

# ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

Volume 29, No. 6. Nov.-Dec. 2007

## **Dairy Proposed along Percha Creek**

*by Bob Tafanelli, MVAS Conservation Chair*

There is soon to be a new dairy in town, or rather in Sierra County, to our north, and we all know which way the water in the Rio Grande flows. The dairy in question is the ParaSol Dairy, which was formerly located in Bernalillo County.

To quote from the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) Notice of Hearing, "In Discharge Permit Application DP-1641, John McCatharn proposed to discharge up to 8,000 gallons per day of agricultural wastewater from the ParaSol Dairy. Wastewater from the milking parlor would gravity flow via a pipeline/concrete channel through a weeping wall separator and collect in a double synthetically lined lagoon with leak detection for storage. From the lagoon, wastewater would be land applied by flood irrigation to 52 acres of irrigated crop land under cultivation. Wastewater from the storage lagoon could also be discharged into the synthetically lined storm water impoundment. Potential contaminants associated with this type of discharge include nitrogen compounds. The facility is located at ParaSol Farms, off Hwy 187, approximately 5 miles southwest of Caballo."

It will be located about a mile west of Caballo Dam along Percha Creek, which drains into the Rio Grande. The dairy has apparently fulfilled all the technical regulations of the NMED. They have requested a subsurface permit (they are required to get either a subsurface OR a surface water permit) regarding ground water contamination and the waste will be held in plastic-lined lagoons according to NMED regulations.

According to FEMA's old flood plain assessment, the dairy is close to, but not in, the 100-year flood plain; however, Sierra County has not been re-evaluated, post Katrina, as Doña Ana County was. In Doña Ana County, the old assessment was found to be incorrect, and many areas previously not considered in the flood plain are now included. This would probably be true in Sierra County if it were reassessed. If the dairy is in the flood plain, it is more likely there will be a spill into Percha Creek if the area floods and the lagoons are flushed out.

Since the dairy has fulfilled all the NMED regulations, they will likely get the permit unless there is a large showing of opposition at this hearing. The biggest issue is that the dairy is probably in the flood plain. If the permit is granted now, and later FEMA finds the dairy is in the floodplain, it would be granddathered in and too late to deny the permit. We should wait for FEMA to reassess the flood plain before granting a permit.

A petition opposing the dairy was signed by hundreds of

*(continued on page 4) See Dairy*

## **President's Message**

*by Gill Sorg, MVAS President*

With regret I am writing my last message as President. I have accepted a position with the Birdstrike Control Program in Wichita, KS, at the McConnell Air Force Base. This is a permanent job, even though I may move to other air fields or airports around the world. Therefore, I am resigning as president of MVAS. I'll remain a member and will try to keep my home and residency in Las Cruces for as long as I can. I hope to return. If you're coming to Wichita, look me up!!

I give to all the members my best wishes and best birding.

## **Las Cruces Christmas Bird Count December 15**

The Las Cruces CBC is an all-day event that involves counting birds within geographic areas of a count circle that extends from the river to Dripping Springs and from the Jornada to the South Valley. We finish up with a no-host dinner at the end of the day, when everyone goes over their list and we figure out the day's total number of species and individuals.

This is a fun, low-pressure outdoor event; the only prerequisite is enthusiasm. You can even do a partial day if it better fits your schedule.

We currently seek team leaders to lead groups into the various areas, as well as team members. If you would like to be involved as a leader or participant, please contact Walt Whitford (521-1358 or [wlawhit@zianet.com](mailto:wlawhit@zianet.com)).



Festival of the Cranes  
at  
Bosque del Apache

20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

November 13-18

Field Trips • Workshops •  
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Schedule of Events and Registration  
Forms available at  
[www.friendsofthebosque.org](http://www.friendsofthebosque.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).
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Address \_\_\_\_\_

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Q54  
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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.



**Programs**

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

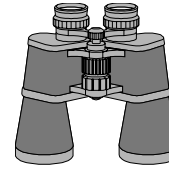
Meetings begin at 7:00 PM. Programs begin immediately following the business meeting and announcements.

**From Black Gold to the Black Oystercatcher: Challenges and Opportunities in Alaska. November 21.** Join us for a virtual tour to some of Alaska's most stunning natural treasures through a multimedia presentation focused on top Alaska conservation issues. Taldi Walter, National Audubon's Alaska Field Coordinator, will present an informative slideshow showcasing some of the important natural areas and brilliant birds found in wild Alaska. The presentation will explore some of Alaska's natural treasures set aside decades ago for the benefit of wildlife and the American public. She will highlight the imminent and compelling challenges and opportunities facing the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Tongass National Forest, Chugach National Forest, and National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska.

**Winter Birds and the Las Cruces CBC. December 12.** To help us prepare for the upcoming Christmas Bird Count, David Griffin will review some common, and not so common, winter residents and visitors to southern New Mexico. Walt Whitford will also be on hand to finalize teams and leaders for this year's count. **PLEASE NOTE** the modified meeting date, the second Wednesday of the month instead of the third.

**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.



**Fillmore Canyon, Organ Mountains.**

**November 17.** This trip will cater to multiple ability levels by including a 1-mile hike to a usually-dry waterfall and desert-riparian area, with the option of continuing another mile or two into a habitat dominated by Alligator Juniper, Gray Oak, and Ponderosa Pine. We will also visit a Velvet Ash riparian strip.

We hope to encounter a variety of typical foothill and montane residents and hopefully some irruptive Rocky Mountain species. Trip will depart at 7:30 AM from the K-Mart parking lot at Highway 70 and Del Rey Blvd and return by early afternoon. Bring water, snacks, and sun protection. For more information contact David Griffin at 382-2080 or [griffinbio@gmail.com](mailto:griffinbio@gmail.com).



**Las Cruces Christmas Bird Count.**

**December 15.** For details, see article on page 1.

**In Memoriam**

When Mesilla Valley Audubon Society was organized in 1977, the late Martha R. Gooden (1913-2007) was one of the charter members who helped make this organization become an outstanding Audubon chapter in New Mexico. Martha was our first secretary, and she participated in many of the activities in this organization for many years. She had a great knowledge of birds and understood the pressing need to preserve their environment.

Mesilla Valley Audubon Society recognizes Martha R. Gooden as an important part of our history.

## Field Trip Reports

### Bird Notes

Species	Date	Location	Observers
Acorn Woodpecker	9/3	Kingston	JM / RH
Pinyon Jay	9/3	Kingston	JM / RH
Steller's Jay	9/3	Kingston	JM / RH
Townsend's Warbler	9/3; 10/20	Kingston; Aguirre Spgs	JM / RH; NS
Common Raven	9/10	Las Cruces	GT
Baird's Sandpiper	9/14	Sod Farms	DG
Black-necked Stilt	9/14	Sod Farms	DG
Chipping Sparrow	9/14	Sod Farms	DG
Least Sandpiper	9/14	Sod Farms	DG
Lesser Nighthawk	9/14	Sod Farms	DG
Lesser Yellowlegs	9/14	Sod Farms	DG
Long-billed Dowitcher	9/14	Sod Farms	DG
Pectoral Sandpiper	9/14	Sod Farms	DG
Savannah Sparrow	9/14	Sod Farms	DG
Western Sandpiper	9/14	Sod Farms	DG
Greater Yellowlegs	9/14; 10/26	Sod Farms; Swan Pond	DG; NS
Vesper Sparrow	9/14; 10/5	Sod Farms; LC Dam	DG; NS
Yellow-headed Blackbirds	9/14; 10/5	Sod Farms; LC Dam	DG; NS
Green-winged Teal	9/14; 15	LC Dam; Sod Farms	NS; DG
Cinnamon Teal	9/14; 15	Sod Farms; Swan Pond	DG
Bell's Vireo	9/15	Leasburg	DG
Black-headed Grosbeak	9/15	Leasburg	DG
Blue-winged Teal	9/15	Swan Pond; LC Dam	DG; NS
Bonaparte's Gull	9/15	I-25 North	DG
Brewer's Sparrow	9/15	Las Cruces Dam	NS
Cassin's Vireo	9/15	High Range	NS
Clay-colored Sparrow	9/15	Las Cruces Dam	NS
Gray Catbird	9/15	Leasburg	DG
Lazuli Bunting	9/15	Leasburg	DG
Virginia's Warbler	9/15	Las Cruces Dam	NS
Warbling Vireo	9/15	Leasburg	DG
Western Tanager	9/15	High Range	NS
Willow Flycatcher	9/15	Leasburg	DG
Green-tailed Towhee	9/15; 10/5	Leasburg; LC Dam	DG; NS
House Wren	9/15; 20	Leasburg; Mesilla Dam	DG
MacGillivray's Warbler	9/15; 20	Leasburg; Mesilla Dam	DG
Red-breasted Nuthatch	9/15; 20	Leasburg; Mesilla Dam	DG
Western Wood Pewee	9/15; 20	LC Dam; Mesilla Dam	NS; DG
W Scrub Jay	9/16	Veteran's Park	NS
Blue Grosbeak	9/20	Mesilla Dam	DG
Green Heron	9/20	Mesilla Dam	DG
Orange-crowned Warbler	9/20	Mesilla Dam	DG
Yellow Warbler	9/20	Mesilla Dam	DG
Rufous-backed Robin	9/30	Casa de San Pedro, AZ	JM / RH
Dickcissel	10/5	Las Cruces Dam	NS
Lincoln's Sparrow	10/5	Las Cruces Dam	NS
American Goldfinch	10/9	Río @ Radium Springs	MS
Anna's Hummingbird	10/9	Río @ Radium Springs	MS
Band-tailed Pigeon	10/9	Río @ Radium Springs	MS
Cassin's Finch	10/9	Río @ Radium Springs	MS
Gray-headed Junco	10/9	Río @ Radium Springs	MS
Hermit Thrush	10/9	Río @ Radium Springs	MS
Prairie Falcon	10/15	Las Cruces Dam	NS
Mt. Chickadee	10/20	Aguirre Springs	NS

Observers: David Griffin, Robert Hull & Jackye Meinecke, Marcie Scott, Nancy Stotz, Gerri Tillett

Please report early, late, or unusual sightings to Robert Hull at 505-523-8009 or [rwhull@zianet.com](mailto:rwhull@zianet.com)

New Mexico Rare Bird Hotline 505-884-3269  
or <http://www.nmosbirds.org>

**Leasburg/Swan Pond. September 22.** The ten participants on this trip had the opportunity to see over 50 species at Leasburg Dam State Park, and the group had great looks at Belted Kingfisher, Red-naped Sapsucker, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and a female American Redstart. Other highlights included two singing Bell's Vireos; Willow Flycatcher; Yellow-breasted Chat; Orange-crowned, Yellow, Yellow-rumped, MacGillivray's and Wilson's Warblers; Summer Tanager; Lincoln's and Lark Sparrow; and an unidentified bunting. Waterbirds included Green Heron, Spotted Sandpiper (sometimes clinging to the edge of the dam!), and Greater Yellowlegs. Swan Pond was much less productive, but we all had great looks at a Great Egret, as well as Cinnamon Teal and Savannah Sparrows. A few observers watched a lone Pied-billed Grebe drift into the cattails.

**NMSU Plant Research Center/Mesilla Park. October 20.** Fourteen people attended this trip. Carl Lundblad and I changed the scheduled destination from Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park to the NMSU Plant Research Center (and associated agricultural areas) and Mesilla Park. Forty-three species were observed in the agricultural areas near the Plant Research Center, and many in the group commented on how much bird activity we found there. The group had great looks at a Prairie Falcon perched on a power pole, and we saw Common Yellowthroats, numerous Orange-crowned Warblers, a couple of House Wrens, Pine Siskins, Northern Harriers, and large numbers of newly-arrived American Crows. We had great opportunities to compare some common sparrows side-by-side, like White-crowned, Chipping, Song, and Lincoln's sparrows. A few of us saw a shy Sharp-shinned Hawk, and one lucky member later saw the hawk carrying a recently-captured Yellow-rumped Warbler!

The real highlights though (besides the overall great day out) were a very cooperative Grasshopper Sparrow at close range and a hunting Osprey, which got everyone excited! We then headed over to Mesilla Park, where we quickly tallied montane species such as Mountain Chickadee (about 5 of them), Red-breasted Nuthatch

(continued on page 4) See *Trips*

**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.cybermesa.com/~mvas/](http://www.cybermesa.com/~mvas/).

(continued from page 1) **Dairy**

Sierra County citizens (that's a lot for Sierra County). The Bureau of Reclamation and NM State Parks are opposed to the dairy location. In addition, Dr. Fernando Cadena, a well known waste water specialist at NMSU has also expressed serious concerns.

What can you do?? Attend and speak at the hearing on **Wednesday, November 7, 2007, 6:00 PM at the Truth or Consequences Convention Civic Center, 400 W. Fourth Street, Truth or Consequences, New Mexico.** Or you can submit (by Nov 7<sup>th</sup>) a written statement to **Hearing Clerk, Sally Worthington, NMED, Harold Runnels Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Room N-2150, P.O. Box 26110, Santa Fe, NM, 87502, or by email** to Sarah McGrath at [sarah.mcgrath@state.nm.us](mailto:sarah.mcgrath@state.nm.us).

For the sake of a clean and safe environment, the dairy's location needs to be carefully evaluated.

(continued from page 3) **Trips**

(many), and a 'Slate-colored' Dark-eyed Junco. Our short walking loop through the neighborhood yielded a White-breasted Nuthatch and many more Red-breasted Nuthatches. Mesilla Park is truly a place to watch for birds this winter! Thanks to all who attended and shared the use of their vehicles, we'll see you next time!

*David Griffin*

*Roadrunner Ramblings* is published six times a year: January, March, May, July, September, and November. Submissions welcome; please email copy to [nstotz1@comcast.net](mailto:nstotz1@comcast.net), or call for mailing information. **Next deadline: January 4.** 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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