

ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

Volume 24, No. 3. May/June 2002

President's Message

by Walt Whitford, MVAS President

The best season of the year for birding has arrived. Every day I look for my favorite arrivals from the wintering areas in Central and South America. Two weeks ago the Swainson's hawks arrived from their winter visit to the grasslands and deserts of Patagonia. This week the Western Kingbirds arrived and began hawking insects in my favorite desert areas. Spring is also the time that I begin planning a strategy for recording the maximum number of bird species for the Mesilla Valley Audubon Society's Birdathon.

Birdathon is my favorite activity with and for the chapter. Not only does Birdathon present a challenge for me to figure out an optimal 24-hour birding schedule, it provides an opportunity to tell friends and colleagues about Mesilla Valley Audubon's program and goals. I have found that most people are very supportive of our efforts to place Audubon Adventures in 4th grade classrooms and have been generous in their support of Birdathon.

This year Birdathon will be a very different experience for me. For the past five years, our past president, Bill Jacobson, was my enthusiastic birding partner for Birdathon. Now that Bill has moved to Vancouver, Washington, I am without a birding partner for birdathon. In the past, we birded Hollaman marshes on Friday evening 4 PM to sunset. On Saturday, we have always headed to the Black Range via some favorite stops near Hatch and the Uvas Valley. This year I hope to spend Friday evening in Socorro and hit the Bosque both Friday evening and early Saturday morning followed by several canyons in the Black Range around Hillsboro. I would appreciate a couple of enthusiastic Birdathoners from the Mesilla Valley Audubon who would be willing to join me on May 3 and 4. Call me at 521-1358 if interested.

I would also like to take this opportunity to emphasize the importance of providing Birdathon sponsors with a report on your activities and the "best birds" or a full list of birds seen. Sponsors are more likely to be repeat supporters if you provide this information.

My wife Linda and I planned our trip to the east coast around Birdathon. We leave on May 6th and will

*(continued on page 6) See **President***

Annual Potluck & Silent Auction May 15

Please plan to attend our annual Spring Potluck, to be hosted once again by charter member Lorraine Schulte. Our special guests will be David Henderson, State Director from the Randall Davey Audubon Center in Santa Fe, and Tom Jervis, President of the New Mexico Audubon Council, who will speak briefly on statewide Audubon programs. During the potluck, we will also have a silent auction, with all proceeds going to support MVAS's Audubon Adventures program which brings environmental education to 91 fourth-grade classrooms in southern New Mexico.

The potluck will begin at 5:30 at Lorraine's home, 1740 Mariposa (phone 524-7029). Bring a main dish, side dish, or dessert, and a spare folding chair or two if you've got them. Table service, iced tea, and coffee will be provided; BYOB for other beverages. If you've got items you'd like to donate for the auction, you can either bring them with you to the potluck or call Lorraine to arrange for an earlier drop-off time.

Lorraine Schulte Excellence in Teaching Award - 2002

by Donna Wood

On April 17, 2002, the Mesilla Valley Audubon Society presented the sixth annual Lorraine Schulte Excellence in Teaching Award. The \$200.00 award is named in honor of charter member Lorraine Schulte for her ongoing work and dedication to the chapter since 1978. The prize is given to a teacher who exemplifies excellence in educating and encouraging our youth to care for their environment, which is one of the major commitments of the Audubon Society.

The winner of this year's award is Sara Sue Torres, a sixth-grade science teacher at Sierra Middle School in Las Cruces.

*(continued on page 6) See **Award***

Bicycle Awareness

Celebrate Bicycle Awareness Month May 11th-18th. The Mesilla Valley Bicycle Coalition, Southwest Environmental Center, City of Las Cruces Ride Share, and Doña Ana County are sponsoring a Community Bike Ride on May 11th and a week-long Bike-Friendly Business Challenge from May 11th through the 18th.

Community Bike Ride Saturday May 11th. Meet on the Downtown Mall, in front of the Rio Grande Theater - the ride begins and ends there. Registration is from 7:30 AM to 8:30 AM; the ride begins at 9 AM and will cover a 12-mile route through central Las Cruces, the university area, and Mesilla.

Free T-shirts will be given to the first 100 registrants; a limited number of free water bottles, Frisbees, and sun visors will also be available. Kids and families welcome - we will have law enforcement support to manage traffic along the route. All ride participants must wear helmets! Call 526-7783 or 522-5552 for more information.

Welcome New Members



Nancy Schaefer
Rose Araya
Janet Kline
Larry Dixon

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 _____

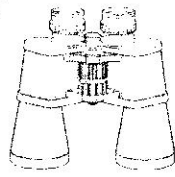
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Membership includes the publications *Audubon* and *Roadrunner Ramblings*.

Send this application and your check (made payable to National Audubon Society) to:

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



Field Trips

New Mexico's spring weather is variable. Be prepared with layered clothing, sunscreen, and plenty of water.

Chiricahua Mountains. May 18. It's time once again for our annual spring trip to one of the premier birding areas of the Southwest: the Cave Creek area in southeastern Arizona, home to such wonders as Elegant Trogons, Painted Redstarts, and oodles of hummingbirds. Birders will meet at the Sunny Flat Campground on Forest Road 42 out of Portal, AZ at 7:00 AM (Arizona time). If you want more details, directions, or information about campgrounds and other accommodations, please contact Ed Mayfield at 382-0715 or mayfield@zianet.com.

NMSU-City Parks. June 22. Our itinerary will be flexible, depending on where the best birds have been reported recently, but we'll likely stick to some of the shadier parts of town ("shady" as in relief from the sun, not unsavory business practices!). Meet at the southwest corner of Apodaca Park (near the wooden statue) at 7:00 AM. For more information, contact Guy Powers (heyguy37@juno.com or 373-3843).

Long-term Schedule of Field Trip Dates and Destinations.

July 17 Burn Lake & Levee
August (day TBA) Grey Feathers Lodge
Sept. 7 Holloman Lake, Holloman AFB
Sept. 21 Chiricahua Mountains
Oct. 5 San Andres Mountains
Oct. 19 Bitter Lakes NRW, Roswell
Nov. 9 Bosque del Apache
Dec. (day TBA) Christmas Bird Count

Field Trip Reports

La Luz/Tularosa. March 9. The field trip to Tularosa and La Luz, led by John Mangimeli, was a very good and productive trip. First thing in the morning we spotted two Lewis's Woodpeckers and that started the day on a good note. We counted 44 species which included: Wood Ducks; Lesser Scaup; Cinnamon Teal; Sharp-shinned, Harris, and Red-tailed Hawks; Red-naped Sapsucker; Scrub Jays; Plain Titmouse; Wood Thrush; and Spotted Towhee to name a few. Every time I have been on a bird tour with John, he has produced a great bunch of birds.....Thanks John.

Ed Mayfield

Caballo-Percha-Animas. April 6. One could never call a Vermilion Flycatcher a trash bird. However, their abundance at both the campground below Caballo Dam and at Percha State Park might have drawn that designation had not the thrill of each sighting been so spectacular. It appears that the showy flycatchers' numbers are on the rise in the areas, and they have decided the campgrounds are good places to nest and raise their young.

The 14 field trip participants relished the numerous Vermilion observations in addition to nearly 60 other species. Other

highlights were a good number of Lucy's Warblers, American and Lesser Goldfinches, Clarks and Western Grebes, and Great Horned Owls. The pair of Great Horned Owls were found to have set up housekeeping on the east side of the Percha campground. The nest was located in a dead cottonwood snag where one of the parent owls was nestled. A couple of happy observers caught a glimpse of a fuzzy baby owlet.

Animas Canyon didn't produce big numbers, but Scrub Jays and a Belted Kingfisher were seen on our way to an ideal lunch break. Ken Stinnett, a field trip participant, was kind enough to invite us to lunch on the banks of the Animas Creek at the rear of his property. We all enjoyed the water falling over rocks and watercress, pleasant conversation, and the breeze chasing dead winter leaves off the sycamores in preparation for their 2002 replacements.

We concluded the wonderful day by chasing White-breasted Nuthatches, Bridled Titmice, and an anonymous vireo where the road crosses the creek and by saying goodbye to the enthusiastic Jan Cline who had traveled from Deming to join the fun.

Harold Harrison

Audubon Adventures 2002-2003

by Lorraine Schulte, Audubon Adventures
Chairperson

Bird Notes

Species	Date	Location	Observer
Common Grackle	3-06-02	Mesilla	SH, LS
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	3-13-02	Percha	SWH, LS
Vermilion Flycatcher	3-13-02	Percha	SWH, LS
Eur. Collared-Dove	3-16-02	Caballo	BG
Rufous Hummingbird	3-25-02	El Paso	BZ
Hooded Oriole	3-25-02	El Paso	BZ
Black-chinned Hummingbird	3-25-02	El Paso	BZ
Painted Redstart	3-25-02	El Paso	BZ
Osprey	3-21-02	Leasburg	SH, LS
Eastern Phoebe	3-21-02	Leasburg	SH, LS
Bronzed Cowbird	3-23-02	NMSU	GE
Common Grackle	3-23-02	NMSU	GE
Turkey Vulture	3-28-02	Las Cruces	SH, BR, LS
Black-chinned Hummingbird	3-28-02	Las Cruces	SWH
Laughing Gull	3-30-02	Sunland Park	BW
Scott's Oriole	4-01-02	Las Cruces	SWH
Broad-tailed Hummingbird	4-02-02	Las Cruces	LS
Tundra Swan	4-02-02	Bosque del Apache	DS
Swainson's Hawk	4-02-02	Las Cruces	SWH
Western Kingbird	4-03-02	Radium Springs	MS, JZ
Lucy's Warbler	4-04-02	Percha	LS, TS
Osprey	4-04-02	Percha	LS, TS
White Pelican	4-04-02	Percha	LS, TS
Lewis' Woodpecker	4-04-02	Rio Grande	SWH
Bullock's Oriole	4-05-02	Canutillo	MS, JZ
Common Ground-Dove	4-06-02	Radium Springs	MS, JZ
Black Duck	4-09-02	Holloman Lake	GE
Painted Redstart	4-09-02	Canutillo	MS, JZ
Franklin's Gull	4-13-02	Burn Lake	BR
Broad-billed Hummingbird	4-14-02	Radium Springs	MS, JZ
Osprey	4-18-02	Shalem Colony	NS
Franklin's Gull	4-18-02	Leasburg	NS
Ash-throated Flycatcher	4-19-02	Caballo	LS, JS
White-throated Sparrow	4-19-02	Percha	LS, JS
White-faced Ibis	4-19-02	Swan Pond	LS, JS
American Avocet	4-19-02	Leasburg	LS, JS
Indigo Bunting	4-19-02	NMSU	GE, TL, LS
White Ibis	4-19-02	Bosque del Apache	SWH

Observers: Gordon Ewing, Bill Glenn, Sue and Wally Hill, Tim Lawton, Barb Rodriguez, Joanne Schaefer, Lorraine Schulte, Marcy Scott, Tara Sheiton, Dave Smith, Nancy Stotz, Bill Whittman, Jimmy Zabriskie, Barry Zimmer

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

New Mexico Rare Bird Hotline 505-323-9323

We are pleased to tell you about the material that will be included in next season's Audubon Adventures. The topics will include four separate biomes: Wetlands, Temperate Deciduous Forests, Coastal Environments and Deserts. These materials will discuss how birds and various other organisms are specifically adapted to thrive in these distinct biomes.

Hopefully we will be able to fund the same number of classrooms in 2002-2003 as we have this previous year (ninety-one classrooms). With your help we can achieve this. The cost is \$40.00 per classroom per year. Make out your checks to Mesilla Valley Audubon Society and mail them to Lorraine Schulte, 1740 Mariposa, Las Cruces, NM, phone number 505-524-7029.

We are also pleased to tell you that plans are developing to have a New Mexico supplement included with Audubon Adventures. This supplement will provide specific information on animals, plants, etc., that live in New Mexico.

Trogon Survey in Southeastern Arizona

A trogon survey for the Cave Creek area of the Chiricahua Mountains will be conducted on June 21-22. Established in 1990, this survey results in an indexed count of trogons along Cave Creek and in some neighboring drainages. Activities will begin with a pre-survey organizational meeting beginning at 6 PM on the 21st at the Cave Creek Visitor Information Center. The survey will be completed on Saturday the 22nd, between 6 and 11 AM.

If you are interested in participating or want more information, contact Gary Helbing of the U.S. Forest Service.

Gary Helbing
Douglas Ranger Station,
Coronado National Forest
520-364-3468
ghelbing@fs.fed.us



Mesilla Valley Audubon Society presents

Birdathon 2002

with special guest birder



Jackye Meinecke

Bird lover, owner of the nature store *Enchanted Gardens*, and a freelance writer who contributes regularly to the *Sun News*. She is also a commentator on KRWG-FM's *Images* with Carrie Hamblin.

Jackie will join a MVAS team during a 24-hour period for May 3-6.

You can help us, too, by making a donation to the annual MVAS fund-raiser. Pledge a dollar amount per species; or, if you prefer, pledge a flat amount.

The money you help us raise goes to Audubon Adventures, an environmental education program offered to some 80 classrooms in Las Cruces, Truth or Consequences, and Alamogordo. Also, MVAS supports local and state conservation issues.

To get involved, just visit *Enchanted Gardens* and sign up. Or you can detach and mail the form below to:

Harold Harrison
3209 Thunderbird Drive
Las Cruces, NM 88011



detach here



Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Pledge(choose one): Per Species _____ Flat Donation _____

Education Update

by Wendy Davis, Education Chairperson

MVAS members involved with our education projects have been very busy this spring. Here are the highlights:

1. We fledged another class of new birders in February from our Bird Identification Course with DABCC. Fifteen students participated. Field trips included visits to Burn Lake, the Rio Grande, Leasburg State Park and the Bosque del Apache. At the Bosque, we had the pleasure of a private, guided bus tour courtesy of the Friends of the Bosque. Grateful thanks go to MVAS birders Sue & Wally Hill, Harold Harrison, Tim Lawton, Ed Mayfield, Guy Powers, Storm Sermay and Lorraine Schulte; the Director of the Vertebrate Museum at NMSU, Dr. Peter Houde; and Friends of the Bosque, Art Arenholz and Doris Long, for all their help and expertise.

2. This year's recipient of the Lorraine Schulte Excellence in Teaching Award was selected (see article on page 1).

3. Guy Powers and Wendy Davis gave presentations about the Junior Duck Stamp Contest to Patsy Combs' 7th grade art classes at Zia Middle School. We are very pleased to announce that one of Patsy's students, Emily Butler, won a first place award in the grade 7-9 category for her outstanding picture of a Northern Pintail. Another Zia student, Kevin Thompson, won an honorable mention. Congratulations to these budding wildlife artists and their teacher! We hope more Las Cruces schools will enter the contest

next year.

4. Sue Hill and Lorraine Schulte gave a slide show on local birds to the residents of Golden Mesa. They were such a success that they were asked to return.

5. Lorraine Schulte, Joy MacFarland and Joanne Schaefer have started working on the ordering process for next year's Audubon Adventures. Our goal is to equal or exceed the number of kits that are presently given to 4th grade classes. The announced curriculum topics will be wetlands, temperate deciduous forests, coastal environments and deserts.

6. Lorraine Schulte gave a program on local birds, including hummingbirds, at Enchanted Gardens, the gardening shop. This event was a fund raiser for Audubon Adventures.

7. Wendy Davis spoke about endangered species to Ria DeKruyf's biology classes at Oñate High School.

8. Several MVAS members manned an information table at two recent events: the International Migratory Bird Day at White Sands National Monument (April 20) and the Earth Day celebration on the NMSU campus (April 22).



Holloman Lake Reopens

Following the tragic events of last September 11, the Lake Holloman Wildlife Refuge Area on Holloman Air Force Base was closed to public access due to security concerns. On April 2, Brigadier General Marc Rogers announced that a portion of the area has been reopened to the public. The road from Highway 70 to the dam, where the kiosk and sign-in box are located, will now be open during daylight hours, 7 days a week, and the public will be able to birdwatch from the dam. In addition, with advanced notice, groups will be able to make arrangements for access to some of the more northerly portions of the wildlife refuge on weekends.

Be aware that additional restrictions could be established if the road gets too muddy or to protect sensitive breeding areas. Also, if the security threat level increases, then public access could be further restricted. Contact the Environmental Office of the 49th Civil Engineering Squadron (505-572-3931) for information about access to the wildlife refuge.

Wildlife Care

Spring, when birds are busy breeding and raising their young, is always a hectic time of year for bird rehabilitators. According to Geri Tillett, of Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue, well over half of the birds she cares for in the spring are young hatchlings or fledglings.

Many well-meaning people assume the worst when they see a young bird on the ground, apparently all alone. Thinking the baby bird is lost or has been abandoned by its parents, many people will pick up the bird and take it home, hoping to rescue it. However, oftentimes, the parents are nearby, and by taking the bird home, these people have reduced its chances for survival.

As birders, we can help spread the word on how best to deal with the young birds that appear each spring. Though they may not be strong fliers, if the bird has a fairly complete set of feathers, it is probably a fledgling with parents nearby. If there are cats or other predators in the vicinity, fledglings can be picked up and placed on a nearby branch where the parents will be able to relocate the young bird easily.

If the young bird is largely without feathers and cannot walk, it may be a nestling that has fallen out (or been blown out) of its nest. If possible, nestlings should be returned to the nest; if it is cool out, warm the bird briefly in your hands before putting it in the nest. If the nest is inaccessible, a makeshift nest can be created from a strawberry basket or other small container, and then wired to a lower branch in the nest tree.

Another problem for breeding birds is springtime pruning or tree removal. Before taking out any vegetation in the spring, make sure to look carefully and see if there are any nests in it.

Because of this seasonal influx of birds and other wildlife, the resources of Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue are quite thin. If you would like to donate money, supplies, or time (they are particularly interested in volunteers to help transport rescued wildlife), please contact Geri Tillett at 522-4966 or Helen Bigelow (in Anthony, NM) at 882-2910.

Nancy Stotz

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	Walt Whitford	521-1358
Vice-president	Guy Powers	373-3843
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Treasurer	Barb Rodriguez	523-1548
Board (00-02)	Wendy Davis	527-4551
Board (00-02)	Sue Hill	382-9758
Board (01-03)	Tim Lawton	522-2056
Board (01-03)	Nancy Stotz	521-8087
Board (99-01)	Harold Harrison	522-6199
Board (99-01)	Rob Davis	527-4551
Past President	Ed Mayfield	382-0715

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Audubon Adventures	Lorraine Schulte	524-7029
Audubon Council	Storm Sermay	382-3348
Delegates	Jack DeLong	527-9118
Conservation	Board at Large	
Education	Wendy Davis	527-4551
Field Trips	Ed Mayfield	382-0715
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Membership	Harold Harrison	522-6199
Newsletter Editor	Nancy Stotz	521-8087
Programs	Nancy Stotz	521-8087
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 (1494 S. Bolanos). All Audubon members are welcome.

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

(continued from page 1) **President**

not return until May 28th. Unfortunately we will miss the pot-luck and a chance to find out how everyone did on the Birdathon, but we will have participated.

I consider Birdathon the most important activity of MVAS because it provides the funding for our most important education program - Audubon Adventures. Please consider becoming an active participant in the Birdathon. Great birding and I hope that each of you will find a lifer or several very special birds in some of the wonderful birding areas that are available to us.

(continued from page 1) **Award**

Runner-up is Cherie Love, a fourth- and fifth-grade special education teacher at Valley View Elementary School in Las Cruces.

Sara captivates her students with her year-long ecology unit. This unit begins in the fall with a trip to the United States Department of Agriculture Jornada Experimental Range. Through visual and hands-on activities the students are engaged in how living organisms interact with each other. Back in the classroom, dressed as a big colorful bird, Sara encourages her students to discover how birds adapt to their environment based on what they can eat.

Her lessons continue emphasizing ecological cycles. The one the students are involved in on a monthly basis takes them to the Rio Grande. Her students learn about the water cycle and work cooperatively in groups taking a variety of water quality measurements. Each month students also create "river journals" for recording poems, short stories, reflections and drawings of the river.

The award committee (Donna Wood, Chair; Wendy Davis; Wally Hill; Tim Lawton; & Nancy Stotz) would like to thank MVAS members for helping obtain several excellent candidates from whom to select this year's winner.

Roadrunner Ramblings is published six times a year: January, March, May, July, September, and November. Submissions are welcome. Please email copy to nstotz@ezianet.com, or call for mailing information. **Next deadline: 22 June.** Printed by **insta-copy printing** on 50% kenaf, 50% PCW recycled chlorine-free paper. Images, except Dale Zimmerman's roadrunner, were obtained from IMSI's Master Clips/Master Photos® Collection.

Mesilla Valley Audubon Society
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