

PLAINS AND PEAKS
MURIE AUDUBON SOCIETY CASPER, WYOMING
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**GLACIER OUTBURST FLOOD IN THE
WIND RIVER MOUNTAINS**

Picture if you will an unnamed 30 acre lake, contained by a glacier and located at 12,000 feet above sea level in the mountain west. A break through the glacier that kept the lake dammed up floods a remote mountain canyon, tearing out shrubs, trees and carrying tons of debris along the way. No, this isn't the plot of the latest block-buster disaster movie. This unusual geological event known as a jokulhlaup, or glacial outburst flood, actually took place in the Wind River Range about 2.5 miles north of Gannett



Peak in early September, 2003. The release of an estimated 850 million gallons of water raised the flow rate on Dinwoody Creek from 250 cfs. to an estimated 1,300 cfs., carrying with it tons of glacial silt and debris. Not many people actually observed this flooding

(Continued on page 2)

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Birds are really amazing creatures and we have a multitude of stories that would testify to that. Allow me to tell you mine.

Both of these stories took place during our recent much needed snow storm and not so needed frigid temps.

I was out in our

backyard in 12+ inches of snow cleaning off feeders and junipers. A spunky little male house finch, who was either just glad to be alive or tuning up his courtship call,

(Continued on page 2)

CALENDAR

- March 3 - Gen. Mtg., 7:00pm, 2211 King Blvd.
- March 4 - Eagle Roost Field Trip
- March 14 - Bd. Mtg., ACGC, 7:00pm
- March 17 - April newsletter deadline
- April 7 - Gen. Mtg.
- April 8 - Hat 6 Lek Field Trip
- May 20 - CHPAS Big Day Bird Count

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Field Trips	3
Counting Sage-grouse leks	3
Education Report	3
Bird Notes	4
Marked Eagle Sighted	6
This ~N~ That	6
New Zealand Bound	7
Wyoming Wind Mill Origins	8

PLAINS & PEAKS

(Continued from page 1)

event and no one was injured. The lake had been contained at the top of Grasshopper Glacier, an expanse of ice up to a mile wide and more than 2 miles long. The glacier prevented the lake from flowing directly downhill. Prior to this event, the lake's outlet was over a rocky gap. The Grasshopper Glacier, like all other glaciers in the Wind River Range, has been shrinking. Over the past few years, the ice dam created by the glacier sank to the elevation of the lake's existing outlet and the water in the lake carved a new outlet causing the flood.

Liz Oswald, a hydrologist with the National Forest Service on the Shoshone Na-

tional Forest has made this flood event part of her master's thesis. Liz will be our guest speaker on March 6, 2006 and will talk about the flood, its climatic triggers, and the flood effects on the upper Dinwoody area. She is currently in a graduate program in Geosciences at Colorado State University at Ft. Collins, Colorado. Liz has served as a geologist on expeditions in East Africa, a scientific assistant at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, and a wilderness ranger in the Wind River Mountains.

Join us on Friday, March 3, 2006 at 7 pm at the Oil & Gas Conservation Commission Building at 2211 King Blvd. As always, the program is free and open to the public.
Bruce Walgren - Program Chair

(Continued from page 1)

By Pete Arnold

was cheerily singing from a high branch in the locust tree. It quite lifted my spirits! My attitude towards trudging through knee high snow and snow falling on my cap and shoulders (and naturally some had found that small space between collar and neck) from the juniper branches didn't seem so bad after all!

One day during the frigid temps when the high

didn't reach above zero, I observed some very hearty birds. I was seriously thinking about sitting for awhile in our hot tub to bring up my "core temp." when I looked out the kitchen window to where house sparrows and house finches were bathing in the water. My pond heater comes on when the water temp. drops below 40 degrees. These birds were bathing in the 2 shallow runs on either end of the main pond. Now I didn't test the temp., but I would think that the water had cooled a few degrees going through the hose and up to the runs

where the water depth is 2-3 inches. The runs are black and may have given off some solar heat. So even if the water was 40 degrees, can you imagine taking a bath in 40 degree water. BRRRRRR!!!!

This is about birds, but other hearty creatures in my yard are the 4 goldfish who live in the pond year-round!

That evening when I sat in the hot tub, I almost felt guilty - almost, but not quite!

Rose-Mary King - President

PLAINS & PEAKS

FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, March 4 Meet at 4:00 PM at the wildlife viewing turnout that is opposite the turnout to the Goose Egg Inn on Wyoming 220. We will drive to the entrance to the Jackson Canyon Road and walk up to the Jackson Canyon Eagle Roost. This is a strenuous uphill hike of over a mile with several hundred yards of rock climbing at the end. If you have never seen the eagles come into the roost before, it is really worth the effort. This year there are lots eagles using the

roost (the BLM counted about 35 one evening in January). Last year, I heard a saw-whet owl calling just after sunset. Bring many layers of warm clothes and a flash light for walking out in the dark. Even on a perfectly calm day the wind will be blowing hard at the roost. The only things that will delay this trip are sub zero temperatures or snowing so hard that we cannot see the eagles. Very strong winds are the norm, so they won't slow us down. Call Stacey Scott at 265-6213 for more information.

Those wishing to eat at the Goose Egg Inn after the field trip should call Rose-Mary King (577-0568) so she can call in the reservations. Please call by 10:00 am on March 4th.

Saturday, April 8 Meet at 5:30 AM at the east side Safeway to go view the strutting sage-grouse at the Hat 6 Lek. This is one of the grandest shows on earth, and we are very fortunate to still be able to watch it so close to town. Many people say that the grouse strut at sundown. This is true, but the evening

(Continued on page 5)

COUNTING SAGE-GROUSE LEKS

Murie Audubon is helping the Game and Fish count sage-grouse leks again this year. We have some leks that we count three times about 10 days apart in April and May, and other leks we just try to visit at least once during April and early

May. Counting starts about 1/2 hour before sunrise, and we count until an hour or more after sunrise. While this is really fun, it is very important to our understanding of the grouse population cycles. Call Stacey Scott at 265-6213 for more information.

EDUCATION REPORT

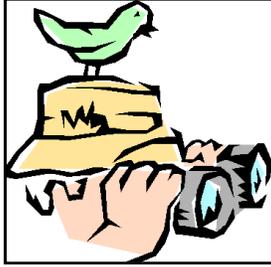
A FIRST EVER!!!!!!! All classrooms for the 2005-06 school year have been sponsored. Sarah Bucklin-Cominsky was our last sponsor for the year. Thank you. Now I can start collecting for next year.

I have the letters ready to go informing teachers of their sponsors. Hopefully, you will be receiving notes from the classroom.

The applications for the scholarship for the Eco-Tracs Kids Discovery camp at the

(Continued on page 6)

BIRD NOTES



As I write this, we are in the throes of a February snowstorm. Here at the Walgren abode we have 8 to 10 inches of snow - and it is still "snowin' and blowin'." There are 4 or 5 House Sparrows attempting to hang onto the feeders swinging in the wind. Otherwise, in the words of our dear late friend Lucy Rognstad: "It is not a very birdy day." But as we slowly move toward spring migration, we wait to see what this storm system might bring in its wake. Maybe Snow Buntings, Lapland Longspurs, Redpolls or Rosy-Finches, or maybe a Snowy Owl!! The possibility of these "surprises" is what fuels birders' passions.

An exciting birding event that we know is already beginning to take place is the annual migration northward of Sandhill Cranes. Each year, thousands of Sandhills from the Texas arena funnel into an 80-mile stretch of the Platte River in Nebraska. The first cranes start arriving in mid-

February, with the migration peak about the third week of March. By this time approximately half a million cranes will be staging on this reach of the Platte. If you drive along old US Highway 30 at this time, every field, meadow, and corn stubble is alive with cranes, probing the soil for waste grain and invertebrates. Every so often, one of these tall, leggy, long-necked birds bursts into a bit of "crane dancing." They spend about 6 weeks in the Rainwater Basin area of Nebraska, feeding and building energy reserves before resuming their migration northward. The last of these birds usually move on around April 20.

The Annual Rivers and Wildlife Celebration in Kearney, along with the International Crane Conference, takes place to coincide with this massive migration event. (You can find more info on this event - this year it will be held March 17-19 - on Audubon Nebraska's website, or links from National Audubon's

website.) If you have never experienced the cacophony of thousands of cranes rising from the river mists on a crisp spring morning or watched a flock spiraling out of the sky to drop into a meadow or corn field, it is a truly unforgettable experience. Two great books on Sandhills are *The Cry of the Sandhill Crane*, by Steve Grooms and *On Ancient Wings*, by Michael Forsberg. The Grooms book is basically a species account; Forsberg's book is also, plus it contains fantastic photography. I highly recommend both.

Observers have been reporting increasing numbers of robins and waxwings as birds begin to move around more. I have heard from people in Casper and the Glenrock-Douglas area seeing large flocks of these species - sometimes in mixed groups. Thanks to all who sent us reports of their sightings and observations!!

Another interesting birding event was noted in Bird Watcher's Digest. Last fall, large numbers of Cave Swallows were re-

PLAINS & PEAKS

(Continued from page 3)

show is a pale shadow of the morning one.

Call Stacey Scott at 265-6213 for more de-

tails. Please remember that I am checking my heifers at 4:00 am, and going to bed early.

Stacey Scott - Field Trip Chair

ported in Ontario, Canada and also in parts of north-eastern US. In the first week of November, birders in the Rochester, New York area reported approximately 600 Cave Swallows. (This species usually inhabits southern Texas and extreme southeastern New Mexico during spring and summer.)

January Yard Birds - For the month of January, Wayne and I received 188 yard bird selections from 20 states and the Yukon Territory, with 79 different species reported. The species reported are becoming more varied, though the expected "winter" birds are still regular visitors; but, as noted, robins do seem to be increasing in numbers. Bruce Bennett in the Yukon noted that he has not had his usual visits of Common Redpolls, but has had Boreal Chickadees and Three-toed Woodpeckers (which many of us wouldn't mind having on our

yard bird list!). (Note: There were no redpolls reported on January yard bird list.) The first place pick was a tie between Northern Flicker and American Robin. Second place was a three-way tie: Townsend's Solitaire, Sharp-shinned Hawk, and Great Horned Owl. And third place was also a three-way tie: Downy Woodpecker, Bohemian Waxwing, and American Goldfinch.

Casper: Jim Herold - Mountain Chickadee, Gloria Lawrence - American Tree Sparrow, Jim Lawrence - Black Rosy-Finch, Bob Yonts - Northern Flicker, Chris Michelson - American Crow, Rose-Mary King - Townsend's Solitaire, Stacey Scott - Downy Woodpecker, Bart Rea - Song Sparrow, Bruce Walgren - House Sparrow, Donna Walgren - Sharp-shinned Hawk; **Big Piney:** Tim Gorman - Common Raven; **Buffalo:** Deane Bjerke - American Goldfinch; **Cheyenne:** Barb Gorges - Brown Creeper; **Douglas:** Billie Snell

- Pine Siskin; **Dubois:** Anna Moscicki - American Tree Sparrow; **Evanston:** Patti Gorman - House Sparrow; **Laramie:** Robin Groose - American Tree Sparrow; **Lovell:** Glen Olsen - American Goldfinch; **Riverton:** Bob Hargis - Merlin; Suzanne Hargis - Northern Goshawk.

Thanks to all who helped with the Yard Bird Project in January!! Though we are still in winter's clutches, perhaps these February storm systems will push some interesting birds into Wyoming. Send your yard bird for February to Donna Walgren (ph. 234-7455), 4311 S. Center St., Casper 82601 or email to bwalgren@coffey.com. Thanks again!!

"In the end, we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught."
---Baba Dioum, African conservationist

Donna Walgren

Banquet Update: Chris Michelson, Treasurer, reported at the last board meeting that we had a profit of \$2900 (+ or -, not all bills in yet). WOW - That's great. A great big thank you to all of you who made that possible!!!

MARKED EAGLE SIGHTED

The following article was written for our newsletter by one of our most ardent birders, Steve Lund. (We appreciate the interesting contribution by this enthusiastic young man.)

On February 22, 1976, late in the day, I sighted an immature bald eagle with colored wing markers, flying over Jackson's Canyon. The sighting was reported to Dr. Scott who, then, found information on bald eagles banded as nestlings in northern Saskatchewan, Canada. A letter was written to one of the banders who wrote back, "The bird you saw was indeed one of the birds marked by us at Besnard Lake, Saskatchewan." He

wrote on to say that the bird was probably marked in 1974, and since one marker was missing, the exact individual could not be determined. He was less enthusiastic about the eagle being sighted in Jackson's Canyon and wrote, "I must admit I am not too enthusiastic about our eagles going to the scene of the 1971 eagle poisonings..." He also said that the bald eagles marked by them were the only bald eagles with such wing markers. The verification of this eagle indicates that it flew approximately 1,000 miles from Besnard Lake to Jackson's Canyon.

From the March 1976 *Plains and Peaks*

Donna Walgren

THIS ~N~ THAT

106th Christmas Bird Count - Counts completed - 1,878; Total Number of Birds - 60,384,940.

Audubon Wyoming is in need of snowplowing during the winter time. If you have a plow for sale or would offer to plow, please contact Diana or Ken at (307) 235-3485.

CHPAS will host a birding weekend on **June 23-25** - Black Hills (Wyo.) bird survey for IBA nomination. More info as it becomes available.

(Continued from page 3)

Lucius Burch Center at Trail Lake Ranch are being sent at the same time. These applications will go to the classrooms receiving Audubon Adventures.

Thank all of you for your commitment to Audubon Adventures.

Ann Hines - Education Chair

NEW ZEALAND BOUND

My New Zealand journey started on October 24th. After picking up traveling companions (JP & K) in Littleton, CO, we headed for DIA to take a 2 hour flight to LA International Airport at 8:00 pm. Once there, my time table went out the window. I kept forgetting that we gained an hour.

We were finally on our way to Auckland, NZ - a 12-hour flight. One thing that makes flight time go faster is good looking female flight attendants. Unfortunately, on this flight, they were mostly male.

Upon landing at Auckland, we had to rush a bit to get our flight to Christchurch. It didn't help that there was a bit of construction going on at the airport. It was a good 1 hour flight to Christchurch with some great mountain scenery. After arrival we went to pick up the vehicle we would use for our tour of the South Island. I was impressed with the South Island the moment I laid eyes on it. Christchurch is located on the Canterbury Plains near Pegasus Bay and not too far north of the Canterbury Bight. Thus we began an almost 3 week's stay in which we circled the South Island, more or less.

We had a great day in Christchurch. Everybody seems to walk and what walkers they are! Also there is a trolley that goes around the older parts of town. There are lots of quaint shops and snack bars, not to mention restaurants. And feed you they do. So beware.

We left the next morning fairly early for Dunedin, roughly a 5-hour drive. Our main reason for staying there was to ride the Taieri Gorge Railway which we did when we reached Dunedin at 2:30 pm. The train ride was great.

We left the next morning for Bluff where we stored the car and took a boat to Stewart Island, about an hour's boat ride from Bluff. We spent 3 nights there at a retreat. Very nice place. I tried my hand at bicycling and found I was extremely

rusty. We took a few boat trips to see birds from Half-moon Bay. Should have spent a week there. Notable birds were the Yellow-eyed penguin, Brown skua, Tomtit, & Rifleman. We enjoyed the main restaurant we ate at which was on a hill overlooking the bay. I enjoyed it so much that I hated to leave and if a woman would have proposed to me, I would have said "yes" so I could have spent the rest of my life in NZ. One sad point of our stay was that we missed the boat trip to find the Kiwi. Even sadder was the fact that they found some.

Onward to Queensland where we spent a couple of nights. Thoroughly enjoyed the town and all it had to offer. Queensland is on the upper end of Lake Wakatipu with high mountains all around. We rode the cable cars on a steep ride to what may have been a ski area but at this time of year seem devoted to the tourist trade. It certainly gave one a beautiful view of the countryside. However the wind seems to blow up on that hill the same as it does in Casper, so birds were far and few between. We did a bit of birding, but not much. The main target in this area was the Kea. We weren't able to see it. We enjoyed a Maori supper and were able to see a Kiwi up close in an enclosure. Actually it was a couple of birds used for mating purposes. I think I forgot that my primary objective was to see a lot of birds in NZ. I totally enjoyed myself just being a very lazy tourist.

It was hard to leave Queensland but Greymouth beckoned. It was almost a total mountain drive - two lane traffic only. If you are an impatient driver, NZ isn't the place for you unless all you want to see Auckland. Then you should be prepared to walk - up hill and down hill. They do have a bit of level land, but not a great deal.

We hit Greymouth at a bad time since it

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

rained almost continually the entire time we were there. This allowed us to relax and shop for jade. We did this mostly in the town of Hokitika. We spent 2 nights in Greymouth at the Ashley Motel. We did try to do some birding here, but the rain fell and the wind roared and we were expecting more pleasant clines.

We left in rain for Nelson, but it had cleared up before we got there. We spent 2 nights here. We did some birding at Marahau to the NW of Nelson.

Again we had a mountainous drive as we headed for Kaikoura. We spent 3 nights at the White Morph Motel. We went on a great pelagic trip here. There was only the 3 of us and the boat was small. We got an intimate look at birds some of which were Southern Royal,

Snowy, Gibson's Albatross, Savin's Molleymawk, and Giant-northern Petrel. We took a boat ride to see whales and found a number of sperm whales. We really liked being here and wished we could have spent a great deal more time.

We made it back to Christchurch. We stayed at the same motel. We ate our meals in their restaurant. We visited the Cathedral and an art museum and we visited a park looking for birds. Then it was time to take the car back and get a ride to the airport. We then started a repeat journey to Auckland, LA International, and DIA.

We have now visited both islands of NZ. I wouldn't hesitate to go back to the South Island, maybe this time to stay. One thing our journeys taught us, either stay longer (3 months or so) or just go to 1 or 2 places and stay put. A great adventure is now a memory.

The Hummer (aka Jim Herold)

WYOMING WINDMILL ORIGINS

This morning I read the good article in the February issue of *Plains & Peaks* on the subject of wind power. Here are some comments and clarifications on commercial wind power in Wyoming.

The government first produced utility scale wind power in Wyoming in 1982 at Medicine Bow. This was a project of the Bureau of Reclamation with the help and cooperation of the Department of Energy and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. The Hamilton Standard 4-megawatt turbine build there was for years the largest functioning wind turbine in the world. As it was a government research project, you could not call it "Commercial".

After that project was shut down, I purchased the Hamilton Standard turbine and a

small company, Medicine Bow Energy, consisting of a wind power pioneer, Glidden Doman of Connecticut and me, put that big turbine into commercial service in late 1992. That occasion was probably the first commercial utility scale wind power in the state.

The next probably was when the Platte River Power Authority of Fort Collins bought the assets of Medicine Bow Energy and put two 600-kilowatt turbines on line on April 13, 1998. My recollection is that commercial generation from Foote Creek Rim, the Wyoming Wind Energy Project, started very shortly after that date.

There were, of course, many smaller wind electric generating turbines in service long before that, perhaps back into the 1930's. Those turbines were mostly on ranches and were less than utility scale.

(William) Bill Young, Medicine Bow, WY