

ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

Volume 32, No. 4. July-Aug. 2010

Sit & Wait: Birding & Relaxation

by David Griffin, MVAS President

The Earth has music for those who listen.

William Shakespeare

In pursuit of especially interesting birds, some birders travel great distances. They spend hours researching, planning, preparing books and gear, renting cabins or campsites, and get up early to beat the traffic and greet the birds. Here I suggest an alternative to the great bird-chasing drama that seems to be taking over. How about you sit and wait? That's right, find a nice spot such as your patio, backyard, a local park or the Organ Mountains, and pull up a chair or a nice thick pile of pine needles, and just sit and wait.

By being patient and by just "being there" you will begin to hear and see birds almost anywhere. Grab your binoculars, a bird book, maybe a cup of coffee (or perhaps a cool beverage of your choice, if it's later in the day!) and sit and relax. And for once I'm recommending that you not put your binoculars' strap around your neck, but rather leave them beside you on the ground or a table.

Begin to hear the sounds around you: the wind in the mulberry leaves, the steady ambient drone of cars and trucks on the interstate 3 miles distant, maybe a neighbors' sprinkler system, and then—there! What was that sound? You just heard a faint, high-pitched call from beyond the mulberry tree. You listen intently, and there it is again. This time you make out a pattern and it's clearer, heard above the whistling leaves. It's a dainty call that sounds like "tsee-see-see." It's coming closer and your eyes do not see the bird, but you follow the sound and its movement with your ears.

Suddenly a spritely little bird flits in front of you and heads straight to the brilliant red flowers of a nearby ocotillo. "Tsee-see-see" it sings again. You slowly pull up your binoculars, and there in the clear morning light you see the lemony yellow head and chestnut red shoulder patch of a Verdin. It's there for just a moment, but a moment is all it takes for you to enjoy one of our wondrous little desert birds. You place your binoculars back down, take a sip of your drink, flip through the pages of your field guide to read up on some of the attributes of a Verdin, and then wait for something else.

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Oil Spill Report

by Melanie Driscoll,

Audubon Director of Bird Conservation

Baton Rouge, LA, June 17, 2010 - "It's heartbreaking," said Louisiana Audubon bird expert Melanie Driscoll, after accompanying state rescuers as they reluctantly left individual oiled birds behind in coastal island breeding colonies, for fear of driving healthy ones into the toxic brew. "They're making incredibly difficult decisions in order to save the greatest number of birds. I can't second guess any of the tough choices they made today."

With untold birds in the gulf already oiled or facing exposure as the disaster expands, the National Audubon Society warns of lost generations of birds in the years to come. Without mature birds to care for them, many eggs will fail and newly-hatched chicks will also die. Others may fall victim to trampling from well-intentioned clean-up workers or the stress of relocation. Even those that survive may fail to acquire the skills needed for long-term success. And the impacts could continue for years.

"Preventing the loss of generations is why it is so important that entire colonies not be jeopardized to save a few individuals," said Driscoll. "I know that individual birds are suffering, and this is intolerable. But destroying nest success entirely, trying to hand-rear thousands of chicks, causing more to be oiled and stressed, causing more to die, is also intolerable."

Writing for *Audubon* magazine about her travels with rescuers, Driscoll notes that conditions can change at any time, making it possible to give oiled birds a second chance:

The decision to not rescue birds, to not pull chicks from islands or nests, could change for any site on any day. There is a colony of Royal Terns near the water at Queen Bess Island, and many of the chicks are oiled, some heavily. Without encroaching and disturbing the colony, it is difficult to tell how many nests may not have hatched yet. Any day, a decision could be made to send several rescuers in with nets to capture as many of the chicks as they can capture. This would certainly be very stressful

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Electronic Newsletter

Help MVAS save resources by signing up to receive *Roadrunner Ramblings* electronically, instead of in printed form. To sign up, email Nancy Stotz at

nstotz1@comcast.net

As each issue goes to press, you will receive an email indicating that a PDF version of the new issue is available for download at our website

www.mvaudubon.org



Programs

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

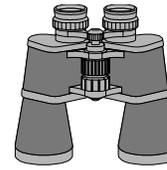
Meetings begin at 7:00 PM. Programs begin immediately following the business meeting and announcements.

Ethnobotany of the Mesilla Valley. July 21.

Location: Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park. Presented by Alex Mares, New Mexico State Parks. Come learn how early residents of our region used native plants for food, shelter, and more.

Broad Canyon Ranch Restoration Project. August 18.

Presented by Bret Beseley, Restoration Specialist, US Fish and Wildlife Service. We'll get an update on ongoing work at Swan Pond and other riparian habitats in Selden Canyon.



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.

Grant County Hotspots. July 24. On this trip we'll visit the Mimbres Valley and Lake Roberts, where the Hummingbird Festival of the Gila will be taking place. Later, we'll go into the Pinos Altos Range to sites including Signal Peak and the Cherry Creek and McMillan Campgrounds.

To register for this trip or for further information contact David Griffin at 575-382-2080 or GriffinBio@gmail.com.

Tentative: Sacramento Mountains. August 21.

For further information, check the MVAS website at www.mvaudubon.org or contact David Griffin at 575-382-2080 or GriffinBio@gmail.com.

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 _____

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C0ZQ540Z

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.

Migration Count Results

Sixteen local birders took part in the annual North American Migration Count for Doña Ana County on May 8th. In spite of a cloudy, windy, dusty day, a total of 132 species were seen, with over 8000 individual birds recorded.

A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was the most unusual species seen, and as is also typical of the Christmas Bird Count, White-winged Doves were the most abundant species. Other highlights included observations of several species engaged in breeding behavior: a Swainson's Hawk on its nest, a Golden Eagle feeding its chick, and Black-necked Stilts watching over their brood of 2 downy youngsters.

Though migrating warblers were far from abundant, other species that were most likely passing through the area made a good showing, including Osprey, Willet, Forster's Tern, Broad-tailed Hummingbirds, Olive-sided Flycatcher, and Cassin's Kingbird. Both Lazuli and Indigo Buntings were seen, as were Gray, Willow, and Cordilleran Flycatchers. Late wintering species included Gadwall, Savannah Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, and Yellow-headed Blackbird.

compiled from information provided by *Marcy Scott*

Hummingbird Festival of the Gila



July 24 & 25

Hummingbird banding, by Joan Day-Martin and Dr. William Talbot will take place from 7:00 am - 10:00 am both days.

There will also be local artists/vendors offering their goods produced from this area.

Location: The Breathe Inn Lodge, at the intersection of Highway 15 & Highway 35, north of Silver City.

For more info email hbnm@gilanet.com or visit the website www.hummingbirdsofnewmexico.com

Welcome New Members

Ida Fisher
Tallulah Moore
Leoniece Beatty
Wilma Ziebe
Jean R. Wilkey
Deborah Fye
Richard Jedlicka
Patricia Pratt
M. Shelton
Nona West
Janice Hoffman
Julie Ann Fortner
Joyce Yearley



Kirsten Munson

(continued from page 1) **Oil**

for the chicks and the adults, and would require hand-rearing the chicks, who might then imprint on humans. However, when the benefit to the colony is greater than the threat, this option will be exercised. If this rescue is attempted, I expect that it will be carefully planned, will occur in the morning before the heat causes undue stress on the birds, and will likely involve a lot of personnel to reduce capture time and stress on birds.

Audubon's Mississippi-based Volunteer Response Center is supporting both bird rescue and broader recovery efforts through thousands of people registered

and organized to assist with transportation, creating nets and other needed tools to help in the capture of oiled birds, bird identification, and clerical duties (volunteers are not solicited for the hazardous and highly-technical job of cleaning birds).

As alarming images of oiled and dying birds bring the tragedy home, state and federal agencies face mounting criticism and protests from would-be volunteers who believe they are being prevented from helping. While Audubon says it cannot yet assess the overall effectiveness of the government-led rescue efforts, the organization is calling on lead agencies to work more closely with independent scientists and to be more receptive to recommendations from outside bird rehabilitation experts, as well as to communicate more effectively about how the bird rescue and rehabilitation is being organized and managed.

Editor's Note: For updates on the oil spill and other conservation issues, sign up to receive the *Audubon Advisory* electronic newsletter at

www.audubonaction.org/audubon/join.html

Bird Notes

Species	Date	Location	Observers
White-faced Ibis	4/21	Mesilla Park	BP
Osprey	4/23	MVBSP	CJ
Yellow Warbler	4/23	MVBSP	CJ
White Pelican	4/24	MVBSP	CJ
Wilson's Warbler	4/24	MVBSP	CJ
Black-throated Sparrow	4/26	Dripping Springs	BP
Leucistic Downy Woodpecker	4/30	Percha Dam	JY
Western Scrub Jay	5/1	MVBSP	CJ
Eurasian Collared Dove	5/3	Tularosa	RB
Lazuli Bunting	5/3	Tularosa	RB
Ringed Turtle Dove	5/3	Tularosa	RB
Western Tanager	5/3; 13	Tularosa; Las Cruces	RB; SWH
Olive-sided Flycatcher	5/4	Las Cruces	LH
Hooded Oriole	5/5; 6/13	Las Cruces	SWH; LS
White-tailed Kite	5/5	MVBSP	CJ
American Redstart	5/7	MVBSP	CJ
Lark Sparrow	5/7	MVBSP	CJ
Slate-colored Junco	5/9	Las Cruces	SWH
Great Horned Owl	5/12	Las Cruces	LS
Pine Siskin	5/16	MVBSP	CJ
Summer Tanager	5/16	Tularosa	RB
Indigo Bunting	5/19	Tularosa	RB
Vermilion Flycatcher	5/19	MVBSP	CJ
Gray Catbird	5/20	Las Cruces	JM
Snow Goose	5/26	MVBSP	CJ
Ruddy Duck	6/11	MVBSP	CJ

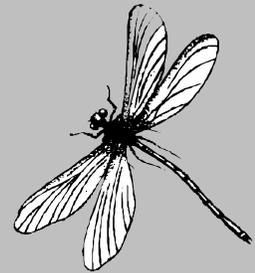
Observers: Richard Ballew, CJ Gojn, Sue & Wally Hill, Landy Hinesley, Jackye Meinecke/Robert Hull, Bruce & Linda Pearson, Lorraine Schulte, Judy Yellow

Please report interesting sightings to Robert Hull at
575-523-8009 or rwhull@zianet.com

New Mexico Rare Bird Hotline
<http://www.wmbirds.org>

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

Dragonfly Festival



**Bitter Lake National
Wildlife Refuge
Roswell, NM**

September 10-12

www.friendsofbitterlake.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.

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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.mvaudubon.org

(continued from page 1) **Prez**

This type of "birding" is very relaxing and allows you to think of other things while waiting for the first bird. Moreover, it's a great way to clear your mind and not think about anything. I believe it's at those moments when your mind is more open to hearing subtle bird songs, or differentiating between two similar calls. It can be an almost meditative state for some.

I use this method all the time at home and afield. I've been using it during my bird survey work in the Organ Mountains and Big Burro Mountains. In those locations I can hike and hike all day long without seeing many birds. I cover many miles in a day, but it doesn't always guarantee that I'll encounter birds. Sometimes, when I find a nice patch of ponderosa pine or pine-oak habitat, I'll sit in the shade, take off my backpack, get out my water bottle, and just sit and wait. More often than not I end up hearing and seeing species I might ordinarily miss.

A few days ago while in the Organ Mountains in search of Grace's Warblers, I hiked over 6 miles and did not encounter any. At noon, following a strenuous near vertical hike into a pocket of ponderosa pine and Douglas fir, I found a nice thick bed of pine needles, sat down and waited. Within minutes I heard a singing Virginia's Warbler, then a Cordilleran Flycatcher, my field partner pointed out a roosting Whip-poor-will nearby, and above the blowing wind I heard the distinctive song of a Grace's Warbler! As I sat there, the warbler came closer and I was able to take a few photos right before he moved on. I sat for an hour or so, recorded all the species I might not have observed otherwise, plus I was now relaxed and ready for the trip back down.

Shakespeare was right.

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