

# ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

Volume 22, No. 1. January/February 2000

## *The 2000 Challenge, The Audubon Cause*

by Ed Mayfield, President MVAS

One hundred years ago, forward-thinking people became concerned over the slaughter of plumed birds, whose elegant feathers were used to decorate hats. Under the leadership of George Bird Grinnell, a big game hunter and magazine editor, they banded together in bird preservation clubs, which they called the Audubon Societies, named after the artist and naturalist John James Audubon. In 1905, thirty-five of these clubs formed an alliance, which became the National Audubon Society. The Society has these goals, which you, as a member, support:

1. Conserve native plants and animals and their habitats,
2. Protect life from pollution, radiation, and toxic substances,
3. Further the wise use of land and water,
4. Seek solutions for global problems involving the interaction of population, resources, and the environment, and
5. Promote rational strategies for energy development and use, stressing conservation and renewable energy sources.

It is nice to go into the second century of our existence and the year 2000 with these things as our goals.

I think that most Audubon chapters struggle with balancing these goals, conservation work, field trips, and meetings. The Mesilla Valley Audubon Society is no different. The work and activities of the Chapter are simply a reflection of the interests of the members who choose to get involved. You know that elections are coming up in January and there are openings coming up on the board of directors. Consider giving a couple of hours a month to keep this chapter going strong. After all, we're the most active club in the state and we have one of the prime birding spots in the nation, so we should remain an active chapter.

I want to thank the members and the board for progressive leadership, exceptional progress and making the activities numerous and pleasant. We are in a prime position to continue to work and give each member what he or she joined the club for. We have challenges and goals in many different areas and we need you to come forward and share your thoughts and dreams with the organization to make our performance even better. Let's keep it going.

I also want to thank all of you for the support and direction you have provided me this past year as your president. It has been a great honor and pleasure being your president and you have made the job easy and enjoyable. It has been a year of challenges and accomplishments for the organization, along with many great and happy events. Thanks to each and every one of you. You have made my life much better.

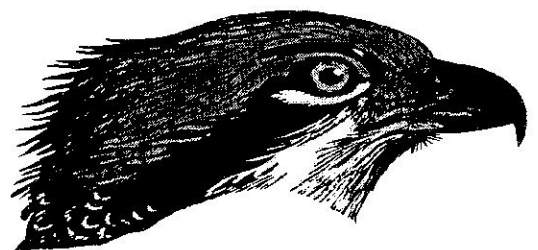
## *Wildlife Dials 9-1-1*

by Geri Tillett

A wildlife rehabilitator has to be either someone who doesn't have a life, or someone whose life IS wildlife. In my case it is wild birds—at least about five months out of the year. In some ways, I am fortunate to be able to see these gorgeous creatures close up, from all angles.

However, it usually means the bird is either injured or orphaned, and that is unfortunate. I do my best to get them to the point that they can be released again. Probably 30% of the birds I receive are cat victims and I can get very grumpy about that. I must always give a cat victim an anti-biotic since the saliva in cats usually kills the birds, whether they are bitten or not.

Since I started this about a dozen years ago, I have found help—occasionally I call on an Audubon member to help me identify a bird, and our area now has four more bird rehabilitators and one for mammals. Now, what we need is transporters—individuals who can pick up birds for us during the summer from people who have no way of delivering the birds to our homes. The number of birds I keep at any one time can be around 35 to 40 which doesn't leave time for a pick-up service. Anyone interested? Call me at 522-4966. The reward comes when the bird is released!



## Christmas Counts Document White-winged Dove Increases

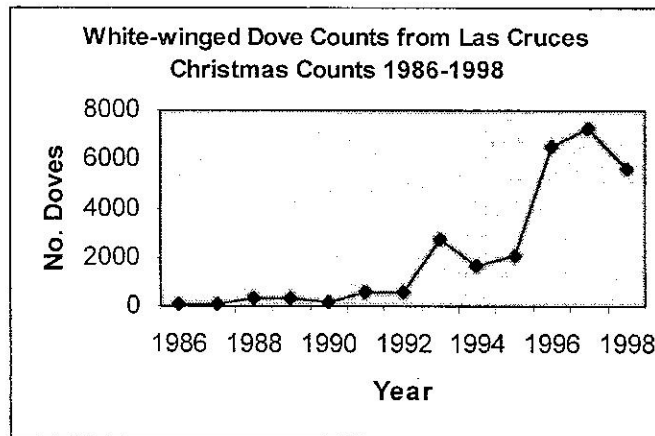
The White-winged Dove is a relatively recent arrival to the Mesilla Valley. According to Florence Merriam Bailey's *Birds of New Mexico* (published in 1928), one of the earliest records of this species breeding in the state came from Mesilla in 1912. In the 1961 book, *New Mexico Birds and Where to Find Them*, J. S. Ligon described White-Winged Doves as being rare in Las Cruces, and they were not known to winter anywhere in the state. As our own Christmas Count results clearly document, wintering dove populations have increased dramatically in recent years, and we often have the highest count anywhere in the nation (data available at

<http://birdsource.tc.cornell.edu/cbcddata>).

Though rigorous analyses of such Christmas Count results must take into

account many other variables, including weather, the number of observer hours, and changes in count-area coverage,

these data are just one example of how Christmas Count data can be used to document changes in wintering bird populations over time. Watch this space for a more complete summary of our 1999 count results, to appear in the March issue of the newsletter.



### Birding Class

Another birding class will be offered by MVAS through Doña Ana Branch Community College. Classes will be held from 7:00-8:30 PM on February 8, 15, and 22, with field trips on February 12, 19, and 26. Contact DABCC at 527-7527 for registration information.

### JOIN NOW!

I would like to join the National Audubon Society and Mesilla Valley Audubon Society for the introductory rate of \$20.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Q54  
7XCH

Membership includes the publications *Audubon* and *Roadrunner Ramblings*.

Send this application and your check (made payable to National Audubon Society) to:

Membership, MVAS  
P.O. Box 3127  
Las Cruces, NM 88003

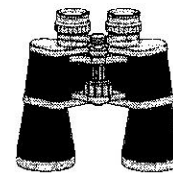
### Programs

*Programs and meetings are held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month, September-April, at the Village at Northrise, Hallmark Building, 2882 N. Roadrunner Pkwy, Las*

*Cruces. Programs begin at 7:30 PM. News, announcements, and information begin at 6:45, preceding the program.*

**January 19. Burrowing Owls.** Dr. Martha Desmond, Professor of Wildlife Sciences at NMSU, will be our January speaker. Dr. Desmond's 10 years of research on the life history of the Burrowing Owl included diet, behavior, the bird's relationship to prairie dog colonies in the Great Plains, and genetic differences across the western hemisphere. She will present various aspects of her past research, as well as plans for future grassland bird research here in the Chihuahuan Desert. Be sure to attend this fascinating lecture on one of Las Cruces' most beloved birds, the Burrowing Owl.

**February 16. New Mexico Wilderness.** Martin Heinrich will present a multi-media slide show developed by the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance. The vast Chihuahuan Desert, diverse Sky Islands and ancient badlands of New Mexico come alive on the screen as Edward Sullivan and Martin Heinrich discuss the new effort to protect Wilderness areas throughout New Mexico. The show features images by photographer Tom Till and others, and a professional soundtrack with Stewart Udall, Dave Foreman, Bill DuBuys and many others.



### Field Trips

*New Mexico's fall and winter weather is variable. Please be prepared with layered clothing, sunscreen, and plenty of water.*

**Saturday, January 22. Feather Lake and Fort Bliss Sewage Ponds.** Explore two popular birding areas near El Paso: The Feather Lake Wildlife Sanctuary (a project of the Trans-Pecos Audubon Society) and the Fort Bliss Sewage Ponds. On a similar trip last year, highlights included a Harris's Hawk, Barn Owl, and numerous wintering waterbirds. Meet Ann Heying at the parking lot of the Bank of the Rio Grande at the corner of Telshor and University at 7:00 AM. Bring a sack lunch and expect to return via New Mexico Highway 404 in the early afternoon. For more information, call Ann at 521-4215.

**Saturday, February 19. Old Refuge.** In addition to waterfowl, shorebirds, and Great Blue Herons along the Rio Grande, winter residents of this riparian area include many species of sparrows. To join this half-day trip, meet Harold Harrison (522-6199) in the northeast corner of the Pan Am Center parking lot at 7:30 AM. This excursion will likely include 1 to 1.5 miles of walking.

## Birding Hot Spots

by Tim Lawton

Many readers of the newsletter have inquired about the locations of some of the places mentioned in the Bird Notes. With this issue, we will begin to provide directions for getting to some of the birding hot spots mentioned. The inaugural location is **Percha Dam State Park**, north of Hatch, where some riparian woodland remains along the Rio Grande. This habitat attracts migrants and residents alike, making this one of the best places to watch birds along the Rio Grande in southern New Mexico.

Distances listed below are approximate.

**Directions:** Drive north on I-25 from Las Cruces to Exit 59 for Caballo Dam and Arrey. Upon exiting, turn left (south) on State Highway 85 and proceed about one mile to a left turn at the south side of an apparently abandoned baseball diamond. Proceed east on this good gravel road, which traverses cultivated fields. These fields are commonly good for sparrows and raptors, especially in winter. After about 3/4 mile the gravel road turns right and traverses creosote scrub habitat that is good for desert birds. The left side of this road varies from dry scrub and grass to a cattail

marsh. Percha Dam State Park lies across a canal about 2 miles from the turn. There is a fee station at the entrance.

**Site Description:** The central, developed area of the park is a relatively manicured, open bosque of cottonwoods with picnic tables and campsites. When not heavily occupied, this area is good for woodpeckers, flycatchers and vireos. Flanking the east side of the park along the river is a thick growth of willow and cottonwood that boasts some of the best warbler watching in the valley during migration in May, August and September. You can park anywhere along the river edge of the park and walk along this riparian area.

There are two other hot spots here. At the south end of the park near the river is a fence with a narrow gap. For about a half mile, there is a trail that follows the river and passes beside a thick cottonwood bosque. This bosque is excellent for birds in all seasons and is probably the best place to go if your time is limited. Watch the river for ducks, shorebirds and kingfishers; the bosque for passerines, hawks, owls and woodpeckers. Sparrows are abundant in the scrub and mesquite near the fence. The other spot to check is a woodland directly north of the fee station and canal. There is a wide spot to park on the east side of the road just north of the canal, and a gate into the forest. In this small woodland there are commonly flycatchers, woodpeckers, and warblers of many sorts during migration. Like birders, accipiters and falcons often seek the smaller birds here. A short walk brings you to the still water of the river north of Percha Dam, a good place for waterfowl. In spring, bring your mosquito repellent for this area.

### Bird Notes

Bird	Date	Location	Observer
Vermillion Flycatcher	Oct 24	Rio Grande at Picacho	JM, NS
Ferruginous Hawk	Oct 29	Percha Dam	LS, JS, SH, WH
Scrub Jay	Oct 29	Caballo Dam	LS, JS, SH, WH
Red-shouldered Hawk	Oct 30	Bosque del Apache	LS, JS, SH, WH
Eastern Phoebe	Oct 30	Bosque del Apache	LS, JS, SH, WH
Anna's Hummingbird	Oct 30	Las Cruces	BG
Rufous Hummingbird	Oct 30	Las Cruces	LS
Canvasback	Nov 4	Burn Lake	LS, JS, SH, WH
Western Grebe	Nov 4	Burn Lake	LS, JS, SH, WH
Ring-neck Duck	Nov 10	Burn Lake	LS, JS
Green-tailed Towhee	Nov 14	Las Cruces	NS, JM
Red-headed Woodpecker	Nov 14	Snow Road	HH
Harris Hawk	Nov 24	Hatch Bridge	TL, EM, CS
Hairy Woodpecker	Nov 24	Percha Dam	TL, EM, CS
Eastern Bluebird	Nov 24	Percha Dam	TL, EM, CS
Lesser Scaup	Nov 24	Burn Lake	LS, JS
Merlin	Nov 26	Percha Dam	JP
Black-and-white Warbler	Nov 26	Percha Dam	JP
White-throated Sparrow	Nov 26	Percha Dam	JP
Mountain Bluebird	Nov 27	Percha Dam	LS, JS
Crissal Thrasher	Nov 29	Las Cruces	NS
Ruddy Ground-Dove	Dec 3	Deming	CR
Prairie Falcon	Dec 7	River at Mesilla	LS, SH
Horned Grebe	Dec 18	Burn Lake	CBC
Gray Vireo	Dec 18	Jornada	CBC
Common Grackle	Dec 18	NMSU	CBC
Black-and-white Warbler	Dec 18	Mesilla Park	CBC

Observers: Bill Glenn, Harold Harrison, Sue Hill, Wally Hill, Tim Lawton, Ed Mayfield, Jim Mulhauser, John Parmenter, Chris Rustay, Cathy Sandell, Lorraine Schultie, John Schultie, Nena Singleton, Christmas Bird Count

Please report early, late, or unusual sightings to Tim Lawton  
505-522-2056 or [tlawton@nmsu.edu](mailto:tlawton@nmsu.edu)

New Mexico Rare Bird Hotline 505-323-9323



## Elections

At our January 19, 2000 general meeting, we will hold our yearly elections for president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and two board members. The officers' terms are for one year, and the board members' terms are for three years.

The nominating committee has developed the following slate of candidates:

President:	Ed Mayfield
Vice-President:	Guy Powers
Secretary:	Storm Sermay
Treasurer:	Mary Lou Wallace
Board Members:	Carole Shirreiff Bill Jacobsen

Attend the January meeting, and show your support for these generous volunteers.

## Audubon Council

All members are welcome to attend the next New Mexico Audubon Council Meeting, to be held at the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge on Saturday, Feb. 5<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 10:00 AM. Activities will include a bird trip to the La Joya Game Refuge to see the early morning flight of geese and cranes. Lodging is available at the refuge; the cost is \$10.00 per night if you use your own sleeping bag, and \$20.00 per night if you use their linens. Contact Ed Mayfield (at 382-0715 or [mayfield@greatwhite.com](mailto:mayfield@greatwhite.com)) for more information.

## Welcome New Members

Don & Mary Ann Bosshardt

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*Roadrunner Ramblings* is published six times a year: January, March, May, July, September, and November. Submissions are welcome. Please email copy to [nstotz@zianet.com](mailto:nstotz@zianet.com), or call for mailing information. **Next deadline: February 24.** Printed by **insta-copy printing** on 50% kenaf, 50% PCW recycled chlorine-free paper. Images, except Dale Zimmer's roadrunner, were obtained from IMSI's Master Clips/Master Photos® Collection.

Mesilla Valley Audubon Society, a chapter of the National Audubon Society, is a conservation and natural history organization in southern New Mexico that promotes appreciation and conservation of birds, other wildlife, and habitat, through environmental education, issue advocacy, and natural history advocacy.

### OFFICERS AND BOARD

President	Ed Mayfield	382-0715
Vice-president	Ann Heying	521-4215
Secretary	Sue Hill	382-9758
Treasurer	Mary Lou Wallace	522-0684
Board (97-99)	Wally Hill	382-9758
Board (97-99)	Maxine Perkins	524-1529
Board (98-00)	Susan Beck	524-6723
Board (98-00)	Jennifer Atchley	526-1320
Board (99-01)	Harold Harrison	522-6199
Board (99-01)	Charles Townley	526-8750
Past President	Bill Jacobson	382-6877

### COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Audubon Adventures	Lorraine Schulte	524-7029
Audubon Council	Jennifer Atchley	526-1320
Delegates	Ed Mayfield	382-0715
Conservation	Jennifer Atchley	526-1320
Education	Maxine Perkins	524-1529
Field Trips	Susan Beck	524-6723
Membership Records	Mary Anne Thibodeau	524-4126
Membership	Harold Harrison	522-6199
Newsletter Editor	Nancy Stotz	521-8087
Programs	Board-at-large	
Publicity	Ann Heying	521-4215

Board meetings are held, September through May, on the Thursday before the 3rd Wednesday at 5:30 PM at the Southwest Environmental Center, 1491A S. Solano Dr., Las Cruces, NM 88011. All Audubon members are welcome.

Mesilla Valley Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 3127  
Las Cruces, NM 88033

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