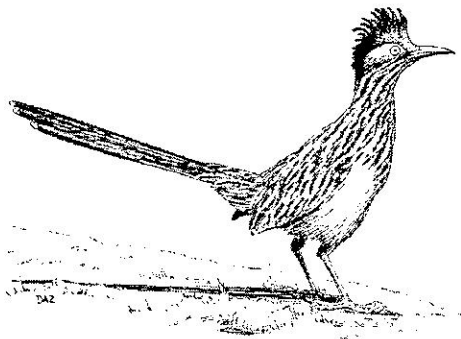


# ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS



Volume 23, No. 4. July/August 2001

## President's Message

by Bill Jacobson, MVAS President

May started off with a successful Birdathon. Thanks to all the birders and to the donors they recruited. Asking for donations is not always the most pleasant task. This event was followed by the cancellation of the annual Potluck. Actually it is only a postponement as the potluck will be rescheduled for the fall. We do not want to miss our only social event.

This year's Audubon Adventures set a record with the involvement of 91 classrooms for the 2001-02 school year. We worked with 83 classes last year. Fortunately, donations to this program are also running at a record pace. The chapter continues to be involved in a number of activities. These include developing a bird list for Leasburg State Park, maintaining a median strip on Roadrunner, providing speakers for various functions (Greyfeathers Lodge, Enchanted Gardens, etc.), developing a 'Birding Hotspots' collection (as seen in previous issues of *Roadrunner Ramblings*) which can also be distributed to visitors by local agencies like the Chamber of Commerce, responding to various conservation issues (area behind the dam, issues involving the Rio Grande, Palomas Marsh, etc.), taking part in a variety of educational programs including the offering of a birding class through DABCC, as well as providing field trips and programs and speakers throughout the year. In addition we publish a bimonthly newsletter and coordinate the Christmas Bird Count and Birdathon. The list goes on and on.

All of this is accomplished by volunteers. This includes the Board, Officers, and Committee Chairpersons. We have no paid positions. Volunteers are the heart and soul of this organization. Without them there would be no Mesilla Valley Audubon Society. We appreciate all who are or have given of their time and talents but there is always a need and a place for anyone and everyone who would like to be involved. The greater the number of people involved the stronger the chapter. Think about our many activities and hopefully you can find a way to share your abilities. Feel free to contact me or any Board member.

I look forward to seeing everyone when we resume our general meetings in September.

## Audubon Adventures Sets A Record

Lorraine Schulte, Audubon Adventures Chair

Mesilla Valley Audubon Society continues to have the largest enrollment of classes in Audubon Adventures of all the chapters in New Mexico. This accomplishment has resulted in great measure from the dedication of our members and friends, and their financial support.

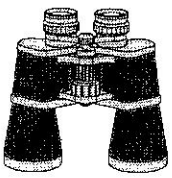
This past year 83 classrooms received this excellent study material. In Fall 2001, 91 classrooms will have this material to use throughout the school year. Subjects presented this coming school year will include "So Different, So Alike: The Diverse World of Mammals," "They Call Us Cold-Blooded," "Who Needs a Backbone?" and "The Feather Factor". Thanks to the interest and assistance of the staff at the Las Cruces Teachers' Center we will be able to get the materials to the enrolled teachers through a much more effective system.

The Audubon Adventures Steering Committee members are Joy McFarland (teacher contact person), Wally and Sue Hill, Bill Jacobson, and Lorraine Schulte (Chairman). Joy McFarland works diligently at contacting teachers and principals to determine their needs. The following members

(continued on page 4) See *Adventures*

## Calling All Bird Photographers!

The MVAS Education Committee is putting together a local bird slide show for use in our education programs and would appreciate all contributions. We have some excellent pictures to give us a start, but we are in need of additional species. We could use the following: ducks & geese, herons, shorebirds (sandpipers, plovers, etc.), birds of prey, woodpeckers, flycatchers, jays, orioles, sparrows, and warblers. There were enough previous contributions to make a nice presentation for school children. Our goal is to accumulate a complete set of local species to use for the adult, community education Bird ID Course, instead of relying on Lorraine Schulte's private collection. If you would like to make any slide donations, please contact Wendy Davis at 527-4551.



## Field Trips

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

**Burn Lake. July 21.** Birds often seen during summer months at Burn Lake include Barn and Northern Rough-winged Swallows, Ross' and Snow Geese, Double-crested and Neotropic Cormorants, Western Kingbirds, American Kestrels, and grackles. There is a chance we may see some ducks, and Gordon Ewing saw a Least Tern there in late June. There probably isn't much of a chance we will see the tern, but one never knows what will show up at this site. If things are slow we may try our luck at areas on Snow Road and along the river. We'll be meeting at Burn Lake at 7:30 AM and be back by noon. Please join us to look for the unexpected on July 21.

*Sue and Wally Hill*  
(382-8758 or [hillco@zianet.com](mailto:hillco@zianet.com))

## Programs

*Programs and meetings are held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month, September–April.*



**See you in September**

## 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 1645  
Las Cruces, NM 88004

## Field Trip Reports

**La Luz Canyon. May 12.** Good birding days at this season of the year depend on a variety of factors that include planning, timing, weather, and migration status. However, the great birding trip on May 12 boiled down to an extremely small and serendipitous group in good places at the right time.

Las Cruces' three participants picked up John Mangimeli sitting on the curb near the north end of the White Sands Mall in Alamogordo. He guided us west of Alamogordo, down a number of back roads to the Tularosa sewage lagoons. Highlights along the way were Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Blue Grosbeaks, Loggerhead Shrike, and Bewick's Wren. Show stoppers at the sewage lagoons included a stationary Least Tern, Franklin's Gull, Black-bellied Plover, Blue-winged Teal, White-faced Ibis, and a full breeding plumage Green-Tailed Towhee.

La Luz Canyon produced the typical Scrub Jays at lower altitudes and Steller's Jays higher up along with Western and Summer Tanagers; Bewick's, House, Rock, Cactus, and Canyon Wrens; and Scott's and Bullock's Orioles. Along our circuit we also saw Ash-throated and Olive-sided Flycatchers; Warbling Vireo; Bushtits; Juniper Titmouse; a possible Golden-Crowned Kinglet; Swainson's, Cooper's, and Red-Tailed Hawks; and Barn, Violet-green, Cliff, and Northern Rough-winged Swallows. Thanks to clouds and a brief shower, the canyon was neither dusty nor hot.

Our guide escorted us to the pinnacle bird-of-the-day as we left Alamogordo, headed west. The Harris Hawk's nest was tended by the female with the male sitting close by. A Ladder-backed Woodpecker, a late migrating Northern Harrier, and some White-crowned Sparrows nearby pushed our species numbers for the day to over 75. All four participants agreed that it had been a very good birding day.

*Harold Harrison*

**Gray Ranch. May 19.** Six excited birders departed from Las Cruces early Saturday morning for the Gray Ranch field trip organized by Ed Mayfield and led by Alan Craig from Portal. Unfortunately at the last moment Ed couldn't make it; however, we met Alan as planned at 8:30 at the post office in Animas. Jean Morgan, a friend of Ed's who had come all the way from Lewisville, Colorado to bird the Gray Ranch joined the group at Animas. Thus there were 8 of us who departed southward for the New Mexico boot-heel and Gray Ranch, a 500 square mile preserve and working ranch, among one of the "last pristine Southwest ecosystems."

Just as we left Animas there was a terrific rainstorm with thunder and lightning which fortunately passed through very quickly, leaving the wonderful, fresh, clean scent of the high desert. The sun shone brilliantly, the puddles dried up and the day sparkled. We couldn't have had a prettier or more perfect day.

Alan led us to the beautiful Double Adobes Creek camp site where we stopped, parked, and birded the road and creek. We spent about three hours here and identified most of the 55 bird species we saw that day, including Western Tanager, Gila Woodpecker, Hooded Oriole, both Blue and Black-headed Grosbeaks, Northern Cardinal, Common Yellowthroat, and Vermilion Flycatcher.

The day, however was not over. We drove to the southwest corner of the ranch where natural grasslands exists—a remnant of short-grass steppe. Here we stood on a natural dike, imagining the lakes of millions of years ago.

It was truly a privilege to visit one of the last great places in New Mexico!

*Jeanne Burkhardt*



## Welcome New Members

Ray and Sylvia Bowers

# Birding Hot Spots: Keystone Heritage Park & Crossroads Pond

By Harold Harrison

Keystone Heritage Park and Crossroads Pond are two of the most accessible birding spots in the area. They are located within a mile of each other on the west side of El Paso. Both locations seem to benefit from a close-to-the-surface water table which in turn attracts birds. The shallow water at Keystone provides

stopping places for shorebirds such as Black-necked Stilts, American Avocets, Yellowlegs, and other sandpipers. Egrets and herons are common along with Ring-billed Gulls, American Coots, and a variety of ducks (Mexican, Mallard, Ruddy, Northern Shoveler, Pintail, and Bufflehead). Fall and spring migrations

can bring large flocks of Yellow-headed Blackbirds and White-faced Ibis.

Keystone is a gem in its early stages of development, but patient observation can bring many birding treasures. To reach Keystone, exit I-10 west on Sunland Park Drive. Proceed west on Sunland to Doniphan Drive (about 2+ mile); turn right (north) on Doniphan until Frontera intersects Doniphan—which is just past the commercial area on the right. At a break in the curb just past Frontera, turn right on dirt “road” and head basically north across the dirt between Doniphan and the retention dam. It is about 500 yards to the low-lying water which offers exceptional birding (especially in the late fall and late spring).

Crossroads Pond is a “duck” place. It is located at the southwest corner of Doniphan and Mesa, just over the railroad tracks and behind a chain link fence. From I-10, go west on Mesa, crossing Doniphan and the railroad tracks. Turn left (south) immediately after crossing the tracks and drive along the dirt track on the east side of the chain link fence. There are a number of domestic ducks there, but winter and spring viewing can also bring a variety of wild duck species including grebes, Wood Duck, Blue-wing and Cinnamon Teal, Pintail, Shoveler, Ruddy Duck, Gadwall, and Wigeon.

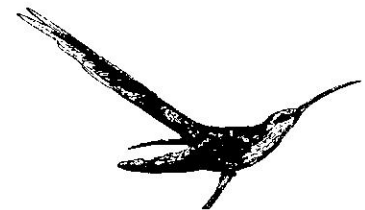
## Bird Notes

Species	Date	Location	Observers
Least Tern	4-21	Burn Lake	MS, JZ
Cave Swallow	4-21	Canutillo, TX	MS, JZ
Whimbrel	4-21	Ft. Bliss Ponds, TX	MS, JZ
Willet	4-21	Ft. Bliss Ponds, TX	MS, JZ
Solitary Sandpiper	4-21	Ft. Bliss Ponds, TX	MS, JZ
Semipalmated Sandpiper	4-21	Ft. Bliss Ponds, TX	MS, JZ
Baird's Sandpiper	4-21	Ft. Bliss Ponds, TX	MS, JZ
Blue Jay	4-22	Fairacres	LH
Mourning Warbler	4-22	Ft. Bliss Sewage Ponds	BZ
Canada Warbler	4-22	El Paso, TX	BZ
Am. Golden Plover	4-23	Rio Bosque Park	MS, JZ
Osprey	4-24	Las Cruces	TS
Glossy Ibis	4-28	La Union	JZ
Blackpoll Warbler	5-1	Crossroads Pond	MS, JZ
Northern Parula	5-1	Crossroads Pond	MS, JZ
Nashville Warbler	5-1	Crossroads Pond	MS, JZ
Red-eyed Vireo	5-1	Crossroads Pond	MS, JZ
Hepatic Tanager	5-2	Palomas Creek	FL
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	5-5	Las Cruces	BE, ME
Elegant Tern	5-7	Burn Lake	LS, TS, GE, et al.
Blue-winged Warbler	5-8	Mesilla	BS, KS
Spotted Owl	5-9	Rock Hound State Park	EM, GP
Forster's Tern	5-15	Old Refuge	KS
Fulvous Whistling Duck	5-28	Rio Bosque Park	JS, BG, HH, KS, LS, TS, et al.
White-rumped Sandpiper	5-31	Ft. Bliss Sewage Ponds	MS, JZ
American Redstart	5-31	Ft. Bliss Sewage Ponds	MS, JZ
Willow Flycatcher	5-31	Ft. Bliss Sewage Ponds	MS, JZ
Painted Bunting	6-5	La Mesa	LS, TS, et al.
Acorn Woodpecker	6-6	Las Cruces	GN
White-tailed Kite	6-11	El Paso	MS, JZ
Mississippi Kite	6-19	Mesilla	GE
Least Tern	6-20	Burn Lake	GE

Observers: Bruce Ernst, Moira Ernst, Gordon Ewing, Bill Glenn, Harold Harrison, Lee Hubbard, Frankie Lerner, Ed Mayfield, George Nevaoll, Guy Powers, Lorraine Schulte, Bill Seager, Keith Seager, Marcy Scott, Tara Shelton, John Sproul, Ken Stinnet, Jimmy Zabriskie, Barry Zimmer

Please report early, late, or unusual sightings to Sue Hill  
505-382-9758 or hillco@zianet.com

New Mexico Rare Bird Hotline 505-323-9323



## Grey Feathers Lodge Celebrates Hummers

From Memorial Day through Labor Day, Grey Feathers Lodge, located north of Silver City in the Gila National Forest, will be having their annual Hummingbird Festival. During the summer months, thousands of hummingbirds can be seen at the lodge, where 9 different hummer species have been recorded. For the festival, the lodge will be having a number of speakers, including the following:

(continued on page 4) See **Hummers**

**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 experiences.

**OFFICERS AND BOARD**

President	Bill Jacobson	382-6877
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Newsletter Editor	Nancy Stotz	521-8087
Programs	Nancy Stotz	521-8087
Publicity	Charles Townley	526-8705

Board meetings are held, September through May, on the Thursday before the 3rd Wednesday at 5:30 PM at the Southwest Environmental Center (1494 S. Solano). All Audubon members are welcome.

Visit our website at [www.cybermesa.com/~mvas/](http://www.cybermesa.com/~mvas/).

*(continued from page 1)* **Adventures**

also assist her with making contacts: Sue Hill, Donna Woods, Wendy Davis and Eileen Roberts.

MVAS gratefully acknowledges this years' contributors: Peter Pasche, Connie Lyons, Tom & Eleanor Wootten, Shirley Minge, T & J Teague, Mary R. Williams, Bill and Donna Jacobson, Tom and Shirley Whalen, Mary Lou Wallace, Ruth Wiser, Diane Nelson, Storm Sermay, Nancy Stotz, Ann Heying, Tim & Diana Lawton, Anne Anderson, Patsy Tracey, Wallace & Sue Hill, Helga & Abe Mendoza, Tom and Barbara Dolezal, Barbara Lee Myers, Lorraine Schulte, Mr. & Mrs. Charles Osgood, Janice & John Kudtka, Donna & Edward Woods, Leslye & John Ramirez, Rebecca & Edward McNair, Dr. & Mrs. William Klein, Linda & Walt Whitford, Darrell Mott, Helen M. Barbara, Elsie Pippingos, Robert & Wendy Davis, Robert (Tito) Meyers, Mary Ann Thibodeau, S & A Enterprises, Hi Hopes Garden Club, Desert Daubers' Garden Club, Enchanted Gardens, Community First Bank, and Citizen's Bank.

*(continued from page 3)* **Hummers**

July 7 & 8, 2:30 PM, Lorraine Schulte, Hummingbirds of New Mexico  
 July 14 and 15, 1:00 PM, Dr. William Calder, The Amazing Hummingbird  
 July 21 and 22, 8 AM to 1 PM, Joan Day-Martin, Banding  
 Hummingbirds and Slide Presentation  
 August 11 and 12, 8 AM to 1 PM, Joan Day-Martin, Banding  
 Hummingbirds and Slide Presentation  
 August 25 and 26, 2:30 PM, Jack Milchanowski, Nature and Bird  
 Photography.

There are fees for these special events; for information on fees and lodge reservations, contact the lodge at 505-536-3206 or visit their website at <http://greyfeathers.com>.

*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: 24 August.** Printed by **insta-copy printing** on 50% kenaf, 50% PCW recycled chlorine-free paper. Images, except Dale Zimmerman's roadrunner, were obtained from IMSI's Master Clips/Master Photos® Collection.

**Mesilla Valley Audubon Society**  
**P.O. Box 1645**  
**Las Cruces, NM 88004**

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