

ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

Volume 30, No. 1. Jan.-Feb. 2008

Initiative Seeks Funding for Rivers

Living rivers preserve our cultural and natural heritage, and they are natural assets that stimulate economic growth and prosperity. They also provide great places for outdoor recreation and education, and they can buffer floods and droughts.

During the upcoming legislative session, supporters of healthy rivers will have an opportunity to help rivers statewide, by lobbying for the River Ecosystem Restoration Initiative. The Initiative requests that the NM Legislature appropriate \$10 million to protect and restore river ecosystems and watershed health.

The River Ecosystem Restoration Initiative builds on successes from 2007, which was the first time in New Mexico's history that the Legislature appropriated funds to benefit rivers statewide. The funds were administered by the NM Environment Department, and a multi-agency team evaluated 25 proposals based on a set of objective criteria. Eleven projects were selected and received over \$2 million in funding.

Project sponsors in 2007 included irrigation districts, non-profit organizations and Pueblos, and already, more than 20 groups have expressed interest in applying for funding in 2008.

For more information on the initiative, contact Beth Bardwell at the World Wildlife Fund-Chihuahuan Desert Program (phone 575-525-9532; or email bethbardwell@zianet.com). You can track down your legislators at <http://legis.state.nm.us/lcs/legislatorsearch.asp>.

Request for Reports of Aplomado Sightings *Jeremy Plauger, Turner Endangered Species Fund*

In the summer of 2007 The Peregrine Fund, working closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Turner Endangered Species Fund, released 39 endangered Northern Aplomado Falcons from two sites in Socorro and Sierra counties.

I need assistance locating the birds, which are now dispersing from the release sites. The falcons' preferred habitat is yucca grasslands.

The Northern Aplomado Falcon has a few distinct physical characteristics that help in identification. If a falcon is identified, it will most likely have an alpha-numeric band (ie. 8K Black over Red). This will be a helpful tool for me in determining

Bird Identification Course

New to the area, or just retired? Think about joining us for our spring Basic Bird Watching Class.

The course is a great opportunity to learn more about the birds that are year-round residents of our area, as well as migratory visitors that are just here for the winter months. The course field trips reinforce concepts presented in classroom sessions, and they provide an introduction to some of our local birdwatching hotspots and our gorgeous Southwestern landscapes.

We have an outstanding group of instructors who will share their enthusiasm as they help you learn about different types of birds such as waterfowl, raptors, and perching birds. You'll get an introduction to the birds' behaviors and habitat preferences, along with tips for attracting and identifying birds, information on optical equipment, and a review of various birding publications.

Our classes will be on February 12th, 19th and 26th from 7-9 PM with field trips on February 16th, 23rd and March 1st. All our classes are held at the Doña Ana Community College, East Mesa Campus.

For registration information contact the DACC Community Education program at 527-7527, and be sure to mention our Course Code, HL101.

Our class was accidentally left out of the Community Education catalog, so please help us spread the word. If you know someone that you think might be interested, please let them know about the course.

*(continued on page 3) See **Falcons***

ANNUAL MEETING

Prior to the program at our meeting on January 16, MVAS will hold its annual meeting to elect officers and board members. The Nominating Committee has developed the following slate of nominees:

President - David Griffin
Vice President - Alan Krueger
Secretary - Frankie Lerner
Treasurer - Guy Powers
Board 2008-10 - John Douglas
Board 2008-10 - Lorraine Schulte

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.



Programs

Membership meetings and programs are held each month, September–April, 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.

Doña Ana County Big Year Challenge.

January 16. Join us to hear a final report from a group of local birders who participated in the 2007 Doña Ana County Big Year Challenge. These dedicated birders competed (and cooperated) to see who could observe the most bird species within the County's borders during the calendar year. Nearly all of them surpassed the previous record of about 250 species.

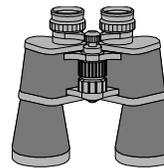
Did anyone tally 300 or more species? Did they find new birds not previously reported? What were the highlights? What did they miss? What did they learn? Did they discover new birding locations? Would you like to get a better idea of how many bird species occur in Doña Ana County and where to look for them? Then come to the presentation.

The group will share their results, highlight the birding hotspots and habitat, and show photos of some of the 250+ species of birds, as well as other wildlife tallied during the year.

The Mexican Gray Wolf – Biology, Ecology, History, and Politics. February 20. Join us for an opportunity to learn the latest about the biology and natural history of the Mexican gray wolf (a subspecies of the gray wolf); its role in southwestern ecosystems; its brush with extinction and remarkable comeback through captive breeding and reintroduction into the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area in the Gila and Apache National Forests; the present status of the reintroduction project; and some of the socio-political issues that affect its recovery. Presented by Dave Parsons, who retired from a 25-year career with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, where from 1990-1999 he was the Project Leader for the Mexican Wolf Recovery Program. Dave is currently a conservation biologist with the Rewilding Institute.

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 and Sierra County Reservoirs. January 19.

This trip will begin birding the riparian and park-like areas of Percha Dam State Park. We'll expect a wide variety of riparian wintering birds including raptors, woodpeckers, bluebirds, and sparrows. This site almost always holds some wonderful surprises during winter months. Then, we'll head to the reservoirs to see what gulls we can find. Ring-billed is the most common species, but species such as Herring and Bonaparte's Gulls are semi-regular with rarities like California, Mew, and Glaucous among the more remote possibilities. Trip will depart at 7 AM from the K-mart parking lot at US 70 and Del Rey Blvd. This trip may last until mid-afternoon so bring lunch and water and be prepared for a variety of weather conditions.

Grassland Raptors and Sparrows.

February 16. On this trip we'll visit multiple remnant grassland patches in Doña Ana and possibly Luna Counties. We'll expect to see a wide variety of raptors including possibly Golden Eagles, Ferruginous Hawks, and Prairie Falcons. Walking swaths of grassland should produce a variety of sparrows, longspurs, Horned Larks, and possibly the elusive Sprague's Pipit. Trip will depart at 7 AM from the K-mart parking lot at US 70 and Del Rey Blvd. The trip may last until early afternoon so bring water, snacks, and sun protection.

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

Las Cruces Christmas Bird Count Summary December 15, 2007

whether the bird witnessed is indeed a Northern Aplomado Falcon and whether it is one of the released birds. I am asking everyone to please contact me to report Aplomado Falcon sightings.

If you have any questions email or call me anytime. I appreciate your time and any help you can provide.

Jeremy Plauger, Field Biologist
Turner Endangered Species Fund
Armandaris Ranch
HC 31, Box 191
T or C, New Mexico 87901
Phone: 505-894-6782
Cell: 301-401-4444
Jeremy.plauger@retranches.com

A large group of about 45 people participated in this year's CBC. The weather was clear and cold for much of the day, and while many of the participants later commented on the scarcity of many regularly occurring birds and the overall low numbers, we did manage to observe about 115 species on Count Day and another 6 or 7 during the Count Week. A total of about 29,000 birds was counted.

Many of the more unusual species observed were montane species that have been spending the fall and winter in lowland valley locations during a "Mini-Inruption" or "Invasion". Some of these

species were Pine Siskins; Cedar Wax-wings; Red-breasted, White-breasted and Pygmy Nuthatches; Mountain Chickadees and Red Crossbills.

Other highlights included a Common Loon at Burn Lake (seen by many participants); 2 Snow Geese at 'Aggie Pond' on the NMSU Campus; a Gray Catbird, White-throated Sparrows, and a Fox Sparrow in Mesilla; at least 3 Rufous Hummingbirds visiting feeders; 5 Long-eared Owls; 4 Burrowing Owls; a Merlin; and 2 Peregrine Falcons.

The ten most numerous species were:

1. White-winged Dove (7,677 birds)
2. American Crow (6,635 birds)
3. Mourning Dove (1,996 birds)
4. Great-tailed Grackle (1,529 birds)
5. House Finch (1,498 birds)
6. White-crowned Sparrow (961 birds)
7. House Sparrow (797 birds)
8. Brewer's Blackbird (773 birds)
9. Red-winged Blackbird (767 birds)
10. Rock Pigeon (701 birds)

David Griffin

Editor's Note: The plight of the Chihuahuan population of Aplomado Falcons, which is being threatened by the conversion of desert grasslands to agriculture (and was described in the September/October 2007 issue of *Roadrunner Ramblings*), is currently fetasured at the National Audubon website:

<http://audubonmagazine.org/features0801/endangeredSpecies-webExclusives.html>

Newsletter Volunteers Needed

MVAS has need of volunteers to take on two jobs related to the production of this publication. Both jobs can be done by one person, or they can be split between 2 people. Brief job descriptions follow. For more information on either position, please contact Nancy Stotz at 521-8087 or nstotz1@comast.net.

Newsletter Editor. *Tasks:* Compilation and layout of materials for 4 to 6 issues of *Roadrunner Ramblings* per year, plus up to 2 single-page supplements for the statewide newsletter. *Useful skills:* layout capabilities using a program such as Quark, Publisher, PageMaker, or InDesign.

Mailing List Manager. *Tasks:* Manage Chapter membership list, combine with National membership list and create mailing labels for each issue of newsletter. *Useful skills:* spreadsheet manipulation using program such as Excel, Quattro Pro, or Lotus 1-2-3.

Bird Notes

Species	Date	Location	Observers
Ferruginous Hawk	10/28	Tellbrook Park	JM/RH
Rufous Hummingbird	10/31	Las Cruces	LS
Barn Owl	11/06	Las Cruces Dam	NS
Orange-crowned Warbler	11/27	Las Cruces	LS
Anna's Hummingbird	11/28	Las Cruces	SWH
Rufous Hummingbird	12/01	Las Cruces	SWH
Anna's Hummingbird	12/07	Las Cruces	SWH
Common Loon	12/09	Burn Lake	HH
Sharp-shinned Hawk	12/21	Las Cruces	LS
Orange-crowned Warbler	12/31	Las Cruces	LS
Fox Sparrow	1/06	Las Cruces	SWH

Observers: Harold Harrison, Sue & Wally Hill, Robert Hull & Jackye Meinecke, Lorraine Schulte, Nancy Stotz

Please report early, late, or unusual sightings to Robert Hull at 505-523-8009 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

Environmental Film Festival in Socorro

Come see the world anew, from the Rio Grande headwaters to the Arctic oil fields, from submerged Glen Canyon to the Australian outback — all through the eyes of independent filmmakers. Seventeen films in all will move us to continue the quest to keep the planet's wild places WILD!

Come to Socorro, N.M., for the second annual RioFest International Environmental Film Festival on January 25 and 26, 2008, at Macey Center on the New Mexico Tech campus. Among numerous offerings are *Gimme Green*, an Academy Award-winning documentary about America's fatal fascination with The Verdant Lawn, plus several avant-garde, award-winning Dutch animation shorts.

RioFest takes place during two evenings and one day, for \$20 per person. If you come only Friday night, it's \$5; \$10 will get you either the day's screening on Saturday or Saturday night alone. But plan to attend the entire Festival for just \$20! From your elegant theater seat, you'll also visit Telluride, New Zealand, Death Valley, and take a horseback trek from the tip of Chile to the Bering Sea.

Flash: renowned Colorado River explorer, octogenarian Katie Lee will be present her *Love Song to Glen Canyon* (plus her case for breaching the "Damn!") on Saturday night.

Mark your calendar today for Socorro's International Environmental Film Festival, Friday evening, Jan.25, through Saturday night, Jan.26, 2008. **For more information** call Carol Lynn Tiegs, 575-418-8642 or log on to www.riofilmfest.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

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Vice-president	Alan Krueger	532-1036
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Education	vacant	
Field Trips	David Griffin	382-2080
Programs	board at large	
Membership	Guy Powers	373-1891
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/.

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