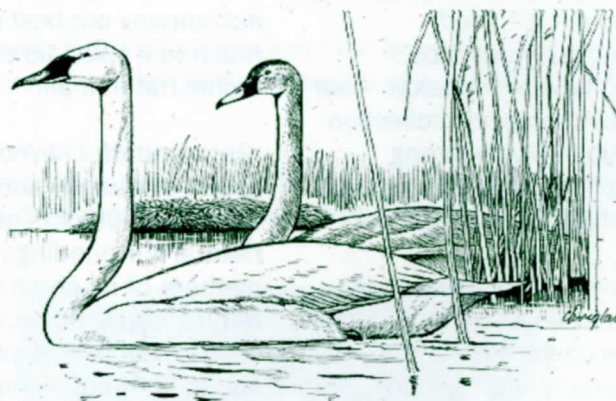
Finally, we were delighted to participate in the launching of a new Utah Bioneers conference at Westminster College in SLC. Thanks so much to Kerry Case, her committee, and Westminster for their outstanding efforts!

Our sponsors included Utah State University—Office of the Provost, Randy Wirth and Sally Sears—Caffé Ibis, I & A Incorporated, Bridgerland Audubon Society, Cache Valley Transit District, Logan Regional Hospital/IHC, Utah State University—Brigham City Campus, Western Rural Development Center, Angel House, BioWest, Cache Valley Veloists, Shaklee Products, Shangri-la, Logan Friends Meeting (Quakers), a long list of individuals and In-kind sponsors round out the list. Bioneers: “Gathering people at the crossroads of ecological restoration, human health and social justice.” This is a conference you won’t want to miss. Visit us at www.extension.usu.edu/bioneers. See you next October!

by Jack Greene

● Utah Bioneers Conference – Best Ever!

"Swan Talk" at the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge



Saturday 12/01/07, 1-3 pm

A special day to learn about swans and the differences between the Trumpeter and Tundra - Carl Mitchell, Wildlife Biologist of Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge presents a special program on how to identify swans and their biology and behaviors.

Cost: \$1/child and \$5/max per family.

1:00 pm - Carl Mitchell's Swan Presentation

2-3 pm - a Swan Story and Family Activities

Pre-Registration is Required! Call (435) 723-5887

Bear River Refuge is located at 2155 W. Forest Street, Brigham City (I-15 exit #363, turn left one block to the Visitor Center). Contact Kathi Stopher @ 734-6438 for questions.

Sponsored by the Friends of Bear River Refuge



I learned it from the Birds

A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, but a bird in the bush won't poop in your hand.

-Kathleen Gibson

Welcome to BAS

New Members

Gary J. Baker
 Allyson A. Davis
 C. A. Benson
 Jason K. Pietrzak
 Diana I. Toth

Diana T. Glenn
 Frederick F. Knowlton
 W Bryan Dixon
 Ann W. Peralta
 Stephen Peterson
 Ruth Eller

Renewing Members

Marion S. Murray
 Linnea Johnson
 Buck Russell
 Jeff Allan
 Brian Creutzburg
 Helen Edwards

Miiko Toelken
 Kazuko Toelken
 Ms. Jane Erickson
 F. H. Wagner

Bridgerland Audubon contacts

Trustees

- 2005-2008 Jim Cane, 713-4668; Jennifer Hoffmann, 713-4935; Dick Hurren, 734-2653; Richard Mueller, 752-5637
- 2006-2009 Ron Goede, 752-9650; David Liddell, 797-1261; Bret Selman, 257-5260
- 2007-2010 Dave Drown, 752-3797; Jack Greene, 563-6816; Reinhard Jockel; Stephen Peterson, 755-5041

Bridgerland Audubon Contacts

- President Val Grant, 752-7572, biores@mtwest.net
- Vice Pres. Bill Masslich, 753-1759, bill@cvlc-logan.org
- Secretary Lyle Bingham, 563-6003, lwbingham@comcast.net
- Treasurer Jennifer Hoffmann, 713-4935, jennifer.hoffmann@comcast.net
- Outings Buck Russell, 734-2653, winstonga@hotmail.com
- Wetlands Alice Lindahl, 787-1594, alicelindahl@earthlink.net
- Education Jack Greene, 563-6816, jackisgreene@yahoo.com
- Newsletter Brandon Spencer, 753-2790, birdnerdut@gmail.com
- Circulation Susan Durham, 752-5637, sdurham@cc.usu.edu
- Hospitality Allen & Gail Christensen, 258-5018, gaichr@pdp.usu.edu
- Hotline Nancy Williams, 753-6268, nanwill@cc.usu.edu
- Webmaster Stephen Peterson, 755-5041, cllslp@msn.com
- Sanctuary Jim Cane, 713-4668, jimcane@cc.usu.edu

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 birdnerdut@gmail.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, 752-5637, 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

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Email: birdnerdut@gmail.com

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

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Congratulations Selman Family!

See page 4 for details.