

**The
Lahontan Audubon
Society**

2003-2004 Annual Report

To Our Members,

Our mission statement, paraphrased, is to preserve, improve and restore natural Nevada habitat. We have strategically decided to do so through education, citizen science, and conservation, including advocacy and community projects. I am pleased to report that during the past year, Lahontan Audubon Society (LAS) made substantial progress in achieving its long-term goals in these three strategic program areas.

Strategic Focus: Education

Environmental education continues to be a niche for LAS. We are one of the only organizations in northern Nevada with environmental education in its mandate and programs. The core of our education program occurs at our eight general meetings each year with guest speakers. This past year, our program offered guest speakers on local and international environmental topics: Australian Painted Snip, Animal Ark, Cuckoos in the West, Impacts of Agriculture on Shorebird Conservation, Nevada: Recreational Opportunities, Traditional Uses of Plants, Black Brant, and Wild Nevada. Approximately 260 members and guests attended these presentations.

Field trips have long been recognized as one of the most important and popular vehicles to get and to continue to have members and the public involved in Audubon. For most LAS field trip participants, the trips are fun, informative, different, challenging, social, educational, inspirational, rewarding, or a combination thereof. We tried to offer a wide range of trips that would meet the needs and/or desires of as many members as possible. Judging by the overwhelming participation on most, if not all, of the trips we offered, we feel we have succeeded in our goal of giving members and the public great ways to spend their free time enjoying the birds and their habitats in northern Nevada and California. Over the past year, LAS volunteer trip leaders took approximately 450 participants on 17 urban and rural birding field trips. LAS offered guided walks at Rancho San Rafael and Oxbow Park, Spring Wings in Fallon (four different walks), River Fork Ranch, Silver Saddle Ranch (2 occasions), Swan Lake (4 occasions), McCarran Ranch, Riverview Park, Pyramid Lake, Carson Diversion Dam and Soda Lake, Truckee River Dipper Day, Lahontan Valley Wetlands, Reno, and Carson Valley.

Education Chair Ray Nelson and volunteer Ron Conkey led walks at Washoe Lake for over 1,000 school children under a program sponsored by the Nevada Division of Wildlife. These volunteers assisted in providing an overview on wetland mitigation to primary school children.

Twenty people attended this year's *Birds of the Truckee Meadows* course, which raised \$400 in course fees for LAS.

While it will be printed and distributed in the 2004-2005 fiscal year, Ron Conkey completed the Nevada Birding Map in this fiscal year. It has the potential to be a widely disseminated educational tool for birders and non-birders alike.

Strategic Focus: Citizen Science

Our citizen science efforts continued with the third year of the Nevada Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program. The Nevada IBA Program is based on a four-step process involving identification, recognition, monitoring, and stewardship of areas offering critical habitat to migrating, breeding, or wintering birds. By the end of our fiscal year, we have recognized 29 IBAs in Nevada, encompassing about 15 percent of the state's surface area. On-the-ground monitoring is being coordinated with the Great Basin Bird Observatory's Nevada All-bird Monitoring Program. Stewardship efforts continue at the Carson River Delta IBA, where LAS is financially managing \$40,000 in grants from the Bureau of Reclamation for fencing to protect the IBA from degradation caused by trespass cattle grazing. Through a network of active and committed partners, LAS also worked to facilitate the BLM's reduction of the wild horse herd on the site, which had grown from its recommended management level of 17 head to more than 300 head. This excessively large herd was contributing to the degradation of the area through over-grazing."

LAS volunteers contributed another year's worth of data from our annual Christmas Bird Counts at Pyramid Lake, Truckee Meadows (Reno), Carson Valley, and Fallon. And, under the management of Alan Gubanich, LAS completed another year of bird-banding at Little Valley for the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) program.

Strategic Focus: Conservation

In an effort to better reach the members, the Conservation Committee, Nancy Bish and Ali Chaney, has implemented the "Conservation Corner" section of *The Pelican*. This provides members with updates on current conservation initiatives throughout the state and conservation efforts from the committee on their behalf.

The policy sub-committee has been busy this past year voicing concerns on a number of conservation topics that may impact birds or bird habitat. A formal letter was written to the state Wildlife Commission regarding their current predator management program as it relates to ravens. A formal letter was written to the State Water Engineer expressing our concerns over water applications for Southern Nevada Water Authority relative to water exportation from rural areas to Las Vegas that may impact Nevada IBA's. And, a formal letter was written to our congressional delegates encouraging support of the Clean Water Authority Restoration Act.

The Conservation Committee continued to represent LAS on the Swan Lake Advisory Board. A Natural Resources Working Group was formed for the Community Foundation of Western Nevada. LAS was included in this group and provided input as to natural resource projects we believe need funding. We also were able to attend an informal get together with other environmental groups to discuss with Senator Reid's staff (Kai Anderson and Mary Connelly) the political lay of the land.

Community Conservation projects continued at Silver Saddle Ranch, in Carson City, with LAS funding the *Birds of Silver Saddle Ranch Checklist*. Swan Lake continues to be a top priority site

for LAS. This spring we organized a Burrowing Owl box cleanup event, providing new nest boxes for owls that have been known to frequent the area, and we also participated in the annual Spring Cleanup Day with other organizations out at the marsh.

The Lahontan Audubon Society received funding requests for two Boy Scout Eagle projects. The first proposal requested funds for construction materials to build bluebird and bat boxes for installation at Silver Saddle Ranch, Carson City. The Conservation Committee Chair worked closely with the scout on the project proposal and box design and installation. In addition, a second request was submitted by another scout for the funding of construction materials for raptor perches in Carson Valley. Funding was approved for both projects. Following the completion of their projects each scout attended a LAS General Meeting and gave a presentation on his project.

The Conservation Committee Chair continued to attend Carson River Advisory and Carson River Habitat Group meetings representing the interest of LAS and our mission to preserve and protect habitat for birds and other wildlife.

Administrative Support

The successes in our program areas would not exist without the administrative support they receive. As with previous years, a core group of volunteers committed themselves to Membership, Communications, and Administration.

Membership

In September of 2003 the LAS (local) membership roster had a little over 80 members. The National roster had approximately 1,000 names. Because of some overlap, the total membership was about 950 addresses.

To replace the income shortage from NAS's decision to terminate dues sharing with chapters, our Membership Chair, Carol Conkey, embarked on a methodical membership drive. She focused her efforts on encouraging those who only belong to NAS to join LAS also. LAS had hoped for \$1,200 by the end of this fiscal year from LAS member dues. Thanks to Carol, we finished the year with \$2,450 in local dues revenue. Carol sent thankyou postcards to everyone who responded. Carol also placed membership brochures at Patagonia and REI and made them available on bird walks, at public talks (Sundance Bookstore and REI), and at the general meetings.

The current rosters show 831 NAS members of which 37 have also paid dues to LAS and 176 local members, 139 of whom are not NAS members. Our current total mailing list has 933 names.

Communications

The Communications Committee, chaired by Karen Kish, was successful in conveying to the general public a greater awareness about LAS and a better understanding of our mission and

activities

While LAS' outreach events decreased this year, we did host two events: "Local Birds and Autumn Visitors" at Sundance Bookstore and "Tips for Beginning Birders" at REI. We also provided KOH Radio intermittent spot commentary about nature and marsh areas during a new Reno development promotional afternoon. Three public radio spots donated by members Carol and Ron Conkey promoted membership and LAS name recognition in May and will run again in the autumn.

We publicized field trips, General Meetings, bird classes, special events, and Christmas Bird Counts through press releases to seven newspapers, two public access television stations, and one commercial radio station. We disseminated fliers on certain special events. Communications also publicized these activities to an internal LAS member email list of about 45 households. Field Trip Chair Diane Wong also announced trips on the Nevada Birds List Server.

Editor Loa Semrau continues to produce our bimonthly newsletter *The Pelican*, which includes the regular columns "Birds in Town" by Alan Wallace and "The IBA Report" by Don McIvor. Long-time volunteer Connie Douglas manages distribution in cooperation with Membership.

Tim Herrick, new web master as of September 2003, changed the general appearance of the LAS web site pages to make them more attractive and easier to navigate and read. He also added animated icons and tested all links and bookmarks. The Communications Committee was also able to establish a notation and link to our web site on the front page of the Reno Sparks Convention and Visitors Authority web site.

The LAS Information Line responded to approximately 80 phone messages, down slightly from the prior year. The Bird Alert aspect is now folded into the Nevada Birds List Server.

The Communications Committee places a "For Your Information" table display with various handouts, posters, and notices at each General Meeting. We also reintroduced use of name tags, including notations of volunteers' activity areas and promoted conversation about activities.

The Communications Chair reformatted and revised the LAS Brochure. We devised a variety of handouts. We also continued to maintain the archive binder files, *LAS in Print*, *LAS in Photos*, and *The Pelican Archives*.

Administration

Our volunteers continued to welcome our members at the general meetings with coffee, tea, and baked goods. Our store, being phased out, filled all orders, primarily for *A Birding Guide to Reno and Beyond*, as timely as volunteers can do.

Treasurer Dave Straley filed all legal documents, federal tax return and Nevada Secretary of State filings on time. We re-filed, as required by the state every 10 years, for a sales tax exemption,

which we were granted after demonstrating the breadth and level of non-profit activities we administer. Our Board Secretary dutifully recorded and filed the minutes of all our Board meetings, which without fail always mustered up a monthly quorum. Alan Gubanich and Jim Lytle successfully managed the Chapter election process, guaranteeing a full roster of officers and trustees for the forthcoming year.

The accomplishments of this volunteer organization over the last year have been significant. LAS has a unique set of volunteers with a passion for environmental education and conservation that carries the organization farther than its funding would allow. I want to thank all the volunteers, members and donors for their continued support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ray Nelson', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Ray Nelson
President