

ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

Volume 30, No. 2. Mar.-Apr. 2008

President's Message

by David Griffin, MVAS President

Well, the year is off to a great start. Here at home each morning I've been listening to the Curve-billed Thrashers, Pyrrhuloxias, Verdins, and even the Greater Roadrunner singing and preparing for the breeding season. It's been so warm that a few of my native plants are flowering and the Penstemons are ready to bloom. As the new MVAS President I'm excited to see how the rest of 2008 plays out. In addition to our regular focus on our Audubon Adventures educational program, conservation issues, and monthly programs and field trips, in 2008 we have a few additional issues and goals on which we'll spend time. These issues will take considerable time and effort for MVAS board members to plan and accomplish, so we decided to create three committees to address them. The committees will be made up of board and chapter members and are open to all interested MVAS members. The committees will focus on the following items:

1. MVAS 30th Anniversary Celebration - The board decided to have some sort of event and/or celebration to honor the chapter and its members. The 30th Anniversary Celebration Committee will look into when and how we should celebrate, where to hold the event/events, what types of activities we should plan, as well as awards, guest speakers, reservations, publicity, and costs associated with such an event. If you're interested in helping out or have suggestions, please contact Valerie Endruweit, Lorraine Schulte, or myself.
2. Friends of the Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park - Many of you know of MVAS's strong relationship with New Mexico State Parks and our efforts with establishing and protecting New Mexico's newest state park, the Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park. In 2007 we were approached by state parks staff who inquired about the possibility of MVAS helping to form a "Friends of the Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park" group. In addition to MVAS, the friends group would be made up of members from other local conservation groups and the public, and would organize as an officially recognized "not-for-profit" 501c(3) group. The group would be dedicated to help with certain programs and other efforts at the park. If you're interested in helping out with this effort, please contact Alan Kreuger, John Douglas or Bob Hull.
3. Website, Publicity, and Membership Communications - The board has recognized the need to be better at reaching out to current and potential MVAS members for purposes ranging from field trip announcements to conservation efforts, calls to action,

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Conservation Update

by Bob Tafanelli, Conservation Chair

Selden Canyon - The Trust for Public Land (TPL), New Mexico State Parks, World Wildlife Fund and other partners are continuing their initiative to acquire, protect and restore land along the Rio Grande in Selden Canyon. Although no capital outlays were provided for this work in the most recent Legislative session, a private foundation has committed significant funds to help leverage available state and federal monies with the acquisition of a large ranch here. TPL is in discussions with the landowner, and more information on this work should be available in the coming month.

As most Audubon members know, Selden Canyon, which includes Swan Pond, is an important riparian bird habitat area. It is home to a variety of waterfowl, shorebirds and waterbirds including ducks, snipe, herons, egrets etc. In addition, along the banks of the river, Painted Buntings, Bell's Vireos and Yellow-billed Cuckoos can be seen. Even a few federally and state endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatchers nest here. Protecting this habitat is a number one issue for MVAS and several members have already written letters to help do that.

Doña Ana County Wilderness - This issue continues to develop slowly. Last month an alternate proposal was submitted to City Council by the ranching community that does not include any Wilderness but instead involves land withdrawals. These land withdrawals would not protect the roadless, quiet serenity of the area and would eliminate the current protections under the Wilderness Study Area status that have provided protection for 20 years.

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Wilderness supporters have been visiting City Councilors to emphasize the importance of Wilderness to Las Cruces and Doña Ana County and the overwhelming amount of support in a wide variety of sectors in this community. More communication and factual clarification of issues is needed. Recent communications between Senators Dominici and Bingaman will hopefully produce legislation soon.

Parasol Dairy - This issue is still being discussed. There was a public meeting in

Truth or Consequences in February concerning the dairy but so far no final word on if and when the dairy proposed along Percha Creek will be built.

Mexican Wolf - Dave Parsons, former coordinator of the Mexican Wolf Reintroduction program, spoke to MVAS in February. The picture he painted did not look good. Virtually no progress has been made in the past four years. Although the numbers of wolves and number of breeding pairs was on target for the first five years of the program, numbers of wolves have remained stagnant and breeding pairs have declined during the past five years. Major renovation of the program and commitment by U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Forest Service is desperately needed. Some changes are currently being considered but it remains to be seen if it is enough to save this important top predator in the forest ecosystem.

More public input is needed on these issues as well as others that MVAS is following. If you would like to help in any way, and I would encourage you to do so, please contact me at btafanel@zianet.com or 526-9380 to learn about the variety of ways you can help.

Programs

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

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

Bird Projects at White Sands Missile Range. March 19. Trish Griffin, Wildlife Biologist at WSMR, will speak about several projects, including the Aplomado Falcon reintroduction, a Burrowing Owl study, a Pinyon Jay study, and a winter shrubland bird study.

Storm & Bob's Terrific Adventure in the Galapagos. April 16. Join MVAS's own Bob Tafanelli and Storm Sermay for photos and discussion of eight days in the Galapagos Islands, one of the natural wonders of the world. If you have never been to the Galapagos or if you just want to relive your trip, this is the program for you.

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

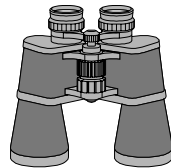
RENEWALS

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.

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.



Holloman Lakes and Oliver Lee State

Park. March 22. On this trip we'll scan the open water at Holloman Lakes for wintering waterfowl and other water birds, look for raptors, and perhaps encounter some migrating shorebirds. Bring a spotting scope and tripod if you have them! We'll next visit Oliver Lee State Park south of Alamogordo. Oliver Lee is usually better for passerine migrants a bit later in the spring, but we should still be able to find some resident birds and early migrants along the stream and associated vegetation. Trip will depart at 6:30 AM from the K-Mart parking lot at US 70 and Del Rey Blvd. and will last until mid to late afternoon, so bring a snack and/or lunch, water,

sun protection and be prepared for variable weather conditions (e.g., cold and windy to warm and sunny; possible muddy conditions). Easy walking.

Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park. April

19. On this trip we'll visit one of our local gems and hotspots, and New Mexico's newest state park: Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park. Migration should be underway, as will the resident breeding season, so we should have plenty to see and hear. We'll walk the pathways and ditches to search for waterfowl and waders, scan the trees for flycatchers, warblers and vireos, and search the field edges for raptors and sparrows. 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 last until about noon, so bring a snack and/or lunch, water, sun protection and be prepared for variable weather conditions. Easy walking.

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

Field Trip Reports

Caballo Dam and Vicinity. January 19. On a cold and clear blue-sky winter day, seventeen people had a great day of birding on the Southwestern New Mexico Birding Trail. We visited Percha Dam & Caballo Dam State Parks, and Caballo Lake. A total of about 85 species was observed; most were seen at Percha Dam - 72 species! - with 36 species at Caballo Dam and 22 at Caballo Lake.

Percha was our first stop, and our first bird was a puffed-up Merlin perched in a large cottonwood tree. Nearby we found three Greater White-fronted Geese in a flock of Canada and Snow Geese. One of our most challenging observations was of

an immature Bald Eagle perched along the Rio Grande. Later, one group member pointed out an unusual bird song to me and within minutes many members were treated to views of a Bridled Titmouse foraging nearby in clumps of mistletoe.

Below Caballo Dam we had less bird activity, but still had great observations of a Bald Eagle, two 'Slate-colored' Dark-eyed Juncos, Great Blue Herons, Black-crowned Night-herons (10 were roosting together along the Rio Grande!), a Belted Kingfisher, a brilliant male Red-naped Sapsucker, and a sprite Ruby-crowned Kinglet that repeatedly sallied forth for insects and looked all the part of a fluttering leaf

dropping over and over again before us!

Later we spent 45 minutes behind Caballo Dam scanning the reservoir for waterbirds. The highlight was the sheer number of American Wigeon (we didn't try to estimate their numbers, but there must have been a few thousand). Other notable species included Clark's Grebe, Canada Goose, Northern Pintail, American White Pelican, a Red-breasted Merganser (discovered by Lorraine Schulte), Ring-billed Gulls, and Horned Larks.

Dripping Springs. February 23. We continued our quest for birds on the Southwestern NM Birding Trail by visiting Dripping Springs Natural Area. Despite the cold and windy morning, fourteen participants had a pleasant trip and saw a total of about 35 species - many of which were seen at the Visitor's Center.

We didn't see much at the windmill on Baylor Canyon Road, but Richard saw a large raptor picking at a dead cottontail. We later saw the bird lift up and fly: a Golden Eagle!

We birded at the Visitor's Center for about 45 minutes and enjoyed close-up views of Pine Siskins and Lesser Goldfinches, Canyon Towhees, and White-crowned Sparrows. The star of the show was a snappy Hermit Thrush that Barb first saw in a nearby mesquite tree. We re-located the bird and nearly everyone had great looks through the spotting scope.

Up the trail we were treated to good looks at 5 or 6 dainty and elegant Black-throated Sparrows, a brilliant male Ladder-backed Woodpecker and several Loggerhead Shrikes. We briefly saw a Rufous-crowned Sparrow and a pair of Red-tailed Hawks delighted us by sailing effortlessly on the wind.

Near the top of the trail, we had a Canyon Wren and a Spotted Towhee shuffling in the underbrush, and I heard a distant Western Scrub-jay. On our way down the trail, Jim from Aberdeen, Scotland (via Ottawa, Canada), flushed 5 or 6 Spotted Towhees, and nearby I heard the call of a White-breasted Nuthatch.

Thanks to all who attended and shared the use of their vehicles. We'll see you next time!

A full list of species observed on either trip is available; just contact David Griffin at griffinBio@gmail.com or 382-2080.

Bird Notes

Species	Date	Location	Observers
Cedar Waxwings	01/05	Buena Vida Park	HH
Townsend's Solitaire	01/05	Buena Vida Park	HH
Gadwalls	01/05	Swan Pond	LS/EW
Great Egrets	01/05	Swan Pond	LS/EW
Lesser Yellowlegs	01/05	Swan Pond	LS/EW
Northern Shovelers	01/05	Swan Pond	LS/EW
Orange-crowned Warbler	01/05	Las Cruces	LS
Wilson's Snipe	01/12	Rio Grande bridge	DM
Fox Sparrow	01/14	Las Cruces	SWH
Cackling Goose	01/15	Burn Lake	CL
Canada Goose	01/15	Burn Lake	CL
Common Merganser	01/15	Burn Lake	CL
Great Blue Heron	01/15	Burn Lake	CL
Neotropic Cormorant	01/15	Burn Lake	CL
Northern Shoveler	01/15	Burn Lake	CL
Red-breasted Merganser	01/15	Burn Lake	CL
Red-breasted Merganser	01/20	Caballo	LS
Barn Swallows	01/28	Mesilla Valley Bosque SP	NS/LS/SWH
Tree Swallows	01/28	MVBSP	NS/LS/SWH
Ferruginous Hawk	01/28	MVBSP	NS/LS/SWH
Prairie Falcon	01/28	MVBSP	NS/LS/SWH
White-throated Swifts	01/28	MVBSP	NS/LS/SWH
Turkey Vulture	02/08	Las Cruces	LS
White-tailed Kite	02/28	MVBSP	RC
N. Rough-winged Swallow	02/28	MVBSP	RC/KS
Violet-green Swallow	02/28	MVBSP	RC/KS
Cliff Swallow	02/28	MVBSP	RC/KS
Sora	02/28	MVBSP	RC/KS
Brewer's Sparrow	02/29	N. Valley	BR/LS

Observers: Rick Castetter, Harold Harrison, Sue & Wally Hill, Carl Lundblad, Darrell Mott, Barb Rodriguez, Lorraine Schulte, Ken Stinnett, Nancy Stotz, Eleanor Wootten

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

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	David Griffin	382-2080
Vice-president	Alan Krueger	532-1036
Secretary	Frankie Lerner	373-0857
Treasurer	Guy Powers	373-1891
Board (06-08)	Walt Whitford	521-1358
Board (06-08)	Sue Hill	382-9758
Board (07-09)	Barb Rodriguez	523-1548
Board (07-09)	Valerie Endruweit	373-0530
Board (08-10)	John Douglas	541-0133
Board (08-10)	Lorraine Schulte	524-7029

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Audubon Adventures	Lorraine Schulte	524-7029
Audubon Council	Guy Powers	373-1891
Delegates	(1 vacancy)	
Conservation	Bob Tafanelli	526-9380
Education	vacant	
Field Trips	David Griffin	382-2080
Programs	board at large	
Membership	Guy Powers	373-1891
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/~mvas/.

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information about local issues, and bird sightings. This effort would start with updating our website and continue with publicity and media, as well as developing personal connections such as the use of "phone trees" to let chapter members know of events or issues that need rapid attention. For these reasons the board decided to create a Website, Publicity, and Membership Communications Committee. If you're interested in helping out with this effort, please contact Guy Powers, Sue Hill, Barb Rodriguez, or Frankie Lerner.

For the past 30 years, and for reasons not entirely clear to all members, MVAS has always taken the summer off, so to speak. We felt it would be best for all chapter members to continue throughout the summer with monthly presentations, field trips, and conservation efforts. We realize the potential problems that may arise with having field trips during the summer months, but there are ways we can avoid the heat of the valley: for instance by doing indoor field trips to museums or university collections, and by going up in elevation to the Sacramento, Pinos Altos and Gila Mountains. See the next *Roadrunner Ramblings* for a complete listing of summer programs.

Have you already forgotten about the Christmas Bird Count? Well, for those of you wondering about the results of our most recent CBC I can tell you that we tallied 118 species, which was a bit below our average. For the complete results go online to: www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/index.html

That's all for now. I'll see you at the next chapter meeting on March 19th or field trip on March 22nd, and if you're new to MVAS be sure to come up and say hi. Best wishes.

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: April 26.** Printed on 100% PCW recycled paper by **insta-copy printing**. Image credits: roadrunner, Dale Zimmerman; clip art, IMSI's Master Clips/Master Photos® Collection.

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