



# 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

March 2011

## Special dates of interest:

### General Meetings:

Apr 11th: 6:30 pm

### Field Trips:

Mar 2011 - S.E. Arizona

### Bird Walks:

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

### Potluck Dinner:

May 9th: 5:30pm

## Inside this issue:

<a href="#">Board Members</a>	2
<a href="#">President's Perch</a>	3
<a href="#">My Favorite Bird</a>	4
<a href="#">Bird Brochure</a>	5
<a href="#">Trail Build for Birding</a>	5
<a href="#">San Diego Report</a>	6
<a href="#">Gull Workshop</a>	7
<a href="#">Join RRAS</a>	8

## RRAS General Meetings

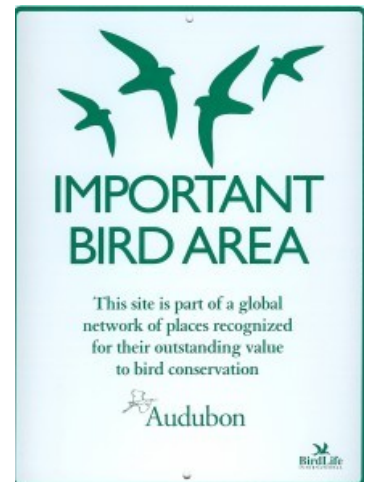
The Red Rock Audubon Society General Meetings are held the 2nd Monday of the month, except June, July, August, and December. Social hour begins at 6:30pm, presentations begin at 7pm. It's free and open to the public. Join us for snacks, conversation, education, and great raffle prizes. Meetings are held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

## April 11th, 2011: Robin Powell (NV IBA Coordinator)

### “Saving Nevada’s Birds, Acre by Acre”

Some of them live here, some just pass through, some spend only the summer or the winter here. But all of them, Nevada’s birds, share one common need: **habitat**. And that’s the focus of Nevada’s Important Bird Areas (IBAs). And what is an IBA you ask? An IBA is an Important Bird Area, and Nevada presently has 39 of them, all managed and monitored by Robin Powell, Nevada’s Director of Bird Conservation.

Join us for a fun and informative look at the IBA Program, with photographs of several priority areas and a discussion of several conservation projects underway at several IBAs throughout the state. Come share the successes and the challenges Robin faces as she continues to try to bring public awareness to the needs of these areas.



## Annual Potluck Dinner - May 9th

Red Rock Audubon Society invites members and non-members to join us at 5:30 - 8:00 pm May 9th, 2011, at the Ranch House at Floyd Lamb Park at Tule Springs for our annual Potluck Dinner. This will be our last monthly General Meeting before the summer break. Everyone is welcome to come enjoy an evening with friends, fellow birders, and good food.

Please bring a dish to share using the guidelines below or bring your favorite dish. RRAS will provide table covers, drinks, ice, cups, plates, and utensils. Tables and chairs are also provided.

Dish guidelines: use first letter of last name:

A - I Main Dish, J - R Salads and Breads, S - Z Desserts

Floyd Lamb Park is located in northwest Las Vegas, near U.S. 95 and Durango.



## Board Members

### Officers

President: Bob Wilkin  
president@redrockaudubon.org

Vice President: Je Anne Branca  
vp@redrockaudubon.org

Treasurer: Christine Mault  
treasurer@redrockaudubon.org

Recording Secretary: Christiana Manville  
secretary@redrockaudubon.org

Directors-at-Large  
John Bialecki, Rita Schlageter, Carolyn Titus

### Committee Chairs

Communications: Maureen Kammerer  
info@redrockaudubon.org

Conservation: John Hiatt  
hjhiatt@anv.net

Education: Len Warren

Hospitality: Marilyn Mackett  
mjackett@cox.net

Membership: Carol Sweet  
membership@redrockaudubon.org

Programs: Cris Tomlinson  
programs@redrockaudubon.org

Sanctuary: John Bialecki  
johnnybosox@aol.com

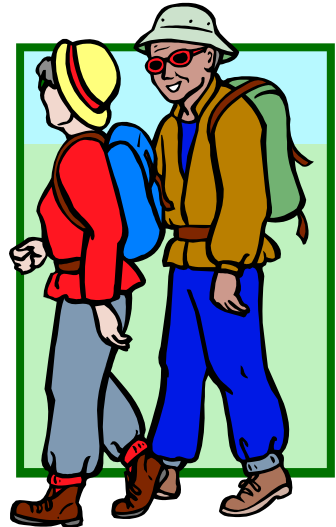
## Field Trips

**Thursday, March 31st:**

**Tule Springs/Floyd Lamb 8:00 am - NOON**

Leader: Rita Schlageter Phone: 702-382-3327 for reservations and meeting place

Tule Springs/Floyd Lamb City park is our most popular field trip! Enjoy a comfortable walk in the park with one of the most experienced leaders we have. Geared toward new or novice birders who want to learn and hone ID skills while looking for waterfowl, raptors, and songbirds. Veteran birders will enjoy the day too. Perfect field trip, easy to moderate walking. Bring water, snacks, and lunch.



**Saturday, May 14th:**

**Pahrnagat National Wildlife Refuge**

Leader: We need one, would you like to lead this trip?

Please call Je Anne at 702-524-5645

## Do Your Part - RECYCLE!



How to help: Bring clean (and preferably crushed) cans to any general meeting. Remember aluminum CANS only... no plates, foil etc. Felix Owens will collect the cans in the parking lot before the meeting begins. You may also phone Felix at 702-395-5510 to arrange a special pick up.

Don't forget to recycle ink cartridges too! Cartridges could take about 1,000 years to decompose, so recycling and/or remanufacturing is crucial! Working with Empties4Cash.com, RRAS collects inkjet and toner cartridges for recycling, and in turn raises funds to help support our organization. You can participate by donating empty cartridges and encouraging others to recycle.

How to help: Drop off the cartridges at any general meeting and we'll send them in for recycling!

## President's Perch

*Submitted by: Bob Wilkin*

We finally have an Education Committee Chair that will take the reins of our education directive for RRAS. I think that education is one of the most important functions of our organization. Len Warren is our new Education Committee Chair! He has great qualifications and works in the field of ornithology surveying nests and working for the town of Shoshone, CA to raise awareness of their birds to build eco-tourism. Len has a burning desire to teach and to coordinate others in our organization that volunteer to help with the task of educating the public and our own members about birds, wildlife, and habitat.

Len is currently at a Marsh and Wetlands Surveying Conference in Arizona. His knowledge and willingness to share it, makes him an ideal candidate to chair our education committee. I keep using the term committee. I would like to take this opportunity to ask each of you to volunteer for a committee. First, consider the education committee. We need volunteers to go to schools, scout meetings, and other opportunities to talk to school children about birds, nests, habitat, and conservation. We have or can order materials. We just need people willing to share their experiences and love for birds and nature. We need volunteers for adult education too. I would like to see a Birding 101 class taught that would go through the parts of different bird types and the identifying characteristics that get beginning birders started on their way in filling out their own life bird list. A reporting class about Ebird and Listserve is needed so that we can all feel comfortable with reporting all of this important data for scientists to use. Regular birding reports are useful for a host of ongoing projects and records historical data that may be used in the future.

Our Field Trip Chair is Je Anne Branca. If you would like to lead a field trip or could co-lead a field trip, join the field trip committee and let Je Anne know of your willingness to participate. We are currently working on a field trip to Pahrnagat National Wildlife Refuge for May. Je Anne has led several field trips this year already and there are more planned! But we could have even more if there were more volunteers for Je Anne to lead and coordinate.

Maureen Kammerer is our Communication Chair. She puts out our newsletter and keeps our website and social networking sites updated and working well! If you have talents in the computing field, I'm sure that Maureen could put you to work in her committee.

John Hiatt is our Conservation Chair. He is really busy going to all the meetings that concern the conservation of habitat and wildlife in Nevada. If you have a desire to go to these meetings, especially when there are multiple meetings on the same day that John can only get to one, contact John and let him know you would like to help cover some of these meetings and report back to him.

Marilyn Mackett is our Hospitality Committee Chair. Do you bake? Would you like to help with the snacks and drinks for the monthly meeting? Marilyn is fun to work with and would welcome the help! You don't have to bake either, we purchase most of the snacks that are at the meetings, but what better way to collect the "oohs and aahs" of the appreciative crowd when you bring your signature snack, cookie, or dessert than to feature it at our monthly meeting.

Carol Sweet is our Membership Committee Chair. If you would like to help sign people in at the meetings, help with membership drives, or have time to volunteer to stand at a booth at one of the many festivals around town, contact Carol and join her committee.

John Bialecki is our Sanctuary Chair. His committee takes care of the sanctuary that we care for out at Wheeler Springs Camp. Fence mending, invasive plant removal, trail maintenance, and trash clean up are just some of the activities that have to be done at regular intervals at the sanctuary. If you enjoy the hands-on work in the field, contact John and volunteer.

Cris Tomlinson is our Programs Committee Chair. If you have ideas that you would like to see as a program for our monthly meeting, email your ideas to Cris.

Volunteering for the committees that serve our organization strengthens each area of our mission. Red Rock Audubon Society is your chapter of the National Audubon Society. What do you want to see it accomplish? What are you willing to help it become? I want to see it become the most active conservation and education group in Nevada!

## My Favorite Bird

Submitted by: Bob Wilkin

To narrow down my choice of birds to one favorite bird is a task that I am going to undertake in this article. I will start by setting for myself a few ground rules. First, the bird must be at least a visitor to Nevada. It is easy to choose a bird that is strange and exotic with colors that dazzle my eyes in the sun and calls with strange song to my ears. I love that, yes, but my favorite must be one that I can go enjoy often like a familiar restaurant or that brings me joy like listening to children sing Christmas carols. One that makes my heart skip a beat when I am getting the perfect photo in the perfect light. A bird that so intrigues me that I need to take other beginning birders to go see it.

The first candidate for favorite bird is the always easy to find Verdin (*Auriparus flaviceps*). A very small gray bird with a bright yellow head and a red shoulder patch that reminds me of a patch that a boy scout would have on his shoulder. They move quickly making them a difficult bird to get a great picture of. They have antics while they are feeding that include them hanging upside down, stretching between two branches with their legs so spread out that they look like they are trying to do the splits. They have a distinctive call that alerts you they are in the area. They make round nests that they enter from the bottom. I have photographed Verdin making a nest in a cholla cactus. And for being small, they are feisty. I once watched a Verdin try to run a Red-naped Sapsucker off a tree.

The second candidate is the Black Crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*). His red eye is in stark contrast to the light gray face. The one that we watched on the February bird walk at Floyd Lamb Park at Tule Springs stood on the shore and let us get great photos of him. The long white feather streaming down his side from the back of his head moved in the breeze. My first good photo of this species was at Pahrnagat National Wildlife Refuge. My wife and I were walking along in middle marsh just as the sun was going behind the hills in late afternoon when it took flight. I followed it around us and took photos as he flew. What a beautiful and powerful bird.

The third candidate would have to be the Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*). I caught the migration of these coppery fellows at the turn-off to Mary Jane Falls in Mount Charleston. There were hundreds of them, each with their little territory that they were defending. They were aggressive and the gold under their chins were shining in the bright sunlight. I enjoyed watching them interact and then come back to their perch to protect their patch of flowers. I even got a photo of one spreading his tail feathers and stretching his wings back. Very entertaining birds!

The fourth candidate is the very neat looking American Avocet (*Recurvirostra americana*). In their summer plumage, these birds are beautiful with their brown heads, up-curved bills, and blue legs. You can see the mating rituals at Henderson Bird Preserve. What a sight! The female lowers her head so that her bill is just above the water. The male splashes water over her head and cleans his feathers over and over. When he finally mounts his mate and copulation is over in a split second, they stand up straight with their bills tucked to their chest and they walk side-by-side several steps before parting company. Nature is so interesting!

The fifth and final candidate is a Black-throated Gray Warbler (*Dendroica nigrescens*). I really like all the warblers and they are challenging to get good photos of because they forage so quickly for insects. I have seen the Black-throated Gray Warbler at Henderson Bird Preserve and can always find them in the summer months at Mormon Well picnic area in the Desert National Wildlife Refuge. The challenge with this bird is to get the photo with the bright yellow spot showing up between the eye and the beak while getting an in focus shot.

So now I have to choose... I think that the Verdin is my favorite today. Of course, my ultimate favorite bird is whichever one is in focus in the lens of my camera at the moment. Happy birding, spring is here!

*Verdin, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Rufous Hummingbird, American Avocet, Black-throated Gray Warbler*  
Photos by Bob Wilkin



## Bird Watching In the Spring Mountains

Submitted by: Marilyn Mackett

RRAS received a Mt. Charleston license plate grant to produce a birding brochure, post cards, and educational efforts for the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area.

Thanks to all the RRAS members who supported the effort, RRAS produced 20,000 copies of a beautiful, all color brochures for the Visitor's Center at Mt. Charleston, which will be given for free to visitors and the community. We indeed have varied and smart members who offered their free time to assist in this project. The brochure included a SMNRA bird check, habitat information, bird user guide, bird photos, a map of the area, and a welcome note from the RRAS board. Marilyn Mackett gave members at the February general meeting a copy of the bird brochure and the postcards.

The postcards are on sale at Mt. Charleston, and RRAS will continue to provide educational programs on Mt. Charleston. Christiana Manville will provide the power point bird and habitat show, she produced, at the Mt. Charleston Library. The presentation was also given at a RRAS general meeting. President Bob Wilkin and Chair of the Committee Marilyn Mackett recently attended the Mt. Charleston Town Board Meeting. Their board members and the audience were delighted with the bird brochure, which is specific to Mt. Charleston. This photo by Bob Wilkin of the Hairy Woodpecker, often seen in the Mt. Charleston area was used in the brochure.



## A Trail Built for Birding

Submitted by: Harry Konwin, Volunteer Program Coordinator - Desert National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Corn Creek has been an attraction for birders for as long as folks have held a fascination with our feathered friends. Compared to the rest of the vast Desert National Wildlife Refuge, the generous foliage and springs found at Corn Creek provide habitat for a wide variety of migrating and local avian species. Because of its springs, Corn Creek has a long history of human occupation. The evidence of human habitation is found throughout the area. In order to leave untouched as much of this cultural history as possible, the designated trails' footprints were limited. There have been trails that wind through the trees and around the ponds for many years. For bird observers, the existing trails encompass only a part of the available environment. Occasionally, more daring adventurers would leave the trails seeking otherwise unseen territory. Unknowingly, some unauthorized trails disturbed precious cultural history.

Birders suggested more of the habitat become available for observation and approached Refuge Manager Amy Sprunger about this when she first arrived. However, because of limited staff and no budget a response to the birders' request was slow to evolve. For a brief period, funds became available to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for an archaeologist to join the staff. With the expertise of an archaeologist and the cooperation of the Red Rock Audubon Society (RRAS), a new trail was delineated to avoid culturally sensitive areas and satisfy the desires for greater birding opportunities. RRAS member Carolyn Titus was among those who offered her expertise in determining the path of a new trail. The project has been on hold for many years due to lack of staff for oversight. However, the new Restoration Specialist hired in 2010, Matt Flores, has a great deal of trail building experience. Ms. Sprunger assigned him the task to complete the trail. Through a partnership that included the RRAS, Friends of the Nevada Wilderness, Friends of the Desert NWR Complex, the Southern Nevada Conservancy, Get Outdoors Nevada, and the FWS, 94 citizen volunteers completed the new 4000-foot- long Bird Song Loop trail over four workdays.



During work in late September, 2010, volunteers salvaged plants that were in the path of the trail. These plants were later transplanted in areas away from development. The next phase took place over three workdays and occurred on consecutive Saturdays in October and November. The trail was sloped for drainage, tamped, and bordered in most areas. Many RRAS members generously contributed their labor over all the workdays. Most notably, RRAS President, Bob Wilkin labored during all four of the

(Continued on page 6)

## A Trail Built for Birding ... continued

workdays. RRAS Director-at-large Carolyn Titus volunteered her and some of her friends' labor on all three consecutive Saturdays, as well. On January 22, 2011, the trail officially opened with a dedication ceremony.

About 50 people attended the opening including dozens of RRAS members. The first activity was a bird walk along the new trail led by Ms. Titus. Observed during the walk were Northern Flicker (red-shafted), Common Raven, Verdin (nest also), Bewick's Wren (heard), Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Mountain Bluebird, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, Phainopepla, Spotted Towhee, Song Sparrow, Harris's Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco (Oregon and slate-colored), and House Finch. The dedication consisted of a few words of thanks by



various individuals, a blessing by local Nuwuvi representative Richard Arnold of the Pahrump Paiute tribe, and a ribbon cutting. Afterwards, a few children's activities took place. University of Nevada, Las Vegas PhD candidate, Paul VanEls trapped several birds in a mist net for close observation. Southern Nevada Agency Partnership Education Specialist Ellen Anderson displayed several taxidermic birds and talked about various bird species.

The completion of the Bird Song Loop trail opens much more habitat for observation at Corn Creek. More development of the trail is anticipated to coincide with construction of the new visitor center nearby. In the future, we hope to see a shade structure and benches along the trail. The FWS extends its gratitude to the Red Rock Audubon Society and in particular to Bob Wilkin and Carolyn Titus for the generous contribution of labor and expertise toward the development of the Bird Song Loop trail.



## San Diego Field Trip Report

*Submitted by: Je Anne Branca*

January 18th, Ken & Patti Ward, Steven Zitzer, Mary Hirsh, and I met, then off to California. First birding stop was Bolsa Chica, where for the second year in a row the American Bittern was in plain sight, what great looks we all had. We also had the Reddish Egret, Brant (they were everywhere) and Belding's Sparrow. Then it was off to Upper Newport Bay and San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary, more great shore birds: Black-bellied Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, Ruddy Turnstone, and Sanderling. We checked into our San Diego hotel for our 3-night stay.

Wednesday morning we were off to Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge, we arrived at high tide and heard at least 20 Light-footed Clapper Rails calling (they were probably saying how cold it was and windy), but the good news is we saw 9 Rails, with 3 of them swimming (ever seen a rail trying to swim again an out going tide?). Ken & Patti found the Yellow-crowned Night Heron for us, we also saw Black-crowned Night Herons in the trees. We then birded the San Diego Bay area from the south end to the north end. We ended our day with a nice dinner at Anthony's on the water.

Thursday morning we birded Famosa Slough, Fiesta Island, San Diego River, stopped to see all 3 Cormorants, before going to Cabrillo National Monument to eat our lunch with California (at our feet) and Spotted Towhees and a Hermit Thrush.

Friday morning after checking out, it was on to Lake Murray where we had great looks at the California Thrasher, then off to Santee Lakes. Then it was time to head home, we ended the trip with 125 species. We were glad to get back to a little bit warmer weather, this was the coldest trip in all the years (over 10) I have been leading it.

## Gull Workshop Report

Submitted by: Je Anne Branca

On Saturday, February 5<sup>th</sup> we hosted our first ever work shop at Lake Mead Marina, presented by Martin Meyers. To say the program was excellent is an under statement! Martin did a fantastic job of presenting his slide program. Everyone learned so much and we will never look at gulls the same way again. After the presentation we had lunch at the other marina, then we had close up looks at the gulls, including a Thayer's Gull. It was attended by 21 people, if you were unable to attend you may contact me and I will be able to give you the information that was presented. Sorry but we can not publish the web site, as it can only be used for personal use.

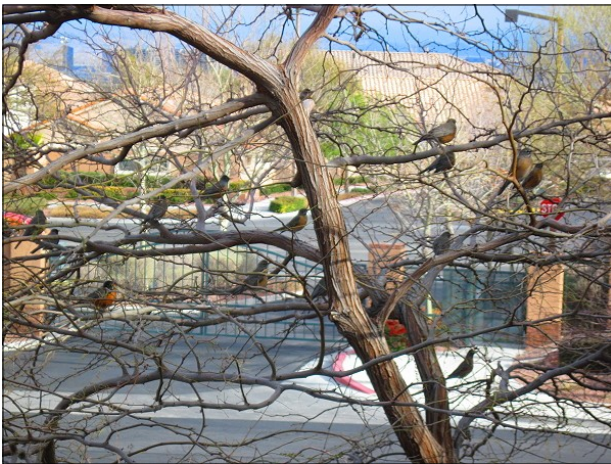
## Photos

Great news! A burrowing owl has taken up residence at one of the new artificial burrow clusters at Floyd Lamb Park, installed on November 19, 2011 with the help of the National Association of Interpretation, Red Rock Audubon, and the City of Las Vegas. The owl is at burrow cluster 500 which is fairly close to the park entrance booth. More burrowing owls should be arriving at the park over the next month.



Mitch La Fontaine wrote:

I am from the Bay Area so this sighting is not unusual for me. But after living in the Las Vegas Valley for the past 35 years I was duly impressed this afternoon by having huge numbers of robins feeding off our pyracantha. I do know that once the berries ferment the birds can get drunk and fly erratically sometimes crashing into cars and houses. I estimate there were approximately 100 birds. Has anyone else reported such large numbers?



Marjorie Cameron sent us this lovely picture of a Verdin building a nest out at Corn Creek on 3/4/11.



Lucky timing!

A Golden Eagle swoops in and takes an American Coot at the Floyd Lamb/ Tule Springs picnic area on February 23rd. Photo by M. Kammerer

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / DONATION FORM**

We invite your membership in the National Audubon Society and the Red Rock Audubon Society. To join, please complete and mail this form with payment to Red Rock Audubon Society, Attn. Membership Dept., P.O. Box 96691, Las Vegas NV 89193. Please make checks payable to Red Rock Audubon Society.

**National Audubon Society Membership:**

\_\_\_ \$20 Introductory Membership for Individual or Family (1yr). Members receive Audubon Magazine, the Rock Wren newsletter, and membership in RRAS.

**Donations to Red Rock Audubon Society:** (Please select one)

\_\_\_ Ruby-Crowned Kinglet \$10      \_\_\_ Crissal Thrasher \$50      \_\_\_ Golden Eagle \$500 or more  
\_\_\_ Mountain Bluebird \$20      \_\_\_ American Avocet \$100

**Gifts to the RRAS Permanent Endowment Fund:** helps insure the future viability of RRAS.

\_\_\_ Any gift is greatly appreciated. Make check payable to RRAS Endowment Fund \$\_\_\_\_\_

**Subscription to printed Rock Wren newsletter Only:** \_\_\_ Rock Wren \$10.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

**NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY RENEWALS** should be sent directly to Boulder, Colorado in the envelope provided with your renewal notice.

C\_\_Z P51 0Z (March2011w)



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