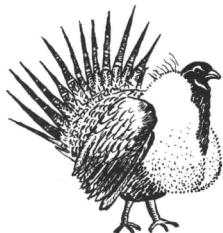


PLAINS & PEAKS



Vol. 43 - Iss. 2

FEBRUARY 2009

MURIE AUDUBON

Casper Wyoming - Monthly Publication
<http://www.murieaudubon.org>

Calendar

- Feb. 7—BOSS seed sale
- Feb. 14—Field Trip—1:30PM
- Feb. 13-16—GBBC
- **Feb. 21—Murie's 23rd Annual Banquet & Fundraiser**
- March 3—Board Meeting
- March 13—General Meeting
- Every Thursday—Brown Bag Lunch with the Birds-ACGC-Noon

IMAGES OF WILDLIFE--OUR WAY

Francis and Janice Bergquist of Saratoga will be the guest speakers at Murie Audubon's 23rd



Annual Banquet, February 21, 2009. They will be discussing wildlife photography in general and their favorite methods of obtaining the images that they use for publication and fine art prints. The main focus of their presentation will be on birds, but all wildlife will be included in this discussion and in their image presentation.

Francis and Janice Bergquist are a husband-wife team photographing and writing out of their home in Saratoga, Wyoming. Francis has been photographing for the past twenty five years and specializes in the wildlife and scenery of the Rocky Mountain region. Janice started photographing several years later; she enjoys capturing images of birds, wildflowers, insects and butterflies.

Their photography has been self-taught, with much of their knowledge gained by reading books and magazines. It has taken years of experience in the field and a lifetime of observing and studying the wildlife to obtain the images now in their files. What started as a part time hobby has become a full time obsession.

They travel very little to obtain their photos, the majority of them are taken near their southern Wyoming home, with limited travel to Arizona, New Mexico and neighboring states of South Dakota and Nebraska. Many of the songbird photos are taken in their own backyard, which has been landscaped for wildlife with water, food and cover.

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The Bergquist images have appeared in a variety of publications, including *Wyoming Wildlife*, *WildBird*, *Birds and Blooms*, and *Pheasants Forever*. They have donated many of their photos to Audubon Wyoming to use in their projects. Their goal in photography is to provide visual awareness of the beauty of nature and its inhabitants within the beautiful state of Wyoming.

We have returned to the Parkway Plaza this year for the banquet. The tickets are \$25 each or you can reserve a table of eight for \$175; contact Rose-Mary King (577-0568) or (262-4861) for tickets. As usual, we will begin the evening with a social hour at 5:30 PM. Our program will begin at 6:30 PM with announcements and presentations. Dinner will be at 7:00 PM, so you should have time to visit and check out the raffle and silent auction items. Proceeds from the event will be used to support Murie Audubon's education programs. **(Bruce Walgren—Program Chair)**

BANQUET HIGHLIGHTS

Our center pieces for the tables at the banquet will be bird houses decorated by local artists. These bird houses are also a silent auction benefitting Audubon Center at Garden Creek. They will be on display at the Center the week

before the banquet where you can start the bidding which will continue at the banquet. Watch for the exact date in our newspapers. Artists participating in this project are: Judi Van Rensselaer, Larana Brink, Linda Gilliland, Joan Odasz, Carolyn Rodgers, June Calmes, Emma Narotzky, Barb Jones, Lon Klatt, Jeremy Jones, Mary Lou Morrison, Sharon Mersch, Hank Washut, Jim Kipp, Linda Lyman, Gretchen Hogan, Karen Onfang, Cathy Szymczak, Ingrid Burnett, Nancy Stichert and J.P. Cavigelli and Lisa Fujita et al. Many, many, thanks to all of you for making this a successful project. **(Ann Hines—Centerpiece chair)**

We will also have a framed watercolor of the west side lake at EKWSP by June Calmes, a framed photograph of a Great Blue Heron, a framed photograph by Pete Arnold of Cheyenne, a signed copy of Dr. Oliver Scott's *A Birder's Guide to Wyoming*, 2-50 lb. Bags of BOSS from Murdock's, *Wesley the Owl* (Ralph's Books), *Yellowstone Wolves--A Chronicle of the Animal, the People, and the Politics* (Blue Heron), *Red Desert: A History of Place* (Audubon Wyoming, and a framed drawing of a Porcupine by Pat Morse. **(Rose-Mary King—Banquet Chair)**

PRESIDENTIAL PONDERINGS

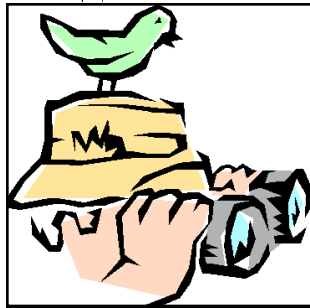


Through the generosity of members and friends, the Murie Audubon Society each year purchases and distributes around 70 *Audubon Adventures* classroom kits to teachers in Natrona County. Ann Hines, Murie's Education Chair, maintains contacts with teachers, recruits new users, orders the *Adventures*, seeks contributions to underwrite the cost (\$45.60 per classroom) and ensures delivery to the educators. Although created for students in grades three through five, *Audubon Adventures* can be adapted for kids of many ages, skill levels and learning styles. Content is aligned to national education standards for science and language arts. The current edition highlights four aspects of the natural world: (1) the important role plants play in the survival of life on Earth; (2) the "builders" of the animal kingdom (birds, bees, crawdads, beavers, etc.) and their methods and materials; (3) defenses plants and animals employ to improve chances of survival; and (4) migration. A teacher's manual provides helpful background, lists an array of hands-on activities, and gives pointers on creating a nature discovery center within the classroom, complete with exhibits and a

small library. There are guidelines for enlisting support of school administration, custodial staff and community members to convert a portion of school grounds to an outdoor classroom for nature study, perhaps as simple as a flowering bush and a place to hang a bird house. Thanks for supporting *Audubon Adventures!* I'll see you at Murie's Annual Banquet, February 21. (President—Jim Brown)

BIRD NOTES

Our cold snap last month was followed up by some unseasonal warm weather, with temps even getting into the lower 60's. Now, as I write this, real winter weather is again upon us - with temperatures hovering between 18 degrees and zero and daily snowfall. (But I must remember - "tis the season!") Typical of this time of year, various species of "winter" ducks have been reported - Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Lesser Scaup, Hooded Mergansers and a few Barrow's Goldeneye. We have also had reports of Trumpeter Swans from a couple locations - North Casper and Grey Reef/Alcova. Some of our "winter birds" have been less numerous; sightings of Lapland Longspurs, Snow Buntings, Bo-



hemian Waxwings, Evening Grosbeaks, and Common Redpolls have been few at this time, but this current winter storm may push some interesting birds into our neighborhoods. We shall be vigilant!!! **December yard birds** - For the month of December, Wayne and I received 172 yard bird selections from 14 states plus Brazil, Iraq, Madagascar, and the Yukon, with 75 different species reported. We are

still getting lots of reports of Steller's and Blue Jays, juncos, and raptors (8 species of hawks and 3 species of owls). One interesting sighting was a Blue Jay/Steller's Jay hybrid in Grantsdale, MT. Dark-eyed Junco and Sharp-shinned Hawk tied for most reported species. Second place was another tie between Blue Jay and Steller's Jay. Pileated Woodpecker was third, and in fourth place - 8 species commonly seen at this time of year: Clark's Nutcracker, Bald Eagle, American Goldfinch, Northern Shrike, Black-capped Chickadee, Great Horned Owl, Northern Flicker, and Hairy Woodpecker.

Casper: Ed Reish - Red-breasted Nuthatch, Pat Classen - Blue Jay, Cecil Foote - Black-billed Magpie, Chris Michelson - Steller's Jay, Pineview School - Mountain Chickadee, Ann Hines - Cedar Waxwing, Rose-Mary King - Northern Flicker (yel.-sh.), Casper College Greenhouse - Gyrfalcon, Judith Key - Steller's Jay, **Buffalo CBC:** Deane Bjerke -

Pygmy Nuthatch; **Douglas:** Billie Snell - Brown Creeper; **Dubois:** Anna Moscicki - Northern Shrike; **Dubois CBC:** Anna Moscicki - Common Redpoll; **Evanston:** Patti Gorman - Pine Siskin; **Keeline:** Donna Walgren - Rough-legged Hawk; **Riverton:** Suzanne Hargis - Northern Goshawk; **Table Rock:** Tim Gorman - Snow Bunting.

Thanks to all who helped with the Yard Bird Project in December!! We are waiting for your reports of birds seen in the New Year!! Send your bird notes and yard bird reports to Donna Walgren, 4311 S. Center St., Casper, WY 82601, or email to Piranga@bresnan.net, or phone 234-7455. Good Birding!!! (Donna Walgren)

AUDUBON CENTER AT GARDEN CREEK

The snowy days are beautiful at the Audubon Center at Garden Creek. Student groups have been visiting and learning about animal tracks, adaptations, and observing the physical changes that accompany the landscape this time of year. It is a true joy to have so many smiling faces at the Center during the winter months.

Due to increased visitations, the ACGC is looking for household and office supply donations for the upcoming

year: Toilet paper, Kleenex, Paper towels, Kitchen and bathroom cleaning supplies, Dish soap, Hand soap, Department store gift cards (Wal-Mart, Target, etc.), Office pack printer paper, White-out, permanent sharpie markers, dry-erase markers, cloth tablecloths,

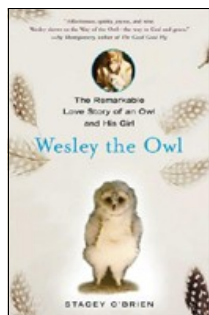
The ACGC's continued success is dependent on donations of time and resources. Many thanks go out to all of those who have given and continue to give. Your support of this wonderful facility and its programs provides your community with a place to connect to the beauty of Casper. **THANK YOU!**

Please feel free to call me at the Center (307) 473-1987 or email me at jryan@audubon.org for more information. I look forward to seeing new and familiar faces that share an appreciation of our natural places. (Jessica Ryan, ACGC Community

Naturalist)

BOOK REVIEWS

Wesley the Owl, by Stacey



O'Brien; ©2008, Free Press, New York

Stacey O'Brien was trained as a biologist, special-

izing in wild animal behavior. She graduated from Occidental College in Los Angeles with a B.S. in biology, then continued her education at California Institute of Technology, where she was an assistant in the owl laboratory. She was working with biologists studying owls (some specializing in barn owls). One of the scientists had received an orphan barn owl (only four days old); this baby had nerve damage in one wing, so it was highly doubtful that the owl would ever be able to fly well enough to hunt and survive in the wild. Stacey opted to "adopt" the little guy and raise him. This is the story of Stacey and Wesley the Owl living together for 19 years - their trials and tribulations.

Stacey brings the reader inside Caltech's research community - into an environment that many biologists can identify with; where resident owls (or other "subjects" for that matter) flew freely from office to office, and where "eccentric, brilliant scientists were extraordinarily committed" to their studies (described on the book jacket as a kind of scientific Hogwarts).

With her commentary and photos, she recorded Wesley's life from "the four-day-old helpless ball of fuzz to a playful, clumsy adolescent to a beautiful gold-and-white adult barn owl." Though this is obviously an "unnatural" relationship (Wesley has imprinted on Stacey), this book gives the reader a look into the behavior of a barn owl and the bird's relationship to his "companion," something that anyone who lives with and cares for an animal can identify with.

Kenn Kaufman (author of *Kingbird Highway* and *Flights Against the Sunset*) wrote that this is a "different animal story, Stacey O'Brien got to know this owl with a unique combination of deep scientific understanding and rare emotional intensity."

Today Stacey lives in California and works in wildlife rescue and rehabilitation.

(Donna Walgren)

☺I have read this book and as an owl fanatic, I adored it! It is a deep look into what kind of relationship can be established between a human and an animal. Stacey understands "owl-speak" through her association with Wesley—his screeches, murmurs, clicks and body language—and Wesley understands "Stacey-speak" through her consistent word phrases, facial expressions and body language. It is an amazing relationship! Editor☺

Red Desert: A History of Place

Audubon Co-Authors Featured in New Publication

This winter, a spectacular book, *Red Desert: A History of Place*, will be available to the public. In this "biography of a place," Pulitzer Prize-winning author Annie Proulx, photographer Martin Stupich, and a group of experts explore this world

class landscape which is threatened by oil and gas development. Three Audubon Wyoming representatives wrote chapters for this impres-



sive work: Andrea Orabona and George Jones — both Audubon Wyoming Board Members—and Mac Blewer, Audubon Wyoming's Grassroots Organizer. Ms. Orabona wrote a chapter about the desert's birds, Dr. Jones wrote a chapter about the sagebrush vegetation of the desert and Mac wrote an article about the history of conservation efforts to protect the desert.

States Dr. Jones, "The Red Desert is a good place to just sit, or walk, and enjoy the space. No doubt a person can learn a lot about the Red Desert by studying Martin Stupich's photos and reading the different chapters. Maybe the book will even give people some kind of understanding. But what a person misses by reading the book in the comfort of the easy chair is the aridity and the wind. By the end of a day in the Red Desert, you're ready for the sun to go down and the wind to stop blowing. Even the shade and shelter of an auto-

mobile take some of the edge off the Red Desert."

Ms. Orabona says, "This book provides a wonderful opportunity to share with readers the incredible diversity of bird species that inhabit the Red Desert. I encourage anyone who is interested in birds and the habitats on which they depend to read this book, and then explore and discover for your-self the avian riches of the Red Desert."

The Red Desert is one of the last undeveloped landscapes in the United States, as well as one of the most endangered. It is an Audubon Important Bird Area and a last refuge for many species of wildlife. Sitting atop one of North America's largest untapped reservoirs of natural gas, the Red Desert is a magnet for energy producers who are damaging its complex and fragile ecosystem in a headlong race to open a new domestic source of energy and reap the profits.

To capture and preserve what makes the Red Desert both valuable and scientifically and historically interesting, writer Annie Proulx and photographer Martin Stupich enlisted a group of scientists and scholars to join them in exploring the Red Desert. Their essays reveal many fascinating, often previously unknown facts about the Red Desert — everything from the rich pocket habitats that support an amazing diversity of life to engrossing stories of the transcontinental migrations

that began in prehistory and continue today on I-80, which bisects the Red Desert.

Complemented by Martin Stupich's photo-essay, which portrays both the beauty and the destruction that characterize the region today, Red Desert bears eloquent witness to a unique landscape worth fighting to protect. **(Mac Blewer, Grassroots Organizer, Audubon Wyoming)**

AUDUBON ADVENTURES

A big thank you to Dwayne Wagoner for sponsoring a class of Audubon Adventures!

FROM THE PLAINS AND PEAKS ARCHIVES

March, 1972—*Snowshoeing Great Fun*

For those of you who missed the trip to Norm Brown's cabin in February, you missed a real fun jaunt. There were three cars of snowshoers who went up and parked at the junction of the Telephone Tower and Hogadon Roads (we even had one member from Cheyenne on this trip!) and started off with a chilly, invigorating breeze in our faces. Soon we were in the timber where it was still and beautiful and the

snow had been trampled by the scampering feet of what we determined to be the little squirrels of the area. Soon after we arrived at the cabin, Norm had a nice warm fire going and we settled down in complete comfort to eat our lunches. After lunch, we all prowled around the 'winter wonderland' until our time began to run out and we had to head back to the cars and home.

February, 1967 *Birding Notes*

On Feb. 12, the Laytons found a Canyon Wren at Ayres Natural Bridge up near the dam along La Prele Creek. They saw many Ouzels on this trip, too. If you've never heard the Ouzel song, plan a trip to Ayres Natural Bridge. Their song is loud, clear and Mockingbird-like, but higher. They are reported to sing through the year, but are most frequently heard in the early spring."

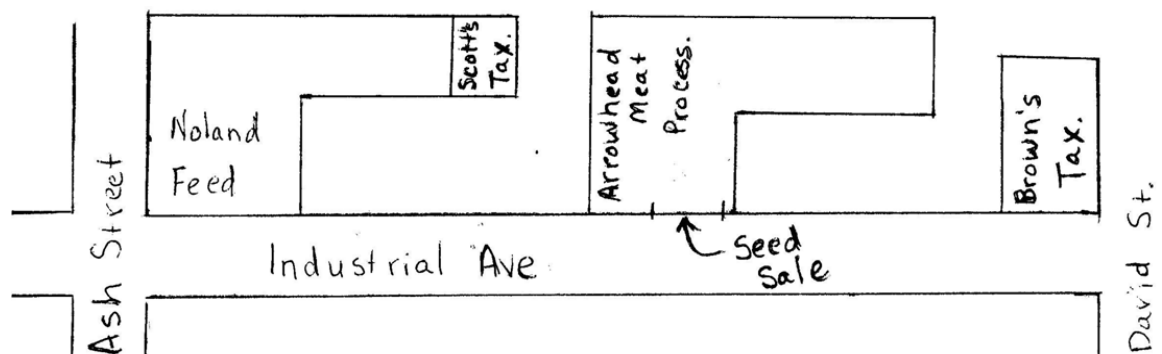
Last Sunday, Feb. 19, the Laytons and Dr. Scott found a Virginia Rail. They have also found Hooded Mer-

gansers, Barrow's Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Shovellers and Mallards at 'Yant's Puddle' and many Bald Eagles in the Bessemer Bend area, with 4 immature sitting in one tree. (Note: Ouzel is the older name for the American Dipper, which can still be easily found at Natural Bridge Park. Unfortunately, the park can no longer be accessed until late spring; but dippers can be found in other areas - one location worth visiting is Miracle Mile.) **(Donna Walgren)**

BLACK OIL SUNFLOWER SEED SALE

Noland Feed has once again been able to find seeds at a reasonable price for us and allowed us to sell seeds out of their storage facility. Look for a large overhead door at the south side of the old Arrowhead Meat Processing building (see map below). We will be offering 50# bags of black oil sunflower seed for \$19 per bag. You need not pre-order your seeds unless you wish. If you wish to purchase seeds but will be out of town on the day of distribution, let us know and we can make arrangements for later pickup. Also, if you are unable to handle the 50# bags, let us know and we can make arrangements for delivery. Many of you may be participating in the weekly Brown Bag Birding at the Audubon Center. If you do not feed birds, but enjoy watching them at the Center, you may want to consider donating seeds to the Center. We can deliver your donation and let them know of your contribution. Seed distribution will take place from 9 AM until 1 PM on February 7.

For more information or to order seeds, please contact Bruce Walgren at 234-7455 or bruce_walgren@bresnan.net. **(Bruce Walgren)**



FEBRUARY FIELD TRIP

We will meet at the Audubon Center at Garden Creek at 1:30 PM on Saturday, February 14 for a field trip to the Dave Johnson Power Plant. Call Stacey Scott at 262-0055 for more information.

2008 BATES HOLE CBC

The Bates Hole Christmas Bird Count was held January 1, 2009. 42 species of birds and 2,137 individual birds were seen. Highlights of the count were 25 Golden Eagles and 71 Sage Grouse.

The following birds were seen: Canada Goose 29, Mallard Duck 353, Pintail Duck 23, Common Goldeneye Duck 315, Common Merganser 13, Great Blue Heron 1, Wilson's Snipe 1, Bald Eagle 4 (2 adult, 2 immature) 1 Northern Harrier (Marsh Hawk) 8, Cooper's Hawk 1, Red-tailed Hawk 3, Rough-legged Hawk 4, Golden Eagle 25 (15 adult, 10 immature), Prairie Falcon 1, Grey Partridge 6, Sage Grouse 71, Ring Necked Pheasant 2, Wild Turkey 145, Rock Dove 42; Great Horned Owl 11, Eastern Screech Owl 2, Downy Woodpecker 3, Hairy Woodpecker I, Red-shafted Flicker 1, Horned Lark 183, Pinon Jay 52, Black-billed Magpie 265,

Common Raven 7, Black-capped Chickadee II, Mountain Chickadee 4, White-breasted Nuthatch 5, Townsend's Solitaire 6, American Robin 3, Northern Shrike I, American Tree Sparrow 81, Song Sparrow 3, Dark-eyed Junco 27 (Slate-colored 6, Pink-sided 6, Oregon 3, undifferentiated 12) European Starling 331, Pine Siskin 15, American Goldfinch 24, House Finch 29, House Sparrow 25

Participating in the count were Andy Anderson, H. Ali Bhutto, J. P. Cavigelli, Harry and Tony Martin, Chris Michelson, Frank Odasz, Debra Parti, and Ben, Charles, George, Hus-tace, and Joe Scott.

The Bates Hole count is located SW of Casper. The count circle includes Government Bridge, the highway 220/487 junction, Freeland Cemetery and the former Spindletop oil field. **(Charles Scott—complier)**

BIRD ID CLASSES

The Bird Class Organizational Committee—Rose-Mary King, Ann Hines, J.P. Cavigelli, Chris Michelson (Stacey Scott & Jessica Ryan-unable to attend)—met January 22nd to begin discussion regarding classes to be offered this year and in the future co-sponsored by Audubon Wyoming and Murie Audubon Society.

Bird ID 101—a beginning bird ID class—will consist of 3 classes with 3 field trips following each class session. Classes will be held on Thursday evening at Audubon Center at Garden Creek at 7:00 PM. April 23 - ACGC birds and Casper Mountain Birds, field trip on April 25. April

30—Waterfowl of Soda Lake, field trip May 2. May 7—Migrants, field trip May 9.

A possible follow-up for those attending this year's Bird ID 101 and the past 2 years beginning bird classes could be Fall Migration Species (emphasis on Raptors) with a class the first of September followed by a field trip.

Other topics discussed for classes:

1. A series of classes beginning in March—Waterfowl, April—Raptors, May (early)—Sparrows, May (late)—Warblers, June—Flycatchers, July—Shorebirds, August—Bats, September—Gallinaceous Birds, October or November—Gulls. Each class would be more specie specific with a follow-up field trip. Suggestions are needed for instructors! (You may remember we did this schedule of classes in 2004 with the exception of the Bats class as no instructor could be found who wasn't already committed during August.)
2. What bird species are found in what kind of habitat.
3. Birding by ear.

The committee would very much like to hear from the membership as to what kind of classes you would like to attend—from beginning bird-

ers on up. We have many very good birders in our group who will be very valuable as instructors. The question is to you "very good birders" what class offering would take you to the next level? What specie family are you good at and could instruct others? What specie family are you struggling with and want more instruction? Who are the experts out there in the bird world we could bring to Casper for a class?

Please contact any of the above committee members with your suggestions or offers of help. (Rose-Mary King)

JOIN THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

February 13-16

Count for Fun, Count for the Future

Bird and nature fans throughout North America are invited to join tens of thousands of everyday bird watchers for the 12th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC),

A joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, this free event is an opportunity for families, students, and people of all ages to discover the wonders of nature in backyards, school-



Rough-legged Hawk - Scott Weins, SD

yards, and local parks, and, at the same time, make an important contribution to conservation.

"Anyone who can identify even a few species can contribute to the body of knowledge that is used to inform conservation efforts to protect birds and biodiversity," said Audubon Education Vice-President, Judy Braus.

Volunteers take part by counting birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the event and reporting their sightings online at www.birdcount.org. The data help researchers understand bird population trends across the continent, information that is critical for effective conservation. In 2008, participants submitted more than 85,000 checklists, a new record.

"The GBBC has become a vital link in the arsenal of continent wide bird-monitoring projects," said Cornell Lab of Ornithology director John Fitzpatrick. "With more than a decade of data now in hand, the GBBC

has documented striking changes in late-winter bird distributions."

Participants submit thousands of digital images for the GBBC photo contest each year. Last year's winners are now posted on the web site. Participants are also invited to upload their bird videos to YouTube tagged "GBBC." Some of them will be fea-

tured on the GBBC web site. All participants will be entered in a drawing to win dozens of birding items, including stuffed birds, clocks, books, and feeders.

Businesses, schools, nature clubs, Scout troops, and other community organizations interested in the GBBC can contact the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at (800) 843-2473 (outside the U.S., call (607) 254-2473), or Audubon at citizenscience@audubon.org or (202) 861-2242, Ext 3050.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is made possible, in part, by support from Wild Birds Unlimited.

(From <http://web1.audubon.org/news/pressRelease.php?id=1221>)

PENNIES FOR THE PLANET

An exciting conservation program for kids across America!

Pennies for the Planet is a nationwide campaign that taps into the amazing power of kids to help critical conservation projects. For the last several years, kids have been collecting pennies (and nickels, dimes, quarters, and dollars, too!) to help save wild places and wildlife in the United States and around the world. Working in classrooms, clubs, Scout troops, other groups, and on their own, kids just like you have turned pennies into an absolute gold mine for projects dedicated to protecting wild spaces and wild species.

Raising thousands of dollars for conservation, kids have proved that by working

together, they can make the planet cleaner, greener, and wilder. That means you can, too!

To donate to Pennies for the Planet for Wyoming, visit www.togethergreen.org/p4p/WhatToDoPennies.aspx

THE SAGEBRUSH SEA WYOMING

The Sagebrush Sea is the name scientists sometimes use to describe a sprawling region of the western United States where a plant called sagebrush grows. This "sea" is, in fact, an incredibly dry place. But it is also home to a great diversity of wildlife. There are pygmy rabbits, pronghorns, mule deer, elk, and large strutting birds called sage-grouse. An entire wildlife community depends on sagebrush habitat for its survival. But over the last 100 years, the Sagebrush Sea has been changed by human activities such as energy

development and the building of houses and roads. There's a lot less sagebrush habitat now than there used to be.

WHERE WILL YOUR PENNIES GO?

In Wyoming, scientists are trying a number of strategies to help sagebrush recover—controlling overgrazing, running local conservation education programs, and organizing programs to track wildlife population changes. All of this will serve as a model for individuals, groups, and entire communities who want to protect and restore the Sagebrush Sea and other critical habitats. With your support, more sage-grouse will strut, pygmy rabbits hop, and pronghorn, mule deer, and elk roam along with all the other wild species that make sagebrush habitat home.



New Year's Day CBC

From Harry Martin, our Vice-President and cartoonist.

www.harrymartincartoons.com