



The *Stilt*

Volume 37, Issue 10
December 2008

Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

Bridgerland's 49th Christmas Bird Count December 20th

We've been at this a long time. But as impressive as that sounds, the CBC itself is twice as old! The CBC was started by one Frank Chapman, a New Yorker who found the tradition of the Christmas Side Hunt an intolerable wastage of wildlife. Many Americans at the turn of the century viewed wildlife as merely a "resource", and an inexhaustible one at that. Market gunners shot thousands of birds in a day, hundreds of birds in one blast. Even sparrows, robins and thrushes were killed for food markets. Wading birds were massacred for their plumage and smaller passerines were taken whole just to adorn ladies' hats. The "last straw" for some nature lovers was the Christmas Side Hunt, a tradition following the midday Christmas meal, were participants ventured afield for exercise and "sport" to kill as many birds as possible in an afternoon, with a winner declared for the highest count.

Chapman and others initiated an alternative: a bird census at Christmas time. Thus began, on December 25, 1900, the first Christmas Bird Count and the longest running, most comprehensive example of citizen science ever. In 1900 there were 27 participants and they covered 27 count circles, and tallied 90 species of birds. Last year there were almost 60,000 participants covering over 2100 count circles in Canada, the United States, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Pacific Islands. In all, observers counted 57,704,250 birds of 2267 species! The high count in the United States went once again to Mad Island Marsh, TX with 235 species. The overall high was (again) the Mindo-Tandayapa count in Ecuador with 425 species. And, once again, Prudhoe Bay saw but one species—the Common Raven—but the three observers set a new record – 119 birds!

This is the 109th CBC and numerous researchers have taken advantage of data to understand the distribution and ecology of birds. There are problems with the data, to be sure, as levels of effort and weather do affect the results. Some counts have many partici-

pants, some few. Some counts have more talent than others or devote more hours, planning, and resources. Some are held in snowstorms, some on balmy, windless days. But all face the limitation of 24 hours between December 14th and January 5th. And all face the scrutiny of experienced compilers who don't hesitate to challenge unusual sightings. These data help scientists discern which species seem to be in decline and which are expanding.

Beware, though, of finding something really unusual. Our party once found some bushtits a few years ago and were directed in no uncertain terms that we had to "write it up." What field marks did you see? What experience have you had with this species before? What else could it have been? What did you have for lunch? Are you prone to hallucinations and delusions? Fortunately for us, the next day other and more experienced birders confirmed our sightings. Whew! That was close! Still, there's always some count that reports a Swainson's Hawk, almost an impossibility since they all migrate to Argentina for the winter.

In the end, the results are compiled into an annual report with extensive commentary about trends and unusual sightings. These days, the National Audubon Society publishes the report as *American Birds* and the results for the entire effort are available on the Internet at <http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/hr/index.html>.

And we have our own notable history. I recall some years ago blurting out that the peregrine that we'd found was the first one ever. A day or two later that I got a call from Buddy Smith, who remarked that, yes, it was great to have Peregrines again; that the last time he had seen a Peregrine on the CBC

Continued-on Page 4

Inside this Issue

Audubon Calendar	2
Local Bird(er) Spotlight	3
BAS News	6
Audubon Contacts	7

Audubon Calendar

December 2008

4 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.

11 General Meeting Join us at our same great location, the Cache Valley Learning Center (75 S. 400 West), when Val Grant will be presenting on Backyard Bird Feeding. He'll be using a PowerPoint presentation put together by Sue Drown. The meeting will start at 7 p.m. Enter through the building's west doors. All are welcome to attend and refreshments will be provided by Crumb Brothers and Caffe Ibis. Enter through the building's west doors. We hope to see you there.

20 49th Christmas Bird Count Come and enjoy good company and good birding while we attempt to break last year's record of 103 species (yeah, right...). Although finding lots of species is a hoot, what's really important is that we carry on this tradition of citizen science, started in 1900. We need your help and extra pair of sharp eyes to be able to accomplish this goal. It does not matter if you are a seasoned veteran or someone who just learned what a bird is. We will be grouped so that we have people who are very good at identifying in every group. If you are interested in attending, please contact Bryan Dixon (752-6830, bdixon@xmission.com). The cost for participating is only \$5 (students under 18 are free) to cover compilation and publication of the national data.

January 2009

1 Two-hundred Club Birding Is it possible to see 200 species of birds in Cache County in the calendar year? Yes, it is not only possible but several local birders do it every year. This trip will be led by local birding expert Reinhard Jockel, who is not only good with visual birding, but also a gifted birding-by-ear expert. Anyone is welcome to attend the field trip, especially those who want to set a New Year resolution to get out of the house and see 200 of the great, natural beauties in Cache Valley. Meet at 9 a.m. at the parking lot between Caffe Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 East 150 North). Bring something to munch on, because the trip will run into the early afternoon.

3rd Annual Sunflower Seed Sale

Bridgerland Audubon Society is very proud to announce the 3rd annual Black-oil Sunflower Seed sale. Allen Christensen will be braving the temperatures to provide the seed on Saturday, December 6th, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. He will be located on the corner of 200 North and 1500 West (the entrance road to the landfill) near the silo. You can simply drive up, load up, and go home!

Why would you want to buy this seed? This high quality seed is provided by a local grower and is guaranteed to be cleaner than other seed. It is also a great buy when you consider the 50 pound bags are only \$20! If you cannot pick up the seed, Allen is willing to deliver the bags for \$25. However, this one day sale is specifically for BAS members at a 20% discount. So, get out and go buy your Winter supply while supporting a local grower! Hope to see you there.

Local Bird(er) Spotlight

Craig Fosdick, Stephanie Cobbold, and I had already scanned the circumference of the pond with our scopes, and were watching some Long-billed Dowitchers feeding at the near edge of the pond, close enough that binoculars seemed to be overkill. I decided to scan the far side of the pond one last time, hoping for the Dunlin I had seen there a couple of days earlier. Killdeer . . . Killdeer . . . Killdeer . . . something different. Just as I spotted it Craig joked, "Where's that Dunlin you promised, Ryan?" A smile stretched across my face as I replied, "How about a Golden-Plover instead?"

American Golden-Plovers are listed on the new 2008 Cache County checklist as being seen only a few times in the last 30 years. But the reason I was so excited about this one was not because it was so rare. It was the 236th species I had seen in Cache County this year, setting a new record for the number of species seen in one year in the county.



This American Golden-Plover was first spotted at the Logan River Wetlands, also known as "Sue's Ponds," on October 26th and stayed around for several days.

I didn't set out to beat the record initially. I moved to Logan in 2006 to start graduate school, and joined the Bridgerland Audubon Society (BAS) on several field trips. I also signed up for the Utah birding email lists. I chased a few rarities around Utah, like the Pomarine Jaeger that was seen at Farmington Bay last winter and the Sabine's Gulls that briefly appeared along the Antelope Island Causeway. But as gas prices rose at the end of the year, I thought about all of the species closer to home that I had never seen before. I thought that a good way to get to know the birds of my home county would be to try for BAS's "200 Club;" to try to see 200 birds in the county in one year.

I had little idea of how difficult or easy it would be to see 200 species. By my estimation I had seen about 100 species in the year before without really trying, but to see 200 seemed daunting. I started the year with the BAS's annual January 1st field trip, and saw 60 species in one day, which gave me hope, although I knew that the birds would get tougher to find as the year went on. I birded several times a week, and by the end of May I had met my goal of seeing 200 species. I knew I couldn't stop then. The record for the most species seen in a year in the county was 235, held by both Keith Archibald and Ron Ryel. Keith told me that the earliest date he had gotten to 200 was in the first week of June, so I knew I had a shot at the record.

Summer went by with many good birds, like Lark Bunting, Band-tailed Pigeon, and Glossy Ibis. I even got two state record birds on my list, a Mississippi Kite found by Craig and I and a Whip-poor-will found by Ron. I was helped by many local and non-local birders who birded with me, emailed me tips, or reported rare birds in the county. Craig dragged me into the field over and over, and sometimes I returned the favor. Craig was also going for a big year, so some friendly competition kept me searching for the next hot bird. In the end, it wasn't the Golden-Plover or any of the other 235 species that made the big year worthwhile. It was the time I spent getting to know the birds, birding locations, and especially the birders of Cache County that brought the biggest smile to my face.

(Note: you can read more about my Cache County big year at <http://200birds.blogspot.com>.)



Craig Fosdick points out a Long-eared Owl to Stephanie Cobbold (back) and Mo Correll (front).

Continued from Page 1

was the 1975 count. Huh? What 1975 count. MY data said the count hadn't begun until 1976, so how could he have seen it in 1975? Patiently, Buddy explained that there were quite a few of them who did, in fact, conduct a 1975 CBC count. So, I took mouse in hand and clicked my way eastward to the depths of databases to verify that history.

The first count in Utah was in Provo in 1903. They found 25 species, including Dusky Horned Owls and Pallid Horned Larks. Since then, there have been almost 40 different counts in Utah, from Zion National Park to Bear Lake.

The first CBC in Cache County was in 1956. At that time it was called the Hyde Park Count Circle, but it had the same boundaries as today. They recorded 47 species, followed by 33 in 1958, 36 in 1959, and so on right through the present. Digging through both library data and the CBC database yielded more details. The first year, the participants included J.M. Gaites, D. R. Mead, W. Pfeiffer, R. A. Ryder, and one A. W. Stokes. Yep, our own Allen Stokes was one of the founders of the Logan CBC, having arrived in Logan in September 1952. But then there's a mystery, for Allen doesn't appear again until 1974, eighteen years later! In the meantime, the count was carried on by 3-4 people who show up year after year: Wayne Hancey, George T. Morrison and Kent Morrison, joined occasionally by Richard Follett and Clair Kofoed. Who were these peo-

ple and why were they interested in counting birds? What possessed them to spend a cold winter's day counting birds? Were they well-rounded naturalists, focused listeners, scientists, weirdos?

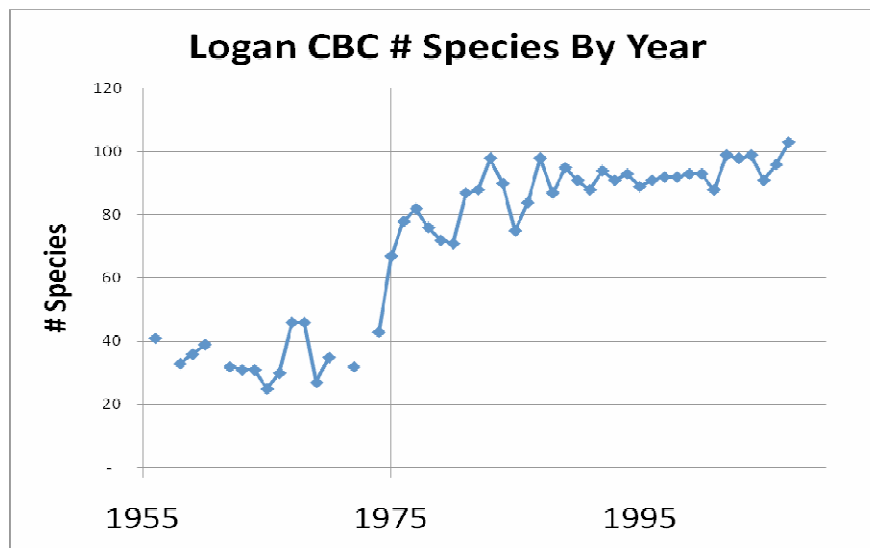
Those early years show a steady level of effort: 3-4 participants and total counts of 3,000-4,000 birds. Species counts rarely broke 40. Then in 1974, everything changed. The old observers disappeared for the most part and a new crop of observers took their place. Allen Stokes appears again, and in 1975

total birds, a lot of the fun is in the number of species. We try hard before the count to find certain hard-to-find species and then we make sure we find them on count day. Until last year, I thought we'd pretty much seen all the species that are likely to be here. Then we shattered our record by finding 103 species in 2007. After trying so hard for so many years to find over 100 species, will we be so fortunate again this year?

Perhaps most important of all, however, is the fun and camaraderie that comes with difficult efforts. A 15 mile CBC circle is a lot of ground to cover. To make it happen, we need all kinds of birders. Beginners with an interest and a pair of eyeballs are just as important as seasoned veterans with a practiced ear for call notes. We need folks to ski and snowshoe high on the mountains looking for Pine

Grosbeaks. We need kids to help count the thousands of starlings and house sparrows. We need people patiently watching the feeders for the possible Harris' or white-throated sparrow. We need people "not from these parts" who identify unusual birds that are common where they come from. We need hikers, canoeists, and people in cars.

So, if you want to dedicate a day to science and conservation, spend time in the out of doors with like-minded nature lovers, and learn more about our avian world, join us on our 49th annual Christmas Bird



there were 20 counters including Barbara Abraham, George Biggs, Jim Haefner, Steve Hoffman, Patricia Howard, Fritz Knopf, Alice Lindahl, Steve Montgomery, Linda Mycek, Judi and Rick Nunes, Roger Olson, Karen and Lee Rentz, Ann and Dave Schimpf, Jeff Short, Diane Siegfried, Frank Smith, Kim Smith, and Jan Young.

With the increasing number of participants, the total tally of birds is routinely over 20,000 and species counts average in the mid-90s. More effort in terms of number of participants or party hours is generally rewarded with higher counts. But, while it's important to count

Continued-On Page 5

Continued-Form Page 4

Count on Saturday, December 20th. Contact Bryan Dixon, 752-6830, or bdixon@xmission.com, to find out where you're needed. Then, scout the area in the weeks leading up to the count. On count day, arise early to look for owls and spend as much time as possible with your friends counting all the avian critters you can find. Meet at lunch at a predetermined spot to share successes and misses and get reoriented to make sure we find as many species as we can. Then, oh then, join everyone else at the home of Alice Lindahl and Jim Haefner, 1738 Country Club Dr., Logan at 6:00 p.m. for the traditional potluck and compilation. The cost to participate is a mere \$5 (under 18 free) to cover NAS's cost of compiling the results. Everyone is invited. Bring your friends and family. Be a part of history.

We Miss Our Friends...

This year's CBC is dedicated to two of our friends who participated in many of Logan's CBCs, but who passed away in 2008 – Larry Ryel and John Barnes. Both were exceptionally gifted wildlife observers, and both had a passion for sharing their knowledge and experience with others. Our job this December will be more difficult for their absence, but joyful for their remembrance.



Our Bioneers conference was a smashing success, which is no surprise given the tremendous effort by so many to make it a happening. “A Gathering of people at the crossroads of ecological restoration, human health and social justice”, it is filled with hope and inspiration. The bottom line is getting participants to make a commitment toward making a better world by taking personal and collective action.

This year's conference focused on food security and energy independence. Questions such as “Can our Valley feed itself?” and “Will algae save us?” were addressed in our local workshops. You can see the full program at www.extension.usu.edu/bioneers.

One of many highlights was the panel discussion held at the LDS Tabernacle. Titled “Rediscovering Our heritage: Frugality and Stewardship in the LDS Faith” the event featured a panel of LDS youth and church leaders who discussed how members are engaged in working toward a sustainable future for our Valley and beyond. Topics discussed included energy, food, and climate change. Informal evaluations were out-

standing and most suggested further discussion on these most urgent and timely topics.

Saturday morning's keynote address was delivered by Craig Denton, a University of Utah faculty member who presented on his recently published book “Bear River, Last Chance to Change Course”. His address was inspirational and showed the way to restoring this amazing river system to health. Craig's photographic exhibit on the Bear River at the Eccles/Czaire library was a wonderful compliment for his mission to enlighten and educate.

Mornings and early afternoons were filled with plenary speakers from the national conference beamed in via satellite, enriched by entertainment and sumptuous food provided by Culinary Concepts, Crumb Brothers Bakery, Café Ibis, and Rock Hill Creamery.

Again, we are indeed grateful for the generous support by Bridgerland Audubon and are hopeful more of our Audubon members will see fit to attend this conference someday as once you have sampled its greatness, there's no turning back!

—by Jack Greene

A Sincere Apology

It seems to happen every month. I spend hours reading, proofreading, even writing articles for the monthly Stilt. And, not surprisingly, with bleary eyes, I make some mistakes. Some notable mistakes have been copying and pasting a previous year's (2004's) board member election ballot into 2008's election... without changing the year. Or the time I didn't bother looking at a calendar to see if that Saturday field trip was really supposed to be held on a Sunday like I was reporting it. There have been numerous typos here and there; misspelled names are especially embarrassing.

So, it is with those bleary eyes that I send off the final version of the Stilt every month to the printers. And without fail, when my copy of the Stilt arrives in my mailbox, I inevitably slap my forehead and groan in disappointment... I notice a mistake. Most of them are probably overlooked by most members. Some mistakes are kindly brought to my attention. But, towards the end of every month, my wife can tell when the Stilt has arrived because of the red mark on my forehead.

This last issue of the Stilt was certainly no exception. Jim Cane is the BAS sanctuary manager and, for as long as I can remember, has done an amazing job caring for, working on, and writing about the Amalga Barrens. As the newsletter editor, I am especially grateful for that last part — writing about the Barrens. Therefore, it came as a huge disappointment to find that I had done Jim a disservice. He works very hard on maintaining and developing the Barrens. He personally plants native species and weeds noxious, invasive species. And he needs help.

In last month's issue of the Stilt, Jim wrote the article entitled "Autumn Notes from the Barrens." At the end of that article, he solicited help from anyone wanting to volunteer. On the surface, that sounds fantastic... except for the fact that I didn't include any of Jim's contact information. For this reason, I am making this public apology. I am sorry my head seems to have a permanent red spot this month. But I am truly sorry that Jim's hard work could have potentially gone in vain. If there is anyone interested in helping Jim, or if you are simply interested in maintaining our wonderful natural resource, the Amalga Barrens, please contact **Jim Cane** at **713-4668** or email him at **jimcane@cc.usu.edu**. Sorry Jim.

Project FeederWatch

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology has just released its newly revised, FREE Homeschooler's Guide to Project FeederWatch.

For more than 20 years, Project FeederWatch has been an easy, fun way for children to learn about birds and strengthen their skills in observation, identification, research, computation, writing, creativity, and more. FeederWatchers keep track of the numbers and kinds of birds at their feeders through the winter and report what they see to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

The Homeschooler's Guide to Project FeederWatch will guide you through bird-related activities that promote learning across many disciplines, including science, math, history, and the arts. Examples of these activities include:

Natural history: Observe and research a bird's behavior and life cycle

Math: Calculate average seed consumption rate and graph data

Writing: Keep a nature journal to write stories and poetry

Geography: Research the geographic ranges of birds
Art: Keep a feeder-bird sketch book or create a papier mache mask

To download the Homeschooler's Guide to Project FeederWatch, visit www.FeederWatch.org and click on the "Education/Home School" button. You'll be able to download the PDF in low (2.2MB) or high (6.7MB) resolutions.

You may choose to use the free guide as a stand-alone resource, or sign up for Project FeederWatch to submit the data you gather. If you would like to be a project participant, the signup fee is \$12 for members of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, \$15 for non-members. There are discounts for group participation.

If you have any questions, please let us know how we can help by emailing feederwatch@cornell.edu.

Sincerely,
David Bonter
Project Leader, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Welcome to BAS

New Members

Holly Strand
Chuck Hawkins

Renewing Members

Lyle Bingham

Bridgerland Audubon contacts

Trustees

- 2006-2009 Ron Goede, 752-9650; David Liddell, 797-1261; Bret Selman, 257-5260
- 2007-2010 Chris Cokinos, 245-7769; Jack Greene, 563-6816; Reinhard Jockel; Stephen Peterson, 755-5041
- 2008-2011 Jim Cane, 713-4668; William Masslich, 753-1759; Richard Mueller, 752-5637; Brandon Spencer, 753-2790

Bridgerland Audubon Contacts

- President** Val Grant, 752-7572, biores@mtwest.net
- Vice Pres.** Jason Pietrzak, 938-0203, pietrzak@gmail.com
- Secretary** Lyle Bingham, 563-6003, lwbingham@comcast.net
- Treasurer** Jennifer Hoffmann, 713-4935, jennifer.hoffmann@comcast.net
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- Conservation** Richard Mueller, 752-5637, rmueller@biology.usu.edu
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- Newsletter** Brandon Spencer, 753-2790, birdnerdut@gmail.com
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- Hospitality** Allen & Gail Christensen, 258-5018, gaichr@pdp.usu.edu
- Hotline** Nancy Williams, 752-4780, nanwill@cc.usu.edu
- Sanctuary** Jim Cane, 713-4668, jimcane@cc.usu.edu
- Webmaster** Stephen Peterson, 755-5041, cllslp@msn.com
- 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 make all checks payable to National Audubon Society and send with this card to:

National Audubon Society
Membership Data Center
PO Box 51001
Boulder, CO 80322-1001
W-52 Local Chapter Code: 7XCHA

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

P.O. Box 3501

Logan, Utah 84323-3501

Email: birdnerdut@gmail.com

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

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Other CBCs in Northern Utah

For updated information on all CBCs in Utah, visit <http://www.utahbirds.org/cbc/cbc.html>.

14 December, Sunday - Evanston WY and UT

One-half of the circle is in Utah, much of which is on the Deseret Land and Livestock Ranch. Those interested in participating please meet at the Hornet's Nest, 8 miles north of Evanston on Highway 89, at 7:00 a.m. Contact: Tim Gorman at wygoob@allwest.net or (307)679-0656.

17 December, Wednesday - Bear River Refuge

Meet at McDonald's (1838W. 2700N., Farr West - just east of I-15 exit 349) at 8:00 AM for breakfast or at 8:30 AM to carpool.

27 December, Saturday - Morgan

Meet at Utah DWR (515E. 5300S., South Ogden) at 7:30 AM to carpool to breakfast at the Spring Chicken Inn in Morgan, or meet at the inn at 8:00 AM.

28 December, Sunday - Bear Lake

Contact Dennis Austin for more information at (435)245-4177. Snow machines and skiers welcome; some needed.

30 December, Tuesday - Montpelier, ID

Contact Dennis Austin for more information at (435)245-4177. Snow machines and skiers welcome; some needed.

1 January, Thursday - Antelope Island

Meet in the parking lot outside the Antelope Island State Park entrance kiosk at 8:00 AM. Coordinator: John Bellmon, (801)444-3704, bellmonj@comcast.net.