

Burrowing Owl



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

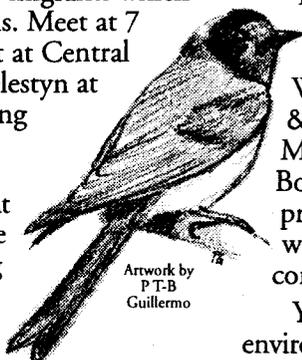
Birdathon 2002, CNMAS Style . . .

CONTINUES on Saturday, June 8, with Celestyn's trip to the Sandia Mountains. Yes, the trip is still on, even with the recent forest closures. This is the last chance to hurrah for this year's Birdathon fund-raiser, so we hope you can join us - in spirit with a pledge, or better yet, in person with your binoculars!

Team 3: Celestyn's Sandia Seekers - Sat., June 8

Celestyn's treasures of last year - the Yellow-throated Vireo and Black-throated Gray Warbler - will be among the sought-after birds, as well the Lazuli Bunting (there's been a pair documented by Andrew Rominger) and the always delightful Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Celestyn has planned the trip for a bit later this year to take full advantage of migrants which arrive and nest later in the higher elevations. Meet at 7 AM at the north end of Smith's parking lot at Central and Tramway on Saturday, June 8. Call Celestyn at 925-8611 to let him know you'll be bringing enthusiasm and some friends.

We'll all need to help Celestyn with our great observational skills if he's going to match the outstanding counts from Sei's Leisurely Long Day and the Thursday Birders Plus trips.



Artwork by P.T.B. Guillermo

Birdathon Reports:

Team 1: Sei's Leisurely Long Day - Sat., May 4

Socorro, Water Canyon and Bosque del Apache

Fifteen CNMAS members and friends were on this trip that started at 6 AM in Albuquerque and ended at 6:30 PM in Bosque del Apache with 122 species of birds observed. The most notable species were: Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Harris's Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Cedar Waxwing, Phainopepla, Red-faced Warbler and Hepatic Tanager.

Team 2: Thursday Birders Plus - Wed.-Thu., May 8 -9

Rebecca Gracey reports the Thursday Birders Plus had 12 birders on their team. They were able to see 124 species in spite of windy conditions. They saw birds in the Manzanita Mountains, Manzano Pond, Quarai, the Bosque del Apache, Riverine Park in Socorro, and Water Canyon, all in a 24-hour period. Highlights of the trip were Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Red-faced Warbler.



Thank you to the following people who have already supported ALL of our Birdathon teams with their contributions: Mary V. Franklin, Dianne Cress, Carol & Robert Scothorn, Dorothy Rogan, David Dain, Nancy Joste, Charlotte Green, Paul McConnell, Carol Higgins, Lou Prime, Wallace & Lena Finley, Porter & Dee Clary, Jean E.

Dilley, Virginia Taylor, Mary Lou Arthur, Laura Lefkofsky, Marjorie Williams, Les Hawkins, Sei Tokuda, Lannois Neeley, Sally Burke, Beth Hurst-Waitz & Ron Waitz, Glen Finley, Rebecca Gracey, Fred & Cheryl Venette, Jim & Cynthia Krakowski, Eileen McNerney, Pat Folsom, Karen & Gary Boettcher, and Bonnie Long. Thanks also to Richard's Printing (the printers of our newsletter for some 20 years, as near as we can figure!), for their in-kind donation of complimentary printing.

You can all be proud to know that you're sponsoring environmental education with your Birdathon contributions. Please consider adding your name to the wrap-up list in our next issue. Like the bumper sticker says, "Education cuts don't heal."

June Audubon Program:

Arctic Refuge Slide Show - see page 5 for details.

There will be no meetings/programs in July and August, though the field trips continue.

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CNMAS Field Trip Reports

by Sei Tokuda

Sunday, March 24: *Domingo Baca Canyon*

Thirteen birders joined Nick Vaughn on a hike into this beautiful canyon in the wilderness area off Elena Gallegos Park. The weather was cool and comfortable. Although the number of species of birds sighted was low, we had beautiful views of Crissal Thrashers, Cassin's Finch, Red-breasted Nuthatch and Townsend's Solitaire.

Saturday, April 6: *Bosque del Apache*

There were 13 Audubon members on this trip. We started out when the weather was nice, but by noon, the winds picked up. We had to quit birding at 2 PM because of high winds and dust. We saw over 60 species of birds and the best birds were the Phainopepla, a kettle of 9-10 Swainson's Hawks, White-faced Ibis, Greater White-fronted Goose and Yellow-headed Blackbirds. The Swainson's Hawk were first seen on the ground and they took to the air and gave us beautiful aerial views. There were immature, mature and a dark morph Swainson's Hawks. A couple of Swainson's Hawks even went into their aerial dance. In addition, everyone in the group saw the white neck and heard the call of the Chihuahuan Raven.

Saturday-Sunday, April 13-14: *Fort Sumner, Bitter Lake and Mescalero Sands*

Eleven Audubon members went on this trip and saw over 100 species of birds. The notable species included: four species of falcons, Snowy Plover, Lesser Prairie Chicken, Least Sandpiper, Franklin's Gull, Red-headed Woodpecker, Blue Jay, Eastern Meadowlark, and Northern Parula.

Sunday, April 28: *Belen and Bosque*

This trip was led by Christopher Rustay and he took 14 CNMAS members to Isleta Pond, the Whitfield Ranch east of Belen and to the home of Dolores Varela Philips near Bosque. The group saw over 50 species of birds and the ones that caused the most excitement included the Great and Cattle Egrets, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Dusky, Gray and Ash-throated Flycatchers and Black-headed Grosbeak.

CNMAS Field Trip Schedule

<http://www.newmexicoaudubon.org/cnmas/trips.html>

Friday-Saturday, May 31-June 1 - Water Canyon Bird Survey

Andrew Rominger will be the leader of the 2002 annual Water Canyon Bird Survey. For those interesting in owling, please meet at the south end of Water Canyon campground on Friday evening at 7 PM. For all others, please be at the campground on Saturday at 6:30 AM to receive your assignment for the day. Novice birders are very welcome and will be paired with experienced birders. Camping sites are available. Call Andrew at 243-7355 for details.

Saturday-Sunday, June 22-23 - Los Ojos, Chama & Hopewell Lake

This trip will be led by Rebecca Gracey and participants will overnight in Chama, NM. The target birds will be Bobolink, Veery, Gray Catbird, Gray Jay and all the Lewis's Woodpeckers you want to see. Departure will be on Saturday morning at 7 AM from the Far North Shopping Center behind the Village Inn (northeast corner of Academy and San Mateo Blvds). Call Rebecca at 242-3821 for details.

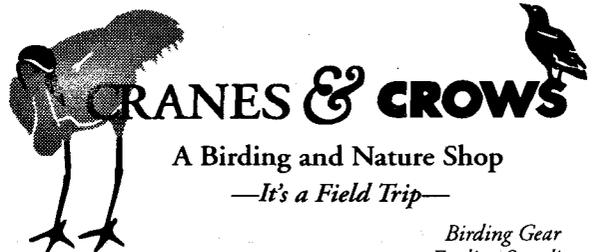
No Field Trips in July.

Saturday, August 3 - Hummingbirds at Rio Grande Nature Center

Please join Lannois Neely for a 7:30 AM bird walk at the RGNC (on Candelaria Road NW, 1/4 mile west of Rio Grande Blvd). CNMAS members will be staffing the pond viewing room of the Center from 10 AM to 4 PM on that date. There is a strong likelihood that four species of hummingbirds will be found. In addition, there will be several lectures and a hummingbird banding demonstration between 10 AM and 4 PM. Call Sei at 266-2480 for details.



NEW LOCATION



CRANES & CROWS

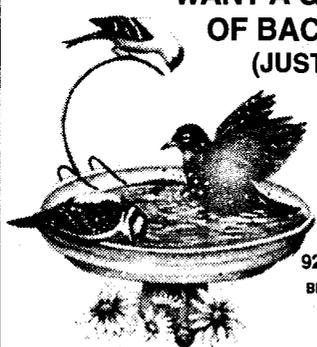
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June - July 2002



The Log At Capulin Spring

Water is flowing again (not a lot, but it's flowing) in the log at Capulin Spring after a long dry spell. Due to the heroic efforts of Ken Schneider with the help of Mary Lou Schneider, Walter Kleweno, and Les Hawkins, all CNMAS Thursday Birders, the broken pipe was restored and is in full working order.

Our special thanks to Beverly de Gruyter of the Forest Service office at Tijeras for arranging the necessary approvals to enable us to proceed with the work, to Ron Phillips who has volunteered to mortar the flagstones back in place later this week, and to the Thursday Birders who donated the materials for the job.

Brightly colored birds swarmed around us while the work was going on, only slightly delaying proceedings:

Band-tailed Pigeon
Northern Flicker
Red-naped Sapsucker (a beauty of a male, right on the log)
Hairy Woodpecker
Warbling Vireo
Steller's Jay
Mountain Chickadee
White-breasted Nuthatch
Red-breasted Nuthatch (the most numerous and active)
Ruby-crowned Kinglet

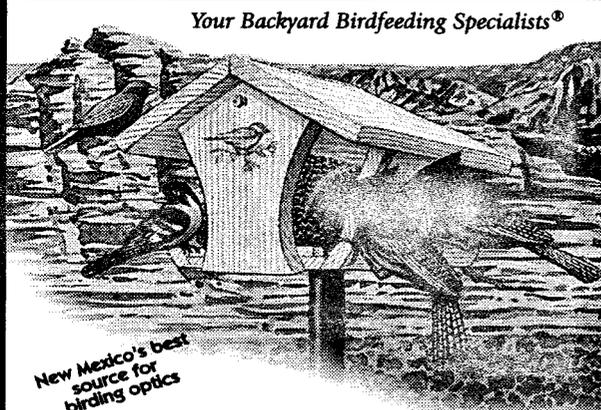
Hermit Thrush
American robin
Virginia's Warbler
Audubon's Warbler
MacGillivray's Warbler
Western Tanager
Green-tailed Towhee
Chipping Sparrow
Gray-headed Junco
Black-headed Grosbeak
Cassin's Finch
Pine Siskin



Thursday Morning Birding Group

Weekly birding outings every Thursday. Meeting time and location, as well as duration, vary. Call Margaret Wallen at 341-0928 for details of outings.

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People Have Feathers, Too!

by Beth Hurst-Waltz

People of national note on the Audubon scene include David Sibley, who joined Audubon Magazine as its newest contributing author in March. Sibley illustrated the feature on shorebird conservation by Don Stap, with accompanying illustration text by Kenn Kaufman. Are we lucky or what?

Featured in that same issue were the folks who make Randall Davey Audubon Center (RDAC) in Santa Fe the environmental education center in northern New Mexico. Janie Chodos, the founder of the environmental ed program at RDAC, is now a classroom teacher who brings her fifth-graders to the Center. Lauren Parmelee, the current Director of Education, leads her small staff of Jessica Lagalo and Margot Shapiro in providing environmental education to 5,000 students per year in the bilingual Outdoor Science Field Study program developed at RDAC. Outstanding!

The 2001 Audubon Medal Award, presented for great individual achievement in the field of conservation or environmental protection, was presented in March to Michael P. Dombek, Chief, U.S. Forest Service 1997-2001. It was under his tenure that the Forest Service held more than 600 public hearings and received more than 1.6 million official comments, which overwhelmingly voiced the American public's support for the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, signed on January 5, 2001, and now in jeopardy under the current administration.

New Mexico Audubon people and places have been receiving local and national recognition! Let's focus our binoculars on them and appreciate their plumage.

Tom Jervis is the President of the New Mexico Audubon Council, editor of "The Mountain Chickadee," the newsletter of Sangre de Cristo Audubon Chapter in Santa Fe, and a member of the Board of Directors of Audubon-New Mexico, which has evolved from the former Stewardship Committee of Randall Davey Audubon Center. Tom was highlighted in the recently published Annual Report 2001 of Audubon and recognized for his more than 30 years of activism here. Tom played a critical role in securing passage of our Reptile and Amphibian Protection bill, passed last year, and continues to lead and inspire in one of Audubon's major platforms, grassroots advocacy. He also spearheads environmental education efforts in his hometown of Los Alamos and makes sure that chapters and their members are paramount in the guiding philosophy of the Board of Directors of National Audubon Society.

Les Hawkins, our "town crier" for the CNMAS Thursday Birders, has been birding since 1929 when, as an enthusiastic 15-year-old, he explored the Santa Cruz Mountains in Central California. His journal from back then is a treasure, indeed, but a pale shadow compared with the treasure that is Les himself. He was featured in the March 3, 2002, Albuquerque Journal, with an affectionate, insightful interview and article by Rebecca Szymanski. Les was one of the original members of the New Mexico Ornithological Society and was a founding member of the Oakland Ornithological Club - 70 years ago! With modesty and dignity, Les continues to share his love and his wonder of birds, and we're lucky indeed to call Les our friend.

We offer our condolences to Norm Broemel and the family of Elizabeth Broemel. Elizabeth was a long-time supporter of CNMAS, who passed away on March 12 to become, as the family

People continued on next page

Central New Mexico Audubon Society assumes no responsibility for injuries, personal or otherwise, incurred while attending society-sponsored activities and will not be held liable for such accidents. You attend at your own risk.



People continued from previous page

expressed it, "a freebird." We wish to thank Norm for his continued support, as well as the contributors who have given donations in Elizabeth's memory.

Mention the name Sei Tokuda, and there is instant recognition – by us Audubon folks, by Rio Grande Nature Center folks, by visiting-birders-to-New-Mexico folks, by Bosque Del Apache/Festival of the Cranes folks, by Hawks Aloft folks – he's as treasured as the rare Buff-breasted Sandpiper, as familiar as the Red-shafted Flicker, and as beloved as the cheerful Chickadee. But did you know that he's also a champion in the civil rights environment? In addition to being chairman for the City of Albuquerque's Human Rights Board several years ago, Sei was a founding board member of the Albuquerque Human Rights Coalition and is its current treasurer. In 1974 he joined the New Mexico chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) and has served as its secretary, VP of membership, president, and District Council member, delegate, and vice-governor. He's a founding member of the JACL Volunteer Service Group and an activist who participated in the Western Region Town Hall Meeting of the President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders held in July 2000. He is one of the founding members of the recently established Asian American Association of New Mexico, and is a past member of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Multi-Cultural Celebration Commission. He still serves on the Albuquerque Partnership Education Committee and was a member of the Organizing Committee for the Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations.

For all this and more, Sei was honored at a ceremony on May 23, when he was inducted into the Senior Hall of Fame at the glittering event sponsored by Silver Horizons New Mexico, Inc., which in 1982 began honoring outstanding seniors who have a lifetime commitment to community service.

At the ceremony, Sei spoke lovingly and movingly of another friend of people and the environment, his wife May, who, though deceased, continues to imbue his life and his consciousness. And for that we're lucky, because we get to love two people in one. This is a quote from an e-mail Sei sent to me back last year: "I am not the sweet, altruistic type. But thank you for the kind thoughts."

Well, Sei, whatever type you are, we thank you and we love you.

Important Bird Areas by Christopher Rustay

The Randall Davey Audubon Center has been working towards identifying areas, which are important for birds in New Mexico. The IBA program in New Mexico is envisioned as a "living program". This means that as sites are identified, they may be added to the existing New Mexico site guide. Nearly one hundred sites have been nominated thus far. Fifty-six sites have been accepted. However, about 30 were tabled pending landowner consent and/or collection and review of additional information. In most cases, specific numbers of breeding, wintering or migrating birds were needed. Some sites required more specific boundaries than what was originally presented.

The Randall Davey Audubon Center is looking for volunteers to go to these sites and collect the necessary information to help elevate these sites from "nominated" to "accepted". Your participation need not be regular or cover the entire area, but needs to be detailed enough to show bird usage in the area. What is of most interest to the identification committee is the date of your visit, how long you spent there (eg. 1 hr., 4 hrs. etc.), the weather conditions, how much of an area you covered, and most importantly, the number of each bird species identified. The resulting information is very similar to what you report to a compiler for any Christmas Bird Count.

Additionally, you may already have information which the committee does not have. Simply sending the information and identifying the IBA would be of tremendous help.

Some of the sites accepted in the last year include San Andres National Wildlife Refuge northeast of Las Cruces, the Delaware River south of Carlsbad, the Hondo Valley, the Gila-Cliff Valley, the playa lake region around Clovis, the Ladd S. Gordon Waterfowl complex in the Belen area, the B-Square Ranch near Farmington, the Caja del Rio area west of Santa Fe, and Sauz Creek and Playa north of Roy.

The following sites need the following information gaps filled:

Bernalillo Watershed - how large and consistent is the average population of Gray Vireo as well as other priority species?

Cahoon Park - how many consistent pairs of kites utilize the area?

Cottonwood Springs Migrant trap (otherwise known as Melrose) - do the number of birds passing through warrant inclusion?

Dexter Fish Hatchery - needs more detailed migrant and summer bird usage.

Emory Pass area - a better definition of the size of the area to be included and priority bird usage.

Gila Wilderness - a better definition of boundaries and priority bird usage.

Guadalupe Escarpment - needs quantification of numbers of fall migrant raptor use as well as other priority species.

Grulla National Wildlife Refuge - is crane usage consistent here? Shorebird usage when wet.

Jornada Experimental Range - a definition of boundaries and more specific numbers on shorebird usage at Isaacs Lake during periods that it is filled.

Las Uvas Valley - a better definition of the boundaries of the area which should be included, additional winter raptor use data along with other priority bird usage.

Last Chance Canyon/Sitting Bull Falls - additional priority bird usage at any time of year.

Morgan Lake - documentation of higher numbers required to attain waterfowl, waterbird or shorebird state IBA status. May include NAPI lands.

Quecho Plains Salt Playas - additional documentation of Snowy Plover use and other priority species usage.

Rio Chama at Chama - additional bird numbers, boundary definition and owner agreement.

Rio Pueblo from Penasco to Tres Ritos - additional priority bird usage needed.

Rowe Mesa - additional priority bird usage needed, especially in the playas and grasslands.

San Pedro Peaks Wilderness - additional priority bird usage needed.

South Park Cemetery - additional documentation of the number of Eastern Bluebirds here in winter.

Spring River Oxbows - additional documentation of bird usage, especially during migration.

Sugarite Canyon State Park - additional documentation of priority bird usage.

Sunshine Valley Wetlands - additional documentation of priority bird usage.

Upper Nogal Canyon to San Mateo Peak - additional documentation of priority bird usage.

Upper Rio Grande Gorge - documentation of raptor and other priority bird usage as well as better justification for where boundaries should be set.

Tucumcari Lake WMA - additional documentation of priority bird usage.

Valles Caldera highlands - documentation of priority bird usage, especially high mountain species use on peaks here and surrounding the preserve.

For more specific information on location of the above areas or which species are considered priority species, call the Randall Davey Audubon Center at (505) 983-4609 or e-mail the NM IBA Coordinator, Christopher Rustay, at chrustay@aol.com.

June - July 2002



Mark Your Calendars Section

The Last Great Wilderness Project

WHAT: "The Last Great Wilderness" show is an interactive multi-media presentation depicting the threats facing the **Arctic National Wildlife Refuge** – home to the most spectacular and awe-inspiring gathering of wildlife in the United States. The presentation places participants on the tundra of the far northeastern corner of Alaska where oil development threatens the survival of 129,000 caribou, musk-oxen, dall sheep, polar bears, grizzlies, millions of migratory birds, and a subsistence Native American culture. Members of the Gwich'in Nation continue to practice their 20,000-year-old subsistence lifestyle in harmony with their sacred animal, the caribou. Both the caribou and this ancient culture will be irreparably impacted should oil development occur on the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge.



WHO: Presented by film-maker and Arctic activist Jeff Barrie and a member of the Gwich'in nation. Jeff has cycled across the country to promote protection of the Arctic Refuge and his film, "Arctic Quest: A search for truth". Currently, the Arctic Refuge, one of America's most magnificent treasures, is threatened by legislation to open part of the refuge to oil development.

WHEN: Wednesday, June 19

TIME: 6:30 p.m.

WHERE: REI @ 1550 Mercantile NE (Montaño West & I-25)

SPONSORED BY:

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Republicans for Environmental Protection

Admission is free!

Summer Wings 
A Festival Of Flight
 Saturday, August 3
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Join the Friends of the Rio Grande Nature Center State Park as they present Summer Wings, a festival celebrating new Mexico's small but spectacular wildlife: hummingbirds, butterflies, dragonflies, and bees.

Co-sponsored by CNMAS

Events include • early-morning guided bird and nature walks • children's craft activities • bird identification with the Central New Mexico Audubon Society • a raffle with exciting prizes • and a live hummingbird from Wildlife Rescue to examine up close. • Talking Talons will be on hand to display and discuss bats - vital plant pollinators in New Mexico and around the world. • The speakers program will feature • information about butterflies, damselflies, hummingbirds and more!

Call RGNC 344-7240 for more info.



The City's Open Space Division's Summer Series . . .

Began May 25th and runs through August 25th. Programs are at the Elena Gallegos Picnic Area, Petroglyph National Monument, our Open Space farms, and parts of the bosque. These are great opportunities to learn about natural resources, such as birds, wildflowers, animal tracking, and rattlesnakes; as well as cultural resources, such as willow basketry, wool spinning, and archaeology. There are bike rides, musicians, storytellers, poets, and more. To receive a schedule via e-mail or to volunteer, contact Bonnie Dils, the Open Space Environmental Education Coordinator, at bdils@cabq.gov. Interesting and fun programs and activities for kids, adults, and families.



CNMAS + Science Fair = Inspiration

Two volunteer judges, Lannois Neely and Virginia Lawler, had the rewarding and difficult task of choosing four winners from among the entrants at the North West Regional Science Fair in March. Each winner, two from the Junior Division and two from the Senior Division, received a \$50 Savings Bond from Central New Mexico Audubon Society, as well as a year's subscription to *The Burrowing Owl*. The students' teachers each receive a year's subscription to *National Audubon Society*.

Lannois and Virginia report that the judging was fun and inspiring, and that the students – *winners all!* – were SO impressive. As you read the students' project summaries below, you, too, will be impressed with the depth of their inquiries and with the intelligence of their reporting. Congratulations, winners, and good luck to all of you!

A Bug's Life: Using Benthic Macroinvertebrates to Determine Water Quality

Dan Tooker, Junior Division, Los Lunas Middle School
Charles Rehner, Teacher

I was interested in studying the conditions along the Rio Grande because it is seventh on the "Endangered River List" and I also live by it. Hopefully, by studying the animals, vegetation and water conditions, we can better understand the problems this river faces. The purpose of this project was to determine the water quality along the Middle Rio Grande, using benthic macroinvertebrates as a factor for determining pollution. The areas included north and south Albuquerque, Los Lunas and Belen.

A riffle of fast moving water was worked starting at the lowest area downstream. A bug seine was used for collection. Macroinvertebrates were observed on the water surface, in the flow of water and under stones/logs. Species were counted and assigned index values: (1) if pollution sensitive, (2) if somewhat sensitive and (3) if pollution tolerant. The higher the index value, the worse the water condition is.

Results showed that north Albuquerque has excellent water quality due to smaller numbers of benthic macroinvertebrates observed. South Albuquerque and Los Lunas recorded good water quality due to higher numbers of somewhat pollution sensitive benthos. Belen revealed poor water quality due to larger numbers of pollution tolerant species. Overall, water quality along the Middle Rio Grande is good. However, as the river flows south, the water quality worsens.

This study has made me realize that if we do not take care of the Rio Grande, we are in jeopardy of harming the animals and vegetation that live there.

Polymer Possibilities Phase II: Biodegradable Corn Cellulose Wind Erosion Control

Vincent Metzger, Senior Division, Cibola High School
Patricia Duda, Teacher

Last year, in the first phase of this project, I learned that glucose, or starches, can be applied to soil in the same manner as spraying water onto soil, and have similar benefits. Combining cellulose extracted from corn with a heated water mixture forms a polymer film, or crust. This year, in Phase II of this project, I tested

whether or not this polymer film would be a practical method of controlling wind erosion, using a hair dryer to simulate wind erosion. I found that films were formed on organic, as well as inorganic soil types, and the polymer film very effectively controlled the simulated wind erosion.

The crop residue that is sometimes left out in fields consists of organic plant material containing both cellulose and glucose (starches). This crop residue could be recycled by being collected, ground up, powdered finely, and applied to the surface of soil in an aqueous mixture.

It was brought to my attention last year that this polymer film may just be washed away when it rains. I conducted an experiment to test this assumption and found that, instead of weakening the polymer film, simulated rainfall actually helped spread out the polymer film and make it cover the surface of the soil more continuously. I also devised a germination test to find out whether seeds could germinate with the polymer film in place. Results showed that germination in the trays with a polymer film was actually promoted. The polymer film absorbed water and then reconstituted, trapping the moisture under the film. In trays without the polymer film, this moisture was very easily evaporated.

This project has a lot of applications. Modern water tankers could be modified to include baffles in the piping (to agitate the mixture) and a heating device to denature the cellulose. With my idea, it is likely that they could control wind erosion, while promoting germination and plant growth at the same time. My idea would be cost-effective and have long-term benefits on construction sites, too. Another overall effect would be a reduction in pollution of the atmosphere from wind erosion.

Finally, in my research, I read about a study that found that simply by completely controlling wind erosion on the dirt roads that surround farms, a thirty percent increase in crop production can be noticed. The dust particles that are eroded from the road enter the air, are deposited on the leaves of plants, and block some sunlight from reaching the plant, which slows down the photosynthesis process.



As of press time, we had not received summaries from two winners:

• **Which Wood Would Work? Part II and More** •
Hunter Allmon, Junior Division, Estancia Middle School
Carolyn Dulaney, Teacher

• **Rio San Jose: A Dying River? Phase II** •
Aaron Sims, Senior Division, The Menaul School
Beverly Morlock, Teacher



Congratulations . . .

To Mariana Gasteyer, who won Andrew Rominger's original artwork, "Rough-legged Hawk Over Truchas Mountains," at the Special Drawing held at the last class of the 2002 Audubon Birding Academy series in April. We're grateful to all of you for your support, and we wish to recognize and thank Andrew once again for his beautiful donation.



June - July 2002

Evaluation Of CNMAS/USFS Cooperative Rosy-finch Feeder Project – 2001-2002

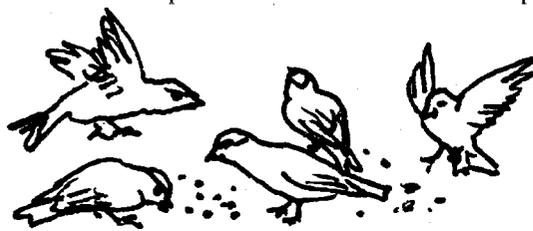
On February 4, 2002 the feeder was set up on Sandia Crest, consisting of a hopper and a tray, both on a 1-inch iron pole, donated by Wild Birds Unlimited (Coors). Within 3-4 days, it attracted all three species of Rosy-finch. Before the feeder was placed, they had been seen feeding in the same general area. However, the birds favored another feeder that had been placed near the entrance of the Crest House Gift Shop by Tom Duncan, resident manager. This is not surprising, as the species commonly forages along ridge-tops.

Early in the winter (December to mid-January) the birds gathered into one or two large flocks of 20 to 50 individuals. These large flocks visited at intervals of about an hour. Later in the winter, they broke down into pairs and smaller flocks of up to 22, which visited much more frequently. All three species were seen nearly every day from early December until March 28, after which none were reported until April 6th, when a birder from the UK saw 5 Black Rosy-finches, the latest recorded sighting. The only earlier negative report came from two visitors from Tennessee, who traveled to Sandia Crest late on the afternoon of Feb. 13 and again on the morning of Feb. 14, hoping for all three Rosy-finches. They did not see any flocks although they spotted two Gray-crowned on the 14th on a fence. None came to the new feeder while they watched for a total of three hours. Unfortunately, they did not know about the feeder near the door of the Gift Shop. The birds had been present at that location on early morning visits February 8 and 16.

This winter, placement of the feeder was not ideal because the construction security fence limited observers to the middle parking lot. Since viewers were somewhat beneath the feeder, they could not see any birds that were feeding on the platform. The wind (and jays) scattered the seed to the ground, where Rosy-finches often fed in plain sight. When construction of the Gift Shop expansion is completed, birders will be free to walk up the cement path. There they will see much better from above, from the south and west, as well as from the picture window in the Crest House.

Next winter, we should evaluate placement of a second feeder. When the new deck is constructed on the west or southwest side of the existing building, it might be an ideal location for patrons of the Gift Shop to observe the birds. A smaller platform feeder

could work there. The Forest Service plans to make signs recognizing donors, and may develop some educational material about the Rosy-finches. We suggest an interpretive sign at the lower viewing area or near the new entrance to the Gift Shop. Birders might enjoy signing a visitor's log and noting any unusual sightings. Tom Duncan did a great job of keeping the feeder stocked with black oil sunflower seed, and he also assisted many visiting birders by providing information about the birds' whereabouts and habits.



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The presence of the feeder presents some research opportunities. If, indeed, the Rosy-finches return as regular visitors next year, there will be the opportunity to study their numbers and species mix over the course of their stay. We suspect some plumage changes due to buffy contour feather tips, obscuring distinguishing marks. These later wear off, and plumage appears to brighten. This could be documented by taking serial photographs. This summer, a botanist might study the extent to which the exotic sunflowers germinate or compete with native vegetation.

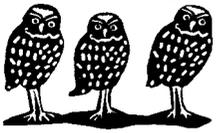
The feeder was taken down on April 9, 2002. About 20 pounds of seed that remained from the 100 pounds donated by "prdseed," will be kept in storage until next winter. Allowing for about 20 pounds donated by guests, total seed consumption was approximately 100 pounds—about 1 2/3 pounds daily.

The only other passerine species reported at the feeder were Dark-eyed Junco, Steller's Jay, Mountain Chickadee, and Pine Siskin. Hairy Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch, Common Raven, Cassin's Finch, Pine Grosbeak and Clark's Nutcracker were observed near the feeder but no one reported seeing them use it. Last year, Pine Grosbeaks visited seed that had been scattered on the upper parking lot. As the weather warmed, Rock Squirrels and chipmunks climbed up to eat the seed. There was evidence that at Pocket Gopher spent much time beneath the snow at the feeder's base during the winter. I observed fox and possibly coyote tracks in the snow around the feeder.

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.




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Minnow Wins Big in Federal Court

On April 19th, Judge James A. Parker issued a ruling in the lawsuit brought by a coalition of environmental groups that sought to compel federal water managers to use all available water sources when considering how to maintain the Rio Grande Silvery Minnow, a fish listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Plaintiffs in the lawsuit, including the New Mexico Audubon Council and the National Audubon Society, contended that federal managers were bowing to the demands of irrigators, municipalities, and the State Engineer's Office in refusing to reduce deliveries to those entities in order to keep water in the Rio Grande for the minnow.

The judge ruled that the Bureau of Reclamation erred in not considering the use of water claimed by the Middle Rio Grande Project and the San Juan-Chama Project for the benefit of the minnow. He also ruled that a Biological Opinion issued by the Fish and Wildlife Service after an agreement with state and federal water managers was not "arbitrary and capricious" as the plaintiffs had argued.

In issuing the ruling, the judge followed closely the arguments presented by Letty Belin and Laird Lucas, attorneys from the Land and Water Fund of the Rockies, which handled the case for the plaintiffs. Law and precedent, they argued, allowed federal officials to reduce water deliveries in time of drought or other

emergency—including an emergency involving an endangered species. The ESA requires them to do so.

He also allowed that the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD) is using more water than reasonably needed for beneficial use. "There is some evidence that this is happening," the judge said. The State Engineer had said that the MRGCD had diverted 11 acre-feet/year (afy) per acre irrigated, while 7.2 afy is "sufficient and non-wasteful."

The ruling means that the Fish and Wildlife Service will have to reopen consultation with the federal water managers and make water available from the projects for the minnow. With the prospect of the river drying early in the season due to the drought, the decision puts more water on the table that can be used to benefit the minnow.

From an equity standpoint, the ruling means that all parties, including irrigators and municipalities, will have to share the burden of the drought with wildlife. Irrigators use by far the largest fraction of the Rio Grande's water. A small fraction of that water will now be used to support the wildlife that belongs to all of the American people.

In his summation, the judge wrote: "I believe it is appropriate to compliment Plaintiffs' counsel for their work on behalf of the endangered silvery minnow and the entire middle Rio

Minnows continued on next page

International Migratory Bird Day Did You Catch This Year's Migration Sensation?

International Migratory Bird Day is an annual international event created in 1990 by Partners in Flight (PIF). Partners in Flight is a coalition of federal and state agencies, bird clubs, non-governmental organizations, corporations, and individuals, whose mission is to conserve migratory birds. This event is to celebrate and conserve the millions of migratory and native landbirds in Mexico, and North, Central and South America.

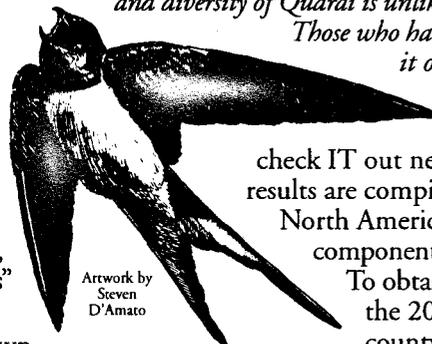
Here in New Mexico, Auduboners and other bird lovers statewide have participated for 10 years. The participation, the coverage, and the numbers have climbed steadily. So we want to raise awareness by recognizing and thanking everyone who volunteers, in the spirit of the Christmas Bird Counts, to contribute to this "picture in time" of migration, always taken the second Saturday in May.

This year a partial list (by no means complete) of folks and their IMBD odysseys would include the 14 counters in Socorro County, under the compilership of Doug Emkalm. There was a day-full of special events held at Bosque del Apache. Christopher Rustay, et al, censused the bird-folk of San Miguel County. Jim Place headed up the Bernalillo County count, with help from Jim Rini, Andrew Rominger, Lannois Neely, Melissa Howard, Sei Tokuda, Jim Krakowski, and others, including the Audubon volunteer "pond watchers" at Rio Grande Nature Center.

Celestyn Brozek and Ryan Beaulieu zipped up and down Valencia County to compile a full day's worth of data for the count. And down at Quarai in Tarrant County, Hart Schwarz was assisted by a cadre of volunteers, including Hannah Porter,

Nick Vaughn, Mary Lou Arthur, Dorothy Rogan, Rita and Frank Slowen, Rebecca Gracey, and Wallace, Elena, and Glen Finley, as well as the staff at Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument, in coordinating a day full of birding and learning.

Hannah Porter wrote a particularly lovely report: "*Everyone, IMBD was great! The turnout was over 60 species!*" (Ed. note: Hannah goes on to list LOTS of birds, including Olive-sided Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo, and "a great look at a House Finch's nest with four sky blue eggs in it.") Hannah concludes: "*It was a really enjoyable outing, and Quarai is a gorgeous place, especially in spring! The cottonwoods are as full and green as could be, and nearby is a stream at which many birds gather, and from there you can turn and see the red stone of the old churches complementing the unrealistically blue southwest sky. And across the stream is wonderful Pinyon/Juniper habitat on a rising hill. The habitat and diversity of Quarai is unlike any other place in New Mexico. Those who haven't been there should really check it out.*"



Artwork by
Steven
D'Amato

And those who haven't participated in IMBD should check IT out next year! New Mexico count results are compiled by Steve West under the North American Migration Count, a sub-component of the bigger picture of IMBD. To obtain a complete 24-page report of the 2001 count results, county by county, with narratives and graphs, as published in the New Mexico Ornithological Society Bulletin, contact NMOS, PO Box 3068, 87190-3068, or call Bruce Neville at 873-0060.



June - July 2002

Audubon Adventures 2002-2003

We are pleased to tell you about the material that will be included in next season's Audubon Adventures. The topics will include four separate biomes: Wetlands, Temperate Deciduous Forests, Coastal Environments, and Deserts! We're also excited to report that through the efforts of our very own Lauren Parmelee up at Randall Davey Audubon Center in Santa Fe, National Audubon has agreed to pay for the printing, stuffing, and shipping of a New Mexican supplement. This supplement is still being developed, and it's going to be a goodie! It's going to focus on Burrowing Owls, Prairie Dogs, and other species that share Burrowing Owl habitat. If you have any art/photos of these critters, particularly by young kid artists, let us know! We would love to feature them in this new supplement. Contact Helen Haskell at helenm@yahoo.com.

We hope to increase the number of sponsored classrooms this year from 26 to 40. With your help, we can achieve this. The cost is \$40 per classroom per year. Use the coupon below to help Central New Mexico Audubon Society share the environmental message with New Mexico kids.

Thank you!

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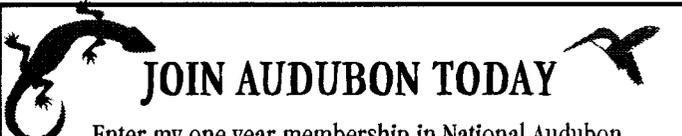


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Minnows continued from previous page

Grande system. It is my impression that at the time this lawsuit was filed, not much was being done by the federal agencies, or by the other major players with interests in the middle Rio Grande, to confront seriously the hard, difficult issues that had to be addressed in order to protect the minnow, and the river, itself. ... Plaintiffs' counsel have demonstrated a determined commitment to the plight of endangered species, while at the same time being mindful of the competing demands on a limited resource. They have performed admirably in serving their clients."

Now the difficult work of trying to come up with an equitable way to share the burden begins. Water issues are always difficult in the arid West and this ruling upsets the apple cart in some ways. Irrigators and even the federal agencies are likely to appeal the ruling, and some in Congress may try to overrule the judge's opinion through legislation. Nevertheless, this has just been one decision of many that assert federal control over water developments paid for with federal funds. The irrigators will complain loudly that they are being robbed. However, it is the American people who are being robbed of their wildlife by private interests that have treated these developments as private property for far too long.

Tom Jervis, President

New Mexico Audubon Council

Burrowing Owl Deadline

Information and articles to be included in August - September 2002 issue of the Burrowing Owl must be received by **July 15**. Contact Turtle-Bear at 265-6094 or turtlebear@jensenbear.com. For advertising inquiries, please contact Beth Hurst-Waitz, 898-8514 or brave_e@juno.com.

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