

ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

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Refuge System Needs Your Help

New Mexico is home to spectacular natural resources, including seven National Wildlife Refuges. Bosque del Apache NWR, where as many as 14,000 Sandhill Cranes and 32,000 Snow and Ross's Geese winter each year, is well-known, even to the most casual of birders.

Closer to home, we have the San Andres NWR, which protects 90 square miles of the rugged mountain chain north of San Augustine Pass. Although public access to this refuge is limited because it is surrounded by military land, the refuge is very important to wildlife—it is home to New Mexico's largest herd of endangered Desert Bighorn Sheep, and it has been designated an Important Bird Area by Audubon New Mexico because of its spring-fed riparian habitats and breeding populations of several species of concern.

But deep budget cuts from Congress threaten these sites, and NWRs nationwide.

Southwestern wildlife refuges need an annual increase of \$1.6 million just to meet rising salary and benefit costs. New Mexico refuges alone need a \$491,000 annual increase just to retain current services. But years of flat budgets coupled with rising fixed costs such as fuel, electricity, and cost of living increases, have forced the US Fish and Wildlife Service to destaff and divert resources from some refuges.

Under the new workforce restructuring plan, New Mexico refuge staffing will be reduced by 20 percent from 2004 levels. With the permanent loss of refuge managers, biologists, maintenance personnel, and administrative professionals, New Mexico refuges will be forced to cut educational programs, close offices, allow equipment and visitor infrastructure to fall into disrepair, and completely eliminate habitat management and monitoring of endangered species at certain refuges. Under the new plan, only one refuge will provide adequate biological services for wildlife and educational programs for visitors, while six refuges in New Mexico will suffer the effects of reduced or no staff.

In order to forestall such staff reductions, the refuge system needs increased funding. The Coopera-

(continued on page 4) See Refuges

President's Message

by Gill Sorg, MVAS President

As some of you know I am working in Colorado on a Mountain Plover project. I will be back in Las Cruces in June.

I was invited to attend The Clean Water Network workshop in Washington DC in February by National Audubon. We were shown what has happened to the Clean Water Act (CWA) over the past 6 years because of Supreme Court decisions. I met with our New Mexico delegation, Domenici, Bingaman, Pearce and Udall, to ask them to support a new bill called The Clean Water Authority Restoration Act of 2007. It will rightly define all the waters in the US for protection under the CWA.

As the last year shows many issues are being advocated across the country concerning conservation of wildlife and habitat. We all like the monthly programs of spectacular pictures of birds and other wildlife. Stories of unique species and places where the birds, mountain lions, bears and many other animals doing the unique behaviors they do, living in interesting places are fun to see at meetings and to visit on our travels and field trips.

But all this would not be possible if it were not for the efforts of members who write letters, attend meetings, make phone calls, and all the other little things to help conserve our environment. Many of you have put forth a Herculean effort and contributed greatly towards these goals and the birds, flowers and the other wildlife have you to thank for their survival. But our elected officials have heard from the same people too often and tend to ignore them after several or even just a few contacts. They need to hear from new voices to make an impact on their choices. If you haven't called, written or had other contact your representatives at the local all the way up to Washington DC, I urge you to do so. It will have the most significant impact on their choices. Issues to speak up about include:

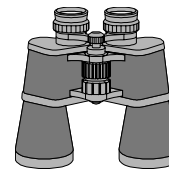
- Doña Ana County Wilderness and the Citizen's Proposal Funding for the US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Otero Mesa and petroleum exploration moratorium
- All threatened and endangered species
- Clean Water Authority Restoration Act

Speak up for the wildlife because they cannot speak for themselves.

Annual Potluck May 16

Please plan to attend our annual Spring Potluck, to be hosted once again by charter member Lorraine Schulte. During the potluck, we will also be raffling off a couple of beautiful books recently donated to the chapter.

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.



Birdathon 2007

Mark your calendars! Spring is here and so is Birdathon, our biggest yearly fundraiser.

This event, which will be held from now through May 15, raises the money to support our local educational projects such as Audubon Adventures.

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 from \$.10 to \$1.00 per bird species. 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 the Birdathon weeks, 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 Barb Rodriguez (523-1548 or bkrod1@aol.com), if you would like to participate or if you need more information.

Teams are forming now—Don't be left out!

Environmental Education Award

Mesilla Valley Audubon Society is happy to announce the tenth annual recipient of the Lorraine Schulte Excellence in Teaching Award. This award is given to teachers who have emphasized conservation practices and positive ways to protect our environment in their classrooms.

This year's award goes to Edward White, a third grade teacher at Mesilla Park Elementary School. Mr. White worked with his students to establish a recycling program at their school; revenues generated by the recycling program are invested in improvements to the Center Garden at the school. Mr. White's students also noticed wasteful electricity use on their campus and created educational materials to encourage others to turn off unnecessary lights.

Mr. White was nominated for this award by Lillian Durran and the Mesilla Park Elementary School principal, Nancy Ayers.

JOIN NOW!

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

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Q54
7XCH

Send this form and your check to:

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

RENEWALS

National Members: NAS will send you renewal notices.

Chapter Members: Check your mailing label. If you see a C followed by a month and year code, you are a Chapter Member. The month and year code indicates the month your membership expires.

Audubon Celebration 2007

Co-sponsored by Arizona Audubon Council and Audubon Arizona
Sept. 14th-16th Fiesta Inn Resort, Tempe AZ

- **Speakers to include:** *John Flicker*, President and CEO of the National Audubon Society, and *Jerry Jackson*, renowned ornithologist and author.
- **Important Bird Area** training on Friday.
- **A variety of Sunday field trips** such as Rio Salado, Gilbert Riparian Preserve, Tres Rios, Boyce Thompson Arboretum and more...

Conference Registration is \$85 per person (includes box lunch, banquet dinner, attendance for all Saturday workshops and Sunday field trips ~ Friday workshops extra). For further details and to request a registration packet, call **Donna** at **602-468-6470** or email egret@cox.net. Early registration is encouraged.

Field Trip Report

Bird Notes

Species	Date	Location	Observers
Lewis's Woodpecker	03/01	Mesilla	KS
N Rough-winged Swallow	03/01	Mesilla Valley Bosque Park	KS
Cliff Swallow	03/01	MVBP	KS
Tree Swallow	03/01	MVBP	KS
Common Yellowthroat	03/01	MVBP	KS
Swamp Sparrow	03/01	MVBP	KS
Green-winged Teal	03/01; 03/05	MVBP; Swan Pond	KS
Cinnamon Teal	03/01; 03/10	MVBP; Bosque del Ap	KS; BP
Sora	03/01	MVBP	KS
Savannah Sparrow	03/01; 03/24	MVBP; Animas Creek	KS
Turkey Vulture	03/04	Mesilla Park	KS
Cinnamon Teal	03/05; 03/24	Swan Pond; Nutt-Hatch	KS
Blk-crowned Night Heron	03/05	Swan Pond	KS
Spotted Sandpiper	03/05	Swan Pond	KS
Bald Eagle	03/05	Salem/Garfield	KS
Cackling Goose	03/05	Percha	KS
Grtr White-fronted Geese	03/05	Percha	KS
Canada Geese	03/05	Percha	KS
American Wigeon	03/05	Percha	KS
Common Merganser	03/05	Percha	KS
Black-tailed Gnatcatcher	03/07	Mesilla; Las Cruces	KS; SWH
Rufous-crowned sparrow	03/08; 03/24	Fillmore Cny; Animas Crk	GS; KS
Sandhill Crane	03/10	Bosque del Apache	BP
Redhead	03/10	Bosque del Apache	BP
Northern Shoveler	03/10; 03/24	Bosque del Ap; Nutt-Hatch	BP; KS
Green-winged Teal	03/10; 03/24	Bosque del Ap; Nutt-Hatch	BP; KS
Swainson's Hawk	03/10; 03/17	Bosque del Ap; Las Cruces	BP; SWH
Hermit Thrush	03/11	La Mesa	BR/LS
Ferruginous Hawk	03/11; 03/24	La Mesa; Nutt-Hatch	BR/LS; KS
Prairie Falcon	03/11	La Mesa	BR/LS
Western Kingbird	03/13	Solano Dr.	BR/LS
Lark Sparrow	03/15	Las Cruces Dam	NS
Common Goldeneye	03/22	Hatch-Rincon	JH/SWH
Northern Parula	03/24	La Joya Game Refuge	NS
Long-billed Dowitcher	03/24	Nutt-Hatch	KS
Least Sandpiper	03/24	Nutt-Hatch	KS
Northern Pintail	03/24	Nutt-Hatch	KS
Gadwall	03/24	Nutt-Hatch	KS
Rough-legged Hawk	03/24	Nutt-Hatch	KS
Song Sparrow	03/24	Animas Creek	KS
Brewer's Sparrow	03/24	Animas Creek	KS
Lincoln's Sparrow	03/24	Animas Creek	KS
Long-billed Curlew	03/25	NMSU	CC
Ash-throated Flycatcher	04/03	La Mesa / San Miguel	HW
Osprey	04/04	La Mesa / San Miguel	HW
Cattle Egret	04/07	Snow Road	BR
Wood Duck	04/07	Calle de Norte bridge	BR
Osprey	04/07	Mesilla	MQ
Painted Bunting	04/17; 4/22	Las Cruces	SWH
Virginia's Warbler	04/19	Soledad Canyon	NS
Summer Tanager	04/20	Percha	NS
Lucy's Warbler	04/20	Percha	NS
Cassin's Vireo	04/20	Percha	NS
Lazuli Bunting	04/20; 04/22	Percha; Las Cruces	NS; SWH

Observers: Carol Campbell, Marcey Gillespie, Jannette Hale, Sue & Wally Hill, Bruce Pearson, Barb Rodriguez, Lorraine Schulte, Gill Sorg, Ken Stinnett, Nancy Stotz, Hope Woodward

Please report early, late, or unusual sightings to Robert Hull at 505-523-8009 or rwhull@zianet.com.

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

Mesilla Valley Bosque. March 24. About 10 people attended the field trip to the Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park. We saw a total of 50 species of birds and everyone had a great time. The weather conditions were beautiful, although the morning started out a bit chilly. One look to the east across the Rio Grande and we could see a fresh dusting of snow on the high peaks of the Organ Mountains. The morning sun slowly warmed us up to a comfortable temperature and slight breezes kept us cool for the four-plus hours we spent there.

The water levels at the park were higher than usual, likely due to the recent release of irrigation water into the Rio Grande and the 0.10" of rain that fell the day before. The high water limited where we could go on foot, but we were able to spend quality time at some good birding spots.

As a group we spent a good deal of time studying hawks and swallows and discerning how to identify each of them (we had Northern Harrier and Cooper's, Swainson's, and Red-tailed Hawks; and Northern Rough-winged, Violet-green, Cliff, and Barn Swallows). By the end of the morning I think we all got the hang of identifying some of the similar species.

The highlight of the morning was all of us being able to get real good looks at an Eastern Phoebe that's been at the Bosque for most of the winter. This bird is a bit out of its range, but a few are found during the winter along the Rio Grande from Bosque del Apache southward.

Other highlights included: many ducks (e.g., Mallard, Green-winged Teal, Cinnamon Teal, and Wood Duck), Common Moorhen, a first-of-the-season male Black-chinned Hummingbird, a calling Hermit Thrush, and great looks at migrating Turkey Vultures "kettling" their way northward. Probably the most ubiquitous, but troublesome species was the Marsh Wren; we counted at least 10 of them, but only a few of us got even a brief glimpse of one.

Species noticeably absent for this time of year or in small numbers included: Swamp and Lincoln's Sparrow (we didn't observe any Lincoln's), Eastern Meadowlark, Savannah and Vesper Sparrow (only 1 or 2 each), and Common Yellowthroat.

David Griffin

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

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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/.

(continued from page 1) **Refuges**

tive Alliance for Refuge Enhancement estimates that the refuge system faces a crippling budget backlog of more than \$2.5 billion and needs an annual increase of \$15 million just to keep pace with inflation and rising fixed costs. Funding of \$451 million for Fiscal Year 08 will return the Refuge System to a level even with its FY 04 purchasing power.

Please contact Representative Pearce and Senators Bingaman and Domenici, and ask them to ensure that the refuge system receives adequate funding.

Representative Steve Pearce
<http://pearce.house.gov/contact.shtml>
 400 N. Telshor Blvd.
 Suite E
 Las Cruces, NM 88011
 (202) 224-5521

Senator Jeff Bingaman
<http://bingaman.senate.gov/contact>
 148 Loretto Towne Centre
 505 S. Main Street
 Las Cruces, NM 88001
 (800) 443-8658

Senator Pete Domenici
<http://domenici.senate.gov/contact/contactform.cfm>
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modified from www.refugenet.org/New-issues/NWRS_Funding.html

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