



ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

MESILLA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

<https://www.mvasaudubon.org/> Vol. 42, No 4, Winter 2020



Bird portrait by N. Khandan (see Zoom presentation article below)

President's Letter

Dear MVAS Members and Friends:

There's not just one type of MVAS member. Some of us are listers. Some are conservationists, others preservationists. Birds are absolutely the focus for some, and others are interested in all wildlife. We are casual birders. We are hardcore.

We all need to be advocates.

Advocacy is one of the three overlapping prongs of our Audubon mission—the other two are education and conservation. What do I mean by advocacy?

Some of you may recall an expression attributed to Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel as he marched with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at Selma: "When I march in Selma, my feet are praying." Taking action, whatever that action may be, for birds, for habitat, for the

MVAS's Virtual Programming Included Three Zoom Presentations in September and October.

MVAS entered the virtual information age big time with three presentations via Zoom. All were well attended and highly successful.

"How to Butterfly" by Rob Wu. Our first speaker was Rob Wu, who lives in Las Cruces and is an environmental consultant who became interested in observing butterflies in the course of his work. He told us that records suggest that New Mexico has over 300 butterfly species and southern New Mexico has roughly 160 species. He encourages newcomers to start in their backyards and municipal parks and gardens. In addition to appreciating subtleties of butterfly appearance, to appreciate Lepidoptera one needs to be

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President's letter, cont'd.

environment, and for wildlife is putting your beliefs about how to make the world a better place out into the world by *doing* something. That's advocacy. Having the courage to take a position and act on it.

This year, the MVAS advocacy wheels started turning. Sometimes on our own, sometimes in conjunction with NM Audubon Council, and sometimes together with other conservation organizations, we took a position. We commented on the proposal to fly F-16s over the Gila Wilderness. We approached the City about renegotiating a lease to make it more bird friendly and supporting an IBWC restoration project on the La Llorona floodplain. We signed on (with Southwest Environmental Center and Native Plant Society) to a letter to the IBWC opposing an event that would have put many hundreds of vehicles in Rio Grande, placing wading birds, nests, mammals, and dens in jeopardy.

Now that NM and AZ Audubon are joined under Audubon Southwest, I anticipate many opportunities to join forces with them in policy and action initiatives. For 2021, I hope we'll be able to continue COVID-scuttled plans for outreach and birdwalks in Otero and Sierra counties. We'll reach out to Southwestern Audubon (the Silver City chapter) and El Paso Audubon for ways we can be of mutual support. After all, birders are like birds—we don't just stay in one spot. Their issues are our issues, and ours are theirs.

One of my favorite sayings is, "If you see the need, then do the deed." In 2021, we'll be asking you to do a lot of deeds for the birds, whether it's signing a petition, making a phone call, or joining us for a trash pick up.

Of course, we all very much hope we'll be able to start chapter-led birdwalks again led by our MVAS experts in 2021—and when that day comes, watch out for the Bring a Buddy Birding MVAS challenge!

Until that happy day, good birding, and on behalf of the MVAS board, best wishes for a safe and happy winter holiday season.

Elaine Stachera Simon

Zoom, cont'd.

aware of flight characteristics, habitats, seasonality, and more. It sounds like birding! The one birding cue that is absent is the bird call, which the silent butterfly can't match.

Rob kindly gave MVAS access to his PowerPoint presentation with his beautiful photos and it is available on our website (mavasaudubon.org).

"Yellow-headed Parrots: Globally important, globally endangered" by Fabio Tarazona. Our second speaker was Fabio Tarazona, who was a graduate student at NMSU working with Dr. Martha Desmond doing field work in Central America and now Puerto Rico. In Belize, his studies on parrots addressed concerns about the low reproductive rate of multiple parrot species, with special attention to nesting problems. He was part of a team that identified nests of the Yellow-headed Parrot, a species endangered in the wild. Their goal was to quantify how much nest failure there is, what factors contribute to this, and what are solutions to the problem. They identified approximately 120 nests and 40 of them were successful in producing fledglings while the remainder did not (17% failure rate). Failure was due to depredation by wild animals, abandonment by the nesting parent, and, of course, poaching by humans. Fabio described some of the historical factors that contribute to poaching.

"~~Taking~~ Creating Bird Photographs" by Dr. Nirmal Khandan. Bird photography for MVAS member Khandan is an orderly, rational process in which he uses his birding knowledge and photography skills to create bird portraits that are truly remarkable.

Khandan likes to use his experience to attract backyard birds, in his home setting in a natural setting primed with food and arrangement of

Continued on page 3: Zoom

Zoom, cont'd

native flora. He is willing to spend enough time in the environment that the birds are not frightened by his presence. At home he can set up a camera and take advantage of all its special features, including attention to the nature and direction of the light source, metering of the camera, and making use of the histogram.

Khandan said that once a birder is comfortable with his/her camera the fun begins. He showed us how he works on creating a photo with attention to the composition, perch, pose, and background where he finds his subject. Where is the light coming from? Is the bird out in the open? Does the photo include a good appreciation of the bird's head and eyes, of its legs and claws, or is it flying and are the wings adding to the photo? What kind of cropping and editing will help his featured subject?

What came through ever so clearly with his examples is that he is very experienced with all aspects of bird photography and that he is a true artist when it comes to taking creative bird portraits. MVAS is honored to count Khandan as part of its family!



Hummingbird portrait, using backyard studio and editing.



Photos courtesy of Nirmala Khandan.

Calendar (all events via Zoom)

November 2, Recent Bird Mortality in the Southwest: What We Do and Don't Know. Room opens at 6:45 p.m., presentation at 7 p.m. As you know, tens of thousands—possibly hundreds of thousands—of birds died in a tragic mortality event across New Mexico and the Southwest as they migrated to their winter habitat.

We are pleased to invite you to a special presentation by Dr. Desmond and Trish Cutler, wildlife biologist at White Sands Missile Range, who will discuss what we know, and what we don't, about what happened. New Mexico State University's Dr. Martha Desmond has been quoted extensively in media throughout the world as a leading avian expert.

Register in advance for this meeting:

https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tZAKc-iorDMoHNCzwWztO_-wADcbGXrul3xw

We do request that the registration link is not shared on social media. Thank you for your consideration.

November 18: Birding in Cuba. Zoom Room opens at 6:45 p.m., presentation at 7 p.m. by MVAS member Elena Espinosa. Stay tuned, registration details pending!

December, January: Scheduling in progress

Christmas Bird Count Cancelled

With a heavy heart, Mesilla Valley Audubon Society has decided to cancel this year's Las Cruces Christmas Bird Count (CBC).

About 50 people typically participate in our Las Cruces CBC each year, and out of concern for the safety of participants, we believe the best thing to do is cancel for this year and come back big next year.

Currently, it is being reported that the coronavirus infection rate is increasing in our state and our county, and further restrictions may be imposed over the coming months. There are fears of a bigger fall and winter COVID surge.

Given the restrictions of state mandates and future unknowns, the logistics of coverage of our CBC circle make it impossible to conduct the Las Cruces CBC in a way that we are confident is safe.

We'd rather sit out the Las Cruces CBC this year on the side of caution so that everyone can join us in 2021 for the highlight of a birder's winter—the Christmas Bird Count!

Thank you.

Wayne Treers, coordinator and compiler for the Las Cruces CBC
and the Mesilla Valley Audubon Society board

Individual Birding Opportunities as of November 1, 2020

Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park is open without restrictions, with payment of a \$5 parking fee or use of an annual pass. Some trails are closed while restoration is completed after last year's fire.

Leasburg Dam State Park is open with restrictions. Automobile access to the riverside parking lot is closed until April, but the dam and riverside portion of the Mogollon Trail is open if one parks in the parking lot by the Visitors' Center (parking fee or permit required) and walks from there to the riverside via a marked trail. In some cases, groups have dropped off members at the riverside while the driver has parked by the Visitors' Center and walked to join them. This is OK according to park rangers. Cars parked outside the riverside gates (ignoring the "no parking" signs) have been towed away.

Las Cruces City Parks: Currently there are no closures and all are open for birding.

Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument: Open. Parking fee applies.

MVAS Bird Survey Project Completes 12 Months of Work

So much has changed in the last 12 months!

The first half of the MVAS Bird Survey is complete, with the collection of data at the eBird Hotspot: [Rio Grande- Las Cruces: Treatment Water Canal South to I-10](#). After compiling 47 lists over 12 months, we identified 86 species and counted 2,258 birds total. Data is recorded on our website <https://www.mvasaudubon.org/mvas-bird-monitoring-project>. The plan was to use this data as a “before” template, to be compared with another year long data collection effort after the US International Water Boundary Commission (USIBWC) completed planned riparian construction at the study site.

However, USIBWC is reconsidering this construction project. They are reviewing their options and will request public input before the end of the year. Another challenge was COVID-19, with MVAS being unable to complete outreach at the survey site because of the closure of La Llorona park where the survey site is located.

MVAS has taken an active stance regarding the preservation of wildlife in and along the Rio Grande, partly in response to the focus created by the Bird Survey Project. MVAS board member and City Council member Gill Sorg and MVAS member Beth Bardwell have been working with the City to update a lease with USIBWC regarding management of the Rio Grande floodplain. Much can be done to improve its status as a bird-friendly environment. MVAS joined Southwest Environmental Center and the Native Plant Society in requesting that IBWC prevent a massive vehicular rally in the Rio Grande that would have been destructive to wading birds, nests, mammals, dens, and habitat. (Thank you to MVAS members who contacted officials!) Finally, board member Sid Webb has joined the Rio Grande Citizens’ Forum of the USIBWC.

MVAS and Audubon Southwest (the combined AZ and NM organization) have been in communication on how we might spend the money that Audubon granted to MVAS, given that plans were derailed. One idea was “Birding Backpacks,” which have been successfully done by Arizona chapter. These backpacks would contain binoculars, a field guide, and a brochure describing the birding spots in our area. They could be made available for lending at local state parks, museums, and to other education and conservation organizations for individuals or small groups interested in learning birding. After bird watchers completed their outing, they would return the backpack to its home location. Other potential projects include a bird blind, or special classes offered to members and available to other chapters. We will keep you posted!



Mexican Duck on sandbar in MVAS Bird Survey Area. It was the last bird counted on the last survey submitted on 10/6/2020

Editor's note: Thank you everybody for your article submissions. They are all great! Our featured article for the Winter edition is a beautiful piece by Jay Wilbur describing how he beat the COVID blues.

Birding Our Backyard by Jay Wilbur

Do you remember the last time you heard the sound of a gragger or knarre, that little wooden ratchet noisemaker we sometimes swing around in the air during moments of celebration, like a birthday party or at the stroke of midnight on New Year's? Much to my surprise, I heard it this morning in my backyard. Furthermore, when I discovered the source of the sound, I was flabbergasted to realize it was all due to the Covid-19 pandemic.



Covid-19 has been the source of much personal tragedy and suffering, and the last thing I want to do by writing this is to minimize that very sad fact. Nevertheless, like many of the more fortunate members of our society, my own impact from the virus has been limited to inconvenience. As a birder, that inconvenience has principally been the closure of many state and city parks that are the main places I go birding.

Judging from the locations cited on a large number of eBird lists from the past few months, my response to the closure of birding hotspots was not unique. Like everybody else, I started birding in my backyard. Of course, backyard birding was commonplace prior to the pandemic, but the number of birders doing it on a regular basis more than quadrupled when the virus-caused closures started.

A Greater Roadrunner sets its sights on a bee

Perhaps like many, my initial attitude about backyard birding was a bit jaundiced. I feared that limiting my birding to my backyard would severely limit my fun. Who wants to see the same birds every day?

Boy, was that wrong thinking. Within just a couple of days, I realized I was having just as much or even more fun birding my backyard as I had checking out the local hotspots I frequented. Moreover, being able to walk in and out of my back door when I needed to get something or take a break was a very nice plus.

Now, I confess to being a lister. The majority of my hobbies for all my life have involved collecting something, e.g., coins, records, books, and keeping bird lists is really just a way of collecting birds. It's what I've always liked to do.

To my delight, however, my backyard opened up a whole new aspect of birding for me. Since my list of species was never long or difficult to compile, I started looking at individual variation and behavior within each species. That added an unexpected richness to my birding experience and it quickly became addictive.

For example, it was fascinating to see the range of variation in feral rock pigeon plumage. Among the 40 or so pigeons regularly coming into the yard, there were black, white, red, checkered, and mottled birds, each showing many slight differences. This made it possible to identify and track individuals. Several got pet names. Over a few weeks, it was even possible to determine the pecking order within the local flock.

At the beginning of summer, there were several juvenile house finches coming to the feeders I added to my yard. It was a lot of fun watching them mature over the next couple of months. As the males began to reach adulthood, I was amazed to see the range of colors they began to show. There was light yellow, light and dark orange, light and dark red, and light and dark purple. I always thought that variation in the color of male house finches was due to diet. This observation strongly suggested it was just normal, individual variation instead.

One day a large male grackle came into the yard followed by two youngsters screeching to be fed. The male led the two to a seed block, pecked some seed from it and deposited it in the mouths of his offspring. He then jumped over the block and hid on the other side. The youngsters followed him, still begging, so he repeated the lesson. After about five repetitions, he flew into a nearby tree. The youngsters still followed him. He came back to the block and fed himself, but did not feed the juveniles. Then they all flew off together. I don't know how many times he had to repeat the lesson before it sank in, but two days later the juveniles were feeding themselves at the seed block.

When I first started putting feed out in the yard, the birds were quite afraid of me. They instantly scattered out of the yard each time I opened the backdoor to replenish the seed, suet, and orange slices. But over time, they got used to me. Some would zoom away quickly, but most just kept their distance and waited for me to deliver breakfast.

Every now and then, of course, the birds would still startle out of the yard, like when there was a loud noise coming from the construction site a few blocks away, or when a Cooper's Hawk swooped into the yard. But this morning I witnessed a bit different behavior. Without warning, and for no obvious reason, the smaller birds panicked out of the yard while the larger doves and pigeons remained in place, apparently unfazed.

That's when I heard the ratcheting sound that made me think of a gragger. I hadn't heard it prior to the flight, so didn't think it was the cause. Then it all became clear. A Greater Roadrunner jumped over my back wall and started strutting about my yard. Every few seconds it would pause and rapidly click its beak together, making that ratchet sound. The birds that were little enough to be potential prey had left the field. The birds too big to be dispatched by the Roadrunner weren't going to be scared into interrupting their own meals.

Over the next several minutes, I watched in fascination as the roadrunner quite successfully hunted the many Carpenter Bees that frequent the Desert Willow in my backyard. It would spot a bee buzzing around a blossom, approach the potential tidbit gingerly while making that ratchet sound, stop just in range of the hapless insect, eye the situation carefully, then time the climactic jump perfectly, snapping up its victim every time.

What a treat to be able to watch this feeding behavior. But I was surprised that the roadrunner made the ratchet sound as part of its hunting ritual. It almost seemed like it was trying to give the bees fair warning. Surely, roadrunners don't practice altruism.

Was there an advantage for the roadrunner to make this sound? An answer came to me in a flash. That ratchet sound also sounded very much like a grasshopper or cicada. Not knowing the difference between a bee and a grasshopper, the bird was instinctively trying to put the insects at ease by imitating them.

I'm not sure if my sudden intuition is correct. I certainly wasn't following a careful scientific method. At the moment, that didn't matter, I was excited by the thought. I was having fun, indeed, a lot of fun, and I knew it.

Well, I have to admit that observing that roadrunner was one of my best birding experiences ever. Had I not been in my backyard taking time to observe behavior, had I been in a rush to find and check off the next species for my list, I would have missed it. How ironic that it probably wouldn't have happened were it not for the consequences of the pandemic.

So, for me, backyard birding has become mainstream. I can't imagine giving it up once the parks are all reopened and the virus is no longer a serious danger. I certainly hope along with everyone else that next year is virus free. But regardless, 2021 will find me making time to get to know better the birds that share my backyard.

Follow-up to Mark Pendleton's Black-headed Grosbeak article

Up Close and Personal with a Black-headed Grosbeak (BHGR)

by Martine Dumont

As a follow-up to Mark Pendleton's article featuring the BHGR in the last issue of Roadrunner Ramblings, here is a quick note about our experience with this bird at the northern edge of its range.

When we return home to Canada, Norm and I volunteer with a bird-banding station in Waterton Lakes National Park. This park is located in the southwest corner of Alberta and borders Glacier National Park in Montana. These two parks are administered separately, but together form the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, a testament to the fact that nature recognizes no boundaries.

The banding station has been operating since 2002 as part of the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) program. Despite the challenges of COVID-19 and a few new safety guidelines to implement, bird banding did occur in Waterton this year. Since 2002, thousands of birds have been banded there, including 49 BHGR, two of them this August.

Bird banding involves a few stages: catching the bird in a mist net, bringing the bird to the banding station, banding the bird and releasing the bird. Some species go through the entire process without fuss (I love those mellow Yellow Warblers!); others, not so much.

This is where the BHGR comes in. At every stage in the process, one of two things will happen with a BHGR. They will either use their powerful seed-crushing beak to bite you or squawk loudly and vehemently until you go temporarily deaf. It is a blessing that they can't do both at the same time.

The two banded this year were hatch-year birds, and just as pretty as their parents. They are probably headed your way: If you do spy a banded BHGR in Las Cruces, it may just be one of these babies.

Thank you to Cyndi Smith for providing the banding data and for sacrificing her finger.



And even more follow up to the Pendleton article . . .

"In view of your very nice description of the Black-headed Grosbeak, I would like to submit a photo of one that visited our bird feeder last week. We have spotted him at least three times, he loves the suet balls."

Sara Kay Walker

We had asked members for their “spark bird” stories, and we received this lovely contribution from Judy Lazarus Yellon!

My Spark Bird Story

Memories from Judy Lazarus Yellon

During my 6th grade school year in the spring of 1954, my wonderful teacher Mrs. Gahn did a unit on birds. As a follow-up, one weekend morning all the girls gathered at her house. If my class photo is correct, there were eight girls in the class. I remember my mother driving me to the teacher’s house in the dark with my bicycle tucked away in the trunk. It was an unusual adventure.

When everyone had gathered, we rode our bikes along with our teacher to one of the nearby Shaker Woods. Or maybe we left our bicycles at her house to retrieve after the outing so that we could ride these to get back home. I honestly don’t remember what we did with our bikes, because I remember us walking quietly through paths in the woods.

Mrs. Gahn was an excellent guide. What stands out the most is that on this bird outing I got my first look at a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak and also a male Indigo Bunting! I have never forgotten the thrill of seeing such gorgeously colored birds. I have no recollection of any of the additional birds we must have seen. A week or two later the teacher organized the same type of outing with the 13 boys in the class.

Although it would be many years before I would join Audubon, gather several bird books, buy binoculars, use my camera to do my best to photograph birds, and eventually create a bird-friendly yard, I feel gratitude to this remarkable teacher because she planted an important seed that lay dormant for many years but has sprouted and bloomed these past 13 years.

It’s that time of year again...



Winter at the Bosque del Apache (photo by Sid Webb)



Photos courtesy Linda Miller

A Turkey Vulture Goes Fishing by Mark Pendleton ©2020

Everyone knows that Turkey Vultures eat only carrion, right? The vast majority of the time, that's true. But one September Thursday this year, three MVAS members watched in amazement as one caught and ate a fish!

Not surprisingly, this happened at Percha Dam State Park in Arrey. Unusual birds show up there and you never know what's in store for you when you go birding at Percha.

Linda Miller, Marcia Wilson and I arrived around 7:15 on this morning and drove down to the parking spot looking over the dam's raceway at the west end of the dam.

For about the first 45 minutes we were busy watching the activity just below the dam. Mallards, Green-winged Teal, and Blue-winged Teal dabbled in the shallows while Snowy Egrets, Great Egrets, and Black-crowned Night Herons fished out in slightly deeper water. Fall migration this year has been unusually birdy and this day was true to form. Barn and Violet-green Swallows with a few Northern Rough-winged Swallows interspersed among them swooped about catching bugs and grabbing quick drinks. Many of the small rocks and larger boulders out in the stream had Black Phoebe and Say Phoebe that would frequently say out to snatch bugs from the air, perched on them.

Even stranger, there were about 12 or 15 Olive-sided Flycatchers perched on little rocks jutting out of the river also. We saw close to 40 of these birds that day, and at least half of these dapper flycatchers were perched in unusual places—on the ground in the middle of trails, in the middle of the road, close to the ground in bushes, plus out in the river!

We were getting ready to bird other parts of the park when we saw warblers—Wilson's, Yellow, Townsend's, a Northern Waterthrush, and at least two we couldn't ID—flitting around in the bushes on the other side of the river. Again, we were getting ready to move on when it was sparrows that caught our attention. There were Brewer's, Chipping, Clay-colored, Lark and Vesper, plus others we couldn't see well enough to identify beyond "sparrows."

If this had been the sum of all the birds we saw that day, it would have been a very good day. What came next, though, was even more unusual and made the day unforgettable.

A Turkey Vulture came flapping and gliding with its signature teetery wobble up the river. Nothing unusual about that. When it banked, circled and landed on the top of the dam, though, we took notice. Then it slid and sidled down the face of the dam towards a fish flip-flopping around about a meter above where the dam flattened out into a cement skirt.

The vulture wasn't the only avian fisherman with an interest in this morsel, though. An adult Black-crowned Night Heron along with a Snowy Egret were stalking over towards it also. Then the confrontation began.

The vulture mantled over the fish. When either the egret or heron got too close, the vulture would raise its wings, bend its upper body over the fish, stick out its neck and hiss threateningly at them. We didn't hear any hissing because of the noise from the raceway's churning and splashing water, but threatening hissing is an integral part of how falconers describe accipiters, buteos, and falcons behaving as they stand over their freshly killed prey. And we could see through our binoculars how the vulture was displaying all the other elements of this behavior.

I don't know if this vulture had ever gone fishing before, but it seemed to be a bit wary of the fish. Every time it flopped, the TUVU would hop or sidle back a little, but never too far, as the egret and heron were still there on the edges of encroachment. When the vulture hopped away, one or the other would take a tentative step forward: Back would come the vulture with wings raised, and the other two would retreat a bit.

The egret gave up first and stalked away to fish somewhere else. Not much later, the heron accepted defeat and also went off to try its luck elsewhere. It still took the vulture about ten more minutes to capture and devour the fish.

In a kind of macabre ballet, vulture would hop or shuffle towards fish, which would flop; at this, vulture would retreat a step or two. Then the whole dance would play out again. Each time, though, the vulture retreated less and came back a bit more rapidly. Finally, it reached out and picked up the fish, which wriggled out of its grip. This happened three or four times before the scaly morsel went down the vulture's throat.

Yes, I grant you that the vulture didn't actually wade out into the river to grab a swimming fish. However, this seems to me highly unusual behavior for a bird regarded as exclusively feeding on carrion. After all, the fish was obviously still alive, albeit maybe only just.

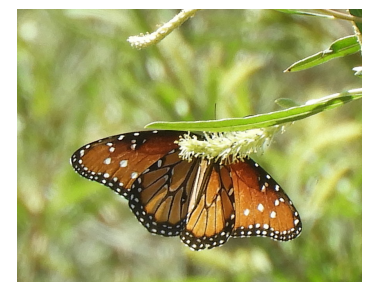
In a coda to the story, at the end of our birding that day, we returned to our cars to head home, and there was a Turkey Vulture out in the shallows below the dam eyeing the river in a most un-vulture-like way. I don't know if it was the same one, but it would seem much more unusual to me that it would be a different bird. One vulture going fishing is strange enough: Two different ones doing it—and the second actually out in (albeit shallow and not running very fast) the water—beggared even my flexible imagination.

Lepidoptera

Not all Brown Butterflies are Monarchs! by C.J. Goin

When butterflying, it is important to distinguish Monarchs, Queens, and Viceroys. They are similar in appearance but not equally noteworthy. Monarchs are a large butterfly with rich, cinnamon-orange wings with black veins and white dots on the black wing borders and the body. They are not abundant in this area, but they do breed here and may be seen in warm weather by careful observers. Queens are similar, but they have less black near the tip of the forewing, and above they lack the obvious black veining. They are abundant here and not significant enough to report. Viceroys usually have a narrow black bar crossing the hindwing, and the flight pattern is different with quick flaps and glides. Viceroys are significant enough to report. They are habitat specific in New Mexico, and their preferred habitat is willows along the river—you're unlikely to see them elsewhere.

This information comes from the *Kaufman Field Guide to Butterflies of North America* and thank you to Steve Cary and Rob Wu for information.



If you see a Monarch, try to get photos and report the sighting to Butterflies and Moth of North America (BAMONA) at butterfliesandmoths.org and also Journey North at journeynorth.org. If you see a Viceroy, try to get a photo and report it to BAMONA.

To the right are photos of each of the three species, taken by me at Mesilla Dam last spring and summer. From top to bottom, they are Monarch, Queen, and Viceroy.



Plan Now for Establishing a Pollinator Pocket Garden for your Yard

by Earl Williams and Jimmy Zabriskie

Moths, butterflies, bees and pollinator insects are running out of habitat, and it is up to you and me to do something to help them!

A nice start is to plant at least one plant like a milkweed that is a host plant and also feeds Monarch, Queen, and Painted Lady butterflies, and many more. One plant helps. More plants provide greater help!

The MVAS website has a link to a list of plants (<https://www.mvasaudubon.org/lepidoptera>) under “Create a home garden that will attract butterflies”) recommended by Dr. Amanda Skidmore of NMSU-Las Lunas Cooperative Extension Service and Jimmy Zabriskie of Robledo Vista Nursery (<http://www.robledovista.com/home.html>).

You’ll find a list of plants that are of great benefit to pollinators. Two or three could easily fit into a sunny corner and can be sourced locally.

We encourage you to do what you can!

Officers and Board, MVAS 2020

President: Elaine Stachera Simon

Vice-president: Mark Pendleton

Secretary: Aaron Lucas

Treasurer: Diane Moore

Directors (7 elected, with three-year terms, two being elected each year. Two openings as of 8/1/2020)

Director 2019–2022: Sid Webb

Director 2019–2022: Gill Sorg

Director 2020-2023: C.J. Goin

Director 2020-2023: Annie Mitchell

Director 2020-2023: Cheryl Fallstead

Director 2018–2021: vacant

Director 2018–2021: vacant

Last year’s president—vacant

Committee chairs:

Conservation: vacant

Education: CJ Goin

Field Trips: Mark Pendleton

Programs: Vacant

Newsletter: Sid Webb

Website: Sid Webb

Membership: Diane Moore

Finance Committee: Diane Moore, Aaron Lucas

Representative to IBWC Citizens’ Forum: Sid Webb

Christmas Bird Count: Wayne Treers,

Facebook administrator: Elaine Stachera Simon


Climate Watch Coordinator: Mark Pendleton

Roadrunner Ramblings is published quarterly and is distributed via email to all MVAS members and posted on the MVAS website (www.mvasaudubon.org). All members of MVAS are encouraged to submit articles of interest to the group and any bird photographs recently taken. Please email photos to sidwebb@gmail.com. To be added to the distribution list, contact Elaine Stachera Simon at mesillavalleyaudubon@gmail.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 their habitat, through environmental education, issue advocacy, and natural history experiences.


Mesilla Valley Audubon Society

A chapter of the National Audubon Society



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