

# ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

Volume 26, No. 3. May-June 2004

## Contribute to Burrowing Owl Database

Martha Desmond, in the Department of Fishery and Wildlife Sciences at NMSU, is looking for reports of burrowing owl locations in the greater Las Cruces area. Several undergraduate students at NMSU are assisting in creating a database of burrowing owl nesting locations, and they will examine nest site selection in relation to the degree and type of development. If anyone has information on owl locations, they would appreciate it if you would contribute this information to the database.

Please report as detailed observations as possible so that the owls can be easily located. Also include your contact information in case the observers have additional questions about the location. Observations can be reported to Martha Desmond at 505-646-1217 or mdesmond@nmsu.edu.

Information can also be sent through regular mail to Martha via the Department of Fishery and Wildlife Sciences, PO Box 30003, MSC 4901, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM 88003-0003.

## 8<sup>th</sup> Lorraine Schulte Excellence in Teaching Award Presented

by Donna Wood

At our program meeting on April 21<sup>st</sup> we honored 7<sup>th</sup> grade teacher Bill Curtis from Vista Middle School. He was the proud recipient of both the 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> annual Lorraine Schulte Excellence in Teaching Awards. It was very special to have Lorraine Schulte present to award Bill with his certificate and check, with several of his colleagues and representatives from the school board in attendance.

Bill continues to be a most caring and conscientious teacher encouraging his students to care for their environment and to help preserve the natural beauty of our earth. His students travel to the Bosque Del Apache, Elephant Butte Dam and other places learning about good conservation practices. He recognizes the diversity within his student body and encourages each and everyone of them to consider pursuing a career in fields that will impact their environment.

## House Finch Eye Disease Study: Call for Participants

In 1994, House Finches with red, swollen eyes began to appear at feeders in the Washington D.C. area. The infection, a type of conjunctivitis commonly known as House Finch eye disease, rapidly spread through the population of House Finches in eastern North America, where it caused noticeable declines in House Finch numbers in some areas.

To help monitor the spread of the disease, the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology established a citizen-scientist study, recruiting volunteers to monitor the appearance of House Finches and American Goldfinches at their feeders and submit reports detailing the proportion of birds infected. Because of the goals of the study, observations of healthy birds are as important as observations of infected birds.

Although the disease was initially limited to birds east of the Great Plains, observations made by participants in the House Finch Disease Survey indicated that the disease

appeared to have crossed the plains and reached western populations by 2001; its arrival to the west was confirmed with the capture of three infected birds in Montana in 2002.

The Cornell lab is continuing the House Finch Disease Survey to keep tabs on the prevalence of the infection, and this year they have added an additional study to monitor how breeding affects House Finch eye disease.

In this second study, Cornell is asking for the help of citizen scientists in observing nesting House Finches, and identifying and monitoring nesting dates, numbers of eggs or young, and numbers of nests that produce fledglings. By monitoring House Finch nests, participants will help determine how many juvenile House Finches susceptible to disease are produced in different parts of the continent.

For more information or to sign up for either study, visit the website [www.birds.cornell.edu/hofi/index.html](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/hofi/index.html) or call 1-800-843-2473.

Adapted from Audubon Newswire and Cornell's House Finch Disease Survey website.

## Election of Regional Representative to National Board

At its May 13, 2004 meeting, the MVAS Board of Directors will be selecting which candidate our chapter will support in the election of Regional Representatives to the Board of Directors of the National Audubon Society. Due to our concerns about National moving away from a bottom-up, chapter-driven organization, one of the main criteria we will use in our decision-making is the apparent commitment of the candidates to local chapter issues.

Information about the candidates is available via National's website, [www.audubon.org/nas/board/regional](http://www.audubon.org/nas/board/regional). If you would like to share your input with the MVAS board, please plan on attending this meeting (5:30 PM at the Southwest Environmental Center) or contact one of the board members listed on the last page of the newsletter.

## Annual Spring Potluck

Please plan to attend our annual Spring Potluck, to be hosted once again by charter member Lorraine Schulte. The potluck will begin at 5:30 at Lorraine's home, 1740 Mariposa (phone 524-7029).

Bring a main dish, side dish, or dessert, and a spare folding chair or two if you've got them. Table service, iced tea, and coffee will be provided; BYOB for other drinks.

## Chapter Only Membership Renewals

MVAS initiated a Chapter Only membership option in the spring of 2003. Chapter Only memberships cost \$15 per year, and all are renewed in May of each year (unless you have joined within the last 3 months - we'll catch up with you next year!). To see whether you are a Chapter Only member who needs to renew, check the upper right-hand corner of your newsletter mailing label.

- If you see the code **C-n**, you are a Chapter Only member who joined within the last 3 months, and you do not need to renew at this time.
- If you see the code **C-r**, you are a Chapter Only member who needs to renew. Please fill out the form below, and send it in along with a check for \$15.
- If you see the code **Nat**, you are a member of National Audubon Society as well as MVAS, and you will receive renewal notices from National.

### What's the Difference?

Chapter Only members receive *Roadrunner Ramblings* (published 6 times a year), and all dues (\$15/year) are retained by our local chapter and used to support our local education, conservation, and outreach programs. National members (\$35/year) also receive *Roadrunner Ramblings*, as well as National's quarterly publication *Audubon Magazine*. Most of your National dues are used to support the conservation and education programs run by National Audubon; depending on how long you have been a member of National, MVAS may receive a small slice of your dues to support our local efforts.

---

### Chapter Only Membership Renewal Form

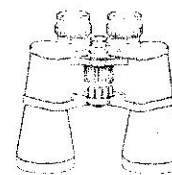
Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

- Check here if you want MVAS to share your name and mailing information with National Audubon so that they may solicit your membership in National Audubon. Leave it blank if you don't want to be bothered.

Clip and mail (along with \$15) to the following address:  
Mesilla Valley Audubon Society  
PO 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.

**Percha Dam State Park, June 19.** We will leave at 6:00 AM from the K-Mart on Highway 70 and should be back by mid-afternoon. There will not be much walking. Be sure to bring plenty of water, bug repellent, sun-block, and a sack lunch. Some of the birds seen on last year's trip were nesting Vermilion Flycatcher, Killdeer, Bullock's Oriole and Phainopepla, along with Lucy's and Yellow Warblers, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Green Heron.

## Programs

Have a great summer!  
Programs will resume  
in September.



## Welcome New Members

Lucinda Oheim  
Paul Turner  
Denise Anstine



Bird Notes

Species	Date	Location	Observers
Rufous Hummingbird	All winter	Talavera	DW
Turkey Vulture	3-5	Las Cruces	LS
Common Grackle	3-6	Radium Springs	MS/JZ
No. Rough-winged Swallow	3-7	multiple locations	GP,LS;MS/JZ;NS
Bald Eagle	3-7	Elephant Butte	MS/JZ
Am. White Pelican	3-7;4-6	El Butte; Caballo; Burn Lk	MS/JZ; GP,LS;JZ
American Avocet	3-7	Elephant Butte	MS/JZ
Common Loon	3-7	Elephant Butte	MS/JZ
Herring Gull	3-7	Elephant Butte	MS/JZ
Western Kingbird	3-9;4-7	Picacho Bridge; Cruces	JoD;LS;JZ
White-throated Swift	3-14	Radium Springs	MS/JZ
Violet-green Swallow	3-14	Radium Springs	MS/JZ
Cave Swallow	3-14	Radium Springs	MS/JZ
Lincoln's Sparrow	3-14	Radium Springs	MS/JZ
Slate-colored Junco	3-14	Radium Springs	MS/JZ
American Goldfinch	3-14	Radium Springs	MS/JZ
Northern Bobwhite	3-15-20	Baylor Canyon	AHM
Yellow-headed Blackbird	3-20	Las Cruces	GS
Swainson's Hawk	3-20	El Paso	JP
Scott's Oriole	3-20	Las Cruces	SWH
Black-chinned Hummingbird	3-21,3-23	Talavera;Las Cruces	TL,LS
Broad-tailed Hummingbird	3-27	Talavera	TL
White-faced Ibis	3-27;4-8;16	Bosque del Apache;Percha	SWH;WD,LS
Bullock's Oriole	3-28	Talavera	DW
Eurasian Collared-Dove	3-29; 4-24	Las Cruces	SWH; NS
Painted Redstart	3-30	El Paso	JP
Black-throated Gray Warbler	4-3	Radium Springs	MS/JZ
Osprey	4-4;4-10;4-12	Radium Sps;Burn Lk;Arrey	MS/JZ;GP,LS;KS
Brown Creeper	4-4	El Paso	JP
Hooded Oriole	4-2; 4-5	Radium Springs; Talavera	MS/JZ;TL
Franklin's Gull	4-7	Elephant Butte	MS/JZ
Yellow Warbler	4-8	Percha	SWH
Vermilion Flycatcher	4-8; 4-12	Caballo, Percha; Arrey	SWH;KS
Lucy's Warbler	4-8; 4-23	Caballo and Percha	SWH; NS
Cedar Waxwing	4-8; 4-23	Percha	BDMcK; NS
Eurasian Collared-Dove	4-8; 4-23	Percha	BDMcK; NS
American Goldfinch	4-8	Percha	BDMcK
Blue-winged Teal	4-10	Calle del Norte Bridge	GP,LS
Lewis's Woodpecker	4-10	S. of Mesilla Dam	GP,LS
Nesting Eastern Bluebird	4-12	Radium Springs	MS/JZ
Hutton's Vireo	4-12	Fillmore Springs	MS/JZ
Hammond's Flycatcher	4-12	Fillmore Springs	MS/JZ
Hermit Thrush	4-12	Fillmore Springs	MS/JZ
Black-chinned Sparrow	4-12	Fillmore Springs	MS/JZ
Rufous-crowned Sparrow	4-12	Fillmore Springs	MS/JZ
Clay-colored Sparrow	4-14	Las Cruces	NS
Ruddy Ground-Dove	4-14	Deming Cemetery	LM
Bronzed Cowbird	4-16	Radium Springs	MS/JZ
Indigo Bunting	4-23	Las Cruces	JZ
Black-and-White Warbler	4-23	Leasburg	SH,LS

Observers: John Douglas, Sue and Wally Hill, Tim Lawton, Larry Malone, Barbara and Daniel McKnight, Abe and Helga Mendoza, Jim Paton, Guy Powers, Lorraine Schulte, Marcy Scott/Jimmy Zabriskie, Gill Sorg, Ken Stinnett, Nancy Stotz, Daphne Wirthlin

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

**Percha Creek Headwaters. March 13.** Ten intrepid birders gathered on a drizzly morning to explore some riparian habitats west of Hillsboro. Though muddy roads limited our travels and the birding was slow, the group enjoyed seeing some new areas and gorgeous scenery once the fog burned off. Near Kingston we discovered that the name "Townsend's Solitaire" is a misnomer, as several of the birds entertained us by singing, displaying, and chasing each other about. We were also treated to a striking display flight by a mature Golden Eagle; remarkably agile for its size, the bird repeatedly tucked its wings tightly and swooped almost straight up and down near a craggy cliff face (its nest site, perhaps?).

Nancy Stotz

**JOIN NOW!**

- National Membership: 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.
- Chapter Membership: 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 \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Q54  
7XCH

Send this form and your check to:

Membership, MVAS  
P.O. Box 1645  
Las Cruces, NM 88004

Use this form for new memberships only. Renewals notices will be sent to you.

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		vacant	
Vice-president	Guy Powers		373-3843
Secretary	Donna Wood		525-8704
Treasurer	Barb Rodriguez		523-1548
Board (02-04)	Harold Harrison		522-6199
Board (02-04)	Richard Bischoff		894-6083
Board (03-05)	Alan Krueger		532-1036
Board (03-05)	Sue Hill		382-9758
Board (04-06)	Tim Lawton		522-2056
Board (04-06)	Nancy Stotz		521-8087
Past President	Walt Whitford		521-1358

#### COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Audubon Adventures	Lorraine Schulte		524-7029
Audubon Council	Richard Bischoff		894-6083
Delegates	Guy Powers		373-3843
Conservation	Bob Tafanelli		526-9380
Education	Donna Wood		525-8704
Field Trips	Donna Wood		525-8704
Programs		board at large	
Membership	Harold Harrison		522-6199
Newsletter Editor	Nancy Stotz		521-8087
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/](http://www.cybermesa.com/~mvas/).

## Education Report

by Donna Wood

On April 19<sup>th</sup> Sylvia Bizzell, Wendy Davis and Donna Wood visited Mary Smith's 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class at Columbia Elementary School. The emphasis was on Earth Day and making environmental collages. After reading *Dear Children of the Earth* and discussing photos of air pollution, logging, oil slicks and recycling, the students were ready to work in small groups. Each group chose pictures and words relating to an environmental theme to glue on poster board. A motto was chosen and attached to their posters.

On April 21<sup>st</sup>, Donna Wood led an Education Committee meeting. The committee shared their thoughts on what we could do to make our presence known in our schools. We discussed promoting our Lorraine Schulte Excellence in Teaching Award.

Anyone wishing to help out with Education Committee activities in the future should contact Donna Wood at [donnacamino@yahoo.com](mailto:donnacamino@yahoo.com).

## Chapter Historian

Ellen Flesher has generously volunteered to take over as our historian. She will help to maintain our archives by collecting and organizing newspaper clippings, photographs, and other materials documenting our chapter's activities. If you have any clippings, photographs from field trips or other chapter events, or any other MVAS mementos to share, please mail them to Ellen Flesher, 2920 Majestic Terrace Drive, Las Cruces, NM 88011.

*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: June 19.** Printed by **insta-copy printing** on 30% kenaf, 70% PCW recycled chlorine-free paper. Images, except Dale Zimmerman's roadrunner, are from IMSI's Master Clips/Master Photos<sup>®</sup> Collection.

Amanda Skarsgard  
 5444 Avenida del Sol  
 Las Cruces, NM 88011  
 C-1

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

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