

Plumas Audubon Society

Plumas Environmental Education Program (PEEP)

Strategic Plan 2015- 2020

INTRODUCTION

Plumas Audubon Society's (PAS) mission is "to promote understanding, appreciation, and protection of the biodiversity of the Feather River Region through education, research, and the restoration and conservation of natural ecosystems".

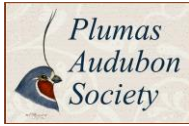
To fulfill this mission PAS engages in a variety of conservation, community outreach, and school activities. Our **conservation work** includes research and surveys of Western and Clark's Grebes, Flammulated Owls, Bank Swallows, bats, and other species; monitoring avian response to habitat management at Heart K Ranch; habitat restoration in Genesee Valley; construction and installation of burrows for Burrowing Owls and nest boxes for a variety of bird species; and citizen science organization and participation such as for the Christmas Bird Count and Backyard Bird Count. Our **community outreach** efforts have included guided bird walks, group tours, talks and presentations, and tabling at local events. Our **work with schools** has included Junior Bird Counts, which introduces classes to birding and record-keeping with a morning bird walk and data entry in e-Bird; All Bird Days in which an entire school rotates through presentations and activities about birds with volunteers from local organizations and the community; participation in one school's Science Night; and a school garden activity.

While various education and outreach efforts have been successful, Plumas Audubon has yet to implement educational programming for youth that has regularity year after year. This strategic plan will serve as a guide for consistent education efforts over the next five years.

VALUES / GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following values and principles will be used to guide the design, implementation, and evaluation of Plumas Audubon's environmental education programs:

- Enjoyable and memorable experiences are as important as content. Encouraging a sense of wonder, beauty, and fun found in nature is what can ignite and sustain a sense of stewardship.
- The content and purpose of environmental education programs are best absorbed and valued when the relevance to people's lives is made.
- It is important to encourage environmental education at all levels and ages.



- It is important to be inclusive and to work to engage with all parts of our communities. Available resources may limit the degree to which we can effectively reach out to all parts of the community, but a commitment to always striving towards more inclusion is of great consequence.
- We value our partnerships and consider collaboration, especially at the local level, to be desirable and effective at producing and enhancing project results and strengthening community.

OPPORTUNITIES and CHALLENGES

Recognizing our strengths and acknowledging challenges will help in developing the most effective programming that PAS can offer.

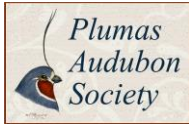
Plumas Audubon Society is a well-established organization with 26 years, community support, and passionate and enthusiastic staff, board and members behind it. PAS has good relationships with strong local and regional partners and support from the wider Audubon network. PAS excels in its research, monitoring and restoration work while encouraging and supporting citizen science contributions. PAS provides quality outreach and educational activities and is driven to do more.

Effectively engaging different communities with sometimes conflicting views or values and maintaining and financially sustaining long-term programs can be difficult with limited time, money, and personnel. However, PAS can face these challenges by leveraging its strengths and taking opportunities to develop new or stronger partnerships with local organizations, schools, events, and businesses. In doing so, PAS can effectively help fulfill the need for more environmental/nature education in the area.

VISION for PAS's ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

Plumas Audubon seeks to provide quality education programs for kids and adults that foster a deeper sense of place, promote a greater awareness and concern for environmental health, and encourage knowledgeable decision-making around conservation issues.

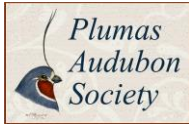
Our vision is to deliver attractive, effective, and sustainable environmental/nature education curriculum, under the broad theme of Birds and Climate Change, that is identifiable as signature Plumas Audubon Society programming.



For the next five years, Plumas Audubon Society will focus on five main education projects that will help us reach various goals leading towards our vision for environmental education. PAS will be providing adaptable, quality environmental/nature education programming under the theme of Birds and Climate Change for our service region that is locally relevant and place-based while addressing the broader concept and consequences of climate change. While we will develop and continue to provide programs for the general public, we will focus and expand our work with school-aged children and strengthen our connections with the public and charter schools.

The five main education projects are briefly described below, not in any order of priority or importance:

- 1) We will continue and expand our work with the **public schools** in our service region. We will continue to provide support and resources for the Junior Bird Count program at all the high schools in our service region. We will support and contribute to the new 5th grade Bird Year that is being piloted in 2015-2016 at Chester Elementary and is hoped to expand to all 5th grade classes in Plumas County. We will help identify ways to enhance Learning Landscapes properties for wildlife habitat and for better birding opportunities.
- 2) We will develop a relationship with **Plumas Charter School** and work with staff and teachers to identify environmental education needs and to provide and support environmental education in class or in an afterschool program.
- 3) We will partner with **4-H** to develop a number of nature activities and projects with lesson plans to provide to adult volunteers to deliver to 4-H youth. We will encourage PAS members to get active and more involved with their communities by volunteering to carry out the activity and share their love of birds and the outdoors with 4-H youth.
- 4) We will continue to provide outreach and education about Western and Clark's grebes under the **Grebe Conservation Project**. We will continue to provide area tours of the breeding grounds in our region to various groups from local organizations, we will plan and organize a Grebe Festival, and we will develop creative ways to educate the public on our research findings regarding the connection between water level management and grebe breeding success.
- 5) We will develop a **Bird-and-Climate Friendly Yard** habitat restoration program using Altacal Audubon's "Neighborhood Habitat Certification Program" and Portland Audubon's "Backyard Habitat Certification Program" as models for developing a similar, but smaller program. Participation in such a program helps the public become better land stewards right where they live.



GOALS and OBJECTIVES

The following goals and associated objectives and strategies are steps to direct Plumas Audubon Society toward our vision for a sustainable environmental education program.

Goal: Develop meaningful curriculum around the broad theme of Birds and Climate Change.

Objective: Create a packet of various activities and lesson plans that can be used for school classes, afterschool programs, or extra-curricular clubs.

Strategy: Research and review successful programs from other Audubon chapters and organizations providing nature and climate education that may work well in our area and that we might consider adapting and implementing.

Objective: Emphasize local and regional environmental concerns along with local and regional mitigation and adaptation strategies.

Strategy: Focus on fire, drought, and water conservation education in curriculum content.

Objective: Make relevant connections to people's lives and values.

Strategy: Research effective ways to communicate about and relate climate change and conservation issues to ranching, farming, hunting, and outdoor recreation traditions.

Goal: Continue and expand working with schools and classrooms to provide students with ecological knowledge and experiences, focusing on birds and climate change.

Objective: Continue to work with teachers and PUSD Learning Landscapes/ Outdoor Education Coordinator to provide information, support, and resources for Junior Bird Counts.

Strategy: Use feedback from teachers regarding their recent experience with Junior Bird Count to identify strengths and ways to improve the program.

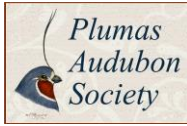
Objective: Support and become closely involved with the 5th grade Bird Year.

Strategy: Work with teachers and PUSD Learning Landscapes/ Outdoor Education Coordinator to identify where PAS can contribute to the Bird Year's curriculum.

Objective: Help expand environmental education in Plumas Charter Schools.

Strategy: Work with PCS teachers to develop curriculum (e.g. learning material for 2 or 3 week unit) and identify opportunities to bring Birds and Climate Change education into PCS classrooms.

Strategy: Work with PCS Garden Coordinator to create a Bird-and-Climate Friendly garden habitat for the school and connect use of this space with curriculum and citizen science projects such as The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's "Project FeederWatch" and National Audubon Society's "Hummingbirds at Home".



Goal: Bring community members outdoors for birding, conservation, and environmental education.

Objective: Continue offering frequent bird walks and area tours.

Objective: Recruit and train local PAS members to deliver education programs.

Strategy: Develop creative ways to communicate the invitation to members to share their passion with youth in their area.

Strategy: Provide easy and adaptable lesson plans and activities that volunteers can choose from.

Goal: Bring birding, conservation, and environmental education into communities.

Objective: Host a Grebe Festival in Chester in August 2016

Objective: Develop a Bird-and-Climate Friendly Yard habitat restoration program.

Strategy: Use Altacal Audubon's "Neighborhood Habitat Certification Program" and Portland Audubon's "Backyard Habitat Certification Program" as models for developing a similar, but smaller program.

Strategy: Provide resources/links for identifying invasive and native plants in our area.

Strategy: Identify well-trafficked and accessible locations to create/transform spaces into bird-and-climate friendly habitats and to advertise this type of conservation.

Action: Contact identified landowners and work with them to facilitate the transformation of their yards, including organizing workdays.

Action: Advertise completed projects.

Strategy: Over the long-term, consider working with Quincy's bike path landowners, Plumas County, Transition Quincy, and local businesses to remove invasive plants, plant native species, set up nest boxes and develop interpretive signs along the bike path.

Objective: Provide educational materials on our website.

Strategy: Include expanded birding guide, including tips for people new to birding or learning birds in our area; ways people can improve habitat in their own yards; and links to other resources.

Objective: Continue hosting free talks for the public.

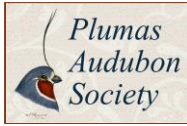
Objective: Advertise our research findings and monitoring updates to the public.

Strategy: In addition to our website, work to get PAS conservation information published in the newspaper, mentioned over the radio, and monthly posters on local bulletin boards.

Goal: Sustain effective education programs.

Objective: Identify successful activity examples.

Strategy: Inventory PAS past and current programs and assess each to determine capacities, strengths, and gaps. Focus resources on the most successful programs.



Objective: Evaluate programs on a continual basis, asking and answering “Are we making the right investments in the right places for developing and maintaining quality education programs?”

Strategy: Develop a self-assessment tool to use regularly for each program.

Objective: Strengthen existing partnerships and create appropriate new ones to maintain, improve, and expand education programs.

Strategy: Identify successful partnerships and make plans for continued relationship and mutual, complimentary support.

Action: Work with PUSD Outdoor Education Coordinator and teachers to coordinate PAS support for Bird Year in the 5th grade classrooms.

Action: Work with Plumas-Sierra 4-H Youth Development Coordinator to develop relevant and fun activity or project options for 4-H youth to explore with adult volunteers.

Objective: Seek community and financial support for programs.

Strategy: Advertise new and successful programs to the broader community.

Strategy: Engage more with PAS members by inviting them to volunteer and share their love of birds and the outdoors with 4-H youth or other groups—encouraging our members to engage more with their communities.

Strategy: Apply for new and recurring grants to develop most successful programs.

CONCLUSION

Using this strategic plan as a guide will keep our educational efforts focused as we work to deliver relevant, enjoyable, and inclusive activities and events. The focal projects and strategies outlined above attempt to play off of PAS’s strengths to meet our educational goals and develop regular educational programming that enhances people’s ecological awareness and decision-making.

As we progress towards these goals we will be furthering the mission of Plumas Audubon Society to protect the biodiversity of the Feather River Region. Through maintaining, deepening, and expanding our connection with the people that live, work, and play in this landscape we can nurture their own connection and sense of stewardship to the land and its inhabitants.