

THE ROCK WREN

Serving the Communities of Southern Nevada since 1976
www.RedRockAudubon.org



RED ROCK AUDUBON SOCIETY, P.O. BOX 96691, LAS VEGAS NV 89193

May/June 2008
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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.

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Submit
Articles by
August 15, 2008

to
Communications
@RedRockAudubon.org

GENERAL MEETING

May 12, 2008

MONDAY

5:00 PM Pre-dinner Birding

6:00 PM Potluck

POTLUCK DINNER AT CALICO BASIN

Hosted by Red Rock Audubon members

Please note the change in location—see map below.

Red Rock Audubon Society members and non-members will meet at *Calico Basin Picnic Area, located near the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area*, to hold our Annual Potluck Dinner. This will be our last monthly General Meeting before the summer break. Everyone is welcome to enjoy an evening of camaraderie with friends and fellow birders. The birding is great along the boardwalk and very accessible for people with walkers and wheelchairs. Picnic tables with benches under covered pavilions are available, as are restrooms. Bring a dish to share, using the guidelines below, or bring your favorite dish. You need to bring your own beverage, plate and plastic ware. Bring a jacket in case the evening turns cool. And, of course, bring your binoculars! If you've never made it to one of our meetings, THIS is the ONE to attend!

Dish guidelines, use first letter of last name:

- A– I Dessert
- J– R Salads and Bread
- S– Z Main Dish

Directions: Drive *west* on Charleston Blvd for 3.8 miles from the I-215 Beltway (about 1.5 miles before the entrance to the Scenic Loop) to Calico Basin Road (small Calico Basin-Red Springs sign). Turn right onto Calico Basin Road and drive for about a mile; the picnic area is on your left.

BOARD MEMBERS

Officers

President:

Pam Nickels 375-7230

Vice President:

Ted Cassidy 444-4767

Treasurer:

John Bailecki 363-6615

Recording Secretary:

Marilyn Mackett 256-8970

Corresponding Secretary:

Betty Seebeck 453-2434

Committee Chairs

Conservation:

John Hiatt 361-1171

Membership:

Vacant

Membership Promotion

Vacant

Programs:

Ted Cassidy 444-4767

Newsletter:

Lorraine Cassidy 444-4767

Education:

Rod Hamburg 332-5611

Field Trips:

Je Anne Branca 524-5645

Communications:

Maureen Kammerer
630-5299

Sanctuary:

John Bialecki 363-6615

Whittell:

Vacant

Director at Large:

Vacant

RRAS Information

(702) 390-9890 voice mail
info@redrockaudubon.org

From the President's Perch



I know I've said it before but I'm going to say it again – I just LOVE springtime! The jasmine has finally bloomed, supplying a heavenly odor to our back yard. Our young Chinese Pistache tree finally has some new limbs for the birds to land on and the Lesser Goldfinches are feeding their babies as they hang on tightly to the Oleander branches. Becoming acquainted with the neighborhood is a young Mockingbird. In the front yard, the Day Lilly brightened my day with its first flower of the season. The African Sumac and the Chaste Tree are growing bigger and I'm hoping that next year they will host a nest or two. I truly hope you are able take the time to experience the wonders of springtime in your yard as well.

At our last general monthly meeting, our (lack of) slate of officers for the upcoming year was addressed. Rod Hamburg stepped forward to be our Vice President, and two new members and first time meeting attendees, Christine Donovan and Debra La Plante, volunteered for the Treasurer and Secretary positions. Rod will also continue to be the Education Chair. Program Chair will be headed by Cris Tomlinson and as mentioned before, Maureen Kammerer has taken over Diane Jadowski's vacated position (she moved to Virginia) of Communications Chair (formerly known as Public Relations Chair.) The Installation of New Officers will be at our May 12 Potluck meeting. See the front page for details.

We still need folks for the following: Field Trips, Membership, Newsletter Editor, Fundraising, and Whittell Fund liaison. Thank you so much to everyone who volunteered and to those of you who will be calling me soon!

Despite the blustery day, Earth Faire was another successful event. We answered numerous bird related questions, obtained some new members, sold quite a few Sibley Guide books, laminated guides, pins, and a t-shirt or two, had teachers sign up for Audubon Adventure info, and met and spoke with lots of wonderful folks. If you didn't get a chance to attend, I recommend putting it on your calendar for next year. Not sure of the exact date, but it's normally the Saturday before Earth Day, which is April 22. For those of you with children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews, there are lots of activities for the young ones.

Check out the recently released National Audubon TogetherGreen Project on the next page. Our next board meeting will entail brainstorming for our own proposal to submit

I would like to thank our outgoing board and committee members – Ted Cassidy, John Bialecki, Marilyn Mackett, Je Anne Branca, Lorraine Cassidy, and Hermi Hiatt. I sincerely appreciate all of your time and wonderful input to our organization. And, a speedy recovery to Lorraine, who recently had surgery.

Have a fantastic summer, be safe, be thankful, and look for our next newsletter in September.

Have a birdiful day!

INNOVATION DIVERSITY

WHAT IS THE

TogetherGreen

INNOVATION GRANTS PROGRAM?

The TogetherGreen Innovation Grants Program will fund creative and ambitious projects that engage diverse communities and contribute to measurable conservation outcomes. National Audubon Society will make one-year grants that range from \$5,000 to \$100,000 for projects that:

- Conserve or restore habitat and protect species, improve water quality or quantity, and reduce the threat of global warming;
- Engage new and diverse audiences in conservation action;
- Inspire and use innovative approaches and technologies to engage people and achieve conservation results; and
- Build the capacity of conservation professionals within the Audubon network and beyond.



WHAT IS TogetherGreen?

TogetherGreen is a new National Audubon Society program with generous support from Toyota. The goals of TogetherGreen are to build conservation leadership, engage millions of people in conservation action, and achieve lasting conservation results. Over the next five years, TogetherGreen will implement a series of national conservation initiatives that support these goals and promote the idea that everyone has a critical role to play in finding solutions to our most pressing environmental challenges.

Visit www.TogetherGreen.org for more information.

PHOTO CREDITS:
COVER: PAUL H. FIELD/USDA; HIC/STREE/AUDUBON WASHINGTON
PAGE 2: BURGESS SAVINGS/GETTY IMAGES; RACCOON HUGGING TREE: © EYEWIRE, INC.
PAGE 3: GREAT BACK WILD BIRD COUNT 2010
PAGE 4: HIC/1/10/09/GETTY IMAGES; TULLU/1/0/BOB FETTY

News and Notes!

ALUMINUM CAN COLLECTION

Don't forget to collect and save aluminum cans (and cans only please) for our fund drive. Not only is this bringing in needed funds for the chapter, but also helps keep our neighborhoods and parks cleaner and free of unsightly litter.

Last year chapter members contributed 1244 pounds of cans that netted almost \$700 to our treasury.

The price for cans has recently gone up and is now the highest it's been since we started collecting so it is even more rewarding. Presently it's at sixty-five cents per pound.

Crush the cans if possible to conserve space and remember: no other items other than aluminum cans...no plates, foil etc.

Call Felix Owens for any questions and for pickup:
702 395-5510.

Support our On-going Fundraising Projects!

Your Audubon Society has several fundraising campaigns. Here are a few ways to contribute:

- * Aluminum Cans for recycling—
Contact Felix Owens at 395-5510
- * Used Ink Jet Cartridges for recycling—Pam Nickels at 375-7230
- * Book sales—Purchase the field guides at our General Meetings.

Fun, Food and Fellowship With Therese



Therese Werst is a long-time and honored member of the Red Rock Audubon Society. She recently moved into a new facility and in true RRAS fashion, her friends came together to show their love and support.

Burrowing Owl Project Update

Photo by MJ Kammerer



In partnership with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Red Rock Audubon Society is studying a Nevada “sensitive species” - the Burrowing Owls in the Las Vegas valley. Volunteers are monitoring breeding pairs!! The data provided on the Burrowing Owls success rate in our rapidly developing urban area will be used to determine how best to protect their habitat. If you would like more information, email Craig Felts at queueg@sbcglobal.net for training information and what all is involved.

YOU CAN STILL VOLUNTEER!

We need owls, especially PAIRS of owls! If anyone sees BOs, please let us know!

We have over 213 burrows located but some of them are inactive or used as satellite burrows. The owls like to have more than one burrow to live in for safety and if the original burrow collapses or is bulldozed, they have other burrows to go to. For the safety of their young against predators or other dangers, they will sometimes split the babies up into two burrows. We have reports of 173 owls and must reconfirm the count as some owls migrate and may go to other burrows. Some may be reports of wintering owls just passing through the Las Vegas Valley, while others may have been killed or died in recent years.

Some monitoring of the Burrowing Owls has already started and will continue to increase as we see the pairs of owls starting their new families. We are matching volunteers with owls in their neighborhoods to make it easier for them to monitor. Monitoring only takes 30 minutes each week. In addition to weekly volunteers, we also need folks who can fill in when a volunteer requests a week off. In other words, if you can't commit to every week, we still need YOU on our list. Let us know if you have ANY interest at all. It's definitely a HOOT! (I'm thoroughly enjoying it—and it's going to get even better when the lil' ones arrive! —Pam)

Claim Markers Make Avian Death Traps by John Hiatt

Perhaps you have noticed pieces of white plastic pipe stuck upright in the ground in outlying areas. These are most often mine claim markers which prospectors have used to mark the four corners of a mining claim. Typically, four inch diameter drain pipe was used because it was cheap, durable, and easily visible. Unfortunately, the open ends of these tubes are very attractive to cavity nesting birds, lizards, and some species of native bees. When species like Ash Throated Flycatchers, Bluebirds, American Kestrels, European Starlings, and others investigate these cavities they become trapped inside by the slick walls and perish.

Although the State of Nevada, which sets standards for mine claim markers within the State, outlawed these pipes in 1993 there still may be as many as a million of them in place on our public lands. The Nevada Department of Wildlife estimates that there are several hundred thousand in Elko County alone. They serve as death traps for birds, reptiles, and many species of bees. I've seen as many as eight dead birds, many dead lizards, and thousands of dead bees in a single tube. Millions of birds perish annually in these death traps. Even though these inadvertent bird traps are a clear violation of the International Migratory Bird Treaty Act, no government agency is willing to take responsibility for removing illegal markers. The Bureau of Land Management says that it is a State problem since the State sets the standards and the State says that they only set the standards, they don't have authority to remove old markers.

Lahontan Audubon and Red Rock Audubon are working with the Nevada Department of Wildlife and the Nevada Mining Association to try and find a definitive solution to this problem. It may take legislative action to achieve this goal. In the meantime however, there is something that can be done. If the claim is abandoned, the tubes can and should be removed. If the claim is active, placing a stone a little bigger than the opening on top will effectively prevent birds from entering the tube. If we all remove or cap any open marker tubes that we see, we can significantly reduce the needless toll on desert wildlife.

Field Trip Reports:

“Birds at the Springs Preserve” Tour
April 5, 2008
Leader: Ted Cassidy

Twenty birders met at the Springs Preserve for on a beautiful morning for a ramble through the gardens. Verdins were making their nests along the trail to the Cienega. White-crowned, Savannah and Brewers Sparrows called from the bushes. A Cooper’s Hawk flew over while Phainopeplas and a Belted Kingfisher entertained the crowd as we stood near the Archeological Excavations.

The most enjoyable part of the trip was meeting people from all over the country. A couple from Indiana had brought their 10-year-old son with a major shot of the “Birding Bug”. Another lady from New Hampshire described her vacation home on a warm sound in Nova Scotia with King Eiders swimming offshore. It is amazing how birders from far off can feel like old friends after just a morning birding together.

Floyd Lamb City Park –Tule Springs
March 26, 2008
Leader: Rita Schlageter

It was one of those perfect days in Southern Nevada that makes you happy to be out of doors and bird watching.

Eleven people came to the park to join me. We watched some of the common birds and learned to identify some new ones. Two Greater White-fronted Geese were mixed in with all the domestic geese. We had an in-depth study of a soaring hawk with missing flight feathers that turned out to be a Red-shouldered Hawk. It took a while to find the Lucy’s Warbler that was singing in the old Cottonwood tree, be we did manage to get glimpses of him. However, I think the star of the day was the male Vermillion Flycatcher that sat atop the tree with the 10 o’clock sun shining on him. He was glowing like a live ember! We ended the morning with a total species count of 48 and a renewed love of the birds. A special thank you to all who joined me for the field trip.

Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve
April 19, 2008
Leader: Je Anne Branca

On Saturday, five of us birded the Preserve for three hours. We enjoyed seeing the Mallard babies and the remaining wintering ducks that were still around. The Marsh Wrens were playing hide and seek with us all day. However, we we’re not happy to see so many Brown-headed Cowbirds. In addition, three American Coots were on nests, along with a single Canada Goose nesting. We had 36 species total for the day. Fortunately, most of the gusty wind held off until we completed the walk so we didn’t lose any hats!



Floyd Lamb Park
Image from birdandhike.com
Thank you to Jim Boone
for the use of this photo.

FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE

Spring 2008

All Red Rock Audubon Society birding field trips are open to the public. Beginning birders are welcome, which includes children with a keen interest in becoming birders. Bring binoculars, field guides, water, snacks, and wear hiking clothes and sturdy footwear. A hat, sunglasses, and sun block are also recommended.

There are no fees for attending local trips; however we do ask participants to **share gas expenses**.

Outdoor activities have inherent risks that are the responsibility of the participant.

MAY 3 CORN CREEK

SAT 7:00 - 11:00AM

Good migratory birds as well as our regular desert birds. Easy walking. Bring water and snacks. Call Je Anne for reservations.

MAY 6 SPRING MT RANCH STATE PARK

TUE 7:00 AM - NOON

Another great area for migratory birds. Lots of walking as we explore the ranch. Bring water and lunch. Meet outside the entrance to the park, \$6.00 park fee. Call Je Anne for reservations

MAY 17 LYTLE RANCH, UTAH

SAT 6:00 - 2:00 PM

We will leave Friday night and stay in either St. George, Utah or Mesquite, NV. Lots of walking; bring water, snacks and lunch. We will look for the Black Hawk that has been nesting there for the past few years. Call Je Anne for reservations.

MAY 31 MOUNT CHARLESTON AREA

SAT 7:00 - 1:00 PM

Bring water, snacks and lunch. High elevation (7,000 to 8,000 ft) with some walking. We never know what we will find on the mountain. Leader: Rita Schlageter. Call 382-3327 for reservations and meeting place. Bring snacks, lunch and water.

If interested in attending or leading any of the above field trips, please call Je Anne Branca at 702-524-5645. If interest is shown, a leader will be found.



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.

National Audubon Society Membership:

___ \$20 Introductory Membership for Individual or Family (1yr). Members receive Audubon Magazine and The Rock Wren newsletter. Please make checks payable to National Audubon Society.

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

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

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 Newsletter Only:

___ *Rock Wren* \$10. Please make checks payable to Red Rock Audubon Society.

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Phone _____ email _____

P51 7XCH

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

Telephone Information 702-390-9890

<http://www.redrockaudubon.org>



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