

ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

Volume 26, No. 6. November-December 2004

Dragonflies: For a Change of Pace

by Kathy Biggs

Like the birds and butterflies, the dragonflies of New Mexico come in vibrant colors. They fly; they have interesting life histories and amazing behaviors. When they emerge from their natal waters, they change from ugly aquatic nymph to beautiful, dazzling flying predators. See them during our spring, summer and early fall months. And if you're used to observing birds, you've already developed the skills for watching them!

In New Mexico, dragonflies range in size from the Giant Darner, at 6 inches, to the Citrine Forktail, a damselfly, at less than 1 inch. All the in-between sizes are present too, with many shapes and a variety of hues represented.

They come not only in red, fuchsia, orange, pink, blue, gold, saffron, black, emerald, maroon, earth tones, and more, but also in metallic colors. Some have colored, spotted or banded wings, others may have clear wings but clubbed abdomens or a spike on their tail. And, no, they do not sting or bite.

They have mouths that they do use to bite their prey (mostly mosquitoes and gnats) but they do not bite people unless caught and handled roughly, and even then it's akin to getting a good pinch. They have no stingers: the projections on the end of their abdomens are their claspers, used by the male to hold the female in their unique 'wheel' mating position.

To date, more than 76 species of dragonflies have been identified in New Mexico – over 112 if you include the damselflies. We are lucky in that New Mexico offers many great places to begin the study of dragonflies.

Just find a spot near water on a calm, sunny day; any natural or artificial body of water will do. Our parks would always be an excellent destination. Bitter Lake even has a dragonfly observation dock. The dragonfly species that breed in ponds and lakes are often the easiest for beginners to observe as they tend to perch, while those along the rivers aren't always so obliging.

Unfortunately, you couldn't find a handy guidebook for identifying dragonflies until recently. The Audubon Society's *Insects and Spiders* field guide can be helpful, but this and other older insect guides cover only a few of the western species of dragonflies. *Dragonflies through Binoculars* (Sid Dunkle) became available in 2000, but

The Christmas Bird Count is Saturday, December 18!

Make plans to participate in this much-anticipated annual tradition. The CBC is an all-day event that involves counting birds within geographic areas of a count circle that extends from the river to Dripping Springs and the Jornada to the South Valley. We finish up with a no-host dinner at the end of the day, when everyone goes over their list and we figure out the day's total number of species and individuals.

This is a fun, low-pressure outdoor event; the only prerequisite is enthusiasm. You can even do a partial day if it better fits your schedule.

We currently seek team leaders to lead groups into the various areas, as well as team members. If you would like to be involved as a leader or participant, please contact Tim Lawton (522-2056).

Be sure to attend the monthly meeting on Wednesday, December 8, when we finalize teams and warm up our identification skills for local winter birds.

only covers the dragonflies, not the damselflies. *Common Dragonflies of the Southwest, A Beginner's Pocket Guide* (Kathy Biggs) just became available this Spring (2004) and includes the damselflies.

If you have Internet access you may find the web site <http://southwestdragonflies.net/> both fun to look through and useful. It is the companion site to the *Common Dragonflies of the Southwest* book. Besides containing much more information on identification, it includes updated distribution maps that are frequently updated. There is also a South West Dragonfly discussion group on the Internet: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SoWestOdes/>.

In Odonatology, the study of dragonflies, you can have fun, be outdoors, and even contribute to a growing body of new knowledge! Enjoy!



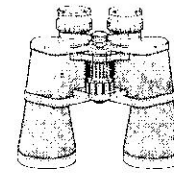
Programs

Programs and meetings are held 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 7:00, preceding the program.

Bodacious Bats! November 17. Bats have had a bad rap because most of us know so little about them. There are many myths about bats but the reality is they make great neighbors! This program will explore bat ecology, bats of the desert southwest, and how we can encourage their presence as safe neighbors. Slides, props and bat specimens are included.

Rink Somerday, Program Coordinator at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park will present the program. She'll also give us a quick update on the latest developments at the nature park and its numerous environmental education programs.



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.

Winter Birds of the Mesilla Valley.

December 8. To help us prepare for the upcoming Christmas Bird Count, Lorraine Schulte will review some common, and not so common, winter residents and visitors to southern New Mexico. Tim Lawton will also be on hand to organize teams and leaders for this year's count.

San Andres National Wildlife Refuge.

November 13. Joint field trip with the Las Cruces Museum of Natural History. Space limited; reservations required. Call the Museum at 522-3120 to reserve your slot. The refuge, located 30 miles northeast of Las Cruces, is surrounded by military land and not generally open to the public, so don't miss this chance to visit! High clearance vehicles needed, 4-wheel drive recommended.

December Meeting Date

Please note that our December program will be held on the second Wednesday of December (December 8th) instead of the third Wednesday, our regular meeting date. We are making this change to make sure we have plenty of time to finalize preparations for the Christmas Bird Count, scheduled for the 18th.

Christmas Bird Count, December 18.

For details, see article on page 1.

JOIN NOW!

- National Membership: Join both the **National Audubon Society** and **Mesilla Valley Audubon Society** for the introductory rate of \$20 (a \$15 savings!). You'll receive both *Audubon Magazine* and *Roadrunner Ramblings*. Make check payable to National Audubon Society.
- Chapter Membership: Join just **Mesilla Valley Audubon Society** for \$15. You'll receive *Roadrunner Ramblings*. Make check payable to Mesilla Valley Audubon Society.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Q54
7XCH

Send this form and your check to:

Membership, MVAS
P.O. Box 1645
Las Cruces, NM 88004

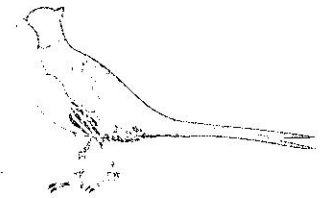
Use this form for new memberships only.
Renewal notices will be sent to you.

Village Gates

It has been brought to our attention that some members had a problem with the gates at the Village at Northrise the evening of our program on Wednesday, October 20th. Some individuals had problems entering via both the north and west gates. We truly apologize for this inconvenience.

There are automatic gates on both the north and west side of the complex. They work on a sensor and should open (sliding sideways) once a car approaches. If the gate does not open, please inch forward slowly. You may use either entrance. Again, MVAS and the staff at the Village at Northrise apologize for this situation. See you at the next meeting!!

Barb Rodriguez



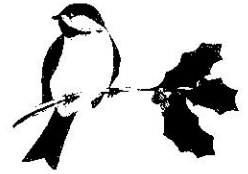
Field Trip Report

Mesilla Valley Bosque Park, September 18. The timing couldn't have more perfect for the 18 birders who were treated to large variety of migrating sparrows and warblers, and a total of 51 species of birds. The group literally needed to pass up unidentified birds to reach the next destination. The Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park has transformed into an excellent habitat in a very short time. The areas with standing water harbored Sora, Green Heron, Pied-billed Grebe, and coot. There was one area, dubbed "bird spa" by one observer, that was visited by five Orange-crowned Warblers, a Yellow-rumped Warbler and a least one sparrow drinking and bathing, all at the same time. Thanks to beautiful weather, the group (which welcomed several new and enthusiastic birders) had a great morning.

Harold Harrison

Welcome New Members

William and Valerie Endrueit
 Kevin and Pamela Sommer
 Ron and Pat Cook
 Thomas Packard
 Wendy Harless



Recycle your Magazines!

Thank you to everyone who donated back issues of the their wildlife and nature publications to the Education Committee. The students in our schools will greatly appreciate all the wonderful pictures and articles that we use to help them understand our environment.

Please call Sylvia Bizzell at 993-0133 if you are interested in helping donate your much needed back issues:

Bird Watcher's Digest,
Audubon,
National Wildlife,
Ranger Rick,
Arizona Highways,
Birds and Blooms,
Living Bird, and
Wildbird.

Bird Notes

Sandhill Cranes have been reported in several different areas including Isaack's Lake, and Cassin's Kingbirds and Anna's Hummingbirds have also been reported by several people.

Species	Date	Location	Observers
Black-throated Gray Wblr	8-24; 28	Las Cruces, Leasburg	PT; RC
American Redstart	8-28	Leasburg	RC
Nashville Warbler	8-28	Leasburg	RC
MacGillivray's Warbler	8-28	Leasburg	RC
Clay-colored Sparrow	8-28	Leasburg	RC
Lincoln's Sparrow	8-28	Leasburg	RC
Red-breasted Nuthatch	8-28; 9-2	Leasburg	RC; GE
Dickcissel	9-1	Radium Springs	MS/JZ
Common Yellowthroat	9-2	WSTF	HH, AS
Sage Sparrow	9-2; 10-3	WSTF; Isaack's Lake	HH, AS; NS
Tennessee Warbler	9-2	Leasburg	SWH, LS
Fox Sparrow	9-2	Leasburg	GE
Acorn Woodpecker	9-2	Radium Springs	MS/JZ
Northern Waterthrush	9-2; 7	Leasburg; WSTF	SWH, LS; HH
Black-throated Gray Wblr	9-2; 10-25	Radium Springs; WSTF	MS/JZ, HH, AS
Eared Grebe	9-6; 10-3	Isaack's Lake	BHH, SS; NS
Golden Eagle	9-7	WSTF	HH
House Wren	9-8	WSTF	HH
Cedar Waxwing	9-15	WSTF	HH
Ovenbird	9-16; 26	WSTF; Las Cruces	HH; DMD
Red-necked Phalarope	10-1	Isaack's Lake	HH, SWH
Wilson's Snipe	10-1	Isaack's Lake	HH
Cassin's Finch	10-1	Radium Springs	MS/JZ
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	10-2; 14	Old Refuge; Talavera	WH; ABK
Eastern Phoebe	10-2; 11	Old Refuge; Las Cruces	NS; SWH
Red-breasted Nuthatch	10-3	Radium Springs	MS/JZ
Baird's Sandpiper	10-3	Isaack's Lake	NS
Sage Thrasher	10-3	Isaack's Lake	NS
Stilt Sandpiper	10-3	Isaack's Lake	NS
Baltimore Oriole	10-6	Radium Springs	MS/JZ
Fork-tailed Flycatcher	10-14	Lake El Paso	AMG, BJ, JP, MS/JZ
Zone-tailed Hawk	10-14	Sunland Park	MS/JZ
Eared Grebe	10-16	Las Cruces Dam	NS
Harris's Hawk	10-23	Las Cruces	SWH
Wilson's Snipe	10-25	Las Cruces Dam	NS

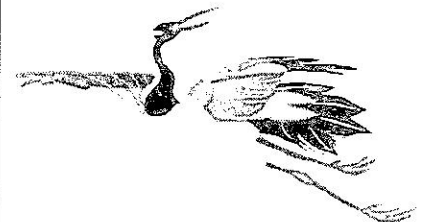
Observers: Rick Castetter, Dick and Margaret Davis, Gordon Ewing, Al and Madeline Gavit, Barbara and Harold Harrison, Sue and Wally Hill, Bob Johnson, Al and Barbara Krueger, Jim Paton, Lorraine Schulte, Marcy Scott/Jimmy Zabriskie, Amanda Skarsgard, Nancy Stotz, Sidney Stryker, Paul Turner

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

New Mexico Rare Bird Hotline 505-884-3269
 or <http://www.nmosbirds.org>

Rare Bird Alerts for NM and other states: www.birder.com

Festival of the Cranes at Bosque del Apache



November 16-21

Tours • Lectures • Exhibits

Schedule of Events and Registration
 Forms available at
www.friendsofthebosque.org

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		vacant	
Vice-president	Guy Powers		373-3843
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Board (02-04)	Richard Bischoff		894-6083
Board (03-05)	Alan Krueger		532-1036
Board (03-05)	Sue Hill		382-9758
Board (04-06)	Tim Lawton		522-2056
Board (04-06)	Nancy Stotz		521-8087
Past President	Wall Whitford		521-1358

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Audubon Adventures	Lorraine Schulte		524-7029
Audubon Council	Richard Bischoff		894-6083
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Education	Donna Wood		525-8704
Field Trips	Donna Wood		525-8704
Programs		board at large	
Membership	Harold Harrison		522-6199
Newsletter Editor	Nancy Stotz		521-8087
Publicity	Jackye Meinecke		524-1886

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/.

Relationship Between National Audubon and Local Chapters

Over the past few years, the relationship between the National Audubon Society (NAS) and local chapters such as MVAS has been an issue, and conflicts have developed over changing priorities and finances. A huge reduction in the dues share returned to local chapters was especially problematic, and helped lead to a *Take Back Audubon* movement that gained steam last year.

In response, the National Audubon Society (NAS) Ad Hoc Chapter Committee has been working on Chapter-NAS Partnership issues for over a year, and they are now sharing their draft recommendations. Their preliminary report, including draft recommendations and appendices, is now available for review on the Web at <http://www.audubon.org/local/cso/adhoccom/>.

The committee is soliciting feedback on their proposals. The MVAS board will be discussing this issue at our board meeting on November 11, as will the Audubon New Mexico State Board, on November 18. If you have any comments you would like to share, please contact one of the officers or board members listed on the back of the newsletter prior to November 11.

Tom Jervis, President of the New Mexico Audubon Council, suggested that people review the draft proposal with the following questions in mind: 1) How should chapters be supported, given that money is tight? 2) Does the redefined relationship between chapters and NAS work for the chapters? 3) What is a funding mechanism that works for chapters? 4) How do we treat each other as equals? 5) How do chapters help support not only local but also state and NAS issues?

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: December 28.** Printed by **insta-copy printing** on 10% kenaf, 90% PCW recycled chlorine-free paper. Images, except Dale Zimmerman's roadrunner, are from IMSP's Master Clips/Master Photos Collection.

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