

# ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

Volume 31, No. 2. Mar.-Apr. 2009

## **President's Message: Spring Growth**

by David Griffin, MVAS President

*"One swallow does not make a summer, but one skein of geese, cleaving the murk of a March thaw, is the spring"- Aldo Leopold*

Leopold's quote from "The Geese Return," (*A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*) defines what the return of a Wisconsin spring is to him. In southern New Mexico we may not have skeins of geese as our harbinger and we don't have to wait for a "March thaw," but we do have our own ways to mark Spring's arrival. Last week, I noted an early return of Northern Rough-winged Swallows and yesterday I saw three other species of returning swallows gracing the sky over the Rio Grande. We not only mark spring by arrivals of migrants, but by departures of wintering birds. Recently, Sandhill Cranes and Snow Geese began to fly north and it won't be long before Pine Siskins and Dark-eyed Juncos vacate the valley.

We think of Spring as a time of warmth, rebirth and growth. And by the sound of birdsong outside my window, I know another breeding season here. Hawks and owls now have nests with young and many passerines like Verdins are busily building nests. I've noticed growth and expansion too—not so much in the natural world, but within our organization. MVAS has added a dozen or so members to our ever-expanding chapter, and programs and field trips have been drawing record-sized attendance. Along with this growth in our organization, I hope to see an increase in the number of members who become active and support MVAS by volunteering their time, sharing their expertise, or by making monetary donations to our programs.

One of the easiest ways to support MVAS is to participate in our **2009 Birdathon**. Each Spring we hold Birdathon to raise funds for Audubon Adventures, our natural history curriculum we provide to 80+ classrooms in our area. Birdathon is Audubon's largest fundraising event and the world's largest bird-watching competition, where people or teams count birds and collect pledges from sponsors based on the number of species seen in a 24-hour period. Participants solicit pledges from chapter members, friends, neighbors, and businesses. Pledges are usually declared in terms of a dollar amount per species observed, and can be in any amount from a penny to \$100/species (or more!). Or you may have a favorite species you want to make a special pledge for, or make a donation for a bird that's on National Audubon's latest "Watchlist" of imperiled birds. Or if you prefer, you can donate any fixed amount.

Birdathon takes place the first week of May. Would you like to get involved? There are a number of ways to participate. Typically there are teams made up of MVAS members and there's always room for more. Or perhaps you'd like to form your own team or do your own Birdathon and spend all or part of a day birding? Or you can pledge to one of the teams.

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

## **MVAS Rummage Sale**

Do you have spring fever? Are you wanting to go through your house and garage to find, and get rid of, those little "treasures" you never seem to use? Wishing they could go towards a good cause? Well, MVAS is here to help you. We will be holding a rummage sale to raise funds to provide Audubon Adventure kits to elementary schools in Doña Ana, Sierra, and Otero counties. We will start accepting your generous donations on Saturday, March 21, 2009. Please contact Barb Rodriguez at 523-1548 or bkrod1@aol.com to arrange a time to deliver your items.

The sale will take place on Saturday, April 11, 2009 from 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM at 695 Cedardale Loop (Northwest corner of Spitz/Cedardale Loop behind Albertson's on N. Main St.). Please plan to join us to support MVAS and Audubon Adventures. Thank you.

## **Bird Food Recall**

A handful of suet products containing peanut meal have been voluntarily recalled due to concerns about potential *Salmonella* contamination. The products were manufactured by the **Scotts Company**, and sold under the brand names **Morning Song**, **Royal Wing**, and **Morning Melodies**.

For more info, visit the FDA's website:  
[www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)  
and search for Scotts.

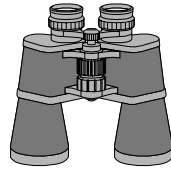
## Electronic Newsletter

Help MVAS save resources by signing up to receive *Roadrunner Ramblings* electronically, instead of in printed form. To sign up, email Nancy Stotz at

[nstotz1@comcast.net](mailto:nstotz1@comcast.net)

As each issue goes to press, you will receive an email indicating that a PDF version of the new issue is available for download at our website

[www.mvaudubon.org](http://www.mvaudubon.org)



## Field Trips

Field trips are free and open to the general public, although pre-registration is required. There may be entry fees to some areas, and driving costs are shared.

### Holloman Wetlands Important Bird Area.

**March 21.** On this first full day of Spring we'll scan the open waters at Holloman Lakes for wintering waterfowl and other water birds, look for raptors, and likely encounter migrating shorebirds. Bring a spotting scope and tripod if you have them! On our return, if there's time remaining, we may stop for a short visit at Aguirre Springs National Recreation Area.

Trip will depart at 7:00 AM from the Wild Birds Unlimited parking lot at Arroyo Plaza, 2001 E. Lohman Ave and will last until early to mid afternoon. Bring a snack and/or lunch, water, and sun protection, and be prepared for variable weather conditions. Easy walking.

**To register for this trip** notify David Griffin by March 18 at 382-2080 or [GriffinBio@gmail.com](mailto:GriffinBio@gmail.com).

### Mesilla Park & Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park.

**April 18.** On this trip we'll visit two of our local hotspots including one of New Mexico's newest state parks. Migration should be underway as will the resident breeding season, so we should have plenty to see and hear. We'll first walk the bird and birder-friendly neighborhood of Mesilla Park to look for migrants. Almost anything can show up here in spring—a rare Buff-breasted Flycatcher was photographed here a few springs ago! We'll then make our way to Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park where we'll walk the trails and scan the trees for flycatchers, warblers and vireos, scan the ponds in search of waterfowl and waders, and search the fields for raptors, sparrows, and meadowlarks.

Trip will depart at 6:45 AM from the Wild Birds Unlimited parking lot at Arroyo Plaza, 2001 E. Lohman Ave. The trip will last until mid-afternoon. Bring a snack and/or lunch, water, and sun protection, and be prepared for variable weather conditions. Easy walking.

**To register for this trip** notify David Griffin by April 15 at 382-2080 or [GriffinBio@gmail.com](mailto:GriffinBio@gmail.com).

## Programs

Membership meetings and programs are held each month at the Village at Northrise, Hallmark Building, 2882 N. Roadrunner Pkway.

Meetings begin at 7:00 PM. Programs begin immediately following the business meeting and announcements.

### Birds of Southeast Alaska. March 18.

Join us for a very special evening and discussion about the "Birds of Southeast Alaska" with Jim Silverthorn, Business Manager with Alaska Waters, Inc. Jim will show us many of the birds that can be found around Wrangell, Alaska. From the dramatic chasms of the powerful Stikine River and its rich delta, to endless coastline and the dripping temperate rain forest found in the Tongass National Forest, we're sure there will be something to please any birder! This is guaranteed to be one of our most exiting presentations this year so don't miss it!

Alaska Waters is central southeast Alaska's premier tour and charter company and they offer a menu of services valuable to visitors and locals alike. They are also one of the few licensed, US Forest Service-permitted guide services for the Anan Bear Observatory. Their trips focus on viewing and photographing bears, Bald Eagles and seals in this unique setting. Alaska Waters is an Alaska Native corporation, locally owned and operated by the Leslie Family.

### Water Use and Establishment of Juniper in Riparian Areas of Southwestern New Mexico.

**April 15.** Kathy Whiteman, a graduate student at New Mexico State University, and the winner of the 2008-2009 MVAS Richard Bischoff Memorial Scholarship will present preliminary findings from her research. Within the last century, woody plant encroachment has been well documented around the globe. More locally, juniper expansion into semi-arid grassland and shrub steppe communities has received considerable attention, although there has been little to no examination of the expansion of juniper into riverine habitats. This talk will discuss current and historic distribution patterns of juniper within riparian corridors, as well as water use patterns of both juniper and cottonwood within the Gila and Mimbres River watersheds in southwestern New Mexico.

## 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 \_\_\_\_\_

C9ZQ540Z

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.

## Field Trip Reports

**Broad Canyon Ranch. January 24.** Over forty people took the opportunity to join us for the first public trip to New Mexico State Park's newest acquisition: Broad Canyon Ranch. This park is located in the heart of Selden Canyon, and NM State Parks took ownership just 4 days prior to our trip. The park is not yet open to the public. Despite morning fog and low numbers of birds we enjoyed a great day exploring this fabulous place along the Rio Grande. After birdwatching along the river and at Swan Pond, a dozen people joined me for a 3-hour cross-country hike through the desert uplands west of Swan Pond. A total of 45 species was observed for the day—most were seen along the Rio Grande and at Swan Pond. Highlights include: Black-crowned Night-heron, Golden Eagles, Wilson's Snipe, Great

Horned Owl, Loggerhead Shrike, House Wren, Western Bluebird, Green-tailed Towhee, and Lincoln's Sparrow.

Thanks to Evaristo "Skeeter" Giron at Leasburg Dam State Park for assistance and his timely action for approving the trip.

**Percha and Caballo State Parks. February 23.** Twenty-three spent a full day visiting two hotspots along the Southwest New Mexico Birding Trail (Points 34 & 35): Percha Dam and Caballo Lake State Parks. These two places offer some of the best bird watching opportunities in southern New Mexico during any time of year. On our return trip late in the day we stopped off at Swan Pond for a quick look at some waders and waterfowl.

A total of 71 species was observed for

the day—most were seen at Percha (53 species) and Caballo (42 species), but Swan Pond was the only place we saw Black-crowned Night-Herons. Other highlights include: Harlan's Hawk, Bald Eagle, Inca Dove, Vermilion Flycatcher, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Tree Swallow, Mountain, Western, and Eastern Bluebirds, Slate-colored Junco, Bewick's Wren, and Common Merganser.

**Thanks** to those who attended and shared their vehicles. A full list of species observed on either trip is available. Just contact David Griffin: 382-2080 or email [GriffinBio@gmail.com](mailto:GriffinBio@gmail.com).

*David Griffin*

### All New Mexico Audubon Gathering April 4, 2009

Open to all Audubon  
members. Activities to  
include:

- Habitat Restoration
- eBird training
- Chapter Updates
- Strategic Planning
- Bird Walk

For more info, and to register, call  
505-983-4609 x 24 or visit  
<http://nm.audubon.org/>

### Welcome New Members



Lupe Flores  
Linda Tuininga  
Susan Pelley  
P. Jones  
Peggy Davis  
Barbara Bennett  
James Flores  
Karen Hall  
Robin Gibbs  
Jeanne Wurgler  
Sara Leuckel  
John Griffith  
Michael McLane  
Moira & Daniel Moga  
Michael & Diane Lilley

### Bird Notes

Species	Date	Location	Observers
Long-tailed Duck	1/09	Holloman Lakes	DG
Ring-necked Pheasant	1/09	Mesilla valley Bosque SP	JD
Anna's & Rufous Hummers	1/12	Buena Vida Park	HH
Lesser Goldfinch	1/21	High Range	GW
Red-headed Woodpecker	1/30	Holy Cross Retreat	BE
Anna's Hummingbird	1/31, 2/07	Las Cruces	KS, NS
Black-tailed Gnatcatcher	1/31	Las Cruces	KS
Green-tailed Towhee	1/31	Las Cruces	KS
Red-tailed Hawk - White	1/31	MVBSP	CJ
Turkey Vulture	2/06	Las Cruces	BR
Common Merganser	2/07	Burn Lake	BR
Great Blue Heron	2/07	Burn Lake	BR
Ring-billed Gull	2/07	Burn Lake	BR
Loggerhead Shrike	2/07	Calle del Norte	BR
Peregrine Falcon	2/07	MVBSP	CJ
Broad-billed Hummingbird	2/13	Radium Springs	MS
Tree Swallow	2/13	Radium Springs	MS
Western Bluebird	2/13	Radium Springs	MS
Red-winged Blackbird	2/14	High Range	GW
N. Rough-winged Swallow	2/18	Las Cruces Dam	NS
Harris's Hawk	2/22	MVBSP	CJ
Northern Goshawk	2/22	MVBSP	CJ
Osprey	2/22	MVBSP	CJ

Observers: John Douglas, Bruce Ernst, CJ Goin, David Griffin, Harold Harrison, Barb Rodriguez, Lorraine Schulte, Marcy Scott, Ken Stinnett, Nancy Stotz, Gerri Wood

Please report early, late, or unusual sightings to Robert Hull at  
575-523-8009 or [rwhull@zianet.com](mailto:rwhull@zianet.com)

New Mexico Rare Bird Hotline  
<http://www.nmbirds.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	David Griffin	382-2080
Vice-president	Alan Krueger	532-1036
Secretary	Frankie Lerner	373-0857
Treasurer	Guy Powers	373-1891
Board (07-09)	Barb Rodriguez	523-1548
Board (07-09)	Valerie Endruweit	373-0530
Board (08-10)	John Douglas	541-0133
Board (08-10)	Lorraine Schulte	524-7029
Board (06-08)	Carol Campbell	640-1660
Board (06-08)	Sue Hill	382-9758
Board (06-08)	Gill Sorg	541-0577

**COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

Audubon Adventures	Lorraine Schulte	524-7029
Audubon Council	Guy Powers	373-1891
Delegates	(1 vacancy)	
Conservation	Bob Tafanelli	526-9380
Education	vacant	
Field Trips	David Griffin	382-2080
Programs	board at large	
Membership	Guy Powers	373-1891
Newsletter Editor	Nancy Stotz	521-8087
Publicity	Storm Sermay	382-3348

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.mvaudubon.org](http://www.mvaudubon.org)

(continued from page 1) **Message**

My team plans to count birds from the Pecos River to the Rio Grande and we've set a goal of 150 species! So this Spring I'm asking you to continue the growth in MVAS and our Audubon Adventures program by pledging or participating in Birdathon. To make a pledge, sponsor or form a team, contact me (382-2080, [GriffinBio@gmail.com](mailto:GriffinBio@gmail.com)) or John Douglas (541-0133, [jlddouglas@zianet.com](mailto:jlddouglas@zianet.com)). For more info visit our website: [www.mvaudubon.org](http://www.mvaudubon.org) or National Audubon's <http://www.audubon.org/bird/birdathon/>.

**MVAS Offers Teaching Award**

Mesilla Valley Audubon Society is offering the 12th annual Lorraine Schulte Excellence in Teaching Award of \$200. This award recognizes excellence in environmental education for teachers of any grade, kindergarten through 12th grade.

Any person who feels a teacher has excelled in this area can nominate a teacher, or teachers can nominate themselves for the award, by submitting an application. Applicants are asked to list the objectives of the program they would like to be considered, with a brief description of teaching techniques, program activities, and a simple evaluation.

Deadline is March 20. The award will be presented at MVAS meeting on April 15th.

To view the application visit our website at [www.mvaudubon.org](http://www.mvaudubon.org) (click on the January 2009 link on the newsletter page). For more information call Valerie Endruweit at 575-373-0530 or email [endruweit@msn.com](mailto:endruweit@msn.com).

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