



The Rock Wren

The mission of Red Rock Audubon Society is to protect, restore, and improve natural ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife, and to educate the public about our unique Nevada environment.

Red Rock Audubon Society
 P.O. Box 96691
 Las Vegas, NV 89193
 702.390.9890

January 2011

Special dates of interest:

General Meetings:

Feb 14th: 6:30 pm
 Mar 14th: 6:30 pm
 Apr 11th: 6:30 pm

Field Trips:

Feb 2011 - Salton Sea
 Mar 2011 - S.E. Arizona

Bird Walks:

Tule Springs - 3rd Sat.
 Springs Preserve - 1st Sat.

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RRAS General Meetings

The Red Rock Audubon Society General Meetings are held the 2nd Monday of the month, except June, July, August, and December. Social hour begins at 6:30pm, presentations begin at 7pm. It's free and open to the public. Join us for snacks, conversation, education, and great raffle prizes. Meetings are held at Nevada Energy, in the Wengert Room, at 6226 W. Sahara Ave.

February 14th, 2011: Felix Owens and Donn Blake

'Hawk Migration in Veracruz, Mexico'



Our own Felix Owens and Donn Blake will present their bird migration survey information from their recent trip to Veracruz, Mexico for the annual southerly hawk migrations. Veracruz is a huge raptor migration corridor for almost every North American migratory raptor due to its location and topography ideal for raptor migrations. Felix and Don have some wonderful images and video to present.

Photo Information: Some of the almost 300,000 raptors that flew over Veracruz, Mexico on Sept. 27, 2008 when Donn

Blake and Felix Owens visited the area to witness the annual "River of Raptors" migration. No where else on the planet does a spectacle occur that approaches the raptor numbers produced here. This was the second largest single day count last year. Most of the birds in this kettle are Broad-winged Hawks.

Floyd Lamb/Tule Springs Monthly Bird Walks

RRAS will lead bird walks at Floyd Lamb/Tule Springs Park the third Saturday of each month to correspond with the Floyd Lamb Park Farmer's Market (10 am to 2 pm). For January, February, and March, the walks will start at 8 am and end at 10. Meet at the last parking lot in the group picnic area. Entrance to the park is free the day of the Farmer's Market. The walks will be geared toward beginners.



Board Members

Officers

President: Bob Wilkin
president@redrockaudubon.org

Vice President: Je Anne Branca
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Treasurer: Christine Mault
treasurer@redrockaudubon.org

Recording Secretary: Christiana Manville
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Directors-at-Large
John Bialecki, Rita Schlageter, Carolyn Titus

Past President: Pam Nickels
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Committee Chairs

Communications: Maureen Kammerer
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Conservation: John Hiatt
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Hospitality: Marilyn Mackett
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Membership: Carol Sweet
membership@redrockaudubon.org

Programs: Cris Tomlinson
programs@redrockaudubon.org

Sanctuary: John Bialecki
johnnybosox@aol.com

RRAS Membership Increases Despite Tough Economic Times

RRAS has experienced a steady increase in membership over the last 6 months from 958 to 1028 members. These are mainly residents from Southern Nevada, only 2 or 3 per month have been transfers in from other areas. We are pleased and gratified by this trend.

Now we would like to see more membership participation in meetings, field trips, and volunteer activities. We realize that other priorities like family might interfere with participation. That is why we are planning a range of family-friendly activities to choose from. This month, we will be assisting with Farmer's Market day at Tule Springs on Saturday, January 15th from 8am to 12 noon. It is a great time to bird, support local farmers, and enjoy one of the valley's more picturesque locations. Children's activities will be included.

Also, January 22nd will be the dedication of the new Birdsong Loop Trail at Corn Creek. Audubon members and other volunteers have worked hard to construct this new trail. Carolyn Titus will lead a bird walk at 7am and the dedication will be at 8am. Please share this rewarding moment with us.

We are also looking for volunteers to lead local field trips. These could be to areas such as Spring Mountain Ranch, Red Spring, Red Rock National Recreation Area, Mt. Charleston, Clark County Wetlands Park, Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve, and Pahrnagat National Wildlife Refuge. You don't have to be highly experienced to lead a trip, just willing to let people contact you and keep records. We know you are out there, so please call JeAnne Branca, our field trip chair at (702) 451-6843.

Stay informed and don't miss out on any activities!



The Red Rock Audubon Society sends out reminders for meetings, activities, volunteer opportunities, and special events. Let us know your email address and we'll include you on our email news bulletins and the distribution of the email version of newsletters. You can opt-out at any time and we will never share or sell your email address. Visit www.redrockaudubon.org and click on "Add your name to our e-news list" link, or email us at info@redrockaudubon.org, or leave us a voice mail at 702-390-9890.

Do You FACEBOOK? Red Rock Audubon Society Does!

Facebook is a free social networking site where users create and customize their own profiles with photos, videos, and information about themselves. Each user has a "wall" where friends can post comments or pictures. This provides a simple way for friends to keep in touch and share pictures and news.

Red Rock Audubon Society has started a Facebook page. To visit us just enter this address into your web browser: <http://www.facebook.com/RedRockAudubonSociety> Be sure to "LIKE" us when you get there!

President's Perch

Submitted by: Bob Wilkin

It is now 2011!! As I reflect on the accomplishments of 2010, I am excited about all that Red Rock Audubon has been able to do. We received grants to begin the Burrowing Owl Project at Tule Springs at Floyd Lamb Park. That project has moved forward and we have expanded our reach to Gilcrease Orchard with the placing of three more burrows there. Thank you to Christiana Manville for her tireless effort on that project and thank you to all the volunteers that came out in good weather and bad to install those burrows.

We have continued the good work of maintaining the sanctuary at Wheeler Springs Camp, thank you to John Bialecki for coordinating the volunteers, and thank you to the volunteers that maintain the trails and habitat there!

RRAS took a leading role in developing and then helped in building Birdsong Loop Trail at Corn Creek Station of the National Desert Wildlife Refuge. It officially opened on January 22, 2011. Thank you to Carolyn Titus for your efforts in mapping out where the trail should be built, building and leading the first official bird walk on the new trail! Thank you to all the volunteers for coming out and working on the trail!

RRAS has had several field trips in our important birding areas and in the surrounding states as well. Thank you to Je Anne Branca for your work to lead and coordinate those field trips and working with other volunteers who led those trips! We look forward to many more in the coming year.

RRAS has continued to lead a monthly bird walk in the Springs Preserve. Thank you to Pam Nickels for your commitment to that endeavor and thank you to Rita Schlageter for establishing and maintaining that program for so many years before I was affiliated with RRAS.

Many RRAS members may not realize the tremendous presence that Red Rock Audubon Society has at conservation meetings. Every person I meet inside the state and in California in an official position with conservation in governmental agencies, knows and speaks highly of John Hiatt. He and Hermi have kept up with and influenced conservation decisions at all levels for decades and I thank you for your continued commitment to conservation actions and measures.

Mount Charleston now has a new birding brochure because of the tremendous effort by the Red Rock Audubon Society. Thank you to Marilyn Mackett for coordinating and dedicating hundreds of hours to help visitors to Mount Charleston enjoy their outdoor experience. And thank you to Carolyn Titus and Maureen Kammerer and all the other volunteers who worked on the project before I was involved.

Our monthly general meetings have been entertaining and educational. Thank you to Cris Tomlinson for your effort in getting good individuals to speak at our meetings.

Many of these activities and projects cost money and require accounting procedures. Thank you to Christine Mault for taking our accounting reports to a professional level in 2010!

RRAS puts out this newsletter, maintains our website and now we have a presence on Facebook. Thank you to Maureen Kammerer for your creativity, knowledge and dedication, you do a fantastic job on these very crucial tools that put the face on the Red Rock Audubon Society.

Now it is time to look forward!! 2011 has begun! The birds are in their winter habitats and we are looking forward to spring. It is time to start working on restoring habitats, cleaning birding areas and preparing ourselves for bird outings! There are a lot of new programs beginning in 2011. Budgets in Washington DC and Nevada are going to be cut due to short falls in the economy. We as volunteers will need to step up and help in many ways that stretch the dollars that are still in the budgets to protect our wildlife and maintain their fragile habitats in the coming months.

Go to www.getoutdoorsnevada.org and sign up for a project that interests you. And remember, EACH ONE BRING ONE!! Get a neighbor or friend to join us as we grow our organization here in Southern Nevada!!

Vancouver Island Birding

Submitted by: Bob Wilkin

I was out of the country over Christmas and New Years Day. My wife and I went to Victoria, British Columbia. I wrote about birding BC in the previous Rock Wren, this is my follow-up.

I was able to visit a few new bird hot spots on Vancouver Island. For those of you who have not been to Victoria, it is on Vancouver Island, which is a little confusing since Vancouver (the city) is NOT on Vancouver Island and is instead on the mainland of Canada's western shore. It is due west of the Olympic Peninsula which is in Washington state of the USA. The temperature is mild in the winter due to ocean currents that effect their weather. That makes it a great place for birds and thus, birders.

I have mentioned previously, Island View Beach, Victoria Harbor and Swan Lake. We visited those and all the usual birds were there. The first

Vancouver Island Birding ...continued

couple of days the weather was rainy but then it cleared up nicely and the remainder of the trip was sunny and cool.

We went to Esquimalt Lagoon Migratory Bird Sanctuary. On the way, we dropped into Fort Rodd Hill and Fisgard Lighthouse National Historic Site. The grounds of the old fort have nature trails that lead through the second growth forest and provide birders with opportunities to see some of the local resident birds close up. I have never been so close to Brown Creepers!! They moved in flocks of 10 to 15 birds and were landing on the base of the trees and working their way up and then going to the next trees. Two to three Brown Creepers were on each tree at once! I was thrilled! The other small bird I encountered in good numbers here were the Orange Crowned Kinglets. They moved in with their little "peep" call and were all around me, then moved on. They were quite close to me and only barely reacted to me moving and taking photos. One was on the ground in front of me and stayed about five feet from me for a good while. I also saw Fox Sparrows in the edge of the woods. The path led us down to the beach where there were several ducks and a few Fox Sparrows that quickly disappeared when two women swam up in dry suits and got too close to the ducks. That's right, 2 degrees Celsius and there were swimmers out in overcast and sprinkling conditions. The Common Mergansers were out toward the lighthouse feeding on crabs. There were Canada Geese in the common areas on the lawns of the old Fort.

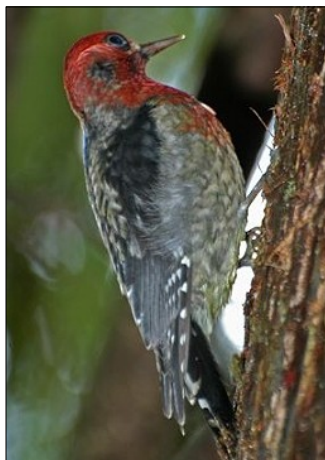
After the side trip to the fort, we moved on to the lagoon. Ducks have been fed at this lagoon and are quite bold. The species noted included Northern Pintails, American Wigeons, Gadwalls, Mallards and Ringed-necked Ducks. The non-park ducks that were there include Buffleheads, Common Goldeneyes, Common Mergansers, Hooded Mergansers, Lesser Scaups and Surf Scoters (lifer for me). There was a Belted Kingfisher positioning himself on an electric wire and then shifting to some logs on the beach and then to a tree over the quiet part of the lagoon. Two Black Oystercatchers were busy feeding in the shallow water that was rushing out as the tide was going out. A couple of Great Blue Herons used the island in the lagoon for a nice place for a nap. And before we left, Mute Swans had flown in and were competing with the tame ducks for attention from the people on the beach. A Common Murre rode the tide waters out of the lagoon area and headed out for deeper water. That was the first time that I knew I saw a Surf Scoter. I thought that I saw them in the distance at Island View Beach a couple of years ago but never counted it because I couldn't identify it in a photo.

Another great adventure in birding Vancouver Island on this trip was Morrell Bird Sanctuary at Morrell Lake in Nanaimo. It is a 2 hour drive up the scenic coast of Vancouver Island through wine country. There are a few feeders on trees near the parking lot and besides the Chestnut-backed Chickadees and Red-breasted Nuthatches that were happy to have the grains provided, we got to see 4 Varied Thrushes (lifer). What a fun bird to see!! There are trails in the sanctuary and interpretive signs and entry is free. We also got to see close-up a Red-breasted Sapsucker. He was not the least bit bothered by us standing six or seven feet away taking his photo. No trip to Nanaimo would be complete without driving into town and finding a bakery that makes Nanaimo Bars. These bars are a layer of nuts and a moist cookie layered with butter cream and chocolate. They are truly delicious and I've had them in Vancouver but they are so much more delicious fresh from the bakery.

In Victoria, we went to Ogden Point which gave us the opportunity to see Surf Scoters and the Common Murre again. It is a long breakwater with a lighthouse at the end of it that marks the entry into Victoria Harbor. We also saw Common Mergansers, Buffleheads and a Double-crested Cormorant. We were lucky enough to see a harbor seal too.

And last on my list of new birding hot spots is East Sooke Regional Park. It takes about 45 minutes by car to get there from Victoria. Then there are trails that can take you a few hours to a few days to explore. We did the shorter ones. The views of the coves at the shoreline with the crashing waves are spectacular. River otters scurry about and swim out to get breakfast. The exciting birds on this hike were a Winter Wren, Northern Goshawk (lifer) and Chestnut-backed Chickadees.

I am looking forward to birding these areas again at the more "birdy" times of the year, maybe this spring?? I missed the Skylarks again this trip... There's a good reason to go back soon!!



Varied Thrush, Red-breasted Sapsucker,
Brown Creeper, Black Oyster Catcher
photos by Bob Wilkin

What is the Pacific Flyway?

Submitted by: Marilyn Mackett

What an amazing area on the North American continent. It is the Pacific flyway, where birds migrate north and south which comprises western Arctic, Alaska, the Aleutian Islands and the Rocky Mountain and Pacific coast regions of Canada and the United States. It continues its run from the Pacific Ocean east to the Colorado River, with birds flying through Montana, Utah, Nevada, Arizona, California, Oregon, Idaho and Washington. The Pacific Flyway then continues south into Mexico where it becomes blended with other flyways to Central and South America.

The longest and important route of the Pacific Flyway is that originating in northeastern Alaska. Most of the waterfowl migratory flights in the United States use this route, flying south and north. The Pacific Flyway element closely parallels the eastern foothills of the Rocky Mountains. Near the international border, the route branches and while large flights continue southeastward into the Central and Mississippi flyways, others turn southwestward across northwestern Montana and the panhandle of Idaho, follow along the Snake and Columbia River valleys and then turn southward across central Oregon to the interior valleys of California. Suitable winter quarters for birds are found in California from the Sacramento Valley south to Salton Sea and in the tidal marshes near San Francisco Bay.

The southward route of migratory birds of the Pacific Flyway that in winter leave the United States extends through the interior of California to the mouth of the Colorado River and on to the winter quarters that are principally in western Mexico.

Pahranagat National Wildlife Refuge, established August 16, 1963, is located approximately 90 miles north of Las Vegas in Lincoln County, Nevada, and is a wonderful part of the Pacific Flyway. The NWR at Pahranagat was established to provide habitat for migratory birds, especially waterfowl, who use the lakes and marshes.

Pahranagat's water originates from large springs to the north of the refuge and is managed to obtain the most value for wildlife. Various types of wetland habitats support many plants favored as food by over 230 species of migratory birds and other resident wildlife. The refuge has four main water impoundments: North Marsh, Upper and Lower Pahranagat Lakes, and the Middle Marsh. The diversity of habitats found at Pahranagat range from desert scrub to marsh and Cottonwood trees. The open water provides an excellent habitat for a variety of wildlife species. Bird abundance and diversity is highest during the spring and fall migrations when large numbers of songbirds, waterfowl, shorebirds and raptors are present. Greater Sandhill Cranes can be seen in February and March and again in October and November as they migrate between nesting and wintering area. Red-tailed Hawks, Northern Harriers, Cooper's Hawks and American Kestrels are most abundant in the winter months, Golden and Bald Eagles are also winter visitors. The open field areas around the water attract Shrikes, Meadowlarks, and Mourning Doves. The upland areas are home to Gambel's Quail and Greater Roadrunners.

Make a promise to yourself to drive to this beautiful area with your family or guests for a beautiful outing in Southern Nevada.



Shoshone Trails Open

Submitted by: Len Warren, Staff Naturalist at Shoshone Village,

Hello Birders, I would like to invite you all to try the new Shoshone Village self guided birding trails.

There are three trails. The Blue Trail begins at Crowbar Restaurant and takes you into the Amargosa River riparian zone, dominated by Honey Mesquite. The Red Trail does the same, beginning at the campground at the north end of town. The Aqua trail takes you on a short walk through a scarce (around here) wet meadow, created by the Shoshone Spring swimming pool. The trails are clearly marked with 6 foot wooden poles painted to the color of the trail. You can see from pole to pole throughout the trail. All conscientious birders are welcome to enjoy this private nature preserve. Our winter specialties are Crissal Thrasher, Black Tailed Gnatcatcher, and there is a year-round Cactus Wren, too.

We have great lodging, and camping. I would be happy to give a tour to any birders almost any time. I am available most anytime after Christmas till March 1st. You can find me at birdman88.com@gmail.com or you can leave a message at 760-852-1001.

Hope to see you soon,
Len Warren,

[Note: be sure to check out Len's blog, Birds of Shoshone Wetlands, for great photos and updates.]
<http://birdman88-birdsofshoshonewetlands.blogspot.com/>

Nevada Bird Records Committee Update

Submitted by: Martin Myers, NBRC

As 2010 ends, the NBRC must say farewell to Debbie van Dooremolen, whose term ended 12/31. Debbie brought great enthusiasm and a strong scientific ethic to the position and we really hate to see her go. Hopefully she will decide to serve another term some time in the future when her career and other responsibilities allow the time. But as much as we will miss Debbie, we are very pleased to welcome our newest member, Jeanne Tinsman. Jeanne's birding experiences over the entire state, including bird banding at the Ruby Valley, make her an ideal addition to the committee. Carl Lundblad, who filled in with a temporary appointment after the tragic and untimely passing of Mike San Miguel, also begins his first full term in 2011. The remainder of the committee is unchanged for 2011 — it includes John Klicka, Tim Lenz, Greg Scyphers, and Dennis Serdehely. I continue in the role of secretary.

We have just completed another packet of reviews. Highlight was the state's first Great Crested Flycatcher, Miller's Rest Stop (Esmeralda), 10/2/10, found and photographed by Fred Petersen. This record was unanimously endorsed by the committee. The record adds a new species to the state checklist, bringing the total count of species for Nevada to 485.

Phase I of the Floyd Lamb Park Burrowing Owl Habitat Enhancement Project

Submitted by: Christiana Manville, USFWS

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program has provided RRAS \$10,000 to enhance burrowing owl habitat at Floyd Lamb Park. The first phase of this project occurred on November 19, 2010, when 23 volunteers from the National Association for Interpretation (NAI) annual meeting in Las Vegas, installed four artificial burrow clusters in the west area of Floyd Lamb Park. RRAS president, Bob Wilkin, and members, Carol Sweet and Jennifer Mercadante, and Darren Copeland with the City of Las Vegas assisted the USFWS with the event. Each cluster of artificial burrows consisted of three separate burrows, with the burrow openings facing each other and spaced 10 to 20 feet apart. We used a hard plastic irrigation box (either the 12 inch or jumbo size) as a nest chamber buried three feet under the ground. A 12 foot long piece of 4-inch flexible plastic perforated drain pipe was used as an entrance tunnel sloping gently down to the nest chamber. A cement block was placed at the end of the pipe to protect it from digging predators.

In addition to installing the burrows, NAI volunteers learned how to survey for owl burrows and how to observe burrowing owls. Volunteers also picked up trash along Brent Lane, the main entrance to the park, and along the future entrance to the park. The highlight of the day was observing a burrowing owl at one of the existing artificial burrows. One participant from northern California had been looking for burrowing owls for seven years.

At lunch time, Leilani Takano of the USFWS gave a presentation on burrowing owl conservation. This presentation was followed by a discussion led by Amanda Rowland, an environmental Education Coordinator with the Southern Nevada Agency Partnership, on integrating natural resource education into the Clark County school curriculum.

There will be many more opportunities for RRAS members to become involved in this project. The next phase of the project is developing burrowing owl interpretation for Floyd Lamb Park and nearby schools. Anyone interested in helping out should contact Bob Wilkin at rjwilkin@cox.net (preferred) or 702-210-1644. In March, we will be surveying the western area of the park for burrowing owl burrows. Anyone interested in helping out should also contact Bob Wilkin. In 2012, we will be installing more artificial burrows and improving the existing burrows installed in 2007. [see more photos at www.redrockaudubon.org]

Organizations Team Up to Provide New Homes for Western Burrowing Owls

Submitted by: Christiana Manville, USFWS

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the Red Rock Audubon Society, William Lyon Homes, and the Gilcrease Orchard worked together today to install three artificial owl burrows in the northwest part of Las Vegas. The burrows provide safe homes for Western Burrowing Owls living in the area.

For several years, two burrowing owls have made their home on a parcel of land south of the Gilcrease Orchard. The landowner, William Lyon Homes, has worked with the FWS to establish a buffer around the existing natural burrow to avoid impacts to these owls. The builder will be using the land in the near future, so the owls will need somewhere else to live. The owls produce young each spring and they are always visible in the area around their burrow.

Burrowing owls cannot dig their own burrows and are dependent on other animals that dig burrows. Artificial burrows can be constructed in place of natural burrows. The Gilcrease Orchard provided space and a backhoe and the Red Rock Audubon Society donated materials to con-

New Homes for Western Burrowing Owls ...continued

struct the artificial burrows. William Lyon Homes brought in small boulders to place around the burrows for added protection. The FWS anticipates that the owls will move to the artificial burrows and breed in their new home this spring.

The western burrowing owl is a small, ground-dwelling owl found throughout the arid and semi-arid areas of the western United States. The western burrowing owl is considered a Bird of Conservation Concern by the FWS.

Burrowing owls are threatened by habitat loss and destruction of burrows due to human disturbance and land conversion for agricultural and urban development. Harming of individual owls and the destruction or harming of their eggs or nests is prohibited under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act; however, the law does not protect their habitat.

Today steps were taken to provide safe habitat for the burrowing owls that make their home in the vicinity of the Gilcrease Orchard. This project provides an excellent example of how a collaborative effort can help a species in need.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. [see more photos at www.redrockaudubon.org]



Gilcrease Orchard 12/17/2010



Floyd Lamb / Tule Springs 11/19/2010



Raptor Watching

Submitted by Margie Klein, Wildlife Education Coordinator - NDOW

Now that winter is here and the temperatures have dropped, you can think about getting outside to view some migratory birds. These traveling birds may include raptors, or birds of prey. Raptors are more plentiful in southern Nevada in the fall and winter. Birds from the north fly in to join other species that are year-long residents. They may include golden eagles, ospreys, red-tailed hawks and kestrels. Bald eagles and peregrine falcons can be seen moving into southern Nevada at this time as well. The most common of the migratory raptors that we see here are the Cooper's hawk and sharp-shinned hawk.

Hawks travel in the daytime, and can glide high above thermal air currents, so that they don't have to flap their wings as much and use up valuable energy. The National Wildlife Federation sponsors an annual hawkwatch, where birdwatchers tally the number and species of different hawks they see at popular migratory stopover sites. High mountain peaks serve as migration corridors and may be good areas to look for birds passing through. Birds can also be sighted perching on power poles along highways.

Christmas Count Results

The Henderson Christmas Count was held on Wednesday, December 15th. The fifteen of us saw 101 species (down 7 from last year). A HUGE THANK YOU for all the great help. Compiler, Je Anne Branca

Snow Goose (15)	Western/Clark's Grebe (687)	Spotted Sandpiper (2)	Rock Wren (3)
Canada Goose (6)	Double-crested Cormorant (94)	Solitary Sandpiper (2)	Bewick's Wren (1)
Tundra Swan (1)	Least Bittern (2)	Western Sandpiper (3)	Marsh Wren (10)
Wood Duck (7)	Great Blue Heron (40)	Long-billed Dowitcher (14)	Ruby-crowned Kinglet (3)
Gadwall (132)	Great Egret (14)	Wilson's Snipe (1 & 1 count week)	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (9)
American Wigeon (48)	Snowy Egret (9)	Ring-billed Gull (569)	Black-tailed Gnatcatcher (3)
Mallard (430)	Green Heron (3)	California Gull (1 count week)	American Robin (58)
Cinnamon Teal (9)	Black-crowned Night Heron (11)	Gull species (3)	Northern Mockingbird (56)
Northern Shoveler (612)	White-faced Ibis (2)	Rock Dove (872)	Crissal Thrasher (2)
Northern Pintail (65)	Osprey (1)	Eurasian Collared Dove (255)	European Starling (841)
Green-winged Teal (129)	Bald Eagle (4 count week)	Mourning Dove (896)	American Pipit (26)
Canvasback (6)	Northern Harrier (19)	Greater Roadrunner (3)	Phainopepla (7)
Redhead (26)	Sharp-shinned Hawk (3)	Anna's Hummingbird (8)	Audubon's Warbler (38)
Ring-necked Duck (81)	Cooper's Hawk (4)	Costa's Hummingbird (4)	Abert's Towhee (12)
Greater Scaup (1)	Red-tailed Hawk (8)	Hummingbird sp. (3)	Song Sparrow (7)
Lesser Scaup (38)	American Kestrel (11)	Northern Flicker (red) (18)	White-crowned Sparrow (177)
Bufflehead (51)	Merlin (1)	Red-naped Sapsucker (1)	Oregon Junco (1 count week)
Common Goldeneye (14)	Peregrine Falcon (4)	Black Phoebe (24)	Red-winged Blackbird (53)
Hooded Merganser (17)	Prairie Falcon (4)	Say's Phoebe (25)	Western Meadowlark (7)
Common Merganser (46)	Virginia Rail (5)	Western Kingbird (1)	Brewer's Blackbird (208)
Red-breasted Merganser (3)	Sora (6)	Cassin's Kingbird (1)	Great-tailed Grackle (192)
Ruddy Duck (291)	Common Moorhen (13)	Loggerhead Shrike (7)	Brown-headed Cowbird (79)
Gambel's Quail (107)	American Coot (1551)	Common Raven (15)	Lesser Goldfinch (18)
Common Loon (3)	Killdeer (7)	No. Rough-winged Swallow (2)	House Finch (329)
Pied-billed Grebe (86)	American Avocet (3)	Swallow sp (3)	House Sparrow (161)
Eared Grebe (58)	Greater Yellowlegs (7)	Verdin (14)	

Corn Creek Christmas Bird Count Gets Newspaper Coverage

Submitted by: Carol Sweet

On December 25th the Las Vegas Review Journal ran a story about the Christmas Bird Count for Corn Creek at the Desert National Wildlife Refuge. The count was held on December 18th and turned up 4,264 birds from 77 species. This was an increase over last year's count which was 1,185 birds from 58 species. Hermi Hiatt of the Red Rock Audubon Society compiled the bird list included in the article.

The Corn Creek bird count dates back to 1942, but counts were not conducted for a few years during the 1940s and 1950s according to John Hiatt of the Red Rock Audubon Society who lead this year's count. He and his wife Hermi have participated in local Christmas Bird Counts for more than thirty years. The count covered a 15-mile diameter area that included Corn Creek, Tule Springs, and ponds on the Paiute Indian Golf Course. The most numerous species were American coot (887), European starlings (663), rock doves (430), and white crowned sparrows (253). Mallards (210), ringed necked ducks (157) and American wigeons (130) were the most numerous ducks. A handsome Great horned owl was photographed as he perched near Corn Creek.

The purpose of these bird counts is to monitor the strength and diversity of the bird population as a measure of the environmental health of the area. John Hiatt has noticed an overall decline in the number of raptors which he attributes to the 10-year drought that has reduced the rodent population. Weather is also a factor in bird count results. This year was overcast and cold. Nevertheless, the count was much larger than last year. The desert offers plenty of opportunity for excellent birding.

Christmas Bird Count Results ...continued

The Desert Game Range (aka Corn Creek) Christmas Bird Count was held Saturday December 18, 2010 in southern Nevada. Thanks to the efforts of 14 participants we observed a total of 77 species. Compiler: Hermi Hiatt

Pied-billed Grebe – 4	Ruddy Duck – 77	Northern Flicker -10	Phainopepla -24
Dbl-crested Cormorant – 1	Northern Harrier -6	Black Phoebe -1	Yellow-rumped Warbler -13
Great-blue Heron – 3	Sharp-shinned Hawk -2	Say’s Phoebe -12	Sage Sparrow -12
Bl-Cr Night Heron – 1	Red-tailed Hawk – 11	Western Kingbird – 3	Savanna Sparrow -1
Great Egret – 1	American Kestrel – 2	Loggerhead Shrike – 3	Song Sparrow -3
Canada Goose – 109	Prairie Falcon – 1	Common Raven – 9	Lincoln’s Sparrow -1
Snow Goose – 1	Falcon sp. 2	Horned Lark – 72	White-crowned Sparrow -253
Green-winged Teal – 2	American Coot -887	Verdin -9	Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco -11
Mallard – 210	Killdeer – 1	Red-breasted Nuthatch – 1	Red-winged Blackbird -24
Cinnamon Teal -1	Ring-billed Gull – 1	Rock Wren -1	Western Meadowlark -63
Northern Shoveler – 6	Rock Pigeon – 430	Marsh Wren -3	Brewer’s Blackbird -102
American Wigeon- 130	Mourning Dove – 149	Ruby-crowned Kinglet -14	Great-tailed Grackle -130
Redhead -70	Eurasian Collard Dove – 97	Townsend’s Solitaire -1	Brown-headed Cowbird -4
Ring-necked Duck -157	Greater Roadrunner – 3	American Robin -19	Cassin’s Finch -9
Lesser Scaup -3	Great Horned Owl – 2	Northern Mockingbird -21	House Finch -89
Canvasback – 19	Burrowing Owl – 7	Crissal Thrasher -1	Lesser Goldfinch -38
Bufflehead – 19	Anna’s Hummingbird – 4	Le Conte’s Thrasher -2	American Goldfinch – 9
Hooded Merganser – 2	Red-naped Sapsucker – 5	European Starling -663	House Sparrow -53
Common Merganser -27	Ladder-backed Woodpecker – 2	American Pipit -5	



Christmas Count photographs taken near Tule Springs courtesy of Billy Chapman

Raptor Surveys Show Population Trends

Submitted by: Margie Klein, Wildlife Education Coordinator, NDOW

With winter fast approaching it won't be long before the Nevada Department of Wildlife begins its annual winter raptor surveys, which will then be followed by spring breeding raptor surveys. Although it takes time for NDOW biologists to completely analyze the data the results will help them determine certain population trends.

Results of the 2010 surveys, for example, showed that some species are increasing in numbers in their winter territory, while others are not faring as well. This can signal which species may need more attention. Breeding survey information also is one of the tools used to determine quotas for the sport of falconry,

According to NDOW wildlife diversity biologist Teri Slatauski, "The 2009 northern goshawk surveys appear to be trending toward a decline in occupancy. This signals a need for follow-up surveys before recommendations can be made to the wildlife commission regarding falconry regulations and quotas for the bird."

Conversely, there is good news for two other species. Both the peregrine falcon and the bald eagle are Endangered Species Act success stories, having recovered from drastic population declines in years past, due to eggshell thinning as a result of the use of pesticides such as DDT. Peregrines were removed from the federal endangered species list in 1999.

"2010 was a record year for bald eagles at Lakes Mead and Mojave, with the highest occurrence recorded in recent years," said Christy Klinger, NDOW wildlife diversity biologist stated,

The increase in peregrines in Southern Nevada is due to improved recruitment (more young) and possible expansion of their range more northward out of the canyon lands of Arizona, though some of the increase in survey numbers may be the result of increased survey efforts. "We have definitely seen an expansion of peregrine falcons, at least in southern Nevada, in the past two decades," Tomlinson added.

It is important to monitor the movement and nesting success of these birds, as it relates the health of ecosystems. Many of these birds migrate in the winter to Southern Nevada from other areas. They spend the winter resting and foraging in a warmer climate where more food is available, before they return to more northern climes. Others that reside here are nesting, breeding, and fledgling their young in the spring.

Through their breeding raptor surveys, NDOW biologists determine territory occupancy and breeding status in the spring. The winter surveys determine general trends of wintering raptors in the late winter and early spring. Some of the species that are covered in these two surveys include bald and golden eagles, peregrine and prairie falcons, northern goshawks, Cooper's hawks, red-tailed hawks, and great horned owls.

"These species are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act as well as being state-protected, and are important in the ecosystem as they are at the top of the food chain," said Cris Tomlinson, NDOW supervising wildlife diversity biologist.

Winter raptor surveys usually occur between December and February and breeding season raptor surveys usually occur from March through July. The objective of winter surveys is to track winter population trends and distributions, while spring surveys are designed to track nest success and adult occupancy, and to observe if the adult birds continue to use the same breeding areas. The latter is done by observing an adult bird on repeated occasions, a pair in a known nesting territory or suitable habitat, an adult on a nest, or either eggs or offspring. Biologists in NDOW's diversity division conduct the surveys, often in collaboration with other agencies and groups such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, and National Park Service and the Great Basin Bird Observatory.

Many of the winter raptor surveys can be done by vehicle, while breeding surveys are generally done from the ground with the aid of spotting scopes and binoculars. However, some breeding raptors are surveyed from a helicopter so biologists can cover more in ground in less time. Species surveyed from helicopters include the peregrine falcon, northern goshawk and ferruginous hawks, which make their nests or scrapes on cliffs or other high areas. These survey flights are often followed up by on-the-ground efforts to verify the birds' nesting stage and status.

Northern goshawks, occupy aspen habitats in riparian drainages. They can sometimes be located using acoustic surveys, where the biologist listens for a response call after playing a recorded alarm call. Peregrine falcons are surveyed according to a stringent protocol established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in its delisting monitoring plan. NDOW is also testing a "call-broadcast" survey method for peregrines, which appears to be an effective method for determining presence during certain times in the spring.



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