

ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

Volume 33, No. 2. Mar.-Apr. 2011

You Did a Christmas Bird Count... Where?

by Storm Sermay

Yes folks, that's right—I did the 2010 CBC in Death Valley National Park. Five people met at 7 AM at the Furnace Creek Golf Course to be assigned an area of the count circle. Believe it or not it was quite cold (10-15 degrees below normal), although the day warmed up quickly. I birded with a couple from Las Vegas, NV, who had driven to Death Valley that morning to help with the count.

Our little group was assigned the golf course and Furnace Creek Ranch area (about 192 ft. below sea-level.) That was quite a treat because birders are not normally allowed on the golf course and, as you can imagine, that green and watered area attracts many of the birds. Cottonwoods and tamarisks lined the course. Water hazards and two sewage ponds treated us to the water-loving birds (Mallards, Snow Geese, Canada Geese, American Wigeons, American Coots, Ring-necked Ducks, Eared Grebes, Ring-billed Gulls and two species of swallows.) Black Phoebes also hung out at the ponds. On the tees, greens and fairways we found White-crowned Sparrows, Say's Phoebes, American Robins, Greater Roadrunners, and Western Meadowlarks. Trees, fences and desert areas around the course produced Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks, Loggerhead Shrikes, Northern Mockingbirds, Verdins, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets and the best birds of the day—two Sage Sparrows.

After finishing the golf course, we walked through the motel and employee housing area and into the date orchard. Although the numbers of birds were high in these areas, there were many fewer species—mostly Common Ravens, Eurasian Collared-Doves and hundreds and hundreds of European Starlings. Our group total was 34 species. The number of species for the entire count was 60 with a total of 1384 individual birds, including 552 starlings. Our group's two Ring-billed Gulls were new to the count this year.

Getting to do a Christmas Bird Count in a new and different area was a great experience. If you are traveling next year during the bird count season, check out <http://app.audubon.org/cbcapp/findCircles.jsp> and find a circle near you.

La Luz and Caballo CBC Reports

by John Douglas

On December 29th, after a year's hiatus, the Christmas Bird Count for La Luz was conducted again. Because of a last minute cancellation, only three teams took the field on a breezy day. With the large area to cover, members could only spend a small amount of time in each locale. We were able to record 70 species, including a female Ruddy Duck at the edge of the National Forest in a pond about 8 x 15 feet, a Wood Duck, and also a Barn Owl. I felt this was a good effort considering the small number of people and the fact that only one had done a count in this circle in prior years. This CBC is in a very interesting area with great potential. With increased participation, this count could be near the top of the state in total number of species seen once again. I hope people in the MVAS will consider doing this count in the future.

On January 2nd, after a very cold 10 degree start to the day, seven teams covered the Caballo CBC circle with a great deal of success. Frozen water and a prolonged dry season contributed to a smaller number of species from last year, but many good sightings were recorded. Unusually large numbers of Sandhill Cranes, Ring-billed Gulls, and Lincoln Sparrows were located. The total species were 124 with a Black-and-White Warbler seen during count week and also the first Wilson's Phalarope for a New Mexico CBC. Again as in the La Luz CBC, the participation of many new people shows an increased interest in the CBC process.

Teaching Award Offered

Each year Mesilla Valley Audubon Society presents this \$250 award to a teacher in local schools.

Applicants are asked to list the objectives of the teacher's program along with a brief description of teaching techniques, program activities and a simple evaluation of the program. Photos are helpful in making the evaluation. The grade level and number of participating students should be included.

Any one can nominate a teacher, kindergarten through grade 12, by completing a brief description of the program. Self-nominations are also accepted.

The deadline for nominations is March 26, 2011, and the award will be presented the April 13, 2011 meeting.

Applications should be sent to Lorraine Schulte, 1740 Mariposa Dr., Las Cruces, NM. 88001, phone 524-7029.

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 with a PDF of the new issue attached. The PDF is also available at our website

www.mvaudubon.org

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.

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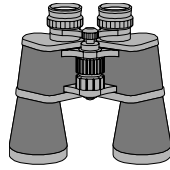
Send this form and your check to:

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.

Dripping Springs, March 5. Meet at 7:00 AM in the Pan Am Plaza (across from NMSU on University Ave.) parking lot in front of Milagro Coffee. We'll leave at 7:15. \$3.00 per vehicle entry fee (or free with federal entry pass), carpooling available. If you are willing to drive, let us know. Bring water & sunscreen, maybe a snack. A hat to keep sun off your head is a good idea too. Wear sturdy shoes. Birds we could see at this BLM site on the west side of the Organ Mountains include Scaled Quail, Black-throated and Black-chinned Sparrows, Canyon and Rock Wrens, and others. We plan to be back early to mid-afternoon, but real hard-core birders may stay even longer. Info: contact Mark at 575-635-8711 or mpendleton@q.com; OR Wayne at 575-528-8696 or way1mike@yahoo.com

Aguirre Springs, March 19. Meet at 7:00 AM in SW corner (closest to Border Patrol Station) of Lowe's parking lot on N. Main St., Las Cruces. Leave at 7:15. \$3.00 per vehicle entry fee (or free with federal entry pass), carpooling available. If you are willing to drive, let us know. Bring water (there is no drinking water at Aguirre Springs) & sunscreen, maybe a snack, too. A hat to keep sun off your head and sturdy shoes are excellent ideas as well. The road into Aguirre Springs is outstanding sparrow habitat, so there's no telling just what we'll see. The plan is to return by early to mid-afternoon, or if you're real hard-core, you might stay longer. Info: call Mark at 575-635-8711 or mpendleton@q.com; OR call Wayne at 575-528-8696 or email way1mike@yahoo.com.

April Field Trips, TBA at press time. Contact Mark at 575-635-8711 or mpendleton@q.com; OR Wayne at 575-528-8696 or way1mike@yahoo.com. Announcements will also be made at program meetings, and information will be posted at the MVAS website www.mvaudubon.org.



MVAS Programs

Membership meetings and programs are held each month 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.

Rio Grande Jumping Mouse Ecology.

March 16. Presented by Greg Wright, winner of MVAS's Richard Bischoff Memorial Scholarsip (see p. 3). New Mexico meadow jumping mice were declared state endangered in NM in 1983. They're currently a candidate for federal endangered status, which prompted Greg's study at Bosque del Apache NWR. Greg investigated life history aspects, as well as the mouse's relationship to management practices on the refuge. This entailed radio collaring mice and following them throughout the night to find out where the fed, what they fed on, what behaviors were unique to them, and so on. Greg also investigated day nest and maternal nest locations, as well as seasonal processes such as pregnancy and hibernation. The project was basically all inclusive to help managers better understand why NMMJM remain on the refuge, how to protect them, and how to create other habitat for them elsewhere in the Rio Grande Valley.

Bald Eagles of Haines, Alaska, April 20.

MVAS's own Katie McLane will share photos and tales from her Alaskan adventure. Last spring, Katie spent two months working in Haines, and photographing lots and lots of eagles.



Steven D'Amato

Please Support Conservation Research at NMSU

Bird Notes

Species	Date	Location	Observers
Ferruginous Hawk	12/20	MVBSP	CJ
Swamp Sparrow	12/20	MVBSP	CJ
Harris's Hawk	12/20; 26	MVBSP; Hatch	CJ; BR
American Goldfinch	12/22	MVBSP	CJ
Sandhill Crane	12/26	Hatch	BR
Tree Swallow	12/26	Bosque del Apache	DG
Lincoln's Sparrow	12/27-2/7	Las Cruces	LS
Broad-billed Hummingbird	01/01	Talavera	TL
Anna's Hummingbird	01/01; 12	Talavera; Las Cruces	TL; NS
Costa's Hummingbird	01/01	Talavera	TL
Broad-tailed Hummingbird	01/02	Las Cruces	SH
Orange-crowned Warbler	01/03	MVBSP	CJ
Green-tailed Towhee	01/03	Las Cruces	TB
Grasshopper Sparrow	01/05	Bar Canyon	TL
White-crowned Sparrow (xanthochromistic)	01/15	Las Cruces	LH
Golden Eagle	1/17; 2/5	U.S. 70; Corralitos	CJ; MP
Ring-necked Duck	01/19	NMSU Golf Course	PA
Canvasback	01/19	NMSU Sam Steele	PA
Vermilion Flycatcher	01/21	Percha Dam SP	NS
Hermit Thrush	01/21	Percha Dam SP	NS
White-breasted Nuthatch	01/21	Percha Dam SP	NS
Ladder-backed Woodpecker (leucistic)	01/21	Percha Dam SP	NS
Bald Eagle	01/21; 26	Caballo Riverside	NS; CJ
Common Goldeneye	01/21	Percha Flats	NS
Eastern Phoebe	01/21	Paseo del Rio	NS
Pyrrhuloxia	01/25	Tularosa	RB
Black Phoebe	01/27	Tularosa	RB
Spotted Towhee	02/05	Tularosa	RB
Orchard Oriole	02/10	Las Cruces	BD
Golden Eagle	02/05	Corralitos	MP
Horned Lark	02/05	Corralitos	MP
Sage Sparrow	02/05	Corralitos	MP
Lark Bunting	02/05	Corralitos	MP

Observers: Phil Alkon, Richard Ballew, Trudy Buck, Barbara Dickenshied, CJ Goin, David Griffin, Sylvia Hacker, Landy Hinesley, Tim Lawton, Mark Pendleton, Barb Rodriguez, Lorraine Schulte, Nancy Stotz

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

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

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

The MVAS Richard Bischoff Memorial Scholarship was established in 2007 with an annual award of \$1,000. Richard joined the board in 2004 and brought many new ideas to the board. One of those ideas was the creation of a graduate student scholarship at New Mexico State University. Because of his pivotal role in establishing the scholarship and his many contributions to MVAS, the scholarship is called the Mesilla Valley Audubon's Richard Bischoff Memorial Scholarship.

This annual scholarship supports graduate student research at NMSU that is consistent with the MVAS mission and promotes natural resource conservation. Not all recipients study birds. The first winner conducted a study on banner-tailed kangaroo rats to develop a conservation model for the Chihuahuan Desert. The second winner investigated the history and effects of the encroachment of junipers into riparian habitats in southwestern New Mexico. The third winner explored the effect of habitat fragmentation on Burrowing Owl nest productivity in grasslands across the Great Plains.

An important part of the scholarship requires the recipient to present their results at a regular meeting of the Mesilla Valley Audubon Society (see March program announcement on p. 2). This allows our members to share in some of the latest research in natural resource conservation and gives the student valuable public speaking experience.

In order to maintain this scholarship contributions are always needed. So please consider helping MVAS support students engaged in important conservation research at NMSU.

MVAS Richard Bischoff Memorial Scholarship Donation Form

Checks should be made out to Mesilla Valley Audubon Society, and sent to

Mesilla Valley Audubon Society
 Scholarship Fund
 PO Box 1645
 Las Cruces, NM 88004

Please consider donations in the following increments:

___ \$20.00 ___ \$35.00 ___ \$50.00 ___ \$75.00 ___ \$100.00

Name: _____

Address: _____

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Thank you.

Raptors of the Southwest Now at the Cottonwood Gallery

The Southwest Environmental Center and the Mesilla Valley Audubon Society are pleased to announce the showing of the Raptors of the Southwest exhibit at the Cottonwood Gallery at SWEC in February and March.

The show consists of 42 beautiful color prints reproduced from paintings created by Richard Sloan for the *Raptors of Arizona* book published in 1998. Hawks, vultures, falcons, kites and owls are portrayed in their typical southwest-ern habitats.

Sloan is one of America's premier bird artists. His paintings have been exhibited at the National Geographic Society's Explorers Hall, the American Museum of Natural History, Carnegie Museum, and the Royal Scottish Academy. Raptors of the Southwest will run through March. The show is free and open to the public.

To see the prints online, go to <http://aldosattic.com/Raptors/index.html>. For more information, call 575-522-5552.

Willow Planting at Broad Canyon Ranch

Continues through March 4. To participate in this effort to restore native riparian species along the Rio Grande, contact Beth Bardwell at

bbardwell@audubon.org or 575-522-5065

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

Roadrunner Ramblings is published six times a year: January, March, May, July, September, and November. Submissions welcome; please email copy to nstotz1@comcast.net. **Next deadline: April 15.** Printed on 100% PCW recycled paper with soy-based inks by **insta-copy printing**. Image credits: roadrunner, Dale Zimmerman; clip art, IMSI's Master Clips/Master Photos® Collection.

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