The Stilt

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Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

Middle Bear River and Cutler Reservoir TMDL

The Utah Division of Water Quality (DWQ) held two public hearings in January on the Middle Bear River and Cutler Reservoir Total Maximum Daily Load study (TMDL). The deadline for comments is February 6, so time is short, but we urge you to examine and comment on this important milestone. Get the full document here:

http://www.waterquality.utah.gov/PublicNotices/index.htm#TMDL_anchor

It's near the bottom under "TMDLs". There are two files, the TMDL report itself (25 MB) and a zipped file containing the supporting data (30 MB).

What it is

The Clean Water Act (CWA) passed in 1977 to restore the quality of the waters of the United States. Unfortunately, it was only partially successful. It was just too expensive to update too many wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) and there were just too many "non-point" sources. Over time, however, new legislation amended the CWA and provided new tools and funding, and there has been major progress, especially in controlling major point sources such as WWTPs and contained animal feeding operations (CAFOs).

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CBC Results – "Kudda Bin Werse"

We had no illusions. We weren't going to break last year's record of 103 species. Still, early December's lovely, warm days provided lots of birds, including interesting gulls, and we were hopeful.

And then reality checked in. Temperatures dropped and snow fell the week before the count. The forecast for count day was grim indeed: temps around zero and more snow. We feared for the safety of the mountain crews (from avalanche) and the youngsters (from cold). For those of us who persevered, however, it really wasn't so bad: a nippy 2 degrees in the morning; although mostly cloudy with light snow to obscure canyon birds, the daytime temps warmed up to 14 degrees; winds weren't so bad; and visibility remained fairly good in the valley. Still, we didn't expect much. Estimates of species counts ranged from an optimistic "maybe 90" to… well, we won't go there.

As it turned out, we were pleasantly surprised by the final tally of 92 species, the average until 2002, and that's despite a real dearth of canyon birds (owing to a lack of x-ray vision on the part of our mountain observers).

And we still had some real oddities, a fact not lost on those poor souls who had to fill out Rare Bird Reports. What's a greater yellowlegs doing here, probing in the mud beside the snow banks? And lesser goldfinches? Who sent them the Cache County vacation brochure?

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Inside this Issue

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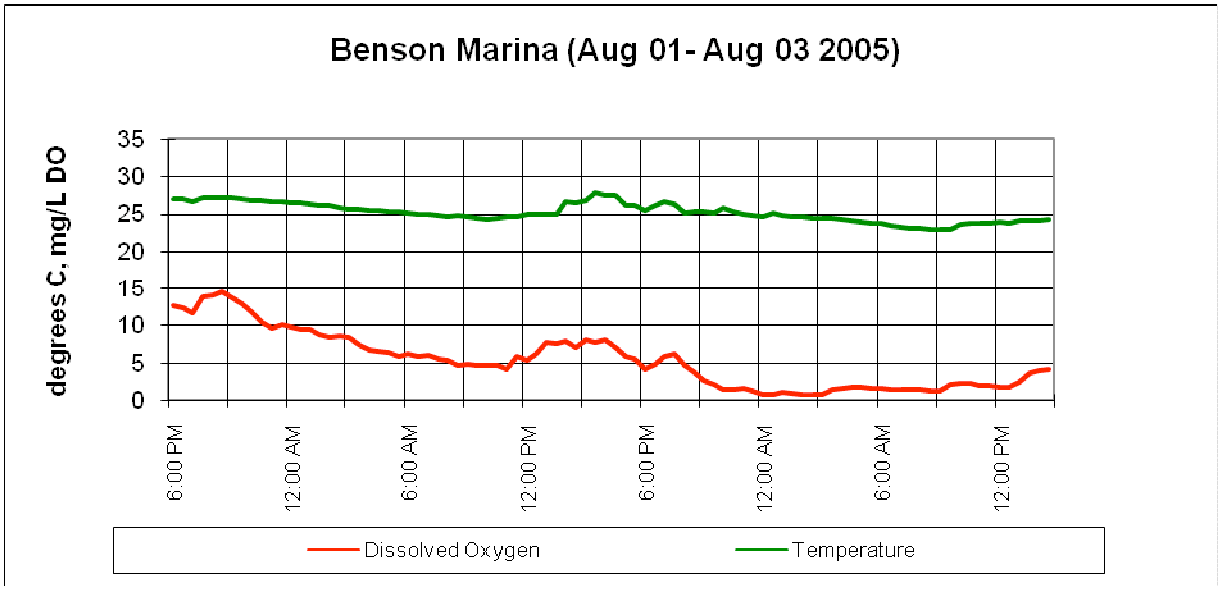
As the CWA evolved, states were given more responsibility for managing water quality. One of the programs being managed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to move states in the right direction is known as the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) program. Here's how it works:

1. States assign one or more "designated beneficial uses" (DBUs) to each water body (e.g., drinking water, primary contact recreation, warm water fishery, cold water fishery, agriculture, etc.). The table below summarizes each DBU.



Example of DO measured at Benson Marina falling below 1.0 mg/L (temperature standard is maximum of 27 degrees C; DO standard is one day average >3 mg/L for adult fish, >5 mg/L for young fish).

2. States use science to set water quality standards for each DBU, e.g., for a warm water fishery, the 30-day average concentration of dissolved oxygen (DO) must be above 5.5 mg/L, and water temperature must not exceed 27 degrees C. See http://www.rules.utah.gov/publicat/code/r317/r317-002.htm for the complete list of standards.)

3. States then determine, based on water quality measurements, which waters "support" and which are "non-supporting" their DBUs (e.g., Cutler Reservoir does not support its warm water fishery DBU because DO sinks too low in the summer).

4. For waters that are non-supporting, the state prepares a TMDL.

The TMDL determines what the pollution loads are, where they're coming from, how much reduction is necessary, and WHO SHOULD REDUCE THEIR LOADS BY HOW MUCH. For non-point sources (runoff from lawns and agricultural fields, etc.) the state promotes best management practices and helps to provide funding and technical assistance. For point sources (including Logan's sewage lagoons), the state adjusts discharge limits in their Utah Pollution Discharge Elimination System (UPDES) permits.

As you can imagine, the rub comes in the "who" and "how much." In recent years, agricultural operations in Cache County have made major improvements by preventing manure from directly entering streams and rivers. Cities, including Logan, have attempted to control pollutants with better treatment (including Logan City's wetlands).

Cutler Reservoir, unfortunately, still has a long way to go. One of the pollutants causing low DO is phosphorus, a nutrient for algae and other plants. Excessive phosphorus promotes excessive plant growth. In the daytime photosynthesis generates DO (good). But at night that huge mass of plant life relies on respiration for its metabolism, and it takes back that DO (bad, very bad). This can depress DO concentrations to the point where fish – especially young fish – are stressed and have few places to go to "breathe." Moreover, algae don't live

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forever. When it dies, it is digested by bacteria which demands even more DO (even worse).

The hope is that, by identifying sources and the magnitude of the problem, we can direct scarce money to the most tractable sources first. This TMDL is the next step in the process. Both agriculture and PacifiCorp have implemented some big improvements (e.g., riparian setbacks, removing almost 800 cars from the reservoir, etc.). TMDLs for other tributaries, including the Little Bear River and Spring Creek, will also make huge differences in the quality of water entering Cutler Reservoir.

The next biggest problem is sewage. It's been interesting to note that the only votes opposing releasing this TMDL report to the public came from J. B. Swift representatives (formerly E. A. Miller), which discharges waste to surface waters from its packing plant and, most surprisingly, the Logan Environmental Department, which controls the sewage lagoons that eventually discharge into Cutler Reservoir.

Critics of the study allege the science is faulty, incomplete, and there is no evidence for low DO. Their concern seems to be mainly that it's expensive to treat the problem. They're having trouble separating recognizing the problem from finding a solution. Of course the data is incomplete, it always is. But graphs of the data from the appendices (see example below) clearly show that DO sags are serious, particularly in summer, and the science points directly to phosphorus as the major culprit. The costs are a legitimate concern and the implementation process must weigh them carefully, however, the impairment of the resource requires a response under the CWA.

What you can do

Have a look at the document. Chapter 1 introduces TMDLs. Chapter 2 describes the watershed (you may be able to skip this). Chapter 3 describes the problem and how it hurts the DBUs. Chapter 4 reveals where the pollutant loads are coming from. Chapter 5 describes the models used to predict effects of changing the loads on water quality (you can probably skip this, too).

Chapter 6 is the most important section. It describes a "Phased TMDL Approach" for Cutler Reservoir. We don't have to do it all at once, but we do have to get started, and NOW.

Send your comments to:

Carl Adams, Chief of the TMDL Section
carladams@utah.gov
Cannon Health Building
288 North 1460 West
Salt Lake City, UT 84116

We owe it to future generations to clean up after ourselves. We get pure water from the mountains. Surely we can discharge it in a better state than we're doing now in order to leave our surface waters in a better state...we all live downstream.

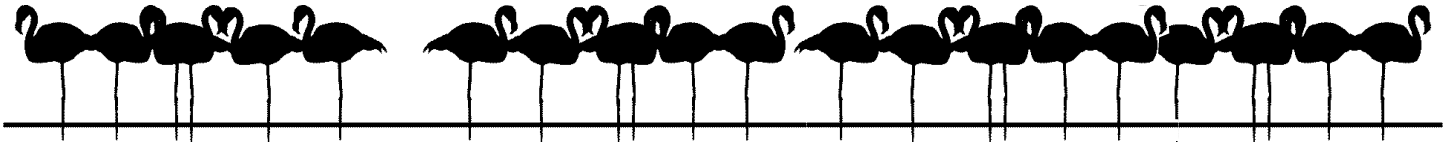
For more information within BAS, contact Dick Mueller, 435-752-5637, rmueller@biology.usu.edu , or Bryan Dixon, 435-752-6830, bdixon@xmission.com.

— by Bryan Dixon and Dick Mueller

Summary of Use Designations for Waters of the State of Utah

Class	Designated Beneficial Use
1	Protected for use as a raw water source for domestic water systems.
1C	Protected for domestic purposes with prior treatment by treatment processes as required by the Utah Division of Drinking Water
2	Protected for recreational use and aesthetics.
2A	Protected for primary contact recreation such as swimming.
2B	**Protected for secondary contact recreation such as boating, wading, or similar uses.**
3	Protected for use by aquatic wildlife.
3A	Protected for cold water species of game fish and other cold water aquatic life, including the necessary aquatic organisms in their food chain.
3B	**Protected for warm water species of game fish and other warm water aquatic life, including the necessary aquatic organisms in their food chain.**
3C	Protected for nongame fish and other aquatic life, including the necessary aquatic organisms in their food chain.
3D	**Protected for waterfowl, shore birds and other water-oriented wildlife not included in Classes 3A, 3B, or 3C, including the necessary aquatic organisms in their food chain.**
3E	Severely habitat-limited waters. Narrative standards will be applied to protect these waters for aquatic wildlife.
4	**Protected for agricultural uses including irrigation of crops and stock watering.**
5	The Great Salt Lake. Protected for primary and secondary contact recreation, waterfowl, shore birds and other water-oriented wildlife including their necessary aquatic organisms in their food chain, and mineral extraction.

Source: Utah Rule Code R317-2; Cutler Reservoir DBU in bold.



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The formal listing of this year's records follows:

New Records

Species	2008 Count	Previous High	Year of Previous Record
Cackling goose (newly recognized species)	**2**	N/A	N/A
Immature Bald Eagle	**5**	N/A	N/A
Common Raven	**54**	20	1996
Lesser goldfinch	**2**	N/A	N/A

Three species counts tied previous records: red-breasted merganser (4 in 1981), greater yellowlegs (1 in 2007), and Eurasian collared-dove (57 in 2007). Other species with unusually high counts (generally one standard deviation above the mean over the last 15 years) included: northern pintail, wild turkey, and western screech-owl.

"Misses" (species we didn't find, but which are almost certainly here) included: Virginia rail (last missed in 1976), Stellar's jay, mountain chickadee (last missed in 1975), canyon wren (last missed in 1998), and golden-crowned kinglet. Other low counts (generally one standard deviation below the mean over the last 15 years) included: pied-billed grebe, great blue heron, Canada goose, mallard, Barrow's goldeneye, ruddy duck, belted kingfisher, black-billed magpie, black-capped chickadee, brown creeper, marsh wren, American dipper, song sparrow, and dark-eyed junco.

Analysis by Group

- Most **waterfowl** were about normal with dabblers a little below average. Wood ducks and redheads continue well below historic numbers, and goldeneye and ruddy duck numbers were noticeably low.
- **Hawk** numbers were typical of recent CBC counts. The 21 bald eagles, including 5 immature birds, were a real surprise. It's likely that some of these were double-counted, as they were flying back and forth in the valley, but it's still probably a higher-than-usual number. Buteo and falcon numbers were both robust.
- **Wading** and **shorebirds** posted some real surprises. We'd been watching the greater yellowlegs feeding in the mudflats west of the fish hatchery for several days. It was still odd, however, to see it probing the mud next to snow banks. The other oddity was finding it feeding amidst eight Wilson's snipe all huddled on the snow, apparently also watching it in disbelief.
- **Grouse** numbers were a little low. We struck out on chukars because we couldn't see a bloody thing in Green Canyon due to the snow and low cloud.
- We'd seen herring **gulls** mixed in amongst the thousands of ring-billed and California gulls at the landfill in the weeks leading up to the count, but like some other Golden State residents, they apparently just couldn't handle the snow.
- It's been particularly interesting to note the expansion of **Eurasian collared-doves** in our valley, having dramatically expanded their range from southeast United States over the last decade. The first two were reported in Wellsville just a few years ago, and a single bird made it into our CBC in 2004. Their numbers didn't grow this year, but they didn't shrink, either.
- We **owled**-out again this year by finding all seven of the possible owl species. That's happened only five times in the history of our CBC, although more frequently in recent years since the long-eared owl seems to have taken up winter residence in the trees near Spring Creek.
- **Woodpecker** numbers were about average. Horned larks were a bit low. **Corvids** were mixed, with record numbers of Common ravens and unusually low numbers of magpies.
- The **micro birds** (chickadees, nuthatches, wrens, kinglets, etc.) were very low, most probably because the weather kept us from finding them. It was odd, however, not to find a single mountain chickadee, especially since they're often seen in the valley in winter – that's the first time in over 30 years we've missed them! The single brown creeper was the lowest count we've had since 1991.
- **Thrush** numbers weren't unusual, though we missed finding a hermit thrush. **Waxwings** are typically irruptive – it's either "feast or famine", and this year it was famine with only a couple dozen cedar wax-

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wings and no bohemians hiding among them. Our only winter **warbler** – the yellow-rumped – didn't disappoint us with ten individuals spotted. It always seems so odd to see them in winter.

- **Sparrows**, **blackbirds**, and **finches** were about average, with the exception of unusually low numbers of song sparrows and dark-eyed juncos. Who knows what the two lesser goldfinches were thinking!?
- **Pine siskins** bounced back from very low numbers last year, but we're still encouraging folks to clean their feeders to prevent disease among these birds.

This year we found a total of 29,636 birds, comprised of 92 species, 12 of which were represented by only one individual and three species that were firsts for our count circle.

The potluck was scrumptious, as usual, and graciously hosted by Alice Lindahl and Jim Haefner. The house was full, but bursting only in the sense of stories of a cold winter's day spent in the warmth of good company.

The CBC is THE longest running citizen science effort in the world. This was the 109th year for the CBC program (started in 1900), and our 49th. Our data have been submitted to the national database where researchers and the public can access them on line:

(http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/index.html

Our local CBC results go back to 1956 and are available electronically (Microsoft Excel spreadsheet) or by hard copy ($1.00 to cover postage and printing). Contact Bryan Dixon at bdixon@xmission.com or 10 Heritage Cove, Logan, UT 84321.

Participants
Thanks to this year's 55 participants and feeder watchers: Robert Atwood, Dennis Austin, Terry Barnes, Liz Becker, Mike Becker, Eric Bingham, Lyle Bingham, Jim Cane, Allen Christensen, Gail Christensen, Stephanie Cobbold, Brad Cole, Scott Datwyler, Bryan Dixon, John Ellerbeck, Barbara Farris, John Gallagher, C.Val Grant, Ben Greene, Jack Greene, Jim Haefner, Frank Howe, Joanne Hughes, Paul Jamison, Reinhard Jockel, Linda Kervin, Peter Kung, Caitlin Laughlin, Dave Liddell, Alice Lindahl, Jean Lown, Margaret Lubke, Bill Masslich, Eric Meyer, Brian Mikkelson, Wayne Moore, John Mull, Ryan O'Donnell, Bruce Pendery, Ian Pendery, Stephen Peterson, Dominique Roche, Ron Ryel, Andrew Semadeni, Frank Smith, Brandon Spencer, Jeanne Sullivan, Kim Sullivan, Tim Sullivan, Robert and Helen Taylor, Miiko Toelken, Dennis Welker, Martin Welker, and Mike Wolfe.

We are also grateful to the many landowners of our valley, who year after year graciously allow us to tromp around their properties looking for birds. Often they are responding to an annual phone call from someone they may never have met. We must be a trustworthy bunch!

On a final note, it looks like we're going to have to learn to live without several folks who've been stalwarts on previous counts. John Barnes and Larry Ryel passed away in 2008. Keith and Judy Archibald and Sue and David Drown just up and left us (reportedly having retired to some warmer place called Prescott)! But it looks like we'll keep their legacy alive because there are so many of you doing yeoman service to make our CBC the success that it is!

by Bryan Dixon

Bryan Dixon filled some big shoes for the Christmas Bird Count, taking on Keith Archbold's role as organizer and master of ceremonies for the Count. We are all grateful to him for a job well-done. Bravo Bryan!

Local Bird (Author) Spotlight

Winter Birds

(Inspired by Ray LaMontagne's song "Winter Birds" from the 2008 album, "Gossip In The Grain")

by Stephen Peterson

The tea kettle sings, and the smell of fresh muffins baking permeate the air, as condensation builds on the inner panes of the kitchen windows, that look out upon the bird feeders hanging from the frost covered trees. A courageous Black-capped Chickadee darts between two House Finches to grab a black oil sunflower seed, which it hurriedly carries off to a nearby perch, and proceeds to pound the shell open with its tiny dark bill.

The heated birdbath draws a crowd, providing open water for drinking and bathing. A group of Pine Siskins are currently splashing about, throwing water onto their backs with the fluttering of wings that flash lemon yellow stripes of brilliance in the crisp morning air. Other siskins are battling for position on the thistle feeder, turning and flaring their wings and tail feathers at individuals attempting to overtake their spot. This winter has brought a large flock of siskins to the feeders, numbering at times close to one hundred birds. As an irruptive species, siskins will move as large groups, seeking out food sources in the valley, when seed crops fail at higher elevations. The siskins are a noisy bunch when they are around, emitting a jumbled mess of rough, staccato notes ending in a rising buzz, which sounds very much like a sleeping bag being zipped up. The 'zipper' bird is a good way to remember the call of the siskin.

Off in a nearby spruce I can hear a Red-breasted Nuthatch noisily trumpeting away, greeting the day with an emphatic pronouncement of, "Yes, I made it through the -5 degree Fahrenheit night." Nuthatches are a welcome addition each winter to my feeders, with their long, stiletto black bills, the bandit like black stripe running through their eye, as they move down the tree trunk, head first towards the brick of suet hanging off the trunk of the poplar tree. Normally confined to higher, mountainous regions, the nuthatches move down to the valley floors along with the siskins, but are usually solitary or foraging with one other nuthatch.

The Dark-eyed Juncos are down on the ground, exhibiting their exquisite chicken-scratch dance, as they forage through the crusted snow for dropped seeds from the above feeders. Juncos are also altitudinal migrants that join the others down in the valley during the winter. The Oregon race of juncos is the most common form seen, but I periodically see pink-sided and slate-colored races on occasion.

A giant of a bird appears (compared to the small finches and sparrows), and lands upon the suet brick, in a flash of black, white and iridescent purple, scaring the nuthatch away. It is a Black-billed Magpie, who makes quick work of half of the suet cake. Another creature fond of the suet brick is the Red Tree Squirrel, who helps finish off the suet with his yellow-stained incisors and nimble little hands.

On the other side of the house, American Robins and Cedar Waxwings are gorging themselves on ornamental crabapples. The high, thin pitched trills of the waxwings will soon be joined with the lower pitched and rattling trills of their far northern cousins, the Bohemian Waxwings, which are another irruptive species, that seek out southerly regions for food, when available winter tree fruits up north go bust. Last winter season (2007-2008) the Bohemians showed up as early as the first part of November 2007 and stuck around till mid-March 2008. I am hoping they make it to Cache Valley soon, since they are such a strikingly beautiful bird to see. If you are unsure how to tell the difference between the two waxwings by their trill calls, you can easily distinguish the Bohemian from the Cedar by just looking at the undertail coverts, which are brown, whereas the Cedars are white. Just remember, "Bohemians have Brown Butts."

A Northern Flicker is now inspecting the other suet cake hanging from the horse chestnut tree out front. Holding itself steady with its stiffened tail feathers, which act as a third foot, the flicker forcefully hammers into the suet, grabbing a piece and swallowing it down, with a jerking motion of its smooth gray head.

American Crows fly around the neighborhood; 'caw-cawing' to everyone they see. A Downy Woodpecker is heard 'pik-piking' off in a nearby cottonwood. A small band of Lesser Goldfinches, accompanied by a lone American Goldfinch swoop in to the front yard to take advantage of the thistle sock feeder. The siskins look as if they are in complete control of the sock (and the entire yard for that matter), but a couple brave female lesser goldfinches run a few off and are able to jump aboard and get their breakfast.

Who's to say that you can't go bird watching within the comforts of your own home? And with a cup of tea and muffins to boot!

... The winter birds have come back again,
Here the sprightly Chickadee
Gone now is the Willow Wren
In passing greet each other as if old, old friends
And to the voiceless trees
It is their own they will lend
- Ray LaMontagne 2008

Audubon Calendar
February 2009

5 **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.

12 **General Meeting** Join us at our same great location, the Cache Valley Learning Center (75 S. 400 West), when Joel Merritt, the Cache County Noxious Weed Supervisor, will be talking about noxious weeds. Learn what noxious weeds are, how they are affecting our valley, and what is being done about them. Joel will also present photos and tips to help you identify weeds yourself. 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. We hope to see you there.

14 **Snowshoe Trip to Limber Pine** What better excuse to be able to snuggle up to your Valentine than joining us earlier in the day on a snowshoe hike?! We will be joining the Cache Hikers to hike the Limber Pine trail in search of Clark's Nutcrackers, Red Crossbills, and other unique mountain species. We will leave from an usual spot — the Southwest corner of the Smith's Marketplace parking lot (700 N. Main) at 10 a.m. Bring a lunch and something warm to drink. This field trip should be finished by 3 p.m.

21 **Signs of Spring** Local birding expert Reinhard Jockel will lead this trip in search for early signs of Spring. We'll be looking for early migrants like swans, geese, and cranes in the Benson—Almalga area. Anyone is welcome to attend. Meet at 9 a.m. at the parking lot between Caffe Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 East 150 North). Dress warmly. Bring something warm to drink and something to snack on. The trip will most likely be finished by 2 p.m.

Mini-Grants Available for Local Events

Neighborhood activities focus on birds and nature

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology invites organizations and educators to apply for its Celebrate Urban Birds project mini-grants. Mini-grants average $100 to $500 and help fund neighborhood events across North America.

Celebrate Urban Birds is a free year-round project that collects information from everyday people about 16 species of birds that may be found in urban areas. Participants spend 10 minutes watching birds in their neighborhood and report their observations online at www.CelebrateUrbanBirds.org. This information helps scientists better understand how birds survive in cities and make use of greens spaces, including parks and gardens.

A local Celebrate Urban Birds event connects the arts, music, dance, and gardening with birds and science. Celebrate Urban Birds mini-grants could be used to support a bird-activity day at a local museum, afterschool, library, or community center, or fund art and gardening activities at your club, business, school, senior center, or neighborhood.

To qualify for a mini-grant, please plan to:

- hold a Celebrate Urban Birds event in 2009
- introduce the public/youth to birds
- collect Celebrate Urban Birds data and inspire others to observe birds and collect data
- distribute Celebrate Urban Birds kits (with posters, seeds, and more)
- integrate the arts
- integrate gardening/habitat creation
- get people outside

Application deadline is February 15, 2009
To apply for a mini-grant, please visit www.CelebrateUrbanBirds.org. No experience with birds required.
Contact:Karen Purcell, Project Leader, (607) 254-2455, urbanbirds@cornell.edu

Join The Great Backyard Birdcount

February 13-16
Count for Fun, Count for the Future

Bird and nature fans throughout North America are invited to join tens of thousands of everyday bird watchers for the 12th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), February 13-16, 2009.

A joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, this free event is an opportunity for families, students, and people of all ages to discover the wonders of nature in backyards, schoolyards, and local parks, and, at the same time, make an important contribution to conservation.

"Anyone who can identify even a few species can contribute to the body of knowledge that is used to inform conservation efforts to protect birds and biodiversity," said Audubon Education Vice-President, Judy Braus.

Volunteers take part by counting birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the event and reporting their sightings online at www.birdcount.org. The data help researchers understand bird population trends across the continent, information that is critical for effective conservation. In 2008, participants submitted more than 85,000 checklists, a new record.

"The GBBC has become a vital link in the arsenal of continent wide bird-monitoring projects," said Cornell Lab of Ornithology director John Fitzpatrick. "With more than a decade of data now in hand, the GBBC has documented striking changes in late-winter bird distributions."

Participants submit thousands of digital images for the GBBC photo contest each year. Last year's winners are now posted on the web site. Participants are also invited to upload their bird videos to YouTube tagged "GBBC." Some of them will be featured on the GBBC web site. All participants will be entered in a drawing to win dozens of birding items, including stuffed birds, clocks, books, and feeders.

Businesses, schools, nature clubs, Scout troops, and other community organizations interested in the GBBC can contact the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at (800) 843-2473 (outside the U.S., call (607) 254-2473), or Audubon at citizenscience@audubon.org or (215) 355-9588, Ext 16.

Ghost Birds Return to Bear Lake Valley

Dennis D. Austin (Adapted from an article submitted to the Montpelier Express)

North America's ghost birds were observed in massive numbers within the Idaho-Bear Lake Christmas Bird Count circle. On the west-facing slopes along the road between Dingle and Bear Lake, a minimum of 2,000 rosy-gray colored, sparrow-like birds hopped and fluttered between grasses and shrubs hunting for seeds and bugs. From a distance, they appeared as an enormous hive of honey bees in a field of big sagebrush, each bee pausing only briefly between hops.

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches are often referred to as ghost birds because they are rarely found anywhere in summer and almost always in very small numbers. For example, I have seen only a few at Granddaddy Lake and near Kings Peak in the High Uinta wilderness. However, Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches are occasionally seen in large flocks during winter. This was the second flock recorded in Bear Lake Valley since Christmas Bird Counts were first conducted in 1996. The first observation was 10 years ago in 1998 when 3,216 birds were recorded on the Utah-Bear Lake circle. That year, it was the highest count of this species in North America. Although 10 years apart, it is probable the two observations were from the same flock.

Although gray-crowned rosy-finches have the reputation as ghost birds, the elusive owls maintain their own mysterious magic. The same seven species of owls found on the Logan count may also be found in Bear Lake Valley, albeit in much lower numbers. Although winter observations of Short-eared Owls, Western Screech-Owls, and Barn Owls have been seen, none have been recorded on the Bear Lake Valley counts. As is the case with most owls, bird watchers must learn the owls' preferred and often exact habitat locations.

After dark, I led a small group of our daytime birders in the art of calling owls, explaining that owling often results in zero success in Bear Lake Valley. Five stop locations and 2 ½ hours later, our calling had turned up five Great Horned Owls, and a single Western Screech-Owl, the first recorded in Bear Lake Valley.

In addition to the Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches and the Western Screech-Owl, other noteworthy birds observed this year from the Idaho-Bear Lake Count included 401 American Coots on Bear Lake, 41 Cedar Waxwings in Montpelier, 17 Gray Partridge on the west foothills, and 2 Red-breasted Nuthatches in the Dingle cemetery. "Good" birds from the Utah-Bear Lake Count included 2 Dusky Grouse observed during count week (not on count day) at Sunrise campground, a White-breasted Nuthatch seen with 2 Brown Creepers in a stand of curl-leaf mountain

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mahogany, a lone Western Grebe on Bear Lake, 2 Harris's Sparrows and a nice flock of Evening Grosbeaks amongst the houses south of Garden City, 24 Bald and Golden Eagles, 8 Trumpeter Swans in Round Valley, a record 997 American Robins, and 380 Bohemian Waxwings near Swan Creek.

With the two counts combined, very few expected species were missed this year. However, the American Kestrel, Ruffed Grouse, Virginia Rail, Marsh Wren, Brewer's Blackbird, and Great Blue Heron were not found.

Our long-term data suggest a few species may be in decline in Bear Lake Valley, including the Northern Shrike, Brewer's Blackbird, and perhaps the Downy Woodpecker. Conversely, the Black-billed Magpie, American Crow, Common Raven, Wild Turkey, and Eurasian Collared Cove appear to be increasing in numbers.

This year, the Idaho count won again for numbers of individuals (4,864 vs 3,164), but the Utah count won for number of species (53 vs 41). Clearly, the combination of these two counts gives an accurate account of the wintering birds present in Bear Lake Valley and broadly represents bird populations in the upper valleys of the Intermountain West.

I wish like to thank all the volunteer observers who participated in this year's counts: especially Brent Price, Annette de Knijf, Bryce Nielson, Chris Peterson, and Barb Ferris, who led the other teams. We totaled 58 party hours. Our bird parties begin about 8:00 a.m. on count day and often end after dark. And for many of us, counting birds is some of best partying of the year. Anyone interested in having their name added to my contact list for the December, 2009 counts, please call me at 1-435-245-5261.

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

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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 15th of each month. Send to birdnerdut@gmail.com.

National Audubon Society
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Yes, I'd like to contribute to Audubon and receive the Bridgerland Audubon newsletter, *The Stilt,* and the *National AUDUBON magazine*, as a:

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☐ 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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Just a short post-Christmas recommendation for your yard birds. Did you have a cut tree in the house, and is it still there? We stand ours under our seed feeder outside for the rest of the winter, giving birds some cover and a place to perch.

—Jim Cane