



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 2005

vol. 42, no. 4

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Membership

Submissions for the May/June issue are due April 4, 2005

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/APRIL 2005 PROGRAMS

March 22 – “Rare Birds of Nevada and the Odd Places to Find Them” – Greg Scyphers

The presentation will be a photographic exposé of rarities in Nevada. We will explore and discuss some of the places to find rarities including the “Desert Loop” and other “Oasis” type locations. I will explain what is known about the desert migrant trap phenomenon. We will also look at some of the rare subspecies I have found in my many travels over the past seven years through central Nevada.

April 26 – “Birds of New Guinea, New Zealand and Australia” – Jim Eidel

These three areas represent vastly different bird populations and birding conditions. Jim Eidel, past president of LAS and a world birder, will tour these Australasian areas with you and introduce you to some of their exciting possibilities. There will be Kakapos, Birds of Paradise, Wedge-tailed Eagles, and many other bird species, plus lots of other wildlife.

(continued, page 2, column 3)

FUND DRIVE 2004

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

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Golden Eagle \$500 or More

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Trust, Dave & Pamela Straley

American White Pelican \$100 - \$499

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– Dave Straley, Fundraising Chair

May 24 -- "Birding Wild Nevada"

-- Nancy Bish and Jane Thompson

Nancy Bish and Jane Thompson will recount their adventures searching the remote reaches of Nevada, looking for birds. Their ongoing treks on snowshoes or backpacking have yielded life lists of over 300 species for both of these women -- no easy accomplishment. In a slide presentation, Nancy and Jane will share with us their adventures in some of Nevada's wild places, where we will see seldom-used roads and trails from northern and central Nevada's Great Basin Desert and mountain ranges to southern Nevada's Mojave Desert. After viewing breathtaking landscapes and some of the bird species that reside there, you too will be tempted to head off Nevada's beaten paths. Nancy co-authored the *Birds of Lake Tahoe Basin Checklist* and works as a wildlife biologist when she isn't birding.

*...Fearless, dressed
like a flower in fiery feathers,
direct, determined
facing my tall threatening frame,
suddenly it discovers a grain or a
worm
and hopping away on thin wire feet
it abandons the mystery
of this giant who remains alone,
apart from its small, fleeting life.*

From "Bird" by Pablo Neruda

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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400 S. Virginia St. #902
Reno, NV 89501
Reno phone: 686-5750

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

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

Governor Kenny Guinn
Executive Chambers
Capitol Complex
Carson City, NV 89710

IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS PROGRAM

Don McIvor

775-882-2597
dmcivor@audubon.org

38 IBAs ...and Holding

Last October the Important Bird Areas Program got a boost during the last meeting of the Program's Technical Advisory Committee, at least for the foreseeable future. The TAC met in coordination with the Nevada Partners in Flight, and our purpose was to take a final look at the IBA nominations that we had on hand—over a dozen sites.

The outcome of the meeting was the addition of nine new IBAs to Nevada's portfolio. We also made some hard and final—for now—decisions on some nominations that proved challenging for us. With the new additions Nevada now has 38 IBAs. In this task of identifying IBAs numbers can be misleading. But it looks like about 10-15 percent of the Nevada landscape is recognized as worthy of IBA status, and this number is consistent with other states and even with most other national programs.

As the IBA Program moves into focusing on other aspects of this conservation initiative, the drive to identify, nominate, and evaluate potential IBAs has slowed to a virtual stop. The path ahead includes publishing *Nevada's Important Bird Areas* (a guide to the IBAs), conservation planning efforts for these landscapes, and assuring that monitoring programs are established on each IBA. None of this means more nominations aren't welcome, but my experience has been that most nominations arrive only after serious coercion.

Even in the absence of any nominations, some form of the TAC will convene about every five years. On this time scale we will reassess existing IBAs to assure that these sites still qualify as IBAs, and to assure that boundaries remain appropriately linked to our understanding of the way birds are using the landscape. It is a little frightening to realize that we really could lose some of our IBAs on a time frame as short as five years—Walker Lake and Carson Valley come to mind.

New Nevada Important Bird Areas

Catclaw Washes IBA

Dry washes in Clark County characterized by a high density of catclaw acacia and, in more isolated places, mesquite. These sites support significant densities of Phainopepla, are critical to both breeding and wintering populations, and are also stop-over sites for migrating passerines.

Carson Range IBA

This IBA captures the incursion of the Sierra Nevada Ecoregion into the state, along with an avifaunal assemblage that is unique to the state.

Washoe Valley IBA

Originally proposed as a part of the Carson Range IBA, the TAC elected to distinguish this landscape from the adjacent mountains. Important waterbird habitat lies in the Scripps WMA, and extensive wet meadows offer habitat for raptors and some grassland species.

Northern Snake Range IBA

The companion IBA to the already-recognized Great Basin NP IBA. This site lies north of Hwy 50, which essentially divides the two areas. Excellent montane habitats, including meadows, vigorous aspen stands, mixed conifers, mountain mahogany, and the suite of bird species that characterize these habitat types.



A healthy aspen grove in the Carson Range IBA.

Ruby Mountains IBA

Another important Sky Island with healthy (mostly) montane habitats. Important to varying degrees for all three species of Rosy Finch, Lewis's Woodpecker, Red-naped Sapsucker, three species of warblers...and much more!

Toiyabe Range IBA

Includes much of the Toiyabe Range south of Austin. Well-watered drainage support narrow but important riparian corridors. Critical Greater Sage Grouse habitat lies here, and the site lies in what is probably the heart of Pinyon Jay distribution in the state.

Jarbridge Mountains IBA

Probably the most well-watered Great Basin range in Nevada. More than 10 Partners in Flight species of concern breed here.

Lower Muddy River IBA

Includes the river and its flood plain from about Overton WMA to Lake Mead. Important waterbird habitat, Virginia and Yuma Clapper Rail, Willow Flycatcher, Swainson's Hawk, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk.

Lake Mead IBA

Includes portions of both Lake Mead and Lake Mohave. Important habitat for migrating and wintering waterbirds.

Don McIvor

NV Director of Bird Conservation
NV Important Bird Areas Program

FIELD TRIPS

Diane Wong, Field Trip Chair
775-324-0762
di_an@juno.com

Saturday, April 2

Swan Lake and Lemmon Valley Marsh, North Reno

Trip Leader: Bob Goodman (775) 972-7848, Pandion26@aol.com

Time: 8:30 a.m.

Place: 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 mid-day. This is a good time to see winter birds as well as possible early spring migrants.

Saturday, April 23

Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge

Trip Leader: Diane Wong (775) 771-8334
di_an@juno.com

Time: 8 a.m.

Place: Refuge office parking lot

This is a great time to see the Mojave Desert in bloom and some fun southern Nevada birds. We will bird the refuge, including Crystal and Peterson Reservoirs and various springs. Vermilion Flycatchers, Lucy's Warblers, White-faced Ibis, and Phainopeplas are just a few of the birds that can be seen in spring. This will be a half-day to all-day trip, depending on what the group decides, so bring food and plenty of water. Scopes are recommended

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S PERCH: Back In Your Own Backyard

As we enjoy spring 2005, let us consider our own immediate habitat, be it yard, patio, open space, or local park. For example, Diazinon, a broad spectrum pesticide which kills birds, bees, butterflies and hundreds of beneficial insects, can no longer be purchased as of January 1, although old supplies can still be used. Of the millions of pounds of Diazinon pumped into the environment, 80% has been from residential use.

You will find enclosed Audubon's *Healthier Choices: The Audubon at Home Guide to Healthier Pest Control*. "Audubon at Home" <http://www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/> provides a wide variety of information about our own mini-habitats. Stephen W. Kress' *The Bird Garden*, among other sources, provides details on water, food, and shelter for birds. Sara Stein's 1993 *Noah's Garden* (still in print), the "bible of the new environmental gardening movement" and a good read, describes the critical role yards and even the smallest suburban lots play in supporting biodiversity.

Karen L. Kish

for birding the reservoirs if you have one to bring and share! Please contact Diane before April 17 to reserve a spot or get information.

Saturday, May 7

Swan Lake Cleanup, North Reno

Trip Leader: Bob Goodman (775) 972-7848, Pandion36@aol.com

Time: 8:00 a.m.

Place: McDonald's parking lot off the Lemmon Valley Exit on Hwy 395 north of Reno

Please bring sturdy footwear and gloves. If you have waterproof, tall boots or waders, these will be helpful working to remove trash from the stream. As the time draws near, we will know more about the extent of pickup trucks needed for transporting trash to the dumpster. As always for this glamorous work, bring a smile.

May (date to be announced)

Silver Saddle Ranch, Carson City

Trip Leader: Nancy Bish (775) 884-1570
or n.bish@att.net

Time: 7:30 a.m.

Place: Silver Saddle Ranch Parking Lot, located on Carson River Road, off East 5th Street

Plan to spend the morning exploring the ranch for birds and learning a little about the ranch history. Habitat at the ranch

includes sagebrush, agricultural lands and a riparian corridor adjacent to the Carson River. The variety of habitat allows for a diverse number of bird species to be observed at the ranch. All levels of birders are welcome and beginning birders are encouraged to attend. Please contact Nancy Bish (775) 884-1570 or n.bish@att.net to register or for more information.

Eighth Annual Spring Wings Festival in Fallon May 13-15, 2005

A celebration of the songbirds, shorebirds, and waterfowl returning to the Lahontan Valley from all over the western world, this year's Spring Wings Festival will offer several new field trips including a tour of one of the local marshes by air boat. Another will include an evening of "bug lighting" with John Acorn, our featured guest speaker at the Friday night banquet. John Acorn, The Nature Nut, is a much sought after nature festival entertainer. His children's show "The Nature Nut" ran for many years on the Animal Planet channel. A hit with adults as well as children, John sings, teaches, and makes us laugh!

After Saturday's field trips there will be a light buffet dinner and talks by local artist Ray Nelson, past President of LAS and this year's Featured Festival Artist, and Point Reyes Naturalist/Storyteller, Ane Rovetta. Ray will present birding through the eyes of an artist. Ane will illuminate the ancient myths and cultural significance of birds and the natural world. The very popular Bat Tours and Owl Prowl will follow the buffet and talks.

In line with this year's theme, "Kids and Nature," we are increasing the activities we offer for kids of *all* ages. Come and help us celebrate spring migration and nature in the Lahontan Valley. Please visit our website for more information: www.springwings.org or call 775-428-6452.

CONSERVATION CORNER

Sage Grouse Protection

On January 12, 2004, the Department of the Interior published in the Federal Register the proposed rule on the petition to list the Greater Sage-Grouse as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. After a 12-month review of the best available scientific and commercial information, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service found that listing is not warranted. The Nevada Sage Grouse Conservation Plan, completed last fall, was important support material used in the review process. Nevada has made great strides to help protect sage grouse and its habitat.

We appreciate the efforts of the Local Working Groups (LWG) and state and federal agencies that have made the plan a reality. However, there is much work to be done. The local plans developed by these groups now need to be funded and implemented. The Governor's Sage Grouse Team continues to spearhead efforts by the LWG's to design and conduct on-the-ground projects aimed at improving habitat and increasing sage grouse populations. We would like to encourage interested Audubon members to become participants in these local working groups; you can contact Katie Simper at the Department of Wildlife at ksimper@ndow.org. For additional information on efforts in Nevada to protect sage grouse visit, www.ndow.org/wild/sg/.

How about getting a little up-close and personal with Nevada's magnificent Greater Sage-Grouse? You can volunteer with the Department of Wildlife and help conduct sage grouse surveys this spring. Training is required and information can be obtained by contacting Kim Toulouse, Volunteer Coordinator at Toulouse@ndow.org, or through NDOW's website www.ndow.org/volunteer/sg/. Let Kim know you are a Lahontan Audubon Society member and you heard about this project through *the Pelican*!

Feeder Maintenance Keep Your Birds Healthy

Cleaning your bird feeders regularly helps the birds that visit them remain healthy. Here's how:

Birds can become ill from moldy or decomposing seeds and hulls that accumulate on feeder trays. Bird droppings and other contaminants may also spread infectious bird diseases. You should clean your feeders about once every two weeks; more often during times of heavy use. For best results wash your feeder thoroughly in hot, soapy water, then soak or rinse it in a solution of one part bleach to nine parts water. Dry the feeder thoroughly before refilling.

Remember to clean the ground below your feeder too, to prevent a build-up of birdseed hulls and other waste. Moldy or spoiled food is unhealthy not only for birds but for your outside pets. And bird food scattered on the ground can attract unwanted rodents.

Spread your feeders apart to prevent overcrowding and make sure they have no sharp edges. If the feeders scratch birds, they may become susceptible to disease.

This tip was taken directly from the website of Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/programs/AllAboutBirds/AttractingBirds/FeedingBirds/FeederMaintenance.html>

Work Group Volunteers Needed at Stillwater NWR

The Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge has some big plans this year to make the refuge more people friendly, and they need our help. All you need to bring are long pants, long-sleeved shirt, boots or sturdy shoes, wide-brimmed hat, sun screen, binoculars (just in case), and a willingness to work. Lunch will be provided as will all necessary tools and materials. Times are from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. The dates are:

Saturday, March 19, remove fences
Saturday, March 26, remove fences
Saturday, April 9, build fences
Sunday, April 17, build a photo blind
Saturday, April 30, build a photo blind
Saturday, May 28, build an overlook
Saturday, June 4, build an overlook
Saturday, June 11, build an overlook

Please RSVP for the dates you would like to volunteer at (775) 428-6452 or (775) 423-5128. If you have any questions please call these numbers or Jim Lytle at (775) 577-9641 or lytleja@sbcglobal.net.



BIRDS IN TOWN

by Alan Wallace

That little dusting of snow that we got in early January seemed to keep people at home, where they put out copious amounts of bird food and watched huge numbers of birds eat it all. Most of the avian hordes were the regulars multiplied by an order of magnitude. **Pine Siskins**, which hadn't visited many feeders in several years, showed up throughout the snow-clogged area, and John Woodyard near Baker got the top prize with his 50 Siskins and 50 **Pinyon Jays**. Winter feeding territories must have shifted for some normally non-town birds, with **Northern Mockingbirds**, **Red-breasted Nuthatches**, and **Western Meadowlarks** appearing in several yards for the first time. **Cassin's Finches** made their first winter yard appearances in several western Nevada yards, but they remained plentiful in the Elko and Baker areas. Several people noted the popularity of hanging and fallen apples and pyracantha berries among **American Robins**, **Cedar Waxwings**, and **European Starlings** during the storms. Hawks, especially **Sharp-shinned** and **Cooper's Hawks**, seemed to like the feeders as well, but the heavy snow cover taxed the larger raptors, such as the common **Red-tailed Hawks** and surprising numbers of **Red-shouldered Hawks**. The snow didn't get in the way of hormones, though. Several birders noted increased vocalizations and aggressive behaviors in January, early suggestions of the upcoming breeding season, and Red-tailed Hawks were busy repairing a riparian-area nest in Reno in mid January.

During and between the non-stormy periods (yes, there were some), December and January brought several unusual to incredibly rare birds to northern Nevada towns. The highlight was a one-day-only **Yellow Wagtail** discovered by Richard Brune in western Reno. **Blue Jays**, so common in the eastern states, appeared for extended stays in both Lovelock and Ely. First one, then two **Harris's Sparrows** joined **White-crowned** and **Golden-crowned Sparrows** along the Truckee River in Sparks in January, and they in turn were joined by a **White-throated Sparrow**; a third Harris's Sparrow frequented the Serdehely's yard in Fernley in December. **Varied Thrushes** appeared in several western Nevada towns, and two separate **Orange-crowned Warblers** joined other birds in Reno and Sparks. A **Burrowing Owl** inhabited a weedy truck storage lot in Sparks in December and January, and birders in Carson City and Gardnerville found two sizeable groups of **Great-tailed Grackles**; the owls and grackles aren't uncommon here in the summer but are very unusual for the dead of winter. A couple of **Eurasian Widgeons** and a **Mew Gull** lingered at the Lemmon Valley sewage ponds into December, a **Franklin's Gull** joined the **Ring-billed** and **California Gulls** at Virginia Lake, along with a presumably escaped or released **Mandarin Duck**, and a **Ross's Goose** mixed with a flock of **Canada Geese** at Rancho San Rafael.

The cold weather froze many ponds, and many waterfowl headed for the rivers. **Barrow's Goldeneyes** appeared on the Truckee River in a couple of places, and **Common Mergansers** were visibly more common this year than in the past. Other river-floaters included **Pied-billed Grebes**, **Redheads**, **Canvasback**, **Hooded Mergansers**, **Green-winged Teal**, and **Northern Pintail**. **Great Blue Herons** and **Black-crowned Night-Herons** (10 in Sparks alone) prowled the shoreline, and a rare mid-winter **Spotted Sandpiper** was found along the Truckee River in January. **Bald Eagles** frequented the rivers as well, including multiple birds in Reno and Verdi and one along Steamboat Creek south of Reno. On the few open ponds, waterfowl density was high (mostly **Mallards** and **Canada Geese**), with the most notable birds being the 45 **Tundra Swans** at Swan Lake. The unfrozen parts of marshes, such as around Swan Lake, were good places to find **Virginia Rails** and **Soras**.

A note of caution: Melissa Renfro reported dead and dying **Northern Flickers** in Baker and Great Basin National Park in early January, possibly due to a flicker-specific disease. Birders in the Reno-Carson City area also noted local die-offs during the heavy storms that may have been unrelated to a disease. Advice from several people emphasized the importance of handling any dead birds only with plastic gloves and washing hands thoroughly afterwards to avoid the spread of parasites or potential diseases to humans.

Birders reported 113 in-town species in December and January, not counting birds seen on the Christmas counts. Sources of information for this column included **Brian Adams**, **Shelley Beckett**, **Richard Brune**, **Loretta Cartner & Matt Wilkin**, **Ali Chaney**, **John Davis**, **Mary Jo Elpers**, **Peter Fairley**, **Bob Goodman**, **Linda Hiller**, **Nancy Hoffman**, **Ed Kurtz**, **Sue Anne Marshall**, **Stan McCart**, **Martin Meyers**, **Don Molde**, **Chris Nicolai**, **Harold Peterson**, **Fred Peterson**, **Kris Pizarro**, **Debbie & Randy Pontius**, **Lynn Purcell**, **Melissa Renfro**, **Dennis Serdehely**, **Tom Stille**, **Lisa Stillings**, **Jane Thompson**, **Dennis Trousdale**, **Jack Walters**, **Glee Willis**, **Diane Wong**, **Bob & Jan Wood**, **John Woodyard**, and me. Contributions are welcome, so send a postcard/note to 1050 Sumac St., Reno, NV 89509 or an email to wallacealan@sbcglobal.net (note the new email address), or continue to post items on the Nevada bird list-serve. The deadline for the next column is **March 25**. Good birding!

LAS SALES

BOOKS

	Price	Postage	TOTAL
<i>A Birding Guide to Reno and Beyond</i> (2000) Published by Lahontan Audobon Society	\$10	\$1.50	_____
<i>Nevada Birding Map</i> (price includes postage)	\$ 4		_____
		TOTAL ORDER	_____

NAME (please print) _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____

PHONE _____

Make checks payable to Lahontan Audubon Society and mail with this form to Ron Conkey, 1865 East Lake Blvd., Carson City NV 89704.

LIQUIDATION SALE – LAS Nature Store

The LAS Nature Store has been changed to LAS Sales. The only merchandise we carry at this time is *A Birding Guide to Reno* and the *Nevada Birding Map*. Ron Conkey is handling sales of both. Ordering details appear here in *The Pelican* and on our web site. Limited supplies of LAS pelican T-shirts will be offered in liquidation sales at the next few general meetings. Don't miss this opportunity!

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/DONATION FORM

Lahontan Audubon Society Membership (all funds remain in the community):

We invite your membership. Please complete and mail this form with payment.

Individual/Family - \$20/year

Full Time Student/Senior (over 62) - \$15/year

Members receive *The Pelican* newsletter. Make check payable to Lahontan Audubon Society and mail to: Carol Conkey, LAS Membership, 1865 East Lake Boulevard, Carson City, NV 89704

Donations: Please select one and make check payable to Lahontan Audubon Society. Mail to P.O. Box 2304, Reno NV 89505

Ruby-crowned Kinglet - \$10

Mountain Bluebird - \$20

American Avocet - \$50

American White Pelican - \$100

Golden Eagle - \$500 or more

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IBA

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