

November 2014

The FLYER

Volume 27 No.3

nevadawaterfowl.org



Hunting Season

Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge

University Field Trips

2014 Hunting Conditions

Wood Duck Band Raffle

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Reno, NV
Permit No. 653

Return Service Requested

NV Waterfowl Assn
Box 18419
Reno, NV
89511

Nevada Waterfowl Association

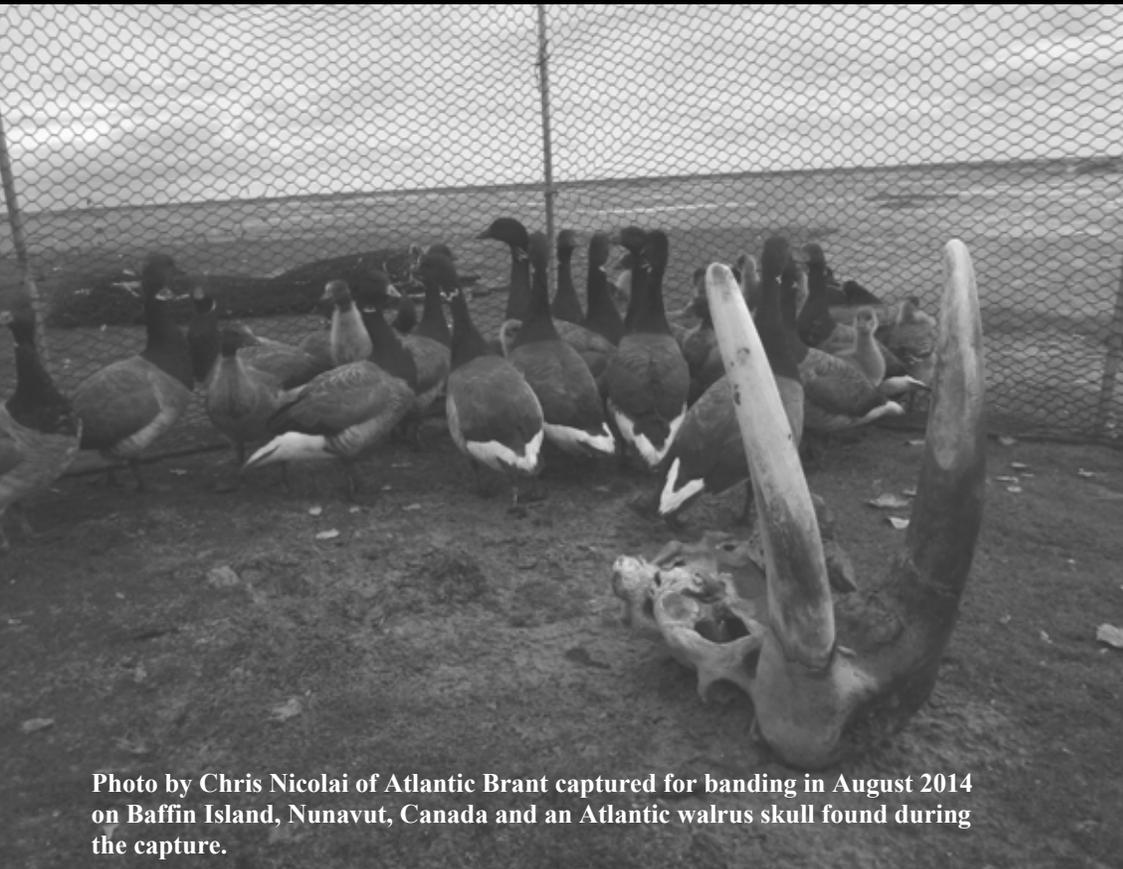


Photo by Chris Nicolai of Atlantic Brant captured for banding in August 2014 on Baffin Island, Nunavut, Canada and an Atlantic walrus skull found during the capture.

OFFICERS

President
William Molini
(775) 742-5592

Vice President
Daryl Harwell
(775) 240-5882

Treasurer
Dave Stanley
(775) 224-5928

Secretary
Travis Rowlett
(775) 842-0556

Business Manager
David Rice
(775) 853-8331

Waterfowl Biologist
Chris Nicolai, PhD
(775) 861-6333

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ron Anglin	(775)423-2494
Dan Grayson	(775)200-2133
Jim Giudici	(775)788-2000
Darren Hamrey	(775)316-0593
Gib Mackedon	(775)427-5424
Chris MacKenzie	(775)841-0915
Norm Saake	(775)867-2198
John Snow	(775)336-8067
Dave Stanley	(775)224-5918
Ken Taber	(775)741-2173
Bernard Venneman	(775)853-2097
Ed Tiltzey	(775)626-8019
Tom Wilson	(775)324-4747

The FLYER

Advertising Rates: B&W/color

Back Page (color)	\$500
Full Page	\$150/400
Half Page	\$90/200
Quarter Page	\$75/150
Eighth Page	\$40/80

Classified Rates

1-20 words	\$15
20+ words	\$25

ARTICLES

3 PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
BY WILLIAM MOLINI

4 STILLWATER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
BY NANCY HOFFMAN

6 UNIVERSITY FIELD TRIPS
BY KELLEY STEWART

8 2014 HUNTING CONDITIONS
BY NORM SAAKE

NOTES

10 WOOD DUCK BAND RAFFLE

11 THANKS RENO DINNER SPONSORS!

Cover photo by Chris Nicolai while banding arctic geese on Baffin Island, Nunavut, Canada

All art work must be electronic! Publication of advertising does not imply endorsement of products, services, or statements made concerning them. All advertising is subject to approval by the publisher. The publisher reserves the right to reject advertising.

The *FLYER*

The Flyer is the official newsletter publication of the Nevada Waterfowl Association and is published three times per year. Guest articles are welcome. Our classified section is available for advertising.

The articles and views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those shared by the NWA membership, its officers, or Board of Directors.

MISSION STATEMENT

Nevada Waterfowl Association's mission is to protect, restore, and enhance Nevada's wetlands and the wildlife dependant upon them, especially waterfowl and shorebirds. Nevada Waterfowl Association works closely with organizations such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Nevada Department of Wildlife, Lahontan Wetlands Coalition, The Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, and other conservation organizations that share our goal of preserving Nevada's unique desert wetlands for future generations to enjoy. Nevada Waterfowl Association is a family oriented conservation organization that was created in October 1987 as a 501 ©(3) tax-exempt non-profit corporation by a group of individuals who were alarmed at the rate of loss of Nevada's unique desert wetlands. Nevada Waterfowl Association intends to become a statewide organization through the formation of local chapters throughout the state. Nevada Waterfowl Association is founded upon the principle that all monies raised by the Association in Nevada, will be spent to help Nevada's own wetlands and wetland-dependant wildlife. All donations are tax deductible.

U. S. Postal Service Identification Statement

Nonprofit Organization
Publication Title: The FLYER
Statement of Frequency: 3 Times a Year
Authorized Organization's Name and Address:
Nevada Waterfowl Association
5081 Albuquerque Rd.
Reno, Nevada 89511
Subscription Price:
No Cost to Members

Congratulations to the Reno Chapter Dinner Committee for the outstanding job they did in putting on the May 17 fund raising dinner. This was our 27th annual fund raising dinner and while all committee members did yeoman work, I especially want to recognize Ed Tilzey who chaired the committee for the second year. The dinner was a great success with just under 200 people in attendance and generating just over \$28,000 for our important work of maintaining and enhancing Nevada's unique desert wetlands and the waterfowl and other wildlife resources which they support. A special thanks to all the people and local businesses who donated to the cause and enabled us to have another successful dinner. Also, my congratulations to Chris Nicolai, NWA waterfowl biologist, for hosting another successful wood duck project dinner in Fallon on March 29.

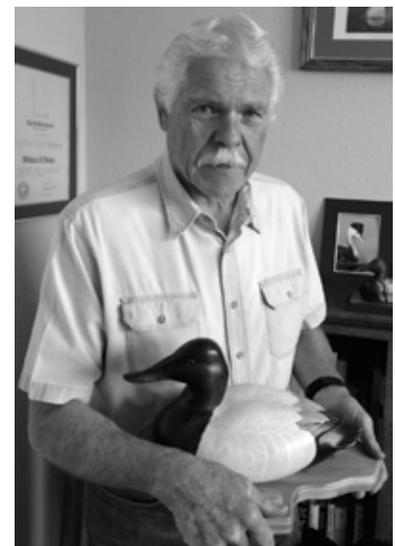
Well, this is the time of the year that we all eagerly await. As I write this, the waterfowl season opener is only a little over one month away, not to mention that football has started and the many other hunting seasons have started or are just around the corner. Unfortunately, Mother Nature has not been particularly kind to us over the last couple of years, and most of northern Nevada is beset with severe or extreme drought. The situation does not bode well for waterfowl hunting opportunity as our wetland habitats will be severely limited. Thanks to the efforts of a couple of our Board members, Norm Saake and Gib Mackedon, and with the cooperation of the Truckee Carson Irrigation District (TCID) the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Nevada Department of Wildlife, an agreement was reached with TCID to let the wetlands take their water-righted water in the late summer/early fall period. This delivery schedule should certainly enhance our fall waterfowl habitat situation. Although still not good, some improvement in habitat conditions will help fall waterfowl populations. At our August 7 meeting, the

NWA Board approved funding for Norm Saake to conduct waterfowl aerial surveys in Lahontan Valley in September and again in early October to assess waterfowl populations and habitat conditions in this drought year.

Water availability for wetlands has always been a concern of the first order for this organization. If a drier climate is going to continue to be with us in the future, then water use and management will be of ever greater importance. As such, I have established a water rights and water management committee to carefully review the full spectrum of this issue, including our water rights and how they should best be managed, as well as how we might best have appropriate input to the public agencies which have the legal authority for water management in Lahontan Valley. This committee has had one meeting and will, in the future, bring forth recommendations to the Board on this critical subject.

I wish you all a great fall and good hunting.

William A Molini, President, NWA



STILLWATER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

by Nancy Hoffman—Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge Complex Manager



National wildlife refuges form a series of stepping stones for migrating ducks, geese, and thousands of other birds. They are also home to mammals, fish, reptiles and plant species. Many national wildlife refuges were established along the four migratory bird flyways to provide crucial stopovers for birds to feed, breed, and recharge during migration.

Recharging during migration seasons has been and will continue to be challenging for birds along the Pacific Migratory Bird Flyway during our continued drought conditions in north central Nevada. Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), of the Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge Complex (NWRC), along with other important wetlands within the Lahontan Valley have been impacted by the lack of available water as seen in a reduction of overall wetland acres and thus important habitat resources for many migratory and resident wetland dependent bird species.

Reduced water supplies on refuges challenge managers to find ways to maximize benefits to wildlife but also to allow for appropriate public

uses. Stillwater NWR met the challenge of drought by working with other public and private natural resource managers and thinking outside the box with the local water irrigation district to split our limited 45% water allocations to provide habitat for wildlife and plants in the spring and fall of 2014.

On a positive note, drought conditions also provide opportunities for wetland management that otherwise may not be available when water is freely flowing from strong snowpack conditions down to the valley floor. Stillwater NWR management team took advantage of drought conditions and allowed some wetland units to continue to dry in preparation for future vegetation management, remain dry to provide needed maintenance of water delivery systems, vegetation control, and improve/develop infrastructure for public uses, and to recharge wetland units that have been allowed to dry in previous years.

The majority of hydrated wetland acres at Stillwater NWR are concentrated south of Division Road within the sanctuary area of the refuge, as

well as limited surface area acres in the South Nutgrass unit north of Division Road. With limited wetland resources available during this drought period and in an effort to reduce disturbance to migratory birds in support of our refuge purposes, Stillwater NWRC management will implement the following for the short- and long-term durations of the upcoming fall/winter waterfowl hunting season:

1. Stillwater NWR auto-tour route will be closed 30 minutes before sunset on October 10, 2014 and reopen at 7:00 am on October 20, 2014.

2. The new, still under construction, hunting blind platform at South Nutgrass will not be available for hunting.

Fall water delivery to Stillwater NWR began September 20 and will end in mid-October, depending on weather conditions and delivery infrastructure. Availability of wetland acres for hunting, north of Division Road will depend on temperature, wind, precipitation, and evaporation during and beyond the water delivery schedule. A pre-waterfowl hunt sea-

son meeting was held in Fernley, Nevada September 18, 2014 at 6:00 pm. Please check the Stillwater NWR website for details on other meeting locations.

In an effort to reduce disease risk during this drought period, we encourage and appreciate all users of Stillwater NWR and other wetland bodies to be vigilant and proactive in watching for and reporting any dead or distressed waterbirds or potential disease outbreak hotspots. Additionally, please be knowledgeable of your state hunting regulations and Stillwater NWR specific rules/regulations so we can all enjoy our public lands and conserve wildlife during these stressful drought conditions. The more eyes we have out on the ground the safer it will be for our wildlife and more enjoyable for public use. Please feel free to contact the Stillwater NWRC administrative office in Fallon at

775.423.5128.

Stillwater NWRC will continue to focus management actions on enhancing or restoring habitats that sustain a diversity of wildlife and plant populations to achieve the Refuge System and US Fish and Wildlife Service missions. Stillwater NWRC is part of a larger national network of land stewards, guided by Aldo Leopold's teachings that land is a community of life and that love and respect for the land is an extension of ethics. We seek to reflect this land ethic in our stewardship and to encourage it in others for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.



UNIVERSITY FIELD TRIPS

by Dr. Kelley Stewart—Assistant Professor, University of Nevada Reno



On September 6 at 4am, I drove off the University campus with a new group of undergraduate wildlife students headed for Fallon Nevada to capture wood ducks with the Fallon Wood Duck Project. At 6am we were gathered at several capture sites, including myself, Ben Sedinger, the PhD graduate student (who I co-supervise with Chris Nicolai) and who also is the current teaching assistant for my class, and about ½ of the students in the class (the other half are at other sites with Chris Nicolai and Walker Price). We are hiding in the O'Shaughnessey's garage peering out the small window looking for wood ducks to approach the corn bait next to the compressed air cannon that we use to capture ducks. My 10-year old son, Riley, who has been on this field trip every year since he was about 4 years old, was quietly sitting in the corner telling several of the students about everything that could possibly happen today. Apparently there is about ten minutes of what Ben described as 'duck social time', where they stand and look at the corn rather than moving toward it and the capture site. Inside the garage the energy level begins rapidly increasing

as more and more students cluster at the windows. After we fire the net (Riley got to push the button), the students race down to the capture site to help get the ducks out of the net.

For many of these undergraduate wildlife students, this is their first opportunity to handle wild animals, to begin learning about collecting data and understanding how we manage populations of wildlife. I believe that getting out in the field to learn how handle animals and collect data by doing it is the best way to teach students about wildlife ecology and wildlife management. Students in our program, who are working to achieve a degree in wildlife, are already interested in animals, but many of them have not had the opportunity to handle wild animals before this trip. Together with Chris Nicolai, we have been taking my undergraduate Wildlife Conservation and Management class on this field trip, since I started at UNR in 2007, and every year I am told by multiple students that it is the best field trip that they have been able to attend at UNR. Students get to handle wood ducks, mallards, or both species. They get to partici-



pate in marking ducks and data collection by applying bands, as well as learning how to determine sex and age of the birds. Sometimes we visit the floating traps at Stillwater refuge and they get to handle and band other species as well. Unfortunately this year because of the drought we were not planning on spending as much time at Stillwater, but we did get an excellent tour of the Canvasback Hunting Club with their biologist/manager John Carrington, who described many of the habitat improvements and manipulations of water to do so that they have made with some help from Natural Resources Conservation Service to improve and provide habitat for waterfowl and other wetland species, even in the face of extreme drought.

In previous years, when we have gone to Stillwater and visited 3-4 floating trips about 1/3 of my students out of a class between 50-60 have showed up with waders and headed out into the marshes to help collect the ducks from those traps. A few more students, who did not bring waders, have simply headed out into the marsh to help as well. Some just kick off their shoes and run right out there. They also learn how to reset and bait the traps after collecting the ducks and heading back to the shore to help apply bands, determine age and sex, and to record those data.

The Fallon wood duck project has provided such experiences for numerous undergraduate students as well as K-12 students and helped them develop an appreciation for wildlife. For undergraduate, wildlife students this project not only provides them a field experience that they will never forget, but also Chris Nicolai comes to my class to give a presentation on the Fallon Wood Duck Project to describe what we do with the data collected. Yes, it is a LOT of fun to band ducks, but the important part for both conservation and management is what we do with the data collected to help to manage these populations more effectively. I have run in to students around Reno years after they finished my class and their degree, and many of them still mention this particular field trip and how much they learned from it. Many of those students have continued on in this field, gone to graduate school, or began working as technicians for management agencies. Opportunities and experiences like those offered with this project are few and far between. This single day field trip has a tremendous effect on and benefit to students in my class, but it also inspires many of those students, especially



those in the UNR Student Chapter of the Wildlife Society, to spend a lot more time in Fallon helping on the project. Those students provide much needed help to the project, but also receive excellent training in handling animals, marking animals, and collecting data, which provides substantial experiences for them and will aid them in their future careers.



2014 HUNTING SEASON CONDITIONS

by Norm Saake



Waterfowl hunters in western Nevada, will face some of the most challenging hunting conditions that they have experienced in more than two decades. Not since the early 1990's have habitat conditions been in such poor shape. Of the six State wildlife management areas (wma) in the western Nevada, three are completely dry this fall and the remaining three have only very limited wetlands available for hunters and migrating birds.

Both the Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge and the Nevada Department of Wildlife have discontinued doing fall aerial waterfowl surveys to monitor monthly wetland conditions and to inventory and document the number of waterfowl using Nevada's wetlands. As a result of the lack of any surveys, there is no agency information available on

the size and timing of the fall waterfowl migration or on how well managed wetlands are providing for these birds. The Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge is the only agency that has committed to flying one survey this year in October to document bird use and habitat conditions on the refuge and the Franklin Lake WMA. As a result, Nevada Waterfowl Association has stepped up and agreed to fund the cost of an aircraft to fly two waterfowl population inventory flights this fall. The first will be flown on September 27th just prior to the youth hunt, the second will be conducted on October 23rd, at what has been traditionally the peak of duck numbers in western Nevada. These will be the only wildlife and wetland habitat surveys conducted on northern Nevada wetlands this year by any agency since May. The information from these two surveys will

hopefully be available on the NWA website as soon as the data can be compiled.

Currently, the Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge has the largest single water right in Lahontan Valley (25,800 Acre/feet) and more than any other wetland in the State. Since 2013, there has been a major shift in water management strategy on the refuge from all previous managers. Currently (Sept.18) there are approximately 2,200 acres flooded up in the closed area compared to only 175 acres, or less, on S. Nutgrass which is open in the public hunting area. Previously, refuge managers split water approximately equally between the refuge and open areas. In addition, S. Nutgrass, was allowed to go dry in August and all submergent food plant production was lost. In the past, a higher percent of the refuge's water rights were



There is a little water on the Little Washoe Lake portion of the Scripps WMA, but the rest of the wma and the wetlands on the south portion of Washoe Lake are essentially dry and hunting is expected to be very poor too nonexistent there. There is some water in Big Washoe, which may attract some birds, but hunting conditions here will be difficult. The Humboldt, Franklin Lake, and Alkali Lake WMA's are completely dry this year and there is no improvement expected this fall.

Only Walker Lake is expected to provide substantial habitat for migrating birds this fall and winter. For the past several years, this area has supported the largest waterfowl numbers in the entire State. As lake levels have declined, waterfowl food plant production has increased dramatically, which is why waterfowl numbers have remained high in spite of the drought. While there are large numbers of birds on the lake, it is relatively difficult to hunt and usually requires either a boat or trained retriever because of water depth close to shore. In addition, the north and south portions of the lake are either closed to hunting or restricted. The north is on the Indian reservation and requires a permit from the tribe. Additionally, that portion of the lake where around the river delta contains quick sand and can be dangerous. The

held to the last half of the summer to provide more habitats for fall and spring, and wintering migrating waterfowl and shorebirds. This year the majority of the water was used during the late spring and summer months. As a result of late summer rains, some of the best wildlife food production, in the form of moist soil plants, occurred on wetland units in the open area, which will not be flooded or available to birds. Hunting conditions for this area should be very poor this year.

fair at best this season.

There will be some huntable habitat on the Mason Valley WMA this year, because of non-river water sources. But as with almost all wetlands in western and northern Nevada, conditions will be in only fair shape. Those, who are familiar with the area, are encouraged to scout out the area before the hunting season begins to see which ponds contain water.

quick sand and can be dangerous. The

Carson Lake (Greenhead Hunting Club) began getting its water deliveries in the afternoon of September 18 and they are expected to continue for approximately 35 days in order to receive all their water this year. Strange as it may seem, because of a problem last year, there may actually be more water on this area than occurred in 2013, even though the allocation is less this year. The Big Water unit will be the only area that will be flooded up this year. While the unit is currently (mid-Sept.) 90% dry, summer rains provided enough water to grow a good crop of moist soil vegetation which is heavily used by waterfowl when flooded and could provide some fair duck use. Unfortunately, because of the drought, the area will not begin to be significantly flooded up until after the first of October, after a high percentage of migrating waterfowl will have already passed through the State by that time. Hunting is expected to be



south portion is completely closed because of the potential of live military ordinances which was fired into the lake decades ago.

In northern Nevada, the Ruby Lake NWR does have some fair to habitat this year and should provide some fair to good hunting. Although until this area has been surveyed from the air on October 27th, the actual bird numbers and habitat conditions are unknown. Because of the location, this area can freeze up fairly early in the fall and that is why this portion of the State opens before those areas to the south. As a result of the earlier opening, hunt participation has been increasing. Early season hunting on this area could be good, especially for the first few weeks of the season.

As habitat conditions have deteriorated in Nevada, waterfowl hunter numbers have plummeted. In 2013, there were only slightly more than an estimated 3,300 waterfowl hunters in Nevada as compared to almost 18,000 hunters in 1984. In the past, when wetland acres were in much better shape and because of the low numbers of wa-

terfowl hunters, Nevadans enjoyed more wetland acres per hunter and less congestion than in any other state in the nation.

Hopefully, the 2014-15 winter will be much wetter and wetlands can

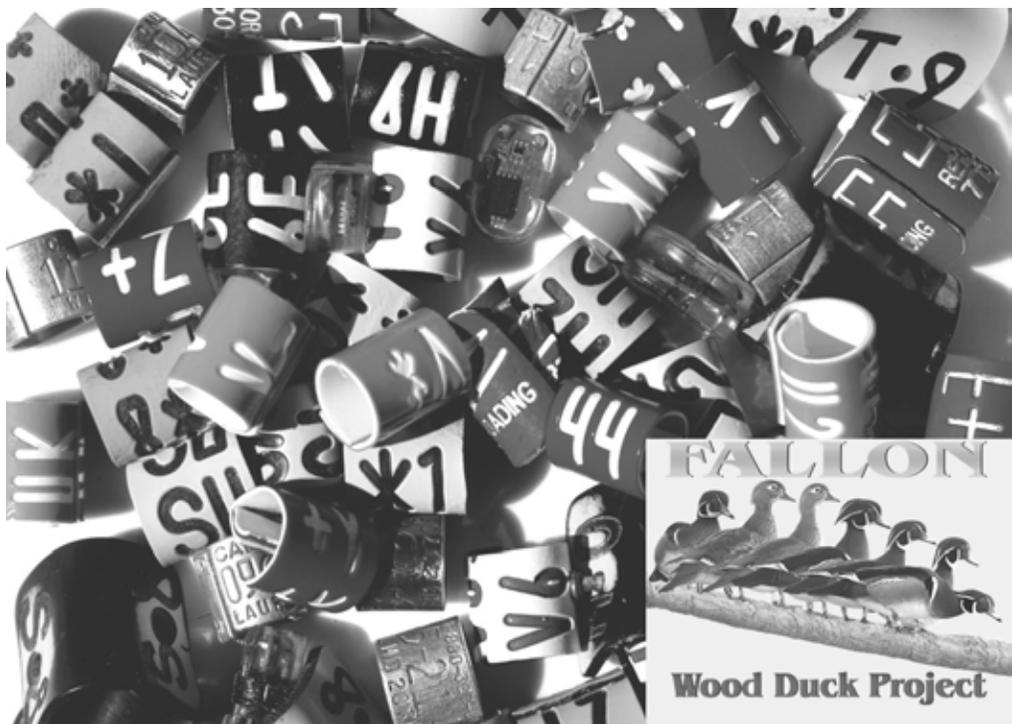
begin their recovery. These conditions have occurred in the past and wetlands have shown the ability to recover quickly once water supplies return. Until this happens, waterfowl hunters will have a difficult time.



WOOD DUCK HARVEST EXPERIMENT

by Chris Nicolai

Hunters reporting bands have been a big part of the current wood duck project. We are asking you to help with the current harvest experiment by hunting wood ducks a bit harder this season. We are holding a \$1000 raffle on March 21, 2015 at the 6th annual wood duck all-day event at the Fallon Convention center in which you enter by bringing in a band from a wood duck; each set of bands gets a ticket in the tumbler. The event also includes duck banding, kids activities, free lunch, and a presentation about the project. Bands can come from any year of the project, unless entered at the 2014 wood duck event. We are also asking for help in collecting livers and wings from wood ducks. Please contact Chris Nicolai (775)861-6333 to help with liver and wing samples or for general questions. Go to nevadawaterfowl.org or on Facebook "Fallon, NV wood duck project" for more information.



THANK YOU TO ALL THE SPONSORS OF THE RENO DINNER!

Ann Weber
 Arrow Creek Country Club
 Atlantis Hotel and Casino
 Bruce Mackay
 Cabelas
 Chad Belding
 Chad Harwell
 Chet Adams
 Chris Eikelberger
 CMS of Nevada
 Coney Island
 Daryl Harwell
 Dave and Kathi Rice
 Dave Finley
 Dave Michaut
 Doran Cushing
 Eagle Valley Golf
 Ed Tilzey
 Eve Johnson
 Fallon Wood Duck Project
 Gary Mattice
 Golden Acres
 IGT
 Jason Woosley

Jim Giudici
 Jim Laughton
 Jim Mortimore
 Joe Bobs Chicken Palace
 John and Mary Jean Snow
 Kristy Belding
 Lake Bar and Grill
 Lynda Judd
 Lyndia Heward
 Mark Fore and Strike
 Marty Howard, Mason Valley Hunt Club
 McDonald Carano Wilson LLP
 Mel Belding
 Miceys Big Mack Charters
 Mike Smith
 Muckel Anderson CPA's
 NBU
 NDOW
 Nevada Wildlife commission
 New West Distributing/Coors Light
 Pat and Patty Myers
 Paul Georgeson
 Paul Gery Norcal Waterfowl

Reno Vulcanizing
 Rick Elmore and Larry Hicks
 Rick Heaney
 Safe Shot Indoor Shooting Range
 Sandy Saltern
 Scheels
 SCI
 Scott Tilzey
 Sheila Mortimore
 Sierra Sage Golf Course
 Silver and Blue Outfitters
 Silver Bullet Gunworks
 Spanish Springs Kennels
 Sporting Adventures International
 Sportsmans Warehouse
 Swag Blue Moon
 Taggert and Taggert
 Tamarack Junction
 Tina Nappe
 Trophy Takers Taxidermy
 Walmart 2nd Street
 Wildcreek Golfcourse
 William Furs
 Woody Redner

NWA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Yes, I want to join NWA and help in the effort to save Nevada's endangered desert Wetlands and the wildlife that is dependant on them.

_____ New Member _____ Renewal

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Phone () _____ Email Address _____

PLEASE CHECK ONE

_____ Canvasback (under 16) \$5.00
 _____ Student Membership \$10.00
 _____ Regular Membership \$25.00
 _____ Sponsor Membership \$100.00
 _____ Marsh Sponsor \$500.00
 _____ Life Membership \$1,000.00

*Available in five annual payments of \$200.00

Enclosed is my check or Money Order for \$ _____
 Please charge to my VISA or Mastercard

Card# _____ Card Type _____ (Visa or MasterCard only) Expiration Date _____

Signature: _____

Please mail to: Nevada Waterfowl Association
 5081 West Albuquerque Road
 Reno, Nevada 89511



Nevada Waterfowl Association

-- Fallon Chapter presents

14th Annual Fundraiser Dinner & Auction
Saturday, November 8

FALLON CONVENTION CENTER

Doors Open 5pm – Cocktails, Games, Raffles

Gourmet Buffet Dinner - 7pm

TICKETS • \$60.00 adult * \$40 youth up to 17yrs.

100 Early Bird tickets until October 12 – chance for gun!

AVAILABLE AT FRONTIER LIQUOR OR CALL YVONNE: 775/351-4351

“Making a difference for Nevada’s Desert Wetlands”