



# The Stilt

Volume 38, Issue 5  
May 2009

Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

## Adopt-a-Trail: Riverside Nature Trail

Would you like to help improve a small part of our local environment and perhaps see some interesting birds in the process? Bridgerland Audubon Society will once again be adopting the Riverside Nature Trail through the Logan Ranger District's Adopt-a-Trail Program. Duties will include visiting the trail (located between the Spring Hollow and Guinnavah campgrounds) to remove trash and noxious weeds. We will also be involved in cleaning out winter downfall and some minor trail repairs. We ask BAS members to help with this trail informally as you walk or bird watch on the trail. We will also organize monthly work days to work on the trail as a group. The work days are as follows so you can save the dates: **Saturday, May 16, 9-12 am; Saturday, June 13, 1-4 pm; Tuesday, July 14, 7-9 pm; and Tuesday, August 11, 7-9 pm.** The dates will also be reprinted as a reminder in the upcoming issues of the Stilt. We will meet at the Logan Ranger District Office (1550 E Hwy. 89) at the beginning of each outing to car pool from there. Please plan to wear long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, boots, and work gloves. We hope you can join us! Call Debi Evans (755-7160) if you have questions.

## Birdhouses for Friends

The long winter can be a hard time to go birding. Cold, wind, snow and ice can keep even the most active birders indoors. This can be especially difficult for people in assisted living who can't always access the outdoors. That's why we decided to help bring birds to our members by installing bird feeders at selected assisted living facilities!

Using donated materials and supplies, we constructed nearly a dozen bird feeders and distributed seven feeders around Cache Valley. So far, Cache Valley Assisted Living and Sunshine Terrace have gotten involved.

Feeders were installed outside windows of common rooms and recreation areas. Where colorful flowers had been covered by winter snows, winter birds drawn to feeders could bring color back to the landscape. Now the birds, which rely on feeders for as much as a quarter of their winter diet, would benefit from having more dispersed sources of food available in harsh conditions and our members (and other bird lovers) would have more chances to see and enjoy nature where ever they might live.

If you or someone you know could benefit from watching nature through their window, think about putting up bird feeders of your own. For more information, visit the Project Feederwatch website at [www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/).

And for more creative ideas on bringing birds to your property, come to the May Audubon general meeting where you can learn about using plants and water-features to attract birds.

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# Got Nest Boxes?

## Monitoring helps the Cornell Lab of Ornithology study climate change and nesting birds

Anyone with one or more nest boxes can help scientists learn more about bird families and how they might be affected by climate change. Just register the nest box (or boxes) with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's NestWatch program ([www.RegisterYourNestbox.org](http://www.RegisterYourNestbox.org)). It doesn't cost anything but yields valuable information needed to better understand breeding birds and how their natural rhythms may be changing. If you don't have a nest box, now is the time to set one up. Many species that build nests in cavities have become very accustomed to using wooden boxes set up by bird watchers to help the birds more easily find a home.

"It's time to lose the winter blues and focus on spring renewal," says project leader Tina Phillips. "NestWatch is easy and fun for adults and children. It helps all of us reconnect with nature which is good for our own health and well-being. NestWatch is a great activity to do on your own, in a classroom, or as a homeschool project. And it helps the birds too."

Studies have shown that some birds are laying their eggs sooner than in the past — as much as nine days earlier in the case of Tree Swallows — and that could spell trouble if the eggs hatch before a steady supply of insects is available for feeding the young. NestWatch participants visit nests once or twice per week and report what they see during each visit, such as which kinds of birds are using their nest boxes, when the first eggs are laid, and the total number of eggs and young. The project collects this information for all species of nesting birds in North America.

"Citizen scientists really make a big difference," says Phillips. "You can turn a nest-box hobby or a passion for bird watching into reliable data that, when combined with other observations from across the continent, increases our understanding of the impacts of environmental change and human land-use on breeding birds. These data allow us to detect trends on large scales, which are very powerful for diagnosing potential threats to breeding birds. Armed with that knowledge, we can take the steps needed to help them survive in this changing world."

All materials and instructions are available on the NestWatch web site, including directions on how to monitor nest boxes without disturbing the birds. Anyone interested in putting up nest boxes for the first time will find information on how to provide the best and safest boxes for bluebirds, swallows, chickadees, and other cavity-nesting birds online. NestWatch participants also monitor the nests of backyard birds that don't use nest boxes, such as phoebes, robins, and goldfinches.

The hugely popular NestCams are back in action — anyone can get a live peek into nests and nest boxes across the country. Live cameras are focused on Eastern Bluebirds, Barred Owls, Wood Ducks, Barn Owls and more. Keep watching and see what hatches! ([www.nestcam.org](http://www.nestcam.org))

NestWatch is a free nest-monitoring project developed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in collaboration with the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, and funded by the National Science Foundation.

Questions or comments can be directed to Pat Leonard, (607) 254-2137, [pe127@cornell.edu](mailto:pe127@cornell.edu).



# NestWatch

# Audubon Calendar

## May 2009

**7 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 Birding Logan Canyon** Leave at 8 a.m. from Caffe Ibis and return early afternoon. Bring something to eat, drink, and perhaps a light jacket. We will visit various sites in Logan Canyon including 1st, 2nd, and 3rd dams, Woodcamp Hollow, and Tōny Grove turnoff to find resident birds and newly arriving migrants. We may see several warblers, grouse, woodpeckers, Mountain Bluebirds, etc.

**16 Riverside Trail: Adopt-a-Trail work day** Meet at the Logan Ranger District Office (1550 E Hwy 89) to car pool or join us on the Guinavah-Malibu side of the trail at 9 a.m. Plan to wear long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, boots, and work gloves. The fun will end around noon.

**14 General Meeting** Bridgerland Audubon and the Stokes Nature Center present an evening with guest speaker Heidi Kratsch, the Extension Ornamental Horticulture Specialist at USU. She will be speaking about water efficient landscaping and she'll show you how you can create your very own oasis for birds, bees, and butterflies! Meeting will take place at the Stokes Nature Center in Logan Canyon at 7 p.m. Drinks and snacks will be provided by Caffe Ibis and the Crumb Brothers Bakery!

**14-18 Salt Lake Bird Festival** Call Val Grant 752-7572 or visit [www.greatsaltlakebirdfest.com](http://www.greatsaltlakebirdfest.com) for more information.

**30 Songbirds north of Clarkston — Steele Canyon** Leave at 7:30 a.m. from Caffe Ibis parking lot. Prepare for a long day as we will return mid afternoon. Bring water, lunch, insect repellent, sunscreen and possibly a light jacket. This is one of the best sites for seeing a great variety of songbirds in one place because of the mixing of several habitats. We will surely hear and see the special bird for this area, which is the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher.

## Attention Bird Photographers!

Audubon and Nature's Best Photography Magazine have teamed up to create a new photography contest for birders. The new contest, which begins accepting submissions in May, offers a chance for youth, amateur, and professional photographers to compete for prizes ranging from South American cruises to Australian safaris. Selected photos will also appear in Audubon magazine! For more information, visit [www.AudubonMagazinePhotoAwards.com](http://www.AudubonMagazinePhotoAwards.com)

# Local Bird Spotlight

—by Bill Masslich

It's time again to watch for the arrival of our feathered, summer residents returning from their southern winter haunts. One bird that I particularly look forward to seeing is the Barn Swallow. Every spring for the last 19 years this very conspicuous and beneficial bird shows up on my front porch on or around the 21st of April. From that day, until sometime in late September, my front porch is transformed into a frenetic scene of nest building, raising young and all sorts of high-speed aerial acrobatics. Beware to all those who dare to venture onto my porch!

The people that we bought our house from warned us about those darn swallows, making all the noise and leaving such a mess with all their droppings. "Just keep knocking their nests down and they will eventually give up," they said. They were right! They are noisy and messy! But we have chosen to let them live with us, despite their raucous behavior and careless toilet habits. Cohabiting with swallows has led to an appreciation of this bird that far outweighs any inconveniences.

First, I have grown to appreciate the almost exclusively insectivorous diet of the species. Swallows eat flying insects such as flies, aphids, beetles and ants to name of few.

When we first moved into our house, one pair of swallows nested on our porch. Nineteen years later our swallow colony has grown to as many as 12 nesting pairs living on our porch, sides of our house and other buildings on the property. By the end of the summer, after many of the pairs have pulled off two broods of 3 to 5 fledglings, we can have as many as 80 swallows foraging on insects above our crops. As

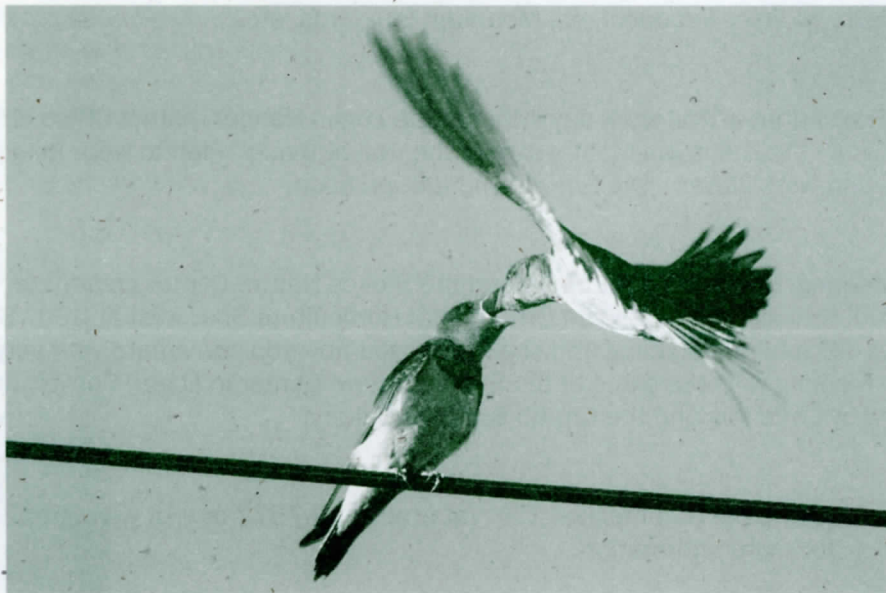


Photo by Brandon Spencer

an organic farmer and a firm believer in biological pest control, my annual crop of swallows leaves me with less flies on my BBQ, fewer aphids on my cabbage, and a big smile on my face — all with no harmful chemicals.

Believe it or not, Barn Swallows also make excellent watchdogs, or should I say watchbirds. No one comes on to my front porch without setting into motion an explosion of alarm calls and aerial dive bombing that often drives strangers back onto my yard where they wait for me to acknowledge their presence while keeping a close eye on the

crazy, little birds that just won't back off. Watching the reaction of people being accosted by these brave birds has become a wonderful source of summer entertainment.

Barn Swallows are also fun to just watch. Their flying prowess is amazing, flying low over the yard, maneuvering between the trees and buildings, flying within inches from my or my dog's head (which drives them nuts), turning on a dime, gliding and darting to and fro. Watching them construct their nests and raise young became a summer pastime for my two sons when they were young. Swallows become pretty tolerant to humans once they figure out you are not going to mess with them too much. My boys would constantly want me to lift them

up, so they could look into the nest at the young birds, and would sit for hours watching the parent birds bringing insects to a flash of gaping mouths. Occasionally, the young birds, already fledged but still roosting in their nest, would explode into flight in the face of my boys eliciting screams of delight. The deeply forked tail and beautiful blue and rufous coloration give the Barn Swallow a particular look of grace as they glide about.

Barn swallows migrate long distances and are the most widely distributed of all swallow species, oc-

*Continued-From Page 4*

curring on every continent during sometime of the year, except Antarctica. Barn swallows that nest in Utah, probably winter in Mexico, Central and South America as far south as Argentina. They tend to be monogamous and pair up with the same mate from year to year and share in nest construction and rearing of young. If a nest is not disturbed, it can be used for as many as 10 to 15 years with annual repairs. If you let Barn Swallow nest on your house their droppings, which can be copious, can be collected by placing newspaper or scrap plywood under the nest. This can make excellent fertilizer or amendment to any compost pile.

To mariners, swallows are a symbol of a safe return from a long journey and are often worn as a tattoo. Superstitions regarding the destruction of a swallow nests suggest that such an act could lead to cows giving no milk or hens not laying eggs. Swallows are also a symbol of Spring and show up many times in literature. Shakespeare writes of swallows in several of his plays with one particularly poetic line in *The Winter's Tale* in which he wrote "Daffodils, That come before the swallow dare, and takes the winds of March with beauty". Well, March has passed, the daffodils are blooming so our Barn Swallows are probably not to far behind. I'll be watching for them.

## News at the Refuge

The BRMBR will be closing the main road into the refuge as it is being paved.

Photographers and birders who would like to drive at their leisure should go in May. There will be guided tours along the D Line this summer, but they are only a few hours long and they do not depart early in the morning.

Currently, shoulder work is underway near the O-line canal, Bear River Club and the security gate. The road remains open to traffic for now, but will be closed sometime in May for a time while they are putting on the top layer of pavement.

More work on the shoulders, driveway, sidewalk and bike trail at the wildlife education center will soon begin too – probably in early May. There will be no closures, but there may be times when only one lane will be open and flaggers may have to hold vehicles for a few minutes.

As of now, plans are to completely close the road in June, July, August, and up until September 15. The closure will be just 1.5 miles west of the education center, not far after you pass the last houses, and before the Reeder Canal. As before, guided tours will go through the Perry gate.

## Bird Call Jukebox

There's a great website for our young bird enthusiasts. If you point your browser to <http://www.greenhour.org/content/activity/detail/6921#make>, you and your youngster can have some fun trying to identify a dozen common (some not so common to our area) bird calls.

How many do you and your child recognize? Have you heard any of these birds near you? Use the player's controls to skip to the next bird call if you already recognize it.

Have fun – and happy birding!

*Original sound recordings by Cornell Lab of Ornithology.*

**GREEN HOUR**  
The parents' place for nature, play & learning



## Bird's Eye reView

I remember it distinctly. It was a cool, Costa Rican cloud forest morning. The dawn mist was giving way to the early sun before the morning showers began. Awake earlier than the rest of my company, I was taking a quiet stroll through the forest specifically looking for aguacatillo trees (little avocado). I was told that they are favorite spots for the Resplendent Quetzal, a target animal on my excursion. Unfortunately for me, I was unable to see the Quetzal on that visit. Fortunately for me, however, I was graced with the presence of a Blue-crowned Motmot. I had always loved birds, but not much more than my love for all animals. It was at that moment, in the still of the cloud forest, that I realized I was hooked. I was officially a birder. Where I used to drive in the mountains looking for elk or moose, I now bird... keeping an eye out for the other wildlife I might find along the way.

I have often been curious how others were influenced in their lives to make one decision or another; how those influences shaped people. One such person was Roger Tory Peterson. I have long wondered what his "hooking" moment was. What was his Blue-crowned Motmot? What was that catalyzing event in his life that turned him immortally to the birds? Or did he simply have parents who were naturalists modeling an interest in our avian friends?



Photo by Brandon Spencer

### BIRDWATCHER

The Life of Roger Tory Peterson



I recently had the opportunity to read a newly published book entitled *Birdwatcher, The Life of Roger Tory Peterson*. At first, I was expecting a book about some of his accomplishments. For me, that wasn't too terribly interesting. However, from the opening pages, I was pleasantly surprised to find my assumptions were wrong.

*Birdwatcher* takes the reader deeper into Peterson's life. The author, Elizabeth J. Rosenthal, obviously spent an eternity researching for this book. She allows the reader to peer into the past, not to relive memories, but to understand the molding of an influential man. The book answers more than the simple, "What did he do?" and delves into the realm of, "Why did he do what he did?" It's not the typical biography. If you are interested in more than historical facts, I would recommend reading this book. It is cleverly written and very insightful, taking information from many people who knew the man the best.

*Birdwatcher, The Life of Roger Tory Peterson* can be purchased anywhere books are sold. If you prefer to shop online or if your local bookstore does not have the title, the ISBN is 978-1-59921-294-4.

— by Brandon Spencer

## Lifelist Tally

Well, the results are in and they are better, if only slightly, than last month. I had a few more souls register their numbers. BAS unofficially tallies an average of 443 species. That is amazing. One thing I did learn is that a large number of birders don't keep lists. On the surface, that was surprising to me. The more I thought about it, however, the more I respect that. I admire those who don't think of birding as a competition or race to a particular number. Though I will continue keeping my own personal records, this experience has helped me keep in mind why I bird and why most birders bird. We love birds. We love their beauty while perched and their magnificence in flight. So, if you choose to keep lists or not, let's all get out and enjoy those things we love, birds.

# Welcome to BAS

## New Members

James A Aagard  
 Gordon W. Allman  
 Mara J. Ballard  
 Terry Barnes  
 Todd Lloyd  
 Nordale N. Nervig  
 Patsy Palacios  
 Robert L. Perry  
 Kris Ricks

## Renewing Members

Barbara Farris  
 Ms. Jun Gallahan  
 Bruce Pendery  
 Jason K. Pietrzak  
 Craig Reger  
 Charles L. Salzberg  
 Carl J. Saunders

# Bridgerland Audubon contacts

## Trustees

2006-2009 Ron Goede, 752-9650; Frank Howe, 787-1859  
 Robert Schmidt, 755-9262; Bret Selman, 257-5260

2007-2010 Chris Cokinos, 245-7769; Jack Greene, 563-6816;  
 Reinhard Jockel

2008-2011 Jim Cane, 713-4668; William Masslich, 753-1759;  
 Richard Mueller, 752-5637; Brandon Spencer, 753-2790

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 Webhost www.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 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 send all checks payable to National Audubon Society with this card to:  
 National Audubon Society  
 PO Box 422250  
 Palm Coast, FL 23142-2250  
 Membership Source Code: C9ZW520Z

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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