



# ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

Volume 28, No. 3. May-June 2006

## **Annual Potluck & Silent Auction: May 17**

Please plan to attend our annual Spring Potluck, to be hosted once again by charter member Lorraine Schulte. During the potluck, we will also have a silent auction, with proceeds going to support MVAS's Audubon Adventures program, which brings environmental education to more than 80 fourth-grade classrooms in southern New Mexico.

The potluck will begin at 5:30 at Lorraine's home, 1740 Mariposa (phone 524-7029). Bring a main dish, side dish, or dessert, and a spare folding chair or two if you've got them. Table service, iced tea, and coffee will be provided; BYOB for other beverages.

If you've got items you'd like to donate for the auction, you can either bring them with you to the potluck or call Lorraine to arrange for an earlier drop-off time. If your item does not sell at the auction please take it home with you.

## **Birdathon 2006**

Mark your calendars! Spring is here and the time is coming for Birdathon, our biggest yearly fundraiser.

This event, which will be held during the first two weeks in May, raises the money to support our local educational projects such as Audubon Adventures. We have also been able purchase bird books for the library and would like to do more for the schools.

How does Birdathon work? Each participating birder collects pledges from sponsors. The sponsor can pledge an amount of money per bird species or pledge a flat amount. (All contributions are tax deductible.) Sponsors in the past have pledged \$.10 to \$1.00 a bird. And many teams see more than 100 species! Don't want to ask friends or co-workers for money? Pledge to yourself or ask relatives. A surprising number of people are happy to have been asked.

During the Birdathon weeks, the birder chooses a 24-hour period to count as many species as possible, either birding alone or with a team. Birdathon can be done in any location. If you expect to be traveling at that time, plan to set aside a few hours to bird. You probably will anyway. Right?

Please help support your chapter by birding and raising funds, or by pledging to someone you know. Contact Walt Whitford (521-1358), if you would like to participate or if you want more information. Teams are forming now! Don't be left out!

## **Environmental Education Award** by Donna Wood

Mesilla Valley Audubon Society is happy to announce this year's recipients of the Lorraine Schulte Excellence in Teaching Award. This award is given to teachers who have emphasized conservation practices and positive ways to protect our environment. They have provided their students with knowledge, hands-on opportunities, and avenues to impact their environment.

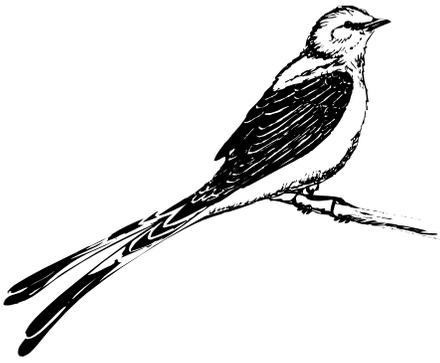
Our first place award goes to Michelle Paz, Biology, Chemistry and Physical Science teacher at Alma d' Arte Charter High School. Her students did a power point presentation on saving Otero Mesa. They also integrated this project through art. The students created mobiles representing animals that are living in Otero Mesa.

The second place award goes to Bill Curtis, 7th grade Science teacher at Vista Middle School. Bill has won this award twice before, and we were please to receive his nomination from 7th grader Denali Wilson. Denali has been impressed with how Mr. Curtis has educated her and others on environmental hazards and how they can be prevented.

Both recipients were honored at our monthly Mesilla Valley Audubon membership meeting on April 19th at 7 PM.



Photo by Donna Wood



## Choosing the Right Optics: Stress Reducing Advice

By Robert Hull

I guess I am an intermediate birder. What are the symptoms? I've spent more than a week's pay on optics. We have more bird books than we can carry into the field. We plan trips for the birding, not the shopping. There are spare binoculars in all the cars, and I take mine on every trip out of town. We notice birds, more than we did before and more than people around us.

I took the Audubon birding class at DABCC a few years ago when I determined this was not a temporary interest; I wanted to know more and get more out of it. Since then I've come to some conclusions and sense that more are developing with experience. Foremost, I've determined that birding is: "An acceptable reason for otherwise grown adults to play outside."

Honestly, birding is not about viewing birds; it's about searching for birds. You can view birds in your own back yard. You leave home to find something you can't see there. And often, we don't succeed, but we enjoy the journey anyway.

I was asked to do a class presentation on optics this year. I'm grateful for the

opportunity, but have come to learn that optics are much less a part of birding than we are led to believe. What do I use? It doesn't matter so much.

Yes, I have looked through thousand dollar binoculars, and I want some. Unfortunately, I did see the difference. But, I have also shown people my \$350 Pentax and know that three people acquired the same. Today's technologies have elevated the mid-range of optics to a quite useable level. It is more important to find binoculars that you will use, rather than hold out for the ultimate. Besides, where do you go from there?

Several of the optical parameters that are described in minute, technical detail—specifications you might lose sleep over—really aren't applicable in southern New Mexico. 100% waterproof, nitrogen filled, anti-fog? Important if you are birding at the seashore, in the rain, while the temperature is below the dew point. Not a problem here. 50mm objectives? We usually have plenty of light; so much that travel binos (7x20) work fine during the day. Sure, come dusk, those small glasses will drop out before bigger barrels, but you were heading home anyway.

(continued on page 4) See **Optics**

### 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.

### Bird Disease in Southeastern Arizona

by Helen Snyder, Portal AZ resident

One Portal resident who feeds birds called me to say she has had several Mourning Doves die of Trichomoniasis in the last few days. This is a protozoan that causes cheesy plaques to form in the mouth and throat that eventually block feed and water. Affected birds try to eat but drop the seeds, now infected. Doves and pigeons drink without lifting their heads and birdbath water washes in and out, infecting the whole water container. Mortality is high, probably 100%, and it spreads rapidly.

Trich is worse in urban areas and in very dry years. It doesn't just affect birds at your feeders: I found a dead fledgling Northern Goshawk at a nest 7 miles from any bird feeders a few years back. It had died of Trichomoniasis, and the hawk pellets from the nest contained milo and wheat, indicating that the parents had been foraging widely and capturing birds, probably doves, at or returning from bird feeders.

To break the cycle of infection and/or prevent its appearance, clean out bird baths with 1:9 bleach:water solution every few days. I have several bird drinking areas and rotate them, allowing some to dry and bake in the sun every day. Google "Trichomoniasis bird feeder" and you can learn more, or go here:

[http://www.audubon.org/bird/at\\_home/bird\\_feeding/feeder\\_maint.html](http://www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/bird_feeding/feeder_maint.html)

*Editor's Note:* The above is an email that was sent to a birding list serve recently, providing a timely reminder of some potential, unintended, risks associated with dirty birdbaths and bird feeders. To reduce the risk of disease transmission, the Audubon website recommends disinfecting seed feeders once or twice a month with the dilute bleach solution; hummingbird feeders should be cleaned at least weekly with a 4:1 mixture of water and white vinegar.

## Education Chair Needed

MVAS is looking for someone to fill the position of Education Chair. (This could be a job for two people to share.)

Responsibilities: Liason between Doña Ana Branch Community College and MVAS in scheduling our fall and spring Bird ID classes. Both classes are planned. All schedules and materials are on a CD. Chair must set dates, contact instructors, set-up field trips and take handouts to DABCC to copy. Announcements and media information on the Lorraine Schulte Excellence in Teaching Award is on a CD too.

This is a wonderful way to learn more about our local birds and attend classes and trips free. All of the instructors involved make this job an easy one. For more information contact Donna Wood at 525-8704 or email to Donna at donnacaminoATyahoo.com.

## Field Trip Report

**Lake Valley Area. March 25.** Fourteen birders traveled to the Nutt Grasslands, Macho Creek, Berrenda Canyon area northwest of Hatch and recorded more than 30 species. At the turn into Macho Creek Canyon in the Nutt Grasslands we had good looks at numerous Horned Larks and Vesper Sparrows plus a Golden Eagle and Red-tailed Hawk. One of the highlights of the morning was watching a Ferruginous Hawk diving and chasing a Chihuahuan Raven. This was unusual because most interactions between hawks and ravens are situations where ravens are harassing the hawk. Large flocks of Brewer's Sparrows and Savannah Sparrows provided lots of opportunities to sort out differences among LBJ's. The morning's birding terminated in Hillsboro where we had lunch at the BarberShop Cafe.

*Walt Whitford*

## Programs

Programs and meetings are held each month, September–April.



See you in September!

## Bird Notes

Species	Date	Location	Observers
Ruddy Ground-Dove	2-27;3-14	Mesilla Park	PSA
Swamp Sparrow	3-2	Mesilla Dam	JN
Bell's Vireo	3-2	Mesilla	CCB
Ruddy Ground-Dove	3-3	Mesilla	CCB,CL
Rusty Blackbird	3-3	Mesilla	CCB,CL
Hutton's Vireo	3-3	Soledad Canyon	JN
Turkey Vulture	3-5	Carlsbad	LS
Long-billed Dowitchers	3-5	Mesilla Dam	DBa
Vermillion Flycatcher	3-5	Percha	JH
White-breasted Nuthatch	3-5	Percha	JH
Pied-billed Grebe	3-8	Burn Lake	PT
Ring-necked Duck	3-8	Burn Lake	PT
Bufflehead	3-8	Burn Lake	PT
Northern Shoveler	3-8	Burn Lake	PT
Cassin's Vireo	3-8	Mesilla Park	CL
Common Ground-Dove	3-8;13	Las Cruces;Mesilla	DG;JN
Worm-eating Warbler	3-9	Las Cruces	LS
Zone-tailed Hawk	3-11;14	MVBP	CL;CCB
Rufous Hummingbird	3-12	Las Cruces	SWH
Anna's Hummingbird	3-13	Las Cruces	LH
Lazuli Bunting	3-15	Las Cruces	CM
Northern Goshawk	3-15	MVBP	CL
Peregrine Falcon	3-16	MVBP	CCB
Black-tailed Gnatcatcher	3-23	Las Cruces	KS
Common Poorwill	3-24	Radium Springs	MS/JZ
Black-chinned Hummer	3-26;27	Radium Spgs;Las Cruces	MS/JZ;LS
Osprey	3-22;4-12	Burn Lake	KS,PT;PT
White-throated Sparrow	3-29	Las Cruces	CCB
Broad-tailed Hummer	3-30	Talavera	TL
Scott's Oriole	4-3	Las Cruces	SWH
Bronzed Cowbird	4-3	Las Cruces	LH
Orange-crowned Warbler	4-5	Las Cruces	LS
Hooded Warbler	4-6;12	Las Cruces;Dona Ana	MK;BBD
Western Kingbird	4-7	Las Cruces	SWH
Yellow Warbler	4-7	Percha	SWH
Lucy's Warbler	4-7	Percha	SWH
Clay-colored Sparrow	4-7	Caballo	SWH
Wilson's Warbler	4-11	Leasburg	DBo
Townsend's Warbler	4-11	Leasburg	DBo
Eastern Phoebe	4-11	Leasburg	DBo
Bendire's Thrasher	4-11	Leasburg	DBo
Hooded Oriole	4-12;16	Dona Ana;Las Cruces	BBD;BHH
Kentucky Warbler	4-14	Percha	NS
Black-throated Gray Wblr	4-14	Percha	NS
Band-tailed Pigeon	4-14	Percha	JA, NS
Tree Sparrow	4-14	Las Cruces Dam	DBo
Bullock's Oriole	4-17	Las Cruces	LS
Yellow-headed Blackbird	4-22	Las Cruces	SWH

*Observers:* Jennifer Atchley, Phil/Sally Alkon, Dan Battaglia, Don Bosshardt, Charles/Chandra Britt, Barb/Bob Dickenshied, David Griffin, Jannette Hale, Barbara/Harold Harrison, Sue/Wally Hill, Landy Hinesley, M. Kincaid; Carl Lundblad, Charlotte Martins, Josh Nemeth, Lorraine Schulte, Marcy Scott/ Jimmy Zabriskie, Ken Stinnett, Nancy Stotz, Paul Turner

Please report early, late, or unusual sightings to Sue Hill at 505-382-9758 or hillcoATzianet.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](http://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	Gill Sorg	541-0577
Vice-president	Walt Whitford	521-1358
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Board (04-06)	Valerie Endruweit	373-0530
Board (05-07)	Robert Hull	523-8009
Board (05-07)	Richard Bischoff	894-6083

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Audubon Adventures	Lorraine Schulte	524-7029
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Delegates	Guy Powers	373-1891
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Programs	board at large	
Membership	Guy Powers	373-3843
Newsletter Editor	Nancy Stotz	521-8087
Publicity	Jacky 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/](http://www.cybermesa.com/~mvas/).

(continued from page 2) **Optics**

Weight and comfort are still important. Jackye prefers Porro prism glass because they fit into her hands more naturally than roofs. I'm used to my roof prisms and find hers clunky. Weight is a factor, but only as an add-on—what you are really holding up is two arms' worth of meat and bone! What is that, about 12 pounds?

Two specs turn out to be important for me: eye relief and close focus. I wear glasses, and while I can get any binocular to work with my glasses off, it blinds me to the total scene if I'm not wearing them. To see the whole view through the binos, I roll down the cups and just wear my glasses all the time. Close focus is great when watching the hummingbirds at the feeder. It is a thrill to see the eyelashes of this tiny bird when it is only six feet away. I look at lot of things with my optic aids: plants, insect, lizards. With good optics, it is better than inspecting an object in hand. I really believe the resolution is better than my natural sight.

So, what is important in optics? Quality. Reliability. Availability. Look for the things that elevate the inner workings to the state of the art: glass, coatings, anti-reflection, phase correction. Solidly built optics will stay adjusted and function for a lifetime and more. Availability means they are compact enough and comfortable enough to take with you often; that they aren't so heavy you dread using them, so costly you're nervous having them; or so huge they just stay at home on the tripod. There are many choices on today's market and more places to shop with the internet. The old brand names are not the end of the line anymore; do some research and see what's available now. A fresh view might give you a new outlook on your birding experience.

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*Roadrunner Ramblings* is published six times a year: January, March, May, July, September, and November. Submissions welcome; please email copy to [nstotz1ATcomcast.net](mailto:nstotz1ATcomcast.net), or call for mailing information. **Next deadline: June 24.** Printed by **insta-copy printing** on 10% kenaf, 90% PCW recycled chlorine-free paper. Images, except Dale Zimmerman's roadrunner, are from IMSI's Master Clips/Master Photos® Collection.

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