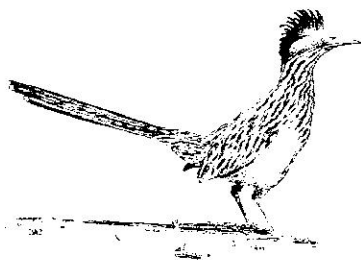


# MESILLA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY



## ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

VOLUME 21, No. 4 JULY/AUGUST 1999

### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Ed Mayfield

The first half of 1999 is over and I personally want to thank each and every person for the contribution and work you have donated to our organization. The Chapter is a "conservation and natural history organization in southwestern New Mexico that promotes appreciation and conservation of birds, other wildlife and habitat through environmental education, issue advocacy, and natural history experiences," and through the dedication and support of several of our members we are meeting our commitment and enjoying being "birders."

I especially want to thank all the officers and board members, and also Storm Sermay for giving us such a nice newsletter, Tim Lawton for his leadership in Birdathon, Lorraine Schulte for making our Audubon Adventures the best one in the state, and Gordon Ewing for our Christmas Bird Count.

In 1964 Congress created the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), and in later years the Urban Parks and Recreation Recovery Program (UPARR), to receive revenues from offshore oil and gas drilling and to distribute those revenues to federal and state agencies to preserve open space and parks, protect cultural and historical sites, set aside wildlife habitat and provide outdoor recreational facilities. Since 1980, funding for the LWCF and UPARR has steadily decreased. In fact, in recent years no money has been given to the states.

Suddenly, however, Congress is interested in the LWCF. Six bills have been introduced into Congress that would permanently fund LWCF and other conservation-related funds. Some of the bills benefit New Mexico more than others. The amount of funds that would become available to New Mexico annually under these bills ranges from a low of \$8 million to a high of \$28 million.

***THIS IS OUR GREATEST CHANCE TO HELP BIRDS, WILDLIFE, OUR ENVIRONMENT, AND EACH CITIZEN IN AMERICA.***

We need everyone to actively support this program. For a long time the monies have been diverted to many other things such as political campaigns and pork barrel funds. These bills will dedicate these funds to the program for which they were designed and not to other things. The intent of the program was to take the money from the resources that were being depleted, the offshore oil and gas, and put it into the resources that will make our parks and recreation places grow and be there for all Americans. We need each of you to help push this bill through congress this year. I am going to send an e-mail message with copies of letters to congressmen and senators. Please give me a call at 382-0715 or e-mail at [mayfield@greatwhite.com](mailto:mayfield@greatwhite.com) and I will give you information and tell you what is happening with the program.

***HELP US KEEP GREAT PLACES AND GREEN SPACES.***

Thanks again for all of your help and dedication. We are an organization on the move.

### NEW MEETING PLACE

Beginning September 1999, we will have a new location for our general meetings and programs. We will be meeting at the Village at Northrise, 2882 N. Roadrunner Pkwy, Las Cruces.

Details and directions will be in the next newsletter, due before our September meeting date.

We hope that members will find this to be a convenient place to meet and that our turnout at programs will continue to be as good as at the high school.

### UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

**SEE PAGE TWO FOR  
TRIP DETAILS**

**July 24** - Visit to Vertebrate Museum, NMSU

**August 12** - Palomas Marsh

**September 25** - San Andres Mountains

**FALL TRIPS/PROGRAMS  
DETAILS IN NEXT  
NEWSLETTER**

**September 15** - Mark Hakkila with BLM will present a program about bats.

**October 16** - Holloman Lakes Field Trip

**October 23** - Chiricahua Mountains Field Trip

**November 13** - Bosque del Apache NWR Field Trip

## ALDO LEOPOLD CONSERVATION AWARD GIVEN

By Tom Wootten

On May 19, the NM Audubon Council presented the first *Aldo Leopold Conservation Award* to Mike Howard, Wildlife Biologist with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Las Cruces Field Office. The award was presented at the MVAS Annual Potluck Picnic.

Mike has always shown his loyalty to BLM by his determination of being truly a devoted public servant. Mike often has gone out of his way, taken on additional work, and used personal time, to ensure that members of the public were given an opportunity to participate in important issues involving wildlife and native plants. The following are just a few examples of the extra steps he has taken.

In the mid 1980's, as part of National Audubon Society's "Adopt a Refuge" program, MVAS approached Mike about adopting Holloman Lake in place of a Wildlife Refuge. Mike was instrumental in making this agreement the first of its kind between BLM and National Audubon. This area is a significant permanent source of water for migrating birds in southern New Mexico, as well as nesting habitat for Snowy Plovers. Through these efforts and Mike's continuing interest, MVAS continued to be influential when the area was turned over to Holloman Air Force Base. Plans had called for drying up much of the area and ponding all water in lined evaporative ponds, devoid of vegetation or wildlife. Mike's early efforts and continuing involvement opened the door for us to modify the plans to construct a very large wetland rather than the evaporation ponds.

The Aplomado Falcon is an endangered bird, extirpated from its historic range in New Mexico. Much of the area assigned to Mike appears to offer good potential habitat, as does much of the neighboring habitat on White Sands Missile Range and Fort Bliss Army Range. Limited funds were being spent to survey for this bird if intrusive operations were planned, but there was no coordination of efforts among the major land managers. To help, Mike was instrumental in starting an effort called "The Aplomado Falcon Working Group" which began slowly but is increasingly recognized as an effective group. The group now involves all major wildlife management groups, the US Fish & Wildlife Service, and The Peregrine Fund. A major research operation in northern Mexico and in the United States, jointly funded has been initiated and consideration is being given to reintroduction of the species, though not planned at this time.

Ready Pay Gulch/ Percha Creek is a riparian area with a mix of ownership among BLM, NM trust land, and private land. It has a great diversity of woody tree and shrub species, and a permanent source of water. Mike has been working to gain cooperation among the agencies and the livestock producer to restrict livestock grazing from more of the land and to gain more rest from grazing for other parts of the area. This can represent a significant riparian habitat and has been nominated for status as an Area of Critical Concern by The Nature Conservancy.

McGregor Range is in the area of Mike's responsibilities. He has always maintained close observation over the prairie dog colonies, the three very rare pristine black grama grass Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (he was instrumental in getting this designation), the recognized prize antelope herd, as well as the many other rare features of the area.

Recently, Mike was honored by having a newly discovered variety of plant species named after him. Mike brought this plant to the attention of the botanical community after noting it while hunting.

These activities represent significant efforts on Mike's part, in addition to his other duties. They exemplify an uncanny ability and devotion to New Mexico's plants and wildlife.

### Audubon Council Meeting

October 2, 1999

10:00 A.M.

### Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge

All Audubon members are welcome. On the agenda will be a discussion of identifying Important Bird Areas in New Mexico.



Programs and meetings are held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month, September through April. Programs begin at 7:30 P.M. Announcement, news, and information begin at 6:45 P.M. preceding the program.

SEE YOU IN SEPTEMBER



## FIELD TRIPS

Please be prepared for outdoor field trips with plenty of water, sunscreen, proper clothing and good walking shoes.

**Saturday, July 24. Vertebrate Museum, NMSU.** Meet Peter Houde, curator of a fascinating collection of specimens found at the University's Vertebrate Museum. We will have the opportunity to see details of birds that we could never see in a field guide, as well as some specimens that are of historical interest. See how birds are stored, prepared, and dressed for viewing. Dr. Houde will show us a recently prepared specimen of a Rufous-backed Robin that died when it flew into a window in Mesilla. Meet at 9 A.M. at Foster Hall on the NMSU campus at the corner of Sweet Dr. & S. Horseshoe. Call Susan Beck, 646-6171 or 524-6723, for more information.

**Thursday, August 12. Palomas Marsh.** Join in and help conduct one of the chapter's monthly surveys of the Palomas enclosure. This time last year we saw Mallards, Marsh Wrens, swallows, peewees, Wilson's Warblers, and more. After surveying the enclosure, we can check the nearby cottonwood grove and Palomas Pond. Those looking for a longer day may stop at Caballo and Percha State Parks. Meet at the N. Main Kmart at 7:30 A.M. Contact Bill Jacobson, 382-6877, for more information.

**Saturday, September 25. San Andres Mountains.** The San Andres Mountains are a prominent feature of southern New Mexico, dividing the Jornada del Muerto and the Tularosa Basins. The geological diversity and variations in altitude results in diverse vegetation and avian habitat. A recent bird count of the area lists Cordilleran, Hammond's and Olive-sided Flycatchers, Black-headed Grosbeak, Orange-crowned Warbler, Red-naped Sapsucker, plus 98 additional species. Those who have high clearance 4WD vehicles, please bring them, as roads can be rough after summer rains. Meet at the Shell Station at Jornada Rd. & Hwy 70 at 7 A.M. This will be an all day trip so bring plenty of food and water. Contact Ed Fredrickson, 646-1301 or [efredric@nmsu.edu](mailto:efredric@nmsu.edu), for more information.

## BIRD NOTES

Glossy Ibis	Apr 24	B. del Apache	GE, TL
Black-and-white Warbler	Apr 29	Leasburg Dam	S/WH,J/LS
MacGillivray's Warbler	Apr 30	Rio at Mesilla	SH, WH
Willet	Apr 30	Rio at Mesilla	SH, WH
White-faced Ibis	Apr 30	Rio at Mesilla	SH, WH
Summer Tanager	Apr 30	Las Cruces	SH
Painted Redstart	Apr 30	Lordsburg	LS
Hooded Oriole	May 1	Las Cruces	LS
Blue Grosbeak	May 1	Rattlesnake Sp	JH
Solitary Sandpiper	May 1	Rattlesnake Sp	JH
Northern Cardinal	May 1	Rattlesnake Sp	JH
Vermilion Flycatcher	May 1	Rattlesnake Sp	CT, JH
Wilson's Warbler	May 2	Burn Lake	JM, NS
American Goldfinch	May 4	Las Cruces	SH
Purple Martin	May 5	Las Cruces	TL
Wilson's Plover	May 8	B. del Apache	L/J/S,S/WH
Black-crowned Night-Heron	May 9	Burn Lake	SH, WH
Blue-winged Teal	May 9	Burn Lake	SH, WH
Snow Goose	May 9	Rio at Mesilla	SH, WH
Long-billed Dowitcher	May 9	Mesilla	SH, WH
Virginia Rail	May 9	Mesilla	SH, WH
American Avocet	May 9	Rio at Mesilla	SH, WH
Western Tanager	May 9	Rio at Mesilla	SH, WH
Lazuli Bunting	May 9	Rio at Mesilla	SH, WH
Blue Grosbeak	May 9	Rio at Mesilla	SH, WH
Lazuli Bunting	May 14	Las Cruces	BG
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	May 20	Las Cruces	RS
Ovenbird	May 23	Lordsburg	TL
Zone-tailed Hawk	May 26	Las Cruces	WS
Painted Bunting	June 5	La Mesa	SH, LS
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	June 18	Las Cruces	SH
Black Tern	June 19	Isaack Lake	SH, WH
Common Nighthawk	June 19	Las Cruces	HH
Bonaparte's Gull	June 20	Isaack Lake	SH, WH
Black-tailed Gnatcatcher	June 20	Las Cruces	SH, WH
Western Screech-Owl	June 30	Mesilla Park	PA

Observers: Pat Arrowwood, Bill Glenn, Harold Harrison, Sue Hill, Wally Hill, Jeanne Howard, Tim Lawton, Jim Mulhauser, John Schulte, Lorraine Schulte, William Seager, Ralph Schork, Nena Singleton, Charles Townley

Please report any early, late, or unusual sightings to Tim Lawton  
e-mail: tlawton@NMSU.edu or phone: 505-522-2056

New Mexico Rare Bird Hotline 505-323-9323

## FIELD TRIP REPORTS

### Chiricahua Mountains

The Chiricahua field trip on May 15 was a great success. Unusual birds we saw were the Elegant Trogon and a Western Screech Owl along with all the various birds available in the area. We had other visitors in our camp at Sunny Flats Campground. We had a Coatimundi visit us along with a Ring Tail Cat and Red Fox. Ann Heying and the fox became good friends. We birded on trails from the Sunny Flats Campground, South Fork, Spofford's, and in the town of Portal. We will have another trip to the Chiricahuas in October. The Chiricahua Mountains are one of the best birding sites in the area. *Ed Mayfield, Trip Leader*

### Leasburg Dam State Park

Six devoted souls had a great time trekking along the river path and identifying 19 species of birds. We watched a pair of Bullock's Orioles urge their fledgling to fly and later observed a parent Black-chinned Hummingbird feed its rather chubby but very greedy young. We also spotted a Black Phoebe, Black-headed Grosbeak, Verdin, Yellow-breasted Chat, Barn, Cliff, and Northern Rough-winged Swallows, Great Blue Heron, Pyrrhuloxia, Phainopepla, and a Crissal Thrasher. We also visited Swan Pond and found it full of water but relatively low on waterfowl this time of year. Here we sighted Killdeer, Ruddy Ducks, Northern Shovelers, and a Ladder-backed Woodpecker. *Susan Beck, Trip Leader*

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Maynard L. Albert  
Sharon Young  
Jean Apgar  
Barbara Rodriguez  
Jean Jamsa

**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	Ed Mayfield	382-0715
Vice president	Ann Heying	521-4215
Secretary	Sue Hill	382-9758
Treasurer	Mary Lou Wallace	522-0684
Board (97-99)	Wally Hill	382-9758
Board (97-99)	Maxine Perkins	524-1529
Board (98-00)	Susan Beck	524-6723
Board (98-00)	Jennifer Atchley	526-1320
Board (99-01)	Harold Harrison	522-6199
Board (99-01)	Charles Townley	526-8750

**COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

Audubon Adventures	Lorraine Schulte	524-7029
Audubon Council	Jennifer Atchley	526-1320
Delegates	Ed Mayfield	382-0715
Conservation	Jennifer Atchley	526-1320
Education	Maxine Perkins	524-1529
Field Trips	Susan Beck	524-6723
Membership Records	Mary Anne Thibodeau	524-4126
Membership	Harold Harrison	522-6199
Newsletter Editor	Storm Sermay	382-3348
Programs	Board-at-Large	
Publicity	Ann Heying	521-4215

Board meetings are held, September through May, on the Thursday before the 3rd Wednesday at 5:30 PM at the Southwest Environmental Center, 1494A S. Solano Dr., Las Cruces NM 88001. All Audubon members are welcome.

**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 NAS) to:

**Membership, MVAS, PO Box 3127,  
Las Cruces NM 88003**

**THANK YOU TO AUDUBON ADVENTURES SPONSORS**

*By Lorraine Schulte*

Thanks to all the people who have donated to Audubon Adventures since December. Your contributions help make Audubon Adventures successful in our area.

Marjorie Ann Goode, Jean Henry, Enchanted Gardens Nursery, Tom & Eleanor Wootten, Ann Heying, Lorraine and John Schulte, Mary Lou Wallace, Nancy Stotz, Janice Bond, Mary R. Williams, Grace Thada, Darrell Mott, Linda and Walter Whitford, Tim and Diana Lawton, Bill and Donna Jacobsen, Connie Lyons and Bill Pannell, Elinore Heriman, Kenneth and Neoma Smith, Robert (Tito) Meyer, Las Sembradores Garden Club, Desert Daubers Garden Club, Calvin Buerkle, Nigel Fitch, Storm Sermay, John Mangimeli, Shirley and Tom Whalen, Madeline Schroeder, Robert Tafanelli, MaryAnne Thibodeau, Kiwanis Club of Las Cruces, Helen Barber, Citizen's Bank of Las Cruces, Community First National Bank, Patsy Tracey, VFW 3224 Tor C, Mary Rozzano, Barbara Lee Myers.

**BURROWING OWLS UPDATE**

*By Carol Finley*

I would like to thank all of you who have contacted me on Burrowing Owl sightings. This information is increasing the database, and will be part of my report on the status of the owls in New Mexico.

I am currently working for the Colorado Bird Observatory as the New Mexico Coordinator for the Prairie Partners Program, a cooperative and voluntary program to work with land owners, leaseholders, and land managers to conserve shortgrass prairie and the birds that depend on them. I am focusing on prairie dog towns and the burrowing owls that live on them.

Once again I am asking the help of Audubon members. I need help in locating prairie dog towns in the NE portion of the New Mexico. The specific areas are Colfax and Union counties, north and northeast of Wagon Mound, to the state border with Colorado and Oklahoma. If anyone will be travelling in those areas please keep your eyes open for the dog towns. I will need to know the road name or number, mile marker, and any other specifics that will help me find the area.

Call me at 505-891-1548 or e-mail [cfinley@psn.net](mailto:cfinley@psn.net)

*Roadrunner Ramblings* is published six times a year: January, March, May, July, September, and November. Contributions are welcome. Please e-mail copy to: [ssermay@zianet.com](mailto:ssermay@zianet.com), or call for mailing information. **Next deadline: August 21.**

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**Mesilla Valley Audubon Society  
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