



The Stilt

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February 2014

Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

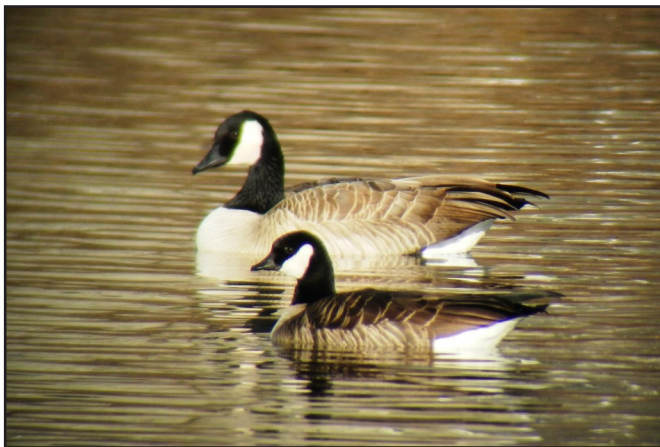
In this day of online information and networking, we invite you to join us on Facebook!

Take a look at the Bridgerland Audubon page on Facebook to see beautiful photographs of local birds and get better acquainted with your fellow birders @ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/BridgerlandAudubon>

Hardcopies of *The Stilt* will be published two or three times yearly in a 4-6 page format to save on paper. We invite you to read longer in-depth articles and more information on Bridgerland Audubon chapter activities and conservation efforts at our website: <http://www.bridgerlandaudubon.org>. Find recent local conservation news and updates by the Education Committee within.

March 8 field trip - Wild Goose Chase

Come learn how to tell the different subspecies of Canada goose. We may see Snow Geese, Ross's Geese, Greater White-fronted Geese, and both Trumpeter and Tundra Swans. Details are on **Page 2**.



Crackling Goose with Lesser Canada Goose
— photo by Ryan O' Donnell

BAS 2014 Annual Banquet

24 April 6 pm at Riverwoods Conference Center

Dr. Terry Messmer will speak on ecology and conservation of Greater Sage Grouse in Utah.

Look for forthcoming details on our website. Or contact Linda Kervin:
ljkervin@earthlink.net
435-713-4668 (phone)
435-770-9178 (text)

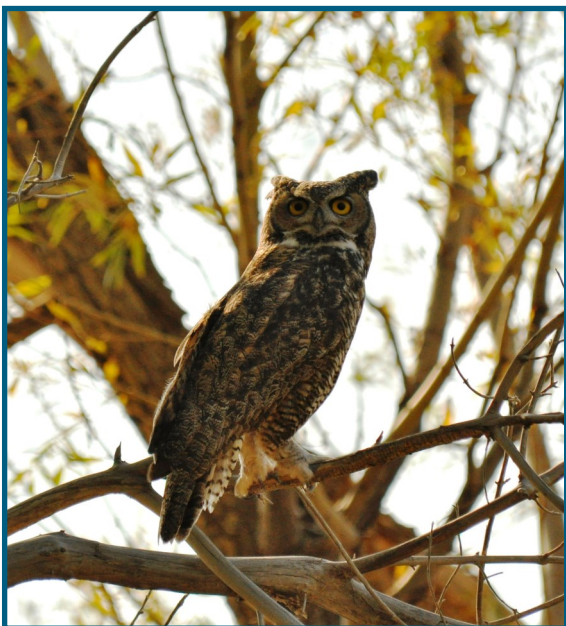
Next Board Meeting

Date: Thursday, March 6, 2014
Time: Full Board meets 7:00 p.m.
Where: Jim Bridger room (northeast corner) Logan Library

All Bridgerland Audubon Society members are welcome to attend and participate. Board meeting is held each month Sept.—May on the 1st Thursday. Email for agenda details: edwwadevans1@comcast.net

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Great horned owl—photo by Ryan O' Donnell

New GBBC Website and Instructional Video

February 14–17, 2014

As the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) approaches, we are excited to launch our re-designed website at <http://www.audubonaction.org/site/R?i=JG8BVx5wuN5jYY9yMWREcg>.

Explore the new site for useful tools like our [instructional video](#). This how-to presentation will teach you and members of your community about the eBird program, the GBBC's history, and the impact of the GBBC data. There is also a PowerPoint version with a script. Offering this presentation in your local area is the perfect way to introduce new people to birding and tell experienced birders about the logistics of the count.

Upcoming Field Trips

February 22nd

Owls of Cache County (Joint BAS w/ USU student chapter of The Wildlife Society activity)

Join BAS Field Trip Coordinator Ryan O'Donnell and expert birder Frank Howe as we look—and especially listen—for the owls of Cache County. We will hike up Green Canyon in the dark and broadcast calls occasionally to try to hear any of our local owl species, many of which should be starting to breed already this time of year. Bring boots and a light, and meet at the parking lot of the Natural Resources building on the USU campus at 6:00 PM. We'll carpool from there, and we will be back by about 10:00 PM.

March 8th

Wild Goose Chase

Even by early March, spring migration is already well under way for many species, especially the waterfowl. This trip will focus on migrating geese and swans: we'll spend some time learning the familiar species better, like learning about Canada Geese subspecies, and we'll especially be looking for the rarer large waterfowl that pass through our valley. Potential targets include Cackling Geese (a miniature form of the Canada Goose that was split out as its own species in 2004), Snow Geese, Ross's Geese, Greater White-fronted Geese, and both Trumpeter and Tundra Swans. Meet at 9:00 AM at the parking lot in front of Caffè Ibis (50 east, 150 north in Logan).

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Bridgerland Audubon Society's 2013

Logan CBC WRAP-UP

Bridgerland Audubon Society hosted its **58th Christmas Bird Count** on Saturday, December 14, 2013. A potluck dinner was held afterward at the Cache Valley Unitarian Universalists building (596 East 900 North, Logan) to tally the results.

This annual event is a great way to spend time with some great birders, enjoying a winter's day watching wildlife—as we add to the most extensive database of citizen science in the world. Data from the CBC is used for a wide variety of research, including substantiating the effects of global warming. But most of us do it because it's fun to be out with friends, old and new, observing nature and marveling at how such tiny creatures survive quite handily in sub-freezing weather.

Despite all the history of the Christmas Bird Count beginning in 1900 to replace the destructive Christmas side hunt, and all the stuff about the longest running citizen science project in the world, and all the supposed insights on global weirding by “science types” from all this data, I'm convinced the real purpose of the CBC is to catch us off guard—to make us realize how little we know about nature and birds. I mean, it was COLD in the two weeks leading up to this year's CBC. And yet, with most of the water frozen, fewer participants than usual, and air that could gag a skunk, we found over 27,000 birds and (tentatively) 100 species. Who'd a thunk?

November and the first few days of December were so pleasant—it was over 53 degrees on December 2—but then, the calendar caught up with us. In the ten days leading up to the count, the average high was only 18 degrees and the average low was below zero! Thanks, Ma (Nature). But despite a forecast for subzero temps on Count Day, we awoke to a “balmy” 22 degrees. What's with that? Didn't help the air quality any, but we didn't lose any observers to Frosty's snowy clutches, either.

The compilation dinner yielded 98 species with several surprises, as usual, including never-before-seen-in-Cache-Valley Rusty Blackbirds found by Craig Fosdick. Unexpectedly, using un-ubiquitous un-unctuous unveiling (is that enough “U”s? in a row?) birding photography techniques, Ryan O'Donnell may have added two more to round us up to an even 100—a Slaty-backed Gull and a Winter Wren (the eastern species was split from Pacific Wren in 2010). I say, “may have” only because these two finds were so unusual that we're seeking professional review from other experts, just to make sure.

“Micro birds” (chickadees, nuthatches, etc.) were well represented. And two parties found Trogodytes species, with possibly a first record for the eastern Winter Wren.

Thrushes seem to be doing fine, with a very high number of American Robins and even a Hermit Thrush. The only notable high numbers among sparrow-like birds were record numbers of Spotted Towhees and a high count of White-crowned Sparrows.

As expected, the cold and frozen water kept waterfowl numbers low, except for a record number of Hooded Mergansers. Most of the ducks that had stayed were packed into tight swirls churning the few open patches of the Logan sewage lagoons. (You duck hunters should think on that one...) It also reduced the total gull count to four—total—one each of four different species! Oddly, we had two American Pelicans camped out at the Logan Fish Hatchery. They didn't even seem to be injured, because we saw them fly.

The cold may have also pushed raptors down from the north; we recorded unusually high numbers of both Red-tailed and Rough-legged hawks. And eagle counts, both Bald and Golden, continued high.

Some chicken birds (“gallinaceous” in technical parlance) were well represented, with high numbers of Sharp-tailed Grouse, but we totally missed the more mountain members of that family—Chukars, Dusky Grouse, and Ruffed Grouse. Species artificially stuck up here by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources to raise money from hunting licenses were mixed—lots of Wild Turkeys but no California Quail.

Despite the frozen water, we still managed to find a few Virginia Rails lurking in the cattails and Wilson's snipe numbers seemed to be doing fine. Rock Pigeon numbers remained high, and Eurasian Collard-Doves more than doubled their previous record numbers, illustrating once again the dynamic nature of avian species, even across continents.

We found six of the seven possible owl species (missed Long-eared), but numbers were generally low, except for Short-eared Owls, which were up from previous years, perhaps because observers walked the fields instead of sticking to roads.

Except for Western Meadowlarks, blackbird numbers were higher than usual, and the Rusty Blackbirds made for a very interesting icing on the cake. That's one bird that looks so much like our regular, run-of-the-mill-hohum-boring Brewer's Blackbird that it may well have been here in the past but none of us actually noticed it before. Stay alert, folks!

Among the finches, it's interesting how Lesser Goldfinches continue their steady increase in numbers, while Pine Siskins were still lower than the average over the last decade (perhaps a result of disease noticed a few years ago?).

-- Bryan Dixon

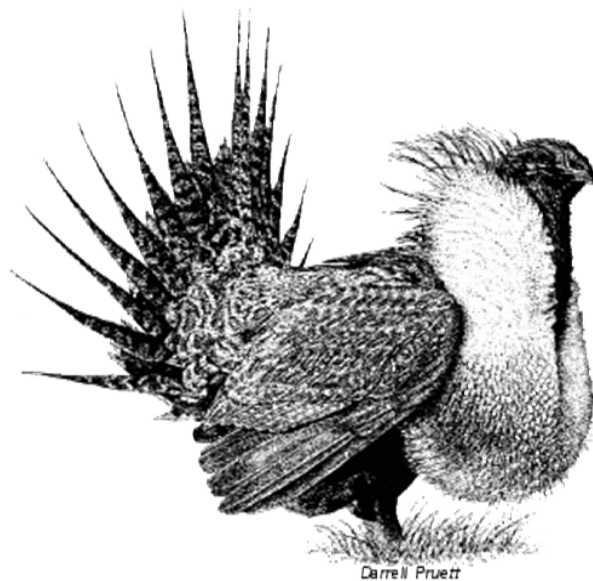
Greater Sage Grouse Habitat Management Workshop

Bridgerland Audubon with co-sponsors the Bear River Watershed Council and Intermountain Bioneers held a Greater Sage Grouse Habitat Management Workshop on Wednesday, January 15th at the First Presbyterian Church in Logan. The purpose of the workshop was to meet with federal and state agency personnel to evaluate and invite citizen comments on new management plans to secure the future of the Greater Sage Grouse whose populations have been in rapid decline due to loss of critical habitat. Presentations were made by Dr. Terry Messmer and Lorien Belton of the Wildland Resources Department at Utah State University and Adam Brewerton of the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources. The speakers described the history and scientific research leading to a draft Land Use Plan Amendment (LUPA) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and US Forest Service (FS) with input from 26 cooperating agencies for Greater Sage Grouse habitat management. The Draft LUPA/EIS describes and analyzes five alternatives for managing Greater Sage-Grouse habitat on approximately 3.3 million acres of BLM-

administered and National Forest System lands and approximately 0.7 million acres of BLM-administered subsurface federal mineral estate beneath non-federal surface ownership in Utah and portions of Wyoming. The alternatives present a range of management actions to achieve the goal of Greater Sage Grouse conservation. Major planning issues addressed include energy and minerals, lands and realty (including rights-of-way), wildfire, vegetation management (including invasive species and conifer encroachment), livestock grazing, recreation and travel management, and socioeconomics. Conserving sage grouse will benefit a host of other species in the Sagebrush Sea, pronghorn, elk, mule deer, native trout, and nearly 200 migratory and resident bird species.

A lively discussion followed the presentations and attendees were provided with instruction on how to submit their comments on the proposed alternatives. Following the meeting, led by Board of Trustees member Jim Cane Bridgerland Audubon submitted three pages of comments supporting science-based actions selected from the alternatives that would protect this important species and its endangered habitat.

- Dick Mueller and Jack Greene



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).

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, 2012; (reiterated by Leanna Ballard 2014)

Bridgerland Audubon contacts

Trustees

- 2011-2014 Jim Cane, 713-4668; 753-1759; Richard Mueller, 752-5637; Mike Wolfe, 753-1513
- 2012-2015 Frank Howe, 787-1859; Leanna Ballard, 213-0584
- 2013-2016 Ron Hellstern, 245-9186; Jack Greene, 563-6816; Ryan O'Donnell, 232-8146

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Vice Pres.	(Open)
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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

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**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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Long-eared owl—photo by Mike Wolfe

26 March 2014 *Utah Raptors*

Ogden Nature Center Wildlife Specialist Bryce King will be presenting on Utah Raptors March 26th. Bryce will be using an owl from the Center to explore why raptors are so cool! Also, the impact of wind energy on raptors and other birds will be discussed. There will be two presentations- the first will be in the Tagger Student Center at 11:30 am and the second at the First Presbyterian Church 200 west Center street downtown Logan. Further details will be posted on our website at www.bridgerlandaudubon.org Both events are free and open to the public.

