

Lahontan Audubon Society Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2022-2023



Letter from the Executive Director

For the love of birds, Lahontan Audubon Society (LAS) creates opportunities to join our birding community together, through field trips, monthly meetings, bird presentations, identification classes, bird conservation, and more! This past August, I joined LAS as their new Executive Director. I am honored to take on this leadership role and will strive to continue my predecessors' work to support LAS' mission. I want to thank you, our members, for the warm support I have received. I have met some of you on the trail, at various LAS events, and I look forward to seeing you at future events too.

This year, LAS had many accomplishments. With the creation of its Strategic Plan, LAS prioritized projects they will be funding in the near future. Many of our volunteers contributed important information to inform the future management of Saline Lakes, important feeding areas for migrating shorebirds. Meanwhile, our stellar education team continued to visit local schools and teach young students about our local birds and food web interactions at Washoe Lake. With our growing taxidermy bird mount collection available for public viewing at multiple locations throughout our community, LAS was able to spread opportunities to learn about birds.

All these stories and more are included in this year's report. Together, we learn about birds, we take wonder at our feathered friends, we create and preserve space for birds, and in so doing, we create a beautiful world for all!



For the love of birds!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Diane Wong-Kone". The signature is fluid and stylized, with a long, sweeping line extending from the end.

Diane Wong-Kone
Executive Director

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White-breasted Nuthatch – Judy Duffy/Photo Contest Winner September 2022.

Cover Photo Credit:

Red-tailed Hawk – Brian Meltzner/Photo Contest Winner October 2022
Rufous Hummingbird – John Koehm/August 2022
American White Pelican – Brian Meltzner/July 2022

Our Organization

Lahontan Audubon Society (LAS) volunteers form the core of our organization. Their dedicated commitment directs our Board of Trustees and Committees to grow our community and foster bird education, birdwatching opportunities, and conservation. A small staff manages the everyday operations and communications, enabling the activities and programs that further our mission to succeed.

Lahontan Audubon Advisory Board

Our Board of Trustees is made up of nine people that govern Lahontan Audubon Society's projects and policies.

2022-2023 Board of Trustees

Suzie Reynolds - President
Tom Stille - Vice President
William Fletcher - Treasurer
Mike Goddard - Secretary
Linda St-Cyr
Brianna Usdrowski
Brendan Bucy
Rose Strickland
Lauren Whitenack



Rose Strickland, Suzie Reynolds, Tina Nappe, Lauren Whitenack, and Judy Duffy are on the current Board of Trustees 2023-2024.

Our Board earned the 100% Giving Board Award in 2022 from the Community Foundation of Northern Nevada. This award recognizes nonprofit boards whose members each financially support the work of their organization. Thanks to the guidance and financial support of our board members, LAS continues to provide accessible opportunities in our community to learn about birds, share collective experiences, and take actions to preserve habitat for birds.

Committees

LAS Committees, managed by individual committee chairs, provide the services to run a nonprofit organization and carry out LAS' community activities to further our mission.



The **Activity and Program Committee** plans the monthly Program Meetings as well as other special LAS events. Chair - Vice President, Tom Stille



The **Audit Committee** checks Lahontan Audubon Society's financial records for accuracy and reports results to the Board. Chair - Jacque Lowery



The **Communications Committee** oversees public outreach through our website, social media, newsletter, and emails. Chair - vacant



The **Conservation Committee** advocates on behalf of birds and bird habitat in Nevada for environmental legislation, policies, and proposed actions and engages in community science projects affecting Nevada's birds. Chair - Rose Strickland



The **Education Committee** schedules and runs educational outreach events to teach kids and adults about birds, with a focus on northern Nevada birds. Chair - Alan Gubanich



The **Equity Diversity and Inclusion Committee** promotes practices to foster a welcoming and inclusive community for all people. Chair - Lauren Whitenack



The **Field Trip Committee** organizes local bird walks and other field trip events. Chair - Lauren Whitenack



The **Fundraising Committee** organizes fundraising activities to help LAS's operations and local conservation and education programs. Chair - Vacant



The **Investments Committee** manages, through financial advisors, the investment accounts of the LAS. Co-Chairs - Suzie Reynolds & Judy Duffy



The **Nominations Committee** nominates individuals who are members of LAS for Trustee positions to be elected each May. Committee Members: Linda St-Cyr, Tom Stille, and Phyliss Henderson



Black-crowned Night-Heron – Rick Mosher/Photo Contest Winner November 2022

Staff



Executive Director

Diane Wong-Kone became Executive Director after the 2022-2023 fiscal year. She served as the AmeriCorps VISTA Development Coordinator for LAS in 2022. She is honored to take on this new role and aims to continue her predecessors' work to promote the growth of our birding community. "The wonder in a child's eyes when seeing a bird for the first time, that is mirrored in an adult's eyes too - that is the special moment that links us to the natural world. Lahontan Audubon Society shares these moments every day."



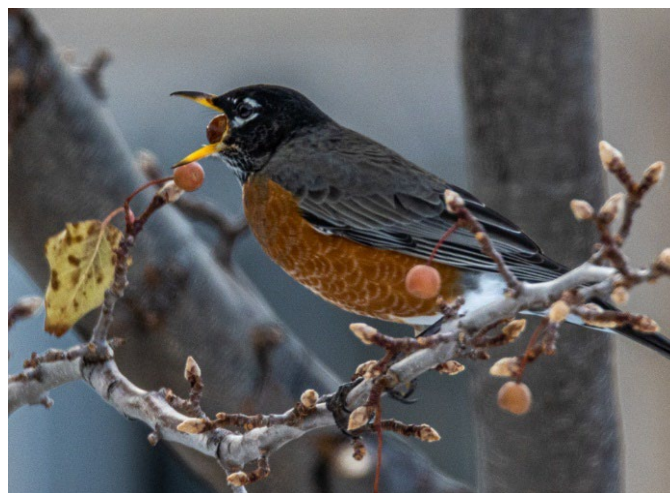
AmeriCorps VISTA Program Developer

Drew Lindsey has done work involved in researching data and compiling reports concerning Title 1 schools in Reno-Sparks. LAS is looking to expand outreach to underserved communities in Washoe County and the data collected will be important in determining where LAS should focus outreach efforts. Additionally, he has worked on events such as Spring Wings as well as helped with setting up Monthly Program Meetings. "LAS has provided me with an opportunity to both broaden my skill set as well as experience work in the non-profit sector".

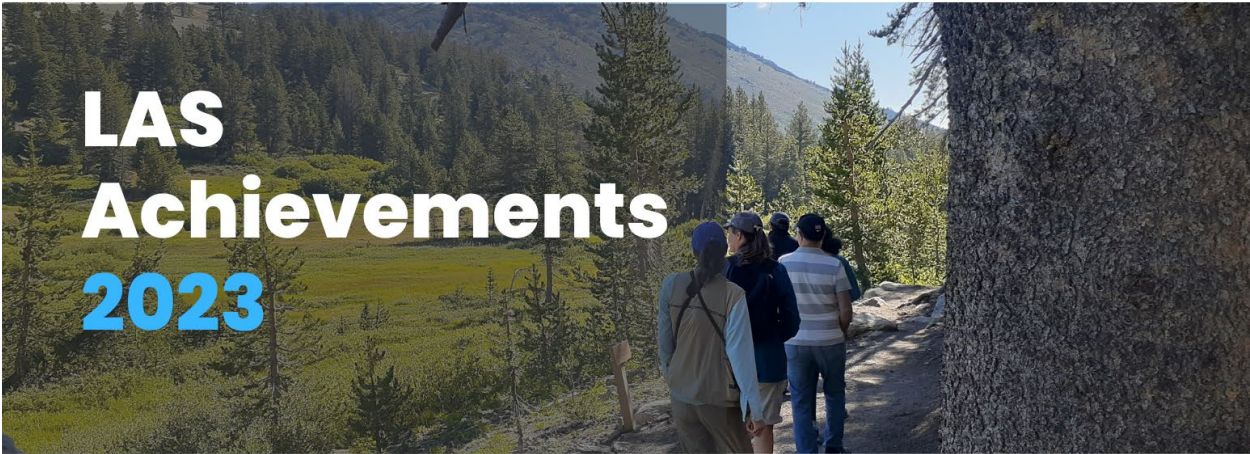


AmeriCorps VISTA Education Coordinator

Patty Moen has been working with the Education Committee on editing and improving the curriculum for LAS classroom visits and field trips to ensure the lessons align with the Next Generation Science Standards. She is helping with teaching and planning training for volunteers so they will be able to feel comfortable leading and assisting with LAS' educational offerings. "I have been impressed with LAS and the expertise, passion and dedication of LAS leaders, volunteers and members."



American Robin – Brian Meltzner/Photo Contest Winner December 2022



ORGANIZATION STATISTICS

498

**LAS
Members**

7

**Program
Meetings**

\$5399

**Yearly Grant
Funding**



4440 **Members of the
Public Reached**

17

SCHOOL TRIPS



775

**YOUTH ATTENDING
LAS SCHOOL
PROGRAMS**

60

LAS FIELD TRIPS



500

**PARTICIPANTS IN
LAS FIELD TRIPS**

Photos

- (Top) Parker Flickinger
- (Bottom) Alan Gubanich

- (Top Right) Alan Gubanich
- (Bottom Right) Parker Flickinger



Hooded Mergansers – Brian Meltzner/Photo Contest Winner January 2023

Vision, Mission, and Strategic Plan

In early 2023, Lahontan Audubon Society created its Strategic Plan to define specific goals, strategies, and actions our organization will take over the next five years, to achieve our mission and vision.

VISION SUMMARY

To share the enjoyment of birds through education, outreach, and conservation with a growing and diverse community.

MISSION

To preserve and improve the remaining habitat of birds and other wildlife, restore historical habitat, and educate people, especially children, about birds in our unique Nevada environments.

STRATEGIC PLAN

Education, conservation, community engagement, and chapter sustainability are the foundational principles LAS was built upon. These same principles are the focus of a five-year [Strategic Plan](#) our Board adopted in June.



Education: LAS values education as an important way to help our community understand the importance of bird conservation and its relationship to mankind. Goals are set to develop a written curriculum and volunteer training. This will allow LAS to continue providing quality community education for years to come.

Conservation: LAS will continue to be an advocate for bird conservation in Nevada with the added goals of increasing the number of community conservation partnerships and the number of participating volunteers.

Community Engagement: Communication is an important aspect of outreach. One goal is to redesign our website to be more informative and user friendly. Another important aspect of outreach is to identify ways to connect with new community groups. LAS will reach out by forming new partnerships and through programs targeting underserved communities.

Chapter Sustainability: Membership and volunteers are the bedrock of LAS. Goals for increasing each include providing training and appreciation events as well as better utilization of our database system. Financial health is also important. Our goal is to have both a Fall Fund Drive which targets our members and associates and a Spring Fund Drive which will be more community focused.

Committee Activity Summaries

Activity and Program

The big news for our meetings at Moana Nursery was that we started meeting in person again, while still offering live recordings for those who wished to watch from home! LAS invited speakers to talk about birds and research from August through May at our monthly meetings held on the fourth Tuesday of each month. Topics this year included: osprey conservation and platform building, a visit to see the birds of Finland, updates on the intermountain shorebird study in which our volunteers take part, research on the effects of urban lights on birds, a talk on the Valley Wood Waterwise Gardens designed by our Vice President, Tom Stille, and benefits of getting outdoors and nature journaling. With in-person meetings, we were able to start our popular book raffle again, as well as renew friendships and make new friends!

Audit

LAS thanks Jacque Lowery for auditing our accounts as part of our system of checks and balances for financial integrity.

Communications

From backyard birding, to photography, to bird conservation, our quarterly [Pelican Newsletter](#) featured interesting articles by you! The Pelican's Prized Page included art, poems, photos, and stories. Thank you all for sharing your stories and thank you Kentia, our young Pelican Editor for publishing our newsletter. Do you have an interesting story about birds or have

original art to share with our community? Send your ideas to Kentia (kentia.kalanaki@nevadaaudubon.org)!



Great Blue Heron – Brian Meltzner/Photo Contest Winner February 2023

Conservation

Our Conservation Committee continued to follow important policies affecting our Great Basin birds and gave an active voice for bird protection through letter writing, comments, and advocacy on policies that benefit birds. Locally, our volunteer team remained active, maintaining a pollinator garden at Oxbow Nature Study Area, monitoring migrating shorebirds at Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge as part of the Intermountain West Shorebird Surveys and submitting observations of Pinyon Jays to the [Community Science Hub](#).

This past year, we followed reports of birds of concern that included Pinyon Jay, Golden Eagle, Spotted Owl, and Greater Sage-Grouse. We also started following reports of Whitebark Pine forest decline and the Clark's Nutcracker.

Policies that we closely followed this past year included:

1. Restoring America's Wildlife Act, which, if passed, would provide needed funding for wildlife species recovery.

2. A Bureau of Land Management Proposed Public Lands Rule that includes conservation as one of the uses of our public lands.
3. Greater Sage-Grouse protections.
4. Consideration of listing the Pinyon Jay as a Threatened or Endangered Species.
5. Proposed listing of the Sierra Nevada/Carson Range population of the California Spotted Owl.

To volunteer with our Conservation Committee and get updates or give input on avian conservation issues, please contact conservation@nevadaaudubon.org. Join our team and make a positive impact on birds!

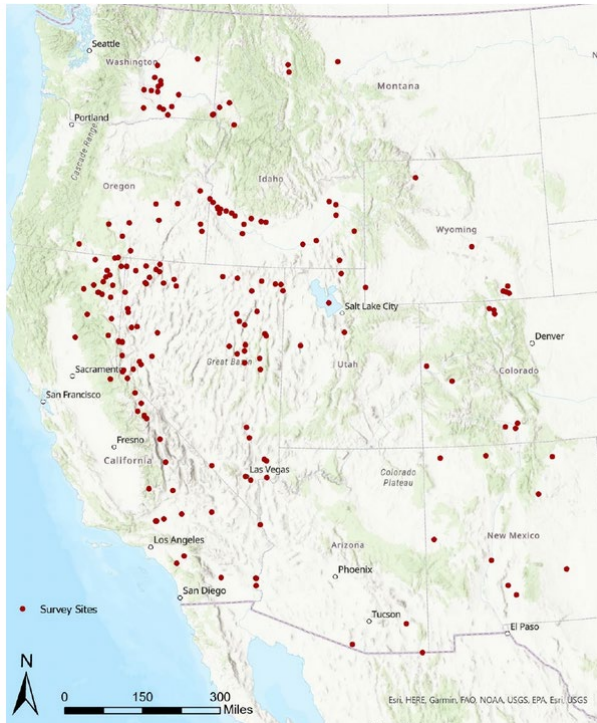


Double-crested Cormorant – Brian Meltzner/Photo Contest Winner April 2023

Saline Lakes Program

Lahontan Audubon Society volunteers, along with other Nevada Audubon Chapters, Red Rock and Bristlecone Audubon Society, worked alongside National Audubon, Point Blue, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and

Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) to count shorebirds on migration as part of a larger, multi-state count for the [Intermountain West Shorebird Survey](#). This survey provides new data to compare to historical Point Blue data gathered 30 years ago. Nevada's wetlands are numerous, but many are far from populated areas. With the help of Audubon chapter volunteers, about 40 sites were visited in Nevada!



Eleven states were surveyed for migrating shorebirds in 2022. (<https://www.audubon.org/news/regional-shorebird-surveys-provide-look-changing-habitat-around-west> accessed 10/1/2023)

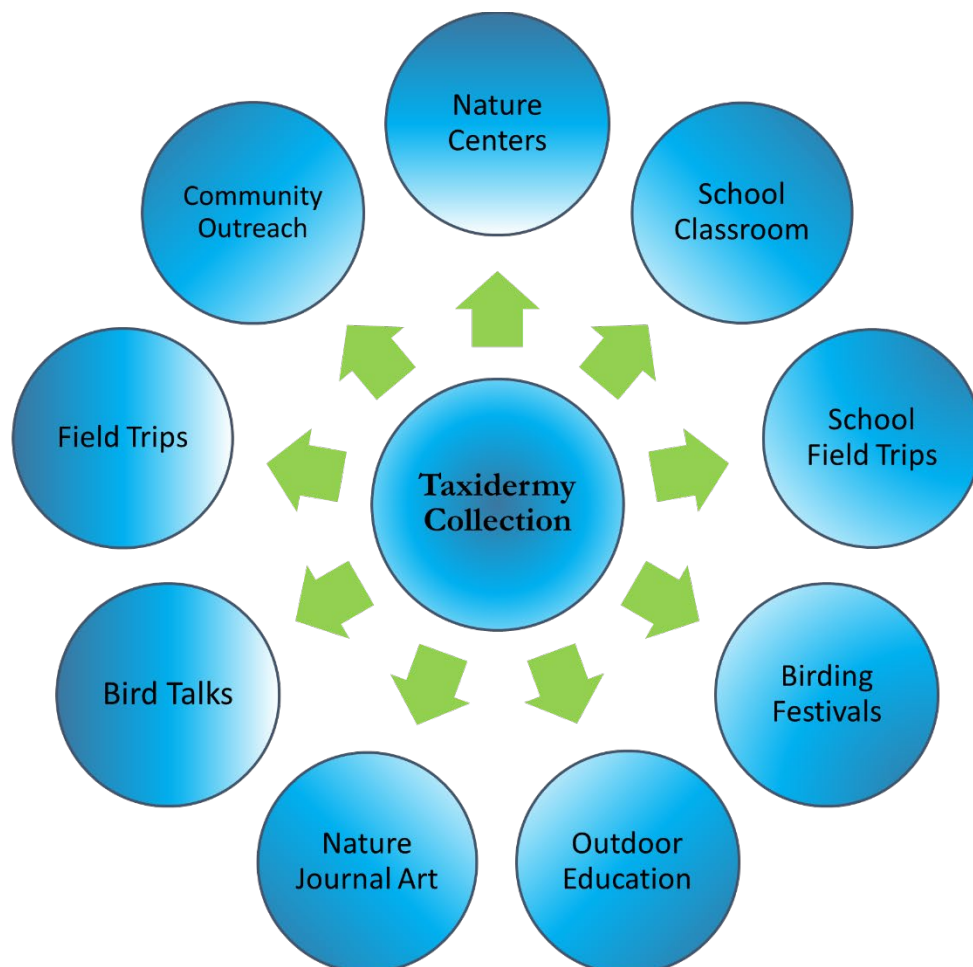
Our saline lakes provide critical stopover habitat for millions of migrating shorebirds each year. These wetlands provide areas for birds to rest and feed; however global climate change, prolonged droughts, and water diversions can impact these shallow lakes, causing desiccation events and increased salinity. Careful water management to preserve these valuable wetlands is needed to protect our shorebirds. LAS' volunteer crew does their part to add their observations to the science, playing a vital role in the future preservation of these birds.

Along with the FWS, Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge, NDOW, Great Basin Bird Observatory, Naval Air Station - Fallon, Fallon Shoshone Paiute Tribe, Nevada State Parks, and Friends of Stillwater, LAS continued to support the Spring Wings Bird Festival

in May. This bird festival highlights the importance of Stillwater NWR and the nearby wetland complex for birds and is an important way to let the public experience the spectacle of bird migration firsthand. In our shared experiences, we can learn to live in balance and protect the birds that we all love.

Education

Our Education Committee reaches out to many parts of our community, using our taxidermy bird collection for educational purposes throughout the area, from Lake Tahoe, to Gerlach, to Fallon, and to Schurz. Bird mounts have been used as educational tools in schools, on outdoor field trips, at day camps, and for adult talks on bird identification, behavior, and ecology. Examples of other uses include sharing the bird collection to show the Nevada Federation of the Blind how to “see” birds through touch and using the birds for study through art and drawing. Because the collection is mobile, birds can be brought to distant locations for learning.



Taxidermy Bird Mount Collection

Our collection of over 300 taxidermy mounts and museum skins is used to teach people about the birds found in Nevada. Our taxidermy mounts are on display for the public to see at multiple nature centers, including:

- Galena Visitor Center - 18250 Mt Rose Hwy, Reno
- Rosewood Nature Study Area - 6800 Pembroke Dr., Reno
- Truckee Meadows Community College, Biology Department - 7000 Dandini Blvd., Reno
- Western Nevada College - 2201 West College Parkway, Carson City
- Whit Interpretive Center at the River Fork Ranch - 381 Genoa Lane, Minden
- Walker River State Recreation Area - 211 East Walker Road, Yerington.



Last year, LAS used the mounts and museum skins for outreach events like Earth Day, the Nevada Outdoor Experience, school visits, and adult education classes. Mounts were also loaned out to various groups including the Nevada Department of Wildlife, the Great Basin Outdoor School, the Great Basin Institute, and Western Nevada College. Last year over 4,000 people viewed mounts at events, and many more were able to view them on display.

LAS retained a permit with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to create and maintain our taxidermy mount and study skin collection for education. An annual report documented collection use.

LAS worked with a local taxidermist to prepare bird mounts, which cost about \$300 each. Approximately \$2,000 or more a year may be spent to maintain the taxidermy collection.

Year Summary



Youth educational offerings included visits to classrooms, summer school, day camps, events like the Fernley Intermediate School Outdoor Day, bird walks, and Washoe Lake Field Trips. LAS provided instruction and volunteers for 17 events for youth.

LAS adult programs included seven Birds of the Truckee Meadows bird identification classes held at the River School Farm, which were attended by several new attendees. LAS also led five talks at the Galena Creek Visitor Center. These included talks on hawks, hummingbirds, summer birds of the Galena Forest, owls, and chickadees. Two bird identification classes, one on raptors and one on shorebirds, were

held at the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR). Other educational events included four bird and wildlife sketching workshops, a bird walk for our blind community, two talks to a Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC) class on bird identification, five presentations to Revel Rancharra, an independent living community, and several workshops for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UNR.

LAS participated in 14 outreach events celebrating the outdoors and nature, such as the Lake Tahoe Bird Festival, Earth Day, Spring Wings Bird Festival, the Nevada Outdoor Education Experience, Youth Wildlife Conservation Experience, and the Galena Creek Fall Festival.

With all the educational events and activities this past year, LAS reached over 4,440 individuals, and over half were children.



Alan Gubanich receiving the Governor Points of Light Lifetime Achievement Award Winner!

We need to credit our outstanding Education Chair, Alan Gubanich, for all the youth and outreach activities LAS accomplishes. He set up and continues to maintain our growing taxidermy collection of birds. Last October, Dr. Gubanich won the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Governor's Point of Light ceremony in Las Vegas, NV! The Governor's Points of Light is the highest honor bestowed by the Governor of Nevada and Nevada Volunteers to celebrate the individuals and organizations who model Nevada values of service, responsibility, cooperation and compassion, and the power of partnership that makes Nevada a better place to live. Bravo Dr. Gubanich!

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

In 2023, LAS created an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Committee. Chaired by Lauren Whitenack, this committee will work to ensure that our organization fosters practices to include everyone in our growing and diverse community. LAS welcomes all groups that are interested in birdwatching or related activities, and our team of volunteers tries to reach out to groups that may face barriers to participation in our regular meetings, classes, and

field trips. Examples of outreach activities LAS participated in during the past year include:

- Collaboration with Patagonia for a film screening of Game Hawker: a Wild Journey to Falconry, a documentary of falconry with an African American falconer who overcame racism and financial barriers to pursue his passion for birds. This event included a Question-and-Answer session with falconer Shawn Hayes.
- Bird walks for the National Federation of the Blind in Nevada.
- Bird walks with an American Sign Language interpreter for the deaf community.
- Bird walks with Nevada Youth Empowerment Project, a local nonprofit that supports young, homeless women by giving them a pathway to success.
- Outdoor bird education and bird walks with Skiing is Believing, a local group that creates access to outdoor activities for all kids, regardless of economic status.
- Bird education workshops and walks with Walker River Paiute Tribe students, who are located distant to Reno.
- Bird talks and walks with Revel Rancharra and Five Star Residences, local independent living communities that may experience barriers with transportation to our regular events.

We do this because we believe that birding is for everyone!

Field Trips

Thanks to our outstanding Field Trip Chair, Lauren Whitenack, LAS organized 60 field trips this past year with over 500 people in attendance! New events this year included monthly walks at the May Arboretum, bird identification workshops at the University of Nevada, Reno, and collaborating with our partners at Truckee Meadows Parks Foundation to provide bird walks for their Discover Your Parks series. Most of our bird walks are free to everyone, and LAS members get the early bird registration notice of new

walks. Our bird walks are popular and a great way to both learn about birds and meet our community birding friends.



Western Tanager – Brian Meltzner/Photo Contest Winner May 2023

Fundraising/Membership

International Birding Trips - Costa Rica

In January-February of 2023, LAS, in partnership with Crescentia Expeditions, hosted an international bird tour to explore southern Costa Rica! Ten enthusiastic birders were given a chance to see endemic birds in the Osa Peninsula and areas close to Panama with expert bird guide Mario Cordoba. Beautiful birds like the Fiery-billed Aracari, Yellow-billed Cotinga, and Scarlet Macaw were seen on this trip. LAS and Crescentia worked together to keep the trip price competitive, covering basic trip costs plus a little extra to give back to the birds, supporting local tropical conservation groups and LAS. Approximately \$2,000, or \$200 per trip attendee was donated to LAS for our projects here in Reno. A new trip to the northern region of Costa Rica, to explore the rainforest along the rivers will be offered in March 2024. This is the last trip in the series of Costa Rica trips that explores the central, southern, and northern regions. Spaces for the northern tour are limited and filling up! Please contact Diane (diane.wong-kone@nevadaaudubon.org) for the 2024 trip details.

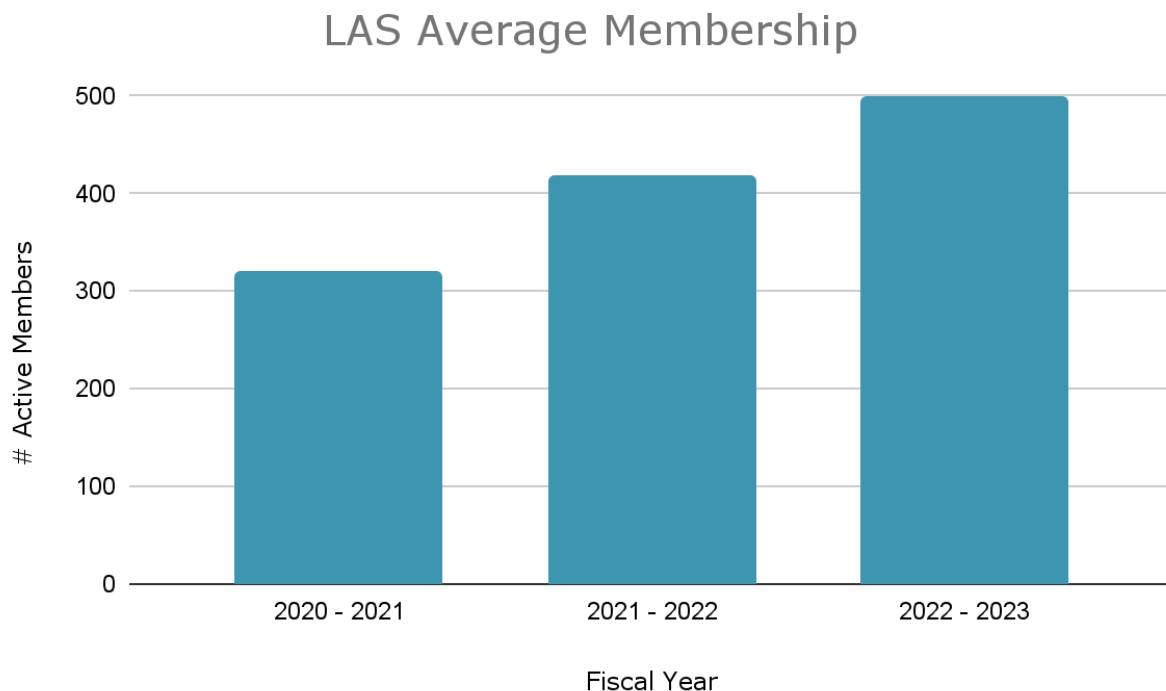
Grants

LAS was awarded three grants in 2023.

- The National Audubon Society Collaborative Grant of \$1,000 was used to help pay for our AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer.
- The National Audubon Society Silver State Wings grant of \$3,350 was used to pay for education materials and Earth Day activities.
- Fallon Convention and Tourism Authority awarded LAS with \$1049 to cover advertising expenses for the Spring Wings Bird Festival.

Membership

Our records indicate that our chapter membership retention rate is high, and that membership has been increasing over the past few years.



The average chapter membership from 2020 - 2023 grew from 319 to 498 members.

Financials

As required by law, our recent tax forms are published online on the [IRS](#) and [Guidestar](#) websites. Form 990 for the past fiscal year will be published later this year.



Black-chinned Hummingbird – Brian Meltzner/Photo Contest Winner June 2023

Partners

Community Projects

LAS partnered with many local organizations to accomplish larger projects that celebrate and beautify our open spaces. We also partnered with larger groups involved in large-scale bird monitoring and community science projects.

Intermountain West Shorebird Surveys

National Audubon Society

Point Blue

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge

Nevada Department of Wildlife

Oxbow Nature Study Area Pollinator Garden

Nevada Department of Wildlife

Pinyon Jay Community Science Hub

Great Basin Bird Observatory

Spring Wings Bird Festival

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

National Audubon Society

Nevada Department of Wildlife

Great Basin Bird Observatory

Naval Air Station, Fallon

Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe

Nevada State Parks

Fallon Convention and Tourism Authority

City of Fallon

Friends of Stillwater

Swan Lake Advisory Board

Washoe County Parks and Recreation

Washoe County School District

Nevada National Guard

Bureau of Land Management

City of Reno

Nevada Department of Wildlife

Valley Wood Waterwise Gardens

River School Farm

Truckee Meadows Water Authority
City of Reno Parks and Recreation
Local Food Network
Help Save the Bees Foundation
Northern Nevada Permaculture
Nevada Bugs and Butterflies
Sierra Garden Club

Visitor Centers for Taxidermy Bird Mounts

Great Basin Institute, U.S. Forest Service, Washoe County - Galena Creek
Visitor Center
Truckee Meadows Parks Foundation - Rosewood Nature Study Area
Truckee Meadows Community College - Biology Department
The Nature Conservancy of Northern Nevada - Whit Interpretive Center
Nevada State Parks - Walker River State Recreation Area
University of Nevada, Reno at Tahoe

Staffing

AmeriCorps
Truckee Meadows Parks Foundation

Other Partners

LAS works with many local groups to promote the education and conservation of birds.

Bureau of Land Management
Bureau of Reclamation
City of Sparks
Crescentia Charter School
Crescentia Expeditions
Doral Academy
Eastern Cascade Audubon Society
Five Star Premier Residences of Reno
Great Basin Institute
Great Basin Outdoor School
Keep Truckee Meadows Beautiful

Lyon County School District
May Arboretum Society
Moana Nursery
National Federation for the Blind of Nevada
Nevada Youth Empowerment Project
Osher Lifelong Learning Institute
Patagonia
Reno Transit Center - RTC Washoe
Revel Rancharrah
Sierra Nevada Journeys
Skiing is Believing
Terry Lee Wells Nevada Discovery Museum
Tahoe Institute for Natural Science
Truckee Meadows Community College
US Forest Service
University of Nevada Reno
Walker River Paiute Tribe
Washoe County Library System
Washoe County Regional Parks and Open Space)
Washoe County School District
Washoe Tribe
Western Field Ornithologists
Wild Sheep Foundation - Youth Wildlife Conservation Experience

Our Community

The most important part of Lahontan Audubon Society is you, our community. Thanks to YOU, our members and volunteers, LAS continues to provide social gatherings, education, and conservation of Nevada birds! Together, we will continue our mission as we head into our 60th anniversary. Now that's an achievement!



California Quail – Brian Meltzner