

ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

Volume 33, No. 3. May-June 2011

Birdathon 2011

Birdathon, to be held in May, is the Mesilla Valley Audubon Society's largest annual fundraising event, and the world's largest bird-watching competition. You can participate in many different ways—by counting birds, soliciting pledges, and/or pledging your own support

MVAS members take part to count birds, have fun, and raise funds for our mission of conservation, education, and advocacy. Here's how Birdathon works: people count birds and collect pledges from sponsors based on the number of species they see in a 24-hr period.

All you have to do is choose a convenient date for your Birdathon in May, and start counting. You can do it alone, with a friend or as a team. You don't have to be an expert—some people do Birdathon from their yard, others drive dozens of miles, while others choose to "Go Green" and do their Birdathon by bike.

Depending on your effort you may end up seeing 35 to 50 or more species, or rack up over 150 species! The key is to have fun and raise money for MVAS programs.

If you're interested in pledging to an existing team, soliciting pledges for an existing team, or creating your own team for Birdathon 2011, contact Nancy Stotz at 575-521-8087 or nstotz1@comcast.net.

North American Migration Count: May 14

The North American Migration Count is a springtime complement to the annual Christmas Bird Count. Participants count birds within an assigned area and share their results with a growing national database. Last year's Doña Ana County count yielded 132 species of birds, with over 8000 individual birds recorded.

Marcy Scott, Doña Ana County compiler for the NAMC, is looking for both feeder/yard watchers as well as those that are confident enough to cover a neighborhood or area on their own (whether alone or with a friend). You don't need to commit to a full day—stints of just a couple hours are fine. Also valuable are those willing to go out in the evening to check for owls, night-herons, and rails.

If interested in helping, please contact Marcy Scott, Doña Ana County compiler, at mtscott44@aol.com or 575-541-8083.

One Year Later: Gulf Oil Spill

One year after the BP oil disaster began in the Gulf of Mexico, oil can still be found in gulf marshes and beaches that provide critical habitat for at-risk birds. Recent trips through Louisiana's Barataria Bay revealed tar balls on beaches and oil oozing through marsh grasses, a discouraging sight as the breeding season begins for dozens of Gulf Coast bird species.

Oil and natural gas gushed into the Gulf for three months before the well was finally capped in July. By then, the region had endured the largest oil spill in U.S. history. Oil reached all Gulf states and washed up along a thousand miles of U.S. coastline, including 17 Important Bird Areas. Birds, other wildlife, habitats, and communities all suffered – and continue to suffer.

"One thing I'm very concerned about now, as we begin a new breeding season, is that there's still lots of oil in places where many species of birds nest and feed," said Melanie Driscoll, Audubon's Director of Bird Conservation for the Gulf.

One way oil can harm birds is by affecting their food sources. Damaging compounds from oil work their way through the food web with potential impacts on birds' overall health and reproductive success. In March, Audubon staff found marine worms burrowing in tar balls on Grande Terre, Louisiana. Laboratory analysis of the tar balls, led by researchers at Millsaps College, showed concentrations of hydrocarbons that can enter the food web through organisms like the worms and can pose long-term health risks for adult birds or fatalities or birth defects in developing bird embryos.

Audubon teams also observed coastal marsh grasses that have not recovered from oiling and are now dying or dead. That leaves some areas more vulnerable to erosion. Other sites show evidence of ongoing clean-up activity – with associated disturbance of birds' nesting habitat. For both of these reasons, Audubon is particularly concerned about birds that depend on sandy beaches, barrier islands, and salt marshes.

Ongoing monitoring work on the Gulf Coast and nationwide is providing scientists and policymakers with long term data to decipher the effects of the disaster. Learn more at <http://gulfoilspill.audubon.org/cleanup-and-restoration>.

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.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

C1ZQ540Z

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.



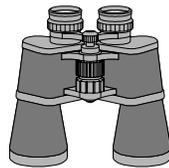
MVAS Programs

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.

The Fauna of Pisco, Peru. May 18. Mari Blocker, a visiting teacher in the public schools, will present a slide show featuring the birds, animals, and scenery of this coastal region of Peru.

Grasslands of Nebraska and South Dakota. June 15. Join us as MVAS member Ray Bowers shows us the flora and fauna of northern Nebraska and southwestern South Dakota.



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.

Migration in Mesilla. May 21. We'll meet at the Branigan Library parking lot at 06:45 and leave by 07:00. Destination: Mesilla Park and Mesilla where there is the potential to see a surprising number and variety of spring migrants coming through. We also could very likely see the Great Horned Owl that nests by the irrigation ditch. This should be about a half-day trip and there will not be any strenuous walking involved. You will want comfortable shoes and clothing though. For more information contact Wayne Treers at 575-528-8696 or way1mike@yahoo.com.

Cooling Off in Cloudcroft. June 18. Meet at the Lowe's parking lot (SW end—nearest the Border Patrol Station) on N. Main in Las Cruces at 06:45 and plan to leave at 07:00. What better way to spend a hot (probably) June Saturday than among the cool breezes (again probably) up in the Sacramento Mountains? We haven't yet set a definite itinerary for where in the Cloudcroft area we'll visit, but we have it on reliable authority that in June some of the birds that we might see include Pygmy Nuthatches, Painted and Lazuli Buntings, Bluebirds, Red-faced Warblers, Painted

Redstarts and more! Also potentially in the mix are stops at the Tunnel turn-out on the way up to check for raptors and Holloman Lakes on the return leg to check on shorebirds. For more information contact Mark Pendleton at 575-635-8711 or mpndltn@gmail.com or Wayne Treers at 575-528-8696 or way1mike@yahoo.com.

Additional Field Trip Notes

E-MAIL NOTIFICATION: If you'd like to get e-mail notification about upcoming MVAS field trips, please notify Mark Pendleton. Just send an e-mail to: mpndltn@gmail.com and put MVAS field trips in the subject line. Put your name and e-mail address in the message, and Mark will sign you up to get the e-mails he sends out about these birding opportunities. If you have already done this, you need not do so again.

CARPPOOLING: There will be some carpooling available at all MVAS field trips. We organize this on an informal basis at the starting point for each field trip. If you'd be willing to be a carpool driver and help us thus reduce the carbon footprint of these outings—after all we are an environmental organization—you'll probably earn some positive karma. If you don't believe in that, it still may work anyways! Even if it doesn't, think how good you'll feel about doing your part to cut down on the pollutants spewed out into the air we all breathe!

Also, many field trips are to locations that require entry fees. If you have any one of the variety of state and/or federal passes that allow free or reduced fee entry to these places, make yourself popular with your fellow field trippers and bring yours along! It always feels good to save money and who knows, the chance to do so might influence someone to carpool and we all know how beneficial that is! Or, you could make yourself very popular with a carpooling driver if you save her or him the entry fee! Who knows what could result!

BioBlitz on the Rio Grande at Broad Canyon Ranch

Celebrate the biodiversity in our backyards by joining Audubon and field scientists in a race against the clock to find and identify as many plants, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and insects as possible on Broad Canyon Ranch. Local birders know Broad Canyon Ranch as the home of Swan Pond.

Experts in insects, birds, mammals, plants, reptiles, and amphibians will arrive

en masse at Broad Canyon Ranch at 3:00 p.m. on May 14th and count their way through the next 24 hours to tally the total number of living organisms they can find within the deeded lands of Broad Canyon Ranch. It's a fun and exciting way to learn about the biological diversity in our own backyards and to better understand how to manage New Mexico Park lands for the

benefit of native species.

The general public will be invited to participate for FREE in live exhibits, including reptiles, raptors, and other hands-on environmental education events during the open house at the base camp from noon to 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, May 15th. During the open house, the public will also be able to witness the final countdown of just how many species the BioBlitz documented on the Ranch property.

The public can also pre-register to participate in smaller workshops, to meet the experts and share the excitement of field investigations into birds, butterflies, and other critters.

To volunteer, learn more, or register a group contact: Beth Bardwell at bbardwell@audubon.org, (575) 522-5065 or visit

<http://nm.audubon.org/BioBlitz.html>.

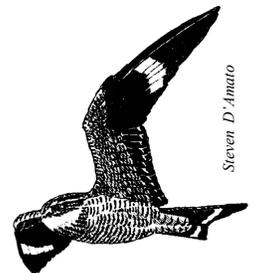
OPEN HOUSE: Sunday May 15th, 2011,
12:00 pm to 3:00 pm

WALKS & WORKSHOPS with
Experts: Saturday, May 14th and
Sunday, May 15th, Schedule of
activities and Pre-registration
required at <http://nm.audubon.org/BioBlitz.html>

WHERE: New Mexico State Parks--
Broad Canyon Ranch, 19400 N.
Valley Drive, Las Cruces, NM.
Detailed directions at <http://nm.audubon.org/BioBlitz.html>

Welcome New Members

Heide Bell
Sarah Jeffers
Gail MacKey
Mary Ann McCarthy
Ms. Joy M. Starr
Joan Kalkwarf
Andrea Joseph
Ms. Phyllis Palmer
Sheila Pickett
Roberta Haecker
Harold & Gail Steen
Maryann Arens
Leslie Habeger
Allan Lee
Amy Morrison
Robin Sutton
Patricia Michkin
Harold Pope



Steven D'Amato

Bird Notes

Species	Date	Location	Observers
Lincoln Sparrow	2/15	Las Cruces	LS
American Goldfinch	2/18	Mesilla Dam	CJ
Eastern Phoebe	2/18; 4/08	Mesilla Dam	CJ
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	2/18	Mesilla Dam; Selden Cyn	CJ; NS
Wood Duck	2/18	Mesilla Dam	CJ
Tree Swallow	2/19	Leasburg Dam S.P.	CJ
Swainson's Hawk	2/21	Las Cruces	AC
American Robin	2/28	Mesilla Park	BLP
Fox Sparrow	3/01	Percha Dam S.P.	CJ
Mountain Bluebird	3/03	Dripping Springs	CJ
Merlin	3/05	MVBSP	CJ
Sage Sparrow	3/05	MVBSP	CJ
Northern Shoveler	3/12	Burn Lake	PT
Redhead	3/12	Burn Lake	PT
Ring-necked Duck	3/12	Burn Lake	PT
Turkey Vulture	3/13	Las Cruces	BR
Warbling Vireo	3/13	Las Cruces	LS
Palm Warbler	3/14	Percha Dam S.P.	SS
Nashville Warbler	3/15, 29	Mesilla Dam, Las Cruces	CJ
American White Pelican	3/21; 29	Mesilla Dam; MVBSP	CJ; BR
Black-chinned Hummingbird	3/30	Las Cruces	LS
Hooded Oriole	4/07; 10	Las Cruces	SWH; LH
Zone-tailed Hawk	4/08	Mesilla Dam	DG
Hermit Thrush	4/08	Mesilla Dam	DG
White-throated Sparrow	4/08	Mesilla Park	DG
Virginia's Warbler	4/08	Las Cruces Dam	NS
Western Kingbird	4/09	MVBSP	BR
Rufous Hummingbird	4/10	Las Cruces	SWH
Scott's Oriole	4/10	Las Cruces	SWH
Plumbeous Vireo	4/11	Las Cruces Dam	NS
Painted Redstart	4/12	Williamsburg	MAP
Yellow Warbler	4/12	Las Cruces	SWH
Rufous Hummingbird	4/14	Las Cruces	SWH
Broad-tailed Hummingbird	4/17	Las Cruces	SWH
Orange-crowned Warbler	4/17	Las Cruces	SWH
Black-necked Stilt	4/18	MVBSP	CJ

Observers: Anthony Caer, CJ Goin, David Griffin, Sue & Wally Hill, Landy Hinesley, Bruce & Linda Pearson, Marjorie Powey, Barb Rodriguez, Lorraine Schulte, Storm Sermay, Nancy Stotz, Paul Turner

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

MVAS Announces Teaching Award Winner

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		
Vice-president	Gill Sorg	541-0577
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Membership Records	Nancy Stotz	521-8087
Newsletter Editor	Nancy Stotz	521-8087
Publicity	Storm Sermay	382-3348

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

MVAS is pleased to announce that the 14th Annual Lorraine Schulte Excellence in Teaching Award has been awarded to Rachel Knight, of Picacho Middle School. This \$250 award recognizes a K-12 teacher who encourages students to appreciate and care for our environment. Rachel teaches five sections of 7th grade science and one class of Agriculture Explorations for 7th and 8th grade students, teaching approximately 220 students each day.

Rachel has worked very hard to implement environmental science, agriculture, and conservation in every day's curriculum. Her students work to keep the school campus clean, act as stewards of the school campus ecosystems, run the school recycling program, maintain the Adopt-A-Spot area close to campus, and participate in various Keep Las Cruces Beautiful programs and activities. Rachel also serves on the school's leadership team and runs the school's "Green Team".

While Rachel does many different conservation and wildlife projects with her students, she is especially proud of the Real World-Real Science project that she completed with her students through the Asombro Institute for Science Education. The objectives for students participating in this project included

Experiencing the excitement of science and learning about the desert ecosystem and methods used to study it by participating in activities at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park and in the school yard.

Giving students a sense of accomplishment by having them create and implement a stewardship program at school or in the community.

Congratulations to Rachel for winning this year's teacher award.

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: June 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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