



# The Stilt

Volume 37, Issue 3  
March 2008

Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

## Get Out and Bird

Since the beginning of the year, many birds have been enjoyed by the novice and seasoned veterans alike. Recently, there have been some fantastic birds reported in our beautiful valley. From the common to the rare, nocturnal to diurnal, at backyard feeders and snow covered canyons, some amazing birds are making an appearance.

This may be another plug for the Top of Utah bird hotline, but many of the rare and interesting sightings have been instantly shared via the Internet. For example, Gray-crowned

Rosy Finches, Black Rosy Finches, Snow Buntings, and Lapland Longspurs have been spotted mingling with flocks of Horned Larks around the Benson Marina. Great Blue and Black-crowned Night Herons have been spotted at the fish hatchery. And owls have been heard hooting up Green Canyon. All of these sightings have been shared through the hotline.

Could this be an extraordinary bird year? Perhaps. The two Rosy Finch species, according to some of the more experienced local birders, haven't been reported for several years. Not to completely discount any possible environmental or behavioral changes for the birds, one very logical explanation for these "abundant" sightings is the ease of sharing information amongst birders. It is possible that because an avenue for sharing sightings was unavailable, these rarer birds went unreported for many years.

Whatever the reason for the unusual bumper crop

of interesting birds this year has yielded, one thing remains a common thread: more people are getting out and birding!

Starting on January 1st, several local birders took the opportunity to get out and get busy finding birds. The following several paragraphs were written by Reinhard Jockel.

"On a very cold but sunny first day of the year, a group of about two dozen people met to go looking for birds. We expected to see about 50 species, half of the number seen on our last CBC which was a record 103 species.

"First, we went to the 'island' area of Logan to look at bird feeders. Most of the birds flew away when so many people showed up, but we did see some nice birds. Next we looked for and found a Screech Owl in the hollow of a box elder tree along the Canyon Road canal trail. We also saw an American Kestrel nearby.

"Then, we went to First Dam where we found the reliable assorted waterfowl

with some Barrow's and Common Goldeneyes.

"We continued up the canyon to Third Dam where we saw a dipper, robin, and a Townsend's Solitaire as well as some more Goldeneyes. We also heard some chickadees. The Winter Wren we had elicited to come out and give us a look last year didn't do the same this time. Maybe it was too cold in the shade... so, we went back down the canyon into the sunshine.

"We headed for the 20-20 ponds in Young Ward. The pond was covered by a multitude of ducks of about a dozen species. We got a chance to see some rare species like Canvasback, Cinnamon Teal, and a Pied-billed Grebe.

"The next spot we spent a lot of time at was the fish hatchery along 200 N by the landfill. There, we were hoping for some rare birds. We were not disappointed with a Great Egret, Greater Yellowlegs, Snipes, gulls, Killdeer, and a Pipit.

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# Audubon Calendar

March 2008

**1 Delta Snow Goose Festival.** Come see thousands of Lesser Snow Geese during their annual migration through Delta, Utah. The sight and sound of thousands of snow geese is an incredible wildlife experience. We will leave at 7:00 a.m. from the parking lot between Caffe Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 E. 150 North) and will return to Logan late afternoon. Carpooling will be available; beginning birders are welcome. If you travel as part of a carpool we ask you to help share the fuel expense. 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 General Meeting** Join us at our same great location, the Cache Valley Learning Center (75 S. 400 West), as Stephen Peterson discusses Grassland Birds of the Northern Great Plains. In the summer of 2007, Stephen worked for the Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center where he assisted in surveying grassland species and habitats across the Northern Great Plains of North and South Dakota, Minnesota and Montana. With less than 1% of native prairie habitat left in North America, Stephen will present an overview of how the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is helping in preserving critical habitat for many declining species of birds throughout the region. 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. We hope to see you there.

## Sunflower Seed

Bridgerland Audubon Society is still selling Black-oil Sunflower Seed. Allen Christensen is willing to deliver 50 pound bags for \$20. Why would you want to buy this seed? This high quality seed is provided by a local grower and is guaranteed to be cleaner than other seed. It is also a great buy: 50 pound bags are only \$20! So, contact Allen and buy your Winter supply while supporting a local grower!

I learned it  
from the Birds

Sacrificial Lamb Law: The bird will be seen by others only after you, as the sacrificial lamb, leave.



Continued-From Page 1

We also saw two owls in the conifers, another screech and a Great Horned Owl.

"From there, we went to the Benson Marina. Along the way, we got some good looks at many Rough-legged Hawks. We had to break up the party in the early afternoon. But, before we went home, we took one last look in Logan and found a flock of waxwings – mostly the familiar Cedar Waxwings, but also the rare infrequently seen Bohemian Waxwings. This winter, they have been in the valley since mid-November.

"After making up my list, I found it to have 50 species – so we had reached our goal. But one group stayed out and had 63 species on their list. That is phenomenal! I have only recorded 30 to 40 species on New Year's Day in the past few years.

"The rest of the year, I will be working on getting 200 species which will be challenging, but a lot of fun too. I welcome others to join me in reaching that goal!"

What a great year to shoot for 200 Cache Valley birds! Like Reinhard, I have taken the challenge to see 200 species in 2008 in our beautiful Cache Valley and I encourage all of you to do the same. Not only can the task be made much easier with the help of great birders like Reinhard, but much more fun as well. Furthermore, the addition of technologies like the Top of Utah Hotline have made it incredibly easy to share information you discover with any and everybody almost instantaneously. But, the bottom line is this, you will never be able to reach the lofty goal of 200 in a single year while sitting at home. Your feeders will only yield so many birds. So, get out and take a drive. Get out and take a hike. Get out and bird!



Story and Photo by Brandon Spencer

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## Volunteers & Friends of the Bear River Refuge

In our "continuing education" series...

Josh Vest is a graduate student at Utah State University working on his PhD. Josh will come to Bear River to speak to us on March 26, at 10 a.m. about his project which is "Wintering Waterfowl Ecology on the Great Salt Lake".

You are all invited to attend! No RSVP is necessary.

Bridget Olson  
(435.734.6433)

Betsy Beneke  
(435.734.6436)

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# Local Bird Spotlight

## The Cassin's Finch A Springtime Treat at Your Feeder

I love watching birds at my feeder for many reasons, but two in particular. First, it's my favorite method of procrastinating — spending time on details of familiar birds that I see daily and usually take for granted. For example, all those Juncos cleaning up under the feeder: which is a female Oregon Junco and which is a true Pink-Sided form? The second reason is the real spice of birding — finding a visitor or rarity among the “regulars.” I remember a phone call from my birding buddy Larry about a Common Redpoll at his Logan feeder a few years ago. Jealous, I turned to my window, and there it was — one Redpoll, the only one I've ever had on my feeder.

So, checking your feeder Finches, especially in March, can be a two-for-one bonus. When the migrating Cassin's Finches start arriving, you can spot a special bird and also practice comparisons with the

ones you take for granted, the House Finches.

Next time you see a really lovely red House Finch at your feeder, take the opportunity to look twice. Is the red concentrated on the crown, and is that crown just slightly crested, with the sun catching an unusually bright red color? Does that red stay just on the top like a cap, with a lovely true pink on the face and breast? And finally, does that finch look big and clear, not so streaky? You likely have a visitor, a migrating Cassin's Finch. Later, you'll find you can ID Cassin's at a huge distance when the sun strikes that Maraschino-cherry red crown.

We know House Finches — they're the sparrows dipped in red. If you concentrate, you can see that male House Finch's red is often not right on the crown. It's stronger, red on the sides of the head, with a browner top, more a Ninja-turtle mask than a cap. The same color red spills down the neck onto the breast.



The extent of the red is quite variable, and some can be impressively bright. But the red over the eye is the same color as the red under the chin. The Cassin's Finch sports true red strictly on its slightly-punk crown, while the breast glows rosy pink. Notice also the shorter, seriously forked tail and hefty body. For detail, note that the upper beak edge is straight, not curved.

Female finches can be tougher. For me, the field mark that stands out is the pale malar on the face of a very streaky brown bird. The malar is the line that goes down the face from the sides of the beak and sometimes continues around the “cheek”. The House Finch female has no significant facial markings, and the contrast on her body between streaks and background is more

muted. Size, always tricky, and tail length can also be good clues.

March seems to be the best time to find Cassin's out your window in Cache Valley. In summer, they prefer conifers, and they do breed in our Cache County mountains. In winter, they pack up and move, downslope and southward, even into Mexico. I'm not saying you can't have a few at your feeder in January, but March and again in September or October seem to be the busiest feeder months.

So, please do procrastinate. If the Cassin's visits your feeder, stop and enjoy them. I'm certain your errands can wait a bit. Mine often do.

— By Sue Drown

Image from [www.whatbird.com](http://www.whatbird.com)



# Legislative Notes

By Bill Fenimore  
Utah Audubon Policy Advocate

A brief summary of the topical areas that have been focused on this legislative session have included the following:

Advocated for Wild & Scenic consideration for the Logan River with Department of Natural Resources Director, Mike Styler; Executive Director of Division of Wildlife Resources, Jim Karpowitz; Senate Natural Resources Standing Committee Chair Sen. Darin G. Peterson; Rep. Roger E. Barrus, House Natural Resources Standing Committee, Chair.

Communicated Audubon's support and encouragement for \$2 million being prioritized for the LeRay McAllister Critical Land conservation fund. With the Capital Facilities and Government Operations who did approve the request. The fund targets lands that are deemed important to the community such as agricultural lands, wildlife habitat, watershed protection, and other culturally or historically unique landscapes.

Advocating support of DWR Budget request with the Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee Co Chairs: Rep. Ben C. Ferry and Sen. Dennis E. Stowell for Utah Nongame Wildlife. Nongame funding is targeted toward management and conservation of wildlife that is not fished or hunted. DWR's nongame avian program receives funding support for raptor and songbird population surveys in Utah. These surveys provide information to biologists to make decisions that will help ensure these birds thrive and have sufficient habitat. Black-footed Ferret and River Otters have been reintroduced and further introductions are planned through these funds. Biologists in the DWR's nongame mammals program use nongame wildlife fund money to help these endangered and sensitive species. Critical information about pygmy rabbits and prairie dogs is being gathered through these funding sources.

Indicated Audubon's support for HB 106 CLEAN AIR AND EFFICIENT VEHICLE TAX INCENTIVES which passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 58-14. This Bill will now moves to the Senate.

Contacted Sen. Scott McCoy and registered Red Cliffs Audubon Chapter's opposition to construction of a proposed coal fired power plant, Toquop near Mesquite, Nevada. The primary concern is plant emissions carried by prevailing winds into Southwestern Utah. Sen. McCoy is the sponsor of Senate Bill 173 that would establish controls for carbon emissions

Working on enhancing DWR's focus on Wildlife Watchers and enhancing their nature recreational opportunities and infrastructure. Gave public comment at the Executive Appropriations Committee meeting during the DWR Budget presentation. The budget review gave an opportunity to point out Utah Audubon Council and Chapter's support of DWR initiatives that support Watchable Wildlife. Additionally, I pointed out the economic benefits that Utah Audubon supports and drives in Utah.

Some of the examples illustrated were the volunteer naturalists at the Nature Center at Farmington Bay Waterfowl Management Area (particularly, providing educational opportunities in the outdoors for children); Eagle and Swan Day's at Farmington Bay and Salt Creek Waterfowl Management Areas; St. George and Great Salt Lake Bird Festivals.

Educated the legislature on the economic nature pie in Utah through Watchable Wildlife activities: Watching, Hunting and Angling activities add \$2.3 billion to Utah's economy. The Watching component accounted for \$1.03 billion of that total (45%). There were 574,000 Watchers in Utah (51.4% of the total). Watching was also responsible for creating and supporting 10,569 jobs (44%) of the total jobs. Tax revenue added another \$56 million from Wildlife Watching activities (44% of the \$127 million tax revenue total).

Pointed out that Utah's Snowbird Resort will be the site of the American Birding Association convention in June 08. Another tangible example of the enhancement of birding Utah and economic benefits realized in the local economy.



# Help Plant Shrubs at Barrens Sanctuary

I am looking for volunteers to help plant native shrubs at our Barrens Sanctuary one fine day this April. Various shrubs belong out there, but lost out to former farming and grazing practices. Now these shrubs can be restored to our Sanctuary. Sagebrush, winterfat, 4-wing saltbush, golden currant and willows have been ordered from the State's Lone Peak Nursery, to be delivered as 100 small bare-root plants in early April. If you have a shovel and, ahem, "dig" a little manual labor for Nature, call or email me and I will add you to the contact list. Be sure to provide me with your name and the means of contacting you. When a convenient day of good April weather is forecast, I will schedule the planting(s) and contact you. With enough help, it will be light work and good company. If you have a trenching spade or planting dibble (or otherwise an ordinary garden shovel), please bring them along. And don't forget your binoculars, for migrants will be all about! I hope that you can join in this good cause.

Jim Cane

E-mail: [jim.cane@usu.edu](mailto:jim.cane@usu.edu)

Phone message: 713-4668

Sanctuary Manager

## Gray Jays In The Cache Forest

*Bridgerland Audubon does not include the gray jay in its listing. The following report and observation should be noted.*

*— By Dennis D. Austin.*

August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004. I had just finished counting snowshoe hare pellets plots in the North Amazon Basin of Logan Canyon, assisting the Forest Service and the Division of Wildlife Resources, and was on my hike back to the highway when I heard a bird calling that seemed familiar, but which I could not place. I followed the bird calls and discovered a small flock of five gray jays (2 adults and 3 juveniles). Note: North Amazon Basin lies in Cache county north of US-89 between the Beaver Mountain and UDOT road sheds spur roads.

Gray jays, often referred to as camp robbers, are commonly found

in the Uinta Mountains, but are extremely rare on the Cache Forest. Indeed, the Bridgerland Audubon bird list currently does not include the gray jay. This is only the second reported observation to my knowledge of the gray jay on the Cache forest. The first report was from an USFS employee several years previous. I eagerly added the species to my Cache County list.

A half mile hike further down the 4X4 jeep road, I encountered the Forest Service employees, assigned to count most of the snowshoe hare plots, noisily driving in low gear a USFS icon-green truck. I told them to look for the gray jays

in the lower draw containing the first group of pellet plots.

Leaving my colleagues and after hiking another half mile down the jeep trail, I observed a single gray jay (probably adult) by the only stock watering pond in the vicinity, where only moments before the Forest Service truck had passed. This brought my total of gray jays to six. The Forest Service employees never observed any of the jays.

Sometimes to observe unusual wildlife it is just lucky to be in the right place at the right time, but it almost always helps to be silent and on foot.



# Welcome to BAS

## New Members

Ms. Kathy Evans  
 Mr. Reed Funk  
 Mr. Lyman Jensen  
 Ms. Ramona Turner

## Renewing Members

Cheryl & Brett Adams	Mr. James E. Kingsland
Mr. Mike Bullock	Ms. Jeanette Norton
Mr. Windsor Copley	Ms. Joan K. Shaw
Allyson A. Davis	Ms. Melanie K. Spriggs
A. P. Ebert	Joyce and Bert Stokes
Mr. Al Forsyth	Cristy Transtrum

# Bridgerland Audubon contacts

## Trustees

2005-2008 Jim Cane, 713-4668; Jennifer Hoffmann, 713-4935;  
 Dick Hurren, 720-7074; 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
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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 15<sup>th</sup> 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*

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## Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

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Logan, Utah 84323-3501

Email: [birdnerdut@gmail.com](mailto:birdnerdut@gmail.com)

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

### Ballot

#### BAS 2008 Election of Officers

##### Board of Trustees (Three-Year Term)

Only BAS members may vote and each membership is entitled to one vote. To vote, clip this ballot and mail to Bridgerland Audubon Society, P.O. Box 3501, Logan, UT 84323-3501. Alternately, you may vote at the banquet, Thursday, April 24. All ballots must be received by April 24, 2008.

##### Vote for Four:

- Jim Cane
- William Masslich
- Richard Mueller
- Brandon Spencer
- \_\_\_\_\_

##### Hello Bridgerland Chapter Members:

Due to an error of omission by yours truly (he never read the by-laws), the election process at the annual banquet is only for Board members who serve a three year term. The officers (he's one of those too) are elected by the Board at their March meeting. Hence, if you wish to lobby board members for certain officers, please do so. You're also welcome to attend the next board meeting at the Cache Valley Learning Center (NW corner of 4th W and 1st S).

- |                |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|
| President      | C. Val Grant      |
| Vice President | Jason Peitrzak    |
| Secretary      | Lyle Bingham      |
| Treasurer      | Jennifer Hoffmann |

This edition of the Stilt lists the 4 Board members up for election at the banquet. Please vote!

C. Val Grant  
President