



ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

MESILLA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

<https://www.mvasaudubon.org/> Vol. 46, Winter 2023/2024 (November, December, January)

President's Letter

Dear MVAS Members and Friends:

One of the many things I love about MVAS is that we comprise all types of birders. Newbies, experts, backyard birders, globe-trotters, grad students starting a career with birds, listers, probably a few chasers, photographers, and those who love birds as a beautiful, critical part of the paradise that is our world.

You don't need me to tell you that paradise—and birds—are in trouble. In 2019, *Science* published Rosenberg et al.'s "Decline of the North American Avifauna" reporting the cumulative loss of three billion birds across North American biomes since 1970. This is a massive, ongoing avifaunal crisis. National Audubon Society and other organizations are doing their best to educate people on what is happening and what can be done.

I just came back from a birding festival, and one stated goal of the festival is education and advocacy to help birds. Indeed, besides going to special places and seeing many avian wonders for the first time thanks to talented guides, I was inspired to do more for birds by presentations from an Audubon Texas community educator, a photographer/bird conservation leader, and a graduate student researching Harris's Hawks.

Yet, it weighs on my mind that I took two planes to get there, drove a car to where I got on the buses and vans that drove 30 – 45 minutes to those special places. I relied on snack food that generated more plastic waste than I usually do. And I was just one of a couple thousand people

Pease et al.'s (2023) "The Steller's Sea-Eagle in North America: An economic assessment of birdwatchers travelling to see a vagrant raptor," published by the

MVAS President Receives National Audubon Society Award



Current MVAS president Elaine Stachera Simon is "extraordinarily honored" to receive the National Audubon Society William Dutcher Award recognizing outstanding Audubon volunteers who exemplify the standard of service to Audubon as established by William Dutcher.

According to an article by Audubon Arkansas, "William Dutcher was the first chairman of the National Association of Audubon Societies in 1905. A tireless birder, researcher, and scholar, he was one of the first to promote the idea of bird sanctuaries, conservation education and bird photography. He was instrumental in convincing President Theodore Roosevelt to set aside Pelican Island, the first federal wildlife refuge, and fought for early wildlife laws. Recognizing the need for effective local organizations, Dutcher helped create the first Audubon chapters and oversaw Audubon's growth from a loose-knit federation to a powerful society."

British Ecological Society in *People and Nature*, notes that 46 million bird watchers in the United States generate “\$85 billion per year in overall economic output.” This is great—and powerful. I definitely spent money in the community—but that doesn’t help birds directly or address the footprint I left participating in the festival.

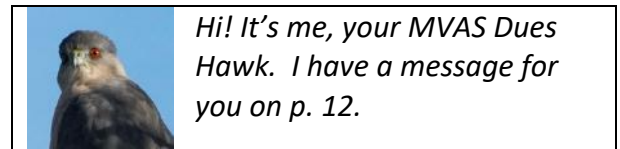
It may not erase my footprint, but as a mitigation effort I’ve donated to Washed Up Texas, a nonprofit in that community that cleans up trash from the beaches and does outreach and education through sculptures made of the trash they collect. It’s a small offset, but it’s something.

So, in my last letter to you as MVAS president, I beseech you as fellow birders—whatever type of birder you are—to do what you can to mitigate the damage that we cause simply by virtue of our love for birds. Globe-trotting lister? Buy the carbon offsets, or donate to a nonprofit in the places you visit dedicated to bird conservation or habitat preservation. Backyard birder? Organize a trash pickup with some like-minded friends. (Picking up fishing line at Leasburg Dam SP might prevent it from wrapping around a bird’s leg. The plastic bag you stop from blowing might be the one that would have smothered a nest.)

No matter the type of birder you are, it’s in all of our interest—as well as the best interest of the birds—to do what we can to protect them and the places they need to survive and thrive.

It has been my privilege to serve as MVAS president for the past four years. Thank you for your love and enthusiasm for our chapter, its activities, and, of course, the birds. I’ll remain an active member, just behind the scenes.

Happy holidays to all and good birding!
Elaine



Notes From the 2023 National Audubon Society Leadership Conference

Dylan Osterhaus, MVAS board & conservation committee member

Early this fall, I applied for and was lucky enough to receive a scholarship from the National Audubon Society to attend the 2023 National Audubon Society Leadership Conference. The conference was held at the YMCA of the Rockies near Estes Park, CO from November 2 – 5. The main purpose of this conference was to “*find the opportunities for collaboration, amplification, and collective action within the broad framework set down in*

Flight Plan, Audubon’s new strategic overview.” Flight Plan is the new five-year strategy that National Audubon Society has created to guide bird conservation efforts in the near future across the hemisphere. The plan focuses on fighting climate change, increasing the diversity of our membership, and conserving birds and the places they rely on at a continental scale. The working portion of the conference was filled with panel discussions, working groups, workshops, and a keynote address given by Matt Hogan, regional director of the USFWS-Mountain States region. I participated in an array of workshops and working groups pertaining to the implementation of Flight Plan objectives throughout our local groups, promotion of equity, diversity, inclusivity, and belonging (EDIB) principles in our community chapters, improving the efficiency of big data collection in the form of Motus tower installation and Christmas Bird Counts, and discussions of improvements that can be made in the new leader onboarding process. The goal of each session was to generate conversation and provide facilitators from National Audubon with information they need to expedite the rollout of Flight





Red Crossbill at the YMCA in Estes Park

Plan to the chapters. Throughout each discussion we heard from a diverse array of Audubon members from a wide range of chapters located in the United States and Central America. Perhaps most interesting to me was the discussion of big data in the form of Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) and Motus radio telemetry tracking. In this session, Audubon leaders in charge of the CBC and Motus programs asked us to brainstorm ideas for what information chapters need. Our group came up with great ideas for how we can improve messaging relating to these projects and recommended a centralized source of information, such as installation instructional videos for Motus towers, that Audubon experts could create and disseminate to the chapters. I will be interested to see what ideas from each of the sessions I participated in will be put into action in pursuit of achieving

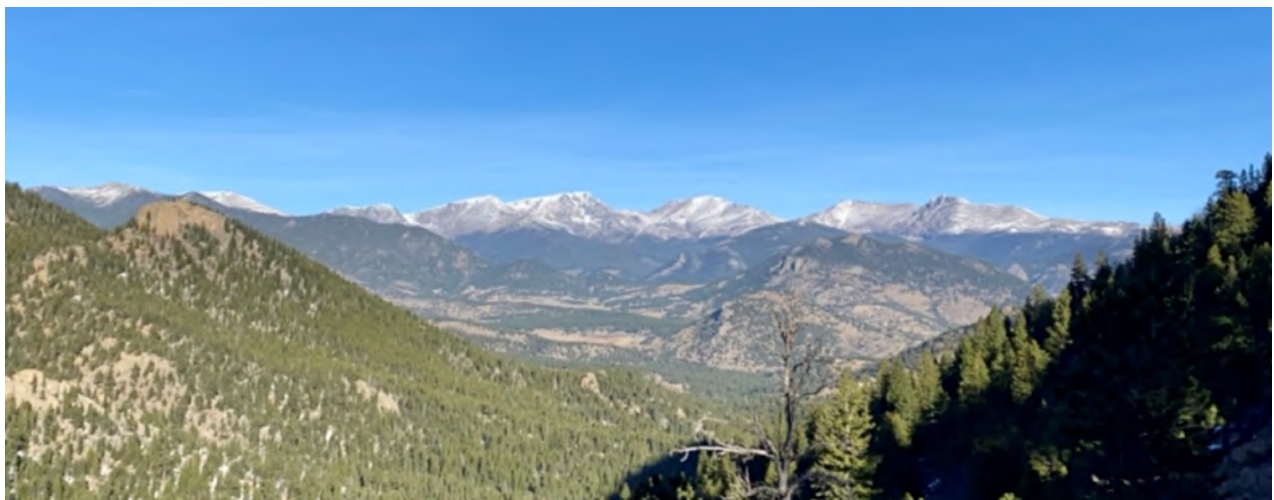
the goals of Flight Plan.

Of course, no bird-oriented conference would be complete without field trips! Organizers prepared an excellent selection of field trips to surrounding areas including Rocky Mountain National Park and Estes Park. I attended field trips to Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge—a former chemical weapons manufacturing plant, now a haven for wildlife only eight miles northeast of downtown Denver; Lily Lake—a beautiful mountain lake located at 10,400 feet in Rocky Mountain National Park; and the banding station at the YMCA of the Rockies, operated by the Colorado Avian Research and Rehabilitation Institute. My favorite birds of the trip included Pygmy Nuthatch, Clark’s Nutcracker, Black-billed Magpie, Red Crossbill, and Steller’s Jay. We also saw many elk, mule deer, and Abert’s squirrels!



Red-breasted Nuthatch at YMCA

The greatest takeaway I have from the conference is that while there were only 350 Audubon leaders in attendance, there are some 90 million Americans that identify as “birdwatchers.” In the closing address, Marshall Johnson, Audubon chief conservation officer, highlighted the fact that there are not even 90 million registered Republicans or Democrats. If politicians knew how much the general population cared about our birds and the habitats they rely on, it is likely that we could more easily accomplish the ambitious goals of the Flight Plan. Therefore, it is our responsibility as Audubon members to activate more and more of those 90 million conservation-minded birdwatchers and inspire them to generate positive change for the birds of our wild so that we may begin to reverse the decline of our avian populations. With all our collective efforts, I am now more confident than ever that we can achieve this ambitious goal.



MVAS Joins the Green Chamber of Commerce

By Trish Cutler, MVAS conservation committee chair

The Mesilla Valley Audubon Society (MVAS) recently joined the Las Cruces Green Chamber of Commerce (Green Chamber) for an opportunity to contribute to the Green Chamber mission and to introduce the community to the Audubon mission of bird conservation, education, and advocacy.

The goal of the Green Chamber is to foster the success of our local economy and promote businesses (including non-profits) committed to environmental and social responsibility. Their “triple bottom line” is “People, Planet, and Profit.” In other words, investing in all three is the key to a thriving community and economy today and for future generations.

Green Chamber membership comes with many valuable benefits, including monthly “Green Drinks” networking events, Zoom interviews by Carrie Hamblin (posted on social media), “eBlast” emails about MVAS sent out to Green Chamber members, an MVAS ribbon cutting, a listing in the Green Chamber directory, and a social media consultation. MVAS president, Elaine Stachera Simon, and conservation chair, Trish Cutler, attended their first Green Drinks event on October 26. The event was an annual networking mixer with both the Green Chamber and the Greater Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce, hosted by Virgin Galactic, which provided wonderful hospitality. Green Chamber President Carrie Hamblen enthusiastically welcomed Trish and Elaine to the event and MVAS as a new member.

Networking events are a great opportunity to spread the word about the MVAS mission, our amazing members and volunteers, and our activities. Trish and Elaine met several Green Chamber board members and members of both chambers of commerce. A business card exchange resulted in Trish meeting a woman who had coincidentally been Googling Audubon that very day because she was interested in learning more about birds! Elaine had a lucky night, winning one of the biggest raffle prizes of the evening—a tour of the Virgin Galactic Spaceport!

Editor's note: After submission of this article, we were all happily surprised by a YouTube interview featuring the president of the Las Cruces Green Chamber of Commerce and the president of Mesilla Valley Audubon Society. You can check it out at this address: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xjqNLi67mzM&t=3s>. It's fair to say, our relationship with the Green Chamber is off to a great start!

SEPTEMBER BIRD-A-PALOOZA! A GREAT SUCCESS

Mesilla Valley Audubon Society welcomed the public for classes, bird walks

In September, MVAS proudly presented Bird-A-Palooza, a series of six bird walks and a butterfly walk to celebrate fall migration. In August we held warbler, flycatcher, and butterfly identification programs, presented by Wayne Treers, C.J. Goin, and Rob Wu, for Palooza preparation.

Walks included one that was women-only led by Linda Miller and one that had a special guest leader for a bilingual bird walk (thank you y gracias Star Posada from El Paso Audubon!). We had two new bird walk leaders during Palooza – Johnathan Brooks and Danny Tipton – and Rob Wu led the butterfly walk. The other walks were led by the wonderful leaders you know and love: Wayne Treers, Mark Pendleton, and Dylan Osterhaus.

We invited the public via Facebook, the KRWG community calendar, and sharing information with the NMSU community. Thanks to these efforts, MVAS added approximately 25–30 new friends and members! (Welcome!)

Keep your eye on the calendar at mvasaudubon.org for upcoming bird walks!



Election Season!

As you know, each year MVAS officers are up for re-election, as are board members whose terms are expiring. The election will be in early January 2024 via email, and nominations will be accepted on a rolling basis until the day before the election period begins. The first meeting of new officers and board members occurs in February 2024.

The upcoming election will be a bit different—several officers are rolling off to make way for others to take the helm. Specifically, Elaine Stachera Simon, Mark Ryan, and Cheryl Fallstead are stepping down from their respective roles as president, vice president, and secretary. Diane Moore will run again for treasurer.

Trish Cutler and Dylan Osterhaus’s terms on the board of directors are also up. Trish will not be running again, and Dylan will be running for one of the two three-year (2024–2026) terms.

So:

President	open
Vice president	open
Treasurer	one candidate so far (Diane Moore)
Secretary	open
Board member 2024–2026	two slots open, one candidate so far (Dylan Osterhaus)

You don’t need to be a bird expert to be an officer or on the board, but you do need to be enthusiastic! There are many active MVAS members, and we very much hope you will bring your talents forward to continue and enhance the work that has been done and bring forth new ideas to help birds, make our community more bird friendly, and introduce more people to the wonder of birds. New officers won’t be thrown to the vultures (so to speak)—you will have plenty of guidance and help from the continuing board as well as past leadership. You do not need to be a member to run for office or a board position, but if elected you must become a member and you must be a member to vote.

MVAS is much more than a bird group—we are a chapter of the National Audubon Society serving Doña Ana, Sierra, and Otero counties, and our mission tracks National’s three-part mission of conservation, advocacy, and education. We have a voice in our community, and, with your help, our voice can continue to grow.

Please reach out to mesillavalleyaudubon@gmail.com to nominate yourself or someone else or to find out more information. In December, we’ll hold a “drop-in” Zoom discussion for those who might be interested and want to chat, or visit with current officers and board members at a bird walk or at the Holi-birds and Beers gathering on December 2 at Bosque Brewing on Telshor!



MVAS monthly programs in-person once again!



On October 18, MVAS had its first in-person meeting since 2019. Thanks to Dylan Osterhaus and Mark Ryan finding an NMSU professor to sponsor us, MVAS secured a classroom in Knox Hall on the NMSU campus for monthly programs. Because it's a classroom, there is Zoom capability, so our monthly meetings can be "hybrid"!

Roughly 20+ folks in person and another half-dozen on Zoom enjoyed Mark Ryan presenting on one of his research topics: Endangered Piping Plover Nesting Habitat Loss in North Dakota, 1992–2021. Special thanks to Carol Ryan for providing refreshments!

Although the pandemic has been (more or less) over for a while, finding meeting space has been difficult. NM Fish and Game has a room, but we ran into scheduling conflicts. Good Sam was our venue for a while, but internet in the meeting room is spotty at best. Finally, we landed in Knox Hall, and are very grateful to have our new program home!



Upcoming Events at Mesilla Valley Audubon Society

Watch for updates at the MVAS website calendar (mvasaudubon.org/calendar) and your email for additional or changes.

November 25 (Saturday) | Leasburg Dam State Park bird walk

8 – 10:15 a.m. Meet at the visitor center at 8 a.m. for carpooling to the day-use picnic area on river. Your walk leader is Dylan Osterhaus. The walk goes along the Mogollon Trail for approximately one mile (flat) and based on sightings will return along the same trail or the upper road.

November 29 (Wednesday) | Monthly program (in-person and Zoom)

6:30 p.m. – 7 p.m. meet 'n greet, 7 p.m. program at [Knox Hall 142 NMSU Campus](#). NMSU graduate student James Lee will do a follow-up presentation on his White-tailed Ptarmigan research in the Pecos Wilderness Area in northern NM.

December 2 (Saturday) | Holi-birds and Beers social gathering

Join us for a no-host gathering to wish each other a merry holiday season!
4 p.m. at Bosque Brewing Co. | Telshor Public House @ 2102 Telshor Court

December 4 (Monday) | Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park bird walk

8 – 10:15 a.m. Meet in front of the visitor center at 8 a.m. Your walk leader is Danny Tipton.

December 9 (Saturday) | Sagecrest Park bird walk

8 – 10:15 a.m. Sagecrest Park is at Roadrunner and Frontier. Meet at the park entrance on Frontier at 8 a.m. Your walk leader is Jonathan Brooks.

December 10 (Sunday) | Keep Las Cruces Beautiful (for the Birds!) Adopt-A-Spot Cleanup

8 – 9 a.m. at Sagecrest Park (Roadrunner at Frontier)

Every 6 weeks (or so) MVAS protects birds by keeping Sagecrest Park litter free! Join other birders to make this happen. Litter-picking supplies provided, bring your own water, sunscreen, snacks, and gloves. Spot leader is Aaron Lucas.

December 16 (Saturday)

Las Cruces Christmas Bird Count | see below

December 21 (Thursday)

Hillsboro Christmas Bird Count | see below

December 23 (Saturday)

La Luz Christmas Bird Count | see below

December 30 (Saturday) | see below

Caballo Christmas Bird Count

Christmas Bird Count Location Lineup!

Get your jingle birds on and join one (or more!) of the local counts, below. You don't need to be an experienced birder—lots of hands on deck are needed to get the job done! Reach out by December 1 to the folks listed below so that you can be placed on a team. Post-CBC gathering tentatively to be held at Habanero's on Lohman (watch your email).

Las Cruces | Saturday, December 16

Sponsored by Mesilla Valley Audubon Society. Mark Pendleton, mpndltn@gmail.com, 575.635.8711

Hillsboro | Thursday, December 21

Kathleen Blair, Bluehare@citlink.net

La Luz | Saturday, December 23

John Douglas, jlddouglas@zianet.com, 575 636-0266

Caballo | Saturday, December 30

Wayne Treers, way1mike@yahoo.com, 575.528.8696

White-eared Hummingbird Comes to Dripping Springs

In October there was a flurry of activity in the MVAS email when a White-eared Hummingbird was sighted at the Dripping Springs Natural Area visitor center. For all visitors it was a beautiful sight, and some were even able to catch it with their cameras. We would like to show all photos, but will limit the exhibit to a few of those by Lori Smith. She submitted 12 beautiful shots, of which three are shown here (thank you Lori!). Following the photos is a little background information on our new friend.



The White-eared Hummingbird (*Basilinna leucotis*) is a small [hummingbird](#). It is 9 – 10 centimeters long and weighs approximately 3 – 4 grams.

Adults are predominantly green on their upperparts and breast. The undertail coverts are predominantly white. The tail is bronze green and straight. The most prominent feature is the white eye stripe found in both males and females. These hummers occur as far south as Cabo San Lucas. Their bill is slightly decurved and red with a black tip. The throat of the male is a metallic turquoise green. The crown and face are violet and black. The female is less colorful than the male.

Their breeding habitat is pine oak forests from southeastern Arizona, southern New Mexico, and western Texas through the Sierra Madre Occidental and Sierra Madre Oriental of northern Mexico and the Cordillera Neovolcanica of southern Mexico to southern Nicaragua. It is a common species over much of its range and is classified as Least Concern by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). It is a rare but regular summer resident in the Madrean sky islands of southeastern Arizona, rarer and less regular in southwestern New Mexico and western Texas in the United States.

These birds feed on nectar from flowers and flowering trees using a long extendable tongue and catch insects and other small invertebrates on the wing or by gleaning them from bark, leaves, and other surfaces.



Organ Mountain Musings ©

by Mark Ryan

Part One

The Talking Tree – An Update

A year ago, I wrote a short piece for this newsletter about the large number (over 100 in the fall!) of Gambel's Quail roosting in a Live Oak in my backyard. And, of the noise they made as they settled in for the night. The tree seemed to talk!

I regularly get asked about whether the quail still come in to roost every evening. The answer: the Talking Tree has lost its voice! What happened? In early June there were 25–30 quail coming to the roost nightly. I was starting to see quail broods in the yard and even a few chicks able to fly up into the lower branches. Then (dramatic music plays) I began to see a Greater Roadrunner pair in the yard nearly every day. It soon became apparent that the roadrunners were going to nest in the Live Oak. I saw them entering and leaving the tree near the top (about 12–15 feet above the ground).

So, predators in the penthouse, prey in the garden view apartments – uh oh! Roadrunners will kill small quail chicks and can be aggressive to other animals near their nests. Hmm – seemed unlikely this would end well for the quail. Co-occupancy of the tree continued for a couple of weeks; then I had to be away for three weeks. I returned in mid-July, and I saw the roadrunners occasionally but never the young. I also didn't see many quail! Another week and there were no quail coming to roost. What happened? I can't know. Possible that the roadrunners attacked young quail in or near the roost; maybe just aggressive nest/brood defense by the roadrunners drove the quail to other roosts. The heat and lack of

rain this summer likely affected survival of young quail, so that could have contributed, too. I still see quail during the day in the yard and a few are roosting in a mesquite tree in the front of the house. I see roadrunners rarely now (typical for this time of year at my place). Did their eggs hatch? Did the young survive? Were there epic battles fought under the Live Oak? Mysteries all.

I miss the nightly quail parade; the entertainment of watching them chase each other around; and listening to the tree talk as they settle in. It will be interesting to see if the quail reclaim the roost tree this winter; whether the roadrunners return to nest next summer. I will keep you posted.

Part Two

Hummingbird Wars

While I didn't witness any roadrunner/quail battles this fall, I have watched with amazement the hummingbird aerial dogfights (or is it hummerfights?). I have heard many people comment on hummingbird battles at their feeders this summer. At my feeders this was driven, in part, by the longer tenure of Rufous Hummingbirds – they arrived in July and were here through mid-October. At my feeders, these little despots spend most of the day driving off the common Black-chinned hummers, the occasional Broad-tail hummer, wasps, moths, small dogs (okay, maybe that was a case of mistaken identity) and (I assume) any nectivorous bats that might drop by.

I have been amazed at the energy expenditure of Rufous Hummingbirds defending a constant (well, nearly constant...my feeders go dry when I am traveling, busy with grandkids, and the occasional oops – I forget) food supply. Ecological theory states that defense of feeding sites is abandoned when food is highly abundant. In part this occurs because high local food abundance attracts large numbers of feeders, and they overwhelm the defender (energy cost of defense is greater than energy gain from the food). This certainly describes hummingbird feeders in the desert (especially in a very dry year). So, why have the rufous tyrants kept up the near constant battle with the black-chins and others in my yard?

The scientific literature on hummingbirds is very large – I sampled only a small portion of it looking for answers. What I learned: 1) hummingbirds can't recognize that feeders will provide near constant "nectar" – in nature flowers and their nectar stores are constantly depleted – so defending feeders from others makes sense; 2) hummers need to refuel about every 10 minutes – taking a short break from defense can refuel the defender quickly and they can get back to defending; 3) nectar-feeding hummers have unique physiology (fueling flight directly and almost completely from ingested sugars [i.e., no use of stored energy reserves] – this allows the Rufous Hummingbird to take a short drink of sugar and keep going without draining fatty reserves); 4) smaller hummingbirds have lower energy costs/body weight than larger hummers (an unusual situation for most birds and mammals!) – so the cost of defense is lower. At a glance rufous hummers look smaller than black-chins, but the data indicated nearly identical length and overall weight (black-chins do have longer wings). Science is teaching us that regular defense of a feeding source makes perfect sense for hummingbirds. But that really doesn't answer "why are Rufous Hummingbirds so pugnacious?" One site (not a scientific source) suggested that Rufous Hummingbirds are slightly more aerodynamic than other similar sized hummers and therefore the cost of defense would be less. But I could not find any reliable data to back that up. So, the question I started with was left unanswered by science.

Next, I turned to some of my non-science friends for their thoughts (admittedly over an adult beverage or two) and they offered several opinions (disclaimer: the opinions expressed are solely theirs – the author assumes no responsibility for the comments!).

- One suggested that rufous hummers are like my red-haired Irish cousins – just feisty by nature.
- Another said maybe they have an evolutionary chip on their shoulders (wings?).
- A tall friend said, "It's a Napoleon complex."
- The last opined, "They are just mean."

None of these pithy conjectures rang true to me. Then I remembered another source of creative observation...my five-year-old grandson! He and I sat and watched the hummingbirds chase and chatter (only apple juice was involved!) and after a while I asked him: "My friend thinks the little reddish one chases all the others because it's mean. What do you think?" He watched a bit more with the intensity only a child can muster. And, then he said: "I don't think they're mean! Can't you hear them laughing? I think the red one just likes to play tag."

That's good enough for me! 😊



Species of Concern: Pinyon Jays



Pinyon Jays are an extremely charismatic bird of the Southwest. They have a complex social structure in which they travel in flocks of up to 500 individuals and keep in contact with each other by "kaw" sounds. Flocks stay together year-round and many birds spend their lives with the flock where they hatched.

For food they feed extensively on pine seeds. These jays will forage on seeds on the spot or hide the thousands of seeds to eat later. Their spatial memory helps them find buried seeds. When foraging on the ground they will leapfrog over other members of the flock looking for more seeds. They also have an expandable esophagus that allows them to carry about 40 seeds at the same time to their cache sites. Thus, you may see them fly to their cache site with their throats bulging.

Courting birds walk side by side on the ground with a swagger, preen each other, and the males will offer sticks to females. The males sometimes feed females and these females will start to beg for food while quivering their wings. Oddly enough, females may even chase the male.

When the pine cone crops fail, Pinyon Jays often leave in search of seeds elsewhere—an indication of an irruptive species. Thus, we will occasionally see Pinyon Jays in southern New Mexico. They have been observed in Soledad Canyon and in Dripping Springs.

Unfortunately, throughout their range Pinyon Jay population numbers have dropped 85% (Defenders of Wildlife) over the last 50 years. Most of today's jay population occurs in northern New Mexico and Nevada and thus are the most important states for the jay's population and conservation. The decline of Pinyon Jays has been precipitated by habitat loss, climate change, and human development.

In response to a petition from Defenders of Wildlife last year, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has agreed to review the Pinyon Jay's status under the Endangered Species Act. The status review will take 18 months. An endangered listing means the agency believes the jay's extinction is imminent and the Service would develop a recovery plan and set aside critical habitat where Pinyon Jays could recover.

Credits: photos by Robert Shantz

References: *Las Cruces Sun-News*

PHOTO GALLERY by Prachi Bhogan



A wonderful new birder, Prachi Bhogan, has joined Mesilla Valley Audubon Society.

Pictured above are three delightful photos of a Blue Grosbeak (Leasburg Dam State Park), Red-winged Blackbird (Sagecrest Park), and a hummingbird (Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park) that she shared with us. She describes herself as a “beginner,” but these are marvelous pictures.

Thank you very much for joining MVAS, Prachi, and thank you for sharing these photographic gems.

Sid Webb



New Board of Directors for USIBWC Upper Rio Grande Citizens Forum to be Chosen: Applications Accepted until November 24

By Sid Webb

The Upper Rio Grande Chapter of the Citizens Forum of the U.S. International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) is selecting new board members. The USIBWC uses its citizens forums to communicate its activities regarding the U.S.-Mexico border to the public and to learn from the public what their views may be. In turn, forum members are expected to pass on their new knowledge to the communities where they reside. There are five citizens forums, with the Upper Rio Grande Forum addressing Rio Grande water issues between Percha Dam to the north down to Fort Quitman, Texas, approximately 150 miles south of El Paso.

What I liked best about my four years with the USIBWC Citizens Forum (two terms) was learning about how this country manages the Rio Grande. When I started, the USIBWC was considering a proposal to convert river space across from the Las Cruces Water Treatment area into a riparian habitat with ponding and increased trees and other vegetation. Although the covid pandemic sabotaged the plan (it is still a possibility!), it showed me how USIBWC worked, via forums and other communications with the public and other government agencies.

On a regional basis, there is ongoing attention by the USIBWC team to ensure the health of the Rio Grande. It is their responsibility to help avoid environmental damage along the river bank, unexpected water loss, and to deal with human catastrophe, as was the case of last year’s flooding of the Rio Grande when El Paso’s sewage system was breaking down in multiple places and dumping its effluent into the Rio Grande.

At the international level, working with Mexico to decide how much Rio Grande water should be allocated to Mexico in the El Paso region, or how much to allocate to the USA further to the south, is an important facet of their work. Much of the decision making there is impacted by local water use upriver as well as climate change and all its ramifications.

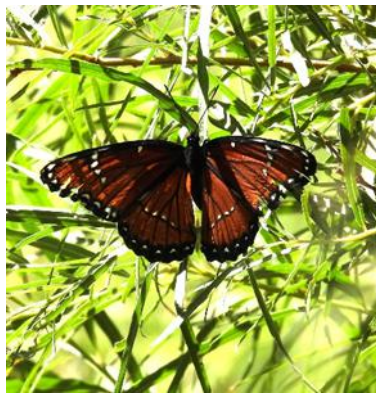
If this is interesting to you, consider an application for membership in the USIBWC’s Upper Rio Grande Citizens Forum. Applications can be completed via the [USIBWC website](#). This site will be open until November 24. Being a member of MVAS puts you in a good position to be selected.

Butterflies of Doña Ana County

by CJ Goin



Red-spotted Admiral



Viceroy



Arizona Sister

Admirals (genus *Limenitis*) and Sisters (genus *Adelpha*) are large, attractive butterflies, some with broad white bands across the wings. Two species of Admirals are found around Las Cruces (excluding the Red Admiral which is called an Admiral but belongs to a different genus): the Red-spotted Admiral (left photo) and the Viceroy (center photo). The Red-spotted Admiral is a mimic of the Pipevine Swallowtail, which is distasteful to birds. The Pipevine Swallowtail lacks the basal spots below found on the Red-spotted Admiral. The Red-spotted Admiral is usually found in foothill country in our area (e.g., Dripping Springs). The Viceroy is also a mimic—it closely resembles Monarchs and Queens, again to appear distasteful to birds—but the Viceroy can be distinguished by the black postmedian band across the hindwing. The Viceroy is habitat specific in New Mexico—riparian habitat near the river—and you're unlikely to see one anywhere else. The species of Sister found in New Mexico is the Arizona Sister (right photo). The appearance is unmistakable. Like the Red-spotted Admiral, the Arizona Sister is usually found in foothill habitat, although they are occasionally found in lower habitat.



for reading the newsletter

Dear MVAS Members,

2024 is just around the corner and MVAS annual dues are due in January. By collecting annual fees at that time, the board will have a clearer idea of our financial status for the upcoming year, which will help with planning for the year ahead. To pay the annual membership, go to our website mvasaudubon.org and follow instructions. There are several options. For those of you who are not yet members, this website page will help you join the team. In advance, thank you very much.

Yours,
MVAS Dues Hawk

P.S.: Thanks

Officers and Board for Mesilla Valley Audubon Society 2023

President: Elaine Stachera Simon

Vice-president: Mark Ryan

Secretary: Cheryl Fallstead

Treasurer: Diane Moore

Directors (seven elected with three-year terms; terms start February 1 of year one, and end on January 31 of year three)

Director 2023–2023: Dylan Osterhaus

Director 2021–2023: Trish Cutler

Director 2022–2024: Sid Webb

Director 2022–2024: Gill Sorg

Director 2023–2025: CJ Goin

Director 2023-2025 Annie Mitchell

Director 2023-2025: Marcia Wilson

Director 2023-2025: Linda Miller

Committee chairs

Conservation: Trish Cutler

Education: vacant

Field Trips: Linda Miller

Programs: vacant, currently managed by president

Newsletter: Sid Webb

Website: Linda Miller

Membership: Annie Mitchell

Christmas Bird Count: Mark Pendleton

Facebook admin: Elaine Stachera Simon

Climate Watch Coordinator: Mark Pendleton

Roadrunner Ramblings is published quarterly and is distributed via the MVAS website (mvasaudubon.org) with a copy emailed to all MVAS members and friends. All members of MVAS are encouraged to submit articles of interest to members and any bird photographs recently taken. Please email your contributions to sidwebb@gmail.com. To be added to the email list, contact Elaine Stachera Simon at mesillavalleyaudubon@gmail.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.

Mesilla Valley Audubon Society

A chapter of the
National Audubon Society



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