

ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

Volume 24, No. 5. September-November 2002

President's Message

by Walt Whitford

I hope that each of you has had a relaxing and enjoyable summer. Our summer included a trip to visit our son's family in Alaska, which included a birding trip to island rookeries near Homer with our grandchildren. I am now recovering from meetings of the Ecological Society of America that were in Tucson last week. That meeting had more than 3500 registered delegates and numerous presentation and symposia on conservation research and conservation issues of importance both locally and globally. At sessions that dealt with riparian restoration issues and avian diversity, I felt a sense of pride in what our local Audubon Chapter has accomplished in this arena on our small budget. Attending those meetings convinced me more than ever that the Mesilla Valley Audubon Society is doing a great deal to increase knowledge, appreciation and respect for our precious natural resources. I am excited about the prospects for MVAS to do even more during the next year.

In order for MVAS to meet or exceed our expectations, we need active participation of more of our membership. We have some exciting programs lined up for the fall meetings that will entertain and educate. If you come to our fall meetings you will venture into the fascinating world of Copper Canyon in Mexico, the unique animals that inhabit the Channel Islands off the coast near Ventura, California and possibly learn more about the interesting New Mexico fish fauna that is threatened or endangered by the management of watersheds and the streams and rivers. I also encourage you to participate in the field trips. The MVAS field trips frequently take participants into areas that are little known to the general public or are off-limits to the general public. These are opportunities for the members to become better informed. At our general meetings, I hope that you will provide suggestions to the officers and board members about our educational and conservation efforts. If you are interested in or passionate about some issue, please inform us. Our effectiveness is reflected in the numbers of active members. If you will join in our activities, I can assure you an enjoyable experience with a most congenial and supportive group of people.

Newsletter News

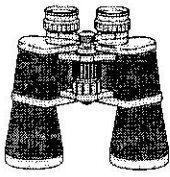
Don't worry when a November-December *Roadrunner Ramblings* isn't delivered to your mailbox in late October. Instead of a sixth issue of our local newsletter this year, keep your eyes peeled for a new publication, a statewide Audubon newsletter, which will be coming out in late November. The statewide newsletter, which is only going to be published once a year, will include all of our own upcoming programs, field trips, and special events, as well as similar information from all the other Audubon chapters in the state. Its publication is timed to coincide with Christmas Bird Count announcements, so that birders statewide will have the full menu of counts in front of them as they schedule their holiday birding. *Roadrunner Ramblings* will be back in 2003, with a modified publication schedule that will allow us to easily substitute the annual statewide newsletter for one of our local issues.

Calling All Beginning Birders!

The Bird Identification Course for adults offered by DABCC Community Education and the Mesilla Valley Audubon Society will be given again this fall. The course listing was somehow omitted from the current Community Education registration booklet.

The classroom portion will be held on Tuesday evenings, October 22, October 29, and November 5, from 7-9 PM, in Room 105 (Main Conference Room) of the new USDA Jornada Experimental Range Building on Knox Street on the NMSU campus. There will also be 2 half-day Saturday field trips on October 26 and November 2, plus an all day trip to the Bosque del Apache on November 9. With the help of experienced MVAS birders, students will get a good introduction to many local bird species and receive general information about bird watching. Students should bring their binoculars, if they have them, to the first class. The cost for the entire course is \$40. To register, call the DABCC Office of Community Education at 527-7527, and ask for the Bird ID Course, #HL 108.

Please help spread the word that our Bird ID Course is alive and well!!



Field Trips

Field trips are free and open to the general public. Entry fees to some areas may be required and driving costs are shared. On all field trips wear appropriate clothing and bring water and binoculars.

Holloman Lake and Lagoon G.

September 7. This trip, announced in the last newsletter, has had to have a slight shift in its itinerary. Due to changes in water delivery, the constructed wetlands at Holloman are dry, and we will instead concentrate our birding around Holloman Lake and Lagoon G. We should still have the opportunity to see large numbers of shorebirds, which will be nearing the peak of their migration. Meet at the information kiosk in the Holloman Lake parking area (turn north off of Highway 70, 3.8 miles east of the White Sands National Monument entrance) at 7:30 AM. To carpool from Las Cruces, be at the K-Mart on Highway 70 by 6:30. The trip will probably involve moderate walking and should be over by mid-afternoon. For more information, contact Hildy Reiser Natural Resources Manager for Holloman Air Force Base, (505-572-3931 or hildy.reiser@holloman.af.mil).

Chiricahua Mountains. September 21.

It is time to go back to the Chiricahuas in southeastern Arizona and "Track the Trojans." If you missed the previous trips this is the time to go to one of the best birding areas in the country. In the Spring we had an Elegant Trogan perch in a tree over our campground. This trip he has promised to stop and have dinner with us—just kidding. The area is open and has had good rain which has brought many birds out for insects. I was in the area the other day and there are a lot of birds. This trip will begin at the Sunny Flats Campground at 7:00AM (Arizona time) and we will bird that day in the area and in the village of Portal. For more information please call Ed Mayfield at 382-0715 or e-mail me at mayfield@zianet.com.

San Andres Mountains. October 5.

Since its establishment in 1941, the 57,215-acre San Andres National Wildlife Refuge was managed to sustain healthy populations of desert bighorn sheep. More recently, this focus was expanded to preserve the unique Chihuahuan Desert ecosystem for variety of species including mule deer, mountain lions, and golden eagles. Thirty-eight species of mammals and 142 species of birds have been documented on the refuge. During our daylong trip, we will pass through the USDA-ARS, Jornada Experimental Range where we will travel from playa lakes to upper-bajada communities. Once on the refuge we will travel through upper elevation grassland, shrubland, and piñon-juniper habitat types. During the trip, we will be able to see the restoration of native desert grasslands through the suppression of Chihuahuan Desert shrub species by use of prescribed fire.

The tour will be lead by refuge manager Kevin Cobble and Jornada Experimental Range biologist Ed Fredrickson. Other experts on Chihuahuan Desert ecosystems and local geography will be on hand to provide tour participants with information on this unique landscape.

Plan on an all day trip, and be certain to bring your lunch and plenty of water. Also, bring you hiking boots, hat, and sunscreen in case we take a short hike. The weather can change rapidly so be prepared for sudden changes in weather. Four-wheel drive vehicles are required. The San Andres Refuge and Jornada Experimental

Range will provide several vehicles; those with four-wheel drive vehicles are encouraged to bring theirs as well. Those participating in the tour should meet at 7:00 AM in the lot north of Shorty's Shell Station located at the junction of Highway 70 and Jornada Road. We will be departing at 7:30 AM. For more information call Ed Fredrickson at 646-4842.

Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge.

October 19. More than 30 species of waterfowl have been recorded at this refuge, located northeast of Roswell, where many lesser sandhill cranes winter. The refuge is also host to an endangered fish species, the Pecos Gambusia. The field trip will be starting from the refuge headquarters at 7 AM. To reach the headquarters, head north out of Roswell on Highway 285, to Pine Lodge Road; turn east and continue 9 miles on Pine Lodge Road to the headquarters. Contact Guy Powers (heyguy37@juno.com or 373-3843) for more information.

Leasburg State Park. November 9.

You never know what good birds might show up in the riparian habitats along the Rio Grande at Leasburg Dam State Park, where MVAS birders have recorded over 120 species in the last couple of years. We'll look for seasonal waterfowl, shorebirds, and raptors, and see how many of the resident quail, Pyrrhuloxia, and other desert dwellers we can scare up where the river valley meets the desert edge. Time permitting, we'll hit some other North Valley hotspots like Swan Pond and the river levee across from the Robledos Mountains. Meet at the K-Mart on Highway 70 at 7:00 AM, and plan on being out until early afternoon. On this trip, we'll do only minimal walking. Contact Nancy Stotz (521-8087 or nstotz@zianet.com) for more details.

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

Mark The Date!

Bird ID Course Alumni Field Trip

Saturday, December 7,
to the Bosque del Apache

More details later.

Bird Notes



Programs

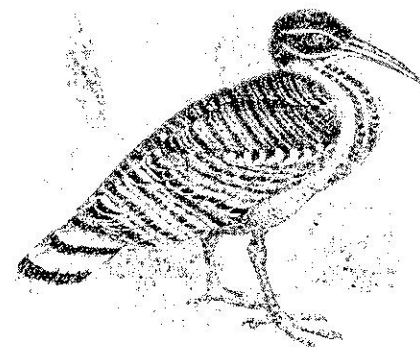
Programs and meetings are held each month, September-April, at the Village at Northrise, Hallmark Building, 2882 N. Roadrunner Pkway, Las Cruces. Programs begin at

7:30 PM. News, announcements, and information begin at 7:00, preceding the program.

September 18. Conservation of the Channel Island Foxes. Dr. Gary Roemer, an assistant professor of Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences at NMSU, did his PhD research on the imperiled Island Red Fox of the Channel Islands and their relationship to Golden Eagles. The Channel Islands are a chain of islands off the California Coast stretching from Ventura in the north to Long Beach in the south. The islands contain spectacular and unique ecosystems where introduced species and human interventions have impacted the conservation landscape in complex ways.

October 16. The Birds and Birding Opportunities in Copper Canyon, Sierra Madre Mts. of Mexico. Dr. Martha Desmond, also from the NMSU Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences, has traveled extensively in the state of Chihuahua, and in this program she'll give us some tips on good places to stay and where to bird in the vicinity of Creel and Copper Canyon. Even if you aren't planning a trip to Creel, plan on attending this program just to enjoy Martha's beautiful photos of exotic trogons, hummingbirds, Slate-throated Redstarts and the like.

November 20. Speaker TBA. We were unable to confirm a speaker for this meeting before press time. Please visit our website (www.cybermesa.com/~mvas) or call a board member in November to find out what the program will be.



Species	Date	Location	Observers
Lark Sparrow	6-13	Bosque del Apache (BDA)	CH, SH, WH
Eurasian Collared-Dove	6-26	Alamogordo	PW
Painted Bunting	6-28	Doña Ana	VH
Varied Bunting	7-4	El Paso	JP
Rufous Hummingbird	7-5	Radium Springs	MS, JZ
Least Bittern	7-6; 8-15	Bosque del Apache	JG, LS; TS
Wood Duck	7-6	Bosque del Apache	JG, LS
Gray Catbird	7-7; 7-28	El Paso; BDA	JP; SH, WH
Long-billed Dowitcher	7-13	Bosque del Apache	SH, WH
Calliope Hummingbird	7-15	Las Cruces	SH, WH
Cassin's Sparrow	7-20	Mesilla	Field Trip Group
Probable Allen's Hummer	7-23	El Paso	BZ
Orange-crowned Warbler	7-29	Radium Springs	MS, JZ
Bell's Vireo	7-31	Leasburg	TL, LS
Virginia Rail	8-3	Bosque del Apache	SH, WH
Solitary Sandpiper	8-3; 8-23	BDA; Las Cruces Dam	SH, WH; NS
Least Bittern	8-4	Radium Springs	MS, JZ
Indigo Bunting	8-4	Aguirre Springs	NS
Hepatic Tanager	8-4	Aguirre Springs	NS
Vermilion Flycatcher	8-7	Radium Springs	MS, JZ
Gray Catbird	8-7	Radium Springs	MS, JZ
Lark Bunting	8-8	Las Cruces	SH, WH
Lazuli & Indigo Bunting	8-10	Percha	GE
Vermilion Flycatcher	8-10	Percha	GE
Ring-billed Gull	8-11; 8-15	Radium Springs; BDA	MS, JZ; TS
Cassin's Kingbird	8-11	Radium Springs	MS, JZ
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	8-12; 8-16	Percha; Old Refuge	LS, SH, WH; TL, BS
Warbling Vireo	8-12; 8-16	Percha; Old Refuge	LS, SH, WH; TL, BS
Dusky Flycatcher	8-12; 8-15	Caballo; La Mesa	LS, SH, WH; SH, WH
Orchard Oriole	8-12	Percha	SH
Lazuli & Painted Bunting	8-12	Percha	LS, SH, WH
Sandhill Crane	8-12	Las Cruces	BR
Hooded Warbler	8-14	Old Refuge	BS
Black & Forster's Tern	8-15	Bosque del Apache	TS
Long-billed Curlew	8-15	Bosque del Apache	TS
Wilson's Phalarope	8-15	Bosque del Apache	TS
Yellow Warbler	8-15	Bosque del Apache	TS
Tree Swallow	8-15	La Mesa	SH, WH
Vesper Sparrow	8-15	La Mesa	SH, WH
Clay-colored Sparrow	8-15	La Mesa	SH, WH
Willow Flycatcher	8-16	Old Refuge	TL, BS
Olive-sided Flycatcher	8-16	Old Refuge	TL, BS
Bank Swallow	8-16	Old Refuge	TL, BS
Townsend's Warbler	8-16	Old Refuge	TL, BS
Yellow & Virginia's Warbler	8-16	Old Refuge	TL, BS
Tennessee Warbler	8-16	Old Refuge	TL, BS
Philadelphia Vireo	8-16	Old Refuge	TL, BS
Cedar Waxwing	8-17	Radium Springs	MS, JZ
Lazuli Bunting	8-17	Radium Springs	MS, JZ
Northern Waterthrush	8-25	Las Cruces Dam	NS, JA, AM

Observers: Jennifer Atchley, Gordon Ewing, Jill Green, Vince Hernandez, Collin Hill, Sue Hill, Wally Hill, Tim Lawton, Angel Montoya, Jim Paton, Barb Rodriguez, Lorraine Schulte, Marcy Scott, Bill Seager, Tara Shelton, Nancy Stotz, Pat Ward, Barry Zimmer, Jimmy Zabriskie

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

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.

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Membership	Harold Harrison ✓	522-6199 X
Newsletter Editor	Nancy Stotz ✓	521-8087 X
Publicity	vacant	

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

Visit our website at www.cybermesa.com/~mvas/.

Field Trip Reports

Burn Lake. July 20. Birding at Burn Lake was not possible due to the City's 2nd annual biathlon being held at this location. So five of us took advantage of the cool, overcast morning and visited a family of burrowing owls located near the intersection of Hadley and 17th Street. We also saw a Curve-billed Thrasher enjoying a breakfast of worms and stealing bread from nearby House Sparrows. A stop along Snow Road showed us a Black-headed Grosbeak, Red-winged Blackbirds, Killdeer, a Green Heron, Gambel's Quail and Mockingbirds. Along Calle del Norte and the river levee, we saw Cattle Egrets, Swainson's Hawks, Western Kingbirds, Western Meadowlarks, male and female Blue Grosbeak and some great listeners alerted us to Cassin's Sparrows, a new bird for me. The trip ended mid-morning due to the heat and humidity of a July day.

Barb Rodriguez

Percha Creek Headwaters. August 17. Our birding group consisted of 6 Las Cruces and Beverly from T. or C. Our first stop was at the bridge over Percha Creek west of Hillsboro where we saw a Blue Grosbeak and heard several Canyon Wrens. At the turnoff on the Forest Service road were several Barn and Violet-green Swallows and small flocks of Chipping and Lark Sparrows in the juniper grassland. Although Percha Creek was flowing, the volume was very low. Birds in the canyon included Hairy and Acorn Woodpeckers, Cordilleran and Dusky Flycatchers, Stellers and Scrub Jays, wood peewees, Townsend's Solitaire, Verdin, and Rufous Hummingbird. Although we wished for more abundant birds, the scenery and wildflowers along the creek were beautiful, the environment serene, and the birders a most congenial group.

Walt Whitford

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, or call for mailing information. **Next deadline: 2 October.** Printed by **insta-copy printing** on 50% kenaf, 50% PCW recycled chlorine-free paper. Images, except Dale Zimmerman's roadrunner, are from IMSI's Master Clips/Master Photos® Collection.

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