Partners in Flight meetings notes June 7th-8th, 2022

## Attendees:

1. Elisabeth Ammon Executive Director Great Basin Bird Observatory (GBBO)
2. Jessica Zehr Ecological Services office biologist S. NV USFWS
3. Michael West NDOW wildlife diversity biologist in Tonopah. Interested in Pinyon Jays.
4. Jennie Jones Scherbinski Lahontan Audubon Society (LAS)- Citizen science
5. Julie Bless DNOW Education Division jbless@ndow.org If you're interested in getting involved in the Nevada Wildlife Discovery Trail!
6. Kristin Szabo Nevada Division of Natural Heritage
7. Ali Chaney NV Div of Natural Heritage
8. Rabecca (Becky) Lausch GBI/USFWS
9. Jessica Zehr USFWS (Southern NV)
10. Kelly Colegrove GBBO
11. Dawn Fletcher GBBO
12. Ryan Muller NLT Volunteer
13. Diane Wong-Kone Lahontan Audubon
14. Rob Vinson USFWS Pahranagat Refuge manager
15. Dan Dewey USFWS Ruby Lake
16. Jim Panaccione USFWS; Mig. Birds R8
17. Joe Barnes Nevada Department of Wildlife
18. Mike Bower USFWS- Ash Meadows Refuge manager
19. Christiana Manville USFWS - Las Vegas
20. Corey Lange BLM Southern NV
21. Evan Myers BLM Southern NV
22. Zachary Day BLM Southern NV
23. Dane Horowski NDOW- Las Vegas Diversity Division
24. Susan Abele USFWS - Reno
25. Michael West NDOW-Tonopah
26. Kristie Boatner USFS - Humboldt-Toiyabe NF
27. Beth Sabin Bureau of Reclamation
28. Carrie Ronning Bureau of Reclamation
29. Jane Burnham Lahontan Audubon
30. Daniella Dekelaita BLM Sierra Front
31. Quinn Young BLM State wildlife
32. Kevin DesRoberts USFWS - Desert NWRC
33. David Syzdek SNWA
34. Lauren Harter GBBO
35. Christa Weise- DWRC
36. Olivia Curtis- Natural Resource Manager Nellis AFB
37. Chris Dodge- Bureau of Reclamation

## Action Items

1. Pinyon-juniper conservation subcommittee
   1. Focused on pinyon-juniper woodlands and management in NV
   2. If interested in participating, contact Elisabeth- [ammon@gbbo.org](mailto:ammon@gbbo.org)
2. Shorebird and waterbird monitoring group
3. Wildlife Action Plan
   1. Due in September. A small group of experts to help inform NDOW on priority species and areas
   2. NDOW is hosting a webinar at 10:00 am on 6/30 to share updates on the revision. You can register at <https://ndow.us18.list-manage.com/track/click?u=71d4ba85fe261d411f0d2a098&id=8b0c749f76&e=549e833e1e> or contact Angela Hessenius at AHessenius@kearnswest.com

## Partner Updates

### Joe Barnes and Michael West on NDOW updates 6/7

* + Rosy Finch work with partners in Utah, Idaho, and Colorado. Headed by Mackenzie Jeffress
  + NDOW is aiding effort in regional cuckoo monitoring effort.
  + On-going Golden Eagle and Ferruginous Hawk studies indicate poor nest success
    - Lincoln County nests mostly failed and even those that succeeded showed young mortalities within the first few months.
    - starvation appears to be a factor-declines in jackrabbit populations, partially due to RHDVZ https://www.ndow.org/blog/rabbit-hemorrhagic-disease/
  + Pinyon Jay studies mostly in Humboldt-Toiyabe north of Tonopah. Reliable flock in Cloverdale area-heavily chained in the 70’s but not very productive PJ

### Dawn Fletcher on thrasher updates 6/7-6/8

* + 2021 thrasher surveys showed very little nesting success. Looking better for 2022 but the season is on-going
  + Tagging thrashers in S Nevada
  + Power point available on website on thrasher working group
  + https://borderlandsbirds.org/projects/desert-thrasher/

### Kris Boatner on Forest Service updates 6/7

* + Large emphasis on fuels treatments after infrastructure bill
    - Treatments largely fall on PJ and mostly on eastern Sierra front and greater Elko area
    - Working with groups to be sure treatments are in line with avian needs such as Greater Sage-Grouse and Pinyon Jay
    - Does not employ prescribed burns often, which are often done in early spring and could impact breeding birds. Burns that do occur are mostly pile burns
      * Recent fires in the south have broken containment lines. Fire conditions at this point may be too favorable for large spread.

\*\* Need for pinyon-juniper sub-committee.

### Susan Abele: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Reno) Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program 6/7

* Staffing - we have biologists located in Las Vegas (Christiana Manville), Reno (me), Winnemucca (Cheryl Mandich), and Elko. We are currently backfilling our Elko vacancy and will be placing two biologists in that area. Our Winnemucca and Elko biologists are collocated with NDOW.
  + Our program recently completed a Strategic Plan update. The plan is for 5 years and this is our 4th generation. We used the Conservation Standards process to identify priority species, habitats, and Focus Areas for our habitat restoration work on private lands. We would love to connect with monitoring (existing and potential) efforts in our Focus Areas.
  + Bipartisan Infrastructure Law
  + Conservation Delivery: The Service will be receiving funding to implement projects for sagebrush ecosystem restoration on private and public lands. Funding will be available on an annual basis through FY26. Projects are directed within ‘core’ and ‘growth areas’ identified by a conservation design that has been recently developed for WAFWA (currently in review for publication). Contact me if you want more information or are interested in particular projects.
  + Science: There is also science funding and one project of interest will be evaluating the effects of pinyon-juniper removal on pinyon jays and songbirds in Nevada. The lead is Scott Summershoe with the Service (Region 6, Denver, Migratory Birds Program).
  + Pinyon jay petition for listing. The Service’s Utah office is the lead on the 90-day finding which they are launching into.
  + White-faced ibis project - Rob will share more information tomorrow but we are a partner on this project. The primary objective is to use ibis as an umbrella species to support climate-resilient conservation of wetland ecosystems in western North America. Examination of ibis movement ecology will be used to define underrepresented continental habitat networks and wetland diversity sustaining migratory waterbirds during their annual life cycles (i.e. breeding, migration, wintering). Secondary objectives will incorporate the development of supporting analyses to include migration network, habitat selection, flooded agriculture, and climate resilience. GPS transmitters to be deployed in 8 states (initiated 2022).
  + There is information on the varying projects that the IWJV is working on here: https://iwjv.org/solution-based-science/current-science/

### Doug Chang on Red Rock Audubon Society Updates 6/8

* + RRAS is focusing on two primary areas: climate and equity, diversity, community, and belonging
    - Growing participating by younger conservationists in southern Nevada including UNLV Audubon Chapter
    - Expanding capacity with more diverse events and partnerships with TNC
  + Establishing a GIS tool that will hopefully soon be available to the public that can illustrate local demographics in the birding community
    - Can help prioritize efforts
  + Community science called Climate Watch <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/climate-watch>
  + Working with local governments

### David Syzdek SNWA 6/8

* + SNWA focusing on restoration and some outreach
  + SWFL, cuckoo, and marsh bird surveys

### Olivia Curtis on natural resources program at Nellis AFB 6/8

* + Conducting point counts and target thrasher and Burrowing Owl monitoring
    - One Bendire’s Thrasher detected last year
    - DOD partners have a list of sensitive birds
    - Banding Burrowing Owl chicks
  + Wants to incorporate Pinyon Jay Surveys

## Renewable energy in Southern Nevada 6/7

### Beth Ransel presentation on proposed projects in Southern Nevada- Full presentation available

* Renewable Energy Project application review process
* 30 pending applications in Southern Nevada for solar and 3 wind sites
  + All photovoltaic fields
* None of the projects in Amargosa Valley are in solar energy zones
* Cumulative impacts are taken into consideration for NEPA analysis

### Considerations for renewable projects

* Fringe-toed lizards are under consideration for BLM species list
* BLM has done a lot of research on minimizing impacts of projects, including ensuring vegetation remains under mirrors
* Current project require pre-construction point counts, GOEA and thrasher surveys, and desert tortoise surveys
* Post-construction requires 3 years avian mortality and raven surveys
* Recent paper: Vulnerability of avian populations to renewable energy production <https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rsos.211558>
* How much impact might habitat loss have on species already under stress?
* Would it be valuable for this group to provide recommendations on mitigation measures or monitoring strategies for added support to agencies?

## Motus discussion 6/7

### Kevin DesRoberts provided updates on regional Motus work and Motus in Southern Nevada

* Motus is releasing a strategic plan hopefully this month. NV will use this as a basis for a state-specific Motus plan
* Funding is a limiting factor
  + Applying for a grant fall of 2023 for Clark, Lincoln, and White Pine counties
* Currently 5 stations up and running on Desert NWR complex and hoping to put an additional in the sheep range
* Moving forward tagging Phainopepla, Lucy’s Warbler, thrashers, and Bell’s Sparrows

### Kelly Colegrove on Motus tower locations and strategic planning

* Three tier approach to expanding Motus network
  + Individual projects focused on species or areas
  + Outreach and education (schools, tribal areas, etc.)
  + Filling in gaps in the Motus network
* Working on Motus story map to illustrate potential locations in Nevada- currently focused on wildlife refuges, wildlife management areas, important bird areas, state parks, and Nature Conservancy properties.
* Focus first on individual projects where towers are built and birds are banded

### Motus considerations

* Discussion on tag type, size, and pulse rate and receiving stations
  + Hybrid tags available
  + Be sure receiving stations are hybrid and can detect Lotek and CTT tags
* More difficult to get permits for tagging birds- must be able to demonstrate proficiency in banding as well as tagging (certification)
  + Need specific research proposal and species
  + SSRS did tagging workshop in March. Hoping to do additional up north and in S NV in fall or spring
* Must include high elevation towers to capture migrants
  + May be difficult due to accessibility
* Might be useful to have a generic write-up to include in permitting process that identifies the need for tagging for expansion of Motus network
* Renewable energy locations could be good sites for Motus towers
  + Could be part of mitigation measures
* Information on building towers and parts can be a limiting factor
  + Complicated to build towers-takes at least two days and some technological expertise
  + Possibly rely on engineers and communications experts
  + Would be helpful to have a designated Motus tower builder for the state
  + Towers should be at least 30ft tall, but depends on terrain. Much easier to build on existing infrastructure.
* Power lines don’t seem to have an impact on towers, but radio waves from urban areas can interfere
  + Buffers are available to minimize interference

## Pinyon Jay Working Group Updates 6/8

* Recent petition for listing. Decision coming out of Utah- still about 90 days out.
* Background on Pinyon Jay working group goals and contributions
  + Conservation strategy https://partnersinflight.org/resources/conservation-strategy-for-pinyon-jay/
  + Range-wide monitoring protocol and various resources available on website
    - https://partnersinflight.org/resources/pinyon-jay-working-group/
* Community science and Pinyon Jays- Pinyon Jay Hub
  + <https://pinyon-jay-community-science-gbbo.hub.arcgis.com/>
  + More informative than e-bird data and just as valuable as standardized plot surveys
  + Anyone can (and is encouraged) to participate
* Cone productivity monitoring
  + Will be expanded to citizen science but may require a different collection application (Field Maps).
  + Could be a good partnership with tribes
    - <https://itcn.org/>
    - Bi-State Tribal Natural Resources Committee: https://btnrc.monolaketribe.us/

## Shorebird and Waterbird monitoring 6/8

### Rob Vinson- Monitoring, banding, and tagging

* Drought is a large concern as effects are becoming apparent in condition and number of birds
* Looking into utilizing Motus to better understand patterns of movement and priority locations
* National framework for monitoring was released two years ago <https://iwmmprogram.org/>
* Ibis monitoring program started this year in NV, CA, OR, and ID
  + https://4932539.users.earthengine.app/view/wetnv
  + CTT transmitters used
  + Showed example of Ibis movements in Sacramento region—it did not fly from Memphis (that we know of)
* Future banding opportunities at Ruby Lake and Stillwater

LOOKING FOR IBIS ROOSTING LOCATIONS—ESPECIALLY AROUND THE LAS VEGAS WASH. EASIEST TO FIND A LITTLE BEFORE SUNDOWN WHEN BIRDS HEAD TO ROOST. CONTACT ROB. James\_vinson@fws.gov

### Jenni Jeffers on monitoring in Lahonton Valley

* Ongoing surveys with LAS volunteers
  + Began last year and will continue into spring
  + Using national framework protocol
  + Despite lack of water, recording large shorebird numbers, but concerns about fall and botulism
* Working on Carson Lake management plan and improving infrastructure
  + Would welcome suggestions from partners
* Identified a list of priority survey locations for shorebirds