

ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

Volume 30, No. 3. May-June 2008

President's Message

by David Griffin, MVAS President

As I write this near the end of April, spring has sprung and we're well into the prime migration period for passerine birds. Here at home I've seen Orange-crowned, Virginia's, Yellow-rumped and Wilson's warblers, Hermit Thrushes and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers. These species are referred to as "Passage Migrants" and will hang around for a day or two and then move on. Other migrants have arrived too, but these will stay for the breeding season. In our yard these include Black-chinned Hummingbirds, Ash-throated Flycatchers, Western Kingbirds and Lesser Nighthawks.

My year-round birds are well into nesting season; the Curve-billed Thrashers I mentioned in the last newsletter are now feeding their lone fledgling and are beginning to make another nest. The Verdins completed their nest, filled it with 4 or so eggs and now are feeding the recent nestlings. The next few weeks are typically the most exciting for watching birds and other wildlife in the desert, so get out there and enjoy it!

I'd like to extend my sincere gratitude to two of our locally-owned businesses for partnering with MVAS in 2008. First I'd like to say thanks to my friend Curtis at Horse-n-Hound Feed-n-Supply, 991 W. Amador (ph: 523-8790). Horse-n-Hound is offering MVAS members a 15% discount on all wild bird feed. Call Curtis for details. Horse-n-Hound has been in Las Cruces for 30 years, and they pride themselves on fantastic customer service. Beyond birdseed and feeders, they offer a wide range of livestock feed, tack and ranching supplies, as well as pet food and care products.

Second I'd like to thank Kristi and Wes Lane, owners of Wild Birds Unlimited at 2001 E. Lohman, Suite 130 (ph: 523-5489). Kristi and Wes have donated two pair of binoculars to MVAS that we plan on using as loaners for our monthly field trips. WBU offers an incredible assortment of bird seeds, feeds, feeders and all things related to birds and bird watching. They have great monthly specials and other programs. WBU is a relative newcomer to Las Cruces, but with support by MVAS members and others, they'll be around for a long time! Thanks again!

Birdathon 2008: BIRDING FOR A CAUSE

This year's Birdathon will take place between April 23 and May 8.

Birdathon is Audubon's largest annual fund raising event, and the world's largest birdwatching competition. Every year, thousands of people join to count birds, have fun, and raise vital funds for Audubon's mission of environmental conservation, education, and advocacy.

Here's how a Birdathon works: people count birds and collect pledges from sponsors based on the number of species they see. All you have to do is choose a date and start counting; you can pick whatever 24-hour period works best for you. You can count alone, in pairs, or with a group. You don't have to be an expert; some people do the Birdathon from their living room and count birds at their feeders; others may cover hundreds of miles in a day and see over 150 species. The key is to have fun.

If you don't want to participate as a counter, you can also contribute to the event just by pledging a certain amount per species or a flat amount to one of our counters.

Nationwide, last years' Birdathon helped raise over \$1 million. The funds raised by MVAS members are used locally, to support our Audubon Adventures environmental education program, which is providing educational materials for 86 local classrooms this year.

We hope you'll join with thousands of other participants in communities across the country who help make Birdathon a success.

Contact David Griffin for additional information or to sign up: email griffinbio@gmail.com or call 382-2080.

Save The Date

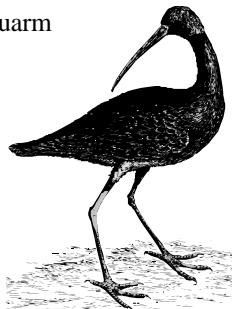
July 11, 7-10 PM

MVAS 30th Anniversary Celebration

Welcome New Members

David & Marcia Robinovich
Thomas Michael Quarm

T. P. Barto
Barbara Dean
Terry Edwards
Nancy Banks
Geraldine January
Dinah Jentgen
Greg Briggs



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

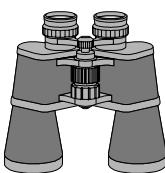


Membership meetings and programs are held each month, at the Village at Northrise, Hallmark Building, 2882 N. Roadrunner Pkwy.

Meetings begin at 7:00 PM. Programs begin immediately following the business meeting and announcements.

Birds of the Big Burro Mountains. June 18.

The Burros are a small range between Silver City and Lordsburg that reach just over 8,000 feet in elevation. The Burros contain ponderosa pine and pine-oak forests and have been little-studied by biologists. David Griffin conducted surveys there during Fall migration and Winter, and is currently surveying Spring migrants and breeding birds.



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.

Dams, Ditches & Driveways: May

Migrants in Mesilla. May 24. On this trip we'll visit local migrant hotspots in and around Mesilla. Spring migration will be nearing the end of its peak period here in the Mesilla Valley, but we should have no problem finding some interesting birds. We'll start by visiting the area around Mesilla Dam where there are relatively verdant ditches and canals that regularly harbor large numbers of migrants and resident breeding birds. Next we'll make our way to a few of the smaller, lushly-vegetated canals in Mesilla to continue our quest (last year we found a brilliant Rose-breasted Grosbeak here). We'll finish the morning with a nice stroll along the canals and roads in Mesilla Park, one of the Mesilla Valley's shadiest places and a great place to find birds in the spring.

Trip will depart at 6:30 AM from the Arroyo Plaza parking lot at 2001 E. Lohman Ave (meet near Wild Birds Unlimited). The trip will likely last until about noon, so bring snacks and a lunch, water, sun protection and be prepared for possible warm weather conditions. *Easy walking.*

Annual Potluck

May 21

Where: Lorraine Schulte's home, 1740 Mariposa (phone 524-7029)

When: 5:30 PM, May 21

Bring a main dish, side dish, or dessert; and a couple of folding chairs or TV tables if you've got them. Table service, iced tea, and coffee will be provided; BYOB for other beverages.

Attire: Where your favorite bird T-shirt!

Aguirre Springs. June 21. On this trip we'll try and beat the local heat by going up in elevation and visit some unique plant communities in Doña Ana County. First we'll bird the campground and picnic area, where species such as Black-chinned Hummingbird, Juniper Titmouse, Bushtit, Gray Vireo, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, and Black-chinned Sparrow are regular residents. For those of you feeling more adventurous, the second (and longer) part of the trip will be a hike around the Pine Tree Trail loop. This is a 5 mile hike with an elevation gain of about 1000'. Species found at these higher elevations include Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Acorn and Hairy woodpeckers, Mountain Chickadee, Western Wood-peewee, Hepatic Tanager, and Virginia's and Grace's warbler.

Trip will depart at 6:30 AM from the Arroyo Plaza parking lot at 2001 E. Lohman Ave (meet near Wild Birds Unlimited). Trip length will depend on your personal preference; those birding only the campground and picnic area should return by noon, and those who hike the trail will return sometime after noon. In either case, bring snacks and/or a lunch, water, sun protection and be prepared for warm weather conditions. *Easy walking* for those in the picnic and campground areas; *moderate to strenuous* for those hiking the Pine Tree Trail (wear appropriate shoes).

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

Bird Notes

Species	Date	Location	Observers
White-tailed Kite	02/28, 3/27-4/04	MVBSP, LC DAM	RC, SH/NS
Black-crowned Night Heron	02/29	MVBSP	RC/KS
Cliff Swallow	02/29	North Valley, MVBSP	LS/BR; RC/KS
Harlan's Hawk	02/29	MVBSP	RC/KS
N Rough-winged Swallow	02/29	MVBSP, N Valley	RC/KS, LS/BR
Sora	02/29	MVBSP	RC/KS
Tree Swallows	02/29	MVBSP	RC/KS
Violet-green Swallows	02/29	MVBSP	RC/KS
Black-chinned Hummer	03/08	Las Cruces	JD
Turkey Vulture	03/08	Las Cruces	JD
Brown Thrasher	03/12	MVBSP	JD
Barn Owl	03/19	Percha/Caballo	SS
Lincoln's Sparrow	03/19	Percha/Caballo	SS
Painted Redstart	03/19	Percha/Caballo	SS
Harlan's Hawk	03/19, 3/29	Percha/Caballo	SS, SH/BR/LS
Burrowing Owls	03/26	Mesilla	BLP
Hooded Oriole	03/26	Las Cruces	HH
American & Lesser Goldfinch	03/29	Percha SP	SH/BR/LS
Bewick's Wren	03/29	Percha SP	SH/BR/LS
Chipping Sparrow	03/29	Percha SP	SH/BR/LS
Cinnamon Teal	03/29	Percha SP	SH/BR/LS
Red-naped Sapsucker	03/29	Percha SP	SH/BR/LS
Western Kingbird	03/29	Percha SP	SH/BR/LS
Broad-Tailed Hummer	03/30	LC	LH
Long-billed Curlews	03/30	Dona Ana, Mesilla Park	JH, BLP
Rufous-backed Robins	04/04	Mesilla Park	PA
Long-billed Dowitcher	04/05	Leasburg	LS
Spotted Towhee	04/05	Leasburg	LS
Swainson's Hawks	04/05	Leasburg	LS
Scott's Oriole	04/06	LC	SWH
Mountain Chickadee	04/08	Percha, Mesilla Park	SS, PA
White-faced Ibis	04/08, 4/12	Mesilla Park, La Mesa	PA, SWH/LS
Brewer's Sparrow	04/13	La Mesa	SWH/LS
Ferruginous Hawk	04/13	La Mesa	SWH/LS
Green-tailed Towhee	04/13	Las Cruces	JS
Savannah Sparrow	04/13	La Mesa	SWH/LS
Solitary Sandpiper	04/13	La Mesa	SWH/LS
Vesper Sparrow	04/13	La Mesa	SWH/LS
Scaled Quail	04/15	NMSU	JMRH
Bronzed Cowbird	04/16	Las Cruces	LS
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	04/19	MVBSP	SH
Summer Tanager	04/23	Las Cruces	LH
Bullock's Oriole	04/24	Las Cruces	LS
Franklin's Gull	04/27	Calle del Norte Bridge	NS
Lesser Scaup	04/27	Calle del Norte Bridge	NS
Blue-winged Teal	04/27	Calle del Norte Bridge	NS
Willet	04/27	Calle del Norte Bridge	NS
House Wren	04/27	MVBSP	NS
Black-headed Grosbeak	04/27	MVBSP	NS

Observers: Phil Alkon, Rick Castetter, John Douglas, Harold Harrison, Landy Hinesley, Sue & Wally Hill, Jackye Meinecke & Robert Hull, John Hyndman, Bruce & Linda Pearson, Barb Rodriguez, Judith Scott, Lorraine Schulte, Ken Stinnett, Nancy Stotz, Storm Sermay

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

Alamogordo Area. March 22. Fourteen birders met earlier than usual and headed east to the large natural playa and created wetland complex known as Holloman Lakes, and Oliver Lee Memorial State Park. A total of 52 species was observed: 34 at Holloman Lakes, and 24 at Oliver Lee.

At Holloman Lakes, the soft morning light and calm air allowed for great scope views of waterfowl and shorebirds, and it didn't take long for members to spot 6 Snowy Plovers on the nearby playa. Also on the playa was a pair of American Avocets, a few Killdeer, 6 Ring-billed Gulls, and a flock of small sandpipers. As we made our way to a cove we put our scopes on a large raft of ducks to the north: a big group of Lesser Scaup. With them were a few Ring-necked Ducks, 2 Gadwall, a couple of American Wigeon, and Cinnamon Teal. In the cove we had good looks at a pair of Bufflehead and 12 Eared Grebes. On our walk back across the levee we saw a group of 5 grebes floating to the north; they seemed to be 3 Western and 2 Clark's grebes.

We next headed southeast to Oliver Lee Memorial State Park at the foot of the Sacramento Mountains and the mouth of Dog Canyon. As we made our way through the desert scrub and down the trail toward the canyon, someone spotted a female Hairy Woodpecker - a real treat for us at such a low elevation. Other highlights included a Bewick's Wren and Orange-crowned Warbler.

After a nice lunch break in the group picnic area, we said our goodbyes and began the long journey home. When we turned north onto Hwy 54, people in our vehicle noticed a dark raptor perched on a power pole. As we headed back to the spot we could see another members' vehicle stopped and checking it out. The bird left its perch and flew west to another set of power poles, where we noticed 2 more raptors. We quickly got the scope on the birds and found them to be a group of Harris's Hawks! Hopefully other participants got a chance to see these beautiful birds. If not, this area, about 10 mi south of Alamogordo is traditionally one of the best places to find this species in New Mexico, so maybe you can take another trip and locate them.

(continued on page 4) **Trip Reports**

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 (07-09)	Valerie Endruweit	373-0530
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Education		vacant
Field Trips	David Griffin	382-2080
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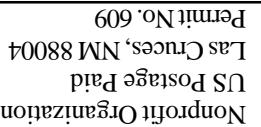
Board meetings are held, September through May, on the Thursday before the 3rd Wednesday at 5:30 PM at the Southwest Environmental Center (on the downtown mall). All Audubon members are welcome.

Visit our website at www.cybermesa.com/~mvash/.

Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park. April 19. An amazing 38 people showed up for today's field trip, even with a fair warning of possible ferocious mosquitoes. Were they lured by the avian riches of the Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park, or was it perhaps the early morning coffee and doughnuts provided by Kristi and Ken Lane of Wild Birds Unlimited? Either way, that's the biggest turnout we've had in recent times. Many thanks to Kristi and Ken for meeting the group way before regular business hours! John Douglas led the group, which consisted mostly of members, although a few non-members also attended. Participants got good looks at many of the regularly-occurring water species such as Mallard, Green-winged Teal, Great Blue Heron, and American Coot. Shorebirds were represented by Killdeer and Spotted Sandpiper. Secretive species such as Marsh Wren, Common Yellowthroat and Green-tailed Towhee were also observed. Raptors made a showing with Northern Harrier, Swainson's Hawk, Red-tailed hawk, and Prairie Falcon making the list. Flycatchers also were well-represented by Say's Phoebe, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Western Kingbird, and a surprise Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. Treetop gleaners included Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, and Bullock's Oriole; while ground feeders included Gambel's Quail, Green-tailed Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, and Dark-eyed Junco.

Thanks to all who attended and shared the use of their vehicles; we'll see you next time! A full list of species observed is available, just contact David Griffin at 382-2080 or GriffinBio@gmail.com.

Roadrunner Ramblings is published six times a year: January, March, May, July, September, and November. Submissions welcome; please email copy to nstotz1@comcast.net, or call for mailing information. **Next deadline: June 21.** Printed on 100% PCW recycled paper by **insta-copy printing**. Image credits: roadrunner, Dale Zimmerman; clip art, IMSI's Master Clips/Master Photos®Collection.



Mesilla Valley Audubon Society
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