

LAHONTAN AUDUBON SOCIETY
A Chapter of National Audubon Society
ANNUAL REPORT to Our Members
July 1, 2007, to June 30, 2008

Lahontan Audubon Society (LAS) is guided by our **Mission Statement** and this organization's three focuses, **birding, conservation, and education**, which are interrelated and reinforce one another, as is reflected in the variety and nature of activities our organization engages in.

LAS consists of over 1,000 member families or individuals. The chapter's territory extends to a 60-mile radius out of Reno and within Nevada, but as only one of two chapters in a vast and geologically varied state, we feel obligated to represent northern Nevada and, on occasion, the entire state and the adjacent Sierra Nevada. For example, the Nevada Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program, which our chapter administers, encompasses the entire state.

LAS's fiscal year 2007-2008 activities began July 15, 2007, with our annual Strategy and Planning Retreat for the LAS Board of Trustees, Committee Chairs, and the IBA Director of Bird Conservation. The following report, while not all-inclusive, attempts to present a broad picture of much of what this all-volunteer organization does and represents.

Conservation

Our mission statement begins, "To preserve and improve the remaining habitat of birds and other wildlife, restore historical habitat, ..." Our **Conservation Committees** are organized along the lines of general conservation responsibility and advocacy (Ali Chaney), Sage Grouse Conservation Team (Ali Chaney), and our special interest areas Silver Saddle Ranch (Nancy Santos) and Swan Lake NSA (Bob Goodman). Ali Chaney serves as Conservation Chairman. In the latter part of the fiscal year a general Conservation Committee was formed, including Gene Hansel and Kathy Oakes, whose responsibilities include facilitating liaison between the IBA Program and LAS and assisting in conservation projects.

This year the Conservation Committee made significant progress in its project to reduce the mortality of birds trapped in hollow mine claim markers throughout Nevada. We developed a working relationship with the Nevada Mining Association, NDOW, and Red Rock Audubon Society (Las Vegas). Together we developed draft language for changes to a Nevada Revised Statute that describes what constitutes a legal, valid mineral claim monument. At a Public Lands Committee meeting in June we formally requested the committee use its bill draft request capacity to carry forward this proposed revision. Our comments were well received. We await a Lands Committee decision in August which could lead to the revision being addressed in the 2009 legislative session.

LAS provided \$1,000 from our Conservation Fund in addition to securing a \$675 grant through a National Audubon Society (NAS) Collaborative Funding Agreement to purchase 300 pine tree seedlings, native shrubs, and native seed for rehabilitation of the Hawken Fire burn area in southwest Reno. LAS worked in cooperation with the Nevada Land Conservancy and Caughlin Ranch Homeowners Association. In April a volunteer project organized 200 people, including LAS volunteers, to do the planting.

Advocacy activity this year involved three areas of effort. LAS supported Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) through the the Teaming with Wildlife Fly-In to Washington, D.C., to seek Federal Wildlife Grants for NDOW Wildlife Diversity Division projects. After careful consideration, we joined Common Agenda, a coalition of other state environmental organizations to establish a few conservation priorities for effective action in the next legislative session. Third, we continued our efforts to support and assist the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) management plan for Porter Springs, a critical but neglected resting and refueling habitat for a large variety of birds during migration.

Ali Chaney represents LAS on the state-level **Sage Grouse Conservation Team**, which meets monthly to evaluate Population Management Units, seek funding opportunities for planning projects, and help with gather current data regarding the official status of this species.

The recently formed Kiley Ranch Preservancy Foundation sought the further involvement of LAS to address the future of the **Kiley Ranch Wetland Preserve** in Sparks. Christiane Omer, Gene Hansel, and Kathy Oakes reviewed and provided detailed written comment on the draft Kiley Ranch Wildlife Wetland Preserve Management Plan.

Nancy Santos, President of Friends of **Silver Saddle Ranch** (FOSSR) in Carson City, led organized efforts culminating in a “charrette,” a program and process to design recommendations for management and use of all public lands adjacent to the Carson River in Carson City, including Silver Saddle Ranch (SSR) and Prison Hill. The process was facilitated through an aid grant (non-financial) from the National Parks Service. LAS supports FOSSR’s position of maintaining the ranch as a natural resource and has been identified as a stakeholder in SSR land issues. We participated in two public workshops and in the charrette, attended by various experts and stakeholders, at the end of May. A comprehensive report is to be presented to the public and Carson City official entities later in 2008.

Bob Goodman serves as LAS’ representative, with Ali Chaney as alternate, on the **Swan Lake Nature Study Area** Advisory Board. Through collaborative efforts of governmental entities, a planned outdoor classroom has just been completed. The Swan Lake NSA Board is monitoring Horse Ravine drainage and plans for its modification appropriate to the habitat. Bob visits and monitors Swan Lake at least weekly. LAS also sponsors an annual cleanup of the nature study area. Swan Lake NSA is a designated IBA and, thus, is also the subject of guidance and support through that program.

Robin Powell is the Director of Bird Conservation for the **Nevada Important Bird Areas Program** (IBA). Robin reports jointly to National Audubon Society’s IBA Program and the LAS Board of Trustees, with the LAS President assisting in administrative oversight including serving as signatory to grant and contract documents. LAS is the 501(c)(3) nonprofit under which the IBA Program operates.

This year the Nevada IBA Program has moved into the implementation of conservation practices and projects, providing technical assistance and building partnerships, collaborations, and consensus on key habitat-related issues. Several examples of these activities are: (1) Initiation of the Lower Carson River Coordination Team, which includes Lyon County staff and commissioners, Nevada Division of State Parks, Audubon Society, Nevada Land Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy, and the Carson River Coalition. The group’s first accomplishment was to secure funding for a 40-acre conservation easement adjacent to Dayton State Park on the Carson River corridor, allowing for protection of the flood plain and cottonwood forest. (2.) Assumption of the role of coordinator of the Washoe Valley Cooperative Weed Management Area, consisting of federal, state, and private landowners in the Washoe Valley IBA, with responsibility for facilitating meetings, executing grant agreements, and providing technical expertise. An initial activity was to organize a Noxious Weed Information Day at Washoe Lake State Park. (3.) Securing a Nevada State Parks Trail Grant for Stillwater NWR to develop a trail, interpretive signs, and viewing blind for the Kent Wetlands within the Lahontan Valley Wetlands IBA.

With travel expenses funded by LAS, Robin joined the NDOW Wildlife Diversity Chief and a Wildlife Commissioner in traveling to Washington, D.C., for the Teaming with Wildlife Fly-In Day to advocate for the Federal Wildlife Grants Program. The director also serves as liaison with Nevada Partners in Flight and as a member of the Nevada Steering Committee for the Intermountain West Joint Venture.

Education

The latter part of our Mission Statement states, “... and educate the public with emphasis on children, providing vision to all about our unique Nevada environments.” The **Education Committee**, chaired by Alan Gubanich, continued significant involvement in a program to lead birding field trips at the Washoe Lake

Mitigation Wetland in cooperation with Washoe Lake State Park. The program had to be scaled back again this year, only because of lack of available park personnel. Eight field trips involved about 281 third-through sixth-grade children in classroom groups. Sixteen LAS volunteers plus Alan and a park ranger led students on birding walks, most notably John Schulte and Susan Stevenson, who volunteered for six trips each. All students had access to binoculars and spotting scopes.

Classroom visits included middle school, high school, and special education students in Lovelock, first grade classes at C.C. Meneeley Elementary School in Minden, and an evening presentation on Nevada Birds to Elmcrest Elementary School in Reno during their Science Fair Night. A program "Birds of the Truckee Meadows," principally for adults, was given by Alan Gubanich at Moana Nursery in Reno. Eleven LAS volunteers manned an interactive and hands-on LAS display at the day long "Tune In To Kids Fair" at Idlewilde Park in Reno.

Bob Goodman coordinated LAS' annual spring course of **Birding Classes**, "Birds of the Truckee Meadows." Five two-hour classes were taught by experienced instructors and skilled birders David Jickling, Larry Neel, Alan Gubanich, Jim Eidel, and Bob Goodman. About 52 participants registered for all or part of the course, many of whom also purchased LAS birding publications.

Education about birds was also furthered by the popular "Learn-a-Bird" and "Bit of Biology" sessions presented by Dr. Alan Gubanich, UNR Associate Professor of Biology Emeritus, at each General Meeting. Alan also maintains the LAS collection of species slides.

Birding

Field Trips Chair Christiane Omer organized 27 field trips throughout the area including adjacent areas in California. Shorter field trips at nearer locations were generally very popular and particularly accessible for potential new birders. Six new locations were rotated into the lineup of these shorter trips. Two new trips at somewhat greater distance were offered, Raptors in the Nile Valley and Unionville Bed and Breakfast Birding, which attracted 30 and 21 participants respectively. Twenty leaders, some working in teams, volunteered as trip leaders, seven of whom were new to leading LAS trips. We also provided a number of leaders for events mentioned later in this report.

LAS members served as Audubon Christmas Bird Count compilers and team members in local count areas, Truckee Meadows (Reno and Sparks), Carson City, Fallon, and Pyramid Lake, submitting count information to a huge database that serves as a barometer of distribution and numbers of North American birds.

General Meetings, with Alan Gubanich as Activity/Program Chair, were offered from September to May (excluding December) to members and the general public. Attendance ranged from 22 to 74. Habitat program topics included Lake Davis Pike Eradication Project, Defensible Space for Fire Protection, NAS' Challenges and Opportunities in Alaska, and The Effects of Urban Weeds on Avian Populations. Species-specific and science-based topics included Avian Use, Nest-site Selection, and Nesting Success in Sierra Nevada Aspen and Prairie Grouse: Status and Conservation Efforts in the Great Plains. Birding and photography avocations were presented in Wild Alaska: A Photographer's Journey. A new program format, a Bird Identification Panel and Challenge – How Do They Know? calling on five "ace birders" among our members, drew the highest attendance of the year and left everyone asking for more.

The preliminary social half-hour portions of General Meetings were enhanced by the **Hospitality Committee** (Jane Burnham succeeded by Linda Badzioch) organizing beverages and snacks. Various Board members greeted people at the door and assured that everyone wore name badges. The Communications Committee set out a "For Your Information" table. The "Budget Bird Book Raffle," coordinated by Jane Burnham, served successfully as an icebreaker and a small fundraiser at meetings.

The **Birds & Books Reading Group**, coordinated by Kenn Rohrs for collaborative discussion of books about birds and their place in nature, continued with a full 12-month schedule. A group eight to 12 regular

readers met at Sundance Bookstore in Reno, while additional members read the selected titles without attending the meetings. Kenn posted a full schedule of the selections plus substantial summaries on the LAS web site. He also created a book review section within the Birds & Books Reading Group section on the web site which offers brief reviews of other bird-related books.

Special Projects

Member Rose Strickland initiated a **Bird Records Archive Project** with the assistance of Karen Kish and Board oversight. The intent is to preserve in a central location certain collections of birding field notes deemed of a significant and historic nature. Meetings and communications with the Curator of Natural History at the Nevada State Museum resulted in an agreement to house selected archive records at the museum with only rudimentary curation involved. Forms and guidelines, compatible with museum policy, plus an invitation-to-donate letter were developed.

A **Celebration of LAS Volunteers** was held immediately preceding the October 23rd General Meeting. A listing of all those who volunteered during the preceding fiscal year was posted. Alan Gubanich gave a power point presentation highlighting a variety of LAS activities and participating volunteers. All volunteers were presented with large laminated sepia-tone bookmarks designed and created by Robin Powell. Two decorated sheet cakes topped off the celebration.

As an outgrowth of the 2007 Board Strategy and Planning Retreat, Kenn Rohrs along with the rest of the Board of Trustees developed a **Member Survey**, which was mailed to the full membership. We received over 100 responses (about 10% of membership) to the two-page survey. Kenn produced a précis of multiple-choice responses and an organized compilation of all expository responses, which were distributed to all Board Trustees and Committee Chairs for review in preparation for the July 2008 Planning Retreat.

Supporting Committees

Membership Committee Chair Kathy Oakes processes and maintains both our local and national membership lists and mailing label list for *The Pelican* newsletter. As of the end of the fiscal year, NAS plus local-only memberships totaled 1,046, an net increase of 34 over last year. Donations made during the course of the year are acknowledged with a letter of thanks and a listing in the donation column of *The Pelican*. This year Kathy began a new policy of reminder letters for expired LAS-only members which has yielded a good response ratio. Overall record keeping efforts have resulted in a very current membership roster. Kathy also began a program of inviting nonmembers who attend General Meetings to join LAS. Membership brochures were placed at Wild Birds Unlimited and were made available at field trips, public events and talks, and General Meetings.

The **Communications Committee**, chaired by Karen Kish, continued as an umbrella for a variety of support activities as follows.

LAS publishes *The Pelican* **newsletter** bimonthly in an eight-page format with a circulation of over 1000. Mike Greenan stepped down after four years as editor. He trained and assisted Jen Martin, who became the new editor with the May/June issue. Kristin Szabo assists with copyediting. Regular columns include *Birds in Town* by Alan Wallace, *Important Bird Areas Program* by Robin Powell, *Conservation Corner* by Ali Chaney, and *From the President's Perch* by Karen Kish. Field trips, general meetings, and special activities are promoted. Connie Douglas handled distribution by way of label attachment and bulk mail processing.

Web Master Steve Ting dealt with a variety of updates and revisions on the **LAS Web Site** in very timely fashion throughout the year. This year Steve added pages to archive Field Trip reports and Birds & Books Reading Group reading selection information. Steve also improved certain internal links and provided a more printer friendly format for certain pages. He again made sure that the web site met with Worldwide Web Consortium standards. Alan Wallace maintains bimonthly master lists of his *Birds in Town* column cross-referenced by species name in a section of the web site.

Jacque Lowery serves as the manager of the **LAS Info Line**. The line receives from two to 10 call messages per month, with an average of four calls per month over the past two years. The recorded message also provides brief information regarding such information as bird rescue contacts and General Meeting information. This year an "LAS Info Line On-Line" section was introduced on the web site, giving a direct link to Jacque's e-mail address.

The **LAS E-mail List**, maintained by Karen Kish, sends out brief notices to participating members regarding meetings, field trips, reading group, LAS and related events, and local civic forums affecting birds and bird habitat. E-mail addresses are relayed by the Membership Chair and are also gathered from the General Meeting sign-in sheets. As of June 5, 2007, the list numbered 221 addressees, individuals or families, up from 183 addressees at the same time last year.

The **Nevada Birds List Server**, a part of the National Audubon Society List Server network, has approximately 280 subscribers from throughout Nevada and a few from outside of the state. Alan Wallace moderates the list server, making sure that all subscribers adhere to the Nevada birds and birding theme. His role also involves responding to various direct requests and resolving any problems related to the operation of the list server. Special efforts have been made to emphasize that the list server is for all levels of birders and welcomes postings from throughout the entire state. A link to the list server appears on the home page of the LAS Web Site.

Karen Kish handles **Publicity**. Press releases are sent via email to as many as seven newspapers and one public access television station. Field trips, general meetings, birding classes, special events, and Christmas Bird Counts are the subject of these releases. Web Master Steve Ting was featured in an October *Reno Gazette-Journal (RG-J)* article about his wildlife photography avocation. Swan Lake Nature Study Area and Bob Goodman were the subject of a *RG-J* feature article at the beginning of November. Karen Kish was interviewed for a December *RG-J* feature article about Christmas Bird Count. A feature article about the Great Reno Caper birding trip appeared in the *RG-J* in early January. The National Audubon Society *Chapter Networker* Winter 2008 newsletter ran a story on our *A Birding Guide to Reno and Beyond*.

Communications also created fliers for the LAS Birding Classes and other activities or events, maintained name tags for General Meetings and public events, and produced several internal administrative reference lists. The committee maintained the LAS display board and table as well as the binders *LAS in Print*, *LAS in Photos*, and *Pelican Archives*. With the assistance of Ali Chaney, we pick up and distribute incoming mail from our post office box in Reno in a reasonably timely fashion.

Public Outreach Events involving both the general public and fellow organizations included, in addition to those mentioned above in other sections:

- Great Basin Environmental Program NGO/UNR Workshop, Reno-Sparks, 2/20-21/08: Karen Kish for LAS and Robin Powell for the Nevada IBA Program were invited by the UNR College of Agriculture, Biotechnology and Natural Resources to serve on a committee to help plan a workshop to promote greater collaboration among non-governmental organizations related to the Great Basin Environmental Program. Meetings commenced 8/2/07 and led up to the workshop attended by over 200 participants. LAS donated \$100 to be formally recognized as a sponsor.
- Eagles and Agriculture Weekend, Douglas County, 2/20 & 22-24/08: Alan Gubanich enlisted LAS members as field trip leaders, Karen Kish coordinated the LAS display, and Robin Powell organized the raffle and door prizes. LAS donated a raffle prize of cast iron bookends.
- Tune in to Kids Fair, Reno, 4/12/08: [Please see the Education section above for this and other education-specific events.]
- Spring Wings Birding Festival, Fallon, 5/9-11/07: LAS, a major sponsor, supplied many of the field trip leaders, as coordinated by Ali Chaney and Alan Gubanich, and workshop leaders. Alan Gubanich served as master of ceremonies for the two evening programs. We also maintained a static display booth during the

weekend and donated \$100 for a magnetic van placard to represent further sponsorship of the festival.

- Washoe Noxious Weed Information Day, Washoe Lake State Park, 4/5/08: LAS maintained a display at this event coordinated by Robin Powell through the IBA Program.
- Bob Goodman delivered talks to several groups in the community, with audiences totaling 380 people.

Administration

The administrative elements of our chapter provide the structural framework through which LAS' substantive activities are formulated and executed.

Board Meetings including officers, trustees, the IBA Director, and certain committee chairmen were held on the first Tuesday of the month September through June. An all-day Planning and Strategy Retreat on July 15, 2007, also involved this group of people. The Officers and Trustees serve as the principal decision-making body of LAS and also shoulder a number of additional duties. Officers, in addition to the writer, were Alan Gubanich, Vice President; Dave Straley, Treasurer; and Bonnie Wagner, Recording Secretary. Board Trustees were Jane Burnham, Gene Hansel, Ali Chaney, Kathy Oakes, Jacque Lowery, Linda Badzioch, and Kenn Rohrs. LAS owes them a great deal of thanks. **Elections** for the forthcoming year were organized by the **Election Committee** (Alan Gubanich and Jacque Lowery) and publicized for the May General Meeting. Jacque certified the results of the election.

Our **Treasurer** (Dave Straley, C.P.A.) filed all legal financial documents, our federal tax return, and Nevada Secretary of State documents as required. We retain our 501(c)(3) status and our Nevada sales tax exemption. Dave issued checks and invoices for both LAS and the IBA program and presented professional reconciled financial statements at Board meetings as well as preparing our annual financial statement. Jane Burnham began training and assisting in Treasurer duties in the latter half of the year. Dave also administered the chapter financial aspects of the Nevada Important Bird Areas Program in consultation with IBA Director Robin Powell and President Karen Kish. Over and above his various volunteer hours as an officer, Dave donated his professional-level accounting services to the chapter.

Jane Burnham handles **LAS Sales**, selling and filling individual mail orders and wholesale transactions for the LAS publications *A Birding Guide to Reno and Beyond—Second Edition* (\$10), *Nevada Birding Map—Second Edition* (\$4), and *Important Bird Areas of Nevada* (\$19.95). Nine local and seven out-of-area and/or out-of-state outlets handle the publications. At the national level, the American Birding Association carries all three publications. *IBAs of Nevada* is carried through Amazon.com and Baker Taylor book distributors, both of which produce sales at very low volume. The University of Nevada and Harvard University purchased copies of our *Nevada Birding Map* this year for their collections.

Recording Secretary Bonnie Wagner recorded and published the Minutes of the Board Meetings, seeking corrections or clarifications via email prior to their formal approval at the following meeting. Bonnie compiles the Minutes annually on a CD for an additional permanent record.

Finances

While we derive tremendous benefit from the efforts of chapter volunteers, we also need a financial basis upon which to operate, both in terms of the chapter itself as well as the IBA Program that our chapter administers.

Our sole paid position is the **Nevada Important Bird Areas** Director of Bird Conservation. While the Director's position is handled as a National Audubon employee, the position is 100% self-funded through grants awarded for proposals submitted by Director Robin Powell. In addition, in the summer of 2007, Connie Douglas our representative to the Audubon **Whittell Fund Committee** facilitated the acceptance of a proposal by LAS on behalf of the IBA Program, resulting in funds to underwrite three-quarters of a year of salary, benefits, and expenses for the IBA Director position during fiscal year 2007-8. Proceeds from sales of the IBA book are directed back into the program as well.

For purely administrative and operational costs, including production and distribution of *The Pelican* newsletter, the chapter needs approximately \$15,000 per annum, going forward. As of June 30, 2008, we were funded for these expenses for the forthcoming year. Last summer we submitted our 2006-2007 Annual Report on time, enabling us to receive a baseline payment from National Audubon Society in the September 2007 of \$2,952.75. Our Autumn 2007 Fund Drive received donations from 119 families or individuals (about 12% of membership) totaling \$5,395. Additional member donations throughout the year brought the total donations to approximately \$6,800. This year LAS received an unrestricted bequest of \$10,074 from member Robert Butler, which the Board has assigned to our Endowment Fund. Other income is derived from local memberships, sale of publications, and birding class fees. Income in excess of the amounts needed for current years operations are set aside for present and future projects.

An **Investment Portfolio** of approximately \$34,000 of chapter funds is invested in a moderate to conservative style appropriate to a nonprofit organization of our size, based on guidelines set out in an Investment Policy approved by the Board in 2005. The portfolio is managed pro bono by Dave Straley, C.P.A. and Registered Investment Advisor, through Third Creek Investments, Inc. Dave delivers quarterly portfolio performance reports to the Board, in compliance with communications requirements incumbent upon a Registered Investment Advisor.

The details of our finances are set out in our finalized **Financial Statements** prepared by Treasurer Dave Straley, C.P.A., and available after September 30, 2008 upon request.

In Conclusion

Based on our annual report for year 2006-2007, our chapter status was re-certified by National Audubon Society. This 2007-2008 report along with other supporting documents has been submitted to National Audubon Society to substantiate this year's re-certification. This report is also posted in the "Chapter Info" section of the LAS Web Site along with four prior LAS Annual Reports.

This report is based on reports prepared by committee chairs and project representatives, our Board Minutes, and a variety of other records. However, any errors, omissions, or oversights are strictly the responsibility of this writer.

We are fortunate in the quality and generosity of the individuals who forward our mission and help us meet the responsibilities we have taken up. The moral and financial support from our broader membership is also an essential element in any success LAS achieves. It is an honor and a pleasure to be associated with this chapter and to serve it and our northern Nevada/adjacent California community.



Karen L. Kish, President
Lahontan Audubon Society
August 2008