



# ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

MESILLA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

<https://www.mvasaudubon.org/>

Vol. 41, No 4, Winter 2019

## 40th Anniversary Celebration

It is time to celebrate. On **Wednesday, November 13 at 6:00 PM** the Mesilla Valley Audubon Society will open the doors at **Trails West Auditorium** for a gala for all its members and spouses (even if they are not birders!). Young and old will be able to reflect on their past experiences with this chapter and how they have enjoyed America's favorite hobby of birding. Many of our own members have returned from their summer travels and will surely have stories to tell. Trails West does not serve alcohol, but guests may bring their own choice of drinks and share them with their friends. John Hays, New Mexico Audubon's Executive Director, will be the featured speaker and will surely bring us up to date with information from the state and national Audubon levels.

Diane Moore and her crew have been working diligently over the last month to make sure this is a success. Please contact her in advance to place your reservation ((575) 528-9164, [hiplibrarian8090@gmail.com](mailto:hiplibrarian8090@gmail.com)).

It will be lots of fun and an important milestone for Mesilla Valley Audubon. We hope to see you there.



Cordilleran flycatcher. Jay Wilbur, 9/18/2019.

## Christmas Bird Count LAS CRUCES CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT – DECEMBER 21<sup>ST</sup>

Our **Las Cruces Christmas Bird Count (CBC)** is not too far off! Mesilla Valley Audubon Society (MVAS) will conduct its 45<sup>th</sup> CBC on **December 21<sup>st</sup>**.

Because the Mesilla Valley provides habitat for wintering birds, such as sparrows, our CBC provides important data concerning the early winter distribution of birds. Also, our region

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## Christmas Bird Count, continued from page 1:

contains remnants of Chihuahuan desert grasslands that provide critical habitat for birds, as climate change affects bird populations in North America. Each one of us is a citizen scientist as we observe, identify, and count birds during the CBC and throughout the year. **Please contact me , Wayne Treers, at [way1mike@yahoo.com](mailto:way1mike@yahoo.com) or call me at 575-528-8696, if you are interested in birding in this year's CBC.** We have 13 teams of birders that cover the Las Cruces CBC circle. All birders (beginners to experienced) are welcome. If you are new to our CBC, I will find a team that you can bird with.

Also, our pre-CBC meeting will be Wednesday, December 18<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM at the **Creative Arts Room of Good Samaritan Village**. Our post-CBC get-together will be after the CBC Saturday evening December 21<sup>st</sup>. Details to be announced at a later date.

Thanks to everyone in advance for your participation in our CBC.

Wayne Treers coordinator and compiler for Las Cruces CBC MVAS



Virginia's Warbler at NMSU. Tom Johnson

## Other Events to Know About:

Not part of the MVAS schedule, but very much to be considered for serious birders...

**Festival of the Cranes:** At Bosque del Apache fall and winter are seasons of the cranes and attract birders from all over the world. This year, the annual Festival of the Cranes takes place November 20-23, and includes extra tours of the preserve and dramatic exhibits of photos and memorabilia for visitors.

**La Luz (December 14) and Caballo Dam (December 28) Christmas Bird Counts** are organized by John Douglas and he is the team leader for both. Data is analyzed and turned in to Audubon exactly as is done in Las Cruces. If you are interested in participating, John would like you to check with him by the first of December. They can be more challenging physically than the Las Cruces CBC. ([jiddouglas@zianet.com](mailto:jiddouglas@zianet.com), 575 541-0133)



Photo Top: Male broad tailed hummingbird by Magic Mountain Shop in Cloudcroft, by Judy Lazarus Yellon

Photo Side: Painted Redstart, Leasburg, 9/9/2019CJ Goin.



# Calendar

## November 2019

**Saturday, November 9: Bird Walk**—Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park. Meet at Visitor's Center at 8:00 AM. CJ Goin to lead.

**Saturday, November 9: Intermediate Birding Class at Wild Birds Unlimited**, 1:00-2:30 PM. Wayne Treers instructor. Sign up required. See article in newsletter or Meetings on webpage

**Wednesday, November 13: Bird Walk**—Tellbrook Park, Las Cruces. Wayne Treers will host a "Beginner's Bird walk. Meet at entrance to park at 7:45 AM.

**Wednesday, November 13: Trails West. 6:00PM: MVAS 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration.** MVAS members only. This replaces monthly meeting. See article in this edition of the newsletter.

**Saturday, November 16: Bird Walk**-- Leasburg Dam State Park. Meet at Visitor's Center at 8:00 AM. CJ Goin to lead.

**No November Field Trip: everybody is encouraged to visit the cranes at Bosque del Apache at some time during the month.**

## December 2019

**Saturday, December 14: La Luz Christmas Bird Count.** If interested, contact John Douglas before December 1 for details ([jiddouglas@zianet.com](mailto:jiddouglas@zianet.com), 575 541-0133)

**Wednesday, December 18: Bird Walk**—Tellbrook Park, Las Cruces. Wayne Treers will host a "Beginner's Bird walk. Meet at entrance to park at 7:45 AM.

**Wednesday, December 18: Monthly Meeting**—6:30 PM Meet and Greet at Creative Arts Room of Good Samaritan Village. 7:00 Preparation for Christmas Bird Count

**Saturday, December 21 Christmas Bird Count:** See newsletter article or website "Field Trips" for details.

**Saturday, December 28: Caballo Dam Christmas Bird Count.** If interested, contact John Douglas for details before December 1 ([jiddouglas@zianet.com](mailto:jiddouglas@zianet.com), 575 541-0133)

## January 2020

**Saturday, December 11: Bird Walk**—Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park. Meet at Visitor's Center at 8:00 AM.

**Wednesday, January 15: Bird Walk**—Tellbrook Park, Las Cruces. Wayne Treers will host a "Beginner's Bird walk. Meet at entrance to park at 7:45 AM.

**Wednesday, January 15: Monthly Meeting**—6:30 PM Meet and Greet at Creative Arts Room of Good Samaritan Village. 7:00: Annual Meeting. Vote for 2020 officers.

**Saturday, January 18: Field Trip.** Mark Pendleton to announce details in monthly meeting.

**Saturday, January 25: Bird Walk**-- Leasburg Dam State Park. 8:00AM at visitor's center. Guide: CJ Goin

## Birding Classes: MVAS teams up with Wild Birds Unlimited

Wayne Treers is spearheading a new set of bird identification classes in conjunction with Wild Birds unlimited. The first class, Beginning Birding, was a real success. Planning for one session on the afternoon of Saturday, October 5, he had to schedule a second session in the morning to accommodate the overflow crowd.

He started with an introduction to birding optics, field guides and eBird.org and had CJ Goin define the important differences between a birder and a birdwatcher. Wayne then reviewed commonly seen birds for the fall season in southern New Mexico, including both permanent residents and migrants. His slides were perfect for the audience, which included some long-term Las Cruces and others new to the region. They came with many interesting anecdotes and good questions. As part of the class, all students were invited to join Wayne the next day at Tellbrook Park for a morning of birding to put into practice what they had learned.

The next class will focus on "Intermediate Birding," As part of the presentation covering seasonal migrants, the class will include recording of different bird calls that help us identify them in the field. The class is scheduled for November 9 at 1:00 to 2:30 PM. People wishing to attend should sign up at Wild Birds Unlimited (2001 E. Lohman Ave., Las Cruces, NM 8800, telephone: (575) 523-5489).

There will also be classes scheduled for the spring on 2020 at Wild Birds Unlimited, with postings on MVAS Facebook and the website when details are available.

## **National Conservation Issues:**

# **National Audubon Society Releases New Study on Birds and Climate Change**

Within a month of each other, the Cornell Ornithology Laboratory and the National Audubon Society published 2 very important articles addressing the impact of climate change on the birds of North America.

The Cornell Ornithology Laboratory published a landmark article in the September 2019 issue of the journal Science reporting the loss of 3 billion (BILLION!) birds in North America since 1970. That represents approximately 30% of the entire bird population that was present in 1970. The losses cut across all classes of birds and all environments present on the continent, with the “grasslands” environment losing most of all at 53%.. The data came from electronically collected data of bird abundance reported to the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology (including EBird.org) as well as data from over 140 radar stations especially designed to track numbers of migrating birds. Both sets of data corroborated each other. This is the first study to look so broadly at bird populations. The data was devastating to the researchers and to those studying climate change and environmental science. It adds yet another huge statement about the impact human civilization is having on our planet.

The article was published in the Journal Science (Decline of the North American avifauna <https://science.sciencemag...>), and was the focus of a section on the Cornell Ornithology Laboratory website (<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/vanishing-1-in-4-birds-gone/>), and Audubon website (<https://www.audubon.org/news/north-america-has-lost-more-1-4-birds-last-50-years-new-study-says>). Each of these references also has a large section of reader comments

Less than one month after the Cornell’s study was released, Audubon Society published its landmark study: “SURVIVAL BY DEGREES: 389 Bird Species on the Brink” on October 10, 2019. Audubon initially analyzed the different ways that global warming impacts our everyday environment and broke this down into 3 persistent threats and 5 intermittent threats. Using state of the art computer modeling applications, it then applied its findings to 604 species of birds in North America to determine how the species could cope with the changes. While there were some birds with the ability to adapt to very different environments, over half of those studied will be at real risk of extinction if global warming continues unchecked. Audubon describes the individual threats (e.g. sea level rise, loss of specific habitat, etc.) and explains their impact on individual species. In a separate section it applies its findings to all the birds studied and allows the reader to pick a bird of interest to him/her and see what can be expected (e.g. crows will do fine; western bluebirds are at high risk of extinction due to loss of livable habitat). Its computer-generated predictions can be broken down to state and county levels. All these predictions are truly shocking! In the final section Audubon sets forth its conclusions about what society must do to save the birds. There is no time to lose. All levels of government need to work to reduce fossil fuel use and to minimize those activities that have led us to the brink of worldwide catastrophe. Audubon then describes what individuals can do. It is clearly appropriate that we do all we can on a personal basis to reduce our reliance on energy and fossil fuels, but it is imperative that each member of society work to make sure government scale measures be undertaken as soon as possible, before it is too late. The article is a MUST READ for any member of the Audubon Society. It can be found in the Climate Section of its web site and the entire October 2019 issue of its quarterly magazine is devoted to the topic.

We will be dealing with the data and conclusions and suggestions coming from the Cornell Study and Audubon’s “Survival by Degrees: 389 Bird Species on the Brink” for the rest of our lives!



## Local Conservation Issues:

### MVAS Bird Abundance Study on the Rio Grande



Looking South across the canal with potential work area on other side and I-10 crossing the Rio Grande in the distance. October 12, 2019.

Since November of 2018 prospects for riparian intervention by the US IWBC have been on the horizon, documented in this newsletter and in the MVAS website conservation page. Most recently, in late September, communication with USIBWC indicates the project involving wastewater from the Las Cruces water treatment center is very high priority and set to start in the fall of 2020 after river flow stops in October when water gates are closed at Elephant Butte and Caballo Dams. More detailed communication between USIBWC, City of Las Cruces and MVAS is in the works, to obtain more precise information to help us understand what to expect and when it will happen.

Prospects for MVAS taking advantage of this situation received a great boost at the last board meeting, with Beth Bardwell offering some suggestions. The proposal is that MVAS initiate a project that would study bird populations at the canal site before and after the project is completed. The findings would help all interested parties learn how effective the USIBWC efforts are in improving habitat intended to help bird populations in our area. Beth described National Audubon Western River Project Grants that might supply finances that would help a local team with education (what, exactly is different when birding and tracking abundance than when going on a routine bird walk and mailing findings to e.Bird.org?), outreach, team building and more. The whole board was excited and eager to proceed.

For the project to succeed we need to start with MVAS volunteers interested in developing a team and collecting data on bird populations at the site using an agreed upon protocol. The project will include outreach efforts to enhance participation from community members representing a diversity of age and ethnicity.

Future updates will appear in this newsletter and on the conservation page of the website. If you are interested in being part of the team, please contact me via the website or via my personal email ([sidwebb@gmail.com](mailto:sidwebb@gmail.com)) or at any MVAS gathering. It should be fun and interesting.

## Invitation from El Paso Audubon to MVAS

### Interested in Birding the Mountains of Colombia, South America?

Colombia is a land of incredible bird diversity with more than 1,900 species, many found nowhere else on earth. By some accounts, it has the most bird species of any place on earth.

The El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society will be offering a 10-day trip to Colombia from February 29 to March 9, 2020. The excursion will visit mid- and high-elevation sites in the eastern and central mountain ranges of the Andes mountains. With an expert guide, we will have the opportunity to see stunning examples of the avifauna of the region and have ample opportunities to watch and photograph them.

You can read more about this trip (itinerary, pricing, sign up, etc.) at the Holbrook Travel site below. Additionally, \$200 of your trip fee will be donated to the Mesilla Valley Audubon Society to support their conservation and education activities. A \$200 deposit will reserve your spot. Final payment is due by November 26, 2019.

<https://www.holbrooktravel.com/where-we-travel/americas/colombia/colombia-birding-elpaso-transpecos-audubon-society>

If you have any questions about this trip, please call Scott Cutler at 915-494-2193

### Tellbrook Park:

Email: 9/14/2019



“Hi all, Two days ago, saw two specials (for me...) at Telbrook Park: a GHO and three Hammond's Flycatchers. And the resident Cooper. Perhaps you could catch them Wed morning. See you all at the meeting.” Khandan



4 Days later...

Black and white warbler. Jay Wilbur, at Beginners Birdwalk at Tellbrook Park, 9/18/2019. (also, see p.1)



Swainson's Hawk at liftoff, 5/15/2019, Carol Campbell



### Volunteers urgently needed

It is that time of year. The Board of Directors is about to appoint a committee to develop the annual slate of candidates for MVAS Officers, Board Members, and supporting committee chairs. The slate should be ready by the December meeting, with a vote to be taken in January, 2020.

Please consider approaching members of the committee and volunteering your services or nominate yourself (or your friend) at the January meeting. There are many very good reasons to step up and help the Mesilla Valley Audubon Society now.

#### Officers, Board, and Committee Chairs 2019

- President: vacant
- Vice-president: vacant
- Secretary: Sid Webb (temporary)
- Treasurer: Diane Moore
- Director 2017–2019: CJ Goin
- Director 2017–2019: Mark Pendleton
- Director 2019–2020: Gill Sorg
- Director 2019–2021: Sid Webb
- Director 2019–2021: Elaine Stachera Simon
- Director 2019–2021: Aaron Lucas

- Committee chairs:
- Conservation: vacant
- Education: CJ Goin
- Field Trips: Mark Pendelton
- Programs: Vacant
- Newsletter: Sid Webb
- Website: Sid Webb
- Membership: Diane Moore
- Christmas Bird Count: Wayne Treers, Coordinator
- Facebook administrator: Elaine Stachera Simon