



# The Stilt

Volume 36, Issue 7  
September 2007

Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

## Ibis Rookery Disappears

It was a rude shock. When we (Bryan Dixon, Tracy Carroll, and Mary Beth Held) visited Cutler Marsh this summer to conduct our annual census of the ibis and Franklin gull rookery, we found zero – ZERO – birds. We've been conducting formal surveys over the past few years to qualify Cutler Marsh as an impor-

tant Bird Area (IBA) of Global Significance because it sheltered over five percent of the world's population of white-faced ibis. In fact, the application had already been submitted this spring.

No one seems to have a solid theory about why the birds abandoned the rookery. It may have to do with

protracted drought and fewer wet meadows, disturbance by nearby water skiers, more development, or even larger scale habitat changes. Others have noted anecdotally fewer ibis in Cache Valley and the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge this year.

Rather than withdrawing the IBA application, we're

on hold, hoping to see the rookery rebound next year. Anyone with observations on apparent changes in ibis populations or habits this year is encouraged to contact one of us working on this nomination – Bryan Dixon (752-6830), Stephen Peterson (755-5041), or Wayne Martinson (801-355-8110).

### Great Salt Lake Minerals Expansion Threatens Global Resource

This past July, the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands (DFFSL) granted a permit for Great Salt Lake Minerals (GSLM) to impound an additional 31,000 acres of the Great Salt Lake (GSL) for evaporation ponds from which to extract minerals. That's almost fifty square miles!

Another branch of Utah government, the Division of Wildlife Resources, has warned that such massive alteration of the GSL could have severely negative impacts on habitat. Over 8,000 acres would be impounded in Bear River Bay, which is critical during times of low lake levels. The other 31,000 acres are in Clyman Bay on the far west shore, near the Bangerter Pumps, a place in the "North Arm" of the

GSL that few people have ever seen because of its remoteness.

That remoteness of the North Arm, however, is what has made it special for American White Pelicans. Colonial nesters, pelicans require nest sites secure from invasion by land-based predators, and have made Gunnison Island the second largest rookery in North America

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## 2007 Meeting Lineup

**September 13**

**Presentation:** Coral reef with Dave Lidell  
**Bird ID Workshop:** TBA

**October 11**

**Presentation:** Birds of Ecuador and the Galápagos Islands with Brandon Spencer  
**Bird ID Workshop:** TBA

**November 8**

**Presentation:** Birds of Peru with Val Grant  
**Bird ID Workshop:** TBA

**December 13**

**Presentation:** Constructing wooden feeders  
**Bird ID Workshop:** TBA

# Conservation News

## Grasses Establish at the Barrens Sanctuary

by Jim Cane

The saga continues for the restoration of native grass communities to Bridgerland Audubon's Amalga Barrens Sanctuary. You will remember that there were two previously cultivated parcels, one north-central, the other southeast on the property, together about 20 acres. With the cessation of farming, these were becoming carpeted by broadleaf Eurasian weeds. The weeds were beaten back during 2006 by an initial application of a short-lived herbicide, followed by periodic disking to disrupt new weed seedlings. Then last fall, late enough to avert premature germination, Craig Rigby drilled a custom grass seed mixture, six of the seven species native to northern Utah, the 7<sup>th</sup> being a small quantity of intermediate wheatgrass. Then we waited and worried.

This April, our patience and preparation were rewarded as rows of green grass leaf blades appeared at the surface (see above image). Within a month, we were dismayed to see these hearty grass seedlings



Rows of grass seedlings that resulted this Spring

choking beneath weedy canopies of Bilobed Speedwell (n. parcel), Field Penny Cress (s. parcel), and others, all common Eurasian

pasture weeds. Here, our caution to first seed just

native grasses paid off, for we were able to con-

tract with Scott Pratt to apply a safe herbicide selective for broad-

leaf weeds. It didn't harm our grasses, but set

Nesting curlews  
"would make all of our  
efforts worthwhile!"



Craig Rigby using seed drill to harrow seed bed prior to planting

back the resurgence of those broad-leaved weeds before they could set seed. My wife, Linda, and I then hand-pulled several hundred bulbous bluegrass plants (an invasive Old World grass) before they reproduced. Truly, "Nature abhors a vacuum" when it comes to fallow farmland in our valley!

Despite the dry winter and spring, our native grass seedlings have continued to thrive well into the summer, enough to be established for the coming year. Next spring, with some member assistance, we should plant some native shrubs and seed some native wildflowers (so long as broadleaf weeds remain under control). Steve Peterson, Sue Drown, Linda and I have been surveying birds at the Barrens Sanctuary, with over 50 species and counting. Notably, some long-billed curlews found the north grass parcel of interest, although we believe they were just visiting. Or were they checking out a place to nest next year? That would make all of our efforts worthwhile!

Jim Cane is the Barrens Sanctuary Manager

# Audubon Calendar

September 2007

**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.

**8 Field Trip: Cutler Marsh Canoe trip**  
Autumn splendor: Where the river meets the marsh.  
Launch at The Ditch on the Logan River west of Logan and paddle the meandering flat water to where the river opens into Cutler Marsh. Approximate paddling time is 3 hours; moderately strenuous (very little current to push us along). Launch site requires climbing a fence and carrying boats 50 yards. Allowing time for the car shuttle, expect to return by 1 p.m. Bring your own boat or rent one from USU Outdoor Recreation (\$13/day, 797-3264), water & snack, sunscreen & bug repellent, hat, binoculars, and sense of quiet exploration. Since birds will be migrating it is possible to see about 30 species including warblers and raptors. Although it is a bit early, autumn colors will begin to adorn the marsh. Meet 8 a.m. at the parking lot north of Caffe Ibis (150 North 50 East, in Logan). For more information, contact Jean Lown, 752-6830.

**13 BAS General Meeting:** Join us at our same great location, the Cache Valley Learning Center (75 S. 400 West), as Dave Lidell will be presenting his coral reef talk. The meeting will start at 7 p.m. We hope to see you there.

**28 Field Trip: Tetons, Elk Bugling**  
Jack Greene will organize and lead our field trip to witness the Elk Bugling in the scenic Teton Mountains. The car pool will leave at 3 pm from parking lot north of Café Ibis on Sept 28th, return Sunday evening Sept 30th. Witness the Tetons in their best fall dress where rampaging large ungulates (elk, bison, moose), release their fall passion with grunts, bugling, and a nasty disposition. Fall migrating birds along with winter residents will add to the fun. Camping at Gros Ventre, so bring your own food & gear. For more information, call Jack Greene at 563-6816.

October 2007

**6 Field Trip: Annual Kokanee Salmon Run**  
Come with us and local fish expert Ron Goede to view and learn the spawning habits of this inland salmon variety. Ron will explain the ecology and natural history of this unique fish and will take us to places where we can view them up close and personal. This should be an excellent trip for families. Birding in this area is also good, so bring your binoculars and plan to have fun. This last couple of years there has been both Bald Eagles and Ospreys on hand to get their fair share of the fish. We will leave at 8:30 from the parking lot between Logan Fire Station and Caffe Ibis (50 East 150 North) Carpooling will be available. Bring a snack. We plan to return in early afternoon. For more information, call Buck Russell at 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.*

(Continued from page 1)

(King, T.D. & Anderson, D.W. Waterbirds 28 (Special Publication 1): 48-54, 2005 "Recent Population Status of the American White Pelican: A Continental Perspective").

GSLM dikes would come well within two miles of the pelican rookery, and also threaten gulls and other wildlife. It would be an industrial eyesore for those who visit the west desert looking for solitude and wildness. (Search for "Lakeside, UT" in GoogleEarth and find "Strong's Knob", aka "The Fingerprint," and just north, with Gunnison Island just six miles north of that.)

DFFSL solicited input on the proposal this spring, and BAS signed onto extensive comments coordinated by Wayne Martinson, National Audubon Society, and Joro Walker, Western Resource Advocates, a *pro bono* legal firm in SLC that works exclusively on environmental issues. We asked about potential impacts and requested a more thorough study. DFFSL responded with a single day field trip by a handful of people, relying on anecdotal observations to justify the massive impacts. It turns out that the state could get \$2 million in additional taxes from the GSLM operation, and DFFSL is eager to be seen bringing those bucks into state coffers.

All we really requested in our original comments was better information. DFFSL has provided pitiful little analysis of the environmental impacts (remember, Utah has no law requiring environmental impact statements). We received little more than a pat on the head with a "Don't worry, it'll be alright." The GSL is a huge natural resource of hemispheric importance for wild birds and we cannot let a private firm destroy it. We have joined other organizations to file a formal appeal through administrative channels, and will seek other avenues to force a full accounting of the proposed project.

The Great Salt Lake is in our backyard, and we cannot let it be destroyed on our watch. Stay tuned.

— Bryan Dixon  
Conservation Chair

## THE BEAR RIVER SYMPOSIUM / NONPOINT SOURCE POLLUTION WATER QUALITY CONFERENCE

Date: September 5-7, 2007

Location: Utah State University, Logan, Utah

The Bear River Symposium / Nonpoint Source Pollution Water Quality Conference is a joint conference sponsored by the EPA Bear River Targeted Watershed Initiative and the Utah Nonpoint Source Pollution Task Force. This annual conference covers nonpoint source and other water quality issues throughout the state and region, but this year will have a special focus on the Bear River Watershed.

Conference sessions will cover a range of topics in watershed science and management including special sessions on the Bear River Watershed and the online Bear River Watershed Information System.

All those in the water resource field are encouraged to attend, including scientists, researchers, managers, resource specialists, especially farmers, ranchers, educators and any other interested citizens. All students may attend free of charge and a limited number of conference fee waivers are available for non-students.

For more information or to register, visit [www.bearriverinfo.org](http://www.bearriverinfo.org).



**BEAR RIVER WATERSHED**  
INFORMATION SYSTEM

*"Providing unprecedented access to data in the Bear River Basin"*



# BIONEERS

## 2007 Utah Bioneers Conference

*Our Fourth Annual Conference*

**October 19, 20, and 21, 2007**

Eccles Conference Center, Utah State University, Logan, Utah

<http://sail2.ext.usu.edu/bioneers/2007/index.cfm>

### Bird's Eye reView

How many times have you been somewhere when a mysterious bird catches your eye only to find, to your chagrin, you're nowhere near your field guides. It has happens to me several times on the way to work. However, when I get chance later that day, I look up the mysterious bird online and to get a positive identification. Now, I can bird on-the-go without actually going birding.

This month's review focuses on the World Wide Web — specifically, a website called WhatBird. This website is a fantastic online field guide that can aid in identifying over 900 species of North American birds. The developer, Mitchell Waite, describes his website as "a radical search engine to identify birds. What makes this engine so special is that it uses a parametric step-by-step approach as contrasted with all the other ID engines currently available in the Internet which use an 'all at once' approach. In order to find a bird, these search engines require you to enter all the ID information and field marks upfront at the same time. This means you are either going to get 'zero matches' or a huge number of matches." The website allows users to, as mentioned before, search the database one parameter at a time. Users can use such attributes as location, size, habitat, color, bill shape or length, or wing shape, as well as others. Once a user has limited the number of possibilities, a comparison can be made between possible matches. Once an identification has been made, a new page opens that contains loads of information about the species, including sound bytes of the bird's vocalizations.

You can find the WhatBird website at [www.whatbird.com](http://www.whatbird.com). And, lately, there has been a very humorous video clip on the WhatBird homepage about a thieving gull in Scotland. If, by chance, the link is no longer on the homepage when you hop online, you can access the video clip at YouTube using the following link: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4t9u23c2\\_Nw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4t9u23c2_Nw)

If you would like to review any topic, product, etc. to be printed in the Bird's Eye reView, or if you have any suggestions, email Brandon at [birdnerdut@gmail.com](mailto:birdnerdut@gmail.com).

—Brandon Spencer

# I Learned it from the Birds

Did you ever see an unhappy horse? Did you ever see a bird that had the blues? One reason why birds and horses are not unhappy is because they are not trying to impress other birds and horses.

-Dale Carnegie



## Local Bird Spotlight

August going into September is usually a slow time of year for birds. Though not too many species are around, some gems can still be found. Presently, great migrants like Townsend's Warbler, a real jewel in the fall, and Rufous and Calliope Hummingbirds are around.

These are fun. But the best are the young of the year that hang around the yard - Broad-tailed Hummingbirds, Black-capped

Chickadees and House Finches. The young House Finches are a curious lot, trying to chase the hummers away from the feeders. Not that these youth can do much good getting a tasty liquid treat, but it's true fun to watch them.

They'll also watch a chickadee opening a seed from about six inches away. In time, they will try to gain access to the seed's contents (to no avail because chickadees,

though smaller, are quicker) or simply give up hope of a free meal and look elsewhere to panhandle.

While the begging ensues, the hummers provide aerial displays *par excellence* - whether gnat catching or chasing one another. It's a time to hope they see you as they zoom by at supersonic speeds.

This is a wonderful time

of year to catch up on our local residents prior to their southern jaunts or trying to survive a Logan winter.

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Val Grant is the BAS President



## 2007-2008 Duck Stamps

Just a reminder to all BAS members and nonmembers alike! You can purchase your 2007-2008 Duck Stamps either at your local post office, online at [www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com) (search for Duck Stamps), or over the phone at 1-800-STAMP-24 (1-800-7826-724). The money goes to purchase land for the US Fish and Wildlife Refuges (like the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge) and for duck breeding spots – not just hunters.

### Fast Facts

Since 1934:

- 1.84 Million Federal Duck Stamps have been purchased in Utah.
- 119.3 Million Federal Duck Stamps have been purchased nationwide.
- \$671.1 Million has been raised for habitat conservation by the nationwide sales of Federal Duck Stamps.

# 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

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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 [birdnerdut@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto: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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Visit our website: <http://www.bridgerlandaudubon.org>

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## Bear River Bottoms – An Update

Save these dates – October 13, 14, and 27 – to help at the Bear River Bottoms. There are a number of projects that need doing, from debris cleanup to vegetation surveys to wildlife habitat improvements.

Last fall, twenty volunteers from BAS and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) logged over 500 hours with sophisticated Archer Field PCs and global positioning system equipment documenting various features and vegetation compositions on over 1,600 acres of riparian lands. These data were incorporated into a geographic information system last winter. This past spring, we developed draft documents for a conservation easement (CE) on 490 acres of PacifiCorp land between Morton and Trenton.

This summer, the CE has been wending its way through the legal maze within PacifiCorp (a large corporation, after all) and we hope to have final language by September. Agreement between TNC and PacifiCorp on the legal documents will justify spending the money on a formal hazardous site assessment, title search, and appraisal, in preparation for the final signing. If all goes well next year (meaning we make a good impression on PacifiCorp's upper management), we'll develop CEs for other sections of the Bear River Bottoms.

The Bear River Bottoms have seen only a minimal management presence since being acquired by PacifiCorp in the 1970s, which suggests that we need not be in a hurry to change things. However, it's not too early to start improving the habitat by working on invasive plants, more detailed biological surveys, etc.

PacifiCorp and TNC welcome the support from BAS volunteers and we're deciding what work makes the most sense for this fall. So, stay tuned and save the dates. We'll provide more details in the October Stilt, but if you're interested in knowing more or volunteering, contact Bryan Dixon (752-6830 or [bdixon@xmission.com](mailto:bdixon@xmission.com)).