



The Stilt

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Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

Secretary Salazar Releases New "State of the Birds" Report Showing Climate Change Threatens Hundreds of Species

A new report released by Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar concludes that climate change threatens to further imperil hundreds of species of migratory birds already under stress from habitat loss, invasive species and other environmental threats.

The State of the Birds: 2010 Report on Climate Change, follows a comprehensive report released a year ago showing that that nearly a third of the nation's 800 bird species are endangered, threatened or in significant decline.

"For well over a century, migratory birds have faced stresses such as commercial hunting, loss of forests, the use of DDT and other pesticides, a loss of wetlands and other key habitat, the introduction of invasive species, and other impacts of human development," Salazar said. "Now they are facing a new threat—climate change—that could dramatically alter their habitat and food supply and push many species towards extinction."

The report, a collaboration of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and experts from the nation's leading conservation organizations, shows that climate changes will have an increasingly disruptive effect on bird species in all habitats, with oceanic and Hawaiian birds in greatest peril.

In releasing the report, Salazar cited the unprecedented efforts by the Obama Administration and the Department of the Interior to address climate change.

Last week in Anchorage, Alaska, for example, the Interior Department opened the first of eight new regional Climate Science Centers that will engage scientists from all of Interior's Bureaus and our partners to research climate change impacts, work with land, natural, and cultural resource managers to design adaptation strategies, and engage the public through education initiatives.

The Climate Science Centers will help support a network of new "Landscape Conservation Cooperatives" that will engage federal agencies, tribal, state, and local governmental and non-governmental partners, and the public in crafting practical, landscape-level strategies for managing climate change impacts on land, natural, and cultural resources within the eight regions.

"Just as they did in 1962 when Rachel Carson published Silent Spring, our migratory birds are sending us a message about the health of our planet," Salazar said. "That is why—for the first time ever—the Department of the Interior has deployed a coordinated strategy to plan for and respond to the impacts of climate change on the resources we manage."

Key findings from the "State of the Birds" climate change report include:

- Oceanic birds are among the most vulnerable species because they don't raise many young each year; they face challenges from a rapidly changing marine ecosystem; and they nest on islands that may be flooded as sea levels rise. All 67 oceanic bird species, such as petrels and albatrosses, are among the most vulnerable birds on

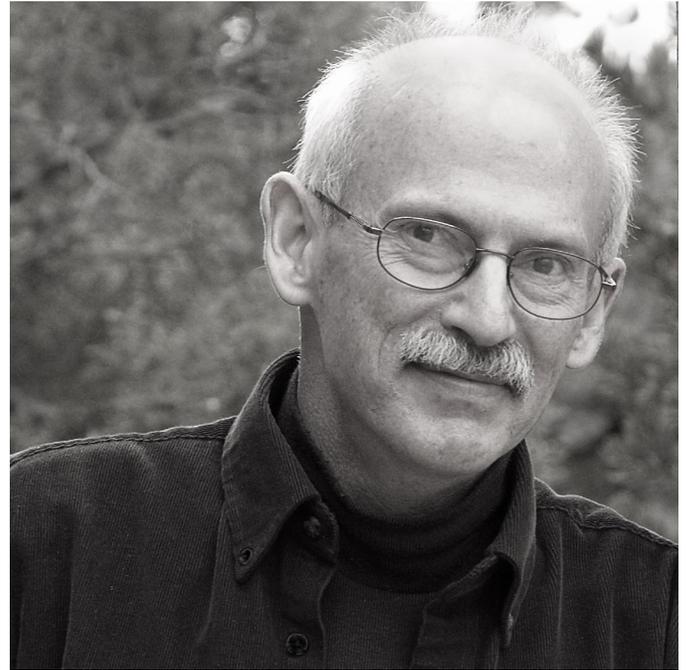
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Spring Banquet

What can we do about the forces that threaten to destroy the open spaces we cherish? How do we participate in our communities—as good, engaged citizens of the North American landscape? We can learn much from Stephen Trimble’s stories rooted in his homeland in the American West. In a David-and-Goliath parable of how power and money too frequently have their way, a billionaire ski resort owner works relentlessly to acquire public land on a lovely mountain. Trimble explores the process that allows greed to prevail, from the back rooms of Washington to the grassroots passion of individual citizens. He goes beyond politics to look at consequences in communities steamrolled by development. And then—to his astonishment—the author becomes a land developer himself. A lifetime environmentalist, he confronts his own ambivalence and explores the ethics of ownership. In his newly adopted rural community, Trimble yearns to break the angry standoff between longtime villagers and the “wealthy, overeducated, spoiled-brat” newcomers—by searching for community dialogue, reciprocity, and common ground. In *Bargaining for Eden*, Trimble looks hard at the values that shape each of his characters, including himself—searching for historical context, for understanding of power politics, for the essence of America. It’s a fascinating, revealing journey that ends on a note of hope—a working credo for citizens and communities seeking to reinvent their relationship with the American landscape.



Stephen Trimble became intrigued with the story of Mount Ogden and its Olympic downhill ski race when he visited the little ski area above Ogden, Utah, from his home in nearby Salt Lake City in 1997 on assignment to photograph for a travel article. He asked, “What will it take to get a racer down the mountain when the 2002 Olympics come to Snowbasin?”

His inquiry into the complicated answer led to this book—and deep into a web of stories that reveals the nature of our relationship with landscape. He learned that people reveled in the idea of the Olympics and that they loved this mountain, but they hated to see it developed so intensely, and despaired over losing its public land to private ownership—all to serve the desires of the reclusive and eccentric billionaire owner of Snowbasin, Earl Holding.



In the middle of following the many strands of this story, the author and his wife fell in love with their own “Eden” in southern Utah. A lifelong environmentalist, Trimble became a landowner and developer, too; he “became Earl,” on a tiny scale. In *Bargaining for Eden*, he confronts the devil’s bargains he has struck. As a citizen of the rural New West, he strives to engage his community in a positive way, to work toward a progressive future for the last open spaces in these lands we all love.

Photos by Stephen Trimble *

Audubon Calendar

April 2010

1 **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.

15 **Bridgerland Audubon Society Annual Banquet:** Please see the announcement on page 2 for further information regarding the banquet and the keynote speaker!

16-17 **Dubois Grouse Days:** Dubois, Idaho is celebrating their 8th annual Grouse Days. This two day event is packed with activities and field trips. Please see the advertisement on page 5 of this Stilt for further information and registration instructions.

24 **9th Annual Birdie Day:** We have been graciously invited by our great rancher friends, the Selmans, to visit their property in extreme southern Cache Valley and observe Sharp-tailed Grouse doing their courting ritual. Following the grouse viewing, the Selmans will provide us with a wonderful ranchers' breakfast. Past participants on this trip have given it rave reviews and we are very grateful to the Selmans for affording us this opportunity. In addition to viewing the birds, it is an opportunity to see how truly responsible stewards of the land (the Selmans) carry out their ranching operations in a way that makes the land more and more productive and beautiful for both man and wildlife. This trip is suitable for both novice and experienced birders. Meet at 5 a.m. at the McDonalds parking lot in Hyrum. Carpooling will be available and mandatory from there. We plan to be back about 1 p.m. Please let Val Grant know in advance if you plan to attend (435) 752-7572.



4th Annual Sunflower Seed Sale Discontinued

Due to the high demand and superb assistance from BAS members and friends, we are pleased to announce that we have completely sold out of black-oil sunflower seed! You have discovered the high quality seed and chosen to support the local growers like never before. Allen Christensen, the brave sole in charge of the annual sale, said that we have never sold out of seed before. Thank you for your help and we'll have more seed in the late Fall.

Local Bird Spotlight

Lesser Goldfinch

By Ryan P. O'Donnell

Climate change is not just a possibility for the future; it is happening here and now, and its effects can be seen in the shifting ranges of birds. A recent report from the Audubon Society showed that winter ranges of North American birds have shifted north by an average of 35 miles over the last 40 years. The report analyzed changes in bird distributions as measured by the Christmas Bird Count, and included 305 species from across the continent.

Although the Audubon report did not specifically mention the species, Lesser Goldfinches (*Spinus psaltria*, formerly *Cardeulis psaltria*) seem to also be shifting northward, and have apparently recently arrived in Cache Valley from further south. Only time will tell whether this is a long-term shift in population distribution, or just a temporary change in range. Lesser Goldfinches were first recorded on the Logan Christmas Bird Count in 2008. The earliest observation in the county for any year in eBird (www.ebird.org) is from August of 2006, although the county is poorly represented in older years and so earlier sightings may not have been reported. Regardless of the exact date of their arrival, Lesser Goldfinches are a relatively recent arrival to the county, particularly in winter, and it is expected that they will become increasingly common here. Similar recent expansions of their wintering range have been reported from northern Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Texas.

Lesser Goldfinches are small seed-eating finches. Little is known about their behavior and ecology, and much is assumed to be similar to their close relative, the American Goldfinch. Lesser Goldfinches primarily feed on seeds, buds, and fruits, but insects constitute about 2% of their diet.

Although they do not match the abilities of some of the more well-known mimics, Lesser Goldfinches include imitations of other species in their song. The species they imitate are usually species which also occur locally, but otherwise nothing is known about geographic variation in their song. Pairs are thought to be monogamous, but no genetic studies or studies of individually-



marked birds have been conducted to confirm this. Males attend females while they construct the nest, but do not contribute much to the building. Females lay about 4-5 eggs, each a day apart, and the eggs hatch about 12-13 days after they are laid. The male feeds the female while she incubates the eggs and broods the young nestlings. A few days after hatching, the female will leave the nestlings and help the male gather food for the young, which consists mostly of partially-digested seeds. Little is known about the behavior of fledglings after they leave the nest.

It is possible that Lesser Goldfinches may be overlooked in Cache County, and they may have gone unreported in the past. Lesser Goldfinches look very similar to the closely related, and more common, American Goldfinch. Most Lessers have a white patch at the base of the primaries, which can aid identification, especially in flight. Lessers have yellow undertail coverts, while Americans have white undertail coverts. Lessers have a bill that is slightly less pointy and generally darker than that of Americans. As their name implies, Lesser Goldfinches are also smaller than Americans, although this is only obvious in side-by-side comparison. Males in breeding plumage are further distinguished by a more extensive black cap and greener back than that of male American Goldfinches.

Lesser Goldfinches range as far south as Peru, and we are at the northern edge of their range in Utah. Further west, they usually range to about the Columbia River between Oregon and Washington. Further east, they are rarely seen as far north as Oklahoma. They do not generally occur on the east coast north of Texas. In most of their range they do not migrate, which may explain why wintering birds showed up in Cache County shortly after summering birds. In Texas and further south, males look different from the males we usually see here in that they have black, not green, backs. These black-backed subspecies also differ from the green-backed form in molt and breeding timing, and may one day prove to be a separate species, although intergradation between the two forms may be too extensive to justify splitting.

Although the 2009 assessment by the International Union for Conservation of Nature determined that Lesser Goldfinches were declining in numbers, they classified the species as “Least Concern” because of its extensive range. They can take advantage of the foods provided by human-modified habitats such as gardens and some agriculture, and so modest habitat conversion does not appear to be a threat to the species. Lesser Goldfinches were once introduced into Cuba but have since been extirpated from there.

Lesser Goldfinches can be found around Cache County in a variety of habitats, and have been recorded



from Avon, Hyrum, Logan Canyon, and especially the city of Logan.

The best place to find this species in the Cache Valley area may be at feeders, and they are particularly fond of thistle seed, but I have also seen the species away from feeders along the Canal Trail and at Rendezvous Park, both in Logan. If you study those goldfinches carefully, you just might find this unique new neighbor at your feeders or your other favorite birding locations!

Photos by Ryan O'Donnell

Save the Dates

Stokes Nature Center will be hosting a morning of spring hiking and beginning bird watching on Saturday, May 29. Our guide will be local expert and author of Backyard Birds of Utah, Bill Fenimore, who will also be available for a book signing after the outing. We will begin our day at Stokes Nature Center at 9:00am and plan to wrap things up around 11:00am. Whether you are just getting started as a birder or would simply enjoy the chance to share an outing with fellow bird enthusiasts, please



join us, all are welcome! The program fee is \$3 (\$2.50 for SNC members). If you'd like to join us, please sign up by Thursday, May 27th. Call 435-755-3239 or visit the SNC website: www.logannature.org.

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Dubois Grouse Days (Fostering Partnerships for Grouse Conservation) is a conservation and educational experience to celebrate the shrub-steppe ecosystem and the distinctive animals which live there. This two-day event (April 16-17) features a banquet, arts and craft booths, kids activities, presentations by biologists and ranchers, and a raffle/silent auction. Also included are guided tours to grouse breeding grounds to view sage grouse courtship, plus a visit to The Nature Conservancy's Crooked Creek Ranch. Proceeds from the event support local conservation and education activities, including two college scholarships for a graduating senior or freshmen already attending a university. For more information, visit <http://www.grousebytes.org>.



12th Annual Great Salt Lake Bird Festival May 13-17, 2010

The 12th Annual Great Salt Lake Bird Festival announces that acclaimed author Terry Tempest Williams will be the Keynote Speaker on Saturday, May 15th. Registration for Great Salt Lake Bird Festival programs has begun. You can visit <http://www.greatsaltlakebirdfest.com/index.php> or call 801-451-3278 for more information.



Continued-from page 1

Earth to climate change.

- Hawaiian birds such as endangered species Puaiohi and 'Akiapōlā'au already face multiple threats and are increasingly challenged by mosquito-borne diseases and invasive species as climate change alters their native habitats.
- Birds in coastal, arctic/alpine, and grassland habitats, as well as those on Caribbean and other Pacific Islands show intermediate levels of vulnerability; most birds in aridlands, wetlands, and forests show relatively low vulnerability to climate change.
- For bird species that are already of conservation concern such as the golden-cheeked warbler, whooping crane, and spectacled eider, the added vulnerability to climate change may hasten declines or prevent recovery.
- The report identified common bird species such as the American oystercatcher, common nighthawk, and northern pintail that are likely to become species of conservation concern as a result of climate change.



Photo by Elena Babij

“Birds are excellent indicators of the health of our environment, and right now they are telling us an important story about climate change,” said Dr. Kenneth Rosenberg, director of Conservation Science at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. “Many species of conservation concern will face heightened threats, giving us an increased sense of urgency to protect and conserve vital bird habitat.”

“All of the effective bird conservation efforts already taking place to protect rare species, conserve habitats, and remove threats need to be continued,” said David Mehlman of The Nature Conservancy. “Additionally, they need to be greatly expanded to meet the threat climate change poses to bird populations.”

“The dangers to these birds reflect risks to everything we value: our health, our finances, our quality of life and the stability of our natural world,” said Audubon’s Glenn Olson. “But if we can help the birds weather a changing climate, we can help ourselves.”

“While there is much to be concerned about in this report, we can reduce the impact of climate change by taking immediate action to reduce carbon emissions and find creative conservation solutions to help birds adapt to the changes that are already in process.” said David Pashley, vice president of the American Bird Conservancy.

The report offers solutions that illustrate how, by working together, organizations and individuals can have a demonstrable positive impact on birds in the U.S. Specifically, the report indicates that the way lands are managed can mitigate climate change and help birds adapt to changing conditions. For example, conserving carbon-rich forests and wetlands, and creating incentives to avoid deforestation can reduce emissions and provide invaluable wildlife habitat.

The report is the product of a collaborative effort as part of the U.S. North American Bird Conservation Initiative, between federal and state wildlife agencies, and scientific and conservation organizations including partners from American Bird Conservancy, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Klamath Bird Observatory, National Audubon Society, The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, U.S.D.A. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Geological Survey.



Welcome to BAS

New Members

Debora A. Huggins
Marjorie Simard
Karen Smith

Renewing Members

Gordon W. Allman Keith L. Dixon Kris Ricks
M.J. Culbertson Rebecca S. Echols Jim Sinclair
Molly and Brian Gee

Bridgerland Audubon contacts

Trustees

2007-2010 Chris Cokinos, 245-7769; Jack Greene, 563-6816; Reinhard Jockel; Ryan O'Donnell, 232-8146
2008-2011 Jim Cane, 713-4668; William Masslich, 753-1759; Richard Mueller, 752-5637; Brandon Spencer, 753-2790
2009-2012 Ron Goede, 752-9650; Frank Howe, 787-1859 Robert Schmidt, 755-9262; Bret Selman, 257-5260

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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 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 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: COZW520Z

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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Email: birdnerdut@gmail.com

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Ballot

BAS 2010 Election of Board Members

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

Vote for Four:

- Chris Cokinos
- Jack Greene
- Reinhard Jockel
- Ryan O'Donnell
- _____

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 in April. All ballots must be received by April 15, 2010.

