



# Audubon Wyoming News

Vol. 9, Issue 1

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS**

WINTER 2007/2008

## The Governor's Implementation Task Force on Greater Sage-grouse

In July of 2007 David Freudenthal, the Governor of the State of Wyoming, held a conference on the state of the Greater Sage-grouse in Wyoming. This spirited and sometimes contentious gathering brought the Governor to the belief that we needed a concerted effort to bring the future of grouse in our wild lands to a point of clarity from which they could be managed. He found the most expeditious manner for effectuating this effort to be a multi-disciplinary team for implementation and an additional technical team made up of management biologists. The Implementation Task Force, as the multi-disciplinary was titled, was made up of two representatives of the mineral extraction community, two members of the agricultural community and two representatives of the conservation community. This committee was facilitated by Bob Budd and met with the charge of determining a list of potential actions that might assure that grouse would continue to inhabit the landscape and not be determined to need to be listed on the Federal endangered species list. As can be imagined there were widely differing opinions on the appropriate actions to be taken and the discussion proceeded through several presentations.

Dave Naugle, PhD presented on the findings of several years of research through the University of Montana. He carefully described the limits and effects of gas extraction and its measured effects on sage-grouse. This peer reviewed research has determined that any more than one drilling pad per square mile is more than the grouse will withstand, in many instances falling in numbers by as much as 80% soon after the onset of drilling. Renee Taylor, a researcher for the mineral industry, found that any more than one pad per forty acres and there might be some effect on grouse populations. This research was not peer reviewed or corroborated. This is a 600 acre

differential. Many members of the committee were visibly torn by the wide variation in reported "research". Lack of a full scale evaluation of animal numbers left much open to preferences as to what one might want to believe. Many of the results, of our deliberations, were general as was to be expected. However, there were four outcomes and recommendations that should be noted.

1. GIS mapping... This is a vital component in understanding where grouse are to be found and the variety of threats that complicate the forecasting of their future. This mapping will also help us in determining the "Set-asides" described below.
2. Set-asides... These are areas to be set aside a grouse refugia. This does not mean areas that would never be developed, however, it might well be determined that these areas are not to have surface development until the areas under development are returned to function in the ecosystem.
3. Threshold Management. This is a charge to the Wyoming Department of Game and Fish to develop an understanding of the existing populations of Greater sage-grouse and manage each of those distinct populations for their future health. This is not to be an "upset figure" at which we determine that our actions may be too late, this is to be an ideal figure for the maintenance of healthy populations.
4. Subdivision Limitations... Presently there is very little law or code to limit the subdivision of land for any purpose. It was recognized by the group that subdivision for human habitation is, probably, the longest term degradation of the landscape for the purposes of maintaining wildlife populations.



With the determination of these action items we set about recommending funding amounts, offices of authority and steps in order to proceed. This set of recommendations was set before the Governor and he will determine priorities and request funding through the legislature.

It has become quite apparent to all that study the Greater sage-grouse that the time is coming when drastic actions may be needed to assure their future and the future of the sagebrush ecosystem. "Business as usual" by the mineral extraction industry and the Bureau of Land Management will end in a federal listing of this incredible bird. We at Audubon Wyoming are determined to avoid the necessity of a listing. Please help us to encourage the BLM and industry to become more deliberate and careful in their approach to leasing the last of Wyoming's wild lands. The Gunnison's sage-grouse should have been listed already, foiled by inappropriate interference by federal employees. Let us demand that we keep the Greater sage-grouse from the brink.

## Gros Ventre Riparian Complex IBA Restoration Project Funded!

Recently Audubon Wyoming was notified that we have been given the green light to begin wetland restoration within the Gros Ventre Wetland IBA (located within the National Elk Refuge). Audubon applied for and received \$118,000 to help restore a wetland complex on the Gros Ventre IBA through the ConocoPhillips (\$20,000) grant and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (\$98,000). We are very excited and pleased to begin working with our partners, the National Elk Refuge, Susan Patla of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) and Bill Long of the Wyoming Wetland Society to accomplish the restoration work. The restoration will be targeting nesting and brood habitat for Trumpeter Swans as well as other waterfowl and shorebirds that inhabit the area. In the short and long-term, the project will increase shallow water wetland habitat within the National Elk Refuge for the benefit of Trumpeter Swans; which are one of Wyoming's rarest resident bird species. Although wintering swan populations have increased over the past 30 years, since 1989 there has been a decrease in number of resident swans in the traditional core habitat area in northwest Wyoming. In 1994, WGFD initiated a range expansion project in the Green River Basin that has been very successful; approximately 10 wild Trumpeter Swan pairs occupy territories there today and 4-5 territories have produced young that last few years. However, more shallow water wetlands must be developed to provide additional nesting and



summering habitat for the increasing number of resident swans in the Basin over the long-term. Wyoming Game & Fish biologists and Audubon Wyoming identified the Gros Ventre Riparian Complex as one of the sites that could provide potential summer habitat for these rare birds. This project is just one of many; our goal is to create a complex of swan habitats throughout the area. The combination of these projects would initiate a larger effort of creating a swan habitat complex and potentially boost species recruitment and subsequent increase in population in northwest Wyoming.

*The restoration project objectives will:*

1. Restore approximately 75 acres of wetland through replacement of dilapidated water control structures and reconstruction of dikes on six ponds
2. Enhance waterfowl, shorebird and Neo-tropical migrating and nesting potentials within the area,
3. Create Trumpeter Swan nesting/summer habitat within the project area,
4. Restore the area's water control structures and reconstruct the wildlife incompatible dikes, eliminating the loss of water bird and shorebird habitat,
5. Educate the local public and visitors to the area concerning the importance of the habitat to local and migrating species.

## AUDUBON WYOMING

The state office of the National Audubon Society is the primary contact for education, conservation, and outreach in the state of Wyoming.

[www.audubonwyoming.org](http://www.audubonwyoming.org)

### STATE OFFICE

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## AUDUBON GETS NEW STAFF

*Audubon Wyoming would like to extend a warm welcome to three new staff members.*

**Kevin Doherty** is the new senior sagebrush ecologist for Audubon Wyoming. □ Kevin comes to Audubon with a wide variety of biological research experience including, 4 years field technician experience with a wide variety of avian species, and 6 years graduate education leading to a M.S. in wildlife conservation with a minor in statistics from the University of Minnesota and a PhD in wildlife conservation at The University of Montana that will be completed this winter. □ Kevin's biological interests include linking habitat selection to fitness, large scale habitat ecology and GIS methods, and the consequences of anthropogenic change. □ Kevin comes to Audubon to put these interests to good use by developing conservation planning tools and management decision support for sage-grouse and other key species of the sagebrush ecosystem. □□□



**Lynn Jones** joined Audubon Wyoming in October of 2007 as Office Manager. She graduated from the University of Wisconsin with a degree in international relations and received her MBA from the University of Wyoming. She has taught business classes as an adjunct instructor at Laramie County Community College for over 10 years. She has developed several businesses over her career including an advertising agency, a business consulting firm and a bridal business. She enjoys her extensive garden and backyard bird habitat. She loves all types of crafts, painting, fly fishing, being a rock hound and Labrador retrievers. She has lived in Laramie for 18 years with her husband Bill.



**Sharon Kahin**, Audubon's new developmental director, is a long term resident of Wyoming who has worked in grant writing, fund-raising, education and the non-profit world since the 1970s. Sharon has written and directed numerous grants for the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts that focus on the history and the cultural traditions of Wyoming. Although she grew up in Ithaca, New York, she spent many summers in the Wind River Valley. A third generation "dudine", Sharon took her first pack trip in the Absarokas at age five a-top a Shetland pony. Kahin holds a PhD. in Art History from Cornell University and has taught extensively for the University of Wyoming from their Casper Office.



## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS AROUND THE STATE

12/15/07 Kane: Meet at 6:30 a.m. at the Lovell Fire Hall. Contact Suzanne Morstad at 568-2128.  
12/15/07 Laramie: Meet at Coal Creek Coffee Co. at 7:30am. Contact Deb Paulson at 742-5623.  
12/15/07 Casper: Meet at ACGC at 7:00am. Contact Chris Michelson at 234-8726.  
12/15/07 Green River: Contact Rick Steenberg at 872-2239.  
12/15/07 Red Desert: Meet at 7:15am Lander's McDonalds, contact Del Nelson at 332-5102.  
12/15/07 Dubois: Meet at Kathy's Koffee at 7:30am, contact Anna Moscicki at 455-2904.  
12/15/07 Sheridan: □ Contact Helen Moriarity @ 750-2225 to get route info prior to the count.  
12/16/07 Evanston: 7am at Front St Maverick Gas Station. Contact Tim Gorman at 789-3833.  
12/16/07 Buffalo: Meet at 7am at Hardees. Contact Deane Bjerke at 684-2798.  
12/16/07 Jackson: Meet at 7am at Jedediahs. Contact Susan Marsh at 733-5744.  
12/19/07 Clark: Meet at Edelweiss at 7:30 a.m. Contact Mary "Lefty" Klein at 645-3223.  
12/29/07 Guernsey-Ft. Laramie: Meet at 7:30am at Post Office Jane Dorn 640-4002.  
12/29/07 □ Sundance: Meet at Conoco at 7:30am. Contact Jennifer Adams at 283-2467.  
12/29/07 Riverton: Meet at 7:15 am □ at McDonald's. Contact Wanda Major □ at 856-6690.  
12/29/07 Cody: Contact Joyce Cicco at 527-5030 to get route info prior to the count.  
12/29/07 Story/Bighorn: Meet at 7am at 37 N. 2nd St. Big Horn. Contact Jean Daly @ 674-9728.  
12/29/07 Gillette: Meet at 7am at Perkins. Contact Mark Winland at □ mwinland@ccsd.k12.wyo.gov  
12/29/07 Pinedale: Meet at □ County Library at 7:30am. Contact: □ Fred Pflughoft at 367-2037.  
12/30/07 □ Ton Valley: Contact Susan Patla at □ 413-1222 or susan\_patla@hotmail.com.  
1/1/08 Bates Hole: Meet at Two Bar Ranch at 7:30am. Contact Charles Scott at 473-2512.  
1/1/08 Crowheart: Meet at Firehall at 7:15am. Contact Evelyn Wilkinson at 856-3557  
1/5/08 Cheyenne: Meet at Downtown Post Office at 7:30am. Contact Greg Johnson at 634-1056.  
*For more information, visit our website at [http://audubonwyoming.org/BirdSci\\_CBC.html](http://audubonwyoming.org/BirdSci_CBC.html)*

## CHAPTER CONTACT INFORMATION

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

### Murie Audubon Society

Casper  
**Bruce Walgren, President**  
(307) 234-7455  
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### Rendezvous Valley

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### Bighorn Audubon Society

Sheridan  
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**Charles Gibson (307) 672-5233**

### Cheyenne High Plains

Audubon Society  
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(307) 634-0463

### Laramie Audubon Society

**Vicky Sue Henry, President**  
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### Meadowlark Audubon

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Big Horn Basin  
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### Powder River Audubon

Society  
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# Kids' Corner



## Did you know...

The North American Willow Ptarmigan is a bird that turns snow white in the winter. They will often fly into snow banks and nestle in the snow to sleep. By flying into the banks instead of walking, they don't leave tracks for predators to follow.

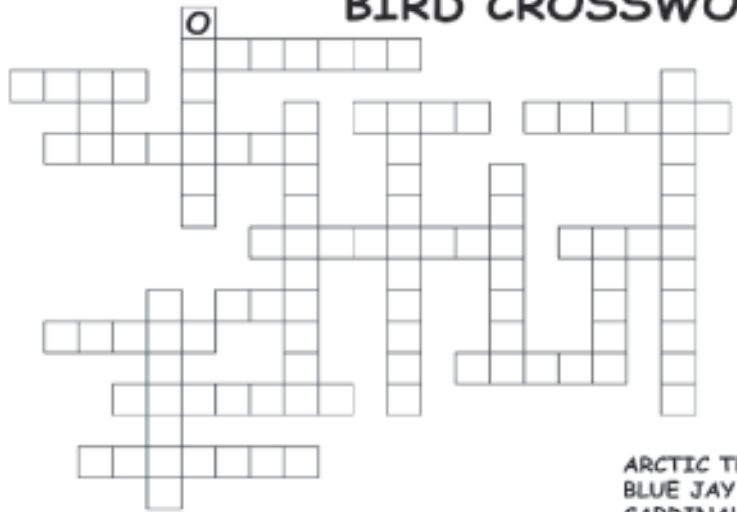


Some penguins can jump six feet into the air! They do this by swimming very fast and then rocketing straight up and out of the water.



Reindeer eat moss because it tastes great and it also contains a chemical that stops their body from freezing.

## BIRD CROSSWORD



- ARCTIC TERN
- BLUE JAY
- CARDINAL
- CROW
- EAGLE
- EMU
- FALCON
- FLAMINGO
- HAWK
- HERON
- KOOKABURRA
- MOCKINGBIRD
- OSTRICH
- OWL
- PELICAN
- RAVEN
- SEAGULL
- SPARROW
- VULTURE
- WREN

## Color Us



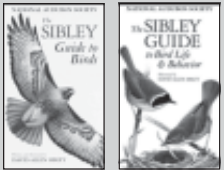
### SANTA'S TIPS FOR AN ECOFRIENDLY HOLIDAY SEASON:

- If you want to be Earth friendly this year, use comics or bandanas to wrap your gifts. If the average person wraps twenty gifts during the holidays, and if just three of the twenty were wrapped in newspaper or bandanas, the new paper saved could cover 45,000 football fields!
- Cut along the seam of an old potato chip bag. Turn it inside out, wash it, and wrap with the silver side out.



358 North 5th Street  
Laramie, WY 82072

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!



Please visit our website at:

[www.audubonwyoming.org](http://www.audubonwyoming.org)

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## 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**  
358 North 5th Street  
Laramie, WY 82072

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Payment (Please do not send cash):

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 Visa     MasterCard     AMEX

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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 Community Naturalist in your area for volunteer opportunities.



#### SPECIAL THANKS TO:

**Jim and Gloria Lawrence** for their recent donations to the Audubon Center at Garden Creek. The Lawrence's recognize the value of the Audubon Center at Garden Creek, and their gift will enhance learning for visitors young and old alike.