

ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

Volume 25, No. 4. July-August 2003

A Good Excuse for Birding

Calling all listers and counters! Are you ready to shift gears to Caballo and Percha?

MVAS is getting ready to wrap up its regular monitoring of birds at Leasburg Dam State Park, which we have been doing over the past two and a half years to create a bird list, including seasonal abundance codes, for the park. Thanks to all the reports from our dedicated volunteers (see below), the list now stands at 141 species. The updated list, including sightings through May 2003, is available at the park and at our website (www.cybermesa.com/~mvash). Although our regular monitoring is winding down, if you happen to bird Leasburg, feel free to go ahead and send me a list of what you see, as I will continue to add new species to the list and tweak the abundance codes as necessary.

Beginning in August, we are going to start work on a similar list for Caballo and Percha. Volunteers will be asked to bird these areas at least once during the month they sign up for, and to provide me with a complete list of the species seen (and numbers of each species seen) for each visit. Even if you don't sign up for a particular month, please go ahead and send me a list anytime you bird the area. Also, if you have any records from past visits that you'd be willing to share, they would be most appreciated.

To sign up for a month, or to submit reports, email Nancy Stotz at nstotz@zianet.com. Sign-up sheets will also be available at our program meetings which will start back up in September.

Thanks to all who helped out with the Leasburg list (and sincere apologies to anyone I left out): D. and M. Bosshardt, A. Doss, B. and H. Harrison, S. and W. Hill, B. and D. Jacobson, T. Lawton, E. Mayfield, H. and A. Mendoza, J. McFarland, J. Montoya, J. Mulhauser, G. Neavoll, B. Rodriguez, C. Sandell, L. Schulte, M. Scott, S. Sermay, T. Shelton, N. Singleton, B. and Z. Stotz, W. Whitford, J. Zabriskie, B. Zimmer, and the Bird ID Class.

Nancy Stotz

Birding Hotspot: Home Depot?

by Harold Harrison
MVAS Board

Why would a dedicated birdwatcher find an excuse to visit Home Depot at least twice-a-month, year-round? Home Depot usually means something connected to an achy back or a skinned knuckle for a clumsy do-it-yourselfer like me. Why go to Home Depot? To check on the owls, that's why!

You can usually count on the Las Cruces Home Depot to provide the Great-Horned Owl for a hard-to-get species for your list during the annual Birthathon or the Christmas Bird Count. In addition, it's just plain fun to wander into the garden section, look around under the roofed area, and locate the owl or owls perched atop a pallet of merchandise or sitting on one of the rafters. Then you can amaze anyone nearby, especially kids, with a "hooter" surprise.

My wife Barbara and I have been watching the Home Depot owls for four years now. I can't remember who told me they were there. However, I recall my first visit and the three fuzzy owlets hovered under their parents' watchful eyes. They were sitting near the ceiling of the roofed area on a stack of landscaping material. Our friend, Susan Tweit, my wife, and I were fascinated with the experience.

Susan, a naturalist and nature writer, recorded our expedition in an article about urban owl watching for her hometown newspaper, the Salida *Mountain Mail*. Later, another friend, George Hackler, told me that the owls had lived on that property long before Home Depot was built. They had a residence in the pre-cast building structure that belonged to Burn Construction Company.

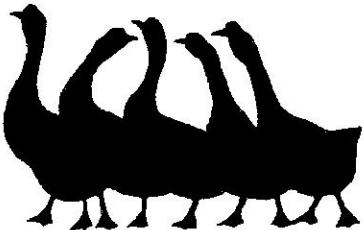
Next time you are owl watching at the Home Depot, please take the time to thank the management for providing the birds a safe place to perch and nest, protecting the fledgling babies from shoppers, and allowing us to enjoy their "pets."

Thanks, Home Depot!



Bird Quarantine Lifted

According to an Associated Press story that appeared in the *Las Cruces Sun News* on June 7, the Exotic Newcastle Disease quarantine imposed in April (and described in the May-June issue of *Roadrunner Ramblings*), has been lifted in west Texas and southern New Mexico. The outbreak of the disease was limited to a single flock of domestic fowl in El Paso County and was successfully eradicated by state veterinarians and animal health inspectors.



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.

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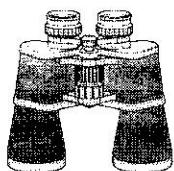
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7XCH

Send this application and your check to:

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

Programs

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



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.

See you in September!

Bosque del Apache Listed as Under Threat

On June 24, the National Audubon Society launched a major effort to control and contain invasive species, emphasizing that invasive species are the world's leading cause of bird extinctions and a major threat to America's declining bird populations. Audubon is calling on Congress to control invasive species in "Hot Spots."

"Invasive species are like a buzz-saw cutting through some of America's most valuable bird and wildlife habitat," said Bob Perciasepe, Audubon's Senior Vice President for Public Policy. "If invasive species are not controlled, they will continue to wreak havoc on America's already declining birds and the natural places they inhabit."

A new report released by Audubon, "Cooling the Hot Spots," recommends immediate investments to protect ten critical areas from invasive species. The ten Hot Spots highlighted by Audubon are: **Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico**, Loxahatchee Refuge in Florida, Willapa Refuge in Washington, Wertheim Refuge in New York, Aransas Refuge in Texas, San Luis Refuge in California, Browns Park Refuge in Colorado, Waubay Refuge in South Dakota, Blackwater Refuge in Maryland, and Mississippi Sandhill Crane Refuge in Mississippi.

"We need to target federal efforts in the most critical areas, where progress can be made toward meaningful conservation results," said Perciasepe. "That is why we identified these ten invasive species Hot Spots: it is a science-based road map toward meaningful protection of America's birds, wildlife, and habitat, on the ground where it counts."

NMSU's Vertebrate Museum. July 19.

Beat the heat!!! Enjoy a different kind of birding in the air conditioned comfort of the Vertebrate Museum at New Mexico State University. Dr. Peter Houde will show us a variety of birds and possibly other animals. This is your chance to get "up close and personal" with the birds. Enjoy the fascinating color and structure of their feathers and a chance to notice things that you can't see through binoculars. Meet at 8:00 AM in front of the Biology Building, Foster Hall (on the southeast corner of the NMSU Horseshoe, south of Hadley Hall). For more information, contact Barb Rodriguez (523-1548 or bkrod1@aol.com).

Chiricahua Mountains/Southeastern Arizona. August 15-17. These spectacular "Sky Islands" of the Southwestern U.S. host many bird species which are rarely seen north of Mexico. In August, we should have a chance at both lingering summer breeders and migrant species passing through the area. Because of travel time (approximately 4 hours, one way from Las Cruces), most folks will do this as an overnight trip, camping in one of the Forest Service campgrounds along Cave Creek, or staying at lodging available in Portal, AZ. Contact Ed Mayfield (telephone 382-0715 or e-mail mayfield@zianet.com) for details, directions and lodging recommendations.

Welcome New Members

Jan Saari
Margaret Wilson
Dennis Seitz
Rosemary LaPlante
Sylvia Bizzell
Robert Hull
Jackye Meinecke



Bird Notes

Species	Date	Location	Observers
Stilt Sandpiper	4-26	Holloman	GE
Vermilion Flycatcher	4-26	Holloman	GE
Solitary Sandpiper	4-27	Ft. Bliss Sewage Ponds	JP
Plumbeous Vireo	4-30	Mesilla Park	CB
White-faced Ibis	4-30	Palomas	FL&RB
Bell's Vireo	5-2	Palomas Marsh	GE
Cassin's Vireo	5-2	Palomas Marsh	GE
McGillivray's Warbler	5-4	Old Refuge	NS
Hermit Thrush	5-4	Old Refuge	NS
Black-headed Grosbeak	5-4, 5-5	Old Refuge, Palomas	NS, FL&RB
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	5-6	Radium Springs	MS, JZ
Ash-throated Flycatcher	5-6, 5-7	Leasburg	DB, NS
Warbling Vireo	5-7	Leasburg	NS
Yellow Warbler	5-7	Leasburg	NS
Lazuli Bunting	5-9	Williamsburg	MP
Hepatic Tanager	5-9	Percha Creek	NS
Black-throated Gray Warbler	5-9, 6-4	Percha Creek, Leasburg	NS, DB
Indigo Bunting	5-9, 5-29	Williamsburg, T or C	MP, CW
Thick-billed Parrot	5-9-5-23	Engle	KS & many others
Mississippi Kite	5-10	Mesilla Park	CB
Clay-colored Robin	5-11	Highway 28	KD
Willet	5-11	Mesilla Dam	KS
Bonaparte's Gull	5-11	Mesilla Dam	KS
Gray Catbird	5-11	Las Cruces	NS
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	5-12	Williamsburg	MP
Swainson's Thrush	5-12	El Paso	JP
Western Tanager	5-13, 5-19	Las Cruces	LS, TMLS
Hudsonian Godwit	5-18	Bosque del Apache	SWH
Brown Thrasher	5-20	Las Cruces	EM
Surf Scoter	5-25, 5-27	Elephant Butte	JP, MS, JZ
Common Poorwill	5-27	Soledad Canyon	NS
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	5-31	Aguirre Springs	NS
Northern Parula	6-4	Leasburg	NS
Black-tailed Gnatcatcher	6-4, 6-13	Leasburg, Las Cruces	NS, SWH
Tricolored Heron	6-18, 6-22	Doniphan Marsh	BZ, BH, MS, JZ
Surf Scoter	6-21, 6-22	Holloman, Keystone	MS, JZ
Anhinga	6-24	McNary	JP
Clark's Grebe	6-27	Deming	MS, JZ
Lesser Scaup	6-27	Deming	MS, JZ
American Avocet	6-27	Deming	MS, JZ
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	6-28	South Valley	MD

Observers: Craig Benkman, Don Bosshardt, Kise Davis, Martha Desmond, Gordon Ewing, Sue and Wally Hill, Bob Hull, Frankie Lerner and Richard Bischoff, Ed Mayfield, Jim Paton, Marjorie Powey, Lorraine Schulte, Marcy Scott, Ted and Mary Lee Shelton, Ken Stinnet, Nancy Stotz, Chet Warwick, 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
or <http://mvar.nmsu.edu/hmos/>

Rare Bird Alerts for NM and other states:
www.birder.com

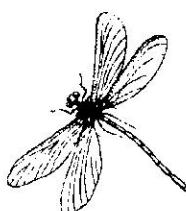
Mesilla Valley Bosque Park/Picacho Wetlands. May 10. Eleven birders participated in this trip to the site sometimes still called the Old Refuge, and a grand time was had by all. Fifty-six species were seen including 52 Snowy Egrets and a Swainson's Hawk pair with 2 fledglings. We got to watch a Verdin feeding 2 young and we had great, definitive looks at the Olive-sided Flycatcher. Habitat restoration on the wetlands was evident; we even had a large front-end loader carve a path for us through the old salt cedar stand.

Ken Stinnett

Percha/Caballo/Engle. June 14. Twelve delightful people joined us for the drive up to Caballo and Percha campgrounds. Although the grounds were teeming with campers we found many Vermilion Flycatchers including one female that had built a nest in a tree beneath a Phainopepla nest and near a nesting Bullock's Oriole. There were several young Verdin. After spending several hours at those areas 11 of us drove on up to Engle where we found a Common Nighthawk roosting in the same tree the Thick-billed Parrot had chosen for its nap. There were several Eurasian Collared-Doves and nesting Cassin's Kingbirds. Adding those to our list we came up with a total of 39 species - not a large list, but a good day of birding was spent with friends.

Sue and Wally Hill

3rd Annual Dragonfly Festival
August 23-24
Roswell Convention Center



Hosted by Friends of Bitter Lake
National Wildlife Refuge
www.bitterlake.org

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.

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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/.

Renewable Energy Comes to NM

by Nancy Stotz, MVAS Conservation Chair

In December 2002, the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission adopted a renewable portfolio standard for the state, which will require utilities to produce 10% of their power from renewable sources such as wind and solar by the year 2011. Under this standard, utilities can now offer a Voluntary Renewable Energy Tariff, through which customers can support the development of renewable energy facilities.

El Paso Electric (EPE) has begun offering this program to their New Mexico customers. For as little as \$3.19 per month, customers can encourage EPE to continue to invest in renewable energy. Residential customers who sign up for this voluntary program agree to pay an extra \$3.19 for each 100 kilowatt-hour block of renewable power that they purchase. EPE reinvests the revenue generated by this tariff in renewables, using it to pay for the acquisition, operation, and maintenance of renewable resources and related administrative costs.

EPE's current renewable energy facility is the small Hueco Mountain Wind Ranch in El Paso County. EPE estimates that the operation of this facility in 2002 allowed them to avoid the emission of almost 3 million pounds of CO₂ and thousands of pounds of other air pollutants, as well as saving over 1.4 million gallons of water.

For more information or to enroll in this program, visit the El Paso Electric website at www.epelectric.com or call 915-543-5970.

Did you know? Using solar power, an area of only 38 square kilometers would be large enough to generate all the electricity currently used in New Mexico.

Source: www.nmraa.org

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: 25 August.** 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.

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