



The *Stilt*

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Newsletter of Bridgerland Audubon Society

Help Bring Back Cache Valley's Sandhill Crane Days

By Bill Masslich
BAS Vice President

Spring at last! As we pass through the vernal equinox and begin our approach to the summer solstice the miracle of spring unfolds around us once again. A big part of that miracle, at least for us birders, are the sights and sounds of our feathered friends migrating through to points north or finding their way home to our valley. Keep your ears and eyes open. The procession has begun!

One of the sounds I look forward to most each spring is the unmistakable calls of Sandhill cranes. The loud, rattling ka-r-r-r-o-o-o, ka-r-r-r-o-o-o, ka-r-r-r-o-o-o as a flock moves through high over head or settles in on a field to rest, feed and dance, gives me the goose bumps or should

I say crane bumps. As the resident cranes move into Cache Valley to nest the bizarre behavior intensifies when young birds compete for mates or paired birds reinforce their bonds. If you have not witnessed the spectacle of dancing cranes, you are in for a treat. They bow and jump; they run around grabbing sticks or grass to toss into the air, all with plenty of wing flapping and posturing mixed in. It will make you laugh, ooh and aah, but mostly it will make you grow to appreciate these magnificent birds.

Sandhill cranes are big, reaching heights close to four feet, with a six-foot wing span. They are usually grayish in color with a red forehead and a tuft of

feathers on their rump. They have long legs and necks and are seen in large flocks during migration. During breeding season, mated pairs find habitat in open grasslands, meadows and wetlands to nest and raise their young, know as colts. They are omnivorous birds, feeding on seeds, grains, insects, mice and other meadow fare. Most breeding occurs in Canada, although there are a few concentrated breeding populations in the Intermountain West, one of which includes Cache Valley. Yes, another reason to love our valley.

After a summer of raising colts, the cranes flock up.

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Chapter Notes

By Bill Masslich
BAS Vice President

BAS Spring Banquet

Guest Speaker Ella Sorenson discusses Utah's Vital Role to Migrating Shorebirds

Mark your calendars!

Bridgerland Audubon's spring banquet will be Thursday, April 26 at the Copper Mill Restaurant, 55 N. Main, Logan. Our guest speaker, Ella Sorenson, is manager of National Audubon's Gillmor Sanctuary on the southeastern shore of the Great Salt Lake, as well as a nature writer and birding enthusiast.

The title of her talk is "Shorebird Pathways of the Sky: Utah's Indispensable Role."

Every year after nesting across the Arctic, Canada, and northern United States, shorebirds funnel to the wetlands of Utah like grains in a giant hourglass. Some of the largest concentra-

tions of shorebirds on earth come to consume midges, brine flies and other invertebrates. Then once again they disperse to winter, scattered across the southern United States and spreading to the tip of South America.

Their numbers are incredible, often counted in the millions. Their flights are spectacular, sometimes lasting thousands of non-stop miles. These wild-wing voyagers follow the pathways of the sky, not haphazardly. Nor are they errant wanderers, searching for places to be. Their wings do not beat aimlessly. There is destination in every flap. Birds are guided to Utah for a purpose, by powers greater than we are. They are giv-

ing answer to a summons we cannot hear. The cycles are ancient and have orientation in the sun, the stars and the earth's magnetic field.

Please come join us for Ella's presentation which includes photos, science, stories and essays of Utah's vital role to migrating shorebirds.

Social hour with cash bar begins at 6 p.m., followed by dinner, presentation of awards, and Sorenson's talk at 7 p.m.

Tickets are \$25 and available at Caffé Ibis, Fuhri-man's Framing and Fine Art and Maya's Corner or from any Bridgerland Audubon board member.

Audubon Calendar

April 2007

5 BAS Board of Trustees. Bridgerland Audubon's Board of Trustees meets at 7 p.m. this Thursday at Cache Valley Learning Center, 75 S. 400 West, Logan. Enter through the building's west doors.

7 Bear River Bird Refuge West of Brigham City. Join us for a morning of birding at the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge west of Brigham City. This is a great time to view migrating shore birds as they fatten up before making their way north toward their Arctic nesting grounds. It's also a great a great time for viewing migrating waterfowl. We will also visit the beautiful new visitors' center, which was dedicated last year. It is truly a world-class facility that is suited for young and old alike. Bring binoculars and a snack. If you have a spotting scope, please bring it also. We will meet at 8:30 a.m. at the parking lot between Caffé Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 East 150 North in Logan). For further information, call Buck Russell 512-9641.

19 Birds, Blooms & Beasts in Southern Utah. We will be scouring the Mojave and Colorado Plateau during this 4-day trip for all things that crawl, hop, fly, and just look pretty. Desert bloom, migratory birds, and warm, sunny days (here's hoping!) will bring on an onslaught of reptiles and amphibians, of whom we will capture on occasion for intimacy! Camp with us April 19-22 (Thursday-Sunday) in primitive settings (your own water, food, & gear), or stay in nearby St. George or Springdale (we finish in Zion National Park). Meet at the Caffé Ibis parking lot by 3 p.m. for carpooling. For more information and to reserve a spot, call Jack Greene at 563-6816 or email: jackisgreene@yahoo.com

21 Breakfast, Sharp-tailed Grouse and General Birding. The wonderful land stewards and ranching family, the Selmans, have again invited us to their property in the foothills at the extreme south end of Cache Valley to view sharp-tailed grouse doing their mating ritual dance on their traditional leks. Some greater sage grouse have also been found recently near the same place. Because we need to be in place by dawn, we will meet at 5 a.m. Saturday at the parking lot between Caffé Ibis and the Logan Fire Station and carpool to the location where the grouse are. Dress warmly, because there is usually a cold wind blowing in the early morning. Bring binoculars and a spotting scope if you have one. Also bring your appetite, because the Selmans cook us a wonderful ranch-style breakfast at the end of the viewing. For more information, call Bret Selman at 257-5260, or Buck Russell at (435) 512-9641.

26 Bridgerland Audubon's Spring Banquet. Our annual spring banquet will be held Thursday, April 26 at the Copper Mill Restaurant, 55 N. Main. Social hour with cash bar will begin at 6 p.m. followed by dinner, presentation of BAS's annual awards for conservation and education, and a talk by Ella Sorenson of National Audubon at 7:00 p.m. Tickets are \$25 and are available at Caffé Ibis, Fuhriman's Framing and Fine Art, and Maya's Corner or from any Bridgerland Audubon board member.

28 Audubon Council of Utah Spring Retreat. Wasatch Audubon will host the Audubon Council of Utah's spring retreat at Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge's Education Center on Saturday and Sunday, April 28 & 29. Members of Utah's four Audubon chapters will attend to decide our state direction on many conservation issues, to bird, and to share fellowship. As with previous retreats, the agenda features a mix of presentations, field trips, meals and business meetings. Please plan to attend. The Bear River Refuge Education Center is located just west of the Forest St. exit from I-15 in Brigham City. Overnight accommodations are available in Brigham City, at Willard Bay State Park campgrounds, or at homes of Wasatch Audubon members by advance arrangement. For more information about the retreat, please contact John Bellmon at (801) 444-3704.

Local Notes

Crane Festival

(Continued from p.1)

Once again, as we pass through the autumnal equinox, the familiar ka-r-r-r-o-o-o, ka-r-r-r-o-o-o, as massive flocks gather and move south to their winter ranges in the southern U.S. and Mexico. A true spectacle that has been going on for millennia, this remains an important part of our valley's natural heritage. Recently the BAS board was reminded that cranes were a fun part of our cultural heritage also. Our good friend Mae Coover, who loves cranes too, took some time at our March board meeting to remind us of a wonderful event called "Crane Days" that used to bring people together in our valley each fall to watch,

learn about and celebrate Sandhill cranes. For five years in the '90s, Margaret Pettis, a local naturalist and educator, spearheaded a hardworking group of people who made Crane Days into a popular multi-day event that focused on watching cranes but also included an array of birding tours into the valley and mountains, pot luck dinners in Logan Canyon, dinner lectures, coffee and cookies at the Benson Marina, and more. Sounds like fun. Unfortunately Crane Days was ended 1996 in protest to the initiation of a limited hunt of cranes by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources. Still a part of our cultural heritage I guess, just more on the consumptive side.

Anyway, Mae's main purpose for coming to our

board meeting was to generate some interest and see if Crane Days or something similar could be established once again. All of the board in attendance thought this was a wonderful idea and a few offered to get involved with their time and efforts. However in order to be successful, we would need the energy and involvement of more people. So here is a call to our membership, to others who love cranes too and might be interested in contributing ideas or helping us out with a new celebration. If you are interested in getting involved please let any board member know or contact Bill Masslich at 753-1759 or bill@cvlc-logan.org before April 20. Thanks.

Welcome to BAS

New Members

Mr. Jeff Allan
Ms. Coralie M. Beyers
Ms. Janice Bowen
Sidney Escareno
Mr. Gustavo Flores

Mr. Roger Mann
Mr. Roger Peart
Ms. Joan K. Shaw
Cristy Transtrum

Renewing Members

Cheryl & Brett Adams
Desmond L. Anderson
Ms. Patricia Bahler
Ms. Rebecca Brook
Mr. Mike Bullock
Ms. Mary E. Carigan
A. P. Ebert

Mr. John Gallagher
Mr. Larry J. Jacobsen
Mr. Lawrence A. Ryel
Mr. Ron Ryel
Ms. Emily Speth
Mr. George Stewart
Ms. Marie Veibell

Bridgerland Audubon contacts

Trustees

2004-2007 Dave Drown, 752-3797; Jack Greene, 563-6816;
Reinhard Jockel; Stephen Peterson, 755-5041
2005-2008 Jim Cane, 713-4668; Richard Mueller, 752-5637;
Dick Hurren 435/734-2653; Jennifer Hoffmann, 713-
4935
2006-2009 Ron Goede, 752-9650; Bret Selman, 435/257-5260;
David Liddell, 245-2705

Bridgerland Audubon Contacts

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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 15th of each month. Send to stilt@bridgerlandaudubon.org.

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 Bridgerland Audubon Society

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Visit our website: [http: www.bridgerlandaudubon.org](http://www.bridgerlandaudubon.org)

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