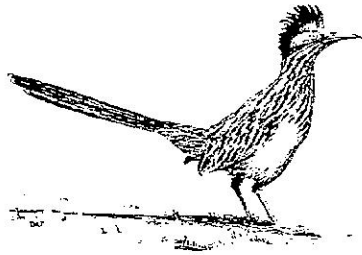


MESILLA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY



ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

Volume 20, No. 3 May/June 1998

MESILLA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY: A BRIEF HISTORY

by Eleanor Wootten

August 1977 brought a dozen like-minded individuals together to look into the feasibility of once again starting an Audubon chapter in the Mesilla Valley (there had been one once before in the 1920's.) By June 1978 the required 35 members were on board and a provisional charter was granted. The permanent charter followed a year later.

The beginning may have been small, but the chapter grew steadily over the next 20 years. Although even now our membership is not large, our attitude has never been small and we can proudly count our accomplishments as many. Conservation, education, field trips, and the chapter's heartbeat, the newsletter have been our biggest strengths. They developed slowly, gradually becoming stronger over time.

Our field trips began modestly with day trips, then overnight trips, and eventually, out of state trips to Texas and California. Fortunately for us, our birding identification skills were well honed by some very fine experts along the way. (We continue passing along those skills through Doña Ana Branch Community College with bird identification classes.) Although Christmas Bird Counts are not field trips, they were under the guidance of the field trip chair and are an important part of our chapter activities.

Our conservation efforts began in tiny steps, but grew in strength to make our chapter the strongest in the state for many years. Holloman Lakes was an early joint project with

Bureau of Land Management - the first of its kind for National Audubon Society and Bureau of Land Management. It gave us credibility and standing for later developments with Holloman Air Force Base. We took the lead in the state on the Spotted Owl issue. We sent several members to "boot camp" in Washington, D.C. for activism training. Now we are embarked on the Palomas Marsh project with Bureau of Land Management and Bureau of Reclamation.

Education has been a large part of our chapter's working.

It began with displays at Branigan Library and two classroom programs about birds and mammals reaching hundreds of students. Then came Audubon Adventures in the classroom. It began with our sponsoring a modest four classrooms and has now grown to our sponsoring 69 classrooms in Las Cruces and Truth or Consequences. This has been made possible in large part by our annual Birdathon fundraiser.

Early newsletters were simple, one or two pages with little or no graphics, evolving into the more sophisticated one you are now reading.

All of these accomplishments have happened because

we have caring, interested members who are willing to give their time and their resources for the care of our planet and more especially our community. All the while we were having a delightfully fun time watching birds with kindred spirits. ☺

Celebrating
20
Years

"Are these not kingbird days, when, in clearer first June days full of light, this aerial, twittering bird flutters from willow to willow and swings on the twigs, showing his white-edged tail?" -- Henry David Thoreau