

## **SBSC Weekly Highlights, July 31-August 6, 2006**

### **Effects of Soil-Geomorphic Properties on Grassland-Shrubland Boundaries:**

Grasslands and sagebrush shrublands are high-priority conservation targets for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and other resource managers because of their diversity, productivity, and vital importance as wildlife habitat. These ecosystems have been recognized as imperiled on a regional scale since at least the mid-1990s due to habitat losses (type conversions), land-use practices, and invasive exotic plants. During 14-22 August, USGS geologists (Earth Surface Dynamics Program) and ecologists (Southwest Biological Science Center) will be conducting field studies to determine effects of soil-geomorphic properties on spatial patterns of sagebrush shrublands and cheatgrass-invaded grasslands in the Canyon Rims Recreation Area of southeastern Utah. This research will involve excavation of trenches across abrupt grassland-shrubland boundaries, and is one component of a larger, interdisciplinary USGS effort which seeks to improve land managers' ability to predict and monitor patterns of cheatgrass establishment and spread on the Colorado Plateau. In addition to supporting information needs of BLM managers, this work is being conducted in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and will support NRCS efforts to update soil surveys and ecological site descriptions for the region. Contact: Mark Miller, [mark\\_miller@usgs.gov](mailto:mark_miller@usgs.gov), 435.644.4325, Kanab, UT.

**SBSC Scientist to Lecture on Avian Virus:** Charles van Riper III will attend the Wildlife Disease Association meeting in Storrs, Connecticut, August 5-12, 2006. Dr. van Riper will participate in the editorial board meeting and council meeting on August 6, and will then give a presentation titled "World-wide distribution and prevalence of avian pox virus." (Charles van Riper III, 520-626-7027).