



the Pelican

Lahontan Audubon Society • P.O. Box 2304 • Reno, Nevada 89505 • www.nevadaaudubon.org • 775-324-BIRD

Mission statement: To preserve and improve the remaining habitat of birds and other wildlife, restore historical habitat, and educate the public, with emphasis on children, providing vision to all about our unique Nevada environments.

**MARCH/APRIL
2007**

vol. 44, no. 4

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Membership

*Submissions for the May/June
issue are due April 1, 2007*

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Date: Fourth Tuesday of the month
Time: Social at 6:30 p.m. Program starts at 7 p.m.
Location: South Valleys Library
15650A Wedge Parkway, Reno
Exterior door, west side of building

Directions to South Valleys Library: Take Hwy 395 to the Mt. Rose Hwy. Head west on the Mt. Rose Hwy and take the first right turn onto Wedge Parkway, just past Raley's shopping center. Go about one mile on Wedge Parkway and look for the boldly designed, mustard yellow library on the right.

March 27—Peter Bradley—Cavity-nesting Bird and Bee Mortality in Hollow Plastic Mine Claim Markers in the Great Basin

In 1983, a new source of songbird mortality was identified in the Great Basin. Mountain Bluebirds were flying into and becoming trapped in hollow, plastic mine claim markers. Peter, biologist for the Nevada Department of Wildlife in Elko, will talk to us about the work that began in 1986 to document the extent of this bird mortality. To date, 914 dead birds of 33 species were removed from 7,058 abandoned posts on public lands in north-east Nevada. As many as 32 identifiable birds have been found in a single post. Native bee and beetle species made up 98% of identified insect mortalities. Peter will provide details about the numbers and kinds of species affected, rates of mortality, and projections of actual deaths statewide. Given the durability and extremely slow decomposition rate of these markers, the problem worsens with each day that the posts remain standing.

April 24—Steve and Paula Gessler—"Antarctic Adventure"

In the austral summer of 2001-2002 Steve and Paula Gessler embarked from Tierra del Fuego aboard a Russian icebreaker to the Antarctic peninsula via the Falkland Islands and South Georgia Island. Join them for an unforgettable photographic journey to areas teeming with wildlife, gorgeous scenery, and a glimpse of the icebox of the world. Steve and Paula have been members of the Reno Photo Club for over 15 years. They met at a meeting and have been competing for tripod space ever since. Both are ardent photographers whose love of travel and nature has taken them to the far corners of the world.

FIELD TRIPS

Christiane Omer

775-354-2634
happycpo@aol.com

Field trips are free to Audubon members and non-members. Birders of all skills levels are encouraged to participate. Trips are subject to change or cancellation, so we strongly encourage all interested participants to pre-register with field trip leaders. Pre-registration provides leaders with an idea of the number of participants to expect and contact information so the leaders can reach you in the event of trip changes or cancellations. Remember to dress for the weather and bring something to eat and drink.

For information on field trips added after this publication, please view the Lahontan Audubon Society web site at www.nevadaudubon.org.

Saturday, March 17 Susanville Sage-Grouse Lek and Honey Lake

Time: 5:30 a.m.

Meeting Place: Hallelujah Junction Highway 395

Trip Leader: Dave Arsenault (530) 258-9137 or dave@aviancenter.com

This is a great chance to observe male Greater Sage-Grouse perform to attract females onto their lekking grounds. This tour also includes a trip to the mountains west of Honey Lake to look for forest dwelling bird species. Meet at the store at Hallelujah Junction to carpool. Depending upon road conditions, only 4-wheel drive or high clearance vehicles will be able to drive to the lek. Bring food and water as well as a scope if you have one.

Saturday, March 31 Susanville Sage-Grouse Lek and Honey Lake

Time: 5 a.m.

Meeting Place: McDonald's on Oddie Blvd., 2 blocks east of Highway 395 in Sparks

Trip Leader: Dave Jickling (775) 329-8959

This is a second chance to make the trip to Honey Lake if you missed it earlier. Observe male Greater Sage-Grouse perform to attract females onto their lekking grounds. This tour also includes a visit to Honey Lake wetlands with good potential for numerous waterfowl and raptor species. Depending upon road conditions, only four-wheel drive or high clearance vehicles will be able to drive to the lek. Bring food, water and a scope if you have one.

Saturday, April 7 Wandering the Carson Valley

Time: 7 a.m.

Meeting Place: In & Out Burger in Carson

Trip Leader: Jim Woods (775) 265-3914 after 6 p.m. or jwoods@pellettconstruction.net during the work day

Here is a great opportunity to see the numerous birds and habitats of the Carson Valley. We'll take a short walk at the IVGID wetlands to look for waterfowl and then move on to sagebrush, raptor, and riparian species. We may see Prairie Falcons, American Kestrels, Bald Eagles, Golden Eagles,

Northern Harriers, and maybe even Swainson's or Ferruginous Hawks. On the Carson River we'll look for Kingfishers, Mergansers, Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks and those challenging sparrows. Next it's back to town and a local ranch for even more! Meet at the In & Out Burger in Carson at 7 a.m. to carpool. From Reno take 395 South to Carson City. South of Carson City turn right on Topsy Lane (a mile or so south of Spooner Summit turn-off) then take a left into the shopping center and look for In & Out Burger. Look for a red mid-size pick-up with a red camper shell. Bring a bag lunch and plenty of water, a scope if possible, and expect to wrap up around 2:30 p.m.

This trip is limited to 12 people; make certain you sign up with Jim.

Saturday, April 21 Swan Lake

Trip Leader: Bob Goodman (775) 972-7848 or pandion36@aol.com

Time: 8:30 a.m.

Meet Bob (look for his van) at 8:30 a.m. at the McDonald's parking lot off the Lemmon Valley exit on Hwy 395 north of Reno. We will carpool the short distance to Lemmon Valley Marsh. Bring a spotting scope if you can and prepare to be out until midday. This is a good time to see early spring migrants and winter resident birds on the marsh and wetlands. This is an easy bird walk and birders of all experience are welcome.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Pelican is the official newsletter of the Lahontan Audubon Society and is published six times annually. Subscriptions are paid for as part of the dues of LAS or the National Audubon Society. LAS welcomes gifts, donations, and bequests in general, or gifts in honor or memory of relatives and friends. Such donations will be used as specified or, if unspecified, will be used to support LAS education and conservation projects. All donations are tax deductible.

WHERE TO WRITE:

Keep conservation to the forefront. Write your elected officials and tell them how you feel:

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Reno, NV 89501
Toll-free: 1-866-736-7343

Senator John Ensign
400 S. Virginia St. #738
Reno, NV 89501
Reno phone: 686-5770

Representative Dean Heller
400 S. Virginia St. #502
Reno, NV 89501
Reno phone: 686-5760

Governor Jim Gibbons
Executive Chambers
Capitol Complex
Carson City, NV 89710

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Thank you for your generous donations to support our conservation, education, and birding activities! Thank you, too, for the vote of confidence that your donations represent.

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Dave & Pam Straley - for the LAS Endowment Fund

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in memory of Dorothy J. Blakey

Mountain Bluebird \$20 - \$49

Gayle Fierce-Lynch
Gene & Sue Hansel

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S PERCH

New Director of Bird Conservation

Lahontan Audubon Society is very pleased to announce the selection of a new Director of Bird Conservation for the Nevada Important Bird Areas program. Following a thorough search, screening, and interview process, the IBA search committee has selected Robin Powell to succeed Don McIvor, who has moved out of state, in the directorship effective February 5, 2007.

Robin has been a resident of Nevada for 26 years. She graduated from UNR with a Bachelor of Science in biology, including ornithology classes, and a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology. She has a significant background in Great Basin natural history. She demonstrates a highly varied professional background with extensive experience in ecology, species conservation, natural resource management, and public policy. The search committee was particularly impressed with her documented ability to work with all entities, from governments to the private sector, build relationships, and effect on-the-ground projects.

Robin has a 15-year-old daughter. Her hobbies include gardening--especially for wildlife--traveling, getting out into the mountains of Nevada, and exploring the culinary arts.

We owe considerable thanks for this successful beginning of the next phase of the Nevada IBA program to the search committee: Larry Neel, Kenn Rohrs, Bonnie Wagner, Alan Gubanich, and Don McIvor, the latter two of whom very effectively led the team.

— *Karen L. Kish, President,
Lahontan Audubon Society*

Spring Wings Festival

May 11-13, 2007

Fallon Convention Center

www.springwings.org

(775) 428-6452

Volunteers contact: Carol Colip (775) 423-2083 or colipso@charter.net

It's the tenth anniversary of the Spring Wings Festival in Fallon this year! It's a great opportunity to bird, socialize, and see how far we have come in 10 years. We will be celebrating with a Saturday night gathering of "The Founders of Spring Wings": Bob Flores, Rich Heap, Larry Neel and Dan Walsworth. Also, for this special anniversary, on Friday evening we will be presenting "Rachel Carson," aka Kaiulani Lee, in *A Sense of Wonder*. Chris Rawson of the Pittsburgh Post Gazette says, "...what Lee achieves in barely an hour is something rare and almost spiritual...I felt flashes of transcendence, the stage disappearing into a living authentic presence." For more information about Kaiulani Lee visit www.kaiulanilee.com.

Volunteers are always needed and appreciated to help with tours, registration, activities and workshops.

Field Trip Report

Taylor Creek and Cove East,
South Lake Tahoe

Co-leaders: Sheryl Ferguson and
Sue Stevenson

Thirteen people braved the cold clear weather at Tahoe for the winter bird outing led by Sue Stevenson and Sheryl Ferguson on January 20. We started at the Taylor Creek bridge (home of the famous Kokanee Salmon) and within minutes spotted an American Dipper. What a great way to start! We saw 29 species which included Townsend's Solitaire, Hairy and Downy woodpeckers, Redhead, Bushtit, Rufous-sided Towhee, Hooded Merganser, three Bald Eagles and two coyotes. After lunch at the Beacon restaurant and warming up we headed to Cove East in the Tahoe Keys. A highlight of the trip was a Bald Eagle fly-by that we spotted from our table in the restaurant.

—*Sheryl Ferguson*

LAS Board Meetings

LAS Board meetings are open to LAS members. The group meets the first Tuesday of the month, September through June from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., with social and refreshments at 6 p.m. If you would like to attend, please contact any of the officers and trustees listed on page 8 for details.

CONSERVATION CORNER

Fire Rehab

Wildfires burned roughly 1.5 million acres of habitat last summer, Elko County being hit particularly hard. State and federal agencies along with non-profit groups immediately began the process of raising awareness and money for rehabilitation efforts. When LAS realized the amount of wildlife habitat that had been lost, we wanted to contribute. Thanks in part to a \$700 collaborative funding grant through National Audubon and \$1000 from the LAS conservation fund, we were able to purchase native seed mix consisting of forb species such as Blue Mountain Penstemon, Scarlet Globemallow, and Wavyleaf Indian Paintbrush which are important plant species for a variety of nectar feeding birds and other wildlife. This winter, thanks to Department of Wildlife biologist Pete Bradley, approximately 500 acres of burned habitat near the Mary's River IBA were treated with native seed mix purchased by LAS. Five hundred acres seems like a drop in the bucket, but we hope over the next few years this seeding effort and the entire rehab effort taking place this winter in Elko County will prove successful in bring back the habitat critical to Nevada's wildlife. We appreciate your generous donations to the conservation fund and look forward to continuing to put that money to good use.

—Ali Chaney

A Looming Funding Crisis for Nevada Wildlife

Soon this state's wildlife could be in peril. Nevada may lose out on millions of dollars for wildlife conservation efforts if the Legislature does not make State Wildlife Grant funding a priority. Since 2001, Nevada has received \$6 million in funds through the federal State Wildlife Grants Program, which has been matched with over \$1.5 million by Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) and partners for wildlife conservation. But this year the federal program will require a 50/50 match of federal dollars to state dollars instead of a 75/25 match. If additional matching general funds from the state are not secured, millions of dollars for wildlife and habitat conservation will be lost. If at-risk species slip into Threatened or Endangered status, they will become even more costly to protect. State support for the State Wildlife Grants Program is a wise investment.

Traditionally, state fish and wildlife agencies have paid for game and fish management and habitat enhancement with funds from hunting and fishing license fees and federal excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment. This funding was responsible for the recovery of many imperiled fish and wildlife species during the 20th century and continues to support most wildlife agency budgets. Relatively little funding has been allocated to support wildlife management for the hundreds of species that are not hunted or fished, those species most in need. The state's wildlife is a public trust. As citizens of this state we have a responsibility to protect this resource.

Nevada already has a plan to protect species and their habitats for the present and future environmental health of our state. The Nevada Wildlife

Action Plan (WAP) identifies 263 Species of Conservation Priority including birds, mammals, and fish. It sets out a roadmap for NDOW and its partners to achieve effective wildlife conservation. LAS has been an integral participant in the creation of this plan, over more than a year in the making, and we are committed to seeing results-based projects implemented.

WAP conservation projects that are already under way in the state include Peregrine Falcon nest territory surveys in southern Nevada to document the expansion of this once-endangered species. A comprehensive monitoring program identifying conservation needs for Nevada's birds will be expanded. Bat surveys across the state will inform on mine closure activities and document use of critical riparian habitats. These projects and many more like them are critical to protecting wildlife resources for generations to come.

Among the 50 states, Nevada ranks eleventh in overall biological diversity and fifth in the number of species extinctions. Our wetland oases, desert pools, and mountain ridge "island" ecosystems provide unique habitats for an amazing diversity of wildlife. Nevada's WAP—along with federal funding AND MATCHING STATE FUNDING—ensures that we will be able to conserve our wildlife and these priceless natural places.

Your voice is needed on behalf of Nevada's wildlife. Contact your representatives to encourage them to support State Wildlife Grant funding. Check out the conservation page of our web site at www.nevadaudubon.org for current information on legislative bills concerning State Wildlife Grants and a link to the Nevada Legislature.

— Ali Chaney

BIRDS IN TOWN

by Alan Wallace

To paraphrase the old adage about the sound of trees falling in the woods, would unusual birds frequent northern Nevada towns in December if we didn't have Christmas bird counts? Take, for example, the **Anna's Hummingbird** that has turned out to be a regular on the Truckee Meadows count for several years but isn't mentioned in other winter months and is just a migrant in the spring and fall. Or the **Rosy-Finches** of Spring Creek, whose numbers (145 **Gray-crowns**, 25 **Black**) suggest overwintering but aren't reported otherwise. Certainly, some birds are "staked out" to get them on the counts, but, to be honest, northern Nevada birders have reported as many, if not more, in-town species throughout the winter as are seen on the combined Christmas counts: 158 total for each of the October-November and December-January periods and 176 for the February-March period, as compared to the near-record 105 species seen on this year's Truckee Meadows count. Regardless, that's a decent number of birds for the dead of winter in the desert!

Contending with the late December and January Arctic cold and lingering snow were issues for both birders and birds. For the birders, attire straight out of the Hudson Bay Trading Company catalog was the norm, perhaps explaining the absence of Paris Hilton from our ranks. For the birds, especially the waterfowl, finding food to stoke the metabolic fires was the challenge. The first part of December was mild and birds dispersed to forage, which made finding them on the Christmas counts difficult at times. The pre-holiday blast of cold, however, sent them straight to the feeders and rare open bodies of water, such as the rivers and the few ponds with fountains that kept patches of water open. Winter brought more white waterfowl than normal, with the abundant **Tundra Swans** joined by **Ross's** and **Snow Geese**, one almost-white **Canada Goose**, and a snow-white, albinistic **Mallard** in Reno. A few more **Barrow's Goldeneyes** than usual joined the **Common Goldeneyes** and **Common Mergansers** on the rivers, and **Eurasian Wigeons** joined the myriad other waterfowl at Virginia and Swan Lakes in and near Reno. **Cinnamon** and **Green-winged Teal** and **Hooded Mergansers** added a touch of color and beauty to the frozen lakes, and Martin Meyers found a hybrid cross between a **Green-winged** and **Common Teal** at Swan Lake. The **American Dippers** didn't seem to mind the frigid rivers, plying their trade along the fringing ice in search of various subaqueous morsels. Of course, the snow and frozen lakes were just perfect for the raptors, who feasted on the well-exposed and lethargic bounty that lay before them. **Bald Eagles** picked off rabbits in Carson Valley, **American Kestrels** added voles and mice to their diets, and a normally woodland-loving **Red-shouldered Hawk** preferred the good pickings in the wide-open fields near Swan Lake.

In addition to the hummingbird and hybrid teal, a few other notable December-January birds passed through towns and yards. **Eurasian Collared-Doves** unfortunately are continuing their range expansion: John Woodyard near Baker has had them all winter at his remote yurt, and a dozen or more have frequented Steve Ting's parents' yard in Verdi all winter. Up to 14 **Western Meadowlarks**, a decidedly non-feeder bird, joined the more typical yard birds at Steve's feeders in Washoe Valley, a few **Sage Grouse** wandered into the suburban fringes of Sparks, and single **Varied Thrushes** appeared along the Truckee River in Reno and at the Anderson's yard in Mogul. A **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**, a real rarity any time of the year, passed through Jonathan Heywood's Reno yard, giving good views. **Northern Goshawks** appeared in Reno and Austin, the latter with one bad leg but still trying for the birds at Frank Whitman's feeder. **Pine Siskins**, which are more common in the eastern part of the state, appeared at Carson Valley and Mogul feeders, and more **Northern Mockingbirds** than usual were reported by birders in both the fringes and cores of towns. Are they – or we – going through a range expansion?

On a personal note, the guy who introduced me to birdwatching as a teenager recently passed away. I've thought about those early days and all the fun birding adventures since then, and I realized that his introduction was quite a gift for life that an acne-laden, hormone-driven teen may not have fully appreciated at the time. Thanks, Dad. So, give some thought to how you started, where it's taken you, and perhaps encourage youth (of any age) to share in the enjoyment of this lifelong pastime.

This December and January, 121 species were reported from northern Nevada towns. Sources of information for this column included **Elisabeth Ammon, John Anderson, Sally Bates, Richard Brune, Jim Eidel, Sue Golish, Bob Goodman, Mike Greenan, Sue Herrera, Jon Heywood, Linda Hiller, Ed Kleiner, Ed Kurtz, Jon Leeds, Tim Lenz, Martin Meyers, Kathy & Ed Oakes, Fred Peterson, Harold Peterson, Mark & Lois Ports, Melissa Renfro, Georgia & Kenn Rohrs, Mike San Miguel, Greg Scyphers, Dennis Serdehely, Jean Sherman, Heather Sprague, Jane Thompson, Steve Ting, Frank Whitman, Diane Wong, John Woodyard, Dave Worley**, and me. Contributions are welcome, so send a postcard/note to 1050 Sumac St., Reno, NV 89509 or an email to wallacealan@sbcglobal.net, or continue to post items on the Nevada bird list-serve. The deadline for the next column is March 25. Good birding!

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Lahontan Audubon Society Membership: All funds remain in the community. Members receive *The Pelican* newsletter and may elect to receive e-mail activities notices. Please complete and mail this form with payment.

1. LAS Renewal New Membership Send me a National Audubon application
 2. Individual/Family - \$20/year Full Time Student/Senior (over 62) - \$15/year

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March/April 2007 issue

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<i>A Birding Guide to Reno and Beyond</i> Published by Lahontan Audubon Society, 2000	\$10	\$1.50	_____
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