



The Stilt

Volume 36, Issue 8
October 2007

Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

Ibises? Terns too!

As I read the lead story of the September issue of the Stilt entitled "Ibis Rookery Disappears," I was reminded of a trip I took to Maritime Canada at the end of July, 2006. Among many other amazing places to see fantastic birds up close, I had the opportunity to visit two locations few people ever go: Machias Seal Island and North Brother Island.

Machias Seal Island is a small island with an interesting nationalism. The scarcely one mile long and a couple hundred feet wide – at low tide – island is found at the mouth of the Bay of Fundy, about ten miles west of Grand Manan Island. Because of its location, both Canada and the US claim the island as their own. Only the Canadian government actually mans and personally regulates the island from a lighthouse they erected on the island over a hundred years ago. Both governments, however, regulate the number of visitors to the island every year. Three touring companies (two from the US and one from Canada)

each have governmental and environmental permits allowing them to take guests to the island. Each company may take a maximum of 13 guests per day to the island only during the breeding season (mostly due to rough waters and treacherous landing conditions the rest of the year) which is from approximately mid-June to the beginning of August.



Photo by Brandon Spencer

Politics aside, the island is so much more than a turf battle – it is the breeding ground of one of the largest colonies of Atlantic Puffins (above photo – ca. 1000-3000 pairs) in the southern Maritimes. It is also home to many other pelagic birds such as Razorbills (right photo – ca. 200 pairs) and Arctic Terns (ca. 2500 pairs).

Everything I had read about the island before visiting was that one must beware; the terns will dive

bomb anyone on the island. Wearing a hat and carrying a stick or camera tripod will help avoid any direct hits from the kamikaze birds protecting their chicks. However, before I took one step on the rocky shore, I could tell something was terribly wrong.

According to researchers from the University of New Brunswick, the past four

all of which died within the first four days of life. (Hence, no photos of Arctic Terns.) Dr. Tony Diamond, who has been researching birds on the island since the 90's, says that this year was even worse than 2006. Only a couple of eggs actually hatched this year, and like last year, the chicks died shortly afterward.



Photo by Brandon Spencer

years have been increasingly bad for terns on the island. The researchers have noticed extended periods of heavy fog, increased annual precipitation, higher than normal surface water temperatures, fewer herring, and increased aggression by Herring and Greater Black-backed Gulls. 2006 yielded only 14 hatchlings,

The second location I had the chance to visit was North Brother Island. The Brothers (North and South) are two tiny spits of land about 1 km west of Lower West Pubnico, Nova Scotia. The larger of the two, North Brother, is barely 800 feet long and not half that wide, at low

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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>

Bioneers Synopsis

by Jack Greene

Getting children connected to nature for their mental, physical, and emotional health, and to shape minds that become good stewards of our natural environment is the main theme of this year's Bioneers conference. Further, it is a primary purpose of Bridgerland Audubon and the Stokes Nature Center which has received solid support from BAS since its inception.

Logan is one of 20 locations in North America that receives a live satellite feed of the national Bioneers conference held in California. The main activity will occur at the USU Eccles Conference Center Oct 19-21. For more information and

registration, go to www.extension.usu.edu/bioneers.

Our conference attendees will see internationally known plenary speakers from the national event along with our own outstanding keynote speaker, Cheryl Charles. Cheryl is the founder of "Project Wild" and former national director of "Project Learning Tree", two of the best known and most highly respected environmental education programs. She is currently director of the newly created "Child & Nature Network", created to support reconnecting children with their natural landscapes. Innovator, educator, author and organizational executive, Cheryl has been recognized for her leadership, collaboration, and communications skills. The title of her keynote is "The Ecology of

Hope – Building a Movement to Reconnect Children and Nature" presented 7 pm, October 19th at the Logan Tabernacle.

Daily plenary speakers from the national event will be followed by our own workshops which attempt to find solutions to maintaining healthy ecosystems and building healthy human communities in our Valley and region. They will address air, water, transportation, renewable energy, nature education programs in our schools and community along with many other topics.

The Bioneers conference provides inspiration and education geared to taking action and catalyzing wider citizen participation. The conference offers pragmatic solutions that honor the living web of

the natural world as the most fertile source of inspiration and models.

The Bioneers span all fields, cultures, ages and walks of life. The work ranges from science to spirit – local to global – academia to the grass roots – farm to city – business to public service – art to engineering. We celebrate the gift of life in all its diversity and mystery, conjuring a change of heart to renew our empathetic connection with the web of life and the Earth, our home.

Gathering people at the crossroads of ecological restoration, human health, and social justice. This is a conference you won't want to miss. We'll see you in October!

Jack Greene is the Education Chair and on the Board of Trustees

Audubon Calendar

October 2007

4 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.

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.

11 BAS General Meeting: Join us at our same great location, the Cache Valley Learning Center (75 S. 400 West), as Brandon Spencer will be presenting photos from his Ecuador and Galápagos Islands trip. Brandon spent ten days in February split between the islands and the mainland. Though birding wasn't the main focus of the trip, plenty of birds were gracious enough to make appearances. The meeting will start at 7 p.m. Enter through the building's west doors. All are welcome to attend. We hope to see you there.

20 Quarterly Roadside Cleanup... Plus Birding.
Some years ago Bridgerland Audubon assumed responsibility for cleaning up litter along a stretch of road west of Richmond. It is currently time again to discharge this responsibility. We thus put out a plea for support from all those who benefit from Bridgerland Audubon activities. When we have a strong turnout, we are able to take care of this assignment in short order, and we have fun in the process. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot between Caffe Ibis and the Logan Fire Department (50 East 150 North). Bring gloves if you have them, and wear clothing suitable for the time of year. Bags and safety vests will be provided. Carpooling will be available. Some may wish to do some birding afterwards; if you do, bring binoculars and something to snack on. For more information call Buck Russell at (435) 512-9641.

November 2007

3 Bridgerland Audubon field trip to Logan Sewage Lagoons. We will go to one of the best places for waterfowl in the Fall, the Logan Sewage Lagoons. We normally see a nice variety of gulls, ducks, (occasionally a Long-tailed Duck), and herons. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the parking lot between Caffe Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 E. 150 North). Dress very warmly and bring binoculars and a spotting scope if you have one. Carpooling will be available. Beginning birders are welcome. For more information call Buck Russell (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.

Ibises? Terns too!
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tide. Ted D'Eon, a resident of Pubnico, was kind enough to let me tag along one morning as his research assistant. Ted is known in the area, and around the world via the world wide web, as the "Tern Man." He earned that distinctive title because of his work with the breeding Roseate Tern populations on the Brothers. Since 1982, he has been conducting nest and chick counts, building and placing nest boxes on the islands, and monitoring their use. He has earned commendations and awards from several local agencies and received the ultimate reward when, in 1999, after years of

steady population increases, The Brothers were designated as an IBA for the Roseate Terns.

Though not as bleak, this story – like that of Machias Seal Island – does not have a happy ending. Last year, Ted was concerned about the lower than normal numbers of tern nests and successful hatchlings and fledglings. He also noticed that most of the terns had left their roosts earlier than in previous years, suggesting that only those fledglings that had hatched earlier in the season survived. This year was similar. Though I was not able to directly contact Ted in time for this article, his tern reports are quite detailed

and available to view at www.ted.ca. From his homepage, the "Tern Reports" can be accessed. This year's report notes on a couple of occasions chick mortality that coincided with heavy rains.

Perhaps there is a connection between the unusually low numbers of Roseate Terns on The Brothers and the shockingly low numbers of Arctic Terns on Machias Seal Island. Perhaps that connection is weather related. Perhaps the change in weather in the past few years is only part of a much larger global change in climate. Whatever the ultimate cause, which most probably is a consortium of changes working

in concert, the consequences on tern populations have been noticed and are dramatic. The only consolation I can give the reader is that several of banded Arctic Terns that have frequently revisited Machias Seal Island have been identified and reported breeding on nearby islands and islets near the mouth of the Bay of Fundy. So, at least they are not all dying. They are simply moving elsewhere to breed. Whether the same can be said about our missing ibises remains to be seen. We can all keep our fingers crossed that they come back to nest next year.

by Brandon Spencer

Bird's Eye reView

What is eBird?

A real-time, online checklist program, eBird has revolutionized the way that the birding community reports and accesses information about birds. Launched in 2002 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, eBird provides rich data sources for basic information on bird abundance and distribution at a variety of spatial and temporal scales.

eBird's goal is to maximize the utility and accessibility of the vast numbers of bird observations made each year by recreational and professional bird watchers. It is amassing one of the largest and fastest growing biodiversity data resources in existence. For example, in 2006, participants reported more than 4.3 million bird observations across North America.

The observations of each participant join those of others in an international network of eBird users. eBird then shares these observations with a global community of educators, land managers, ornithologists, and conservation biologists. In time these data will become the foundation for a better understanding of bird distribution across the western hemisphere and beyond.

How does it work?

eBird documents the presence or absence of species, as well as bird abundance through checklist data. A simple and intuitive web-interface engages tens of thousands of participants to submit their observations or view results via interactive queries into the eBird database. eBird encourages users to participate by providing Internet tools that maintain their personal bird records and enable them to visualize

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Eared Grebe

By Bill Masslich

Birding Northern Utah in the Fall can be like eating at a smorgasbord; so many choices that it is easy to fill your plate – and it is all so good. What to recommend? It's a tough decision but here is one to consider. Head on down to Antelope Island to check out the Eared Grebes. The road (also called a causeway) leading out to the island is a great location to see the grebes as well as other cool species of migratory birds. Numbers of Eared Grebes consistently peak about mid October, when as many as 1.5 million of these ruby-eyed wonders can congregate on the waters of the Great Salt Lake. Here they linger, often into December, to molt and fatten themselves on the Lake's plentiful invertebrates, often doubling their weight, prior to heading for their wintering habitats in the southern U.S. and Mexico. Grebes migrate only at night and are one of the latest of all migrating species in the U.S. to finish their migration south.

Eared Grebes are the most abundant grebe in the world as well as in Utah and prefer saline lakes as breeding and staging habitats. In many years, up to 99% of the Eared Grebe population in the U.S. can be found congregating in the Great Salt Lake of Utah and Mona Lake in California during Autumn. If you are lucky, hundreds of thousands of these birds can sometimes be seen working the waters on the north side of the causeway in Gilbert Bay. What a spectacle!

These highly social birds breed throughout Utah in breeding colonies of thousands of birds. They are diving birds, gleaning rocks and submerged vegetation for aquatic invertebrates. They build floating nests and usually lay three eggs. When the little grebes hatch, they are carried on the back of one parent and

Local Bird Spotlight

fed by the other parent for about 10 days. After that each parent takes one or two of the offspring and separates itself from its mate for the remainder of the year. The juvenile grebes become independent about three weeks after hatching.

Eared Grebes have distinctive red eyes, a black crest on their head, and rusty-brown wing feathers.

Their bill is up-turned. In winter, their color changes to gray with black on top and white on bottom. Like other grebes, Eared Grebes often eat their own feathers. This behavior is thought to protect their stomachs from sharp objects. Each year, as many as six times, Eared Grebes go through a staging cycle similar to their behavior in the Fall. During these times, their pectoral muscles rapidly shrink, digestive organs grow quickly and large fat reserves are deposited, rendering them flightless for up to 10 months each year, the longest for any bird species in the world capable of flight.



If you haven't, or even if you have, check out the Eared Grebes in the Great Salt Lake this Fall. While you are down at Antelope Island, make sure to take in some of the other attractions at the State park too. For more info on Antelope Island State Park visit their website at www.utah.com/stateparks/antelope_island.htm.

Bill Masslich is the BAS vice president
Eared Grebe illustration from www.whatbird.com

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data with interactive maps, graphs, and bar charts. All these features are available in English, Spanish, and French.

A birder simply enters when, where, and how they went birding, then fills out a checklist of all the birds seen and heard during the outing. eBird provides various options

for data gathering including point counts, transects, and area searches. Automated data quality filters developed by regional bird experts review all submissions before they enter the database. Local experts review unusual records that are flagged by the filters.

Data accessibility

eBird data are stored in a secure facility and

archived daily, and are accessible to anyone via the eBird web site and other applications developed by the global biodiversity information community. For example, eBird data are part of the Avian Knowledge Network (AKN), which integrates observational data on bird populations across the western hemisphere. In turn, the AKN feeds eBird data to international

biodiversity data systems, such as the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF). In this way any contribution made to eBird increases our understanding of the distribution, richness, and uniqueness of the biodiversity of our planet.

All information taken directly from the eBird website found at www.ebird.org.

There's a brand new shorebird pond in Cache Valley!

BAS (Sue Drown, really) has been working with Logan City to establish a shallow playa-type pond for shorebirds west of the Logan Landfill. It will have water for spring and fall migration seasons, but will go dry during the summer months. Despite initial appearances, it is open to the public. The access will be marked with signs soon. For now, pedestrian access is OK any time. Driving access is OK when the gate is not locked. Beware of mud! Turn south on 1900 West from Valley View Highway (200 North) and drive a few hundred yards to the first gate and dirt road on your right. There is a small pull-out just south of that gate where you can observe a roadside pond. The new pond is just west of the roadside pond, not visible from the road. Logan City

has also built a nice wetland at the west end of the dirt road. These are accessible wet spots – a rare thing for Cache Valley.

As the new pond "matures", the plant and insect populations should provide good feed for migrant shorebirds. Right now, it's just being filled for the first time, so it will be interesting to see what birds find it.

If you see anything particularly interesting, email Nancy Williams, our local hotline coordinator, at nanwill@cc.usu.edu.

Thanks, Sue, for all the diligent work! This project was made possible by a substantial grant from the Cache County RAPZ tax fund.

I Learned it from the Birds Wild Watchers

*Out on the prairie where the wheat blows free
lives a red-tailed hawk
and his daring family.
They hunt for their supper
and they wait in the trees,
out on the prairie where the wheat blows free.*

*Down in the valley where the wild river runs,
lives a great horned owl
and her wide-eyed sons.
They hunt all day in the rabbit runs,
down in the valley where the wild river runs.*

*Here in my yard where the violets grow,
lives a tiny brown wren
who loves her babies so.
She watches for the hawk
and she watches for the owl,
here in my yard where the violets grow.*

-DONNA SWANSON

Suggestions Welcome!

The Bridgerland Audubon Society's newsletter, the Stilt, is yours. This award winning newsletter is paid for and sent to you thanks in large part to your membership dues. For this reason, I would like to invite you to play more than just a passive role in the Stilt. If there is anything that you are particularly enjoying, let me know about it. Do you wish the Stilt contained something else? Or, better yet, would you like to have an article you've written published in the Stilt? I can't improve the already great newsletter if I don't know what the readers want. If you have any suggestions, comments, or would like to write an article, please email me at birdnerdut@gmail.com. I can't promise that every suggestion will be implemented. But I will do my best.

Bridgerland Audubon contacts

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- 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;
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- 2007-2010 Dave Drown, 752-3797; Jack Greene, 563-6816;
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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 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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