

# ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

Volume 36, No. 5. Sep.-Oct 2014

## ***Animal Control Ordinance Revision***

In April 2014, the Las Cruces City Council rejected a proposed revision of its Animal Control Ordinance due to concerns about language that would allow for the release of neutered feral cats into the community (a practice known as Trap-Neuter-Release, or TNR). Well-meaning supporters of TNR believe that by capturing feral cats, neutering and vaccinating them, and releasing them back into the wild at a colony with a feeding station that the feral cats will eventually disappear. Unfortunately the scientific literature continues to show that this does not work.

At its August 25<sup>th</sup> work session the council was presented with a comprehensive alternative to TNR as a way to address concerns about all free-roaming cats (both wandering pets and feral cats). The work session included a detailed presentation about Alamogordo's Kitty City sanctuary as a real-world example of how an enclosed cat sanctuary works.

Free-roaming cats are the source of the vast majority of unwanted cats, and they are a menace to public health as well as native wildlife (for an overview of these issues see the American Bird Conservancy's web page at [www.abcbirds.org](http://www.abcbirds.org) and click on "Cats Indoors"). Reducing the impacts of free-roaming cats requires a two-pronged approach, including responsible pet ownership as well as feral cat management.

The comprehensive alternative presented to City Council bans the feeding of stray cats and promotes responsible pet ownership through strong ordinance provisions including restraint requirements and sterilization incentives. The feral cat portion of the alternative grandfathers in existing managed cat colonies, with registration requirements and other restrictions, including a sunset clause. The sunset clause phases out the grandfathered-in colonies in favor of enclosed colonies. Both the responsible pet ownership and feral cat management language suggested for the ordinance would have to be accompanied by adequate funding for enforcement and an aggressive public education campaign.

At press time, the City had not yet scheduled the Council vote on the comprehensive alternative or any other potential revision to the Animal Care Ordinance. However, a vote is likely to occur within the next month or two. To ensure that the comprehensive alternative to TNR moves forward, email the Mayor and City Council at [council@las-cruces.org](mailto:council@las-cruces.org). To receive timely email announcements about this and other issues, contact Bob Tafanelli at [btafanel@zianet.com](mailto:btafanel@zianet.com) and ask to be put on the MVAS conservation email list.

## ***North American Migration Count: Doña Ana County Summary***

*by Marcy Scott,  
NMAC-DAC Compiler*

Nineteen participants contributed to this year's Doña Ana County NAMC. Our species count of 139 tied with 2009 for our third highest total, and our individual count of 12,269 beat last year's high by 23 birds. New for the count were Swan species, Common Merganser, and Townsend's Solitaire, bringing our cumulative species total (2007-2014) to 211 species. The entire region continues to suffer from extreme drought, so the Rio Grande was mostly dry in the county save for a few shallow pools, a small natural spring below Leasburg Dam, and a couple of sewage inflows in the southern part of the county. Most of the area's irrigation canals and drains were dry as well.

Our mostly veteran crew provided decent coverage of the better habitats and turned up a number of rarities, including a near-mirage of seven likely Trumpeter Swans (a group of seven beige first-year birds over an agricultural field in Garfield), a very late White-breasted Nuthatch in Mesilla, a late Townsend's Solitaire in the North Valley, a Gray Catbird photographed in an Organ backyard, and a well-described Black-and-white Warbler at Dripping Springs in the Organ Mountains.

## ***Introduction to Birdwatching***

MVAS continues to offer our bird identification courses through the Community Education program of Doña Ana Community College. Our fall course will be an introductory course, which includes an introduction to some of the common birds of our region, plus information about buying optics, landscaping for birds, and locating printed as well as on-line resources. Classroom sessions will be from 6:30-8:30 PM on October 28 and November 4 & 11. Field trips to local birding hotspots will be on November 1, 8, and 15.

Space is limited. To register, visit the community college's website at [dabcc.nmsu.edu/comed](http://dabcc.nmsu.edu/comed) or call 575-527-7527.

## 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)



## 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.*

### **A Quick Note from Jennifer Montoya, MVAS Program Chair**

*Think Globally, Act Locally.* This is one of my favorite bumper stickers because the message is simple but strong, and it is our theme for a Fall Speaker Series at our monthly meetings.

Conserving birds and bird habitats is an Audubon priority, and when we look at how we can make a difference, we have many opportunities to assist birds that spend just a portion of their year here. Neo-tropical migratory birds that breed in Southern New Mexico but spend winters in Mexico, Central America, and South America face the constant threat of habitat loss, exposure to environmental pollutants, and hazards such as cell phone towers and feral cats. When we keep in mind the importance of our region to ecosystems elsewhere in the hemisphere, our work takes on greater importance.

Restoring and protecting vital riparian habitats in the desert southwest is essential for long-term population viability of many species, like the Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Southwest Willow Flycatcher, and Bell's Vireo. In September and October, our speakers will emphasize how we can get involved in securing the future for species dependent on our fragile and rare bosque environments. Mesilla Valley Audubon members can turn their commitment and camaraderie into a better day for birds both locally and around the world.

**September 17. Focus on the Future of the Gila River.** Presented by Terry Timme, Southwestern New Mexico Audubon Society. In this presentation Terry will update us on the future of the Gila River in light of the Arizona Water Settlement Act and explain why it is important to everyone in New Mexico.

The Arizona Water Settlement Act could have a tremendous impact on our State's last free-flowing river. In 2004 Congress passed a law that guaranteed New Mexico \$66 million for any water-use project in the four New Mexico counties

that are in the Gila River basin. There was also an additional \$32 million if the project diverted and used up to 14,000 acre-feet of water. Numerous stakeholders submitted project proposals and the Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) will decide which project(s) it prefers by December 2014.

Proposals to divert the Gila have been termed "fatally flawed" by a former ISC commissioner and an independent engineering firm concluded that plans for a diversion "represent significant technical challenges or potential fatal flaws." Economic analysis of diversions by the Bureau of Reclamation found that "costs exceed expected benefits."

Will the available money be used for cost-effective beneficial projects such as water conservation, improved agricultural and municipal infrastructure, and wastewater reuse? Or, will it be used for a costly unneeded diversion of the Gila River? Will Gila River water be piped to Las Cruces?

### **October 15. To Be Announced.**

Please check our website at

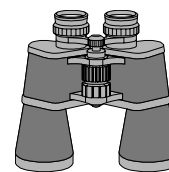
[www.mvaudubon.org](http://www.mvaudubon.org)

in late September for details about our October meeting.



## 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 [mpndlttn@gmail.com](mailto:mpndlttn@gmail.com)*

**September 20. Deming's Mt. View Cemetery.** This well-vegetated oasis is a serious migrant trap, so should be hopping in September. Meeting time & place TBA.

**October. TBA.** To sign up for email updates and reminders, contact Mark Pendleton at [mpndlttn@gmail.com](mailto:mpndlttn@gmail.com)

## 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.



Mesilla Valley Audubon Society continues to provide Audubon Adventures environmental education materials for teachers in our region that request the program. The program targets 4<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms, and each classroom kit covers 4 distinct topics. For each topic, the kit contains full-color magazines for each student in the classroom, plus an Educator's Guide to help teachers implement the hands-on activities in the magazines and assess student learning. Audubon Adventures materials are aligned with state and national standards for science, language arts, and social science. This year, for the first time, teachers are given the option of choosing the hard-copy version of the classroom kit or a purely on-line version.

New topics introduced for the 2014-2015 school year include *Wild about Birds*, *The Buzz about Native Bees*, and *Wildlife of Our Towns and Cities*. A New Mexico specific supplement, focusing on hummingbirds, is also available at the MVAS website.

Other new developments in MVAS's Audubon Adventures program involve our local core of dedicated volunteers. After many years of tireless service, Joy McFarland is stepping back from her role as the primary liaison with teachers and administrators in our local school districts. CJ Goin has volunteered to take over this important role. Lorraine Schulte, who has chaired the Audubon Adventures program for decades, continues as our point-of-contact for fundraising.

Many generous MVAS members and friends have helped make MVAS's support of this program possible through the years. Some of the funds raised by our spring Birdathon are also used to support the Audubon Adventures program.

Donations of any amount to support this program for the upcoming school year would be greatly appreciated. Checks should be made out to Mesilla Valley Audubon Society, and donations should be sent to:

Lorraine Schulte  
Chairman, Audubon Adventures  
1740 Mariposa  
Las Cruces, NM 88001

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

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

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

Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

## SW Women in Conservation

**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
Secretary	Laurie Keaton	522-3710
Treasurer	Diane Moore	382-5389
Past President	David Griffin	640-0029
Board (14-16)	vacant	
Board (14-16)	Randy Gray	644-2148
Board (13-15)	Lorraine Schulte	524-7029
Board (13-15)	Ken Stinnett	649-3781
Board (12-14)	CJ Goins	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 Goins	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)

Please join Audubon New Mexico on Friday, September 26<sup>th</sup>, for a forum on freshwater at our annual Southwest Women in Conservation event.

Explore personal perspectives on today's critical water issues and learn how you can engage in water protection and decision making with guest speakers Letty Belin & Beth Bardwell, moderated by Laura Paskus.

**Letty Belin**—One of the few New Mexicans serving in a senior position at the Department of the Interior, Letty will share her national, state and on-the-ground perspectives on the evolving legal, institutional and cultural framework of how Westerners value and manage water.

**Beth Bardwell**—As Audubon New Mexico's Director of Freshwater Conservation, Beth is working to put water back in New Mexico's precious rivers through innovative, voluntary, market-based strategies.

**Laura Paskus**—A self-professed muckraker, Laura is an independent writer, editor, and radio reporter based in Albuquerque who covers water, wildlife, and climate change in New Mexico.

Beginning at 1:30 PM and ending around 4:30 PM (including hors d'oeuvres and cocktails), we invite you to join us at the Randall Davey Audubon Center & Sanctuary in Santa Fe, NM. Tickets are \$55 per person (please inquire about teacher and student rates). Seating is limited. Please RSVP no later than September 15<sup>th</sup>.

For more information visit the Audubon New Mexico website at <http://nm.audubon.org> or contact Maryam Miller at [mmiller@audubon.org](mailto:mmiller@audubon.org)

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