



The Stilt

Volume 37, Issue 8
October 2008

Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

Identification of North American Peeps: A Different Approach to an Old Problem

For all of those who are not members of the American Birding Association, you surely missed a fantastic article written by Cameron Cox and published in the July/August issue of *Birding* magazine. The article is titled "Identification of North American Peeps: A Different Approach to an Old Problem." Mr. Cox explains his article quite well.

"The five species of 'peeps' in North America present a well-known identification challenge. Many birders are aware of subtle differences in plumage and bill structure among the peeps, but it is less widely appreciated that the five species of peeps differ appreciably and consistently in foraging behavior and overall body structure. This article provides an overview of those structural and behavioral distinctions that are surprisingly reliable for identifying peeps."

"In this article, peeps are divided into three different categories: Least Sandpiper, 'Standard Peeps' (Semipalmated and Western Sandpipers), and 'Long-winged Peeps' (White-rumped and Baird's Sandpipers). Placing an unknown peep

into one of these three categories is an effective first step in the identification process. In doing so, you will either identify the bird immediately or be left with only two possibilities on which to concentrate. Therefore, each section begins with an overview of the group and how its members are separated from the other two groups. More detailed, species-specific information follows the overview."

If you have ever had a hard time sorting through several hundred peeps to find different species, this article is a must read. I am reminded of a time I was in the Bay of Fundy, New Brunswick, Canada watching a flock of 10,000 Semipalmated Sandpipers (a small group for migration standards) completely flabbergasted that my friend was picking out a lone Least or Spotted Sandpiper here and there. How this article could have helped me back then!

You can find the article at the following website: <http://www.aba.org/birding/v40n4p32.pdf>. An additional, also very helpful article is found at this website: aba.org/birding/v40n4p40w1.pdf.



Inside this Issue

Audubon Calendar	2
Bioneers Conference	3
Local Bird Spotlight	4
UAC Conference	5
Audubon Contacts	7



Audubon Calendar

October 2008

- 2 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.
- 9 General Meeting** Join us at our same great location, the Cache Valley Learning Center (75 S. 400 West), as Mike Wolf will be presenting on bats. 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. We hope to see you there.
- 11 Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge and Environs** Join us for a trip to the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge and its environs. The trip will be held in conjunction with the Utah Audubon Council Retreat, but all of our regular friends and patrons are invited to participate as well. Those not specifically involved in Council activities will meet at the parking lot between Caffe Ibis and the Logan Fire Station at 8 a.m. and will carpool over the refuge. Dick Hurren will lead the trip. As you may or may not know, the refuge has been closed for road reconstruction and only recently reopened. Bring a snack, binoculars and a scope if you have one. Dress for the season. Waterfowl should be plentiful and there should still be significant numbers of migrating shore and wading birds. For more information, call Dick at (435)744-2017 or Jason at (435)938-0203.
- 18 Support the Bioneers Conference** No field trip is scheduled for this weekend because we will be lending our support to the annual Bioneers conference, which runs from the 17th to the 19th of October.
- 25 Quarterly Roadside Cleanup plus Birding** Some years ago, Bridgerland Audubon Society assumed responsibility for cleaning up the litter along a stretch of road west of Richmond. It is currently time again to discharge this responsibility. We thus put out a special plea for support from all those who benefit from Bridgerland Audubon activities. When we have a strong turnout, we are able to discharge this assignment in short order. And we have fun in the process. Meet at 8 a.m. at the parking lot between Caffe Ibis and the Logan Fire Station. Bring gloves and wear clothing suitable for the time of year. Bags and safety vests will be provided as well as gloves for those who have none. Carpooling will be encouraged. Some may wish to do some birding afterwards. If you do, bring binoculars and something to snack on. For more information, call Jennifer Hoffmann or Jeff Allen at (435)713-4935.



If you'd like to come along on a field trip but do not have binoculars, call Dick Hurren (435)720-7074. He'll try to find a pair for you to use.



October 17, 18, and 19, 2008

Eccles Conference Center, Utah State University, Logan, Utah

<http://sail2.ext.usu.edu/bioneers/2008>

Bioneers: "Gathering people at the crossroads of ecological restoration, human health and social justice" will be with us for the 5th season. For details and registration information, visit us at <http://sail2.ext.usu.edu/bioneers/2008>. This is considered by most to be the best conference they've ever attended. Filled with hope and inspiration, one can't help but commit to making a better world. Personal and community action is our central purpose. Bridgerland Audubon's generous contributions continue in many forms from a generous cash donation and fine exhibit to Board members serving 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.

This year's conference will focus on food security and energy independence. Questions such as "Can our Valley feed itself?" and "Will algae save us?" will be addressed in our terrific line up of workshops. Friday evening at the Tabernacle will feature generations coming together as a panel of LDS members discuss how their faith has become engaged in finding solutions to these paramount concerns, including global warming. The panel will consist of younger members who will pose questions to their seniors.

Our Saturday morning keynote address will be delivered by Craig Denton, a University of Utah faculty member presenting on his recently published book "Bear River, Last Chance to Change Course", a marvelous production on one of the west's great river systems that blesses our Valley with its bounty. A documentary photographer and writer, Prof. Denton's work looks at the intersection of public policy and community's sense of place, a crossroads that often is confrontational and painted with lines marking opposing ideologies.

This will be followed by an afternoon workshop where Craig will discuss the technical aspects of his production. An exhibit of Craig's outstanding photography and text will begin showing at the USU library September 25th and continue through early November.

Mornings and early afternoon will be filled with plenary speakers from the national conference beamed in via satellite, enriched by entertainment and sumptuous food provided by Culinary Concepts, Crumb Brothers Bakery, Caffe Ibis, and Rock Hill Creamery. Please join us for this great Fall celebration!

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



Local Bird Spotlight

The Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*) is a fairly common bird in Cache Valley year-round. But, as we get closer to the Winter months, it seems like this bird is one that is seen more and more frequently. Especially at feeders that are consistently stocked, juncos are a reliable backyard sighting.



Dark-eyed Juncos are medium sized sparrows about 5 to 6 inches long. They have distinct pink, conical bills and white outer tail feathers. The tail feathers are specifically helpful for the author who, on many occasions has found himself wondering, "Now, what kind of drab looking sparrow could that be?" as it is flushed and flying away. The gray tail enclosed by a flash of white signals the end of the identification process.

When given more time, or at least one moment head-on with the bird, the gray or dark hood is another distinguishing characteristic. So too are the pinkish legs and lack of any wing bars (except in the very localized White-winged race). And, as one might have guessed by the name, these juncos have dark eyes. In fact, their French and Spanish names are Junco ardoisé and Junco ojo oscuro, which mean "slate" and "dark eyes" respectively. Both male and female are very similar, but the females tend to be slightly paler than the males.

Juncos breed in the mountainous forests surrounding us and winter down in the valley. The smaller amount of snowfall and open fields (as well as the

well stocked feeders around many homes) make the valley floor a much more inviting habitat. The birds will scratch at the ground with both feet foraging for seeds and insects.

One thing that makes this fairly ubiquitous bird somewhat more interesting is the fact that there are at least five subspecies or races of the Dark-eyed Junco. At one time, the races were indeed separate species. Regardless, each race is quite distinct in their own right.

The three most common of the races found in our valley are the Slate-colored, Oregon, and Gray-headed juncos, though other races have been seen and reported. The Slate-colored Junco is unique in that it is fairly uniformly dark gray all over. The Oregon Juncos have "rusty" backs and sides with a very dark to black hood. The "rusty" back of the Gray-headed Junco is very similar to the Oregon race. However, the Gray-headed race is aptly named having a gray hood with a small black face mask resting in front of the eyes.



As with many species of birds, some juncos migrate while others are permanent residents of particular areas. An interesting fact is that migratory Dark-eyed Juncos have longer wings than permanent residents. The longer wings help the birds in their long migration.

Photos and article by Brandon Spencer
Information gathered from All About Birds at http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide/Dark-eyed_Junco.html

Utah Audubon Council Fall 2008 Meeting October 11th and 12th, 2008

Saturday, October 11: Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge - Brigham City

8:30 AM: Breakfast and Birding tour of Bear River Refuge with Dick Hurren Meet up at the Bear River Wildlife Education Center for a quick bag breakfast (details below) and birding tour of the refuge given by expert birder Dick Hurren.

12:00—1:00 PM: Presentation and lunch break at BRMBR Lunch break and presentation about BRMBR (bring your own lunch or we can order out from the BRMBR Visitor's Center)

1:00—4:00 PM: Break Everybody is free to do whatever they would like at this point.

4:00 PM: Birding in Cache Valley with Reinhardt Jockel Reinhardt Jockel will lead a birding tour of some of the best Cache Valley birding sites including the Amalga Barrens. Meet at Caffe Ibis parking lot in Logan.

Sunday, October 12: Utah Audubon Council Business Meeting

8:00—8:15 AM: Meet at Caffe Ibis in downtown Logan Meet at Caffe Ibis to grab coffee and carpool/caravan to...

8:30 AM—1:00 PM: Utah Audubon Council Business Meeting at Stokes Nature Center Agenda TBA

Directions to Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge: Take exit 363 off of I-15. Go west one block and turn left into the BRMBR Wildlife Education Center parking lot.

Caffe Ibis in Logan is a 30 minute drive from the Refuge. Directions: take right out of BRMBR Visitor's Center parking lot and drive into Brigham City. In 2 1/2 miles turn right onto Main St. Drive 2 blocks and turn left onto 200 South and follow this onto highway 89/91 to Logan. This road goes right into downtown Logan in 22 miles. In downtown Logan take a right onto Federal Ave (half a block past the Tabernacle) and this leads you into a small parking lot where you should see birders assembling.

The Stokes Nature Center is located in Logan Canyon. From downtown Logan, take 400 N. eastward toward Logan Canyon. After you pass the small reservoir at the mouth of the canyon, it's about a mile on your right. Parking is available across the street from the entrance in a dirt lot and from the parking lot to the building is a few hundred yards. Anybody with difficulty walking will be able to drive right up to the building as I will have a key to the gate.

***Breakfast and coffee on Saturday and Sunday mornings will be provided by Crumb Brothers and Caffe Ibis respectively. I will be picking up all sorts of baked-goods and breakfast foods on my way down to the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge and the meeting at the Stokes Nature Center.

Lodging is available near Bear River MBR as well as in Logan. Here are a couple of accommodations within 15 minutes of the business meeting in Logan:

Hampton Inn - (435) 713-4567

Weston Inn (435) 752-5700

Best Western Baugh Motel (435) 752-5220

Camping courtesy of your National Forest Service:

The Spring Hollow Campground will be open that time of year. It is the closest open campground to the Stokes Nature Center (3 miles up canyon) and it will be first-come first-served by the weekend of our meeting. There are bathrooms there, but no electricity, etc...

Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival



Come Celebrate Our 13th Annual Festival!
January 16-19, 2009

MORRO BAY, CALIFORNIA – Come to where the birds are and join Morro Coast Audubon Society (MCAS) for our 12th Annual Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival. Located on California's scenic Central Coast, Morro Bay is an important stop on the Pacific Flyway and one of the country's pre-eminent birding spots. The area is recognized worldwide for its diversity of both resident and wintering birds, and at last year's festival, over 200 species of birds were identified!

The Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival is sponsored by MCAS and gives you the chance to join local and national birding experts on a variety of field trips and workshops. Field trip group sizes are limited to maximize spotting and identification opportunities. The Festival also offers workshops aimed at sharpening your birding skills, as well as evening programs with outstanding speakers.

For more information about the Festival, check out our website at www.morrobaybirdfestival.org, or call (805) 772-4677. You can request that your name be added to the mailing list for our 2009 brochure, or register online. Both the brochure and online registration will be available in October 2008. The registration deadline is January 5, 2009 but early signups are encouraged as the most popular events fill up quickly.

Little Green Places

Last month, we told you about the Celebrate Urban Birds! project from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. It's an easy, fun way for city-dwellers to get to know their birds, enjoy the outdoors, and contribute information that scientists can actually use to study urban birds. Now we want to tell you about our "Little Green Places" contest.

We want to see your photo, drawing, or video of a Little Green Space that's good for birds. Have you noticed a spot that birds like because it provides shelter, food, or water? It could be an ivy-covered wall, flowers next to the stoop, a windowbox, a container garden on a rooftop or balcony, your school garden, or the potted plants by your library entryway.

Send a photo, drawing, or link to your video to urbanbirds@cornell.edu. We'll send the first fifty entries a copy of the new "Celebrate Little Green Places" poster and there will be other great prizes, including a \$100 gift certificate from Johnny's Selected Seeds. The deadline is October 31.

Information about the Little Green Places contest can be found on our web site: <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/celebration/temporary/little-green-places-photo-video-contest>. Make sure to watch our video about the contest!

We can't wait to see your Little Green Places!

Best wishes,
Karen Purcell,
Celebrate Urban Birds! project leader
kap7@cornell.edu

Welcome to BAS

New Members

G W. Beus
Bracken Berger
Glen Johnson
Donna Reid
Sean M. Smith
Anita Weston

Laurie Baefsky
Mr. & Mrs. Max Elliot
Brunson, Jr.
Phyllis Conover

Renewing Members

John Dymerski
Edward Deborah Evans
Reed Funk
Norman & Marcia LaBarge

Mr. and Mrs. David Lewis
Diane Browning Oblock
Tim Slocum
M Coburn Williams

Bridgerland Audubon contacts

Trustees

- 2006-2009 Ron Goede, 752-9650; David Liddell, 797-1261; Bret Selman, 257-5260
- 2007-2010 Chris Cokinos, 245-7769; Jack Greene, 563-6816; Reinhard Jockel; Stephen Peterson, 755-5041
- 2008-2011 Jim Cane, 713-4668; William Masslich, 753-1759; Richard Mueller, 752-5637; Brandon Spencer, 753-2790

Bridgerland Audubon Contacts

- President Val Grant, 752-7572, biores@mtwest.net
- Vice Pres. Jason Pietrzak, 938-0203, pietrzak@gmail.com
- Secretary Lyle Bingham, 563-6003, lwbingham@comcast.net
- Treasurer Jennifer Hoffmann, 713-4935, jennifer.hoffmann@comcast.net
- Outings Dick Hurren, 720-7074, dickhurren@gmail.com
- Conservation Richard Mueller, 752-5637, rmueller@biology.usu.edu
- 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, 752-4780, 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*

Nonprofit Organization
BULK RATE
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 104
Logan, Utah

Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

P.O. Box 3501

Logan, Utah 84323-3501

Email: birdnerdut@gmail.com

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

