

# ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

Volume 24, No. 1. January/February 2002

## **Christmas Count Highlights**

Here is a summary of the 27th Las Cruces CBC, held on 15 Dec 2001. There may still be a change or two when all the paper work is completed.

**Total Species:** 121, the seventh highest for this count.

**Birds new to the count:**

Western Sandpiper - 17; Grace's Warbler - 1

**New highs for the count circle** (in addition to the two above):

Snow Goose - 9; Ross's Goose - 5 (one Ross's and one Snow summered at Burn Lake); Cooper's Hawk - 18; White-winged Dove - 19,783 (another US high, I assume); Burrowing Owl - 18; Lewis's Woodpecker - 2; Ladder-backed Woodpecker - 33; American Crow - 10,250; Tree Swallow - 14; Black-tailed Gnatcatcher - 17.

We were happy to find that the Long-eared Owls were back at Owl Gulch below the Dripping Springs Visitor Center. Also in Owl Gulch was a leucistic Ruby-crowned Kinglet. It appeared to have no black pigmentation. We were discussing its identity when it flashed its ruby crown.

*Gordon Ewing*

## **Excellence in Teaching Award Available**

The Lorraine Schulte Excellence in Teaching Award is presented by MVAS annually to a teacher for his/her efforts in teaching children to care for the environment. The amount of the cash award is \$200. Audubon members are encouraged to nominate teachers they know who have displayed their interest in environmental education. Applications will be available at the January and February meetings. March 1st is the deadline for completed applications. Call Donna Wood, 525-8704, for more information.

## **Statewide Burrowing Owl Group Forms**

The New Mexico Burrowing Owl Work Group is a volunteer collaborative effort involving government agencies, non-profit organizations, private enterprises, and individuals. Their goals include determining population trends via a volunteer monitoring system; facilitating communication among researchers, agencies, and the public; and making conservation recommendations based on their monitoring efforts. We'll have blank observation forms available at the next MVAS meeting. For more information, contact Hawks Aloft in Albuquerque at (505) 828-9455 or email [gail@hawksaloft.org](mailto:gail@hawksaloft.org).

## **Volunteers Needed for International Migratory Bird Day 2002**

*By Rob Taylor, The Nature Conservancy*

International Migratory Bird Day celebrates the incredible journeys of migratory birds between their breeding grounds in North America and their wintering grounds in Mexico, Central, and South America. This year's International Migratory Bird Day festivities will focus on areas having exceptional value for migrating birds.

In celebration, Holloman Air Force Base, White Sands National Monument, White Sands Missile Range, and The Nature Conservancy are planning birding excursions to Holloman Lake on Saturday, April 20. The lake and adjacent wetlands were recently designated by Partners In Flight as an "Important Bird Area." The event will be open to the public and will aim towards increasing public awareness of migratory birds and the importance of the Tularosa Basin as a migration corridor.

Skilled birders, especially those with spotting scopes, are needed to assist in the day's events. If you'd like to help, contact Rob Taylor of The Nature Conservancy at (505) 678-0949 or at [rtaylor@tnc.org](mailto:rtaylor@tnc.org).

## **Annual Elections**

The nominating committee has compiled the following slate of candidates for our upcoming election of officers and board members.

President: Walt Whitford  
 Vice-president: Guy Powers  
 Secretary: Donna Wood  
 Treasurer: Barbara Rodriguez  
 Board Members: Harold Harrison, Rob Davis,  
 & Tim Lawton  
 NM Audubon Council Delegates: Storm Sermay  
 & Jack DeLang

Elections will be held prior to the program at our meeting on January 16. Thanks to all who volunteered to serve MVAS in the coming year(s).



## Programs

Programs and meetings are held each month, September - April, at the Village at Northrise, Hallmark Building, 2882 N. Roadrunner Pkwy, Las Cruces. Programs begin at

7:30 PM. News, announcements, and information begin at 6:45, preceding the program.

**January 16. African Wildlife.** Jessica O'Leary, a graduate student in the Biology Department at New Mexico State University, will share with us some of her adventures from a recent working trip to Africa. Jessica worked on a research project in Katavi National Park, Tanzania with Dr. Tim Caro. The project included compiling a bird list for the park, and running transects to estimate mammal densities and to catalog tree species in the national park and surrounding areas.

**February 20. Of Rocks and Birds: Lessons From a Year of Wandering a Mobile Cordillera.** Tim Lawton, of the Geological Sciences Department at NMSU (and MVAS), will describe how he squandered his sabbatical year in search of cool birds. This talk will attempt to illuminate the link between western geology and birds, if he can divine that relationship before February 20.

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

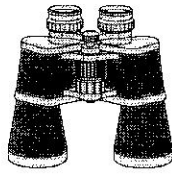
State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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



## 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.

**January 19. Feather Lake.** Winter visits to this wetland managed by the the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society may include sightings of numerous waterfowl, raptors, and sparrows. If time allows, we'll swing by the Ft. Bliss Sewage Ponds on our way home. Meet at the Bank of the Rio Grande (intersection of Telshor and University) at 7:30 AM and plan on being out until mid-afternoon. Contact Nancy Stotz (521-8087 or nstotz@zianet.com) for more details.

**February 23. Rock Hound State Park.** Near Deming, this park contains desert scrub and rocky foothill habitat surrounding the Florida Mountains. Meet at the Bank of the Rio Grande (intersection of Telshor and University) at 6:30 AM. For more information, contact Ed Mayfield (382-0715 or mayfield@zianet.com).

**Barrenda Canyon. November 17.** Our small group of seven birders drove through thick fog almost all way to Nutt! As we crested the ridge west of the Uvas Valley, we were treated to bright sunshine. The drive up Macho Creek canyon was a bit disappointing. We failed to get good looks at Horned Larks - they flew off into the grassland several hundred meters in front of the vehicles. We watched a small herd of pronghorns cross the road. The first real good looks at birds were Loggerhead Shrike, kestrel, and Red-tailed Hawks at the bottom of the canyon. At several locations during the trip we were treated to excellent views of pairs of Golden Eagles soaring over the escarpment cliffs. Several of the birders ticked a lifer when we found several Sage Thrashers in the brush along the road. Acorn Woodpeckers, Red-shafted Flickers, scrub jays, Common and Chihuahuan Ravens, sparrows and juncos rounded out the sparse birding. The abundance of birds in the area was the lowest that I have encountered in the 15+ years that I have birded the area.

Walt Whitford

## Council Corner

The next New Mexico Audubon Council meeting will be at the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge at 10 AM on Saturday, January 26. All Auduboners are encouraged to attend. The agenda will include deciding on statewide projects for 2002.

If you attend, you can stay Friday and Saturday at the refuge in very comfortable and reasonable lodgings. The cottages have nice beds; if you use their bed linens the cost is \$20.00 per night and if you take your own sleeping bag the cost is \$10.00 per night.

There will also be two bird-watching trips: one to the La Joya state refuge and one to the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge. If interested please contact Ed Mayfield at 382-0715 or e-mail mayfield@zianet.com.

## Field Trip Reports

**Bosque del Apache. December 1.** Eleven birders ventured up I-25 to bird at the Bosque. We couldn't ask for a nicer day. It was a little windy in the morning, but warmed up nicely in the afternoon. We had three car-loads of people with 2 sets of walkie talkies to communicate our sightings. With this communication Wally's car pointed out where to look and what birds we were seeing and as an added treat Guy gave his Naturalist report as we traveled along the loops.

Wally, Sue and Lorraine also provided us with scopes to see the birds up close and personal. We saw 63 species of birds, including 6 Bald Eagles and 5 Golden Eagles. It was a treat to hear the Snow Geese clamor when the 5 Golden Eagles were soaring overhead. At noon we headed to the Owl Cafe for our fill of Green Chile Cheese Burgers. It was a first for some of our birders. During the afternoon more ducks were seen: all in all it was a great day. Just before leaving the refuge Sue, Wally and Lorraine saw a Goshawk.

Donna Wood

**Birding Hot Spot: New Mexico State University, Plant Science Farm and Vicinity**  
by Walt Whitford

This area features large irrigation return drains with dense vegetation on the margins consisting of willows, cottonwood trees, four-wing salt bush, sumacs, and wolfberry. The Plant Science Farm features crop fields, alfalfa fields, and pecan orchards. There are a large number of pines that provide bird habitat as well.

Several interesting permanent residents of the area include: Common Moorhen; Mourning, White-winged and Inca Doves; Black Phoebe, Spotted Towhee, Green-

tailed Towhee, Marsh Wren and Greater Roadrunner. Tropical migrants that nest in the area include Bullock's Oriole, Blue Grosbeak, and Western Kingbird.

Winter is the best season for birding this area. More than 90 species of winter birds have been recorded. Winter raptors include Red-tailed Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, American Kestrel, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, and Northern Harrier. Winter species that are practically guaranteed include: Loggerhead Shrike, Song Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Red-shafted Flicker, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, and Phainopepla. Various ducks, sandpipers, and herons add

to the potential numbers of wintering birds in the area.

**Directions:** From the intersection of Main Street and Union Avenue in Mesilla Park, proceed south on Main Street for 5.1 miles. Turn right on Richardson Road. There is a green and white sign for the Plant Science Research Center at this intersection. Proceed for 0.4 miles west on Richardson Road to a drainage ditch that crosses the road.

There is a dirt road along the ditch bank on the right side of Richardson Road. This ditch is a good birding spot in winter with many sparrows, a variety of birds in the large cottonwoods, and occasionally flocks of crows in the fields.

Proceed west on Richardson for another 0.2 miles to a T junction that is unmarked. Turn left on the paved road and proceed south for 0.2 miles. There is a sign for P.S.R.C. at Leyendecker Road. Turn left on Leyendecker for 0.3 miles (6.5 miles from Main and Union) where the road enters the plant science farm.

The drain to the right and left is easy to access by walking or driving along the drain roads. The road to the right on the east bank traverses 1 mile of drain channel, pecan orchards, and alfalfa fields. Driving into the Plant Science Center there are lines of pines and pecan orchards that should be closely examined. It is possible to drive through the Plant Science Center to the Rio Grande Levee road and access the river and the mowed area between the river and the levee.

**Alternate Directions:** From Mesilla at the intersection of Avenida de Mesilla (Hwy 28) and University Avenue proceed south on Highway 28 for 5 miles to the Rio Grande Bridge. Turn left on the levee road at the Rio Grande Bridge and drive south for 0.7 miles to the New Mexico State University Plant Science Center.

**Bird Notes**

<b>Species</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Observers</b>
Olive Warbler	11-11	Mesilla Park	JZ, MS, BZ
Anna's Hummingbird	11-11—12-16	Las Cruces	LS
Harris's Hawk	11-16	Bosque del Apache	GE
Northern Parula	11-17	Gadsden	JZ, MS
Rusty Blackbird	11-17	Canutillo	JZ, MS
Eastern Phoebe	11-21	Las Cruces	HH
Rough-legged Hawk	11-22	La Mesa	JZ, MS
Greater Scaup	11-22	Sunland Park	JZ, MS
Gray Catbird	11-23	Las Cruces	EM
Brown Thrasher	11-23	Las Cruces	EM
Peregrine Falcon	11-25	Las Cruces	NS
Brown Thrasher	11-26	Las Cruces	GN
Violet-crowned Hummer	11-28	El Paso	BZ
Broad-billed Hummingbird	11-28	El Paso	BZ
Rufous Hummingbird	11-28	El Paso	BZ
Anna's Hummingbird	11-28	El Paso	BZ
Broad-tailed Hummingbird	11-28	El Paso	BZ
Northern Parula	11-28	El Paso	BZ
Pine Warbler	11-29	Santa Teresa	JZ, MS
Herring Gull	12-01	Sunland Park	JZ, MS
Vermilion Flycatcher	12-01	Leasburg	JZ, MS
Northern Parula	12-01	Leasburg	JZ, MS
Northern Goshawk	12-01	Bosque	LS, SWH
White-throated Sparrow	12-01	Las Cruces	NS
Bonaparte's Gull	12-14	Bosque	TS, LS
Winter Wren	12-17	Ft. Bliss	BZ, JP
Golden-crowned Kinglet	12-17	Ft. Bliss	BZ

Observers: Gordon Ewing, Harold Harrison, Sue and Wally Hill, Ed Mayfield, George Neavoll, Jim Peterson, Lorraine Schulte, Marcy Scott, Tara Shelton, Nancy Stotz, 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**



Allen Crane  
Janice Duseau  
Jack Swanson  
Jack DeLang  
Jill Green  
Rose Mary La Plante

## Bird Identification Course

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

Vice-president (and interim President)	Guy Powers	373-3843
Secretary	Barb Rodriguez	523-1548
Treasurer	Wait Whitford	521-1358
Board (99-01)	Harold Harrison	522-6199
Board (99-01)	Charles Townley	566-1268
Board (00-02)	Wendy Davis	527-4551
Board (00-02)	Sue Hill	382-9758
Board (01-03)	Donna Wood	525-8704
Board (01-03)	Nancy Stotz	521-8087
Past President	Ed Mayfield	382-0715

### COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Audubon Adventures	Lorraine Schulte	524-7029
Audubon Council	Jennifer Atchley	526-1320
Delegates	Ed Mayfield	382-0715
Conservation	Board at Large	
Education	Wendy Davis	527-4551
Field Trips	Ed Mayfield	382-0715
Membership Records	Mary Anne Thibodeau	524-4126
Membership	Harold Harrison	522-6199
Newsletter Editor	Nancy Stotz	521-8087
Programs	Nancy Stotz	521-8087
Publicity	Charles Townley	566-1268

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

Visit our website at [www.cybermesa.com/~mvas/](http://www.cybermesa.com/~mvas/).

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 give participants a good introduction to the birds of southern New Mexico and general information about bird watching. The classroom portion will be held Tuesday evenings, February 5, 12 & 19, from 7-9 PM, at the Branigan Library Terrace Gallery. (Note the change in location.) There will be 2 half-day Saturday field trips on February 9 & 16, and an all-day trip to the Bosque del Apache on Saturday, February 23. The course is a fun experience for anyone wanting to know more about our local birds. Joanne Schaefer, a recent bird course grad and new Audubon member had this to say about it, "Very enjoyable and informative. Never met friendlier, more helpful folks." Thanks for those kind words, Joanne!

Wendy Davis

## Otero Mesa Field Trip

On a visit to Otero Mesa you will likely see a variety of hawks and kestrels. If you're lucky you might see Mountain Plovers and Baird's Sparrows. And just maybe, you might spot an Aplomado Falcon. There's also something else that might soon be on Otero Mesa. If the oil and gas industry has its way, you'll see pipelines, gas wells, electric lines, and compressor stations.

Although remoteness has long protected the grasslands of Otero Mesa, that very isolation now becomes a threat: The less people that are familiar with the region, the less opposition to oil and gas exploration. A number of groups want to change that. A coalition of the Sierra Club, the Wilderness Alliance, the Southwest Environmental Center, and the Nature Conservancy will conduct a field trip to Otero Mesa on Saturday, February 16. The purpose is to familiarize people with the biology, botany, history, and sheer beauty of the region. Vans will be leaving from Las Cruces and El Paso for this day-long outing. For more information please call 527-9962 or e-mail [jim@nmwid.org](mailto:jim@nmwid.org).

Jim Scanlon, NM Wilderness Alliance

*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](mailto:nstotz@zianet.com), or call for mailing information. **Next deadline: 27 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.

Mesilla Valley Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 1645  
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## ON-BOARD THE AUDUBON BOAT

The Mesilla Valley Audubon Society (MVAS) Officers and Board feel that we can better realize the potential of the Chapter if we increase the participation of the membership. Many of you have time, energy, talent, and ideas that are currently untapped and which could be used to benefit your Chapter.

**Please take a few minutes to read and respond to our questionnaire by circling those activities in which you might have an active interest. Then fold, seal, stamp, and return.**

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CITY:** \_\_\_\_\_ **ZIP:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-MAIL:** \_\_\_\_\_

### I. Conservation

- A. La Palomas Marsh
  - 1. Bird survey
  - 2. Expansion of the enclosure
- B. New Mexico Audubon Council
  - 1. Represent our Chapter at bi-monthly Council meetings
- C. Legislative Issues
  - 1. Calling/writing legislators on specific bills
  - 2. Establish and maintain a telephone/e-mail tree
  - 3. Be part of the tree if established
- D. Cats Indoors – distribute flyers and/or related Information.
- E. San Andres Wildlife Area Project

### II. Education

- A. Audubon Adventures
  - 1. Classroom/teacher contacts
  - 2. Fund-raising and publicity
- B. Help organize and/or deliver school programs
- C. Work on community interest programs
- D. DABCC Bird ID Class (Instruct/student)
- E. Help maintain and update the MVAS Webpage
- F. Speakers Bureau (Maintenance/Participant)
- G. Help research and assemble a locally based, Chapter developed Bird Book

**Thank you very much, *Harold Harrison***  
**Membership. For further information please call me at 522-6199**

### III. Meetings (September – May)

- A. Programs (Arrange for speakers)
- B. Publicity (Flyers, Radio, Newspaper, TV)
- C. Hospitality (Sign-in, door prizes, etc.)

### IV. Birdwatching

- A. Field Trips
  - 1. Chair Field Trip Committee
  - 2. Lead a trip
  - 3. Lead a trip to your favorite spot especially if you live outside of Las Cruces
  - 4. Join in on a field trip
- B. Christmas Bird Count
  - 1. Organize the event
  - 2. Lead a team
  - 3. Participate on a team
- C. Birdathon (Spring Fund-raiser)
  - 1. Organize the event
  - 2. Lead a team on a 24 hr. marathon trip
  - 3. Lead an ordinary team
  - 4. Participate as a team member
  - 5. Participate as a Sponsor
- C. Help State Parks establish bird checklists
- D. Establish and maintain a telephone/e-mail tree for bird sightings

### V. Membership

- A. Recruitment, distribution of flyers, or booth sitting at Environmental/Wildlife Displays
- B. Set up a Membership Database that can maximize this flyer and other similar info

**PLEASE ADD ANY OF YOUR SUGGESTIONS OR IDEAS BELOW:**



**AUDUBON ADVENTURES in year 2000-20001**

**Mesilla Valley Audubon Society is one of 518 Audubon chapters that provide this excellent program to teachers and students. Currently 440,000 students are participating throughout the United States. Locally we have 81 classrooms enrolled, in Las Cruces, Truth or Consequences and Alamogordo.**

**Through Audubon Adventures students develop an appreciation, awareness and understanding of the natural world through classroom and field study activities.**

**Currently students are studying "Sharing the Earth", "The Mighty Forest", "Eagle Adventures", "Wild Alaska". and "Our One and Only Everglades".**

**Your continued support has made it possible to enroll the 81 classrooms in our area, and hopefully we can extend this program to even more classrooms.**

**Thirty-five 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 donation to the address shown below by May 1, 2000. Please make checks payable to Mesilla Valley Audubon Society.**

**For further information please call Lorraine Schulte at phone 524-7029**

AUDUBON ADVENTURES DONATION

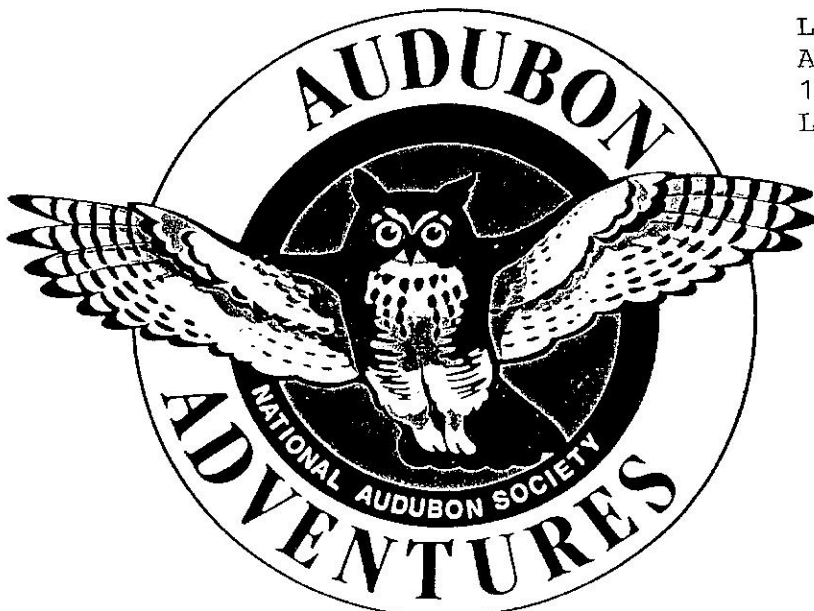
NAME \_\_\_\_\_ ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT \_\_\_\_\_

(Make checks payable to MESILLA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY )

Mail to the following address:

Lorraine Schulte  
AUDUBON ADVENTURES, MVAS  
1740 Mariposa  
Las Cruces, N.M. 88001





# Nature in Your Community

