

# ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

Volume 26, No. 2. March-April 2004

## Birdathon 2004

Mark your calendars! Spring is nearly here and the time is coming for **Birdathon 2004**, our yearly fundraiser.

This event, which will be held during the first week of May, 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. 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.) 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.

During **Birdathon** week the birder chooses a 24-hour period to count as many species as possible, either birding alone or with a team. **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!

## To Our Audubon Friends

From Rob & Wendy Davis

Rob and I are sad to announce that, due to family considerations, we are moving to Granbury, Texas, sometime this summer. We have thoroughly enjoyed being involved with the Mesilla Valley chapter for the past five years and getting to know all of you. It has been our privilege to serve on the MVAS Board of Directors and to be active in such a worthwhile organization. We both agree that this is, without a doubt, one of the nicest groups of people we have ever been associated with.

Being the MVAS Education Chairman has been fun and fulfilling, and I want to thank everyone who has helped with our educational projects. I believe that through our numerous school programs and the adult bird course, we have followed our Audubon mission and increased local awareness of our natural environment. I am very happy to have been a part of these efforts.

Donna Wood has graciously agreed to assume the position of Education Chairman, and I know that she will do an excellent job. We have enjoyed working together as a teaching team in regular school classes and in after-school enrichment. I urge the chapter to continue to support the Education Committee and to assist Donna with its important projects.

Rob and I are looking forward to this new adventure in our lives, but we will greatly miss Mesilla Valley Audubon. We will always treasure the many friendships we have made.

## Mesilla Valley Bosque Park Update and Event

State and local officials are continuing to provide significant financial support for New Mexico's newest state park, located along the Rio Grande, south of Calle del Norte Bridge. The state legislature approved a \$270,000 capital outlay request for the park, which will help leverage matching federal funds to acquire additional land for the park and perhaps begin development. The Las Cruces City Council also approved a request for \$20,000 in matching funds for a grant the Southwest Environmental Center received from the New Mexico Youth Conservation Corps; these funds will support a youth conservation work program at the site, focusing on habitat restoration and erosion control.

### Special Event along the Rio Grande. *La Horana Park*

*March 10, 3 PM, Mesilla Valley Bosque Park.* Environmental attorney Robert Kennedy Jr. will speak, focusing on river and environmental issues. (In addition to being featured at this riverside event on the 10<sup>th</sup>, Kennedy will be presenting "Our Environmental Destiny" at 7:30 PM in the Pan American Center, NMSU, as part of the University Speakers Series.)



**Crested Caracaras** inhabit open shrublands; their US distribution is limited to southern Texas, Arizona, and Florida. Photos provided by D. Howell.



## 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.

### Face to Face with Caracaras. March 17.

Meet the *other* social raptor! Donna Howell will bring a pair of Caracaras and discuss their ecology, behavior and intelligence. These little-studied opportunists seem to be a cross between a parrot, coyote and golden retriever and are totally distinct from the relatively hard-wired, smooth-brained typical raptor. Bernd Heinrich's ravens are sluggards compared with these birds. This is an interactive program—flock behavior is encouraged.

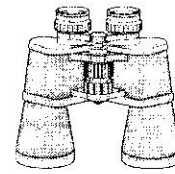


### Who the Heck is that Flitting around My Feeder?? April 21.

Joan Day Martin, founder of Hummingbirds of New Mexico, will discuss identification pointers for the hummingbirds we are likely to see arriving into the area this spring. She'll also cover species that will migrate through the state beginning in late June early July and provide some pointers on identifying accidental and wintering hummingbirds. Joan has been banding hummingbirds in New Mexico since 1994 and estimates she has banded at least 12,000 individuals of 13 different species.

## 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 Creek Headwaters. March 13.

On this trip, we'll head into the foothills of the Black Range, west of Hillsboro. This time of year, these riparian, mid-elevation habitats should contain some nice mixed-species flocks of birds like titmice, jays, chickadees, nuthatches, and woodpeckers. Wild turkeys also haunt this drainage. The area is best explored on foot, so everyone should be prepared to hike a few miles with a moderate elevation gain. We'll be leaving from the K-Mart on Highway 70 at 7 AM, returning by 4 PM (that should give us plenty of time to stop in Hillsboro on the way home for homemade ice cream and pie!). For more information, contact Nancy Stotz at [nstotz@zianet.com](mailto:nstotz@zianet.com) or 521-8087.

### Portal/Cave Creek, AZ. April 23-25.

The Portal/Cave Creek area is in the Chiricahua Mountains. Called "Sky Islands," they offer numerous noteworthy bird species including Brown-crested Flycatchers, Mexican Jays, Painted Redstarts, and many hummingbird species. The area includes the premier US habitat for the Elegant Trogon. Participants should meet trip leader Ed Mayfield at the Sunny Flats Campground at 7 AM (Arizona time) on Saturday morning. Contact Ed at 382-0715 or [mayfield@zianet.com](mailto:mayfield@zianet.com) for more information.

*Accommodations:* Several forest service campgrounds are available, as well as some B & B's (including Portal Peak Lodge at 520-558-2223 and Cave Creek Ranch at 520-558-2334).

## Welcome New Members

Rich Spellenberg & Naida Zucker  
Robert & Elizabeth Czerniak  
Robert Moffitt  
Edwin Nelson  
Ellen Flesher



## 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 Trip Reports

**Salton Sea. January 16-19.** We had 16 enthusiastic birders in the Salton Sea area north of Brawley, California. Several of us had great opportunities to see lifers and to watch their behavior. One highlight was several fields filled with Mountain Plovers, a species listed as endangered because of habitat disappearance. Thanks to Tim Lawton who got directions to the fields with the plovers, all who wanted to see the birds had ample opportunity. The Salton Sea Refuge (now Sonny Bono Refuge) and its environs provided willets, whimbrels, cormorants and many other shore and aquatic species. The fields around the Salton Sea area were filled with egrets, curlews, and ibis. I think that most of the world's population of cattle egrets

must reside in the Imperial Valley in winter. Touring around a freshwater marsh-lake that is a California State Wildlife Refuge provided a number of bird species that were not using the Salton Sea. The general consensus was that this was a great trip to one of the best birding spots in the U. S.

**Otero Mesa. February 28.** The Otero Mesa natural history trip enticed 36 participants to spend a day exploring the Chihuahuan Desert grassland landscapes of Otero Mesa. Despite the drought conditions, the gently undulating grasslands of Otero Mesa present vistas that are unique in southern New Mexico. Several herds of pronghorn antelope provided some "different" wildlife viewing for the participants as did the prairie dogs

on one of the colonies that we visited. Birds were sparse as predicted but there were lots of horned larks, a couple of loggerhead shrikes, and a pair of kestrels that several of the group got to study. As we traveled from the southeast end of Otero Mesa to the northwest, we encountered some heavy precipitation that precluded a couple of planned stops in ungrazed black grama grassland patches that have been designated "Areas of Environmental Concern" by the BLM. Despite deteriorating weather and a paucity of birds, most of the participants were grateful for the opportunity to see this unique landscape that is planned for fragmentation and destruction by the oil and gas industry.

*Walt Whitford*

## VFW Post Supports Audubon Adventures

In the Winter 2003 statewide newsletter, we reported the generous donation of \$400 to the Audubon Adventures program by VFW Post 1389 in Elephant Butte. In January, they decided to more than double their donation, and contributed an additional \$500 to provide these educational materials to schools in their area. On behalf of the more than 20 classrooms who will benefit from their generosity, MVAS sincerely thanks the VFW for their interest and support.

## Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

## Lecture & Photography Exhibit

by Subhankar Banerjee

Friday, April 2  
7:30 PM

NMSU Corbett Center Auditorium



### Bird Notes

| Species                   | Date       | Location              | Observers    |
|---------------------------|------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| Anna's Hummingbird        | 10-20-1-21 | Las Cruces            | LS           |
| Harris's Hawk             | 1-10       | Alamogordo            | MS           |
| Long-tailed Duck          | 1-10       | Holloman              | MS           |
| Eastern Bluebird          | 1-10       | Radium Springs        | MS/JZ        |
| Long-billed Curlew        | 1-12       | Uvas Valley           | MS/JZ        |
| Common Grackle            | 1-14       | Radium Springs        | MS/JZ        |
| Eastern Phoebe            | 1-15       | Radium Springs        | MS/JZ        |
| Merlin                    | 1-19;2-23  | Leasburg; Las Cruces  | RH/JM;SWH    |
| Cedar Waxwings            | 1-24       | Percha                | RH/JM        |
| Western Bluebirds         | 1-24;2-10  | Percha;Radium Springs | RH/JM; MS/JZ |
| Hutton's Vireo            | 1-29       | Radium Springs        | MS/JZ        |
| Cattle Egret              | 2-2;2-12   | Las Cruces            | DM; NS       |
| Am. White Pelican         | 2-2        | Caballo               | RH/JM        |
| Bald Eagle                | 2-2        | Percha and Caballo    | RH/JM        |
| Hairy Woodpecker          | 2-2        | Percha                | RH/JM        |
| White-breasted Nuthatch   | 2-10       | NMSU                  | RP           |
| Winter Wren               | 2-11       | Mesilla Dam           | GE           |
| Eurasian Collared-Dove    | 2-14       | Anthony               | BHH          |
| Lewis's Woodpecker        | 2-15       | Dona Ana              | JH           |
| Mew Gull                  | 2-16       | Sunland Park          | JP           |
| California Gull           | 2-16       | Sunland Park          | JP           |
| Black-crowned Night-Heron | 2-18       | WSTF                  | JD,HH,AS     |
| Lincoln's Sparrow         | 2-29       | Las Cruces            | LS           |

Observers: Jim Dawson, Gordon Ewing, Barbara/Harold Harrison, Sue/Wally Hill, Robert Hull/Jackye Meinecke, John Hyndman, Darrell Mott, Jim Paton, Ralph Preszler, Amanda Skarsgard, Lorraine Schulte, Marcy Scott/Jimmy Zabriskie, Nancy Stotz

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

New Mexico Rare Bird Hotline 505-884-3269  
or <http://www.nmosbirds.org>

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      |                  | vacant |          |
| Vice-president | Guy Powers       |        | 373-3843 |
| Secretary      | Donna Wood       |        | 525-8704 |
| Treasurer      | Barb Rodriguez   |        | 523-1548 |
| Board (02-04)  | Harold Harrison  |        | 522-6199 |
| Board (02-04)  | Richard Bischoff |        | 894-6083 |
| Board (03-05)  | Alan Krueger     |        | 532-1036 |
| Board (03-05)  | Sue Hill         |        | 382-9758 |
| Board (04-06)  | Tim Lawton       |        | 522-2056 |
| Board (04-06)  | Nancy Stotz      |        | 521-8087 |
| Past President | Walt Whitford    |        | 521-1358 |

**COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

|                    |                  |                |          |
|--------------------|------------------|----------------|----------|
| Audubon Adventures | Lorraine Schulte |                | 524-7029 |
| Audubon Council    | Richard Bischoff |                | 894-6083 |
| Delegates          | Guy Powers       |                | 373-3843 |
| Conservation       | Bob Tafanelli    |                | 526-9380 |
| Education          | Donna Wood       |                | 525-8704 |
| Field Trips        | Donna Wood       |                | 525-8704 |
| Programs           |                  | board at large |          |
| Membership         | Harold Harrison  |                | 522-6199 |
| Newsletter Editor  | Nancy Stotz      |                | 521-8087 |
| Publicity          | Jackye Meinecke  |                | 524-1886 |

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/).

**Education Highlights**

By Donna A. Wood

February has been an active month for the education committee. Our Basic Bird Watching Class moved to the new DABCC East Mesa Campus. Our class was one of eighteen very enthusiastic new birders. A big thank you to Lorraine Schulte, Sue and Wally Hill, Nancy Stotz, Tim Lawton, Storm Sermay, Guy Powers, Barbara Rodriguez, Walt Whitford, and Wendy Davis, for their help in the classroom and in the field. We look forward to having our new birders take an active part in our Mesilla Valley Audubon Chapter.

Wendy Davis and Donna Wood joined Ken Barragan, our state education manager, out on the dry river bed twice in February. Ken was at Columbia Elementary School for a week and also at Hermosa Elementary School for a week teaching about "Birds of the Bosque." Each week culminated on Friday at La Llorona Park with the students looking for birds and participating in a Migration Game.

Lorraine Schulte has been working hard recently promoting our Audubon Adventures program. This program has been made available to all 4<sup>th</sup> graders in Las Cruces and also in Alamogordo, White Sands and Truth or Consequences. Due to the generosity of the VFW 1389 in Elephant Butte we hope to expand the program to more schools in that area.

If you would like to become active on the education committee, please contact Donna Wood at 525-8704 or email her at [donnacamino@yahoo.com](mailto:donnacamino@yahoo.com).

*Roadrunner Ramblings* is published six times a year: January, March, May, September, and November. Submissions are welcome; please email copy to [nstotz@zianet.com](mailto:nstotz@zianet.com), or call for mailing information. **Next deadline: April 24.** Printed by **insta-copy printing** on 30% kenaf, 70% PCW recycled chlorine-free paper. Images, except Dale Zimmerman's roadrunner, are from IMSI's Master Clips/Master Photos® Collection.

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