



Audubon Wyoming News

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SPRING 2007

It's Not Just Sage-grouse

Recently, there has been a lot of concern about the status of Sage-grouse throughout the west, especially regarding the effects of mineral development on their populations. The thought by many is that it is just one bird, that only Sage-grouse are being affected by the development and loss and fragmentation of the sagebrush sea. However, it's not just about the grouse. Audubon Wyoming is clearly concerned about Sage-grouse populations throughout the west (see Sagebrush Initiative article in our next newsletter), but we believe and are also greatly concerned about the loss of the entire ecosystem.

The sagebrush sea is an expansive eco-region of high, open, arid country and is as complicated and varied as snowflakes that fall on it during the Wyoming winter. According to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's website sagebrush occupies approximately 50% (32 million acres) of Wyoming's land area which includes 13 different types of sagebrush. These vegetation types provide habitat for approximately 297 species of birds, 87 species of mammals, and 63 species of fish, reptiles and amphibians. Additionally, many of Wyoming's species of greatest conservation need (Wyoming Game and Fish Department 2005) depend upon these sagebrush communities during some part or all of their life cycle.

For example the Sage Sparrow, Brewer's Sparrow and Sage Thrasher are all sagebrush obligates. The Sage Thrasher has a beautiful; seemingly never-ending song can be easily distinguished from the others in the crowd. It's general appearance and tail-flicking movements remind us of the Northern Mockingbird, but is less repetitious mimic in its song than the mockingbird. Birds are not the only



inhabitants of the sage, mule deer, pronghorn, elk, prairie dogs, swift fox, coyote, horned lizards and rare plant communities all grace us with their presence in this vast and important habitat that covers over half of the state. Habitat loss, degradation, and outright conversion are severe in areas throughout the



sagebrush ecosystem. Research has demonstrated that large-scale energy and mineral developments have had major long-term impacts. In fact, a new scientific paper titled, "Teetering On The Edge Or Too Late" outlines this phenomenon. Conservation and Research Issues for Avifauna of Sagebrush Habitats," recently published in *The Condor*, sounds the alarm for protecting this unique habitat. Based on the critical importance of sagebrush to the survival of so many species of flora and fauna the journal article recommends the "need to enlarge existing protected blocks, increase connectivity in the landscape, and employ basic principles of landscape management to ensure long-term survival of sagebrush habitats and birds." This is an especially pertinent point because less than three percent of sagebrush habitats are safeguarded in national parks or other protective federal reserves.

Therefore, Audubon Wyoming is focused on the conservation and preservation of the entire sagebrush sea, not just the sage-grouse. The Sage-grouse serves as our "flagship species" that if conserved will help spare landscape scale pieces of the sagebrush from further loss, fragmentation and degradation and thus help conserve and protect other species dependant on the this ecosystem for survival. For more information about how you can help conserve the sagebrush ecosystem and what steps Audubon is taking please visit our newly designed website at www.audubonwyoming.org.

Symbols of the Sagebrush

Wyoming is well known for a wonderful diversity of wildlife. While birds and mammals often bask in the spotlight, numerous other critters also inhabit this breathtaking state. Excluded from the mountains, but found throughout Wyoming's equally beautiful lower elevations, the eastern short-horned lizard (*Phrynosoma douglassi*) is an often overlooked species.

With a mere 2.8 inch snout-vent length, "horny toads" are not hard to miss. Their cryptic coloration makes the challenge of spotting one even greater. Eastern short-horned lizards are a grayish brown color with patchy dark splotches on their backs. Although horny toads are not related to toads, the genus of the horned lizards, *Phrynosoma*, does translate to toad-like body. These pancake bodies and the heads of horned lizards sport numerous spines. According to the Horned Lizard Conservation Society, these lizards can inflate their spiny bodies in an effort to detract predators. A highly publicized predator response, although one that can rarely be reproduced or witnessed in the field, is the ability of horned lizards to eject blood from their eyes. This bleeding may also aid in the shedding of skin or in thermoregulation. Of the thirteen species of horned lizards in North America, seven species reproduce

by laying eggs, while six species give birth to live young. The vast majority of a horned lizard diet is ants; however they also enjoy a variety of other invertebrate prey species.

Like numerous other prairie species, horned lizard populations seem to be declining range wide.

Threats to horned lizards include the degradation of habitat as well as various exotic species ranging from nonnative grasses, introduced and unpalatable ant species, to domestic and feral cats and dogs. Hopefully a waning concern is the collection of horned lizards as pets. These species are notoriously difficult to keep in captivity and should be left to roam free in the wild.

By supporting Audubon Wyoming's sagebrush initiative, you will be helping to ensure horny toads, and indeed an entire ecosystem of species, will continue to remain an integral part of the Wyoming landscape.



The Mission of Audubon Wyoming is to be a strong, unified voice for the ethic of conservation in Wyoming, focusing on birds, other wildlife and their habitats, for the benefit of present and future generations.

**AUDUBON
WYOMING
CONTACT
INFORMATION**

www.audubonwyoming.com

Audubon Wyoming, the state office for the National Audubon Society, is the state liaison for local chapters and volunteers, and is the primary contact for education, conservation, and outreach for the state of Wyoming

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WHAT ARE YOU DOING FOR EARTH DAY?

Oasis on the Plains: Hutton Lake National Wildlife Refuge Awareness Project

Tuesday, April 17th — Refuge Manager Ann Timberman and Toni Griffin from the U.S Fish & Wildlife Service will give an overview of the refuge system and discuss the importance of Hutton NWR. Program will be held from 1-3 pm in the Agriculture Auditorium at the University of Wyoming.

Saturday, April 22nd – A follow-up fieldtrip to Hutton Lake NWR will be offered from 10am – 12pm. Refuge biologist Pam Johnson will attend. Carpooling is available to the refuge. For more information on these events, contact Zach Parrie at 307-399-0953 or zparrie@uwyo.edu.



Earth Day Celebration in Cheyenne

Community Naturalist Kim Check has teamed up with the Wyoming State Museum to host an Earth Day Celebration. The celebration will kick off with a sneak preview of the documentary film JJ Audubon: Drawn From Nature on Friday, April 20th at 7pm in the multi-purpose room of the WSM. Then, join us on Saturday, April 21st from 10am – 2pm for interactive and educational displays, hands-on activities and free giveaways from a variety of local organizations. The celebration is free and open to the public. Contact Kim for further information.

**Earth Day 2007 “Top Ten”
Tips for Work & Home from the EPA**

1. Participate in your community’s recycling program and recycle all you can.
www.wyomingbusiness.org/pdf/energy/rd06internet.pdf
2. Improve your home’s energy efficiency by adding insulation and caulking, and regularly cleaning heating and air conditioning filters.
3. Compost yard trimmings and food waste in a backyard compost bin. Don’t bag grass clippings - either leave them on the lawn or compost them.
4. Practice water conservation - install a low flow showerhead or make an Earth Day pledge to take shorter showers.
5. Use compact fluorescent lights to conserve up to 75 percent of the energy consumed by incandescent bulbs.
6. Bring lunch in reusable/washable containers.
7. Use e-mail instead of paper copies whenever possible.
8. Conserve energy by turning off lights, computers and other appliances when out of the office.
9. Drink beverages from a reusable, washable mug.
10. Use double-sided photocopying or printing whenever possible.

For more information, visit <http://www.epa.gov/earthday/index.htm>



Earth Day Facts

- The average American contributes 1,859 pounds of air pollution to the atmosphere each year.
- Running a refrigerator and freezer for one year can produce as much pollution as driving a car from Chicago to Las Vegas.
- Each mile a person travels in an airplane accounts for 1.08 pounds of greenhouse gases.
- Every minute, 37,000 empty soft drink bottles are thrown away in the United States.

PROJECT SWITCH
Save energy by switching
your inefficient
incandescent light bulbs!



Save money on electricity
bills, use less energy,
reduce your carbon
footprint, and help stop
global warming!

**CHAPTER
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For further information about a chapter near you, please contact the leaders listed below.

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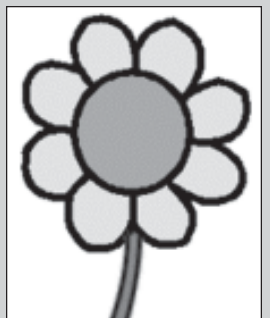
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Kids' Corner

Springtime means a time of new birth. Adult animals give birth to baby animals. Every mother knows her baby—but do you?

1. A mother horse gallops with her _____.
2. The mother cow gives milk for her _____.
3. The mother hen looks for worms for her _____.
4. The mother dog plays with her _____.
5. The mother duck swims with her _____.
6. The mother cat catches a mouse for her _____.
7. The mother goat nibbles grass with her _____.
8. The mother pig is busy caring for her _____.
9. The mother sheep calls her _____.
10. The mother black bear climbs trees with her _____.

1. lamb
2. piglet
3. duckling
4. kid
5. chick
6. cub
7. pup
8. calf
9. foal
10. kitten



PLANT A BEAN EXPERIMENT

Getting Ready

The bean should be wrapped in a moist paper towel and kept in a warm place for about 5 days.

Stage One

The bean seed is covered in a hard outer shell. When water is added to the seed, it swells and the seed bursts open. When the seed begins to grow roots, it can be put into potting soil. (It is best to put it in a clear jar of soil near the edge so that you can watch the changes).

Stage Three

Now place the potted plant near a light source. As the roots grow, a stem will also appear. The bean uses the food in the seed to grow.

Stage Four

Leaves will grow on the stem and stretch towards the light.

For more information, go to <http://www.sparta.k12.il.us/SID/plantunit/growthofbeans.html>



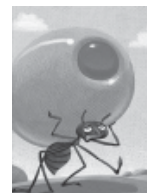
Did you know...

Sailor, Dead Leaf, Paper Kite, Blue Striped Crow, Julia and Great Egg Fly are all names of butterflies.



Dogs and cats, like humans, are either right or left handed (or is that paws?).

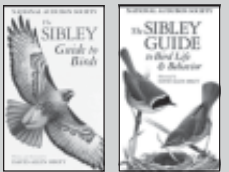
A rat can last longer without water than a camel can.



Ants don't sleep.

154 North 8th Street
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Help support Wyoming's wildlife and wild lands by purchasing your copy of *The Sibley Guide to Birds* (\$42.50) and *The Sibley Guide to Bird Life & Behavior* (\$32.50) from Audubon Wyoming! Other titles also available. Stop by 101 Garden Creek Road to browse our selection!



AUDUBON WYOMING HAS A NEW WEBSITE!!!

The new site highlights our science, education and policy efforts, in addition to a new way to contribute to these endeavors through an online donation page. Check it out at:

www.audubonwyoming.org

 Printed on recycled paper with soy-based ink.

Make a Difference for Wyoming's Wildlife & Wildlands!!

JOIN/DONATE

Membership — \$20.00

All donations received in the Audubon Wyoming office are tax-deductible and used to benefit Wyoming's birds, wildlife and their habitats.

Complete & return to: **Audubon Wyoming**
154 North 8th Street
Laramie, WY 82072

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Signature _____

VOLUNTEER

Do you enjoy watching wildlife? Love spending time in the outdoors? Then we invite you to volunteer with Audubon Wyoming! You don't have to be a bird expert...you just have to be willing to learn and want to have fun! Contact the following for volunteer opportunities.



Volunteers are the heart of Audubon Wyoming programs. We would not succeed without the assistance you provide so please join us in making a difference today!