

Burrowing Owl



December 1999 January 2000 Issue

Volume 29 No. 1

Welcome to Central New Mexico Audubon Society! Come join us. All our meetings and field trips are free and open to the public

Phil Norton, Fall and Farewell

When Phil Norton came to Bosque del Apache in 1986, he was faced with water management problems, salt cedar problems, hunting on the refuge, a lack of community involvement, budget problems, too much work and too few people.

In just 13 (going on 14) years, he has intensified and maximized water-use efficiency to the ever-increasing benefit of waterfowl and flora at the refuge. He has pioneered and innovated moist soil management practices and salt cedar eradication methods. His experimentation with periodic timed flooding has promoted cottonwood regeneration and been a model for agencies statewide. Twelve years ago he hosted the First Annual Festival of the Cranes—his brain child. He fought to remove hunting from the refuge—and succeeded. He envisioned volunteer involvement—and the Friends of Bosque del Apache came into being.

Phil graciously donned the mantle of ambassador. Nationwide, Bosque del Apache came into the public awareness. Charles Kuralt featured the Bosque regularly on his beloved “Sunday Morning” nature vignettes. He praised Phil in his book, “America.” In 1996, Phil opened the Bosque to National Audubon Society’s most successful interactive educational program ever—“Wild Wings: Heading South.” For three days, film crews were live on site at Bosque del Apache and at Welney Wildfowl Reserve in Great Britain—and schoolchildren across the globe tracked the migrations of sandhills and snow geese arriving in New Mexico, and Bewick’s and whooper swans arriving in England.

Phil supported Kent Clegg’s attempts at establishing a Rocky Mountain Whooping Crane flyway—a program which captured the imagination of a supportive public. Phil still hopes that Kent’s program will continue.



Fall is a season of change. Some people see it as an ending. We have the choice to think of it otherwise: the beginning of our incomparable season of blue and gold; the freshness of new arrivals, migrating by the thousands; the sunset of the bravado of summer into the nurturing of winter, out of which all Nature stirs anew.

Phil is leaving the Refuge on December 15, to accept his new position as manager of Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuge on January 2. He feels it’s time for a change. He admits, “I didn’t think that I would ever leave here.” He goes there, faced with water management problems, disputes over land-use practices between farmers and the refuge, a native land reclamation claim by the Klamath Indian Tribes, a lack of community

involvement, budget problems, too much work and too few people—not “problems” to Phil, but challenges.

In honor and recognition of Phil’s years of dedication and inspiration at Bosque del Apache, Central New Mexico Audubon Society has presented Phil with a Resolution to fund the building of the **Phil Norton Commemorative Photography Blind**. The plans and specs have already been developed by Refuge personnel. The blind will be built on the Refuge side of the Ducks Unlimited pond, which is inaccessible but visible on the east side of the road into Bosque del Apache from San Antonio. The new blind will be accessible from the Refuge and will provide outstanding wildlife viewing opportunities. The check will be presented to Phil on December 4 at Bosque del Apache.

We encourage your gifts and donations to the “**Phil Fund**.” What an Audubon legacy! Send donations to CNMAS, P.O. Box 30002, Albuquerque, NM 87190-0002.

To you, Phil, we say: *Vaya con Dios. Fare well—but not “farewell.”*

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Audubon Field Trips

Everyone is welcome on field trips: Audubon members and nonmembers, novice and experienced birders. Call Sei for more information 266-2480.

December Trips

Saturday, December 4 *Bosque del Apache*. This is a great time to see the winter birds. Meet at 8 AM at the UNM Physics building parking lot (NE corner of Lomas and Yale). Dress warmly and bring lunch. This will be a full day trip. Call Sei at 266-2480 for details.

January Trips

Sunday, January 9 *Kit Carson Park and Elsewhere* Meet at 8 AM at the parking lot on the south side of Kit Carson Park (Alcalde and Tingley - Lead and Coal merge to form Alcalde just a couple blocks from Tingley Drive). This will be a half day trip.

Saturday - Sunday, January 29-30 *Las Vegas and Maxwell NWRs*. Meet at 7:30 AM at the Far North Shopping Center (Academy and San Mateo Blvds.) behind the Village Inn. Bring lunch and lots of warm clothing; it can get pretty cold. This can be a day trip or overnight at Springer. This a great trip to see Rough-legged Hawks, lots of Bald Eagles, Tree Sparrows and waterfowl. Call Sei for lodging and possible car pooling information.



Winter Birding by Ear

Classes taught by Jim Place at the Rio Grande Nature Center, Albuquerque, NM. Cost is \$20 for each class, field trip included.

Level I Class: Saturday, December 4, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Field trip on Sunday morning, December 5.

For anyone interested in learning to identify birds by their calls and sounds. This class features waterbirds and waders, for greater enjoyment of New Mexico's waterbird refuge areas in winter.

Level II Class: Saturday, December 11, 9a.m.-4p.m. Field trip on Sunday, December 12.

For those with some experience in identifying birds by songs and sounds. This workshop will focus on passerine call notes, those "tweets" and "chips" which can help locate and identify birds on Christmas Counts and other winter bird searches.

Call Rio Grande Nature Center at (505) 344-7240 to register. Charge cards, checks, or pay in person. Space is limited. Bring your field guide(s) to the class.

Audubon Programs

Programs begin at 7:30 p.m. Light refreshments are served from 7:15. Come to St. Timothy's Lutheran Church, northwest corner of Copper and Jefferson.

December Program
No Program

January Program

Thursday, January 20 *A Guatemalan Connection is Made*
Donna Thatcher will tell us about her recent trip to Guatemala and how the people of the Peten region are learning to use environmentally friendly practices for development there. Donna is an enthusiastic and interesting speaker and will also have some slides to show us.

**Audubon
Birding Academy**
Presented by expert birders.

February 17 • Woodpeckers
March 16 • Flycatchers
April 20 • Birds of Spring by Song

Mark your calendars and register early.
The cost is \$5.00 per class payable
in advance or at the door.
Pre-register for all three classes
and the price is only \$12.00 (saves 20%).
Call Beth Hurst at 898-8514 to register now
or for info. Beginning January 3, you can
pick-up a form at bird stores
and in the RGNC pond room.

3rd Thursday in February, March and April
7:30 pm St. Timothy's Lutheran Church
(Copper and Jefferson)

Thursday Morning Birding Group

For information on weekly birding outings (every Thursday), call Julie Goodding at 255-9366. Meeting time and location, as well as duration, vary.

Burrowing Owl Subscription

You can subscribe to our newsletter without being a member of our chapter. In fact, if you live outside our region you will have to subscribe separately in order to receive the newsletter. The Burrowing Owl Newsletter is published six times a year, February, April, June, August, October and December. Subscription is free to Central New Mexico Audubon Society members, \$12 to nonmembers. Send checks to: Central New Mexico Audubon Society, 804 Guadalupe Circle, N.W., 87114-1710



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Field Trip Reports by Sei Tokuda

Saturday, September 25 *Quarai and HawkWatch Site.* Ten birders made this trip. The day was somewhat uneventful with very few birds found. The most exciting sighting was the flight of several hundred Pinyon Jays flying directly overhead and the presence of Broad-winged Hawks at the HawkWatch site.

Saturday, October 9 *Percha Dam.* Seven people made this trip on a fairly nice day. There were over 45 species noted and the most exciting sights were a Golden Eagle sitting on a post just north of the Mitchell Point turn off on I-25 and a flock of White-throated Swifts that were flying overhead at Percha Dam State Park.

Saturday, October 30 *Bosque del Apache NWR.* This was a beautiful day to go birding. The weather was perfect for late October and everyone had good looks at a Harlan's Hawk and the Ross's Geese. Other species included Yellow-Headed Blackbirds, Pipits, Glossy Ibises.

Saturday, November 6 *Las Vegas NWR.* A beautiful Indian Summer day enjoyed by 6 birders led by Art Arenholz. There were outstanding views of Bald Eagles and Prairie Falcons plus the joy of seeing 4 species of Grebes in one pond. In addition, there were a few "stained" Sandhill Cranes.



Nests and Cavities by Beth Hurst

"Thank you" to Tom Fowler for his gift to CNMAS in memory of Lew Helm. Feathers to Mary Lou Arthur, who agreed so readily to help handle Audubon phone calls — one of Donna Thatcher's many roles left vacant since she's moved to Farmington. Bird calls and whistles to Hart Schwarz and Steve Cox for undertaking the Audubon Christmas Bird Counts locally. Your efforts do not go unappreciated! "Gracias" to Hart Schwarz, Christopher Rustay, and Jennifer Atchley for your invaluable help in compiling the statewide Christmas Bird Count information. Flowers and a Life Bird to Andrew Rominger and Jay Reidy for their time and talents in making the new Waterfowl Identification Poster Series for us — and for doing it so graciously and artistically!

There is no such thing as an "organization" — there are only the people who form together to further a common goal. We invite you to consider sharing yourself with us in whatever way your time and talents incline you. Planning general meetings, taking on the annual Science Fair project, doing nature slide presentations for youth/community groups are only some needs and ideas. Bring your own need to share, and your own ideas, and join the Audubon family. It takes all of us to make a flock!
Happy holidays, fellow Auduboners!



Are you reading this newsletter but **STILL** not a member of the National Audubon Society?

When you join the National Audubon Society, you become an important part of the most effective environmental organization in the world. An organization for nature and wildlife that reflects your concerns and rewards you with an impressive range of benefits.

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- Free membership in your local Audubon chapter.
- Audubon Travel.
- A strong voice in Congress.

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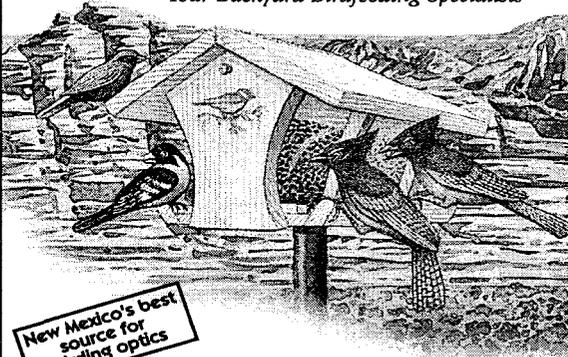


Use the above form for new subscriptions only. Contact Membership Chairperson for changes of address or correction in your Burrowing Owl label. Nonmembers can receive the Burrowing Owl by sending your name and address with \$12 to CNMAS, c/o Beth Hurst-Waitz, 804 Guadalupe Circle, N.W., 87114-1710



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100th Christmas Bird Count



The 100th Christmas Bird Count period begins Thursday, December 16th, 1999 and ends on Monday, January 3rd, 2000. The Christmas Bird Count has become the world's largest all-volunteer bird survey.

More than 45,000 people participate each year in this all-day census of early-winter bird populations. The results of their efforts are compiled into the longest running database in ornithology, representing close to one hundred years of unbroken data on trends of early-winter bird populations across the Americas.



CBC Begins New Count Period

As of the 101st Christmas Bird Count, the count period will be fixed to calendar dates, instead of varying each year. Beginning in December, 2000, the Official CBC period will always run from December 14th through January 5th. This will ensure that compilers and participants always know the dates of the Count period, and should usually include an extra weekend to conduct CBC's.

The natural alternative

Backyard birding is an increasingly popular entertainment option. Share it with you friends and family, and enjoy **15% off** any bird feeder with this ad.



Wild Bird Center

The Promenade Shopping Center
5200 Eubank NE (Eubank at Spain NE)
(Just East of Marie Callender's)
332-4737



A Christmas Bird Count Long Ago

by EBirdman

December 27, 3:30 AM, 1950—something.

There were four of us in the car. The frost-covered windows were cracked open a little to let out the smoke from each of our habits. The hoot of the great horned owl we knew to be resident in the adjacent woods had not yet happened. These were the early days, when it was called bird-watching, and if it was mentioned at a social gathering, that you did it, people moved to the other side of the room and looked back, furtively.



We were the CBC team, dedicated, unshaven, dressed in a polyglot of WWII surplus, binocs strung from our necks. Our appearance never occurred to me until the flashing blue light illuminated the inside of the station wagon. I scraped the frost off the inside of the little vent window to get a better view of the outside mirror, and there, silhouetted in the same flashing blue light, was the unmistakable shape of a rather large policeman approaching warily.

"Anybody have a thought on what I should tell the officer we are doing here?" "Tell him he probably spooked the owl," came from the back seat.

I couldn't think of a more believable story than the truth. How could it hurt? I lowered the window as his flashlight glared in, destroying our night vision for at least a half hour.

"Is there a problem here?"

"No, officer, we're bird-watchers. We're looking for an owl."

He backed up a little, signaled his partner to the other side of our car, pulled out his revolver and said, "Yeah! Well, you bird-watchers come out of that car, one at a time, and keep your hands where we can see them." *We did!*

After an hour of being searched, having our identification scrutinized, the car registration checked, and determining that none of us had outstanding warrants, we were reluctantly allowed go about our business. We were admonished, however, to take our bird-watching elsewhere. *We did!*

That night, We sat around a table with all of the other dedicated and unshaven, creating the record of the count. Our chair-person intoned each species, in order, in a pontifical voice, and we each responded with our counts. When he reached "Great horned owls?" there was absolute silence in the room.





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LOCAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Saturday, December 18 - Bosque del Apache NWR, Socorro
Contact Steve Cox, 345-2385. Meet at Refuge Headquarters, 7:00 a.m. Owl Bar afterwards for treats and tallies.

Sunday, December 19 Albuquerque Contact Hart Schwarz, 266-1810. Meet at Corrales Shopping Center, NW corner of Coors and Alameda, 7:15 a.m. Compilation party afterwards at the home of Jonalyn Yancey, 248-0260— bring a dish to share. All sub-compilers are encouraged to attend, even if your list is the only thing you bring!

Sunday, January 2, 2000 Sandia Mountains Contact Hart Schwarz, 266-1810. Meet at Wells Fargo Bank (formerly Norwest Bank) in Tijeras at 7:30 a.m.

STATEWIDE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

For sites not listed, contact Sandy Williams, (505)827-9914

Bluewater/Grants
Saturday, December 18
Bruce Pataky, (505) 862-7679

La Luz/Otero County
John Mangimeli,
(505) 479-4102

Caballo
Sunday, January 2
Contact Barry Zimmer,
(915) 821-6737

Lakes Avalon/Brantley
(Carlsbad area)
Contact Steve West,
(505) 885-1153

Carlsbad Caverns National Park
Contact Steve West,
(505) 885-1153

Las Cruces
Saturday, December 18
Gordon Ewing, (505) 522-3934

Clayton
Wednesday, December 29
Lois Herrmann,
(505) 983-6036 or
Christopher Rustay,
(505)343-0111

Las Vegas
Sunday, January 2, 2000
George Blanchard,
(505) 757-8828

El Palomino,
Chihuahua, Mexico
Contact Ray Meyer,
Las Cruces, (505) 541-5853

Loving
Contact Steve West,
(505) 885-1153

Espanola
Sunday, December 19
Contact Bernie Foy,
(505) 466-1587

Peloncillo Mountains
Saturday, January 1, 2000
Alan Craig, (520) 558-2220

Farmington
Compiler, Alan Nelson.
Contact:
Farmington Bird Club,
(505) 632-8335

Roswell
Saturday, December 18
Sherry Bixler, (505) 622-0597

Gila River
Saturday, January 1, 2000
Roland Shook,
(505) 388-3441

Ruidoso
Contact Anita Powell,
(505) 257-5352

Janos, Chihuahua, Mexico
Saturday, December 18
Cynthia Melcher,
(970) 491-5146

Santa Fe
Sunday, December 26
Pat Insley, (505) 982-0796

Santa Rosa
Sunday, December 19
Bill West, (505) 473-2780

Sevilleta NWR
Tuesday, December 21
Steve Cox, (505) 345-2385

Birds and Beans

Coffee —it is perhaps surprising that something so commonplace in our everyday lives, so ubiquitous throughout culture, plays such an important role in the lives of our migratory birds. Facing devastating habitat loss and degradation on their breeding grounds in the United States and Canada, and on their wintering grounds in Central and South America, migratory birds have found refuge in the lush forest-like environments of traditional coffee plantations. In fact, researchers at the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center have revealed that of all agricultural systems in the tropics, traditionally-managed coffee plantations support more species of bird—over 150 — than any other type of agriculture.



Yet coffee farming in Latin America is changing. Traditionally, coffee was grown under a canopy of shade trees, providing wintering habitat critical to many species of migratory birds and preserving the rich biodiversity inherent in tropical rainforests. Increasingly, however, industrial coffee farms, where land is cleared of its lush vegetation to grow coffee in full sun, are replacing traditional coffee farms. With this conversion from traditional shade-grown to industrial sun-grown coffee comes a corresponding decrease in migratory bird species, and this decrease in species diversity is dramatic— over 90% fewer bird species are found on sun-grown coffee farms than on shade-grown coffee farms.

By choosing shade-grown coffee, coffee drinkers not only help common birds that use shade-coffee plantations during the winter like the Baltimore Oriole and Ruby-throated Hummingbird, but also a host of at risk WatchList species including:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Swallow-tailed Kite | Kentucky Warbler |
| Black-throated Blue Warbler | Greater Pewee |
| Short-tailed Hawk | Painted Bunting |
| Hermit Warbler | Wood Thrush |
| Chuck-will's-widow | Audubon's Oriole |
| Cerulean Warbler | Golden-winged Warbler |
| Buff-bellied Hummingbird | |

To learn more about why shade coffee plantations are great for birds, and to see the certification criteria developed by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, check out <http://www.si.edu/smbc/>.





New Mexico Audubon Joins in Lawsuit

As contemplated by the New Mexico Audubon Council at its meeting on Oct. 2, 1999, the Council joined with five other conservationist groups in a legal effort to save the rapidly dwindling population of the endangered Rio Grande Silvery Minnow as well as the also endangered Southwestern (extimus) Willow Flycatcher. The six groups have sued the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the Army Corps of Engineers to force the two federal agencies to obtain biological studies of the minnow and the flycatcher in the expectation that the studies will require that more water be left in the Rio Grande and not be diverted by dams and irrigation channels. The following is the plaintiff's press release.



Albuquerque, New Mexico – Six national, regional and local conservation groups filed suit today to stop the decline of the Rio Grande ecosystem in central New Mexico. Defenders of Wildlife, Forest Guardians, National Audubon Society, New Mexico Audubon Council, Sierra Club, and Southwest Environmental Center filed the lawsuit in federal district court, claiming federal water managers have failed to recover the endangered Rio Grande silvery minnow and southwestern willow flycatcher, in violation of the federal Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act. Recent biological surveys show that the minnow population has declined severely, necessitating a swift and immediate response. Biologists conducted surveys in July and August showing that over 90% of the remaining population is concentrated in a small stretch of river just above Elephant Butte Reservoir that is the most likely stretch to go dry. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) says that the situation is "serious." "The situation is worse than serious; it has become an emergency. The status quo is killing off the minnows and is also endangering the health of the bosque and the entire riparian system," said Tom Jervis, President of the New Mexico Audubon Council. "The decline of the silvery minnow is merely a symptom

that the river itself is dying. We need immediate action to protect not only the minnow and the flycatcher, but the multitude of life the river supports, including humans" said Susan George, State Counsel for Defenders of Wildlife. The Biological Assessment of middle Rio Grande water management issued recently by the Bureau of Reclamation and Army Corps of Engineers asserts that those agencies have almost no discretion to change the way the river is operated so as to prevent the death of the river and the species dependent on it. This lawsuit disputes that claim and argues that federal agencies should be consulting with Fish and Wildlife Service over a wide range of actions that might be taken to improve the health of the river, the silvery minnow, and the southwestern willow flycatcher.



Audubon's Willow Flycatcher

Numerous other lawsuits have been filed in recent weeks by the State of New Mexico, City of Albuquerque, the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, and the Farm Bureau challenging protection of habitat for the minnow as well as sources of water to keep the river wet. "This issue has already been taken to the courts by the other stakeholders. We must give the river and its species a voice in the process," said Letty Belin, with the Land and Water Fund of the Rockies. The Rio Grande silvery minnow, once one of the most abundant fish species in the Rio Grande, is the last of its kind in the river. Listed as an endangered species in 1994, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service held a meeting in 1992 to warn water users of the impending listing and to look for alternative solutions. "Had water managers and users heeded warnings from nearly a decade ago that the river was in trouble, the emergency room measures of the ESA would not have been necessary. No one could give us any assurance that adequate water would remain in the river, so here we are today in a crisis," said John Horning of Forest Guardians.



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December 1999 January 2000

Fishing in the Wind by Gull-a-bill Gary

Council Corner by Jeff Myers

As an aid to readers of The Burrowing Owl, we have gleaned the following items from newsletters of other Audubon chapters around the nation. Actually, we gleaned only one and made up the rest. Use your finely honed birding skills to make the correct ID.

The Slippery Eel (Washington, D.C. Chapter): An anonymous benefactor has made a multi-million dollar contribution to support Audubon's "Cat Indoor" Program. The money will be used to purchase a fuzzy mechanical mouse for each cat-owner willing to participate in the Program.

The House Sparrow (N.Y.C. Chapter): An effort is underway to stop the Parks Department's proposal to convert the northern end of Central Park into a multi-modal transportation facility for the City's taxis, busses, helicopters and overnight delivery vans. A study commissioned by The Friends of the Red-Tailed Hawks Who Nest Near Woody Allen's Building has shown that this plan would have a detrimental effect on most of the Park's wildlife (other than pigeons).

The Old Coot (Baton Rouge Chapter): The popularity of the Chapter's Fetch and Release Program (training classes for hunting dogs) has led to a sharp increase in membership, especially from rural areas, although its effect on the local Gadwalls remains to be seen.

The Wood Tick (Southern Colorado Chapter): In an attempt to curtail the loss of habitat caused by the population growth in the Chapter's region, the Chapter has created a task force to introduce legislation that would require each Colorado County to incarcerate at least 5% of its population annually for the next five years.

The Sandpiper (East Islip Chapter): Three birders waded and swam across a 300 foot wide tidal inlet to get a close-up look at a Mongolian Plover, a life bird for each of them.

The October NMAC meeting was held at the Sevilleta NWR. Christopher Rustay reported on the Important Bird Area Program now underway in New Mexico. Chris will be giving a presentation to each chapter encouraging local birders to submit site nominations. Each Chapter is encouraged to have an IBA Liaison to coordinate nominations in its area. Chris can be reached at the Randall Davey Audubon Center at (505) 983-4609.

The next meeting will be at the Sevilleta NWR at 10:00 am on Saturday, February 5, 2000. All Auduboners are encouraged to attend.

See page 6 for info on Audubon's involvement in a lawsuit to protect the Silvery Minnow and Southwestern Willow Flycatcher.



Important Information

Wildlife Rescue

If you find a sick or injured bird, call 344-2500.

Rare Bird Alert

In Albuquerque is 323-9323.e-mail: Pinyonjay@aol.com

Bat in Trouble? (Talking Talons)

Call before you intervene. 281-1133 or 281-1515

The correct answer is *The Sandpiper*.

Help support this educational outreach program!
Send your check payable to CNMAS with this form to:
Ron Waitz, 804 Guadalupe Circle, N.W., Albuquerque, NM 87114.

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Burrowing Owl Deadline

Information and articles to be included in the February / March 2000 issue of the Burrowing Owl must be received by January 15. Contact Browning Coke at 256-9130 or email bcokenm@aol.com.

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(505) 835-1828

US Fish and Wildlife Service

500 Gold Avenue, SW
Albuquerque, NM 87102
Regional Director (505) 766-2321
Refuges and Wildlife (505) 766-2036
Habitat Conservation (505) 766-2914

Sandia Ranger District

US Forest Service
Clifford Dils, District Ranger
11776 Highway 337
Tijeras, NM 87059
(505) 281-3304

New Mexico Department of Game and Fish

Villagra Building
P.O. Box 25112
Santa Fe, NM 87503-0001
(505) 827-6681
<http://www.gmfsh.state.nm.us>

DIRECTORY

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