

BAYARD “BART” REA

Geologist
Board Member: Audubon Wyoming
Casper, Wyoming

CONSERVING WILDLIFE AND THRIVING ECONOMY DOVETAIL FOR THIS WYOMING PIONEER

Bayard “Bart” Rea is perhaps best known in Wyoming for his lifelong passion and contributions to wildlife conservation. His distinguished contributions include serving on the Audubon Wyoming board since its inception, and serving as former president of the Murie Audubon Society of Casper and Vice Chairman of the National Audubon Society Board of Directors. For his many years of commitment, Bart was recently honored by the Murie Audubon Society with its 2009 Conservation Award. Though he and his wife Liz are both enthusiastic birders, Bart is quick to point out that the Audubon mission is not exclusive to birds, but aims for the more encompassing goal “to conserve ecosystems for all wildlife.”



Bart is particularly concerned with the plight of the greater sage grouse in Wyoming. “Times have changed for this icon of Wyoming and the American West,” he says. “With the invasion of exotic species in the sagebrush steppe ecosystem, the pressure of drought, the upswing of West Nile virus and the loss of habitat from energy development, the greater sage grouse is faced with a number of growing challenges. Populations of this species have declined to one-half to one-third the size of those during the late 1960s.”

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He applauds the leadership of Wyoming Gov. Dave Freudenthal and cites the Governor’s Sage Grouse Core Area Plan as “a visionary approach to protecting critical habitat areas while allowing for sustainable oil and gas development.”

By day, the Casper resident is an independent consulting geologist who is called in on conservation easement transactions to ensure that the property contributed by farmers, ranchers and landowners for protection has no likelihood for surface mining in the future. Bart is one of the few geologists in Wyoming who do this work. Such mineral evaluations are mandated by the Federal IRS and his work is integral to making Wyoming conservation easements happen.

At 79, Bart remains quite active in the Casper community, and serves on the Board of the Platte River Parkway Trust, formed in 1982 to develop a trail system along the Platte River that would allow users to enjoy the river environment and facilitate exercise for health and well being. Bart and other Board members guide the Parkway Trust, bringing together diverse community entities, groups, agencies and individuals to help conserve and develop the river corridor while preserving and protecting the scenic, natural and historic value of the North Platte River environment.

"We've established and maintained great relationships between the non-profit board, the city and county government, and with the people at the Wyoming Game and Fish Department," he says. "Energy company BP has also been a generous partner donating eight acres of land initially, where we developed a beautiful park with fishing access."

The Platte River Parkway trail system is now a widely used recreation destination and event venue that includes a "whitewater park" and multi-use trails constructed along an abandoned rail corridor. In October 2009 the Parkway Trust turned the abandoned Tate Pumphouse, an historic brick structure once used as a pumping station to send water to the town of Midwest, into a restaurant and public plaza.

Among his civic commitments, Bart is also a board member for the Casper Area Community Foundation, an affiliate of the Wyoming Community Foundation, with a mission to improve the quality of life in the Casper area by connecting people who care with local causes that matter. At CACF, Bart administers the Robert and Janet Schneider Fund which supports Casper's arts community and helps to protect wildlife and habitat. In addition, he is a founding board member of the Wyoming Stock Growers Agricultural Land Trust (WYSGALT).

Bart sees the future of the Wyoming economy as closely tied with energy development. "As long as we are dependent on the consumption of natural resources, then we'll have to get used to a boom and bust economy." But no matter how Wyoming ultimately solves its energy challenges, Bart is unwavering in his belief that wildlife conservation and the preservation of open spaces must be central to the state's vision. "Above all else," he says, "the Red Desert, the Upper Green, the Powder River Basin and all of the other stunning Wyoming landscapes, are what we love as Wyomingites and why we are here."

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GEORGE HUNKER

Owner
Sweetwater Fishing Expeditions
Lander, Wyoming

FOR THE LOVE OF FISHING

To talk with George Hunker is to hear the wind rustling in the high mountains of Wyoming's Wind River Range and to see its pristine lakes shimmering in the sunlight. In so many ways, George Hunker is Wyoming.

Hunker is the owner of Sweetwater Fishing Expeditions in Lander for over 30 years, one of only a few fly fishing outfitters to take anglers into the rugged Wind River Mountains. He specializes in guided camping trips to the high country – either walking in with animal support, riding in on horseback, or backpacking trips -- and day fly fishing excursions on the smaller streams coming out of the east side of the Winds.

Among the rich diversity of jobs that power the Wyoming economy, George is part of the state's outdoor recreation industry, one of Wyoming's biggest economic engines. Over 4 million tourists visit Wyoming annually and contribute nearly \$1.9 billion to the state's economy. And among the top outdoor activities visitors



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to Wyoming participate in most often are fishing, river rafting and hunting. In particular, anglers spend approximately \$423 million each year fishing in Wyoming's pristine waters, with the sportfishing industry creating 3,500 jobs in the state.

Growing up in New Mexico, George came to fishing at an early age. "I was addicted by the time I was 10 years old," he says. "I sort of figured it out and taught myself by reading books." He made his way to Wyoming in his early 20's, became a climbing guide with NOLS, the National Outdoor Leadership

School known for teaching outdoor skills in some of the most jaw-dropping wilderness locations, and eventually worked his way up to Associate Director. He married his sweetheart and now wife Paula in 1975 and by 1977 together they started Sweetwater. In between, they spent time in New Zealand, a celebrated Mecca for fly fishing, and returned to the States to try their hand at ranching and farming.

A lifelong lover of the outdoors, George speaks reverently about the mountains in which he works.

“The Wind Rivers are a rugged, rocky mountain range, with active glaciers and steep granite walls,” he says. You’ll find the world’s largest herd of Bighorn Sheep here, and lots of moose, elk, deer, and smaller critters. The lakes we fish are from 9,000 to 12,000 feet up, carved out by the glaciers, and inhabited by all kinds of trout; mostly brook and cutthroat, but we get our share of golden, rainbow, brown, and lake trout, too.”

“We look to make the smallest environmental impact possible on our trips,” George adds. Accordingly, all of Sweetwater’s mountain trips are run with an eye to conservation and safety. Camp areas are kept small, clean and primitive, with almost no sign of “use.” Maintaining water purity is a high priority.

“Our goal is simple,” he says, “to take people to beautiful places, where trout abound, and where the simple camp life can cleanse our minds and bodies. We are primarily about two things: fly fishing solitude and golden trout.” Because the waters in the low-lying Wind River Valley have not become as famous as many other western rivers, abundant solitude can even be found on day trips.

Sweetwater’s clientele come from all over the globe to enjoy fishing in the Winds. George has guided people from as far as England, Kenya, and Norway, from the U.S. South and Midwest, and locally from Lander.

George doesn’t hesitate to acknowledge how conservation has made his world possible. “If it wasn’t for all of the conservation, sportsmen and agriculture groups working together to protect and steward Wyoming’s resources and natural spaces, I and many others wouldn’t be in business.” He notes specifically that efforts by the state’s conservation groups to improve riparian habitats greatly impacts fishing outcomes. “These days I get a full picture of conservation in Wyoming from Paula,” he says (who is now Assistant State Director of The Nature Conservancy in Wyoming).

George heartily supports the conservation efforts and goals of Wyoming Governor Dave Freudenthal. “The Governor believes that open space and our outdoor independence define who we are as Wyomingites. He was right to institute the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resources Trust in 2005. They’ve done a lot of great work in conserving our land, water and wildlife, which I can tell you helps keep the tourists and outdoor recreationists coming, among many other benefits.”

Since its inception George has intentionally kept Sweetwater Fishing Expeditions small. Now 61, he took on a “partner” five years ago to guide additional trips and recently his son Hank has been assisting and will be running his own trips soon. “I love this life,” he says. “I get to share what I would do for free, and provide an exhilarating and peaceful outdoor experience for all kinds of people. If I had my life to live over, I’d be right here.”

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HELPING NATRONA COUNTY KIDS STEP INTO THE “REAL” WORLD

In 1998, George Vlastos made a career decision to become part of a small group of educators who were starting a high school program that integrated learning through problem-solving. Today Star Lane Center, in the Natrona County School District, is a model for problem-based learning (PBL) where young adults learn by doing and getting connected to the world and the workplace.

PBL is learning that is driven by challenging, open-ended problems, with students working in small collaborative groups, and with teachers taking on a non-traditional role as “facilitators” of learning. “The nature of problem-solving is that it calls upon critical and analytical thinking skills,” says George, “more so than other avenues of learning.”



“Problem-based learning helps students to ‘get out there’ with eyes open to the political process, to key environmental issues...”

Students at Star Lane are confronted with real world, adult problems and asked to come up with solutions. According to George, “approximately one third of the problems focus on land, energy and energy use, climate change and endangered species. We involve community experts in the exercises to make the problems real and not hypothetical,” he adds.

PBL works because it replicates the commonly used approaches to resolving problems or meeting challenges that are encountered in life and career. “We created Star Lane Center to better prepare students for the workforce or the academic community or wherever they choose to end up. Problem-based learning helps students to ‘get out there’ with eyes open to the political process, to key environmental issues, to the adult world in general.”

Students attend Star Lane by choice. They participate in a traditional high school setting for half a day, and then for the other half – either morning or afternoon – attend the problem-based program at Star Lane Center. “We tend to get kids who are bored with traditional schooling,” George notes. “Otherwise the student population goes across the spectrum.” The Star Lane Center program is available to all 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th graders in Natrona County. There are

no classrooms or textbooks. Students work in small study groups of 8-12 students led by a teacher, and the school never has more than 75 students per morning or afternoon session.

Star Lane presents one Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) problem each year that focuses on conservation. This year students were asked to look at the increase in the number of prairie dogs due to urban sprawl. They concluded that, as the prairie dog population grows larger, putting in raptor poles (a pole for birds of prey to nest or sit) could be the best and most humane solution for control.

One of the most topical problems asked students to suggest an energy alternative for coal in Wyoming, a “new coal” that is renewable and produces less CO₂ and other greenhouse gases. One novel solution: update existing underground coal gasification technology, a method of extracting coal where the byproducts are carbon monoxide and hydrogen, and not CO₂.

Born and raised in Casper, George Vlastos attended Stanford University, returned to Wyoming after schooling, and is currently finishing an MFA in Poetry from the University of Wyoming's Creative Writing Department.

An avid outdoorsman, he believes that "land use is the most pressing issue in Wyoming, and in the nation. I am most intrigued by the conflicting uses of land, like when wind farms crop up on sage grouse habitat, and I wonder what will happen."

He believes that respecting the landowner and the land is an important commitment. "When I go out on the land I see more no trespassing signs than years ago," he says, "and that dismays me." Above all, George treasures that within 20 minutes from his home, he can be alone and at peace on the back of Casper Mountain. He describes his feelings in a poem written one chilly winter day somewhere between Casper and Muddy Mountains:

*"land use is the
most pressing issue
in Wyoming..."*

Sweating

While wading in snow waist-deep

& blown by a fog soft & fast

as the cloud it was

when we saw it from town, said

Let's go up in it & away

from sidewalks & rooms so known

& sojourn'd & always ours,

ours.

Panting these shreds of breath

about past bears (seen, unseen)

& choices aboard idle Dutch roads,

glass bead games & a frozen gazebo

we're wading toward (still unseen)

sharing these:

thoughts.

Stopping.

Hearts beating hard rhythms

upon a slope of laden spruce,

A silence begins, secures secrets

we know we must hide from each other,

these anxieties & distortions

Dearly pass'd off

as well.

Groaning lodge poles

sway'd by gusts above us

& this aloneness, this swelling

insignificance

can amount.

THE JINXS:

again we've ended up

making up

much of things.

JEFF STREETER

Manager: North Platte River Project
Trout Unlimited
Saratoga, Wyoming

GIVING IT BACK TO THE RIVER

Jeff Streeter is one of those fortunate people who knew what he wanted in life and got it right the first time. He's been working as a fishing guide for 36 years now, and he's been doing it on the same breathtakingly scenic river, the trout rich North Platte.

Born in Middlebury, Connecticut, Jeff came to Wyoming in 1969, spent a few years getting his B.A. in the Pacific Northwest, and promptly started his guiding career. For 27 years he worked for the famed Old Baldy Club in Saratoga, a Wyoming icon, as its Streams and Outdoor Recreation Department Manager and head guide. Retiring in 2007, Jeff now serves as the North Platte River Project Manager for Trout Unlimited's Wyoming Water Project, where he works with state and federal agencies, stakeholders (such as conservation groups), landowners and users to preserve and protect cold water fisheries in the North Platte. "Trout Unlimited is my opportunity to give back to the river that has given me so much," he says.

Jeff's long career at Old Baldy brought him great renown as one of the premier fly fishing instructors in the world, and he still guides today. During his tenure he built the outdoor department from 30 guided excursions a summer to well over 500 with clients coming from all over the U.S. and Europe. His clients over the years included two Supreme Court justices, TV personalities, law makers, and many corporate executives. "We offered rafting, birding, picnics in the mountains, whatever the client wanted" he says. "There were no set itineraries; we were careful not to define the client experience."

At TU, Jeff works collaboratively with large landowners along the Upper North Platte to protect the river's fisheries. Despite its productive reputation for trout among anglers, the North Platte River Valley remains an off-the-beaten path



"Trout Unlimited is my opportunity to give back to the river that has given me so much."

destination, whose exceptional beauty is enhanced by its remote and undiscovered nature.

“The area is still very much intact. It’s a very unique valley since it’s still dominated by large landowners,” he says. “I ask them to view the fisheries on their land as a crop. This provides them with much-needed income and discourages fractioning of land ownership,” he points out. “The landowner’s profit would come from leasing their recreation opportunities like fishing to an entity,” he adds. “That’s how they would reap annual income. Enhancing their habitat also enhances their land value.”

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Jeff notes that Saratoga is only four hours from Denver, so there are “a lot of potential sportsmen and outdoor enthusiasts who can come to the North Platte River Valley for great recreation opportunities.” Since over half of Wyoming’s 21,600 stream miles are on private land, the environmental and economic integrity of recreational activities along rivers depends a great deal on the stewardship of private landowners, especially ranchers and farmers. Jeff believes that “the potential for recreation on private land is very much understated” and that the long-term health of tourism in Wyoming will depend not only on agencies that manage recreation on public land, but on the ability and willingness of private landowners to protect the quality of recreation - fisheries and wildlife habitats - on their land.

Jeff foresees that Wyoming’s strongest economy moving forward will be a balance between tourism and recreation and energy extraction. “Trout Unlimited is not against energy development,” he says, “but we would certainly like to influence energy development in sustainable ways. Energy development will not go away, but we need to step back, slow down and make sure we don’t do something we’ll regret. We need to have some very dynamic, astute folks leading Wyoming.”

Jeff sees the disconnect of so many people from the land as the most pressing conservation issue today. “This feeling of disconnect allows us to destroy natural habitats with little thought of the long-term impact our actions have on ecosystems. Whether it is energy development, housing sprawl, carbon dioxide emissions, depletion of ground and surface waters, monoculture ag practices or logging, we should tread lighter. Profit-generated activities must be balanced with the needs of our natural environs.”

His approach to conservation challenges is to sensitize people to the consequences of the demands they place constantly on the environment. “If one person at a time can be sensitized to the incredible beauty, diversity and importance of the natural world, we have a good shot. Take a friend fishing or hunting or just for a walk; give someone this incredible gift. I believe there is an essential connection we all share with wildness; it must be rekindled. Only then will people think about conservation.”

GETTING WYOMING'S BIG PICTURE

Patrick "Pat" O'Toole is all about achieving balance for Wyoming – making sure that the need for healthy landscapes, abundant water and wildlife, and the need for continuing energy sources work together and grow in tandem. Understanding that Wyoming's three main industries -- agriculture, energy development, and tourism -- all depend on natural resource use to remain economically stable,

he strives in everything he does to "find a way of going about things to maximize resources." With a decidedly holistic approach to everything he undertakes, Pat calls himself a "philosopher farmer."

*"find a way
of going
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Pat O'Toole wears many hats. He, and his wife Sharon Salisbury O'Toole and their extended family, preside over the Ladder Livestock Company, a six-generation family ranching operation in the Little Snake River Valley on the Colorado-Wyoming border near Savery, Wyoming.

"We raise cattle, sheep and horses on over 100,000 acres, private and public, of some of the most beautiful country to be found anywhere," Pat marvels. "For an extra prize, we have one the largest elk herds located in North America living on and around our range lands."

Pat farms irrigated hay and alfalfa fields to produce winter feed for the livestock. He serves as president of the Family Farm Alliance (FFA), an organization dedicated to ensuring the availability of reliable, affordable irrigation water supplies to farmers and ranchers in 17 Western states. He served in the Wyoming House of Representatives from 1986-1992 where he was on the Select Water Committee. He was appointed by President Clinton to the Western Water Policy Review Advisory Committee, which studied Western water issues from 1995 to 1998.

Historically, agriculture plays an important part in Wyoming's economy, and is essential in Wyoming's culture and lifestyle. The cattle industry is by far the largest component of



Wyoming agricultural income, with a production value growing to \$801.8 million dollars in 2008. According to 2004 figures, production of cattle and calves accounted for over three-fourths of the state's total agriculture production. Wyoming is ranked 4th in the nation in lambs and sheep.

In a major collaborative effort, Pat helped organize Mountain States Rosen – a company that melded B. Rosen & Sons, Inc., a lamb and veal processor and distributor, and the Mountain States Lamb Cooperative, a cooperative representing sheep producers, including Ladder Livestock, in 10 Western states. “Sheep ranching as an independent was no longer viable for a number of reasons, but coming together and combining resources in this coalition has been a great success for us and other ranchers,” says Pat.

With Pat's mission to maximize resources whenever possible, Ladder Livestock has been involved in Wyoming's Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) program since March, 1993. CRM is a collaborative approach to managing natural resources involving private landowners and state agencies and other diverse stakeholders, with an aim to promote optimum private and public benefit from the land and its resources.

“Since the ranch is abundant in big game and other wildlife species, and is located in a very scenic area, one of our CRM goals is to develop income from a recreation base,” Pat explains. “We have been working with a fisheries expert to enhance five miles of Battle Creek which flow through the Home Ranch. We have found the CRM process to be very helpful in generating ideas and resolving conflicts.” Pat and Sharon's daughter Meghan lead in developing ranch recreation. They are working with a Wyoming Audubon leader to open up Ladder Ranch to bird enthusiasts. In other innovative explorations to maximize resources, Pat is looking for a way to re-use the water produced out of coal bed methane, and using livestock to reclaim oil fields.

In March of this year, Pat and his family protected 266 acres on Ladder Ranch through a conservation easement accomplished with a broad coalition of partners including The Nature Conservancy, The Green River Valley Land Trust, Trout Unlimited, and Audubon Wyoming -- the first step toward safeguarding the entire 1500+-acre Home Ranch. The easement not only protects the ranchland from future development pressures, but enhances the family's efforts to develop fishery and recreational opportunities. More than 1,500 acres are also being protected across the state line with the Colorado Cattlemen's Land Trust. “Land is disappearing at a rate that is unsustainable,” says Pat. “I believe that people want to preserve these beautiful open spaces for enjoyment now and for future generations.”

Pat O'Toole looks at everything, from the traditional to the new, with an eye to the big picture. And from his big picture window he sees balance as the key. “The Wyoming we want maintains beautiful open spaces with new energy and industrialization,” he says. Pat's mission is to be a catalyst for this balance.

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TIM BANKS

Chair of Laramie Chapter: Audubon Wyoming
Owner: Bird Brain Activities
Songbird Technician: Wyoming Natural Diversity Database
Field Tour Guide & Leader: Elderhostel
Laramie, Wyoming

LISTENING TO HIS “CALL OF THE WILD”



For many years people knew Tim Banks as a law enforcement officer with the University of Wyoming Police Department in Laramie. And although he did have a fulfilling and successful 28 year career in law enforcement, Tim’s blood (and academic background) lay in wildlife and wildlife-associated recreation, and he yearned to one day return to his “roots.”

Born in Brooklyn, New York, Tim was brought up near northern New Jersey’s picturesque Lake Owassa, about 10 miles due east of the Delaware River. “Early in life, I became fascinated with hunting and fishing,” he says, “and Wyoming was all about wildlife.” So, in 1971 he made the journey to Laramie to attend UW and pursue a wildlife-related career.

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Life often has its own direction, and for economic reasons Tim detoured into a security job at UWPD, and then became deputy sheriff for the Albany County Sheriff’s Department. But he never lost his interest in wildlife and the outdoors and eventually migrated back to UW for a master’s degree in recreation and park administration. His thesis examined “non-consumptive wildlife activities.” “The size of this group is surprisingly significant,” he says. “It’s a great diversity of people including bird watchers, outdoor photographers, and people who just keep a bird feeder in their backyard.”

During graduate school, Tim had many seasonal jobs. “My work for Wyoming Game & Fish was to travel independently all over western Wyoming,” he remembers, “to find and document the loca-

tion of Whooping Cranes. I loved it, camping and hiking through remote terrain, but the seasonal work just wasn't enough to raise a family."

Accordingly, Tim returned to law enforcement, was named Chief of the University of Wyoming Police Department in 2001, and retired five years later.

In "retirement", Tim has seized the opportunity to devote more and more time and energy to bird-related activities. "Birding has been a common thread throughout my life," he says, "and is a part of all of my outdoor experiences." He's now developed an ecotourism business called Bird Brain Activities, which provides guided birding tours in southeast Wyoming and nearby regions. He has led American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) field trips in the Snowy Range, and recently led an Elderhostel group on a one week birding tour through western Nebraska and eastern Colorado. "I was able to provide some outstanding viewing opportunities of sandhill cranes for the participants. They were so excited to see the cranes flying in over the sunset. It was a moment that reconfirmed my calling."

In addition, Tim serves on the Board of Directors of the Laramie Audubon Society, and also does bird surveys for the Wyoming Natural Diversity Database, which tracks the distribution and ecology of rare plants and animals in Wyoming.

Recently Tim has begun to help landowners explore birding activities as a way to expand their income stream, which helps Wyoming's farms and ranches to remain intact. In August, when Ladder Ranch in Savery was looking to expand activities for ranch guests, Tim was brought in to survey what kinds of birds populate the ranch and to pinpoint where they are located.

As a devoted outdoor enthusiast, Tim's overriding concern is the potential loss of wide open spaces in Wyoming. "Wyoming is what America was," he marvels. "In Wyoming you can see landscapes that were there 200 years ago. But this open space is a rapidly dwindling resource," he adds. "We could easily lose our viewscapes." Tim sees a huge overlap of interest between Wyoming landowners and the state's outdoor recreation industry and recreationists. "Both want to keep the land and wildlife healthy, so there is a large amount of compatibility between Wyoming agriculture's desire to keep quality rangeland and in the wildlife interests of conservation and sportsmen groups."

Tim believes that "we are in the crosshairs of both oil & gas and renewable energy development. It's an issue and our challenge is to make energy development compatible with open space," he emphasizes. He also notes that "as more and more rural subdivisions crop up, we lose wild and scenic viewscapes, and we interfere with wildlife migration."

"I want to play a role in preserving Wyoming's natural beauty," he concludes. "The more you show people what Wyoming is and what there is to appreciate, maybe the more they'll want to protect it. That may be my small role in the conservation effort."

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