

ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

Volume 23, No. 3. May/June 2001

President's Message

by Bill Jacobson, MVAS President

Spring has arrived bringing warm weather, wind and May, an active time for Mesilla Valley Audubon Society. The migrations have begun, and we have our Potluck and Birdathon. I strongly urge you to take part in both of these events. The Potluck is our annual social event and gives everyone a chance to visit in a relaxed congenial setting. It would be a good time to bring a non-member and introduce them to MVAS. Birdathon is our major fund-raiser, providing a substantial portion of our "income." You may participate by either collecting pledges then going out and viewing birds on May 5 or by pledging money to a participating member. (I would be happy to accept your pledges). Look for articles about both of these events elsewhere in this issue of *Roadrunner Ramblings*.

In this newsletter you will find a list of field trips planned from now (May) until the end of the year (December). This is something new for us and, hopefully, will allow you to better plan your birding activities. Suggestions for field trips are always welcome and should be directed to Ed Mayfield.

Another Bird Identification Class will be offered through Dona Ana Branch Community College this coming fall. Specific information will be available at a later date in the newsletter and the DABCC flyer. The class has been extremely successful in the past.

Thanks go to Joy McFarland and her committee for their work on the Lorraine Schulte Excellence in Teaching Award. I hope you had a chance to read the nice article in the April 14 *Las Cruces Sun-News*. Thanks also to those members helping with the upkeep of "our" median strip. This provides good publicity for our group as well as providing a service to the community.

We continue to receive donations (tax deductible) for Audubon Adventures. This is a great program and is funded entirely through your donations and Birdathon moneys. Donations are always welcome and may be made directly to Audubon Adventures care of MVAS and/or by being a Birdathon participant.

A reminder that we have no meetings in June, July and August though the field trips continue in June and July. Looking forward to seeing you in September.

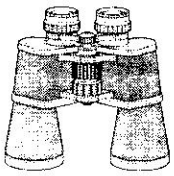
Spring Potluck May 16

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. The potluck will begin at 6:00 at Lorraine's home, 1740 Mariposa (phone 524-7029). Bring a main dish, side, 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.

Council Corner

The March New Mexico Audubon Council meeting was held at the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge. The major topics of discussion were: (1) the Reptile and Amphibian Protection bill was ready to be passed by the legislature (it subsequently did so and was signed by the Governor); (2) Hummingbird Connection will be starting up again; (3) a presentation by two candidates for the National Board of Directors; and (4) current education projects and plans for Audubon at the Davey Center and throughout the state. If you have input on education projects, please contact Lauren Parmalee at (505) 983-4609.

The next meeting will be at the Lounge at Bosque del Apache at 10:00 AM on Saturday, June 16th. A major topic of discussion will be the relationship of the Council and the Randall Davey Audubon Center under National's governance guidelines for state programs. All Auduboners are encouraged to attend.



Field Trips

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

May 12. La Luz Canyon. This trip is a pleasant one because we will be joined by some of our members from Alamogordo. We will drive up La Luz Canyon to see some of the birds that frequent the lower elevations of the Sacramento Mountains. Since the road is bordered by private property, we will do most of our birding from the road's shoulder and walking will be minimal. Birds to be seen include many raptors, warblers, Cedar Waxwings, jays, wrens, buntings and maybe even some montane species like Band-tailed Pigeons. Time and interest permitting, we may also make a run farther into the mountains near High Rolls to try for Red-faced Warblers. Those coming from the

Welcome New Members



Linda Fredrickson
Richard Atkinson
William Hendricks
Elizabeth (Buff) Brigham
Edward & Rebecca McNair

Mesilla Valley should meet at the K-Mart on Highway 70 at 6:30 AM; Alamogordo area residents can hook up with the trip by meeting the caravan at the north end of the Shopping Center on the north side of Alamogordo at 7:45 AM. For more information contact Harold Harrison (522-6199 or hharrison@zianet.com).

May 19. Gray Ranch. As of 1997, the Animas Foundation's Gray Ranch bird list numbered 264 species. Not only are there many different birds in that area, it is private property and requires special permission to go onto it. This is a chance to see how a well-managed ranch in New Mexico contributes to the natural resources while producing well-fed beef. Birds seen recently are Broad-billed, Violet-crowned, Blue-throated, Broad-tailed, Magnificent, Black-chinned and Rufous Hummingbirds. Other possibilities include Great-horned Owls, Mexican Jays, Yellow-eyed Juncos, Hutton's Vireos, 4 species of swallows, raptors and many others. We will leave at 6:00 AM on the morning of May 12 and return late that same day. This trip is limited to 12 people, so call Ed Mayfield at 382-0715 to reserve a spot for yourself and a friend.

June 9. NMSU's Vertebrate Museum. Avoid the heat of summer! Come explore the air-conditioned wonderland of the Vertebrate Museum in the Biology Department at NMSU. Jeff Brown will show us a sampling of the bird skins and taxidermic mounts housed in the museum, providing a great opportunity to get up-close and personal with a wide variety of bird species. Meet at 8:30 AM in front of the Biology Building, Foster Hall (on the southeast corner of the NMSU Horseshoe, south of Hadley Hall). For more information, contact Lorraine Schulte (524-7029 or mljs@zianet.com).

Long-term Schedule of Field Trip Dates and Destinations.

July 21 Burn Lake & Levee
August (day TBA) Gray Feathers Lodge
Sept. 8 San Andres National Wildlife Refuge
Sept. 22 Percha Dam
Oct. 6 Dripping Springs
Oct. 20 Chiricahua Mountains/
Southeastern Arizona
Nov. 3 Holloman Lake
Nov. 17 Florida Mountains State Park
Dec. 1 Bosque del Apache
Dec. 15 Christmas Bird Count

Field Trip Reports

Las Uvas Valley, February 24. The trip was modified due to weather conditions. A total of 6 hardy souls braved cold wind and snow flurries. The birding was much better than anticipated. We recorded several species of ducks (Cinnamon Teal, Northern Pintails, Gadwalls, Northern Shovelers, Green-winged Teal and Mallards), plus Least Terns, and Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs at the marsh pond on the old highway to Hatch. We passed by the Uvas Valley where all of the water sloughs are dry and headed west up Macho Creek Canyon. There were lots of Horned Larks along the grasslands and in the canyon we recorded Golden Eagles; Canyon Towhees; Townsend's Solitaires; a flock of Pinyon Jays; and large numbers of Stellar's, Mexican, and Scrub Jays. Acorn Woodpeckers, Red-shafted Flickers, lots of Common Ravens and Western Bluebirds were among the nearly 60 species we encountered.

Walt Whitford

South Valley, March 24. Our itinerary was reorganized because of a lack of water at Feather Lake, high wind, and a desire to see a life bird. Our first stop, Keystone Lake, was a feast for our eyes. Fresh food had been lain out for Buffleheads, American Wigeons, Ruddy Ducks, Short-billed Dowitchers, Snowy Egrets, Common Moorhens, Northern Shovelers, Ring-billed Gulls, and Pied-billed and Eared Grebes. The Crossroads Pond yielded a pair of Wood Ducks, numerous Gadwall, and the sod farm hosted a Loggerhead Shrike. As reported in a previous *Roadrunner Ramblings* (January-February 2001), Cave Swallows are making a small bridge their home along Highway 28, and while winding our way through farm country, we found an entire field full of American Pipits. We saw forty-nine species and were home before noon.

Ann Heying

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 National Audubon Society) to:

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

Birding Hot Spots: Las Cruces Parks

By Donna A. Wood

As in many towns, the city parks of Las Cruces offer some pretty good birding. The mature trees and shrubs of two urban parks, Young and Apodaca, provide attractive habitat to migrants and residents alike, while scattered remnant riparian vegetation, adjacent agricultural lands, and a lengthy riverside trail make La Llorona Park, the city's newest park, a productive birding destination.

Young Park

Directions: From the intersection of Main Street and Lohman, travel east for approximately 1 1/2 miles through 3 traffic lights. Turn right on Walnut Street and go 3/10 of a mile to Nevada Street. This will be just before Lynn Middle School. Go by the tennis courts and proceed 1/10 of a mile to the paved path bordered by Oleanders.

This part of the park has cedar trees and a picnic area. Deciduous trees providing homes for the birds beginning in the spring line the street. In the center of the park is a pond with a walkway around it and a bridge over the center. Spring and summer make for good birding. Grackles, robins, warblers and sparrows are almost always present. During the cooler months, wintering ducks are common on the pond.

Apodaca Park

Directions: From Main Street and Picacho Avenue head east on US 70 to Madrid Drive, which will be your first stoplight. Turn right and go to the next stoplight. The park will be directly in front of you.

Lots of mature trees provide good food and nesting sites for the birds. Part of the park abuts the Las Cruces Country Club's golf course. At times Burrowing Owls have been spotted next to the fairway. American Kestrels, Phainopeplas, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Red-shafted Flickers, robins, White-winged Doves and Mourning Doves are frequent visitors to the park. Occasionally sapsuckers and Ladder-backed Woodpeckers have been seen.

La Llorona Park "The Crying Woman"

Directions: From Interstate 10 take the Motel Boulevard exit and head north. At the intersection of West Picacho Avenue and Motel turn left (west) on US 70. Go approximately 6/10 of a mile. The park entrance is the first left after Burke Road, just prior to the bridge that goes over the Rio Grande River.

Parking and restrooms are available at the park entrance. Check out the cottonwood trees with mistletoe in them next to the parking area for Phainopeplas. Swallows are often seen darting in and out from under the bridge. Take time to walk the paved bike/walking trail along the river heading south. This path continues for several miles and at each mile there is a bench for resting. Coyote Willows line the riverbank and fields are adjacent. The fields provide wonderful habitat for meadowlarks, sparrows, thrashers, shrikes, etc. Great Blue Herons, shorebirds and ducks are plentiful in the river during the winter when the water is low. Flocks of Sandhill Cranes are often seen in the fields during the winter months.

Bird Notes

Species	Date	Location	Observer
Harris' Sparrow	12-7-4-20	Las Cruces	TS
Rosy Finches	2-20	Sandia Crest	TL, LS, SWH
Peregrine Falcon	2-23	Las Cruces	SWH
Golden-crowned Kinglet	2-24	Old Refuge	BS
Tree Swallows	2-25	Old Refuge	TL
Turkey Vulture	2-28	Hatch	BJ, WW
Long-billed Curlew	3-7	Leasburg	LS, SWH
American White Pelican	3-12	Swan Pond	SWH
Brown-headed Cowbird	3-25	Las Cruces	SWH
Black-chinned Hummer (M)	3-27	Las Cruces	DL
Black-chinned Hummer (F)	3-28	Las Cruces	TS
Swainson's Hawk	3-28	Rio Grande River	TS
White-faced Ibis	3-29	Rio Grande River	TS
Hooded Warbler	4-4	Canutillo, TX	MS, JZ
Osprey	4-7	Calle del Norte Bridge	NS
House Swallows	4-11	Crossroads Pool	MS, JZ
Bank Wren	4-13-18	Las Cruces	SWH
Scott's Oriole	4-13	Las Cruces	KS
Black-headed Grosbeak	4-14	Las Cruces	DL
Ash-throated Flycatcher	4-14	Las Cruces	TL
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	4-16	Las Cruces	TL
Black-tailed Gnatcatcher	4-16	Las Cruces	TL
Lazuli Bunting	4-16-19	Las Cruces	SWH
Franklin's Gull	4-17	WSTF	HH
Dusky-capped Flycatcher	4-17	Ft. Bliss Sewage Ponds	LS, TS, SWH
Wilson's Phalarope	4-17	Ft. Bliss Sewage Ponds	LS, TS, SWH
Indigo Bunting	4-17	Canutillo, TX	MS, JZ
Warbling Vireo	4-18	Canutillo, TX	MS, JZ
Black-and-White Warbler	4-18	Randel's Pool	MS, JZ
Virginia's Warbler	4-18	Randel's Pool	MS, JZ
Black-throated Gray Warbler	4-18	Randel's Pool	MS, JZ
Red Crossbills	4-18	Canutillo, TX	MS, JZ
Least Tern	4-20	Burn Lake	TS, LS, SWH

Harold Harrison, Sue and Wally Hill, Bill Jacobson, Diane Lawton, Tim Lawton, Lorraine Schulte, Marcy Scott, Bill Seagar, Tara Shelton, Ken Stinnet, Nancy Stotz, Walt Whitford, Jimmy Zabriskie

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

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.

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Board meetings are held, September through May, on the Thursday before the 3rd Wednesday at 5:30 PM at the Southwest Environmental Center (1494 B Bolano). All Audubon members are welcome.

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

Lorraine Schulte Excellence in Teaching Award - 2001

by Wendy Davis and Joy McFarland

On April 18, the Mesilla Valley Audubon Society presented the fifth annual Lorraine Schulte Excellence in Teaching Award. The \$200 award is named in honor of charter member Lorraine Schulte for her tireless 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 Kristi Edwards-Britch, a Science teacher at Gadsden Middle School. Runner-up is Barbara Bubel, an Environmental Science teacher at Oñate High School.

Kristi sparks her students' interest in science by bringing in a variety of guest speakers, taking students on field trips, and by using hands on learning activities in the classroom. Special activities which she organized this year included a school-wide recycling program, Astronomy Night, a Human Body Museum, and field trips to the Jornada Experimental Range, the El Paso Natural History Museum, and the Insights Museum. Her main goal is to communicate the idea that each of us has a personal responsibility for maintaining a healthy environment, and she inspires her students with her contagious enthusiasm and genuine caring for natural environments.

The Award Committee (Joy McFarland, Chair; Gordon Lowmyr; Carole Shirreffs; Wendy Davis; & Donna Wood) would like to thank MVAS members for helping obtain several top-notch candidates from whom to select this year's winner.

Birdathon Participants

Birdathon weekend is scheduled for May 5-6th. Here's hoping for a day of great weather and flocks of species! Please have your sponsor sheet completed and pledges collected and ready to turn in to Storm Seimay at the potluck on May 16th. If you will be unable to attend the potluck, or have any questions, please contact Storm at 382-3348 or stormay@zianet.com.

Roadrunner Ramblings is published six times a year: January, March, May, July, September, and November. Submissions are welcome. Please email copy to nototz@zianet.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 IMC's Master Clips/Master Photos® Collection.

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

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