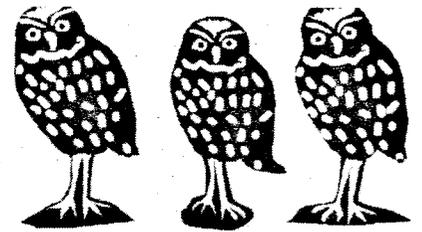


Central New Mexico Audubon Society

# Burrowing Owl

December 2003 - January - February 2004 Issue

Volume 33 No. 1



Our missions: To appreciate, experience, and conserve birds, other wildlife and their habitats. To encourage and support environmental education in New Mexico.

## Premiere of a New Series: Learning Look-Alikes by Art Arenholz

### • Snow Goose and Ross's Goose •

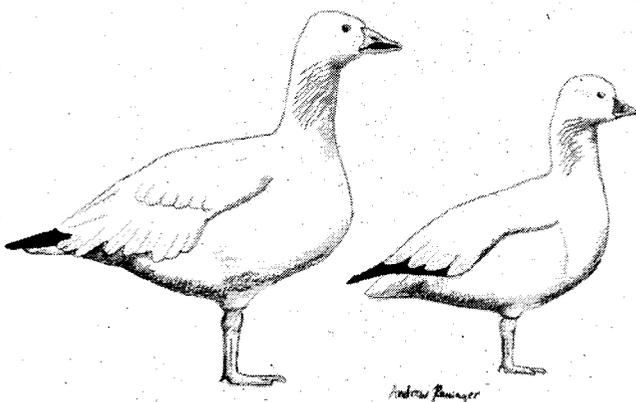
If you read the bird counts in the newspaper during the winter, you will see a count for "Light Geese." This count includes the totals for both Snow and Ross's Geese, because they look so much alike that the counters lump them together. Even though they do look a lot alike, with a modest effort you can learn to tell them apart. Then, when your birder friends from the eastern U.S. come to visit, you can help them see a new species seen only in the west: the Ross's Goose.

In New Mexico, you can find the Ross's Goose anywhere you find Snow Geese, e.g. Bitter Lake NWR, Maxwell NWR, and Las Vegas NWR, but perhaps the easiest place to see them up close is from the tour road at Bosque del Apache NWR. There, the winter counts are between 15,000 and 30,000 Snow Geese and perhaps 1,000 Ross's Geese. Both species nest on the Arctic tundra and migrate south in large, noisy flocks, which often contain both species.

The Lesser Snow Goose (the Greater is larger and winters along the Atlantic Coast) is a bit smaller than our typical Canada Goose. It is all white except for the black wing-tips, and it has pink legs and bill. The bill is quite large and shows prominent black "lips" protruding from the side of the bill. The head is large and somewhat flattened.

Ross's Goose is a pint-sized replica of the Snow Goose, but with some important differences. Ross's is about the size of a Mallard duck, (about 2 feet tall), so the size difference is apparent in a mixed flock. Also, the head of a Ross's is round and the "grinning patch" or black lips are missing. Instead, the Ross's has a small, stubby bill with dark, warty looking bumps at the base of the bill. The smaller size, rounded head and smaller bill cause the Ross's to look like a baby Snow Goose.

So find a loafing flock of Light Geese that are close, and scan with your binoculars for some "baby geese." But be careful of confusing a Snow Goose (which is standing in a furrow, and thus appearing to be shorter), with a Ross's Goose. Look for the Ross's shorter height, rounder head, smaller bill and lack of black lips. Compare the Ross's with a nearby Snow Goose, and the differences will become obvious as you compare the two birds side by side.



The Snow Goose also comes in a Blue morph, which has a dark body and a white head and neck. It is a Snow Goose; it is just a different color. The Ross's Goose has only a very small number of Blue morphs, so 99% of the Blue morphs you see will be Snow Geese.

## The **Sixth** Annual Audubon Birding Academy (They Get Better and Better!)

The more you know, the more you want to know. And the more you know about birds, their identification, their vocalizations, their behavior, and their habitat, the more you'll enjoy your birding trips with CNMAS and beyond. Join us as experts present these classes designed to encourage the beginner and challenge the experienced.

**All classes are held at St. Timothy's Lutheran Church, NW corner of Copper and Jefferson NE, 7:15PM. Pay in advance (see form, page 9) or pay at the door. \$6.00 per class, or sign up for all three for \$15.00. Nonmembers: Pay \$20.00 to join National Audubon Society, and the classes are free!**

### ~~ Those Amazing Hummingbirds ~~

Joan Day-Martin, Presenter

Thursday, February 19, 2004

Did you know that hummingbirds can fly forward, backward, shift sideways, and stop in midair to scratch their head as they reach over their wing to do so? That an average hummingbird consumes twice its weight in nourishment of nectar and insects each day? That they can reach speeds up to 70 miles an hour during a dive towards the earth? That the species name, hummingbird, comes not from the bird's voice, but from the whir of its wings whipping the air 70 to 80 times a second during regular flight and up to 200 times during a dive? That a hummingbird egg is about the size of a small pinto bean prior to cooking it? That its heart can exceed 1,260 beats per minute?

Well, now that you know all THAT - would you like to learn identification clues and behavior characteristics about the 15 species of hummingbirds that have been verified in New Mexico? Join CNMAS as we proudly present Joan Day-Martin, the state's only authorized bander of hummingbirds, for a lively humm-dinger of a presentation to get you all ready for the arrival of our tiny avian pollinators.

### ~~ Hawks, Falcons and Eagles -

Mastering Identification ~~

Art Arenholz, Presenter

Thursday, March 18, 2004

Identifying hawks is a difficult skill to acquire. Often, we see a hawk from a distance, sometimes in poor light, and sometimes only briefly. As with other birds, plumage marks are important, but with hawks we need to use several other clues. In this presentation, augmented with color slides, hawk enthusiast Art Arenholz will point out the plumage marks as well as the silhouette of the bird, what it is doing, where it is, what time of the year it is here, how large it is and combine these clues into an identification. We will learn how to identify 15 of the most common hawks, falcons, and eagles in our area. You'll enjoy the challenge of mastering identification of these masters of the air!

### ~~ Owls of New Mexico ~~

John DeLong, Presenter

Thursday, April 15, 2004

Ever wake up in the middle of the night, lying in your tent out in the woods, and wonder what all those barks, screeches, hoots, and moans are? Well, you're not the only one. In this

ABA - continued on next page

## January Audubon Program Before Dinosaurs: Amazing Dragonflies Thursday, January 15, 2004

Dustin Huntington is no stranger to birding - in fact, he's past president of CNMAS and led field trips from 1979 into the '80s. He's expanded his interest to include dragonflies, which he touts as an ideal extension to bird watching. Dragonflies offer many of the same ID challenges and interest as birds, and New Mexico has the greatest diversity of species, per area, of anywhere in the US - with Bottomless Lakes SP near Roswell having probably the highest diversity of any single location. Dragonflies are an excellent indicator of water quality, colorful, fascinating, harmless - and yes, they predate dinosaurs! For a sneak preview of this beautiful and engaging program, visit [www.imunu.com](http://www.imunu.com).



Meeting held at St. Timothy's Lutheran Church, NW corner of Copper and Jefferson NE, 7:15PM. For info, call Beth, 898-8514.

## Local Christmas Bird Counts

Sunday, December 14

ALBUQUERQUE

Meet Hart Schwarz at Corrales Shopping Center, NW corner of Coors and Alameda, between 7:00 and 7:15AM. Call Hart at 266-1810 or email him at [hschwarz@fs.fed.us](mailto:hschwarz@fs.fed.us). Compilation party at Beth and Ron's house, 898-8514, at 6:45PM. (Get maps from your trip leaders.) Bring a dish to share - they'll have hot food and drink.

Saturday, December 20

BOSQUE DEL APACHE

Meet Steve and Nancy Cox ([swcox@spinn.net](mailto:swcox@spinn.net), 345-2385) at the Bosque del Apache Visitor Center at 7:00AM. You'll be split into teams and paired with knowledgeable birders. We'll convene at Acosta's in San Antonio after the count - reservations required, since the place holds only about 26 folks, so let Steve and Nancy know you'll be part of the compilation party!

Sunday, December 21

SANDIA MOUNTAINS

Meet outside of Dion's at Four Hills Shopping Center (Central and Tramway) at 7:30AM. You may sign up early with Rebecca Gracey at [mrgacey@earthlink.net](mailto:mrgacey@earthlink.net), 242-3821. Wrap-up party back at Dion's in Four Hills at 5:00PM.

## CNMAS Winter Field Trip Schedule

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

### Saturday, December 6 - Bosque del Apache NWR

Art Arenholz will lead this trip which should end late in the afternoon. The Bald Eagle numbers should be increasing and there is a good likelihood that there will be several different morphs of Red-tail Hawks. Bring lunch, snacks and water and dress appropriately for cold and unpredictable weather. Meet at 8:00AM at the UNM Physics Department parking lot (NE corner of Lomas and Yale NE). Call Art Arenholz at 298-1724 or Sei Tokuda at 266-2480 for details.

### Sunday, December 7 - Petroglyphs NM

Join Hart Schwarz for a pre-Christmas Count foray into the Petroglyphs, one of the few places in central NM to harbor Rock Wrens in winter and one of the best places to find Sage Sparrows at this time of year. We may even be lucky enough to find a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher attempting another winter here. Meet at 8:30AM in the parking lot of the Petroglyph National Monument Visitors Center on Unser, about a mile north of St. Joseph's Drive. Bring a lunch and water, since we will be out until about 2:00PM. If you need more information, call Hart at 266-1810.

### Saturday, January 3, 2004 - Bosque del Apache NWR

This will be a repeat of the December 6th trip. Same place, same time. Call Art at 298-1724 for details.

### Saturday, February 7, 2004 - Sandia Crest & Rosy-Finches

This will be a good time to see all three species of Rosy-Finches. Ryan Beaulieu and Raymond VanBuskirk will give a report on their Rosy-Finch project and there is a possibility that Ken and Mary Lou Schneider will be there to give details of RF species variation. Meet at 8:00AM at the Fours Hills Shopping Center parking lot on the SE corner of Tramway Blvd. and Central Ave. NE and across the street from the Travelodge Motel. Please dress appropriately for the cold on the crest. Call Art at 298-1724 for details.

### Saturday, March 13, 2004 - Las Vegas NWR

This will be a day trip to see early migrants at the refuge. Bring lunch, water, snacks and dress appropriately for the late winter weather conditions in the Las Vegas, NM area. Meet at 7:30AM at the Far North Shopping Center behind the Village Inn (NE corner of Academy and San Mateo NE). Call Art at 298-1724 or Sei at 266-2480 for details.

## 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. Send an e-mail to Les Hawkins at [leshawkn@aol.com](mailto:leshawkn@aol.com) to get on the TBER's e-list of scheduled trip announcements.

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.

## CNMAS Field Trip Reports compiled by Sei Tokuda

### Saturday-Sunday, August 23-24: Fort Sumner & Bitter Lake/Roswell

There were 12 birders on this trip. The notable species seen in Ft. Sumner were Red-headed Woodpecker, Blue Jay, and Eurasian Collared-, Inca and Mourning Doves. Bosque Redondo also produced Red-headed Woodpecker, and there was a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher at the Melrose Migrant Trap. On the way from Melrose to Bitter Lake, we stopped at a small pond a few miles from Elida and saw over a hundred Long-bill Curlews, plus the Forster's and Black Terns. Bitter Lake produced a Tricolored Heron and a pair of Roseate Spoonbills, plus Semipalmated and Snowy Plovers, Stilt Sandpipers, and Mississippi Kites. Our vehicle logged 85 species, but Sondra Williamson and the keen-eyed boys - Ryan, Raymond and Michael (Sondra's grandson) counted 120 species.

### Saturday, September 6: Corrales Bosque

There were four birders on this trip and they rewarded with 7 warbler species - Orange-crowned, Virginia's, Townsend's, MacGillivray's and Wilson's Warblers plus the American Redstart and Common Yellowthroat. Other notable species were the Blue Grosbeak, Summer Tanager and Lesser Goldfinch.

### Sunday, September 14: Tent Rocks (Submitted by Hart Schwarz)

On a beautiful mid-September day ten eager souls assembled at

Tent Rocks for a day of birding. This site, which was declared a National Monument only a couple of years ago, features spectacular rock formations, carved out by the elements at the outer edges of the Pajarito Plateau, the landfill where the Jemez volcano dropped its huge loads of sand, mud and rocks a million years ago. We took a leisurely walk through juniper woodland, which had until recently been a pinyon/juniper woodland, until the drought and an army of bark beetles took out most of the pines. Our path continued through a narrow canyon and then climbed out to a mesa top where we took our lunch, surrounded by magnificent views, five hundred feet above our starting point. The birds came sparingly, little by little, until finally we had about eighteen species, including a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet and several Wilson's Warblers. Rock Wrens were on the verge of moving out, while Townsend's Solitaires were settling in for the winter, even though the Juniper berry crop seemed skimpy. At the beginning of our journey I promised something memorable by the end of the day. That's an easy promise to keep when "memorable" is simply a bird seen up close and for a good long while. But our memorable sighting at the end of the trip transcended these easy pleasures by giving us an unexpected vision of fifty American White Pelicans gracefully floating in the sky and occasionally flashing the pure white of their wings as they caught the direct light of the sun.

### Saturday-Sunday, September 27-28: Fort Sumner area

Trip leader Rebecca Gracey writes that the timing was right on for fall migration with about ten species warblers seen by at least one member of the group. Stops were made at Sumner Lake and campground, Bosque Redondo, Billy the Kid State Monument, and the Melrose Migrant Trap. A total of over a hundred species of birds were seen including Sabine's Gull, Ovenbird, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Northern Bobwhite, Scaled Quail, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, and Long-eared Owl.

### Saturday, October 4: Corrales Bosque

Six birders were on this trip led by Art Arenholz on a day when there were hundreds of hot-air balloons in the air. The balloons however did not detract from birding as the birders had excellent views of Great Horned Owl, Spotted Sandpiper, Fared Grebe and Cooper's Hawk.

## The Rosy-Finches Are Coming!!!

And so are the birders! Learn about Rosy-Finches at Sandia Crest - the "International Birding Hotspot." Story on page 14.  
<http://www.rosyfinch.com/>



Photo by Ken Schneider, rosyfinch.com



### ABA - continued from previous page

presentation, raptor biologist John DeLong will discuss the strange art of owl identification, preferably without getting out of your sleeping bag. New Mexico has many owl species, and we'll cover important visual, and especially vocal, clues to identifying them. In addition, John will talk about owl migration and present findings from HawkWatch International's ongoing Flammulated Owl Migration Project.

## The 6th Annual Audubon Birding Academy Registration Form

To register for the following classes check circles:

- Hummingbirds (Feb. 19) ----- \$6
- Hawk, Falcons, Eagles (Mar. 18) ----- \$6
- Owls (Apr. 15) ----- \$6
- ALL 3 CLASSES (preregistration only) --- \$15
- I want to be a new Audubon Society Member and get 3 free Birding Academy classes -- \$20

NAS chapter code Q51

Total Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

Questions? Call Beth at 898-8514.

Name/s: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

I want to get the *Burrowing Owl* via the web -

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Send your check, payable to CNMAS to:

CNMAS Birding Academy  
P.O. Box 30002  
Albuquerque, NM 87190-0002

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## A Message from Sei Tokuda

Simple and straightforward, Sei wants to let all of our members know: "I am retiring after being field trip chair/co-chair for 10 years." Fellow Birders, it seems impossible to replace the irreplaceable, but we are putting out the call for YOU to come forward to become part of a team to continue the fun and adult education opportunities made so enjoyable by our *Ambassador of Goodwill*. The next newsletter, the Spring issue of the stand-alone Burrowing Owl, comes out in April. Please come together and let Sei know that you and we will put together a team of Field Trip Leaders as a manifestation of the gratitude and honor in which we hold Sei. Let Beth or Turtle-Bear know of your interest (see Directory, above). Leaders often step forward out of need. There's certainly a need here, but let your impetus be love of birds, love of nature, and love of Sei. Thank you, Sei. And thank you, future trip leaders.

**The DEADLINE for the Spring 2004 issue of the Burrowing Owl is February 10. For submissions, contact Turtle-Bear or Beth (see Directory, above).**