

# ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

Volume 25, No. 2. March-April 2003

## *"Birds of the Bosque" Presented in Las Cruces School*

*by Wendy Davis, Education Chair*

Early in February, Jessica Lagalo and Ken Barragan, two educators from the Randall Davey Audubon Center in Santa Fe, traveled south to our city to present a science outreach program called "Birds of the Bosque" at Valley View Elementary School. Funded through a grant from the PNM Foundation, the program introduces 4th and 5th grade students "to the importance of river habitat through the fascinating world of birds." Jessica and Ken have conducted it throughout the state since December 1.

The program consists of a full day of classroom instruction followed by a half-day field trip to a local birding location. Lorraine Schulte and Wendy Davis had the pleasure of observing one of the two classroom sessions at Valley View. Jessica and Ken did an outstanding job of teaching these active students about birds using a variety of props, artifacts and equipment. Their great sense of humor and infectious enthusiasm made the subject matter come alive.

They covered such topics as "what makes a bird a bird," feathers, bird anatomy and nests. The students examined feathers with jewelers' loupes, viewed slides of local birds, and played a game using bird field guides. The highlight of the day was dissecting owl pellets. Each child was given his/her own pellet and took it apart using dissecting tools to see what the owl had eaten. The entire class became very involved in the activity, and the students were excited and amazed by what they uncovered in the pellets. A chilly but fun-filled trip to Dripping Springs the following day completed the program.

Natural history programs like this are extremely valuable to our school systems. They can really turn a child on to science or start a student on the road to becoming a biologist or ecologist. We are grateful to Jessica and Ken for bringing "Birds of the Bosque" to Las Cruces, and we hope that more schools here will take advantage of this or other similar programs in the future.

## *Birdathon 2003*

**Mark your calendars!** Spring is nearly here and the time is coming for **Birdathon 2003**, our yearly fundraiser.

This event, which will be held the weekend of May 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, raises the money to support our local educational projects such as Audubon Adventures. We have also been able purchase bird books for the library and would like to do more for the schools. Some of these funds may also be needed to support the Chapter newsletter which provides you with information about what the Chapter is doing in the areas of conservation, field trips, and programs. With the reduced share that we receive from the dues paid to National Audubon, **Birdathon** is more important than ever before. We need help from everyone in the Chapter either as a birder or sponsor. Let's make this a record year!

**Birdathon** is not only a great contribution to your local Chapter, it's also lots of fun.

How does **Birdathon** work? Each participating birder collects pledges from sponsors. The sponsor can pledge an amount of money per bird species or pledge a flat amount. (All contributions are tax deductible.) Then on **Birdathon** weekend the birder has 24 hours to count as many species as possible, either birding alone or with a team. Sponsors in the past have pledged \$.10 to \$1.00 a bird. And many teams see more than 100 species! Don't want to ask friends or co-workers for money? Pledge to yourself or ask relatives. A surprising number of people are happy to have been asked.

Although we have set the above weekend as the official **Birdathon** date for our chapter, you can do your count either before or after if it is more convenient. Also, **Birdathon** can be done in any location. If you expect to be traveling at that time, plan to set aside a few hours to bird. You probably will anyway. Right?

Please help support your chapter by birding and raising funds, or by pledging to someone you know. Contact Storm Sermay, 382-3348 if you would like to participate or if you want more information. Teams are forming now! Don't be left out!

## Legislative Updates

**NM State Legislature.** The state representatives and senators representing Doña Ana County have all expressed formal support for the Mesilla Valley Bosque Park (MVBP) by introducing authorizing legislation and capital outlay requests for its establishment. If you haven't yet voiced your support for this proposal, at this stage probably the most critical call you could make would be to the Governor (1-505-476-2200), to urge him to support the full \$450,000 capital outlay request for land acquisition.

**108<sup>th</sup> US Congress.** National Audubon maintains two web pages which can help you keep up-to-date on federal legislation relating to environmental issues.

(continued on page 4) See **Legislation**

### JOIN NOW!

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State . . . Zip . . . . .

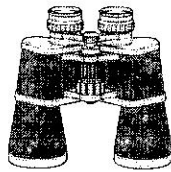
Email \_\_\_\_\_

Q54  
7XCH

Send this application and your check to:

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

## 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.

**Percha Dam State Park. March 22.** We will leave the Highway 70 K-Mart parking area at 6:30 AM and return mid-afternoon. We should expect to see woodpeckers, sparrows, blackbirds, snipes, hawks and a variety of waterfowl. Be sure to take water snacks or lunch. If time allows, we will visit Caballo Dam and Animas Creek in addition to the Percha area. Contact Jack DeLong (e-mail johncdelong@aol.com or call 527-9118).

**Chiricahua Mountains/Southeastern Arizona. April 26.** These spectacular "Sky Islands" of the Southwestern U.S. host many birds species which are rarely seen north of Mexico. The Trogons will be there at the time of this trip. Because of travel time (approximately 4 hours, one way from Las Cruces), most folks will do this as an overnight trip, camping in one of the Forest Service campgrounds along Cave Creek, or staying at lodging available in Portal, AZ. Contact Ed Mayfield (phone 382-0715 or e-mail mayfield@zianet.com) for details, directions and lodging recommendations.

## 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.

**Red Crossbills. March 19.** Dr. Craig Benkman, from the Department of Biology at NMSU, will update us on the fascinating natural history of these highly specialized seed-eating birds. His lab studies a diversity of topics including crossbill, conifer, and squirrel evolution, as well as the vocalizations of crossbills. Craig's enthusiasm for crossbills is contagious, so be ready to have a new favorite bird!

**Bosque del Apache: Ongoing and Future Efforts. April 16.** Come learn a bit about the behind-the-scenes planning which helps make birding the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge a truly wondrous experience. Jim Savery, who recently became refuge manager, will catch us up on all the ongoing improvements at the Bosque. He'll also fill us in on what plans he has for further changes, and future needs the refuge might have.



### 25th Anniversary Banquet

Please mark **Wednesday, May 21** on your calendars and join us for a very special occasion. MVAS will be having its 25th anniversary and we'll be celebrating it with a banquet at the Best Western Mesilla Valley Inn in Las Cruces.

Our special guest of honor will be Denver Holt, founder and director of the Owl Research Institute in Montana. Dr. Holt has been featured in *National Geographic Magazine* (see December 2002 cover story) as well as on their television network. He will be speaking on the "Adaptations of Owls." Dr. Holt is a very dynamic speaker, and you will not want to miss his program.

The celebration will begin at 5:30 PM with a social hour (cash bar available) and then a wonderful buffet dinner. We're planning to raffle some great items - all bird related of course. Besides Denver's program we'll look back at all the accomplishments of MVAS. The cost for this special evening is \$25.00/person. Your invitation will be mailed out in early March; please be sure to return it to us by April 10, 2003. See you there!

## Field Trip Report

**Rio Bosque. January 18.** Nine birders braved the heavy traffic on I-10 through El Paso to reach the Rio Bosque, a restored wetland near Socorro, TX. We were rewarded with some wonderful birds (54 species to be exact), including several great looks at a Sora: perfect light, perfect distance to fill up a scope's field of view, and a bird that was perfectly content to hang out at the edge of the reeds where nothing obscured our view. Other highlights included Lincoln's Sparrow, Green Heron, Black-necked Stilt, and huge flocks of dabbling ducks in all the flooded areas. Oh, and did I mention the three Harris's Hawks?

Nancy Stotz

## Welcome New Members

Paul Burkett  
Gill & Christine Sorg  
William & Genevieve Strouse

## High Plains Prairie Chicken Festival

April 11-13

Milnesand, NM

- Observe mating rituals of lesser prairie chickens at lek sites
- Observe radio telemetry and other research efforts
- Participate in roadside population survey of prairie chickens
- Guided tours to other birding sites and prairie dog towns

Registration (\$55) is limited and is on a first-come, first-served basis.

Contact New Mexico Department of Game and Fish at 1-800-862-9310 or visit their website at

[www.gmfsh.state.nm.us](http://www.gmfsh.state.nm.us)

for more information or to request a registration form.

## Bird Notes

Species	Date	Location	Observers
Harris's Hawk	1-12	Doña Ana	BZ
Eastern Bluebird	1-13, 2-6	Radium Springs	MS, JZ
Bald Eagle	1-18,23,25	Radium Springs	MS, JZ
Bald Eagle	1-19	Leasburg	BR
Cassin's Vireo	1-21	Mesilla Park	MS, JZ
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1-21	Mesilla Park	MS, JZ
Golden Eagle	1-21,23,27	Radium Springs	MS, JZ
Steller's Jay	1-24, 2-5,21	Radium Springs	MS, JZ
Cedar Waxwings	1-24	Radium Springs	MS, JZ
Western Bluebird	1-24,2-21	Radium Springs	MS, JZ
Mountain Bluebird	1-24,2-21	Radium Springs	MS, JZ
American Dipper	1-27	Bosque del Apache	DW,BR
Sage Sparrow	1-27	Columbus	GE, TL
Sprague's Pipit	1-27	Columbus	GE, TL
Lawrence's Goldfinch	1-27	Columbus	GE, TL
Mountain Bluebird	1-27	Columbus	GE, TL
Merlin	1-27	Las Cruces	NS
Swamp Sparrow	1-28	Percha	DB,SWH,CK,LS
Bald Eagle	1-29	Alamogordo	EER
Red Crossbills	1-29	NMSU	PE
Cattle Egret	1-29	Las Cruces	PE
White-throated Sparrow	1-30	Las Cruces	GE
White-throated Sparrow	1-31	NM 28	MS, JZ
Black-necked Stilt	1-31	Rio Grande	MS, JZ
Hutton's Vireo	2-2	Bosque del Apache	GE,SE
Eastern Phoebe	2-2	Bosque del Apache	GE,SE
American Dipper	2-2	Bosque del Apache	GE,SE
Turkey Vulture	2-3	NMSU	PE
N. Rough-winged Swallow	2-3	Old Refuge	PE
Herring Gull	2-5	Anapra	CL, MS, JZ
Slate-colored Junco	2-5	Radium Springs	MS, JZ
Cordilleran Flycatcher	2-5	Percha	WW
Eastern Bluebird	2-5	Percha	WW
Turkey Vulture	2-9	El Paso	JP
Juniper Titmouse	2-10	Deming	MS, JZ
Fox Sparrow	2-10	Deming	MS, JZ
Black-necked Stilt	2-10	Rio Grande	PE
Cedar Waxwings	2-11-2-19	Las Cruces	NS
Violet-green Swallow	2-11	Radium Springs	MS,JZ
Barn Swallow	2-12	Las Cruces	NS
White-throated Swift	2-13	Radium Springs	MS,JZ
Mountain Bluebird	2-13	Gadsden	HH
Eastern Phoebe	2-19	NM 185	MS,JZ

Don Bosshardt, Pim Edelaar, Gordon Ewing, Steve Ewing, Harold Harrison, Sue and Wally Hill, Carrie Kirkpatrick, Tim Lawton, Charlie Lyon, Jim Paton, Ed & Edna Robey, Barb Rodriguez, Marcy Scott, Nancy Stotz, Walt Whitford, Donna Woods, Jimmy Zabriskie, Barry Zimmer

Please report early, late, or unusual sightings to Sue Hill at 505-382-9758 or [hillco@zianet.com](mailto:hillco@zianet.com)

New Mexico Rare Bird Hotline 505-323-9323  
or <http://mvar.nmsu.edu/nmos/>

Rare Bird Alerts for NM and other states:  
[www.birder.com](http://www.birder.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.

**OFFICERS AND BOARD**

President	Walt Whitford	521-1358
Vice-president	Guy Powers	373-3843
Secretary	Donna Wood	525-8704
Treasurer	Barb Rodriguez	523-1548
Board (01-03)	Tim Lawton	522-2056
Board (01-03)	Nancy Stotz	521-8087
Board (02-04)	Harold Harrison	522-6199
Board (02-04)	Rob Davis	527-4551
Board (03-05)	Wendy Davis	527-4551
Board (03-05)	Sue Hill	382-9758

**COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

Audubon Adventures	Lorraine Schulte	524-7029
Audubon Council	Rob Davis	527-4551
Delegates	Jack DeLong	527-9118
Conservation	Nancy Stotz	521-8087
Education	Wendy Davis	527-4551
Field Trips	Ed Mayfield	382-0715
Programs	board at large	
Membership	Harold Harrison	522-6199
Newsletter Editor	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 (on the downtown mall). All Audubon members are welcome.

Visit our website at [www.cybermesa.com/~mvas/](http://www.cybermesa.com/~mvas/).

(continued from page 2) **Legislation**

Audubon's **Issues and Action** page (at [www.audubon.org/campaign/index.html](http://www.audubon.org/campaign/index.html)) provides background information on a number of issues Audubon is following at the federal level. For instance, the site currently features an analysis of the federal budget passed in early February, describing environmental "winners" and "losers."

Audubon's **Take Action** website ([www.capitolconnect.com/audubon](http://www.capitolconnect.com/audubon)) is updated daily, and provides additional information on key issues. This site is a little intimidating, because some of the areas require users to be registered, but even without being registered you can access useful information. Under the heading "Contact Legislators" you can access up-to-date information on select issues. Under the heading "Lawmaker Positions" you can track the voting record of individual senators and representatives on environmental legislation.

By registering at the Take Action site (in particular, by providing your residential address), you can utilize additional services. Registered users can access and edit sample letters on particular issues which will then be emailed or faxed (at no cost to the user) to the their legislators. Registered users can also edit sample letters to the editor which will then be sent directly to media outlets in their region. If you register, you can also choose to receive a twice monthly email update called *Audubon Advisory*.

**Note:** The Internet is an ideal resource for tracking legislation. If you are aware of other websites or listserves that you find useful for tracking federal or state legislation, please let me know. Future newsletter articles could highlight additional sources of timely information.

*Nancy Stotz*

*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](mailto:nstotz@zianet.com), or call for mailing information. **Next deadline: 25 April.** Printed by **insta-copy printing** on 50% kenaf, 50% PCW recycled chlorine-free paper. Images, except Dale Zimmerman's roadrunner, are from IMSI's Master Clips/Master Photos<sup>®</sup> Collection.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Mesilla Valley Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 1645  
Las Cruces, NM 88004

Nonprofit Organization  
US Postage Paid  
Las Cruces, NM 88004  
Permit No. 609