



The Stilt

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Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

Climate Change 'Makes Birds Shrink' in North America

Songbirds in the US are getting smaller, and climate change is suspected as the cause. A study of almost half a million birds, belonging to over 100 species, shows that many are gradually becoming lighter and growing shorter wings.

This shrinkage has just half a century, thought to be evolutionary smaller size in re-warmer temperatures there is little evidence that the change is harmful to the birds. The discovery is published in the journal *Oikos*.

In biology, there is a thumb that animals smaller in warmer climates idea known as Bergmann's Rule. Usually, this trend



R. MULVIHILL / POWDERMILL AVIAN RESEARCH CENTER

among animal species that live over a range of latitude or altitude, with individuals living at more northern latitudes or higher up cooler mountains being slightly larger than those below, for example.

Quite why this happens is not clear, but it prompted one group of scientists to ask the question: would animals respond in the same way to climate change?

To find out, Dr Josh Van Buskirk of the University of Zurich, Switzerland and colleagues Mr Robert Mulvihill and Mr Robert Leberman of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, US decided to evaluate the sizes of hundreds of thousands of birds that pass through the Carnegie Museum's Powdermill ringing station, also in Pennsylvania. They examined the records of 486,000 individual birds that had been caught and measured at the ringing station from 1961 to 2007.

These birds belonged to 102 species, arriving over different seasons. Each was weighed. It also had the length of its wings measured, recorded as wing chord length, or the distance between the bird's wrist to the tip of the longest primary feather. Their sample included local resident bird species, overwintering species, and even long distance migrants arriving from the Neotropics.

What they found was striking. Of 83 species caught during spring migration, 60 have become smaller over the 46 year study period, weighing less and having shorter wings. Of the 75 species migrating in autumn, 66 have become smaller. In summer, 51 of 65 breeding species have similarly reduced in size, as have 20 out of

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Spring Banquet Review

The annual Bridgerland Audubon Society's Spring Banquet was held on Thursday, April 15th. There were approximately 90 people in attendance. A good time and good food was had by all. We would like to thank the Copper Mill Restaurant for the venue and Caffe Ibis for the coffee. A special thanks goes out to Stephen Trimble, this year's keynote speaker.

Holly Strand is this year's recipient of the Carl Johnson Educator of the Year Award from Bridgerland Audubon Society. Holly arrived in Logan in 2005 and in September of 2007 was hired as the director of Stokes Nature Center. She brought with her a Master's degree from the University of Colorado and ten years' experience with World Wildlife Fund as a technical adviser to their overseas offices. Her key role at Stokes Nature Center is to secure the financial resources necessary to fulfill its mission and to help the Center expand to meet the growing need for field science education and experiential learning in our schools and community. Her successful fund-raising has put the Center on a firm financial footing and builds toward the hope of new quarters at Second Dam near the hydropower plant on the Logan River. Such a facility will provide better, safer access for the community and school programs provided by Stokes Nature Center. Holly is also a partner with Bridgerland Audubon in writing and delivering half of the Wild About Utah segments on Utah public radio, which reaches some 40,000 listeners weekly throughout our region.

Jim Goodwin is this year's Alan Stokes Conservation Award recipient. He has lived in Logan since the summer of 2004. Prior to that, he lived for 33 years in San Rafael, CA, right across the Golden Gate Bridge from San Francisco in Marin County. San Rafael is where the national Bioneers Conference is held each year. "As such," he says, "I was quite familiar with the gathering before moving here. I have had the pleasure of meeting the founders of the Bioneers Conference, that will celebrate its 21st conference this year, on several occasions." In California, he sold solar power equipment, among other jobs.

Jim is the Senior Program Officer for the Western Rural Development Center at Utah State University. He joined WRDC in January of 2005. In 2005 and 2006, Jim organized Listening Sessions across the west supporting the National Coalition for Rural Entrepreneurism initiative. In Logan, as in Northern California for over 30 years, Jim works on sustainable environment, economy and social equity issues with the Utah Bioneers Conference, the Utah State University Sustainability Council, the Cache 2020+ Vision Committee, the Cache Land Trust Alliance and the Benchmark Summit. He graduated from Drake University in Des Moines, IA. He was a captain in the USAF. Jim is married and has three grown children living in California.

Bridgerland Audubon is honoring him for his leadership in bringing Bioneers to Utah, as well as his other efforts to work toward a more sustainable future.

When Jim attended his first Bioneers or two, he decided he liked their three Es approach to suitability, that is to make this beautiful blue marble we call home a much better place, a sustainable place, the Three Es of Sustainability would have to be equally studied and supported. We must have a sustainable Environment, a sustainable Economy and sustainable social Equity.

"I know of no other conference that does such a good job of presenting the importance of each of those Es and how we must weave all Three Es into our decisions when trying to make this county, state, nation, world a better place for living creatures," Jim says.

The USU and Cache Valley community is lucky to have Jim Goodwin working so hard to make our planet a better place.

Audubon Calendar

May 2010

- 6 Board of Trustees Meeting:** BAS Trustees meet at 7:00 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.
- 8 Amalga Barrens:** We will meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot between Caffe Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 East 150 North) and return around 1:00 p.m. We will mainly be focused on shore birds. However, we will be on the lookout for Short-eared Owl, Sandhill Crane, and Peregrine Falcon. At the end of the trip, we will probably take a side trip to Newton Reservoir for loons and osprey.
- 13 General Meeting; Stokes Nature Center:** Join us at the future Stokes Nature Center as Holly Strand gives a guided tour of the projected facilities. Meet at 6:30 p.m. at the parking lot just East of the power plant at 2nd Dam. All are welcome to attend and refreshments will be provided by Crumb Brothers and Caffe Ibis. We hope to see you there!
- 22 Birding Green Canyon:** We will meet at 7:30 a.m. in the parking lot between Caffe Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 East 150 North) and return around 1:00 p.m. We will stop several places and listen for the songs of Black-throated Gray Warblers, Canyon Wrens, Plumbeous Vireo, Hermit Thrush and others. Be prepared for the weather. Bring something to eat and plenty to drink.
- 29 Stokes Nature and Bird Walk:** Stokes Nature Center will be hosting a day of spring hiking and beginning bird watching! 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). Call 435-755-3239 or visit the SNC website www.logannature.org for more information.

BRB Fundraising Campaign in May

The Bear River Bottoms conservation easement on 500 acres of bottomlands was signed in April 2009, but it took until late September to clear up confusion over access rights so we could get started.

We've come a long way in the last six months, however, with volunteer help and supportive organizations. The latter include a \$25,000 grant from the NRCS for wildlife improvements, another \$6,000 grant from the USFWS for boundary fencing, and we're currently ranked first in Utah for a capacity-building grant from the Intermountain West Joint Venture for \$15,000, matched by another \$19,000 in local funds from BAS and the former BOC. These monies will help us treat

weeds, plant native shrubs and trees, and clean up interior fencing to prevent snagging wildlife. We're also working to establish a local land trust. These efforts will take more cash, and here's where you come in. In May, we're launching a new fundraising effort – Teams of Ten – to secure another \$20,000 for the Bear River Bottoms. We're looking for 10 people each to donate \$1,000, \$500, \$250, \$150, \$75, and \$25. Watch for a flier in the mail, or send your check right now to Teams of Ten for the Bear River Bottoms, Bridgerland Audubon Society, POB 3501, Logan, UT 84323-3501. For more information on our progress to date or plans for the future, please contact Bryan Dixon, BRB Manager, bdixon@xmission.com, 435-760-0691.

Results from the 2010 Great Backyard Bird Count

Count records more than 600 bird species across the continent

The 13th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) results are in and it was a record-breaking year for participation. During the four-day event in February, more than 97,200 bird checklists were submitted by an estimated 63,000 volunteer bird watchers from across the United States and Canada. From reports of rare species to large-scale tracking of bird movements, the GBBC provides insight into the lives of bird populations.

The GBBC is a joint project of the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology with Canadian partner Bird Studies Canada. It is open to bird watchers of all ages. The results provided a snapshot of the whereabouts of more than 600 bird species. “There’s simply no better way to collect information about all these birds so quickly across such a large range,” said Janis Dickinson, Citizen Science director at the Cornell Lab.

For example, this year, participants recorded more American Robins than any other bird species—primarily because of a massive roost in St. Petersburg, Florida. Participants reported 1,450,058 robins in Saint Petersburg alone. For perspective, the entire rest of the continent tallied 400,321 robins. Reports such as these help document hotspots for robins and year-to-year changes in their movements across the continent.

At the other extreme, one of the most dramatic results from this year’s count was the absence of

other bird species, including winter finches such as Pine Siskins and redpolls. Pine Siskins moved south in such great numbers last year that they burst onto the GBBC Top-10 list of most numerous birds for the first time ever. Over time, the GBBC has captured dramatic swings in the numbers of these species reported from year to year. These fluctuations may be influenced by the birds’ food supply and reproductive success far to the north. This year, they presumably didn’t need to travel as far south to find enough food.

Results from this year’s GBBC also documented the continuing expansion of an introduced species across the continent. A dozen years ago, the Eurasian Collared-Dove was reported in 9 states during the GBBC. This year more than 14,000 doves were reported in 39 states and provinces.

Tree Swallows showed dramatic increases in numbers reported compared to years past. Although the number of states reporting the species was down from 25 in 2009 to 20 this year, the number of individuals reported increased nearly four-fold, from 22,431 to 84,585. Whether this is a result of warmer temperatures and earlier migration is not yet clear.

“The new and the unusual are always a thrill during the GBBC,” said Robert Petty, Western Director of Field Support at Audubon’s Education and Centers. “Notable sightings this year included a Crimson-collared Grosbeak in McAllen, Texas—the first time the species has

been reported during the count since 2005.” Birders off the coast of San Diego were treated to a Red-billed Tropicbird—the first verified sighting of this species for the Great Backyard Bird Count. Highlights from Canada included a Rustic Bunting seen in Creighton, Saskatchewan. In Marathon, Ontario, a Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch was a spectacular sighting because it was far outside its normal range in the Rocky Mountains.

“GBBC data become more and more valuable with each passing year,” said Dick Cannings, program director for Bird Studies Canada. “Over time we’ll be better able to see significant changes that may occur in the numbers and distributions of birds which may be tied to climate change, habitat loss, disease, or other factors.”

The next Great Backyard Bird Count is February 18-21, 2011.

To view the complete summary of the 2010 GBBC, go to <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/science-stories/2010-results/>

Top 10 birds reported on the most checklists in the 2010 GBBC:

- 1) Northern Cardinal
- 2) Dark-eyed Junco
- 3) Mourning Dove
- 4) Downy Woodpecker
- 5) Blue Jay
- 6) American Goldfinch
- 7) Tufted Titmouse
- 8) House Finch
- 9) American Crow
- 10) Black-capped Chickadee

White-faced Ibis Counts Rescheduled

Cutler Reservoir is already been designated as an Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society because of its importance for waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors, song birds, and others. However, it's more than that. It's an important bird area of Global Significance because it shelters over five percent of the continent's white-faced ibis in a single rookery.

Designation as an IBA does not impose restrictions on a property owner, in this case PacifiCorp, a seven-state power company. It does promote awareness—awareness by the property owner, by citizens, and by public and private groups whose missions are to protect wildlife and wildlife habitat. It helps to remind recreational users, whether hikers or boaters, whether motorized or human-powered, that animals need their

space. They rely on these lands and waters for food, shelter, and breeding and nesting opportunities. Our own species is spreading fast, taking over critical lands from these traditional users, and we should be careful about our impacts. The awareness associated with designation as an IBA of Global Significance can bring attention, funding, and special consideration from development interests.

We're close to this official designation, but we need one more year of data. Here's where you come in. Rookery counts will take place on the evenings of Wednesday, May 5, Saturday, May 22, Wednesday, June 2, and again on Saturday, June 19. It takes 3-4 people starting around 6:30 or 7:00 until after dark. If you can help on one or more of these counts, contact Bryan Dixon, 752-6830, or bdixon@xmission.com.



Carry a Tune with Digital Warbler Songs

Sounds from Cornell Lab of Ornithology play on any MP3 device

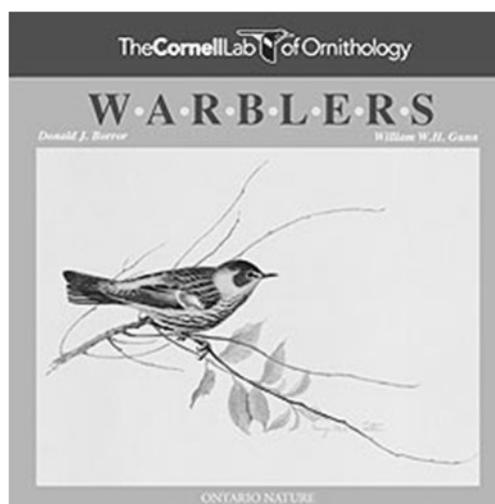
A compilation of 310 songs and calls for 57 species of warblers is now available from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Macaulay Library—

the largest archive of wildlife sounds in the world. Originally released in 1985 as an LP record, *Songs of the Warblers of North America* is the most comprehensive audio guide to warblers available anywhere. The newly digitized version can be used on any device that plays MP3 files and is \$14.99 at www.macaulaylibrary.org.

"We received numerous requests for this digital release," said Macaulay Library audio curator Greg Budney. "Knowing the songs of warblers really enhances people's ability to find and identify dozens of stunning warbler species."

Multiple sounds for each species showcase the variability in warbler vocalizations, enabling listeners to recognize the essential qualities of each species' song

while also appreciating the variability within and among species. Selected examples are available for listening at www.macaulaylibrary.org.



The MP3 files are accompanied by photos of each warbler for those who download the material to a device that can show images. A PDF copy of the booklet that accompanied the original album provides information on the location and date for each recording and is included in the download. This guide to warbler songs and calls is a col-

laboration of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the Borror Laboratory of Bioacoustics, and Ontario Nature.

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26 wintering species.

The differences in size are not big. "On average, the decline in mass of spring migrants over the 46 year study was just 1.3%," says Dr Buskirk. "For a 10g warbler, that's a loss of just 130mg."

But some species are losing more weight. For example, the rose-breasted grosbeak has declined in mass by about 4%, while the Kentucky warbler has dropped 3.3% in weight and the scarlet tanager 2.3%. The trend is particularly noticeable among those birds that winter in the New World tropics of the Caribbean, Central America and South America. "The headline finding is that the body sizes of many species of North American birds, mostly songbirds, are gradually becoming smaller," says Dr Buskirk.

However, their populations are not dwindling. "So many of these species are apparently doing just fine, but the individual birds are becoming gradually smaller nonetheless," says Dr Buskirk.

That suggests that bird species in North America are obeying Berman's rule, by evolving into a smaller size as temperatures increase. Though this change appears quick, it has taken place over at least 20 generations of birds. "There are plenty examples of rapid contemporary evolution over much shorter time periods," says Dr Buskirk.

Whether the trend will cause the birds any long-term consequences is unclear. "In one obvious sense, the consequences are positive," says Dr Buskirk. "That is, as temperatures become warmer, the optimal body size is becoming smaller."

However, even though the species appear to be adapting to the new climatic conditions, it could still be that their average "fitness" in evolutionary terms, is going down.

— by Matt Walker
Editor, Earth News

Be a Part of the BPP

The North American Bird Phenology Program houses a unique and largely forgotten collection of six million Migration Observer Cards that illuminate migration patterns and population status of birds in North America. These handwritten cards contain almost all of what was known of bird status from the Second World War back to the later part of the 19th century. The bulk of the records are the result of a network of observers who recorded migration arrival dates in the spring and fall that, in its heyday, involved 3000 participants.

Today, those records are being processed and placed into a modern database for analysis. This information will be used, along with recently collected arrival times of migrant birds, in conjunction with historical weather data to show how migration is affected by climate change. The information from this analysis will provide critical information on bird distribution, migration timing and migration pathways and how they are changing. There is no other program that has the depth of information that can help us understand the effect that global climate change has on bird populations across North America.

Migration cards are currently being scanned and becoming available on the NABPP website at <http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bpp/>

You can become one of the many many volunteers from around the country to sign into their site and convert these files into their database, working at whatever pace you chose. This will allow the migration records to become accessible for analysis and comparison with modern seasonal schedules of birds (such as migration and nesting).

To become part of or find out more information about the North American Bird Phenology Program, please visit the their website at <http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bpp/>

Welcome to BAS

New Members

Lucille Clark Mary J. McWhorter
 John Ellsworth Albert Pakradounian
 Susan Gibson Darwin Wolfley

Renewing Members

Martha H. Balph Star Coulbrooke Rosalie Mueggler
 Beth Booton Joanne Hughes Craig Reger
 Janice Bowen Ronald W. Goede Earl Sullivan
 Fred C. Brasfield Theodore J. Kindred Von Taylor

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

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Econet Returns

Join the Econet! Learn about upcoming events and environmental issues in northern Utah. We hide recipients' email addresses, send simple text emails (to avoid spreading viruses), and solicit notices from our readers. Although started by BAS members in the 1990s, this is not a BAS official email distribution list because the Board isn't always able to approve the messages due to short time constraints.

For those who were on the list before, please sign up again because we lost the list in a hard drive failure. Send this invitation to friends and associates whom you think might be interested. This is an "opt-in" list, so you have to request to join (no one refused!). It's easy; just send an email to bdixon@xmission.com.