

# ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

Volume 36, No. 2. Mar.-Apr. 2014

## **Las Cruces CBC Summary**

by Wayne Treers,  
LC CBC Compiler

I would like to again thank all of you who participated in this year's Las Cruces CBC. In spite of the nasty weather (snow, fog, rain, and bitter cold wind), we still managed to have a successful Christmas Bird Count on Dec. 21, 2013.

We had a total of 49 participants this year which is up from 43 on last year's count. The final count of individual birds was 30,739 which is just 616 less than last year. There were 109 species reported - one more than last year.

There were 10 unusual/rare species observed: Northern Bobwhite, Harris's Hawk, Broad-billed Hummingbird, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Williamson's Sapsucker, Cassin's Vireo, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Fox Sparrow, and Harris's Sparrow. These species are unusual for our CBC circle, which means that only 1 or 2 have been sighted in the past 38 years.

We had an unusually high number of low counts for the circle this year - 37 out of 109 species. I attribute this to the nasty weather on count day. It appears that birders walked less and drove more, plus the birds stayed hidden more in the bushes and weeds because of the cold wind. We had no sightings of Northern Pintails, Ring-billed Gulls, or White-breasted Nuthatches. Overall, the count of various sparrow species we normally see was down this year. The gross number of sparrows counted this year was 1,575, which is down by 1,048 (almost 40% less) from last year. Of the 1,575 sparrows counted, 885 were White-crowned Sparrows. That is approximately 56% of all the sparrows observed. By contrast, last year's White-crowned Sparrow count was 1,942 which was approximately 74% of the sparrow count for our 2012 CBC. This year's count appeared to have a better distribution of sparrow species observed in the circle.

Finally, the most White-winged Doves and American Crows observed was in the Old Refuge portion of our circle, which is west of Mesilla and south of the Calle del Norte Bridge (basically the Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park area). Mesilla Park had a large count of White-winged Doves also. Our White-winged Dove count for the circle was 11,359 which is up by 3,161 from last year. This count is about average for our circle, and we still hold the perhaps "unenviable" record for most White-winged Doves counted in a CBC for the entire nation.

## **Las Palomas Marsh: Volunteers Needed!**

In order to fulfill our birding responsibility for Las Palomas Marsh, we need to start up again a periodic bird survey/census of the Marsh. Therefore, we need birders to volunteer to conduct a bird survey or census at least once a month at the Marsh. The Marsh is located east of Exit 71 on I-25, and it is a New Mexico birding "hot spot".

More than one survey can be conducted each month, and one person or a group of birders can conduct the survey. The goal is to conduct at least one survey a month, so that we can further populate the database of information for the Marsh. The only stipulation is that you or someone in your birding group enter the data into Cornell University's eBird.org database on-line. I will be developing a pool of birders that are interested in helping out with this worthwhile project. Please contact Wayne Treers at way1mike@yahoo.com or call at 575-528-8696 if you would like to volunteer and receive more details.

## **Teaching Award Offered**

Each year, Mesilla Valley Audubon Society presents the Lorraine Schulte Excellence in Teaching Award, a \$250 award to a teacher in local schools who encourages children to care for the environment.

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

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. The grade level and number of participating students should be included.

The deadline for nominations is March 15, 2014, and the award will be presented at the April 16 MVAS meeting.

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

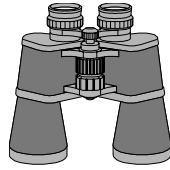
## Electronic Newsletter

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](mailto: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](http://www.mvaudubon.org)



## 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, sunscreen, and binoculars. Announced trips

subject to change. To receive updates and reminders, sign up for the field trip email list by contacting Mark Pendleton at [mpndltn@gmail.com](mailto:mpndltn@gmail.com)

### Socorro, NM Birding Hotspots. March 21-23.

A small group of us avid birders are planning a weekend birding trip to Socorro, NM on Friday, March 21 through Sunday, March 23. We plan to leave early Friday afternoon and stop at Las Palomas Marsh for an hour or two of birding on the way north. Saturday will be an interesting birding outing to Water Canyon in the Magdalena Mountains west of Socorro. Travelling through a variety of habitats (from sagebrush flats to higher altitude montane regions) promises glimpses at Montezuma Quail, Juniper Titmouse, Bushtit, Hairy Woodpecker, Acorn Woodpecker, and possibly Red Crossbill and Bridled Titmouse. On Sunday, we will bird a few areas in the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge just south of Socorro. We are targeting to return to Las Cruces by mid- to late afternoon on Sunday. If you are interested in a great birding weekend with like-minded birders in Socorro, NM, please contact Wayne Treers at [way1mike@yahoo.com](mailto:way1mike@yahoo.com) or 575-528-8696 or Mark Pendleton at [mpndltn@gmail.com](mailto:mpndltn@gmail.com) or 575-635-8711.

### Leasburg Dam State Park: Camp Robledo Unit. April 19.

C.J. Goin will lead this field trip to an area of the park that is closed to the public, so it should be particularly good for birding. Sharp-shinned Hawk, Blue-headed Vireo, various sparrows, warblers and other avian life are some of the sightings we've had in the past. Meet at 7:15 AM in the SW corner (closest to the Border Patrol Station) of the parking lot at Lowe's on N.Main to leave at 7:30. Carpooling can be arranged beforehand or on the spot. Dress: comfortable walking shoes and clothes; a wide-brimmed hat and sunscreen are also excellent ideas. Bring plenty of H<sub>2</sub>O and, if you want, a snack or two. We should be back in Las Cruces by early afternoon. Information: Mark Pendleton at 575-635-8711 or [mpndltn@gmail.com](mailto:mpndltn@gmail.com).

## MVAS Programs



Membership meetings and programs are held each month at the Southwest Environmental Center, 275 N. Downtown Mall. Meetings begin at 7:00 PM. Programs begin immediately following the business meeting and announcements. Questions? Contact Jennifer Montoya at 526-1320.

### Conservation of the Sage-Grouse.

**March 19.** Randy Gray, retired Wildlife Biologist with the USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service, assisted in crafting the initiative underway for conserving this beautiful native bird. Randy will discuss the challenges and opportunities associated with protecting and restoring sage-grouse habitat as well as the important role the Farm Bill plays in conservation.

### Field Research on Parrot Intelligence in Venezuela. April 16.

Angela Median-Garcia, last year's winner of MVAS's Richard Bischoff Memorial Scholarship (see p. 3), returns to discuss her research. Angela reports she spent last year "studying parrot intelligence among anacondas, mosquitoes and bulls in the Venezuelan Llanos." This will be an enjoyable evening, and she assures us she will not be providing any live demonstrations of her field conditions.



### Digital Photo Contest: Birds of DASO

What's DASO? No, we're not referring to a local sheriff's office, we're talking about Doña Ana, Sierra, and Otero counties, the geographic range of our membership. MVAS announces its first digital photography contest, focusing on the birds of south-central New Mexico.

Winning photographs will be published in a 2015 calendar, which will be sold as a fundraiser for MVAS. So, pore through your photo archives, or dust off your lenses and get out there to capture this year's avian beauty and diversity.

Submission deadline, July 15, 2014; all submissions should include information about where the photograph was taken.

Contact Barb Rodriguez at [bkrod1@comcast.net](mailto:bkrod1@comcast.net) for more information and submission details.

## 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 \_\_\_\_\_

C4ZQ540Z

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.

# *Richard Bischoff Memorial Scholarship*

The MVAS Richard Bischoff Memorial Scholarship was established in 2007 and gave its first \$1000 grant in 2008. Richard joined the board in 2004 and brought many new ideas to the chapter. One of those ideas was the creation of a graduate student scholarship at New Mexico State University. Because of his pivotal role in the scholarship and his many contributions to MVAS, the scholarship is called the Mesilla Valley Audubon's Richard Bischoff Memorial Scholarship.

The scholarship supports graduate student research at New Mexico State University that is consistent with the MVAS mission and promotes natural resource conservation.

Not all recipients study birds. One recipient conducted a study on Banner-tailed Kangaroo Rats to develop a conservation model for the Chihuahuan Desert, while another investigated the life history of the endangered Rio Grande Jumping Mouse. Scholarship recipients have also studied plants, including the history and effects of the encroachment of junipers into riparian habitats in southwestern New Mexico, and the conservation genetics of Rio Grande cottonwoods. Other winners have explored the effect of habitat fragmentation on Burrowing Owl nest productivity and grassland restoration technique's effects on Scaled Quail.

An important part of the scholarship requires the recipient to present their results at a regular MVAS meeting. This allows our members to share in some of the latest research in natural resource conservation. This year's winner will present on April 16 (see Program announcements on page 2).

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

Donations should be sent to:  
Mesilla Valley Audubon Society  
Scholarship Fund  
PO Box 1645  
Las Cruces, NM 88004



United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service Collection, Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh.

## 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

Thank you.

Please consider donations in the following increments:

\_\_\_ \$20.00 \_\_\_ \$35.00 \_\_\_ \$50.00 \_\_\_ \$75.00 \_\_\_ \$100.00

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Caballo and La Luz CBC Summaries**

**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      | Gill Sorg        | 644-0660 |
| Vice-president | Nancy Stotz      | 521-8087 |
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| Board (14-16)  |                  | vacant   |
| Board (13-15)  | Lorraine Schulte | 524-7029 |
| Board (13-15)  | Ken Stinnett     | 649-3781 |
| Board (12-14)  | CJ Goin          | 202-1354 |
| Board (12-14)  | Mark Pendleton   | 635-8711 |

### COMMITTEE CHAIRS

|                    |                  |          |
|--------------------|------------------|----------|
| Audubon Adventures | Lorraine Schulte | 524-7029 |
| Audubon Council    | Gill Sorg        | 644-0660 |
| Delegates          | Lorraine Schulte | 524-7029 |
| Conservation       | Bob Tafanelli    | 526-9380 |
| Education          | CJ Goin          | 202-1354 |
| Field Trips        | Mark Pendleton   | 635-8711 |
| Programs           | Jennifer Montoya | 526-1320 |
| Membership         |                  | vacant   |
| Membership Records | Nancy Stotz      | 521-8087 |
| Newsletter Editor  | Nancy Stotz      | 521-8087 |
| Publicity          | Jennifer Montoya | 526-1320 |

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](http://www.mvaudubon.org)

*Caballo CBC.* In contrast to the Las Cruces CBC, the thirteen participants in this count on December 28 were treated to sunny, calm conditions. A total of 117 species were tallied, which is on the low side (in recent years, the Caballo CBC total has been in the 120s and 130s consistently). No new species were added to the list for this count, but unusually high counts were recorded for Yellow-headed Blackbird (for the second year in a row), Western Sandpiper, and Canada Goose. On the flip side, unusually low counts were recorded for both Common Mergansers and Eared Grebes, diving species that normally number in the thousands on this count.

*La Luz CBC.* Twelve participants also enjoyed sunny, calm weather on this January 2<sup>nd</sup> count. A total of 88 species were observed, 8 more than last year and the second-highest species total ever tallied on this count. New for the count circle were Cackling Goose (if it gets through the regional reviewer), Peregrine Falcon, and Orange-crowned Warbler. New high counts (most individuals ever recorded on this count) were observed for Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Brown Creeper, Lesser Goldfinch, Eurasian Collared-Dove, and Rock Pigeon.

*compiled from data provided by John Douglas*

## **Birding Event with Hot Springs High Biology Class**

Please look for future announcements concerning a birding outing with students of Mark Hedge's biology class at Las Palomas Marsh to celebrate the spring migration. It is tentatively planned for late April or early May. For details, contact CJ Goin at [cjgoin11@gmail.com](mailto:cjgoin11@gmail.com) or Wayne Treers at [way1mike@yahoo.com](mailto:way1mike@yahoo.com).

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