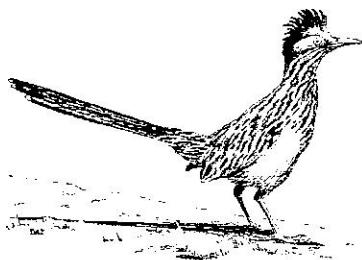


MESILLA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY



ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

Celebrating
20
years

Volume 20, No. 5 September/October 1998

NEW MEXICO AUDUBONERS HONORED

by Deanna Einstpahr

In July at the National Audubon Society biennial convention in Estes Park, Colorado, three New Mexicans were honored recipients of one of National Audubon's highest awards for conservation, the Charles Callison Award. David Henderson, Executive Director of the state office, and Tom and Eleanor Wootten, of the Mesilla Valley Audubon Society in Las Cruces, were recognized for their contribution to Audubon and to the conservation of New Mexico's wildlife resources in a ceremony before more than 800 Audubon members.

David Henderson was recognized for "creatively establishing the Randall Davey Audubon Center in Santa Fe as an educational center and advocacy-based state office. His vision, advocacy, ability to work with people with boundless enthusiasm and commitment to wildlife habitat have established the New Mexico State Office at the Randall Davey Center as a facility for others to emulate."

Tom and Eleanor Wootten were recognized for "working tirelessly as volunteers toward the achievement of outstanding environmental advocacy efforts throughout New Mexico based on sound scientific principles, while always exemplifying creativity, perseverance, patience, and generosity."

This honor is bestowed upon one professional and one volunteer within the National Audubon organization each year and this year New Mexico activists took home all the honors. The hard work of David Henderson and Tom and Eleanor Wootten helps to assure that New Mexico's spectacular wildlife heritage will be here to enjoy for generations.

(Deanna Einstpahr is the Office Manager for the Randall Davey Audubon Center)

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

by Bill Jacobson

Summer is almost over, signaling the start of another Audubon year. This year we will be meeting in the Las Cruces High School Library. Our first meeting is on September 16, with the business meeting starting at 6:45 PM followed by the program at 7:30 PM. John Mangimeli from White Sands will be the featured speaker. In conjunction with the program, John will lead a field trip to Holloman Lakes the following Saturday. (See details in the Field Trips section.)

My wife Donna and I had the chance to visit the New Mexico office for Audubon in Santa Fe this summer for the first time. I highly recommend the visit. They have a gift shop crammed full of wonderful items and the site is very interesting. It is the Randall Davey estate, which began as a sawmill and is located at the end of Upper Canyon Road. Just when you think you must have taken a wrong turn (except there are no turns) you arrive. There are birding trails and a friendly and hospitable staff.

Lana Berand of Welcome Services in Las Cruces has agreed to include our membership brochure in the packet of material she passes out to newcomers. She distributes approximately 60 packets a month. Newcomers to Las Cruces will now be aware of our organization.

Our chapter recently entered the Audubon newsletter contest. Although we did not win any prizes, we received many excellent comments and helpful suggestions. (We welcome contributions of conservation and birding articles to the newsletter.)

Your board has produced a questionnaire about the chapter activities, which is enclosed in this issue of Roadrunner Ramblings. Please take a few minutes to fill it out and return it. I strongly urge you to make comments in the space provided or on the back of the sheet. This is our way of finding out what you want from your chapter. You may mail it back or bring it to either the September or October meeting. Thank you for your cooperation. Remember, this is your chapter.

As Fall migration gets in full swing, don't forget to turn in your unusual sightings to Storm Sermay (382-3348 or ssermay@zianet.com).

Looking forward to seeing you at the meeting.

PLEASE NOTE THE DIRECTIONS TO OUR NEW MEETING LOCATION IN THE "PROGRAMS" SECTION.

PROPOSED WILDERNESS ENDANGERED BY OIL & GAS LEASING

by Greg Magee

Rising dramatically from the desert floor, the Big Hatchet and Alamo Hueco Mountains are excellent examples of 'sky island' mountain ranges that provide diverse habitats for many plants and animals. But the southeast corner of the New Mexico boot heel is under attack from potential prospecting for oil and gas. A current proposal by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) calls for leasing over 51,000 acres of Federal oil and gas estate in southeast Hidalgo County to a private corporation. A portion of this acreage falls within the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance's proposals for wilderness.

Although there are no immediate plans for prospecting, leasing the oil and gas rights will leave this fragile landscape vulnerable to serious damage in the future. Each prospecting site requires a 16' wide road with a 50' right-of-way and the clearing of two acres at the site. If a site is to be developed it could mean an oil well every 40 acres or a gas well every 160 acres, each with its associated road and cleared pad.

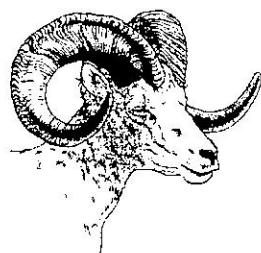
This area of the state has long been recognized as excellent wildlife habitat. The proposed lease area includes such diverse plant communities as piñon-juniper-oak, mountain scrub, grassland, desert scrub, and arroyo riparian. There are approximately 186 species of birds, 59 species of mammals, and 55 species of amphibians that may occur in the affected area. It provides excellent habitat for many endangered species such as Jaguar, Mexican Gray Wolf, Desert Big Horn Sheep, Peregrine Falcon, Apolomado Falcon, as well as some species of concern such as Cave Myotis, Fringed Myotis, Pale Townsend's Big-eared Bat, Ferruginous Hawk, Western Burrowing Owl, Contra Yerba, and Night-blooming Cereus.

These mountain ranges provide a natural corridor for long-term animal migrations as well as short-term seasonal movements. Because of the Desert Big Horn Sheep that were reintroduced to the area in the 80's, BLM has created the Big Hatchet- Alamo Hueco Habitat Management Plan area. The New Mexico Game and Fish Department has designated a State Game Refuge in the Big Hatchet Mountains. The Desert Big Horn Sheep reintroduction program calls for facilitating inter-mountain movement of the Sheep that live in the boot heel area. The fragmentation and human disturbance caused by drilling could seriously decrease the possibility of these movements.

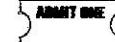
In addition to the negative impacts on wildlife, this leasing proposal could seriously compromise the Wilderness Alliance's proposal for wilderness. BLM is accepting comments on the proposal until September 21. In addition to the 51,000 acre proposal, BLM has analyzed two alternatives. In 'Alternative One', the area offered for lease would be reduced to 19,160 acres, none of which is in our wilderness proposal. In the 'No Action' alternative, no leases would be offered. Obviously 'No Action' would be the preferred alternative, but it is doubtful that this alternative would ever be seriously considered. 'Alternative One' appears to be the best compromise since it excludes potential wilderness from leasing.

Don't allow this truly special place to be jeopardized. Please send letters before September 21 to: Bill Merhege, Bureau of Land Management, 1800 Marquess St., Las Cruces, NM 88005. Refer to the Proposed Oil and Gas Leasing in Hidalgo County, Environmental Assessment NM-036-98, and support either the 'No Action' alternative or 'Alternative 1'.

(Greg Magee is a member of the board of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance)



PROGRAMS



NEW MEETING PLACE

Beginning this month MVAS will have its general meetings and programs in the Las Cruces High School library, 1755 El Paseo Rd. The library is to the left of the main entrance. If the main entrance is open, enter the lobby, take a left at the corner, go down the hall to the 3rd door on the left. If the main entrance is not open, there is an exterior entrance directly to the library (to the left of the main entrance.)

September 16. White Sands National Monument. John Mangimeli will give a talk and slideshow about the unique story behind the gypsum dunes and the plants and animals that live there.

October 21. Feather Lake Wildlife Sanctuary. John Sproul with the El Paso/Trans Pecos Audubon Society will talk about the Feather Lake Sanctuary in El Paso's lower valley. Come and find out about birding opportunities and Feather Lake's role as an educational resource.



FIELD TRIPS

September 19. Saturday.

Holloman Lakes. As a follow-up to the September 16 program, John Mangimeli will lead a field trip to Holloman Lakes. This is a great time of year to see migrating shorebirds and early waterfowl. Meet at the dam at 7:30 AM. Directions: East on Hwy 70, 3 miles past White Sands National Monument (mm 203). Turn left for 1/4 mile to the dam. Allow about one hour to get there from Las Cruces. Call John Mangimeli at 679-2599 ext. 230 for more information.

September 12. Monjeau Peak, Lincoln National Forest. This trip with the Lincoln Co. Bird Club will meet at 7 AM at the softball field at the beginning of Ski Run Road (Ruidoso). Call Anita Powell at 505-257-5352 for more information.

October in the Chiricahuas. A trip has been planned for Fall birding in the Chiricahua Mountains and surrounding area. If you missed the August trip, here's another opportunity for some great birding. Contact Ed Mayfield at 382-0715 for information on exact dates and arrangements.

AUDUBON ADVENTURES EVENT

On October 4 at Enchanted Gardens Nursery (2:30 - 4:30 PM) Ken Stinnett and Ric Castetter will present slides on the "Birds of the Las Cruces Vicinity". Lorraine Schulte will also be there with posters and informational handouts about birds and the Audubon Adventures program. The nursery is located on Stern Drive near the El Paso Saddle Blanket billboard. Contact Jackie Meinike at 524-1886 for further information.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

J. W. and Martha Sharp
Dolores and Norman Fuller



BIRD NOTES

| | July 3 | Mesilla Park | CB |
|-----------------------------|---------|-------------------|----------|
| Yellow-billed Cuckoo | July 3 | Las Cruces | LS |
| Rufous Hummingbird | July 16 | Las Cruces | LS |
| Calliope Hummingbird | July 23 | Las Cruces | TL,GE |
| Calliope Hummingbird | July 23 | Palomas Marsh | LS,EW |
| Common Yellowthroat | July 23 | Palomas Marsh | LS,EW |
| Wilson's Phalarope | July 23 | Palomas Marsh | LS,EW |
| Lesser Yellowlegs | July 23 | Percha State Park | LS,EW |
| Summer Tanager | July 23 | Caballo Dam | LS,EW |
| Black Tern | July 23 | Las Cruces | BM by EW |
| Painted Bunting | July 29 | Old Refuge | TL |
| Prothonotary Warbler | Aug 6 | Jornada Range | SH |
| Solitary Sandpiper | Aug 14 | Jornada Range | TL |
| Solitary Sandpiper | Aug 16 | Jornada Range | TL |
| Townsend's Warbler | Aug 16 | Percha State Park | GE |
| Eastern Phoebe | Aug 18 | Percha State Park | GE |
| Barn Owl | Aug 18 | Percha State Pk | LS,SH |
| Prothonotary Warbler | Aug 27 | Percha State Pk | LS,SH |
| Yellow Warbler | Aug 27 | Percha State Pk | LS,SH |
| Orange-crowned Warbler | Aug 27 | Percha State Pk | LS,SH |
| Black-throated Gray Warbler | Aug 27 | Percha State Pk | LS,SH |
| Bell's Vireo | Aug 27 | Percha State Pk | LS,SH |
| Warbling Vireo | Aug 27 | Percha State Pk | LS,SH |
| Plumbeous Vireo | Aug 27 | Percha State Pk | LS,SH |
| Western Tanager | Aug 27 | Percha State Pk | LS,SH |
| MacGillivray's Warbler | Aug 30 | Las Cruces | TL |

Observers: Craig Benkman, Gordon Ewing, Sue Hill, Tim Lawton, Barbara Moody, Lorraine Schulte, Eleanor Wootten.

There were many other good sightings in our area by non-local birders. To find out about these other sightings subscribe to BIRDWG05 by sending an e-mail message to listserv@listserv.arizona.edu with the message SUB BIRDWG05 Your Name.

Please report any early, late, or unusual sightings to: Storm Sermay
e-mail ssermay@zianet.com or 505-382-3348

New Mexico Rare Bird Hotline 505-323-9323

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Leasburg State Park. On July 25 Jennifer Atchley led a group of 10 on a birding trip at Leasburg State Park. We parked near the dam, walked down the road and then walked back to the dam on the shoreline. Later some of the group then walked up the road past the dam. The weather was excellent. Birds seen included Blue Grosbeak, Black-headed Grosbeak, Spotted Towhee, Bell's Vireo, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Mallard, Pyrrhuloxia, Verdin, and Spotted Sandpiper. Also seen were some soft-shelled turtles, one of which was quite large. A very successful trip. by Bill Jacobson.



Chiricahua Mountains. This year, five birders enjoyed our traditional August SE Arizona weekend and saw more than 80 species. We began Friday evening at the San Simon Cienega with Cassin's Sparrows singing all around us. Saturday morning found us hiking in delightfully cool weather up the South Fork of Cave Creek for our target birds of Painted Redstart and Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher. Along with those birds we also saw Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Black-throated Gray Warbler, and Hutton's Vireo. After a picnic lunch at the Cave Creek picnic area, we started up the Paradise Road where we found Costa's Hummingbird. A detour because of flash flooding took us by a picnic area for Strickland's Woodpecker and then on to Rustler Park and the high country. Sunday morning on the trail to Barfoot Lookout we had excellent looks at Band-tailed Pigeons, Yellow-eyed Juncos, Grace's Warbler, Western Bluebirds, and Hairy Woodpeckers. After a picnic lunch with a spectacular Magnificent Hummingbird, we dropped down to Willcox and the sewage ponds at the golf course. There we saw Baird's, Spotted, and Western Sandpipers, American Avocets, Greater Yellowlegs, and Willets. What a wonderful summer weekend. by Storm Sermay.

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 | Bill Jacobson | 382-6877 |
| Vice-president | Tim Lawton | 522-2056 |
| Secretary | Sue Hill | 382-9758 |
| Treasurer | Mary Lou Wallace | 522-0684 |
| Board (96-98) | Lorraine Schulte | 524-7029 |
| Board (96-98) | Margaret Morey | 527-1155 |
| Board (97-99) | Bill Jacobson | 382-6877 |
| Board (97-99) | Maxine Perkins | 524-1529 |
| Board (98-00) | Ed Mayfield | 382-0715 |
| Board (98-00) | Jennifer Atchley | 526-1320 |

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

| | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|----------|
| Audubon Adventures | Lorraine Schulte | 524-7029 |
| Audubon Council | Jennifer Atchley | 526-1320 |
| Delegates | Storm Sermay | 382-3348 |
| Conservation | Margaret Morey | 527-1155 |
| Education | Maxine Perkins | 524-1529 |
| Field Trips | Vacant | |
| Membership Records | Mary Anne Thibodeau | 524-4126 |
| Membership | Ed Mayfield | 382-0715 |
| Newsletter Editor | Storm Sermay | 382-3348 |
| Programs | Jennifer Atchley | 526-1320 |
| Publicity | Ann Heying | 521-4215 |

Board meetings are held, September through May, on the Thursday before the 3rd Wednesday at 5:30 pm at the Southwest Environmental Center, 1494A S. Solano Dr., Las Cruces NM 88001. All Audubon members are welcome.

JOIN NOW!

I would like to join the **National Audubon Society** and **Mesilla Valley Audubon Society** for the introductory rate of \$20

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____
 State _____ Zip _____

Q54

7XCH

Membership includes the publications *Audubon* and *Roadrunner Ramblings*.

Send this application and your check (made payable to NAS) to:

**Membership, MVAS, PO Box 3127,
 Las Cruces NM 88003**

THANKS TO OUR BIRDATHON CONTRIBUTORS

The following individuals and organizations helped make the 1998 Birdathon a success. Hats off to all of you!

Bill and Donna Jacobson, Greg Magee and Julie Prior-Magee, Eleanor and Tom Wootten, T & E, Inc., George Ashby, David Henderson, Barbara Dolezal, Rita Gay Wells, Bob Tafanelli, Rich Spellenberg and Naida Zucker, Barbara Moody, Carol and Don Anderson, Jennifer Atchley, Barbara and Harold Harrison, Susan Tweit and Richard Cabe, Tom and Jane Teague, Peter Pache, Ed Southworth, Carlos Macias, Pinkie Stevens, Greg Hall, Charlie Collins, Jane Moore, John Eubank, Lisa and David McKee, Joe Copolla, Genevieve Chavez, Diane McLaughlin, Bob Deutsch, Lori and Don Minnick, Michael Embesi, Don Biad, Chris Biad, Robert Alvarado, Vince Hernandez, Paul Hyder, Chris McGlone, MariLynn Van Zandt, Christina Trowbridge, Stephanie Taylor, Adrienne Croly, Linda and Mike Hartshorne, John and Lorraine Schulte, Ken Stinnett, Paul Mitchell, Charles Wagner, Roger Lord, Fae Adams, Thomas Ashbrook and Katherine Warren, Ann and William Buckley, Ross Burkhardt, Christine Brandl, Louise Harvey Clark, Jeff Cramer, Elsie Carrington, Martha Gooden, Jeanne Howard, Phillip Medina, Ben Molina, Roger Mayfield, Bruce Neville, Barbara Peaslee, Betty Reynolds, Stephanie Trujillo, Lucia Wilcox, Kathy Mallouf, Russ and Marge Lawton, Jonathan Lawton, Teena Tabet, Malcolm Weiss, Tom Kling, Diana and Tim Lawton, Brenda Buck, Barb Freese, Dick and Pat Buffler, Katherine Giles, Kathy and Roger Davis, Jeff and Peg Herrick, Amrita de Soyya, Barb and Dave Baron, Walt and Linda Whitford, Adventure Travel, Collin Hill, Wally Hill, Anna and Bob Stack, Jeri Sermay, Annetta Artuso-Banegas, Betsy Huber, Mary Anne Owen, Yolanda Gonzales, Saul Porras, Teresa Garcia, Sandra Padilla, Martha Martinez, Tracy MacCallum, Sue Williams, Jack and Maureen Ososki, Margaret Morey, Sandra Cortez, Priscilla Parrish, Storm Sermay.

And here is more Birdathon news. This year we had 16 participants raising money on six teams. Total species seen in three states (Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas) was 203. The highest team count this year was 125 species. As of the June 26 deadline, we had raised \$2894.55 of which half went to the support of the Randall Davey Audubon Center in Santa Fe. More money did come in after the deadline which will be included in next year's total. This was an excellent Birdathon!

PALOMAS MARSH NEEDS YOU!

One of Mesilla Valley Audubon Society's projects is the monitoring of a 40-acre enclosure at Palomas Marsh. We are doing this in conjunction with the BLM and have collected a year's worth of data. Our role is to monitor the bird usage of the site. We do this one day a month and are currently seeking volunteers to help with the project. It takes approximately one hour to monitor the enclosure. The day of the month and the time period are up to the observer. You may volunteer by signing up at a meeting or by calling Bill Jacobson at 382-6877 or e-mail bfrog@zianet.com. Volunteers will be provided with directions to the marsh and a data sheet. Volunteer NOW while you have a good selection of months.

Roadrunner Ramblings is published six times a year: January, March, May, July, September, and November. Contributions are welcome. Please e-mail copy to: ssermay@zianet.com, or call for mailing information. **Next deadline: October 24**

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