

ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

Volume 25, No. 1. January-February 2003

Rules Still Hamper Wolf Recovery

By Jean C. Ossorio

In October 2000, we watched the Francisco pack of Mexican gray wolves as they slowly worked their way across snow filled Double Cienega, in the Blue Range wolf recovery area. Alpha female 511, poster wolf for the program, her mate, a yearling female, and four pups stopped occasionally to sniff the ground. The pups rolled and wrestled in the snow like young canines everywhere.

Now 511, her mate, and five wild born pups of 2002 are targeted for recapture and incarceration. Their crime? They have established a territory that includes some land outside the designated recovery area.

In 2001 the Fish and Wildlife Service commissioned a scientific review and assessment of the recovery program as part of a three-year review process. A panel of four recognized wolf experts, selected by the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group of the IUCN (the NGO known as the World Conservation Union), and chaired by Paul C. Paquet, of the University of Calgary, released an 86 page report in June, 2001.*

The Paquet Report outlined rule changes necessary to enhance the chances of a successful recovery, including removing artificial boundaries to wolf movement, allowing direct releases into the relatively cattle-free Gila Wilderness in New Mexico, and requiring livestock operators on public lands to remove cattle carcasses to prevent wolves from becoming accustomed to eating beef. After eighteen months, the Fish and Wildlife Service has failed to propose a single rule change.

As a result, packs like the Franciscos, who have committed no transgressions other than displaying an inability to identify political boundaries, are subject to heavy-handed management. Frequent trapping of wolves in the past has resulted in shattered pack structures, missing toes and limbs, and even a wolf dead of exhaustion, following a long pursuit by helicopter net gunners.

The time for FWS officials to begin the rule change process recommended by the independent scientists is long overdue. The Francisco pack can't read maps, nor can they plead their own case. It is up to their human

Mesilla Valley Bosque Park Needs Legislative Support

Now that a feasibility study has been completed by the New Mexico State Parks Department, the Mesilla Valley Bosque Park (MVBVP) is another step closer to reality.

MVBVP is a vision developed by the Southwest Environmental Center (SWEC) for the area on the west side of the Rio Grande between the Calle del Norte bridge and Mesilla Dam, which includes the birding hot spot commonly referred to as the Old Refuge. The MVBVP vision includes significant habitat restoration as well as a trail system and environmental education facilities. During the 2003 legislative session, two proposals that could help make the park a reality will be considered by state legislators.

One is authorizing legislation for the MVBVP as a State Park, which would include an appropriation of \$50,000 to create a master plan for the park. The other is a proposal to each of Doña Ana County's state representatives and senators that they contribute a portion of their discretionary capital outlay funds (\$35,000/representative, \$60,000/senator) to provide funding necessary for land consolidation (purchase of private land and/or easements) at the site. For more information on these proposals, contact SWEC at 522-5552.

Please contact your state representative and senator and encourage them to support both proposals. During the session (which begins January 21), legislators can called in Santa Fe at 505-986-4300 or sent mail at the following address: New Mexico State Capital, Attention: Mail Room, Santa Fe, NM 87503. To find out what state senate and house districts you live in, check your Voter Registration Card or call the County Clerk's Office.

Representative Name	District	Senator Name	District
Dona G. Irwin	32	Cynthia Nava	31
J. Paul Taylor	33	John Arthur Smith	35
Mary Helen Garcia	34	Mary Jane Garcia	36
Antonio Lujan	35	Leonard Lee Rawson	37
Andrew Nuñez	36	Mary K. Papen	38
William Boykin	37		
Joseph Cervantes	52		

(continued on page 2) See *Wolves*

supporters to see that they are afforded justice and a chance to survive in the wild.

Letters supporting the rule changes proposed by the scientific panel may be sent to

Brian Kelly,
Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator
USFWS
P. O. Box 1306
Albuquerque, NM 87103

*Copies of a 13-page, abridged version of the Paquet Report are available by calling Jean Ossorio at 647-1362, or by sending your postal address by e mail to ossorios@zianet.com and requesting a copy.



Christmas Bird Count Report

by Gordon Ewing

Fifty birders participated in the Las Cruces Christmas Bird Count on December 14. They were divided into 10 groups each with an assigned area within the circle. By the end of the day 118 species of birds had been identified. This is the 7th highest count for Las Cruces. The highest Las Cruces count was 139 species counted in 1996. The total number of birds counted this year was 32016, which was the 5th highest for Las Cruces.

Nearly every year a bird or two never before counted in the Las Cruces Christmas Count is/are counted. Lately, with the national warming trend, these new birds tend not to be new for this area, but they are new for the winter here. We had two new birds this year, the Broad-tailed Hummingbird and the Barn Swallow, both quite common in Southern New Mexico in the summer.

No single bird species was reported in all ten areas within the Las Cruces Circle but 4 species were found in 9 areas. These birds were White-winged Doves, Northern (Red-shafted) Flickers, White-crowned Sparrows and House Finches.

The three top species in total numbers seen were American Crows (8852), White-winged Doves (6648) and Great-tailed Grackles (1643). The White-winged Dove population has recently exploded from a few hundred to 10 to 20 thousand in the Las Cruces Christmas Count. The count this year was about one third of the number counted last year when this circle had more White-winged Doves than any other circle in the United States.

Over the last several years I have noted that each group of birders manages to find birds that were not found within the other portions of the circle. This happened again this year. About 18% of our birds were only found in one area: North Valley, 1 unique species; Mid Valley, 5; Old Refuge, 2; South Valley, 3; University, 4; La Cueva, 8; Jornada, 1; High Range, 1; City & Parks, 3; Mesilla Park, 2; Burn Lake, 2.

Finally, 41 species have been counted in every count (28) of the Las Cruces circle, meaning that about one third of our species show up every year.

Alumni Field Trip

On December 7, 2002 a small caravan of MVAS members and alumni of the Beginning Birding ID Class traveled to Bosque del Apache for the second annual get-together. We kept in touch with each other by two-way radio and attentively watched for a Golden Eagle or some other equally exciting bird. However, we had to wait to reach the Bosque to find the first eagle, this one being a gorgeous Bald Eagle. Someone did see a Golden Eagle, so we were 100% in our eagle sightings. The American Dipper that has been making its home in the Bosque since October was probably the second-best sighting.

Due to a fog which accompanied us on much of our journey to the Bosque and which was quite dense at the Bosque, we were only able to tour the northern portion of the refuge. The number of birds seen was not large, but everyone seemed to enjoy the 63 species we did see. We rounded out the day with a lunch in San Antonio.

Wally and I would like to thank Guy Powers for arranging for a van large enough to hold most of the participants and for doing a GREAT job of driving us around the refuge. Wendy (a class alumna) and Rob Davis, were a wonderful help, and we thank Nancy Stotz for loaning us her scope. We have met many nice people through the class and wish to invite all alumni to join us for next year's trip.

Sue Hill

MVAS Offers Environmental Education Award

Mesilla Valley Audubon Society strongly believes that the best way to preserve our earth and the environment for future generations is to increase awareness in our youth and to show them how they can make a difference. The Society uses a large part of its resources of both money and time each year for education.

For the seventh year, the **Lorraine Schulte Excellence in Teaching Award** is being offered to a teacher at any grade level for his/her efforts to promote appreciation of and care for the environment. This year \$200.00 will be given to the recipient of the award. Applications

(continued on page 4) See Award

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

Bird Notes

Since no bird sightings have been listed since September, there will not be enough room for four month's listings in this edition. However, a brief accounting for September and October is provided. In September at Holloman we had Sanderling, Pectoral, Solitary, and Baird's Sandpipers, and Black Tern, while Grasshopper Sparrow, Dickcissel, Painted Redstart, Black-throated Gray and Black-throated Blue Warblers, Northern Waterthrush, Merlin, Pinyon Jay, and Osprey were among birds reported in the Las Cruces area along with Northern Goshawk at Bosque del Apache. October brought reports of Gray Catbird, Williamson's Sapsucker, American Redstart, Steller's and Pinyon Jays, Forster's Tern, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Lawrence's Goldfinch, Brown Thrasher, Cassin's Finch, Cassin's Vireo, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher in the Las Cruces area, Harris' Hawk at Bosque del Apache, and a late Common Poorwill near El Paso.

Species	Date	Location	Observers
Gray Catbird	11-2	Las Cruces	JM
Black-bellied Plover	11-6	Holloman	GE
Vermilion Flycatcher	11-10	El Paso	JP
Turkey Vulture	11-10,11-17	Las Cruces	BG
Eastern Phoebe	11-11	Radium Springs	MS, JZ
Mountain Bluebird	11-11	Radium Springs	MS, JZ
Western Grebe	11-13	Burn Lake	BR
Anna's Hummingbird	11-13-1-3	Las Cruces	LS
Fox Sparrow	11-16	El Paso	JP
Lawrence's Goldfinch	11-19	Leasburg	SWH, LS
Hooded Merganser	11-19	Swan Pond	SWH, LS
Red-breasted Merganser	11-19	Swan Pond	SWH, LS
Carolina Wren	11-20	Canutillo	JZ
Eastern Bluebird	11-24	Bosque del Apache	JG, LS
Varied Thrush	11-24	El Paso	JP
Black-thrtd Green Warbler	11-25	Radium Springs	MS, JZ
Slate-colored Junco	11-25	Radium Springs	MS, JZ
Common Ground Dove	11-30-12-2	Las Cruces	BS
Cedar Waxwing	12-11	Las Cruces	BR
Lawrence's Goldfinch	12-11	Radium Springs	MS, JZ
Red Crossbills	12-15	Mesilla Park	CB
Varied Thrush	12-21	El Paso	BZ
Common Goldeneye	1-4	Holloman	BG
Olive Warbler	1-11	Mesilla Park	BZ
Townsend's Warbler	1-11	Mesilla Park	BZ
Hutton's Vireo	1-11	Aguirre Springs	BZ
Black-tailed Gnatcatcher	1-11	Jornada	BZ

Craig Benkman, Gordon Ewing, Bill Glenn, Jill Green, Sue and Wally Hill, Joy McFarland, Jim Paton, Barb Rodriguez, Lorraine Schulte, Marcy Scott, Bill Seager, Jimmy Zabriskie, Barry Zimmer

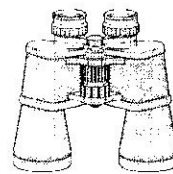
Please report early, late, or unusual sightings to Sue Hill at
505-382-9758 or hillco@zianet.com

New Mexico Rare Bird Hotline 505-323-9323



Welcome New Members

Carol Verploegh Lori Kubinski
Craig Severy Jannette Hale
Alan Krueger



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

South Valley. February 22. Ed Mayfield will lead this trip to some of the birding hotspots in the southern Mesilla Valley and western El Paso. The trip will include a visit to the A & G Turf Farm, which often hosts huge flocks of sparrows and Horned Larks in winter, sometimes including longspurs in the mix. We'll be leaving from the Bank of the Rio Grande at 7:00 AM. Contact Ed Mayfield (at mayfield@zianet.com or 382-0715) for more details.

Programs

Programs and meetings are held each month. September April, at the Village at Northrise, Hallmark Building, 2882 N. Roadrunner Pkway, Las Cruces. Programs begin at 7:30 PM. News, announcements, and information begin at 7:00, preceding the program



Banding Hummingbirds in New Mexico. February 19. Joan Day Martin, a Master Hummingbird Bander licensed through the US Department of Interior, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the NM Department of Game and Fish, will present a slide show about hummingbird banding and hummingbird identification. Joan has been banding hummingbirds since 1993, and she has banded more than 8000 hummingbirds statewide. This meeting will be a joint meeting with the Las Cruces Museum of Natural History.



*Note: During the business meeting preceding this program, we will be considering proposed by-laws changes to accommodate Chapter-Only memberships for MVAS.

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	Wall Whitford	521-1358
Vice-president	Guy Powers	373-3843
Secretary	Donna Wood	525-8704
Treasurer	Barb Rodriguez	523-1548
Board (00-02)	Wendy Davis	527-4551
Board (00-02)	Sue Hill	382-9758
Board (01-03)	Tim Lawton	522-2056
Board (01-03)	Nancy Stotz	521-8087
Board (02-04)	Harold Harrison	522-6199
Board (02-04)	Rob Davis	527-4551

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Audubon Adventures	Lorraine Schulte	524-7029
Audubon Council	Storm Sermay	382-3348
Delegates	Jack DeLong	527-9118
Conservation	Nancy Stotz	521-8087
Education	Wendy Davis	527-4551
Field Trips	Ed Mayfield	382-0715
Programs	board at large	
Membership	Harold Harrison	522-6199
Newsletter Editor	Nancy Stotz	521-8087
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 (on the downtown mall). All Audubon members are welcome.

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

(continued from page 2) **Award**

will be available at area schools in mid January. They will also be available from members of the Mesilla Valley Audubon Society. All applications must be submitted by March 1, 2003.

If you know a teacher who you think would be a good candidate for this award, please nominate them or encourage them to apply. For further information contact Donna Wood at donnacamino@yahoo.com or 525-8704.

Bird Identification Course

It's sign-up time for another MVAS Bird Identification Course for adults offered through the Community Education Program at Doña Ana Branch Community College. Knowledgeable MVAS members will help participants learn to identify local birds, find out about viewing equipment and bird books, and discover some favorite birding "hot spots."

The classroom portion will be held Tuesday evenings, February 4, 11, 18, and 25, from 7-9 PM, in the main conference room of the USDA Jornada Experimental Range Building on the NMSU campus at Knox & Frenger. There will be 2 half-day Saturday field trips on February 8 & 15, and an all-day trip to the Bosque del Apache on Saturday, February 22. The fee is \$40 per student.

This course is a fun experience for anyone wanting to know more about our wonderful, southern New Mexico birds. Al Krueger, a recent bird course grad and new Audubon member, had this to say, "The MVAS members who taught the course were terrific - patient and helpful." Thanks, Al!

Roadrunner Ramblings is published six times a year: January, March, May, July, September, and November. Submissions are welcome; please email copy to nstotz@zianet.com, or call for mailing information. **Next deadline: 23 February.** Printed by **insta-copy printing** on 50% kenaf, 50% PCW recycled chlorine-free paper. Images, except Dale Zimmerman's roadrunner, are from IMSI's Master Clips/Master Photos® Collection.

Nonprofit Organization
 US Postage Paid
 Las Cruces, NM 88004
 Permit No. 609

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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

AUDUBON ADVENTURES 2003-2004

The year 2002 was a big year for Audubon Adventures.

Many contributors made it possible for us to enroll 93 classrooms in Las Cruces, Alamogordo and Truth of Consequences. A total of 3,969 New Mexico students and their teachers are benefiting from having this excellent study material.

Audubon New Mexico created a state supplement to Audubon Adventures that focuses on the birds and wildlife of our state. The first issue of Audubon New Mexico's Wildlife guide highlights the Burrowing Owl and includes information on the little raptor's life history and habitats as well as the pressures on the population.

The supplement encourages readers to study the wildlife in their back yards and places they might visit.

This coming year 2003-2004 students will have the opportunity to study the following subjects: Grasslands, Riparian Habitat, Urban Habitat and Unique Forests.

Forty dollars will bring this program to one teacher and her students for one year. Funding for next year must be submitted before the end of the current school year. Please send your donations to Lorraine Schulte, Audubon Adventures Chairman, 1740 Mariposa, Las Cruces, N.M. 88001 by May 1, 2003. Checks should be made out to Mesilla Valley Audubon Society.

AUDUBON ADVENTURES DONATION

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

AMOUNT _____

**DO
BURROWING
OWLS
REALLY
LIVE IN PRAIRIE
DOG HOLES?**



U.S. Dept. of Fish
and Wildlife