

ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

Volume 30, No. 4. July-Aug 2008

President's Message

by David Griffin, MVAS President

As I write this about 24 hours before the official start of summer, it's hard to believe that spring has come and gone. But I must admit, it has felt like summer for quite a while. For the last week or so we've been dealing with near record high temperatures, and two nights ago I was teased by Mother Nature with a "dry" thunderstorm over my neighborhood. We all watched on June 14 and 15 as a wildfire burned portions of the Organ Mountains near Dripping Springs, and continues still on the east side of the range. The lack of rainfall this year, along with the seemingly endless spring winds and the heat, all have been tough on plants and animals, but the desert biota is adapted to these sorts of things, and now as we (hopefully) head into our regular rainy season, things will become a bit more lively again.

I'm excited for the summer and MVAS, because for the first time we're having summer programs and field trips. Last night's program was attended by about 25 people, which proves there is a demand for natural history information even in the summer months. The programs for summer and fall are still in the planning stages, but we hope to have presentations on things familiar and things not-so-familiar such as Sandhill Cranes at Bosque del Apache NWR and hummingbird adaptations to high elevations in the mountains of South America. And our field trips are planned to help us beat the heat and explore distant locations, so be sure to see the announcements inside.

If you haven't heard by now, MVAS is celebrating our 30th Anniversary this year and as part of the celebration we're having a dinner on July 11, with members and invited guest speakers (and a few door prizes too). See the announcement inside. And now that we're finished planning and organizing that event we'll begin to focus on another of our main goals for the year, which is to update and overhaul the MVAS website. We hope to have this completed by the end of the year and we're excited about the possibilities that an improved website will mean for us; for reaching out to existing members and attracting new ones, as well as sharing information about local birds and wildlife, conservation and education, and having alerts to urgent needs, field trip announcements, a calendar of events and much more.

That's all for now. I'll see you at the next chapter meeting on July 16 or field trip on July 19, and if you're new to MVAS be sure to come up and say hi. Best wishes. And oh yea, Bring on the rain!

Audubon Adventures Update

by Lorraine Schulte,
Audubon Adventures Chair

Audubon Adventures, an environmental education program targeting third- to fifth-grade students, was well-received by teachers and students again this past school year.

Thanks to donations from members, friends and Birdathon funds we will have eighty-seven classrooms enrolled again next year in Las Cruces, Alamogordo, Truth or Consequences, and Arrey.

Audubon Adventures subjects for the 2008-2009 school term will focus on "Feats of Nature" including "Migration," "Animal Builders," "Animal Defenses," and "Plants."

Audubon Adventures is inquiry-based and fun for teachers and students alike. Audubon Adventures is aligned to national and state learning standards and helps students form positive attitudes toward the natural world in the local community. Teachers use Audubon Adventures to enrich their science and language arts lessons.

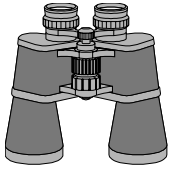
Individuals who gave Birdathon donations, and other members and friends who have helped keep this excellent program going include the ever-generous Charles Osgood, Lucia Wilcox, Robert Tafanelli, Mary Williams, Charlotte and Carl Martens, Ruth Wiser, Robert (Tito) Meyer, Daison Taylor Glace and Mark Glace, Geri Tillett, Nancy Stotz, Rob and Wendy Davis, Ann Anderson, Mary Lou Wallace, Darrell Mott, Barbara Rodriguez, Grant Brick - Marketing Director, Citizens' Bank, Helga and Abe Mendoza, and Lorraine Schulte.

Welcome New Members

Fred & June Yellon
Lynn McCalmont
Floyd Barbour
Dan Scurlock

Mary Ferguson
Elizabeth Amos
Jeffrey Cramer
David Hover





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.

Pinos Altos Mountains. July 19. Possible overnighiter. This trip will take us to even higher elevations and cooler climates than our June trip and we'll visit the following Grant County hot spots: McMillan Campground, Cherry Creek Campground,

and the road up to Signal Peak. These areas offer opportunities to observe many of the southwest's specialty species such as Greater Pewee, Mexican Jay, Painted Redstart, and Red-faced and Olive warblers.

Trip length will be all day to possibly overnight (for some members). We will try to carpool with two types of trip in mind: those who wish to bird for the day (and return by evening); and those who wish to camp at the McMillan or Cherry Creek Campgrounds, or stay at some other local hotel the night before or the night of the trip.

Easy to moderate walking for those in the campground areas; moderate to strenuous for those hiking up the Signal Peak Road (wear appropriate/suitable footwear).

Note: this trip includes Point #'s 23 & 24 along the Southwest NM Birding Trail. For logistics, see "Both trips" below.

Sacramento Mountains. August 23.

Possible overnighiter. This trip will bring us up about 4,000' from Las Cruces into the pines and spruce-fir zone and cooler temperatures. We'll visit locations like the village of Cloudcroft, the Rio Peñasco Valley, and Bluff Springs, which should yield montane species such as Mountain Chickadee, Evening Grosbeak, Red Crossbill, Western and Mountain bluebirds, Wild Turkey, MacGillivray's Warbler, and Green-tailed Towhee. And we may get lucky during the day and see something truly special like Magnificent Hummingbird or maybe even a Northern Goshawk.

Trip length will be all day (or possibly overnight for some members). We will try and carpool with two types of trip in mind: those who wish to bird for the day (and return by evening); and those who wish to camp at the Bluff Springs CG or other location, or stay at some other local hotel the night before or the night of the trip.

Note: At the time of newsletter publication the Lincoln National Forest was closed to recreation due to extreme fire danger; we may reschedule or cancel the trip if closures are still in place in August.

Both trips will depart at 6:00 AM from the Arroyo Plaza parking lot at 2001 E. Lohman Ave (meet near Wild Birds Unlimited). For participants choosing the overnight options, camping supplies, food, US Forest Service permits, fees, etc. are the

sole responsibility of the each participant. For both day-trippers and overnighiters, bring snacks and/or a lunch, plenty of water, sun protection and be prepared for variable weather conditions and the possibility of monsoon storms. Both trips will include walking and most areas are readily accessible to most people, but because of the elevation (about 7,500' to over 9,000') and some possible rough terrain, members should be prepared (wear appropriate/suitable footwear) and use caution and common sense when moving about .

For more information on either field trip, contact David Griffin at 382-2080 or griffinbio@gmail.com.

Programs

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

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



How Hummingbirds Thrive in the High Andes. July 16.

Hummingbirds seem poorly suited for high-altitude environments given their exceptionally small body size, high metabolic rate, and energetically demanding mode of flight. Yet one quarter of the 325 species of hummingbirds occur at elevations 3000 meters or above, where oxygen availability is reduced by 30% relative to sea level. The ancestor of modern hummingbirds occupied the lowland tropics, but numerous lineages independently shifted from lowland to montane habitats during the last 20 million years. This talk explores the evolutionary changes that accompanied the colonization of the high mountains, using data collected on five field expeditions to the Peruvian Andes between 2006 and 2008. Presented by Dr. Chris Witt, University of New Mexico.

Apomado Falcon Release Project in New Mexico. August 20. Angel Montoya of the Peregrine Fund will describe efforts to increase the population of this endangered species in New Mexico, through releases of falcons raised in captivity.

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.

Field Trip Reports

Mesilla and Vicinity. May 24. Sixteen people attended the trip to Mesilla to look for migrants. Although it was a bit late this year for most migrants, we were treated to large numbers of flycatchers and had great looks at singing Summer Tanagers, Bullock's Orioles and Black-headed

Grosbeaks. Other highlights included Great Egret, and an abundance of flycatchers—Olive-sided, Gray, Willow, and Cordilleran flycatchers as well as numerous Western Wood-pewees, which gave us a good chance to compare different individuals and their differing plumages.

In Mesilla Park, Valerie spotted a lone Great Horned Owl, which was perched in a large pecan tree along the canal. A little way down the canal trail I was able to refind a resident female Black-chinned Hummingbird, which was nesting above the canal. Most of the group had good scope views of the tiny nest, which was nearly hidden by the camouflage pattern of the intricate material it was constructed of. On our walk back along one of the small streets, we stopped to look at the giant trees of one residents' yard, and Valerie once again spotted owls: this time it was two recently fledged Great Horned Owls. A pair of owls has nested in the neighborhood for years and many of the locals usually know where they are, and cherish and keep an eye on "their" owls. Last year the Black-chinned Hummingbird nested within 10 feet of the Great Horned Owl's nest, and it was a real treat to see these extreme examples of avian diversity at one time!

Aguirre Springs. June 21. Fifteen people attended the trip to Aguirre Springs National Recreation Area to try and beat the heat and look for local montane species. Although we didn't cover a lot of ground and never made it up into the ponderosa pines, we were able to see or hear a couple of montane species such as Hepatic Tanager and Juniper Titmouse. Other highlights included singing Gray Vireos, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-chinned Sparrow, and Rufous-crowned Sparrow.

About half of the group met at WBU and carpooled to the east side of the Organ Mountains, where we met the rest

(continued on page 4) **Trip Reports**

MVAS 30th Anniversary Celebration Dinner

Friday, July 11, 2008 (7 to 10 pm)

Stan Fulton University Club (on
NMSU campus)

\$30/person

For information contact:
Valerie @ 373-0530, or Lorraine
@ 524-7029

Bird Notes

Species	Date	Location	Observers
Bullock's Oriole	4/23	Las Cruces	SWH
Green-tailed Towhee	4/23	Las Cruces	SWH
Hooded Oriole	4/23	Las Cruces	SWH
Scott's Oriole	4/23	Las Cruces	SWH
Virginia's Warbler	4/23	Las Cruces	SWH
Wilson's Warbler	4/23	Las Cruces	SWH
White-faced Ibis	4/25	Burn Lake	BR
Lincoln's Sparrow	4/26	Las Cruces	LH
Summer Tanager	4/26	Tortugas	SB
Indigo Bunting	4/27; 5/31	Dona Ana; Las Cruces	JH; GW
Bell's Vireo	4/28	Las Cruces	SWH
Barn Swallow	5/03	La Mesa Bosque	LS
Brewer's Sparrow	5/03	Río Grande	LS
Chipping Sparrow	5/03	Río Grande	LS
Cliff Swallow	5/03	La Mesa Bosque	LS
Gray Vireo	5/03	Las Cruces	SWH
Olive-sided Flycatcher	5/03	La Mesa Bosque	LS
Spotted Sandpiper	5/03	Río Grande	LS
Western Kingbird	5/03	Río Grande	LS
Western Tanager	5/03	Río Grande	LS
Yellow Warbler	5/03	La Mesa Bosque	LS
Yellow-breasted Chat	5/03	La Mesa Bosque	LS
Lark Sparrow	5/03; 04	Río Grande	LS; BR
Lark Bunting	5/04	Río Grande	BR
Lesser Nighthawk	5/07	Las Cruces	SWH
Bronzed Cowbird	5/08	Las Cruces	LH
Townsend's Warbler	5/08	Las Cruces	LH
Black & White Warbler	5/10	La Mesa Bosque	SWH
Orange-crowned Warbler	5/10	Las Cruces	LS
Swainson's Hawk	5/10	Las Cruces	LS
Painted Bunting	5/10; 30	La Mesa Bosque	SWH; LS, GW
Hermit Thrush	5/22	Las Cruces	SWH
Macgillivray's Warbler	5/09; 26	Las Cruces	CK; SWH
Ash-throated Flycatcher	5/30	La Mesa Bosque	LS, GW
Yellow-rumped Warbler	5/30	La Mesa Bosque	LS, GW
Warbling Vireo	5/31	Las Cruces	LH
Mississippi Kite	6/02	Dona Ana	DG
Peregrine Falcon	6/03	LC Dam	NS
Burrowing Owl	6/16	NMSU	JMRH

Observers: Susan Beck, David Griffin, Landy Hinesley, Sue & Wally Hill, Jackye Meinecke & Robert Hull, John Hyndman, Clare Kapner, Barb Rodriguez, Lorraine Schulte, Nancy Stotz, Gerri Wood

Please report early, late, or unusual sightings to Robert Hull at
575-523-8009 or rwhull@zianet.com

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

Rare Bird Alerts for NM and other states: 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
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Board (07-09)	Valerie Endruweit	373-0530
Board (08-10)	John Douglas	541-0133
Board (08-10)	Lorraine Schulte	524-7029

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Audubon Adventures	Lorraine Schulte	524-7029
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Education	vacant	
Field Trips	David Griffin	382-2080
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Membership	Guy Powers	373-1891
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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 3) **Trip Reports**

of the participants. We were fortunate that the area was open to the public—because of the recent fire at Dripping Springs, it had been temporarily closed. Every now and again we would catch a faint whiff of the burned area over on the other side of the mountains.

Shortly after we began to hike the Pine Tree Trail we came across a singing Rufous-crowned Sparrow. Wally was able to quickly get the bird centered in his scope, and we all had good looks while we studied the song. White-winged doves came dive-bombing down the slopes on their way to lower elevations, and someone noticed White-throated Swifts foraging high overhead—once or twice a swift would come swooping down the nearby canyon. Around the next bend half of the group found a bright male Hepatic Tanager perched in an oak tree. Eventually we all had great looks, and we saw this male a few more times while we stayed in the shade of a nearby oak.

Over a rise, we discovered a singing Gray Vireo, which we were able to watch from across the canyon. This uncommon species is listed as Endangered by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, and is a "Species of Greatest Conservation Need" under their Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy for New Mexico. It is a rare breeder in Doña Ana County and for the last few years there have been 1 to 3 pairs of Gray Vireos on the slopes along the Pine Tree Trail.

Thanks to all who attended and shared the use of their vehicles; we'll see you next time! A full list of species observed is available, just contact David Griffin at 382-2080 or GriffinBio@gmail.com.

Roadrunner Ramblings is published six times a year: January, March, May, July, September, and November. Submissions welcome; please email copy to nstotz1@comcast.net, or call for mailing information. **Next deadline: August 27.** Printed on 100% PCW recycled paper by **insta-copy printing**. Image credits: roadrunner, Dale Zimmerman; clip art, IMSI's Master Clips/Master Photos® Collection.

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