



The *Stilt*

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Newsletter of Bridgerland Audubon Society



Announcing Our 47th Christmas Count December Birds

By Bryan Dixon and
Keith Archibald

For nature lovers, December can be a gloomy time. The cold means layers of clothing, and the shorter days and snow limit opportunities to enjoy those special places of summer. There are fewer plants to enjoy, no flowers, and many of nature's animal species have gone into hibernation or fled south. That's the downside.

The upside is the beauty of contrast in whites and blacks, the crisp air, the quiet of snow-covered woods and trails. And although some birds have moved south out of our valley, others have moved south *into* the valley. Now is the time for careful study of herring and Thayer's gulls at the landfill, searches for rough-legged and ferruginous hawks along Valley View Highway, Barrows and

common goldeneyes at First Dam, prairie falcons, northern shrikes and tree sparrows in the fields around Benson and Amalga.

Don't forget our "common" birds. On the benches, there will be sharp-tailed grouse, gray partridge, and (ugh) wild turkeys to find. In the mountains, listen for northern pygmy owls, mountain chickadees, and red crossbills; in the cat-tails and rushes search for the lingering marsh wren and common snipe.

Best of all, however, are the real weirdos. Amongst the hundreds of horned larks will be a larkspur, but who will find it? Perhaps another eastern bluebird will join his friend, the hermit thrush, along the canal above the golf course. And why is it that only in the

depth of winter do we find long-eared owls, supposedly here year round? This is also the time of glory for feeder watchers, for they will get the first glimpse of Harris' and white-throated sparrows. And, veteran birders will remember that winter when 4,000 gray-crowned rosy finches appeared on the bench above North Logan.

Just in case you need more motivation to get bundled up and out, remember our Christmas Bird Count, scheduled for Saturday, December 16. One of over 2,000 count circles, the CBC preserves a tradition of counting birds rather than shooting them, and adding to the longest running bird census in the world, first begun in

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Regional Notes

St. George Winter Bird Festival

Red Cliffs Audubon

Can you believe that another year has gone by and it is time again for the St. George Winter Bird Festival? The 4th Annual Event is on January 26th-28. This community outreach program is presented by Red Cliffs Audubon Society.

The festival has expanded to two days of activities centered at the Tonaquint Park & Nature Center: sales, exhibits, presentations, and kid's workshops. Outstanding and unique presentations include: Birds of Washington County; Extinction; Introduction to Bird Watching; Watchable Wildlife Program; Bird Photography; SW Utah's Wintering Hawks & Eagles; California Condors; Utah Raptors; Binoculars & Scopes; Feeders & Seeds; and the Origin of Birds.

There will be three days of field trips featuring: Lytle Ranch; Washington Fields & Springs Park; Quail Creek Reservoir/Hurricane Fields; Halfway Wash; St. George Ponds; Toquerville, Grafton & Springdale; Snow Canyon SP; Rio Virgin Estates

Area; Ivins, Gunlock, Baker Reservoirs; and weather permitting, Vermilion Cliffs in Arizona. All field trips are free and open to the public and will depart from the Tonaquint Park parking lot. Carpooling encouraged.

During the winter months many waterfowl migrate through and stop over in our lakes, ponds, and reservoirs. Our southwest Utah habitats can attract over 350 species of birds during the year. In January, see wintering raptors, waterfowl, sparrows, woodpeckers, and many more. The total species seen at the last festival were 103. Perhaps we will see the elusive vermilion flycatcher!

On Friday evening the featured guest speaker is Bobby Harrison. In 2004 he sighted an ivory-billed woodpecker in the swamps of Arkansas along with Tim Gallagher. Harrison will tell the story of the ivory-bill's near demise and miraculous resurrection and how the grail bird was rediscovered. He will also give the latest updates on new sets of credible sightings! Admission is free. Location: Dunford Auditorium, Dixie College.

Attend the Saturday evening banquet featuring keynote speaker Reece Stein, KUTV outdoor personality since 1968. He hosts "Roughin' It Outdoors" and at the banquet he will discuss and show his best birding experiences. Don't miss this evening with Reece! Great food and lots of door prizes! The banquet will be held at the beautiful SunRiver St. George. Cost is \$20, and pre-registration by January 25 is required through the St. George Recreation Center: (435)-634-5860 or go to www.activityreg.com under programs.

For further information contact Festival Chairman, Marilyn Davis (435)-673-0996 or mkdavis028@msn.com. To view and print a brochure, schedule of events, or banquet registration forms go to www.sgcity.org/birdfestival. For Southern Utah visitor information go to www.utahstgeorge.com or request a Vacation Planning Guide from the St. George Area CVB at (800) 869-6635. Make your plans today to join us for a wonderful three-day event in sunny St. George!

Audubon Calendar

December 2006

6 BAS Board of Trustees Meeting. Bridgerland Audubon's Board of Trustees meet at 7 p.m. Wednesday at the Cache Valley Learning Center, 75 South 400 West in Logan. Please enter through the building's west doors. All are welcome to attend.

9 Antelope Island in Winter. Winter often brings unusual northern birds down to the Antelope Island area both along the causeway and on the island itself. Such rarities as long-tailed ducks, scoters and other sea ducks as well as such Arctic songbirds as snow buntings and Lapland longspurs have been found by our group in past years. We will thus go on another winter foray to see what the winter weather has brought us this year. This is also a very good time of year to see big game, which is likely to be down low near the road rather than up higher on the mountains. Come join us for a morning and early afternoon of fun on the island. We will meet Saturday at 8:30 a.m. at the parking lot between Caffé Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 E. 150 North), carpool down to Antelope Island State Park, and bird both the causeway and the island itself. Bring a lunch and dress for the season. We plan to be back home by mid-afternoon. For more information call Dick Hurren at (435) 734-2653.

14 Backyard Birds, and Feeders. At our December general meeting, BAS board member Dave Drown will show us how to build simple feeders to support our feathered friends for the upcoming winter. Materials will be provided for all who wish to participate and build their own backyard feeder to attract birds. These items make great Christmas gifts. Local birding expert Sue Drown will present ideas for attracting birds to your yard this winter and year round, including suggestions on water features, plants, and seed mixes. For the bird identification workshop, Sue will showcase species that frequent birdfeeders, helping in the identification of backyard birds. Join us this Thursday at 7 p.m. at the Cache Valley Learning Center, 75 South 400 West in Logan.

16 Christmas Bird Count. The Christmas Bird Count is our most important winter event. Dr. Keith Archibald has been organizing the count for years now and always does an outstanding job. We divide into teams and bird the various segments of a 13-mile circle of land centered on Hyde Park. Birding begins before dawn and lasts until after dark. Don't despair if you cannot bird the whole day; Dr. Archibald will line you up with a team that can make use of your talents during the time period that you feel you can allot to this activity. Come join us this Saturday for a day of great fun, where we all learn and share nature experiences together. To sign up or for more information call Keith at 752-8258.



If you'd like to come along on a field trip but do not have binoculars, call Dick Hurren (435) 734-2653. He'll try to find a pair for you to use.

January 2007

1 Two-Hundred Club Birding. Is it possible to see 200 species of birds in Cache County in the calendar year (January-December)? 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 is 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 to see 200 of the great natural beauties in Cache Valley. Meet at 9 a.m. at the parking lot between Caffé Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 East 150 North). Bring something to munch on, because the trip will run into early afternoon. For more information call Buck Russell at (435) 512-9641.

30 Northern Box Elder County for Unusual Winter Birds. Northern Box Elder County is one of those places which very unusual birds of the extreme north are sometimes pushed down to by the harsher weather further north. Come join us as we explore the area around Snowville and Park Valley where in the past such rarities as snow buntings, Lapland longspurs, and even snowy owls and gyrfalcons have been found. We also always see ferruginous hawks, golden eagles, and at least two or three different species of owls. We will meet Saturday at 8:30 a.m. at the parking lot between Caffé Ibis and the Logan Fire Station (50 E. 150 North) and carpool to the areas we intend to bird. We plan on returning by mid-afternoon. Please come join us. Bring a lunch or be prepared to buy one. Dress warmly. For more information call Dick Hurren at (435) 734-2653.

Dick Hurren is stepping down as outings chairman for Bridgerland Audubon at the end of the year. He thanks all those who have helped him make the outings program a success. He is especially grateful for Dave and Sue Drown, who have assisted him officially, and for the unwavering support of BAS President Val Grant. You will note that in this, his last month as outings chair, he has been a bit selfish and has chosen to do two events that happen to rank high among his personal favorites. Please forgive him for this act of selfishness.



Please remember that the price of gasoline remains high. Carpooling riders should plan to reimburse their drivers \$2-3 for shorter trips, \$5 for longer trips

Black Oil Sunflower Seed Sale

Would you like to support our feathered friends as they weather another Cache Valley winter, while at the same time supporting local agriculture?

Then make plans to stop by a roadside stand set up especially for people who care about birds on Saturday, December 2 from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the corner of Valley View Highway and the landfill road (200 North, approximately 1400 West), southwest corner. There, 50-pound bags of black oil sunflower seed will be available for \$20 a bag. This high quality seed is grown by Laron Barfuss from Box Elder County, who is the second generation farming seed for Bridgerland Audubon. It's GOOD STUFF.

At this price, you should try to buy for the season, or how about a Christmas gift?

—Allen Christensen

Chapter Notes

BAS Field Trip Report: Birding the South End of Cache Valley

We had a pleasant day on our Saturday field trip of November 4. It was not snowing, it was not bitter cold, and it only rained a bit. We were happy. And, we had a “three-owl day”—remarkable any time, but especially this time of year when by rights, things should have been a bit slow.

Our caravan of five cars toured three areas. We

stopped at the east side of Hyrum Reservoir, meandered around a special spot we get permission to access on the Little Bear River in Paradise, and drove the McMurdie Valley Road loop back to the west end of Hyrum Reservoir. There, we checked out a wonderful up-close quartet of common loons.

Top ten birds of the day were:

- Surf Scoter (female)
- Common Loons (5)
- Western Grebes (many)
- Barn Owl
- Great Horned Owls (2)
- Common Mergansers
- Buffleheads
- Downy Woodpecker
- Cedar Waxwings

And three trees decked out in dozens of rock pigeons, as pretty as holiday ornaments!

By Sue Drown
BAS Treasurer

CBC

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December 1900. Last year something like 60,000 birders found 70,000,000 birds on the one-day count.

Record numbers will probably be tallied again in Texas – almost 250 species – and at Prudhoe Bay – one (common raven)! There have been 38 counts in Utah over the years, the first one in Provo in 1903. Last year, our own Logan count tallied 91 species, relatively low for recent years, but

the third highest in the state! Only Salt Lake City and Provo recorded higher numbers of species (95 and 101 respectively). We still, however, lead the state in number of participants. Last year, 64 of us participated in the count.

We need experts and beginners, early-morning-dark-owl-watchers and afternoon-only-because-the-kids-have-morning-soccer participants. Don't want to drive? No problem, we can hook you up with someone who does. Some of us will scour the valley marshes, some will hike the narrow canyons and high ridges to the east.

And, we're all invited to the evening potluck at Dave and Sue Drown's home (1776 East 1400 North, 752-3797), where we tally the day's sightings and keep that real surprise discovery for the last moment.

The cost for participating is only \$5 (students are free) to cover compilation and publication of the national data. Don't let winter get you down – contact Keith Archibald (752-8258, archie132@comcast.net) or Bryan Dixon (752-6830, bdixon@xmission.com) to sign on to this year's winter adventure!

Conservation News

Dam Removed at Cove

The Cove Dam on the Bear River west of Niter and Grace, Idaho is gone, and a section of the Bear River is free-flowing once again after 90 years. PacifiCorp elected to remove the dam and impoundment rather than invest heavily in rebuilding the flume that supplied the Cove Power Plant. This fall, they've recontoured the banks, recreated the channel to match historic photographs, and replanted

vegetation. The result is a Class II whitewater stretch and cold-water fishery just below Black Canyon. It's worth a visit to see what can be done to restore natural rivers. To access the site, go north from Logan on Rt. 91 for 63 miles. Turn west on 2-Mile Road just before the cemetery south of Grace, Idaho. Follow the paved road westward toward the Bear River for about 2-

1/2 miles to turn right onto Power Plant Road, which turns to dirt. After another mile, you should reach an overlook to the river from which you can proceed down a dugway past the Grace Power Plant, PacifiCorp substation, and the river itself. To the north is an access to the bottom of Black Canyon; to the south is where the Cove Dam and flume were. Enjoy!

Tracking Marbled Godwits

Conservation scientists are looking to give the marbled godwit a leg up by learning more about their travels and now you can learn right along with them.

The godwit, a species of high concern in both the U.S. and Canada, is currently the focus of an international shorebird conservation effort by scien-

tists in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico.

As part of that effort, Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge Biologist Bridget Olsen and USGS Scientist Adrian Farmer fitted godwits captured last spring at Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge with lightweight, solar-powered satellite transmitters. They are tracking the birds to

learn more about the routes the birds follow, their stopover sites, and where they breed in order to protect areas critical to the bird's survival.

You can follow the bird's progress, learn more about the project, and find out how to report sightings at <http://www.fort.usgs.Resources/GoGodwits/>

Calling environmentalists! Get connected! Join the Econet email notification list. Send an email to bdixon@xmission.com to join. We use your address only for Econet messages. We also respect your privacy – we suppress the listing of all the recipients' addresses in the To: field when we send messages and we do not release these addresses to anyone. As a recipient, you're also entitled to submit a notice for distribution. We circulate notices for local events of conservation interest, BAS outings, and meetings.

—Bryan Dixon

Welcome to BAS

New Members

Maureen Correll
Theodore J Kindred
Dianne Morris-Masten
Sue Sanborn
Brandon Spencer

Renewing Members

Leanna Ballard
David J Behmer
Christopher Cokinos
David B Drown
Diana T Glenn
Molly Hysell
William Jensen
Reinhard A Jockel

Lauren L Mastro
Eric J Meyer
Ivan G Palmblad
Marjorie Simard
Don Standing
F H Wagner
Maureen Wagner
James L Woodson

Transfers Into Our Chapter

John Gallagher
Kris Koelling

Bridgerland Audubon contacts

Trustees

2004-2007 Dave Drown, 752-3797; Jack Greene, 563-6816; Reinhard Jockel; Stephen Peterson, 755-5041
2005-2008 Jim Cane, 713-4668; Richard Mueller, 752-5637; Dick Hurren 435/734-2653; David Liddell, 245-2705
2003-2006 Ron Goede, 752-9650; Bret Selman, 435/257-5260

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 stiltnews@hotmail.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*.



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