

# The Stilt

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Newsletter of the Bridgerland Audubon Society

## Help Project FeederWatch Track Backyard Birds

Bird watchers needed to help scientists discover changes in bird populations

What happens in the backyard should not stay in the backyard—at least when it comes to bird feeders. By sharing information about which birds visit their feeders between November and April, backyard bird watchers can help scientists track changes in bird numbers and movements from year to year, through Project FeederWatch, a citizen-science program from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Bird Studies Canada.

Project FeederWatch begins on November 14 and runs through early April. Taking part is easy. Anyone can count the numbers and kinds of birds at their feeders and enter their information on the FeederWatch website. Participants submitted nearly 117,000 checklists last season. Since 1987, more than 40,000 people from the United States and Canada have taken part in the project.

“To get the most complete picture of bird movements, we always need new

sets of eyes to tell us what species are showing up at backyard feeders,” says David Bonter, leader of Project FeederWatch. “Participants always tell us how much fun it is and how good it feels to contribute to our understanding of birds by submitting their sightings.”



There was a massive southern movement of Pine Siskins during the 2008-09 season.

Project FeederWatch is for people of all ages and skill levels. To learn more and to sign up, visit [www.feederwatch.org](http://www.feederwatch.org) or call the Cornell Lab toll-free at (866) 982-2473. In return for the \$15 fee (\$12 for Cornell Lab members) participants receive the FeederWatcher’s Handbook, an identification poster of the most common feeder birds, a calendar, complete instructions, and Winter Bird Highlights, an annual summary of FeederWatch findings.

Participant Nancy Corr of Harrisburg, Oregon, sums up her Project FeederWatch experience: “Thanks for the wonderful opportunity to share our love of birding and to participate in something meaningful!”

### Regional highlights based on 2008-09 FeederWatch reports:

**Southwest & California:** On most lists: House Finch. Fewer reports: Western Scrub-Jay. Increasing: Lesser Goldfinch and Eurasian Collared-Dove.

**Pacific Northwest & Rocky Mountains:** On most lists: Dark-eyed Junco. Increasing: Anna’s Hummingbird and Golden-crowned Sparrow. Rare bird: Yellow-throated Warbler (Alberta).

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# New Maya Lin Work Highlights Extinction

“What is Missing?” sculpture uses multimedia of endangered animals

**M**aya Lin, the world-renowned artist who created the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., revealed her latest work on September 17—an ambitious multimedia project that brings attention to the environmental crisis of extinction. The sculpture, called *What is Missing?*, uses sound and video of endangered species from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s Macaulay Library archive. The sculpture is on display at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco, California.



Lin worked with the Cornell Lab’s scientists and staff for two years to develop her unique vision for this work. “In *What is Missing?*, Maya Lin’s genius is to juxtapose scientifically documented sounds, images, and facts in imaginative ways that connect individuals to a natural world that is indeed on the verge of going missing,” said Cornell Lab director John Fitzpatrick. “We cannot imagine a more important use of the assets so carefully gathered and archived through the decades at the Cornell Lab.”

The *What is Missing?* sculpture consists of a huge bronze and wood cone that shows multiple short videos featuring extinct, threatened, and endangered species and the habitats and ecosystems they need to survive. One video about noise pollution in the ocean used data from the Cornell Lab’s Bioacoustics Research Program “to create a scene that makes people realize how loud the ocean is for any sonar-dependent marine animal,” said Lin. Other videos depict “Sounds of Songbirds in Our Backyards” and “Rivers Running Freely to the Sea.” Lin also used sounds and video of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, Common Loon, humpback whales, prairie-chickens, sea turtles, pronghorns, and coral reefs from the Macaulay Library archive.

This is the first of several installations around the world in which Lin will continue the environmental theme begun with *What is Missing?*

The **Cornell** Lab  of Ornithology

## Christmas Bird Count To Mark 110th Anniversary in December

We will be braving the cold weather to search out those rarities that make Cache Valley a very wonderful place.

Save the date: our CBC will be held Saturday, December 19th.

Audubon's Signature Citizen Science program is already making news. Information gathered by dedicated volunteers goes towards the State of the Birds Reports.

# Audubon Calendar

## November 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.

**7 Field Trip: Benson Area** The Benson area is always a good place for local raptors. Join us as we hike around the Benson Marina in search of late migrants and early wintering waterfowl. We will keep our eyes on the power polls as well for raptors like Rough-legged Hawks. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the parking lot between Caffe Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 East 150 North). Dress warmly and bring snacks and something warm to drink. The trip will most likely be finished by 1 p.m.

**12 General Meeting** Join us at our same great location, the Cache Valley Learning Center (75 S. 400 West), as Robert Schmidt will lead a panel discussion regarding the controversial topic of cat control. He will bring his own insight and experience controlling the feral cat population on and around USU's campus. Come with questions. 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!

**21 Field Trip: Hyrum Dam** Join us as we visit a Cache Valley site that is sure to provide a good variety of waterfowl. We will be looking for early wintering birds, perhaps even scoter. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the parking lot between Caffe Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 East 150 North). Dress warmly and bring snacks and something warm to drink. The trip will most likely be finished by 1 p.m.

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## Utah Bioneers Conference November 20-21 at USU Eccles Conference Center

Bioneers: "Gathering people at the crossroads of ecological restoration, human health and social justice" will be with us for the 6th season. For details and registration information, visit us at [www.extension.usu.edu/bioneers](http://www.extension.usu.edu/bioneers). This is considered by most to be the best conference they've ever attended. Filled with hope and inspiration, one can't help but commit to making a better world. Personal and community action is our central purpose.

Bridgerland Audubon's generous contributions continue in many forms from a generous cash donation and fine exhibit to Board members serving on the planning committee, presenting workshops, and rallying students to become involved. Both university and high school students play significant roles before and during the conference. Their energy and creativity are essential.

This year's conference will focus on economic implications of renewable energy development and energy efficiency in Utah. Experts and professionals from around the state will address this timely topic including Mary Ann Wright, Energy Resource Coordinator for the Office of the Governor.

Mornings and early afternoon will be filled with plenary speakers from the national conference, enriched by entertainment and sumptuous food provided by Culinary Concepts, Crumb Brothers Bakery, Caffe Ibis, and Rock Hill Creamery. Please join us for this great Fall celebration!

BIONEERS

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# Local Bird Spotlight

## Sharp-shinned Hawks in the Wellsvilles

— by Lyle Bingham

On our recent Bridgerland Audubon hike to the Hawkwatch site in the Wellsvilles, we didn't have the number or diversity of raptors that we saw last year. That day, smoke covered the western horizon and the Great Salt Lake into Cache Valley. The smoke indicated stable air conditions with lower prevailing winds. A field fire west of Honeyville showed weak south winds carrying additional smoke to the north. The west upslope wind on the Wellsvilles provided lift for the hawks to glide

south. But there weren't as many raptors as when there is a stronger prevailing west wind providing a conveyor between mountain ridges. Under these conditions, the predominant migrating raptor during our visit was the Sharp-shinned hawk.

According to Hawkwatch, the Sharp-shinned hawk, *Accipiter striatus*, is one of the more common raptors migrating along mountain ridges. This hawk is infamous among birders for raiding bird feeders and causing mayhem followed by instant quiet. When not an uninvited guest at the backyard feeder, "Sharpies" live in wooded areas, where they fly from perch to perch, or wait silently looking for the opportunity to take small birds. They

kill with their talons and take their prey to a favorite post or branch, the so-called "killing post", where they pluck the feathers with their beak.

Just slightly larger in length and wingspan than Kestrels, Sharp-shinned hawks are the smallest accipiter. Weighing only 3-5 ounces, they are 10-14 inches long and have a wingspan of 21-27 inches. Sibley notes that like other accipiters, the female is almost twice as large as the male. This size trait, or dimorphism, is more common in bird-eating raptors than carrion-eating raptors.

Sharp-shinned hawks nest in the crotches of trees or on branches near the trunk of the tree, where they build

young. The young fledge in 3 to 4 weeks.

Immatures have streaky brown markings on a creamy breast. Their backs are dark brown, and their eyes are yellow. As they mature, their eye color changes from yellow, to orange, to dark red in older adults. Adult plumage on the back is grey-blue in males and grey-brown for females. Sharp-shinned hawks most closely resemble the larger Cooper's hawk, but have a short head and a shorter, more square tail than the longer rounded tail of the Cooper's. Immatures of both species are more similar than adults.

Sharpies are found from Alaska and



Canada, to Mexico and the Caribbean. They range from the west to east coasts. These hawks fly south in September and October, returning in April and May to Alaska and Canada. Accipiters rarely cross large bodies of water. On the east coast, Sharpies follow the coastline. Some attribute this to the

small nests of twigs lined with bark. Sharpies favor coniferous forests. And unlike other hawks, they don't always return to the same nest each year. Most often, the pair works together to create a new nest. In late May or early June, the female lays 4 or 5 bluish-white eggs with brown speckling. During the time the female is laying and incubating the eggs, the male feeds her. Then, incubation duties are shared for 23-27 days until hatching. The male continues to provide food after the eggs hatch, while the female guards and incubates the

migrating passerines available for food. Others attribute coastline flights to lower, less reliable thermal winds over water. When migrating, Sharp-shinned hawks seek geographic formations that cause lift. They glide the updrafts from mountain ridges to migrate with less effort than they would use flapping their wings. Upslope wind is caused by the sun warming the slope or by prevailing winds being forced over the slope. On more level ground, solar warming builds stand-alone columns of rotating air. These columns

Continued from page 4

enable eagles, pelicans and larger hawks to rise to other levels and find winds that assist their flight.

Sharp-shinned hawk numbers are dependent upon the number of small birds, which in turn indicates the availability of food, including insects. Thus, the presence of Sharp-shinned hawks indicates the health of the overall environment. Perhaps we can forgive their occasional visits to the feeder, in return for the opportunity to view this small accipiter. Who knows, our feeders may contribute in some small way to the count on the Wellsvilles.

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## Reinhard's Goshawk

How much better can it get- sunrise bouncing off Teton spires, aspen and cottonwood blazing gold, continuous elk bugle to mingle with distant roar of Teewinot waterfalls and cascades. Then Reinhard breaks the spell as he blurts "Goshawk!!" My sight follows his frantically waving arm. There she sits in wild splendor, an adult queen of the acciptors, contentedly preening her loveliness in preparation of another day of Teton grandeur. Her majesty sits in a very picturesque cottonwood snag framed by Teewinot spires far above. Other than an occasional glance, she appears oblivious to our presence and continues her ritual preening as Carlos, Jim, and Dan join our excitement.

We're on yet another annual BAS pilgrimage to the Grant Teton National Park to witness one of our planet's great wildlife spectacles as vast herds of bison, elk, and antelope create a parade of lust as they grunt, groan, shriek, and bugle their urgency. The lower slopes of Teewinott offer great early morning viewing as we scour the meadows and patches of spruce-fir and aspen forest hoping for a monarch bull to present himself. We begrudgingly depart from her regalia moving up-slope where we flush two young bulls that keep a safe distance as they lead us upward toward more bugling emitted from forest shadows.

I soon split from the group to search a patch of forest that holds promise of bigger game. An hour later I retrace my path to find the goshawk still sitting and preening. The others haven't returned, so I revel in the moment until itchy feet take me along another segment of a game trail which eventually leaves the lodgepole pine forest to a meadow and pond with promise of waterfowl and perhaps a wayward shorebird. Ducks hang in the recesses. Emitting no sound or other distinguishing features, and myself without binoculars, I soon depart to bushwhack my way back to our vehicle where the others have just arrived.

Later in the am we visit the new Moose visitor center where I query the staff on the park status of goshawks. No resource people on board so they refer me to the Yellowstone N.P. website where experts reside who might have recent inventory data. As the reader is probably aware, goshawk populations have been in decline for decades due to habitat loss, primarily large blocks of mature forest with good populations of snowshoe hare and suitable mature aspen forest for nesting. I have yet to visit their resources, so the question goes begging.

We finish our forays with a hike into Granit Canyon near Wilson at the south entrance. Again, I depart my comrades to visit the new Rockefeller visitor center which boasts a platinum LEEDs (leadership in energy and environmental design) building, the highest "green building" and site rating available for such endeavors. From there, I enjoy a delightful 3 mile run through forest, field, and stream corridors adding several more birds to our list to join the waiting party and begin our return trek with wonderful impressions and memories to see us through until next fall when we all plan to do a repeat, hopefully with another goshawk in view!

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# Greetings Grab Attention with Surprising Sounds

Fun new cards contain real bird songs and calls

A woodpecker may hammer, a loon wail, or a cardinal sing. Open a card from a new series of collectible greetings and out pop cheeps, peeps, whistles, and croaks from a variety of beautiful birds. The cards are produced by the U.K.'s Really Wild Cards and their authentic bird recordings come from the Macaulay Library archive at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Each card features an elegant painting selected from the Cornell Lab's art collection and contains information about the bird.

"The quality of the sound is fabulous not only because of what we've done at our end, but because of the editing and engineering work done in the Macaulay Library," says John Wignall of Really Wild Cards. "You get 13 to 15 seconds of the best sounds of that particular bird. I love the loon—it has a great, haunting call. I love the woodpeckers too. You get the whole range of sounds the birds make."

These environmentally-friendly cards are made from recycled or sustainable forest products. The sound chips run on lead-free lithium batteries and even the clear wrapper is biodegradable. A percentage of profits from sales of the cards will fund research and conservation projects at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Wignall launched the cards at bird shows in the United States and Britain. "There is so much interest in birding," Wignall says. "Everybody knows somebody who is a bird watcher. It's amazing how enthusiastic people are."

Really Wild Cards expects to release a new set of bird sound card approximately every six months and is planning a series that features endangered bird and animal species from around the world. Really Wild Cards is handling wholesale distribution. Individual customers can obtain the cards through Wild Birds Unlimited at Sapsucker Woods (contact information below).

"Musical cards have been a really big hit," says Wignall, "but there's nothing like these cards out there, they are quite unique."

#### Links:

Really Wild Cards: <http://www.reallywildcards.com>

Cornell Lab of Ornithology: <http://www.birds.cornell.edu>

Macaulay Library: <http://www.macaulaylibrary.org>

WBU at Sapsucker Woods: <http://www.sapsuckerwoods.com/category/RWSC.html> or (877) 266-4928 (toll free)



## First Manx Shearwater in USA

On September 8, biologists visiting Matinicus Rock, an island off mid-coast Maine, discovered a fledgling Manx Shearwater, the first of this species to successfully mature to fledgling age in the USA. Audubon's Scott Hall, along with Brian Benedict, Bob Houston, Matt Klostermann, and Lauren Scopel of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, discovered the chick. Named for their habit of flying low over the water, adult Manx Shearwaters develop a wingspan of nearly three feet. The discovery is a tribute to the partnership between Audubon's Seabird Restoration project and USFWS. More about this incredible even can be read at <http://web1.audubon.org/news/pressRelease.php?id=1740>.

# "Thank You" to XMission

For the last couple of years, Xmission has hosted the [www.bridgerlandaudubon.com](http://www.bridgerlandaudubon.com) web site and donated the services. All they ask is that we post their banner on our home page and re-certify yearly as a non-profit organization. Their generosity extends to many non-profit organizations throughout the state, including Hawkwatch International, Utah Opera and the Utah Symphony.

Xmission also manages the registration for our domain name at a competitive rate and through a recognized registrar, Tucows. XMission can also serve the BAS board as an Internet and technology resource. They have been very willing to provide the help we need. They helped us set up [WildAboutUtah.com/wildaboututah.org](http://WildAboutUtah.com/wildaboututah.org) and point these names both to a [www.bridgerlandaudubon.org](http://www.bridgerlandaudubon.org) web site directory. This gives us an archive for audio, text and pictures supporting the weekly UPR/Stokes Nature Center/Bridgerland Audubon Wild About Utah radio spot.

All members of Bridgerland Audubon Society qualify for discounted Internet service through Xmission. This includes officers, board members and our valued members. Simply mention BridgerlandAudubon to receive the discount. Xmission can be contacted online at [www.xmission.com](http://www.xmission.com) or on the phone at 801-539-0852 or toll-free at 1-877-964-7746

# 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 15<sup>th</sup> of each month. Send to [birdnerdut@gmail.com](mailto: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).

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**Please send all checks payable to National Audubon Society with this card to:**  
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 Palm Coast, FL 23142-2250  
 Membership Source Code: C9ZW520Z

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](mailto: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***

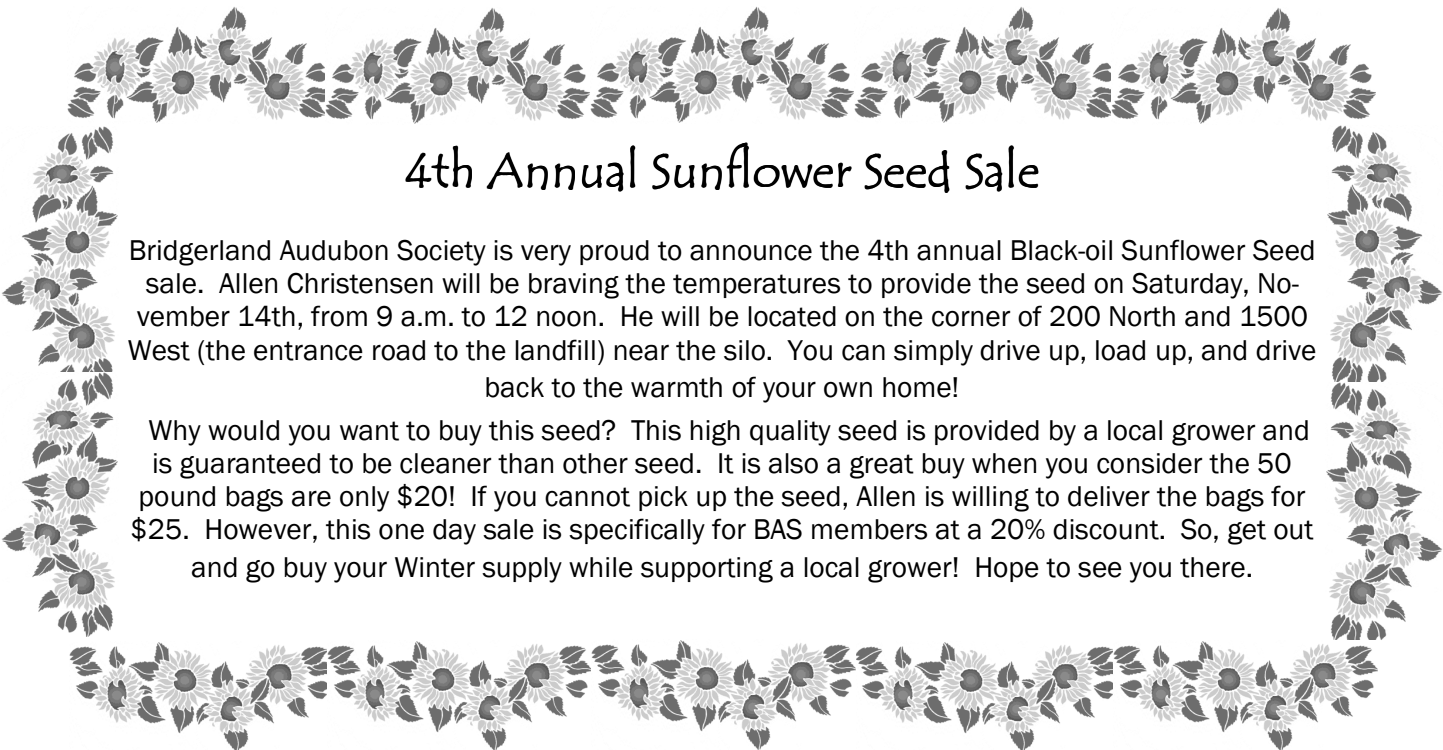
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## 4th Annual Sunflower Seed Sale

Bridgerland Audubon Society is very proud to announce the 4th annual Black-oil Sunflower Seed sale. Allen Christensen will be braving the temperatures to provide the seed on Saturday, November 14th, 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 drive back to the warmth of your own 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.