

ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

Volume 26, No. 2. March-April 2004

Birdathon 2004

Mark your calendars! Spring is nearly here and the time is coming for **Birdathon 2004**, our yearly fundraiser.

This event, which will be held during the first week of May, raises the money to support our local educational projects such as Audubon Adventures. We have also been able purchase bird books for the library and would like to do more for the schools. With the reduced share that we receive from the dues paid to National Audubon, **Birdathon** is more important than ever before. We need help from everyone in the Chapter either as a birder or sponsor. Let's make this a record year!

Birdathon is not only a great contribution to your local Chapter, it's also lots of fun.

How does **Birdathon** work? Each participating birder collects pledges from sponsors. The sponsor can pledge an amount of money per bird species or pledge a flat amount. (All contributions are tax deductible.) Sponsors in the past have pledged \$.10 to \$1.00 a bird. And many teams see more than 100 species! Don't want to ask friends or co-workers for money? Pledge to yourself or ask relatives. A surprising number of people are happy to have been asked.

During **Birdathon** week the birder chooses a 24-hour period to count as many species as possible, either birding alone or with a team. **Birdathon** can be done in any location. If you expect to be traveling at that time, plan to set aside a few hours to bird. You probably will anyway. Right?

Please help support your chapter by birding and raising funds, or by pledging to someone you know. Contact Storm Sermay, 382-3348, if you would like to participate or if you want more information. Teams are forming now! Don't be left out!

To Our Audubon Friends

From Rob & Wendy Davis

Rob and I are sad to announce that, due to family considerations, we are moving to Granbury, Texas, sometime this summer. We have thoroughly enjoyed being involved with the Mesilla Valley chapter for the past five years and getting to know all of you. It has been our privilege to serve on the MVAS Board of Directors and to be active in such a worthwhile organization. We both agree that this is, without a doubt, one of the nicest groups of people we have ever been associated with.

Being the MVAS Education Chairman has been fun and fulfilling, and I want to thank everyone who has helped with our educational projects. I believe that through our numerous school programs and the adult bird course, we have followed our Audubon mission and increased local awareness of our natural environment. I am very happy to have been a part of these efforts.

Donna Wood has graciously agreed to assume the position of Education Chairman, and I know that she will do an excellent job. We have enjoyed working together as a teaching team in regular school classes and in after-school enrichment. I urge the chapter to continue to support the Education Committee and to assist Donna with its important projects.

Rob and I are looking forward to this new adventure in our lives, but we will greatly miss Mesilla Valley Audubon. We will always treasure the many friendships we have made.

Mesilla Valley Bosque Park Update and Event

State and local officials are continuing to provide significant financial support for New Mexico's newest state park, located along the Rio Grande, south of Calle del Norte Bridge. The state legislature approved a \$270,000 capital outlay request for the park, which will help leverage matching federal funds to acquire additional land for the park and perhaps begin development. The Las Cruces City Council also approved a request for \$20,000 in matching funds for a grant the Southwest Environmental Center received from the New Mexico Youth Conservation Corps; these funds will support a youth conservation work program at the site, focusing on habitat restoration and erosion control.

Special Event along the Rio Grande. La Horona Park

March 10, 3 PM, Mesilla Valley Bosque Park. Environmental attorney Robert Kennedy Jr. will speak, focusing on river and environmental issues. (In addition to being featured at this riverside event on the 10th, Kennedy will be presenting "Our Environmental Destiny" at 7:30 PM in the Pan American Center, NMSU, as part of the University Speakers Series.)



Crested Caracaras inhabit open shrublands; their US distribution is limited to southern Texas, Arizona, and Florida. Photos provided by D. Howell.

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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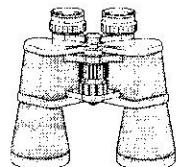
Send this application and your check to:

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. Programs begin at 7:30 PM. News, announcements, and information begin at 7:00, preceding the program.



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.

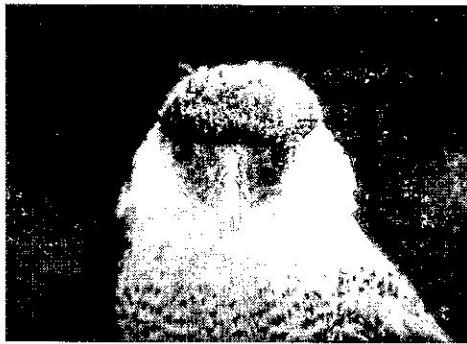
Percha Creek Headwaters. March 13.

On this trip, we'll head into the foothills of the Black Range, west of Hillsboro. This time of year, these riparian, mid-elevation habitats should contain some nice mixed-species flocks of birds like titmice, jays, chickadees, nuthatches, and woodpeckers. Wild turkeys also haunt this drainage. The area is best explored on foot, so everyone should be prepared to hike a few miles with a moderate elevation gain. We'll be leaving from the K-Mart on Highway 70 at 7 AM, returning by 4 PM (that should give us plenty of time to stop in Hillsboro on the way home for homemade ice cream and pie!). For more information, contact Nancy Stotz at nstotz@zianet.com or 521-8087.

Portal/Cave Creek, AZ. April 23-25.

The Portal/Cave Creek area is in the Chiricahua Mountains. Called "Sky Islands," they offer numerous noteworthy bird species including Brown-crested Flycatchers, Mexican Jays, Painted Redstarts, and many hummingbird species. The area includes the premier US habitat for the Elegant Tropic. Participants should meet trip leader Ed Mayfield at the Sunny Flats Campground at 7 AM (Arizona time) on Saturday morning. Contact Ed at 382-0715 or mayfield@zianet.com for more information.

Accommodations: Several forest service campgrounds are available, as well as some B & B's (including Portal Peak Lodge at 520-558-2223 and Cave Creek Ranch at 520-558-2334).



Who the Heck is that Flitting around My Feeder?? April 21. Joan Day Martin, founder of Hummingbirds of New Mexico, will discuss identification pointers for the hummingbirds we are likely to see arriving into the area this spring. She'll also cover species that will migrate through the state beginning in late June early July and provide some pointers on identifying accidental and wintering hummingbirds. Joan has been banding hummingbirds in New Mexico since 1994 and estimates she has banded at least 12,000 individuals of 13 different species.

Welcome New Members

Rich Spellenberg & Naida Zucker
Robert & Elizabeth Czerniak

Robert Moffitt
Edwin Nelson
Ellen Flesher



Field Trip Reports

Salton Sea. January 16-19. We had 16 enthusiastic birders in the Salton Sea area north of Brawley, California. Several of us had great opportunities to see lifers and to watch their behavior. One highlight was several fields filled with Mountain Plovers, a species listed as endangered because of habitat disappearance. Thanks to Tim Lawton who got directions to the fields with the plovers, all who wanted to see the birds had ample opportunity. The Salton Sea Refuge (now Sonny Bono Refuge) and its environs provided willets, whimbrels, cormorants and many other shore and aquatic species. The fields around the Salton Sea area were filled with egrets, curlews, and ibis. I think that most of the world's population of cattle egrets

must reside in the Imperial Valley in winter. Touring around a freshwater marsh-lake that is a California State Wildlife Refuge provided a number of bird species that were not using the Salton Sea. The general consensus was that this was a great trip to one of the best birding spots in the U. S.

Otero Mesa. February 28. The Otero Mesa natural history trip enticed 36 participants to spend a day exploring the Chihuahuan Desert grassland landscapes of Otero Mesa. Despite the drought conditions, the gently undulating grasslands of Otero Mesa present vistas that are unique in southern New Mexico. Several herds of pronghorn antelope provided some "different" wildlife viewing for the participants as did the prairie dogs

on one of the colonies that we visited. Birds were sparse as predicted but there were lots of horned larks, a couple of loggerhead shrikes, and a pair of kestrels that several of the group got to study. As we traveled from the southeast end of Otero Mesa to the northwest, we encountered some heavy precipitation that precluded a couple of planned stops in ungrazed black grama grassland patches that have been designated "Areas of Environmental Concern" by the BLM. Despite deteriorating weather and a paucity of birds, most of the participants were grateful for the opportunity to see this unique landscape that is planned for fragmentation and destruction by the oil and gas industry.

Walt Whitford

VFW Post Supports Audubon Adventures

In the Winter 2003 statewide newsletter, we reported the generous donation of \$400 to the Audubon Adventures program by VFW Post 1389 in Elephant Butte. In January, they decided to more than double their donation, and contributed an additional \$500 to provide these educational materials to schools in their area. On behalf of the more than 20 classrooms who will benefit from their generosity, MVAS sincerely thanks the VFW for their interest and support.

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

Lecture & Photography Exhibit

by Subhankar Banerjee

Friday, April 2

7:30 PM

NMSU Corbett Center Auditorium



Bird Notes

Species	Date	Location	Observers
Anna's Hummingbird	10-20-1-21	Las Cruces	LS
Harris's Hawk	1-10	Alamogordo	MS
Long-tailed Duck	1-10	Holloman	MS
Eastern Bluebird	1-10	Radium Springs	MS/JZ
Long-billed Curlew	1-12	Uvas Valley	MS/JZ
Common Grackle	1-14	Radium Springs	MS/JZ
Eastern Phoebe	1-15	Radium Springs	MS/JZ
Merlin	1-19-2-23	Leasburg; Las Cruces	RH/JM; SWH
Cedar Waxwings	1-24	Percha	RH/JM
Western Bluebirds	1-24-2-10	Percha; Radium Springs	RH/JM; MS/JZ
Hutton's Vireo	1-29	Radium Springs	MS/JZ
Cattle Egret	2-2-2-12	Las Cruces	DM; NS
Am. White Pelican	2-2	Caballo	RH/JM
Bald Eagle	2-2	Percha and Caballo	RH/JM
Hairy Woodpecker	2-2	Percha	RH/JM
White-breasted Nuthatch	2-10	NMSU	RP
Winter Wren	2-11	Mesilla Dam	GE
Eurasian Collared-Dove	2-14	Anthony	BHH
Lewis's Woodpecker	2-15	Dona Ana	JH
Mew Gull	2-16	Sunland Park	JP
California Gull	2-16	Sunland Park	JP
Black-crowned Night-Heron	2-18	WSTF	JD, HH, AS
Lincoln's Sparrow	2-29	Las Cruces	LS

Observers: Jim Dawson, Gordon Ewing, Barbara/Harold Harrison, Sue/Wally Hill, Robert Hull/Jackye Meinecke, John Hyndman, Darrell Mott, Jim Paton, Ralph Preszler, Amanda Skarsgard, Lorraine Schulte, Marcy Scott/Jimmy Zabriskie, Nancy Stotz

Please report early, late, or unusual sightings to Sue Hill at
505-382-9758 or hillco@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	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/~mvash/.

Education Highlights

By Donna A. Wood

February has been an active month for the education committee. Our Basic Bird Watching Class moved to the new DABCC East Mesa Campus. Our class was one of eighteen very enthusiastic new birders. A big thank you to Lorraine Schulte, Sue and Wally Hill, Nancy Stotz, Tim Lawton, Storm Sermay, Guy Powers, Barbara Rodriguez, Walt Whitford, and Wendy Davis, for their help in the classroom and in the field. We look forward to having our new birders take an active part in our Mesilla Valley Audubon Chapter.

Wendy Davis and Donna Wood joined Ken Barragan, our state education manager, out on the dry river bed twice in February. Ken was at Columbia Elementary School for a week and also at Hermosa Elementary School for a week teaching about "Birds of the Bosque." Each week culminated on Friday at La Llorona Park with the students looking for birds and participating in a Migration Game.

Lorraine Schulte has been working hard recently promoting our Audubon Adventures program. This program has been made available to all 4th graders in Las Cruces and also in Alamogordo, White Sands and Truth or Consequences. Due to the generosity of the VFW 1389 in Elephant Butte we hope to expand the program to more schools in that area.

If you would like to become active on the education committee, please contact Donna Wood at 525-8704 or email her at donnacamino@yahoo.com.

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: April 24.** 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[®] Collection.

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