



The Stilt

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Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

Cache County may Condemn Private Ranchland along Davenport Creek for Road to New Development Hearing April 10th

While Utah's Legislature leads the nation in fighting for private property rights (including trying to condemn tens of millions of acres of federal land), usurping these rights will soon occur by the Cache County Council if they vote for condemnation of private land at the south end of Cache Valley. The County Council has set a public hearing to take place at 5:30 p.m. on April 10th in the Cache County Chambers to take the land by eminent domain.

The property, owned by Gary and Kay Samples and their family, is Four Mile Ranch, located south of Avon. The Samples are 4th generation ranchers.

The land will be condemned to put in a public road. The road could destroy the operation of the Four Mile property as a viable ranch. Because of public traffic, trespassing of campers and hunters, and liability risks, the road would have to be fenced. However, the County has clearly stated they will not fence the road.

This issue began when trespassing allegedly occurred by two individuals on the Samples' property. The Samples were attempting to keep these individuals from continuing to cross their ranch, damage fences, leave gates open and disregard their private property rights. A lawsuit which ensued from this alleged trespass is working its way through the courts to determine if the area in question is a public road.

After a lawsuit was initiated between two private parties, the County asked to intervene, and now intends to condemn, or "take," the land. If the County condemns, a judge or jury will determine the amount owed, including the value of the land, destruction of the ranching business, loss of hunting revenue, etc.

In addition, if condemnation occurs, the public will be paying for a road to access private property, at the expense of the public wildlife resources. The [private] property is being developed by Blue Bell Realty Company as "La Plata Ranch" to include a lodge, ski lifts to connect to Powder Mountain, and many home sites. For a map, see: www.bluebellrealty.net/props/laplata/download/laplataranch.pdf. This area is natural habitat for Bonneville cutthroat trout (Davenport Stream, which will be impacted if the condemnation occurs, has never been stocked), Sharp-tailed Grouse and Greater Sage-grouse. In 2010, the US Fish and Wildlife Service designated the Greater Sage-grouse as "warranted but precluded" for listing under the Endangered Species Act, meaning it would have been listed if the USFWS had the resources to complete the process.

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Education Committee's 3-5 year goals:

[Editor's note: Each of the new Bridgerland Audubon Society (BAS) committees is articulating their goals and objectives. The first to report out is the Education Committee.]

1. Expand education committee by inviting participants and collaboration from USU College of Education, College of Natural Resources (CNR), College of Agriculture, etc., also utilizing AmeriCorps interns, teacher interns, etc.
2. Teacher contact(s) in each valley school.
3. Continue/develop collaboration/partnerships with Stokes Nature Center (SNC), Cache Valley No Child Left Inside, Youth Discovery Inc., Cache Valley Green Schools, Utah State University (USU) Departments of Environment and Society, Wildlands, Watershed, Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning, Utah Conservation Corps, LDS Earth Stewardship, Hardware Ranch, Western Heritage Center, Pheasants Forever, etc.
4. Establish junior BAS/SNC sponsored nature clubs in interested schools.
5. Establish Project Feederwatch in all Valley schools.
6. Establish Shorebird Sisters program in at least half of Valley schools.
7. Promote and provide resources for kid friendly/wildlife friendly landscaping for schools and families by partnering with LAEP, nurseries, landscape businesses, etc.
8. Create adoption/citizen science/service learning partnerships for monitoring/restoration work for Bear River Bottoms, BAS Clay Slough, Bear River Watershed Council, etc. for secondary schools & USU CNR clubs.
9. Expand adult education. including more "education" in our field trips to having bird identification workshops and birding tool workshops (like the iBird workshop last year), "family" workshops where we educate both adults and the kids, "Senior Citizen" classes, summer citizen trips and workshops, or even Senior Center Feederwatch.

- Jack Greene and Ron Hellstern

Local Feederwatch Program Up and Running

Our new "committee" system of governance has spawned some innovative projects which we hope will have positive impacts for our communities and the environment. The Education Committee is well aware of the current disconnect between today's young people and the outdoors. To address that dilemma, it was proposed that a citizen science activity be provided for at least one teacher in each of Cache Valley's elementary schools. Cornell's Project Feederwatch (PFW) was a perfect fit, considering Audubon's affinity for birds.

A serious concern was how to obtain funding for such an undertaking. This is when a new collaborative effort among Cache Valley's diverse outdoor organizations stepped up to realize this endeavor. Along with a donation from Bridgerland Audubon Society, a major grant was made by Pheasants Forever, with other contributions from LDS Earth Stewardship, No Child Left Inside, and local Parent Teacher Association organizations from the schools.

Once the budget was in place, a bird feeder, seed, and binoculars were given to 25 schools, including some middle and high schools. The first ten schools to enroll were also able to receive Cornell's PFW packet which illustrated bird species and how to report observations online directly to ornithologists in their New York lab. All 25 schools will receive those same materials for the 2012-13 school year.

Teachers have the initial responsibility to assist students in collecting and reporting data online, such as the species observed and population counts, at least twice per week. But Cache Valley teachers are creative and have used this opportunity to integrate this project across many curriculum topics. Activities include: drawing and coloring unique field

markings of the species observed around their schools; making flash-cards to aid in learning the top ten species likely to visit their feeders; using various graphing techniques to record data; establishing math baselines to compare this year's data to the next year; learning the songs of observed species; observing feeding behaviors; reading about historical bird studies; determining the most suitable habitat to locate the feeders; learning about massive population fluctuations such as in extinct Passenger Pigeons and abundant European Starlings; using diverse foods to determine the favorites of each species; and comparing their projects to those of neighboring schools.

Bridgerland Audubon Society is proud to be instrumental in uniting local organizations to provide an opportunity for Cache Valley youngsters to expand their academic learning by utilizing nature and the outdoors.

- Ron Hellstern

Get 'em Outside!

Several years ago, a group of citizens launched a new initiative called Cache Valley No Child Left Inside. Collaborating with the Stokes Nature Center, Bridgerland Audubon, and other outdoor programs, and creating their own "Family Nature Club," they continue to be strong advocates of getting kids unplugged from our virtual world of computer games and TV to come face to face with the real outdoor world.

It may seem strange that we need to teach folks about the virtues of getting kids out the door if your youth was similar to mine. Born and raised in the great north woods of Wisconsin and Michigan, the majority of my time when not in school was spent hunting, fishing, exploring the wilds, and working on the family farm. Forest and fields were a major part of our culture.

No TV until age 10, about the same time we got a telephone. So here we are in an alien world so far removed from what most of us "Boomers" experienced – over structured, estranged from nature, and fearful of strangers, snakes, spiders, bad air, and most everything else, it seems. Unknowingly, we have lost much of what it means to be children of the Sun, wind, rain, and the extraordinary delights and challenges lying beyond our human built environment.

In reality, strangers pose less threat today than they did 30 years ago, but listening to the evening news, (which has become little more than an evening crime report), our brains perceive it very differently. Further, most of us aren't aware of the overwhelming benefits gained from allowing our youngsters to play in natural settings. Numerous recent studies reveal a host of benefits including improved physical health, social adjustment, creativity, and even academic performance. See www.childandnaturenetwork.org for an excellent resource on this topic.

I must emphasize the importance of "unstructured play" in outdoor settings – the more natural the better – and providing frequent opportunities, several times a week, even in winter! Caution: During winter inversions, check www.brhd.org for air quality conditions. If we all decide to drive less and drive "clean", more winter days will have healthy air to enjoy!

For "how to," and if you're looking for "wild" spaces for kids to explore in the Logan metro area, our NCLI website has much to offer: www.cachevalleyncli.org. Other "must visit" sites include: www.bridgerlandaudubon.org, www.logannature.org, and www.youthdiscovery.org.

If you don't have any little dudes underfoot, consider volunteering as a "free range kid mentor" for a neighbor, relative, or Big Brothers, Big Sisters.

- Jack Greene



Audubon Calendar

April

14 **Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge**

Local bird expert Ryan O'Donnell will lead us on a field trip to the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge in Box Elder County. This is a great time of year to visit the refuge, when waterfowl migration is peaking and shorebird migration has begun. Meet at the parking lot in front of Caffe Ibis (50 East, 150 North, Logan) at 7:30 a.m. to carpool from there, and bring a lunch and a few dollars to help pay for gas.

28 **"Birdie Day" — Sharp-tailed Grouse Lek and Ranch Breakfast**

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 5:00 a.m. at the McDonald's parking lot in Hyrum. Carpooling will be available and mandatory from there. We plan to be back about 1:00 a.m.

May

5 & 6 **Allen Stokes Memorial Canoe Trips**

Join local expert naturalists Bryan Dixon, Andrea Liberatore, and Jack Greene on either one of these two dates for a canoe trip down the Bear River. We will start in Trenton and end in Amalga, watching birds and other wildlife along the way, including passing a Great Blue Heron rookery. Registration in advance required. Contact Bryan Dixon (752-6830 or bdixon@xmission.com) for details or to register. This is a joint trip with the Stokes Nature Center.

June

9 **Baby Cranes at Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge**

Grays Lake NWR is the largest hardstem bulrush marsh in North America. Located in a high mountain valley near Soda Springs in southeastern Idaho, the refuge and surrounding mountains offer incredible scenic vistas, wildflowers, and fall foliage displays. Grays Lake Refuge provides breeding habitat for over 200 species of mammals, birds, fish, and amphibians. The refuge hosts a large nesting population of greater sandhill cranes; as many as 1200 individuals are counted in the valley during migration and staging times. We will be visiting at the peak of Sandhill Crane nesting season and will be looking for the adorable young colts. The refuge is closed to public access this time of year, but great views can be had from the road, and we will also be birding in the adjacent National Forest. Most of us will camp in the Grays Lake area and return on Sunday morning, but a late return Saturday night is available for those who don't want to camp. Trip is limited to 15 people: reserve your spot by emailing Ryan.ODonnell@usu.edu by June 4th.

July

7 **Black Swift Expedition**

The Black Swift is a rare and unique species that nests only behind waterfalls in western North America. This species is high on the want list of many Utah birders, and is found in Utah only at Bridal Veil Falls and several nearby waterfalls in the Provo Canyon area. Join us as we seek out this unique species, and study the difference between this large swift and our more common White-throated Swift. Meet in the parking lot in front of Caffe Ibis (50 East, 150 North, Logan) at 7:30 a.m. to arrange carpools; bring money for gas and a lunch.

21 Butterflies of Cache County

"Beautiful flowers with wings" is a phrase frequently used to express the exquisite beauty of butterflies. Join expert naturalist Jack Greene (jackisgreene@yahoo.com or 563-6816), the Bridgerland Audubon Society, and the Stokes Nature Center for a fieldtrip to learn the secret lives of these amazing sparks of life. Place: Tony Grove meadows Date and time: meet at 9:00 a.m. in the Forest Service parking lot (1500 East Highway 89, Logan) to carpool. Bring binoculars and a lunch.

August

4 Cache County's Coral Reef

Explore an ancient seabed with local fossil expert Paul Jamison. Hiking north from Tony Grove, we will visit a 400 million year old coral reef in the Ordovician Fish Haven Formation, and trace it out to the White Pine Lake Overlook. This will involve about six miles of moderate difficulty hiking, including some off-trail, so wear sturdy shoes and bring a lunch and lots of water. Meet at the Forest Service parking lot at 8:00 a.m. (1500 East Highway 89, Logan).

September

8 Salmon Spawning

Come watch the annual spawning of Kokanee Salmon at Porcupine Reservoir. The bright red salmon are a beautiful sight here each fall, changing color just before the leaves do. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot in front of Caffe Ibis (50 East, 150 North, Logan). We'll be back in the early afternoon.

21-23 Elk Bugling in the Tetons

Jack Greene will organize and lead our field trip to witness the Elk Bugling in the scenic Teton Mountains. The car pool will leave at 3:00 p.m. Friday afternoon, September 23rd and return Sunday afternoon/evening, September 25th. Witness the Tetons in their best fall dress where rampaging large ungulates (elk, bison, moose) release their fall passion with grunts, bugling, and a nasty disposition. Fall migrating birds along with winter residents will add to the fun. Some participants choose to camp while others choose to stay in a hotel. You will need to provide your own meals. Expect anything from 40 to 80 degree weather; rain, snow, or sunshine. For more information, call Jack Greene at 563-6816.

Next Board Meeting

Date: Thursday, April 5

Time: Committees meet 6:30 p.m.; Full Board meets 7:00 p.m.

Where: Jim Bridger room (northeast corner) Logan Library

Agenda to include:

- Committee reports: Education, Conservation, Field Trips, Communications, Programs, Membership and Fundraising
- Carl Johnson Education Award recipient
- Allen Stokes Conservation Award recipient

All Bridgerland Audubon Society members are welcome to attend and participate.

Where did they go??

It's our 25th winter here in Smithfield Canyon. We've had amazing visitors during this quarter century – Green-tailed Towhees, White Breasted Nuthatches, Eastern Bluejays, Harris Sparrows, Varied Thrushes, and an occasional Belted Kingfisher (poor confused bird!). But something happened this year. Where did they go? By far our most barren, disappointing season. This has been the first winter we are lacking: woodpeckers, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Cassin's Finches, Pine Siskins, and Mountain Chickadees. Even the regulars – Black-capped Chickadees, House Finches, Dark-eyed Juncos, and American Goldfinches, are few in number. Throughout our valley, I hear the same story from others who have fed birds for many years.

It will be interesting to see what spring brings – we expect Black-headed Grosbeaks, Lazuli Buntings, Lesser Goldfinches, Western Tanagers, and Bullock's Orioles. They better be here, or I want my money back!

Here's my hypothesis on the dearth of birds. You may recall that last summer was very wet and cool well into July, which produced a bumper seed crop for most plant species utilized by birds. That was followed by an extremely weird winter – warm and dry other than a few big dumps. These combined to keep birds dispersed and independent of the extra boost provided by our protein-fat rich feeders. And robins are appearing far more frequently in our lower canyon, and doing a bit of singing – in January!

So, welcome climate change! We are on a new planet called Eearth, as Bill Mckibben titled his recent best seller. We can expect more frequent weird weather and thus subtle and not so subtle shifts in plant and animal response. The once predictable is no longer such, new regimes of seasonal phenomena, which can add major stress to the intricately timed behaviors life have forged to accommodate these assumed patterns.

These certainly aren't boring times we're now confronted with, but they are rather unsettling.

Jack Greene

A Turdus Invasion!

In my daily skiing deep into Smithfield Canyon I've taken note of the growing cacophony of epic flocks of *Turdus migratorius*, better known as the American Robin. It's quite a thrill to watch them, conveyor belt fashion, flow down steep slopes to splash in Summit Creek for their ritual daily bathing. As days lengthened, so did their volume and excitement, which reached such a pitch Sunday that I was pretty sure these huge winter flocks would be exploding with testosterone driven energy. And sure enough, yesterday once again my yard had become a battleground of territorial robins, loudly proclaiming their turf with mucho gusto!

The robin is North America's most commonly known and revered bird, and one I've come to adore for their spirited ways, their lovely song, and visibility as they bounce around our yard to capture worms and other creepy crawlers. A pair has nested just outside our kitchen window for the past two seasons, which delights my wife as she watches the procession of activity from nest building to fledglings while doing dishes. Their easily identified nests always include a bit of mud to bind the grasses together and their nests are near eye level making them visible to a grandchild perched on my shoulders.

American Robins are ubiquitous in North America. I've found them from Alaska to Florida, from our valley to the Mt. Naomi summit. Members of the thrush family, they share genes with bluebirds, Townsend Solitaires, and our common Hermit and Swainson's Thrush species.

My encounter with the European version of the robin was a pleasant surprise. Much smaller, it is a spritely, delicate beauty very similar to our wood warblers, packed with energy that bursts forth in a song reminiscent of the Pacific (alias Winter) Wren. It, too, has an orange breast, but shows more blue grey on the back. In a different family than our robin, it belongs to the Old World flycatchers.

A few months ago, I witnessed the spirited nature of *Turdus migratorius*. Skiing along Summit Creek deep in the Naomi Wilderness, my tranquility was interrupted by loud robin alarm chirps well above my position in a patch of Utah junipers. It occurred to me there might be a predator triggering this response, and I had a hunch as to which one it might be. Thus I began my own sharp whistle imitating the northern pygmy owl, a common diurnal owl that sets off much excitement among most songbirds, its common prey. Within seconds, the owl glided down slope alighting in a cottonwood within 50 feet of me. Riding its tail was a flock of a dozen robins giving it the business. Poor Pygmy Owl! So cute, but so deadly!

- Jack Greene

Leadership in Bridgerland Audubon Society

Calling Auduboners! For years now, Bridgerland Audubon Society has been operating with less than a full complement of officers. We all have busy lives and other obligations but, if BAS is to thrive, it needs leadership. Some people may be reluctant to volunteer thinking they don't have the background or experience. Nonsense, I say.

Leading a volunteer organization like BAS doesn't require that you be a crack birder, know all about every environmental issue, or have raised lots of money. It is about lending your ability to think and committing a little time to help organize events and activities. It requires only your willingness to join others who value nature to help improve our natural world. It is about keeping an open mind, making decisions based on data, and working with people who are certain to become friends. It is about giving back to the land, the air, and the water; about helping to ensure that wildlife receives some protection from the onslaught of humanity. BAS's goals are conservation, environmental education, and field trips. Field trips prompt folks to want to learn more. And, having learned more, people naturally want to help conserve what is left. We're an inquisitive lot, and BAS can feed that curiosity.

There's great joy in discovery, whether by participants or leaders. If you've ever thought about getting more involved in Bridgerland Audubon Society, now would be a good time. Contact any of the Board members to say "yes."

- Bryan Dixon

Davenport Creek (Continued from page 1)

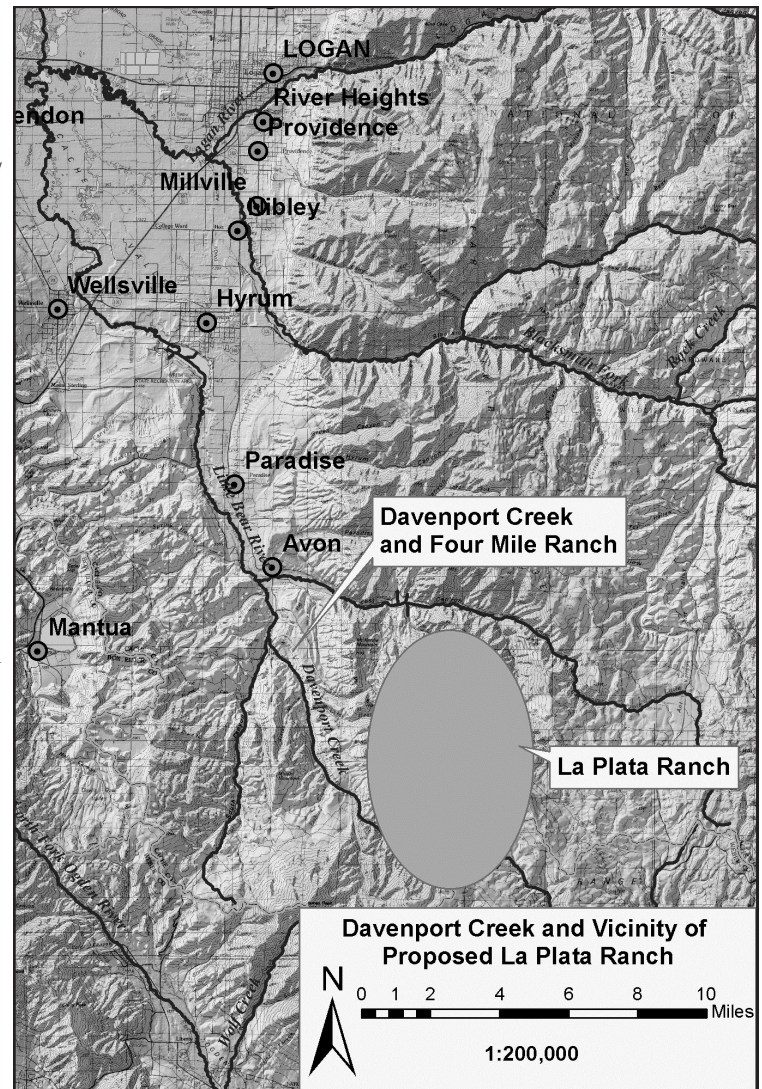
Please voice your concerns regarding the upcoming vote by contacting your County Council person (www.cachecounty.org/council), writing letters to the *Herald Journal* (and asking the *Herald Journal* to cover this issue!), and by attending the April 10th public meeting.

Various talking points may include:

- Condemnation is only allowed by our Constitution to protect public health, safety, and welfare. What is the compelling public interest in condemning this land?
- Are condemnation and the cost to the taxpayers and wildlife to benefit a few very large private landowners the best use of taxpayers' money?
- Why not let the existing lawsuit be settled before starting a second lawsuit to condemn if negotiations are not successful? If the County wins the lawsuit, it will need to condemn nothing.
- There already exists a public road that allows access to the properties. It is the Flint Grove Road. However, a gate on the Flint Grove Road (a public road since 1928) is locked and remains locked despite a 1982 Court decision which prohibits locks from being placed on the gates. Why not spend scarce County resources and protect wildlife by first opening and then improving that road instead of condemning private property?

For more information, contact ppetrzelka99@gmail.com.

- Peg Petrzelka



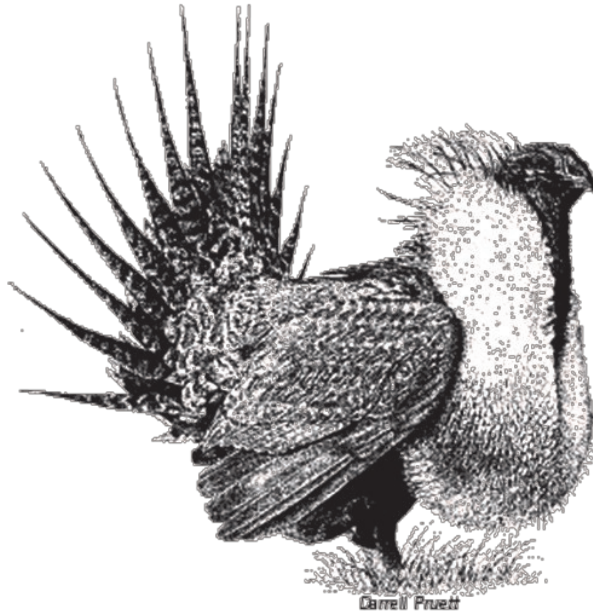
Bridgerland Audubon Society Annual Banquet

The Nexus of Sage-grouse and Public Land Grazing In the Western United States

– Rick Danvir, Deseret Land and Livestock Co.

Rick Danvir has been the Wildlife Manager for Deseret Land and Livestock for 29 years. Prior to that, he worked for the New York Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources and the Colorado Division of Wildlife. In Utah, he has worked for the Division of Wildlife Resources, served as a member of the Wildlife Board, and served as a board member of the Habitat Council and the Cooperative Wildlife Management Association. He currently is the President of the private nonprofit Foundation for Quality Resource Management. At Deseret, he has pioneered approaches that seek synergy, managing for both agriculture and wildlife, and achieving sustainability through practices that enable land to be economically self-supporting.

Where: Riverwoods, 615 Riverwoods Pkwy, Logan, UT 84321
When: Tuesday, April 24, 2012, 6:00 p.m.
Tickets: \$35, available from Caffé Ibis, 52 Federal Ave., Logan;
Fuhriman's Framing, 75 South Main, Logan; and
Sunrise Cyclery, 138 North 100 East, Logan
Or: contact any Board of Trustees member...
(Please purchase before April 20, if possible)



Artwork from Rowland, M. M. 2004. Effects of management practices on grassland birds: Greater Sage-Grouse. Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center, Jamestown, ND. Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center Online. <http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/literatr/grasbird/grsg/grsg.htm> (Version 12AUG2004).

Mission of Bridgerland Audubon Society

To conserve, enhance, and enjoy the natural environment
with special emphasis on birds and their habitats
for the benefit and education of humanity
and for the biological diversity of the Earth.

Bridgerland Audubon contacts

Trustees

- 2009-2012 Ron Goede, 752-9650; Frank Howe, 787-1859; Robert Schmidt, 755-9262; Bret Selman, 257-5260
- 2010-2013 Ron Hellstern 245-9186; Jack Greene, 563-6816; Reinhard Jockel; Ryan O'Donnell, 232-8146
- 2011-2014 Jim Cane, 713-4668; 753-1759; Richard Mueller, 752-5637; Mike Wolfe, 753-1513

Bridgerland Audubon Contacts

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Asst. Treasurer Susan Drown
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Webhosting Donated by Xmission

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 10th of each month. Send to bridgerlandaudubon@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 _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Please send all checks payable to National Audubon Society with this card to:



National Audubon Society
PO Box 422250
Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250
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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April is Election Time!

Bridgerland Audubon Society's bylaws call for election of up to four members to the Board of Trustees each April. Trustees serve three year terms. Members may vote at the annual banquet or by clipping and mailing the ballot below and sending it by mail to P.O. Box 3501, Logan, UT 84323-3501; to be received by April 24, 2012.

_____ Roslynn Brain

_____ Nat Frazer

_____ Frank Howe

_____ *(write in)*