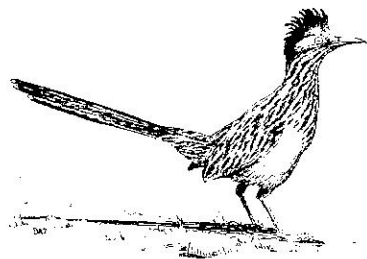


# MESILLA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY



## ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

Volume 20, No. 1 January/February 1998

### FOR SALE: A VERY SPECIAL PLACE

by David Henderson, Randall Davey Audubon Center

It doesn't often happen that we get a chance to work on something that will have a lasting impact on the landscape. However, Senator Bingaman's recently proposed bill to purchase the Valle Grande in the heart of the Jemez Mountains is just such an opportunity.

The Valles Caldera came into existence about 1.2 million years ago, following the second of two cataclysmic volcanic eruptions spaced about 300,000 years apart. In all, more than 100 cubic miles of material were ejected, placing these eruptions among the largest known. Left in their wake was a caldera 12-15 miles in diameter, forming roughly a circular shape. Within the caldera, several volcanic domes formed long after the great eruption, resulting in what we know today as Redondo Peak, Cerro del Media, and Cerro del Abrigo. The East Fork of the Jemez and San Antonio and Redondo Creeks each has their headwaters within the caldera. From Highway 4 you can only see the Valle Grande. This is a teaser of what the Valles Caldera has to offer.

There is no question that human history has been tied to this area for thousands of years, beginning with Native American use of the Jemez range. In 1860, the United States granted the 94,812 acre Baca Location No. 1 to the heirs of Luis Maria Cabeza de Vaca to settle a dispute involving conflicting claims near Las Vegas, New Mexico. The Cabeza de Vaca family ownership continued until the turn of the century. Over the next half century, the ranch changed hands a few times. In 1962, James Patrick Dunigan purchased the ranch and his heirs own it today.

Prior to the 1962 purchase by Pat Dunigan, there was an attempt by New Mexico Senator Clinton Anderson and Congressman Joseph Montoya to pass legislation to purchase the

property for inclusion into the National Park Service system. Unfortunately, that attempt failed and the property, managed as a summer pasture for livestock and elk hunting, has been in private hands ever since.

That may change if Senator Bingaman has his way. In October, the Senator introduced legislation that would authorize Congress to negotiate the purchase of this treasured property. The bill, though not perfect, has been the motivation for those of us interested in protecting special places to begin to dream again. As written, the bill would allow the Congress to purchase the Baca Location No. 1 from the Dunigans at fair market value. The property would then be managed, at least initially, by the U.S. Forest Service. The concern with this bill is that it was written in broad, general terms. It provides no management guidelines nor interim protection for the land's myriad of resources while a long-term management plan is developed.

Clearly, as this bill moves, some vital changes must be made to guarantee the protection of this unique property.

There is much to be excited about with this new development in the Jemez. Imagine sitting in one of the caldera's valleys on a cool fall night, listening to the bugling of a male elk belonging to New Mexico's largest herd, or trying your luck fishing for trout on the San Antonio Creek. There is no question that securing the caldera for the public will be a priority for New Mexico Audubon. Once purchased, we will diligently work to ensure this jewel in the Jemez be managed to enhance its value for all creatures. I encourage you to let Senator Bingaman know that you appreciate his first step towards protecting the Valle Grande. I also hope you will urge him to include stronger language in his bill that will guarantee a protected future for this amazing place in the New Mexico landscape.

*"human history  
has been tied to  
this area for  
thousands of  
years"*

## COW FREE, FINALLY!

*from Barbed Wire, the publication of  
Gila Watch*

Last word from the Forest Service is that the Diamond Bar grazing allotment's 145,000 acres are cattle free, except for one lone, wandering bull.

Next spring, for the first time in over a century, the thousands of root suckers which sprout each year at the base of the Diamond Bar's last old cottonwoods won't be chomped and stomped by cattle. For the first time in over a century, these will be young trees that will flourish, guaranteeing that some day these streams will once again shelter the iridescent copper and gold Gila trout beneath grassy, tree-lined banks.

Gila Watch is still closely monitoring the eleven miles of Main Diamond and South Diamond creeks the Forest Service claims aren't "riparian." Our lawsuit over these stream reaches is still active and we've proposed waiting two growing seasons, then going out with the Forest Service to take a look. Thousands of cottonwoods won't lie!

Help us help the Diamond Bar. The cows are gone, but due to years of Forest Service mismanagement and failure to quickly kick off the 2000 illegal cows that digested much of the wilderness over the past two years, Diamond Bar streams suffered severe damage during last fall's heavy rains. With riparian areas grazed to the bone, the Gila East Fork "blew out", ripping up giant cottonwoods, undercutting streambanks, flooding a home downstream with two feet of mud, and unearthing coffins from an old cemetery.

The East Fork needs your help. Next summer, Gila Watch will plant thousands of willow slips to stabilize raw banks and aid the healing process. Please come help if you can. Contact: Gila Watch, PO Box 309, Silver City, NM 88062.(505-388-2854)

## REFUGES

On Wednesday, October 8, President Clinton signed into law the National Wildlife Refuge Improvement Act. For the first time, the Refuge system has a clear mission statement and wildlife conservation is finally recognized as the primary purpose for establishing refuges. This is a tremendous victory for the refuge system. NAS President John Flicker joined a small group of interested parties for the signing at the White House.

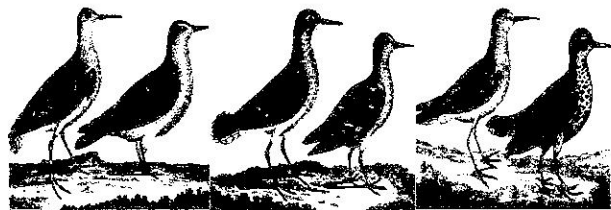


## FIELD TRIPS

*Please be prepared for winter weather. Layered clothing, sun screen, and water are always good ideas.*

**January 17, Saturday. Hatch/Uvas Valley.** We will start birding at the Rio Grande bridge near Hatch to look for wintering shorebirds and riparian species. After scouting the river banks, we will head west to the grasslands of the Uvas Valley. A previous trip to this area of Luna County offered views of many Sandhill Cranes, hawks, sparrows, longspurs, and even waterfowl. Bring lunch. We should return by 3 PM. Meet at the Hwy 70 KMart at 7 AM. Call Tim Lawton at 522-2056 for more information.

**February 21, Saturday. Palomas Marsh/Animas Creek Area.** Join Bill Jacobson at 7:30 AM at the Hwy 70 KMart to search for wintering songbirds and raptors. Recent winters in the Animas Creek area have hosted Lewis' and Red-headed Woodpeckers, Western Screech-Owls, and Hammond's and Vermilion Flycatchers. Resident birds include Wild Turkey, Acorn Woodpecker, Bridled Titmouse, and Lesser Goldfinch. Call Bill at 382-6877 for more information.



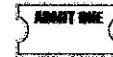
## NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING AND ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS

The annual election meeting for officers and board members will be January 21, 1998 (our regular meeting night). The nominating committee has proposed the following slate of officers and board members: president, Bill Jacobson; vice-president, Tim Lawton; secretary, Sue Hill; treasurer, Mary Lou Wallace; board members Ed Mayfield and Jennifer Atchley; delegates to the New Mexico Audubon Council, Jennifer Atchley and Storm Sermay.

Officers are elected for one-year terms, board members for three-year terms, and delegates to the Audubon Council for two-year terms.

Nominations will be accepted from the floor at the meeting. Please plan to attend and make your vote count! Also, if you would like to become more involved as an Audubon activist, this is a good time to meet officers and to volunteer help on various committees such as conservation, education, or programs.

## PROGRAMS



*Programs and general meetings are held the 3rd Wednesday of each month, September through April, at Good Samaritan Village, Social Center, 3011 Buena Vida Cir, Las Cruces (May's date and place vary.) Programs begin at 7:30 PM. Announcements, news, and information begin at 7 PM preceding the program.*

**January 21. The World Of The Crossbill: Why Are There So Many Species and What Threatens Them?** Craig Benkman will discuss his research on various morphological and behavioral adaptations of crossbills for feeding on conifer seeds. Is each crossbill specialized on a single species of conifer? What characterizes these conifers? What are the consequences of certain forestry practices? Find out about the important role that red squirrels play in crossbill ecology and evolution. Come and learn about a new species of crossbill that Craig found last summer.

**February 18. Member Participation Night.** Bring slides (no more than 10, please) to share your photography successes (or failures) with other members. We will share tips on photography and hints on identifying field marks. A fun night to just discuss birds and learn from others.

## FIELD TRIP REPORT

**Dripping Springs, December 20.** Six participants (including two people who had not been on one of our field trips before) spent a calm, sunny day at Dripping Springs seeing 30 species of birds and working on our birding skills. The day was much warmer than expected which gave us an excellent opportunity to observe some species at length and concentrate on their field marks. Many of the birds were very cooperative! After a morning of birding we enjoyed a picnic lunch. One of the highlights of the day was a sighting of a Mountain Bluebird. *Sue Hill, trip leader*



### Bird Notes

### Nov-Dec 1997

Winter Wren	Nov 7	Las Cruces	KS
Anna's Hummingbird	Nov 7	Las Cruces	TL
Eastern Bluebird	Nov 8	Mesilla	VB
Orange crowned Warbler	Dec	Las Cruces	LS
Sora	Dec 5	Ft. Bliss	VB
Eastern Bluebird	Dec 6	Dripping Springs	Group
Merlin	Dec 6	Hachita	VB
White-winged/Rock Dove hybrid	Nov	Las Cruces	BJ
Cassin's Finch	Dec 18	Las Cruces	EW
Yellow bellied Sapsucker	Dec 19	Elephant Butte	TL
Rock Wren	Dec 20	Las Cruces	LS
Harris Sparrow	Dec 20	Las Cruces	TL, BS
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	Dec 20	Las Cruces	BI
Chestnut-collared Longspur	Dec 20	Las Cruces	KS
Red-tailed (Harlan's) Hawk	Dec 20	Las Cruces	TL, BS
Ferruginous Hawk	Dec 20	Las Cruces	TL, BS
Neotropic Cormorant	Dec 20	Burn Lake	Group
Savannah Sparrow	Dec 20	Burn Lake	Group
Brown Creeper	Dec 20	Las Cruces	TL, BS
Loggerhead Shrike	Dec 24	Las Cruces Yard	LS

Observers V Burgett, B Jacobson, T Lawton, L Schulte, B Seager, K Stinnett, E Wootten

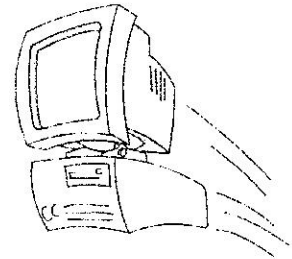
*Bird Notes* is compiled by Victor Burgett. Please report early, late, or unusual sightings to him by phone, 505-521-7098, or e-mail, vburgett@nmsu.edu

New Mexico Rare Bird Hotline 505-323-9323

## BIRDING ONLINE

Online, the NM rare bird hotline is available by subscribing to either BIRDWEST or BIRDWG05. Send an e-mail to: listserv@listserv.arizona.edu (leave the subject blank.) In the body of your message type: subscribe birdwest your name, or sub birdwg05 your name, depending on the list you want to join. Be sure to type in your e-mail address on the "from" line if your program does not do that automatically.

BIRDWEST lists rare bird alerts for many of the western states. BIRDWG05 has information primarily about birding in Arizona and New Mexico. It has information about places to go, birds to see, and is an opportunity to share information about birding these areas with other subscribers to the list.



### ABOUT "AUDUBON ADVISORY"

Because *Roadrunner Ramblings* is published every two months, we cannot keep you up to date on all the environmental initiatives and Congressional actions. *Audubon Advisory* and Action Alerts are available online through Audubon's read-only listserv. Send an e-mail message to: listserv@list.audubon.org (leave the subject blank.) In the message, type: SUB audubon-news. Be sure to include your e-mail address in the "from" line if your program does not do this for you.

Because this is a read-only list, you will not receive hundreds of possibly unwanted messages from other subscribers. You will only receive environmental information and alerts from Audubon.

The alerts will tell you who to contact if you want to comment and what Audubon's position is for each issue.

This is a great way to learn about and become involved with conservation issues.

**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	Board-at-large	
Vice-president	Vacant	
Secretary	Sue Hill	382-9758
Treasurer	Julie Prior-Magee	525-9424
Board (95-97)	Tim Lawton	522-2056
Board (95-97)	Ken Stinnett	522-2919
Board (96-98)	Victor Burgett	521-7098
Board (96-98)	Margaret Morey	527-1155
Board (97-99)	Bill Jacobson	382-6877
Board (97-99)	Maxine Perkins	524-1529
Past President	Storm Sermay	382-3348

### COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Audubon Adventures	Lorraine Schulte	524 7029
Audubon Council	Storm Sermay	382-3348
	Ken Stinnett	522-2919
Conservation	Margaret Morey	527-1155
Education	Maxine Perkins	524-1529
Field Trips	Victor Burgett	521-7098
Membership	Mary Anne Thibodeau	524-4126
Newsletter Editor	Storm Sermay	382-3348
Programs	Vacant	
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, 1494A S. Solano Dr, Las Cruces NM 88001. All Audubon members are welcome.

### 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 7XCH8

Membership includes the publications *Audubon* and *Roadrunner Ramblings*.

Send this application and your check (made payable to NAS) to:

**Membership, MVAS, PO Box 3127,  
 Las Cruces NM 88003**

## COUNCIL CORNER

by Storm Sermay

As a delegate to the NM Audubon Council, I was fortunate to attend the October Council meeting and have an opportunity to talk with John Flicker, the president of the National Audubon Society, and hear his views for the future of NAS. He discussed Audubon's narrowing of focus from a multitude of global issues to our present focus of birds, other wildlife, and habitat preservation. Mr. Flicker wants to see the development of a culture of conservation and of an environmental ethic with a strong emphasis on environmental education and public policy advocacy. Good science will be the rudder.

There are several projects underway to accomplish these goals. *Bird Source*, a partnership between the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and NAS, will be devoted to research on birds. This will be a clearinghouse and database which will consolidate information on birds and include information from Christmas Bird Counts and other information from Audubon chapters and individuals. *Bird Source*, will produce the Watch List to identify which bird populations are in trouble and will identify important bird areas.

In the area of education, NAS wants to continue development and improvement of nature centers to get more people involved with nature, to use *Audubon* magazine as an educational vehicle, and to improve Audubon Adventures to include more ages.

I think that these changes will make Audubon a more effective organization. This is an exciting time to be an active Audubon member, with NAS headed in a more productive direction to preserve our environment.

Another item of interest discussed at the Council meeting was the state bill to protect New Mexico's reptiles and amphibians from commercial collecting. This has been an ongoing Council project. The bill cannot be reintroduced in the short 1998 legislative session, but the Council will continue to work on public education in this area to generate more public support when the bill can be introduced in 1999.

Listing of the Lesser Prairie-Chicken as threatened or endangered is another continuing project. The state will be studying this and, at the federal level, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is also gathering data for federal listing. A 1997 report shows no improvement in the Prairie-Chicken status.

### BIRDING CLASS TO BE OFFERED AGAIN

MVAS is teaching another bird identification class through Doña Ana Branch Community College beginning March 26. There will be three short evening classroom sessions and three field trips. If you are interested in learning birding skills or brushing up on the skills you have, contact DABCC at 527-7527 for information on course registration.

*Roadrunner Ramblings* is published six times a year: January, March, May, July, September, and November. Contributions are welcome. Please e-mail copy to: ssermay@zianet.com, or call for mailing information. **Next deadline: FEBRUARY 25**

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