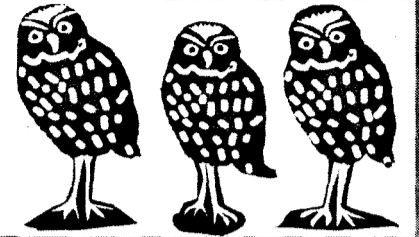


Central New Mexico Audubon Society

# Burrowing Owl

June, July, August 2005 Issue

Volume 34 No. 3



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

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

## Institute of Desert Ecology

Central New Mexico Audubon Society this spring sent two teachers to the Institute of Desert Ecology, a four-day workshop hosted by Tucson Audubon Society that allows participants to immerse themselves in the ecology of the Sonoran desert. Teach one teacher, and you teach a generation of students. We're proud to publish those teachers' reports here.

### IDE Report: April 2005

*The following is an account of the Institute of Desert Ecology held April 13-17, at Catalina State Park near Tucson, AZ. After applying for a scholarship offered by CNMAS, they so generously chose me and another teacher, Rich Winkler, from southern New Mexico to attend. Thank you CNMAS for this opportunity. It was a wonderful experience and I returned to Gallup with loads of material and ideas for my classroom.*

*- Jeremy Shreve, biology teacher, Central HS, Gallup, NM*

**4/13:** After driving all day from Gallup, I finally arrived at Catalina State Park near sunset. Pusch Ridge of the Santa Catalinas, the mountains that rise sharply east of camp were painted with that familiar warm mix of soft pink and peach. I was graciously welcomed by institute director Jessie Shinn and given instructions on where to set up my tent.

Many participants were set up in a mix of small trailers, pop-ups, and tents. After setting up my tent, I checked in and received a folder containing information regarding daily schedules, faculty and participants, and articles supplementing the workshops.

A large group was already sitting under the large shelter, talking and introducing one another in eager anticipation of the following morning's activities. A quick night stroll with a headlamp failed to yield anything unusual so I found my way to my tent, and deciding to lay out in the open to view the spectacular display of stars and the waxing crescent moon I dozed off.

**4/14:** Brrrr! It's a chilly morning. By the end of the institute, we will have experienced 60-degree swings in temperature from 90 during the day to the low 30's at night. Thankfully what awoke me wasn't the cold, but the incredible bird song. I listened intently to the unfamiliar songs and calls since I haven't had much experience with the Sonoran Desert species. As camp slowly stirred to life, the catering crew quickly had some large containers of hot coffee and water prepared. Soon Jessie, softly ringing a metal triangle, made her way among the campers to awake any late sleepers.

Breakfast began and we all indulged ourselves. Just a short note about the food: what an amazing spread. There were at least 3 meals a day (sometimes more) with a great assortment of greens, salads, main entrées, soups, and desserts, and, of course, tasty alternatives for those who eat meat and those who don't.

After a few announcements and a short introduction to deserts and the institute by Carl Tomoff, we were soon moving into our groups to begin the sessions. The institute is organized very well, and in the interest of learning as much as possible, everything starts on time and is highly structured.

The first day included hour-long

sessions with each of the six faculty members on hand. The faculty is made up of a mammalogist, herpetologist, geologist, entomologist, and two ornithologists/botanists all with years of study and experience in the Sonoran Desert ecology. The sessions featured some short discussions, some hands-on learning, and/or a short interpretive walk into the surrounding desert.

The day wasn't over yet, however, as some of the faculty set up some night demonstrations either owling for elf owls in the saguaros or screech owls, blacklighting for scorpions and insects, or attracting bats and electronically capturing their echolocations.

The second and third days were organized a bit differently with longer sessions in the morning and optional sessions after lunch that included workshops on environmental education, tracking, conservation biology, hummingbird biology, and important bird areas of Arizona.

**4/15 & 4/16:** While the institute as a whole was fantastic there were some personally memorable highlights. One evening, just after dinner, I was eager to set out on foot toward the base of the Santa Catalinas in order to spot a desert tortoise that was reportedly spotted earlier that day by another group. On the way there, I was following the sandy bottom of a dry wash and happened upon a rare find. A Gila monster! How cool! Luckily I had my camera along and took some photos from a surprisingly close distance. It was less than concerned with me and showed little response as I inched closer to inspect its bumpy exterior and powerful jaws. What a mysterious reptile, seemingly not far removed from its Mesozoic or even Paleozoic predecessors.

Other memorable times were the riveting lectures by the faculty geologist Bob Scarborough. With his illustrations of geologic processes and time, samples of minerals and fossils, and animated stories of geologic history, he was able to keep all of us on the edge of our seats with new evidence and findings that are turning most conventional beliefs on their heads. Our group walked away from his sessions in a daze of mind-blown perplexity, slowly processing these new ideas, with the only possible reaction at this point uttered as an admiring 'wow', 'gee', or 'can you imagine that?'

**4/17:** Sunday, our last day, involved a group hike into the foothills of the Santa Catalinas led by several of the faculty. Not only was the natural history and ecology of the area the focus, but a well-hidden archaeological site was also explored. I'll leave the details for those lucky enough to attend the Institute.

Soon, the imminent long drive back to Gallup began. It was difficult to leave Catalina State Park after such a great time and after meeting so many friendly and naturally curious folks, but with anticipation I was excited to return to the classroom and share some of my stories.

I highly recommend the Institute for its location, the impeccable organization, and the wealth of knowledge in the excellent, amicable, and often playful members of the faculty. I can't wait to integrate these ideas into my lessons. Thank you again, CNMAS, for this opportunity!

**Richard W. Winkler, High School and Mid School Science Teacher at Animas Public Schools in Rodeo, New Mexico, writes to CNMAS and all our members:**

Dear CNMAS:

I returned from the Desert Institute this week and would like to thank all of the Audubon members for the chance to participate in the Desert Ecology Workshop. Without your support I would not have been able to attend. I found the Institute enlightening and informative!

Attending the Institute has given me new insight into how to teach Ecology and Biology. I will use what I have learned at the Institute by applying these concepts into my classes here at Animas Public Schools. Many of the people that I met at the Institute are good

## Let's Make Birdathon "Bucks-A-Thon"!

by Beth Hurst-Waitz

Two CNMAS Birdathon teams have birded their brains out, with the Youth Team report following. Remember, you can join the last Birdathon outing of 2005 on June 11 with Celestyn's Sandia Songsters! Catch up with the final results and reports of the Thursday Birders and Celestyn's teams in the Fall issue of Burrowing Owl - and add your name to the list of contributors!

We extend our appreciation to the following Birdathon contributors: Mary Lou Arthur, Thursday Birders, Vanessa Dargain, Paul McConnell, Julie Goodding, Rebecca Gracey, Marian Washburn, Dr. John Tyson, Virginia W. Taylor, and Dianne Cress.

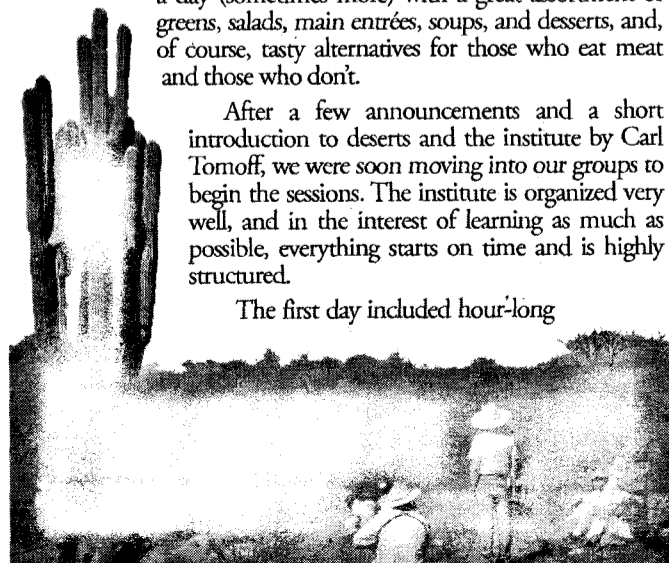
Folks, let's see YOUR name on the supplemental list of contributors in the next newsletter. There are 1300 Audubon members out there. We can do better so we can support Science Fair, teacher and youth scholarships, Rio Grande Nature Festival sponsorships, and all the other good work of our chapter. If everybody sends a buck, we're at our goal of \$1300. If everybody sends two bucks - WOW! (See pledge form, next page.)

## Youth Birders Birdathon Report

Our Birdathon was on Saturday, April 30, with Raymond VanBuskirk, Christopher Rustay and yours truly, Ryan. We did a Big Day Birdathon in Socorro and Valencia counties, resulting in a total species count of 137. Nick Pederson and Matt Baumann were not able to join us on this day because both got called into work, so needing a last minute vehicle ride, Christopher was called and luckily he was planning a trip to Socorro as it was.

Bosque del Apache highlights included two Willets and a single Black-bellied Plover in breeding plumage at the flight deck pond. We came across a Glossy Ibis feeding alone but with White-faced in the area. On the Marsh Loop we heard a probable Chestnut-sided Warbler in the cottonwoods; also, a Black-throated Gray-Warbler on the Seasonal Road. Water Canyon produced a Grace's Warbler picking off rootlets from the ground and bringing them to its nest site. Plumbeous Vireos were singing everywhere at the campground. Also of note were the numbers of Black-throated Gray-Warblers. Turtle Bay produced only a Green Heron and a Cassin's Vireo. Arriving at Belen Marsh at around 7:30 pm, we had a flock of about 60 ibis fly in to roost for the night. Scoping these ibis produced three Glossy Ibis. Also present at the marsh was a migrant Cordilleran Flycatcher. Finally, my yard in Los Lunas produced a single White-throated Sparrow (tan-striped?).

Thanks to one and all for your pledges and donations to our team, and for all your support and encouragement! Cheers and Good Birding to all, Ryan Beaulieu.



**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.

**CNMAS Field Trip Reports  
compiled by Celestyn Brozek**

**Saturday, February 26: Cochiti Lake**

Leader Rebecca Gracy. Six people enjoyed this outing to the farm land around Peña Blanca, the river below the spillway at Cochiti and the lake. The predicted wind, rain, and snow did not materialize, and even though no unusual birds were seen, it was a beautiful day to be out birding. Forty-three bird species were counted.

**Saturday, March 19: Las Vegas NWR**

Six people joined Celestyn in a cold, snow covered refuge. Extremely muddy road by McAllister Lake did not allow for driving and required walking through the snow to reach the lake. We also visited Storrie Lake and Mora where we enjoyed the best in the world tamales. 66 bird species were observed on that day. We had excellent views of Peregrine Falcon, Prairie Falcon and Rough-legged Hawks. Horned Grebe in breeding plumage was seen together with 3 other species of Grebes: Eared, Western, and Clark's. At Mora, Lewis's Woodpecker, Red-naped Sapsucker, and beautiful Western Bluebird allowed close-up views.

**Saturday, April 23: Bosque del Apache NWR**

Lou Prime led the trip. Hoping against hope, the group of 7 people left Albuquerque battered by strong winds. They were rewarded by relative calm at the refuge, 73 species of birds, and finding extremely rare Black-bellied Whistling Ducks! Early migrants: Yellow Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Common Yellowthroat were also present at the refuge with the regular variety of waterfowl and shorebirds.

**Sunday, May 8: Owls and Stars - Sandia Mountains**

This trip was lead by Laurel Ladwig and Raymond VanBuskirk. The Owls and Stars field trip was a successful (if a bit cold) event. Raymond was able to call up Flammulated Owls, Saw-whet Owls and Poor-will. The Flam was fairly cooperative and a few people got to see it briefly. The Saw-whet remained elusive, but the calls were heard by all. Sightings included Io, Europa, Ganymede and Callisto (around their parent planet Jupiter) and Titan orbiting the beautiful ringed Saturn. After much shivering, it was decided that next fall's Owls and Stars field trip will include a large supply of hot chocolate!

**Do You Want to Lead?  
by Celestyn Brozek**

We are always very grateful to all field trip leaders who have been providing invaluable service to our chapter. Many of them led an impressive number of birding outings over the years and still faithfully share their time with us in the field. However, sometimes they need a rest and we need to involve additional new people for the leaders of these most exciting activities of our group. Please, contact me by e-mail: [cbrozek@unm.edu](mailto:cbrozek@unm.edu) or by phone, 505-925-8611 if you are willing to lead field trips. Spread the word among your friends as well! Your help is greatly needed and appreciated! Give it a thought!



**Birding in the Snow:  
Celestyn Brozek's Las Vegas NWR outing  
on March 13, 2005  
By Judith Liddel**

When we arrived at the Las Vegas National Wildlife Refuge at 8 AM, there was a blanket of snow on the ground. Even though it had snowed almost 3 feet in Las Vegas, NM earlier in the week, I figured there would only be a couple of inches on the ground. After all, Albuquerque's 8 inches had melted. It turned out to be an adventuresome day!

I left home shortly before 5:30 AM, picked up my friend Barbara, and then met the man who was carpooling with us - a birder from Hungary who is co-owner of Ecotours. When we arrived at the refuge, it was still about 30 degrees with a few wisps of clouds. Besides the trip leader, there were three other hardy souls joining the field trip. "We'll head down the road as far as it is paved, but we'll have to walk into the campground at McAllister Lake because the road is not in good shape," relayed our trip leader Celestyn Brozek. He had scoped things out the day before and had checked out the road earlier that morning. "The mud from the tire tracks on the road is still frozen," he told us. "So it should be an easy walk."

*Birding in the Snow...continued on next page*

**CNMAS Field Trip Schedule**

Our most current field trips, including Thursday Birders, can be found at: <http://www.newmexicoaudubon.org/cnmas/trips.html>

**Saturday, June 11: Sandia Songsters Birdathon!**

Join Celestyn Brozek on a beautiful singing day in the Sandia mountains! We will bird from the foothills up to the crest and hope to find about 70 bird species. We will meet at 6:00 AM at the Three Gun Spring trailhead (Monticello subdivision). From there we will move around and up the mountains. Latecomers can join us at Doc Long picnic ground around 9:00 AM. If we are not there by 9, please, wait, we might be caught up in some intense birding on the way. We will spend all day at the mountain. There is a possibility of listening to nighthawks and owls in the evening. This is a fund raising event for our Central New Mexico Audubon chapter. Please, be generous in your contributions. Spread the word among your friends and let them pledge a donation per species. We will have fun working hard to find as many species as possible. For more information contact Celestyn Brozek at 505-925-8611 or [cbrozek@unm.edu](mailto:cbrozek@unm.edu).

**Saturday-Sunday, July 23-24: Hummingbirds in New Mexico!**

2nd Annual Backyard Hummingbird Festival at Lake Roberts (north of Silver City). Unforgettable experience! Hummingbirds in hand! Exciting program! E-mail Joan Day-Martin at [hbnm@gilnet.com](mailto:hbnm@gilnet.com) for details.

**Sunday, August 7: Jemez Mountains**

Meet at the Far North Shopping Center behind the Pancake House at 7:00 AM. We will go to the town of Ponderosa then Jemez Falls to look for the Black Swift and then the old burn areas to look for the Three-toed Woodpecker. It will be an all-day trip so everyone should bring a lunch. For questions call Rebecca Gracy at 505-242-3821 or email at [mrgracey@earthlink.net](mailto:mrgracey@earthlink.net)

**Saturday in August 2005: RGNC Summer Wings Festival**

Date to be determined. Join us for a celebration of New Mexico's small but spectacular wildlife: hummingbirds, butterflies, dragonflies and bees, at the Rio Grande Nature Center State Park, 2901 Candelaria NW, 505-344-7240. Sponsored by Friends of the RGNC.

**October 1-2, Saturday-Sunday: Overnight trip to eastern plains including tour of Clabber Hill Ranch by Conchas Lake**

Meet at 7:00 AM at the Four Hills Shopping Center parking near Dion's Pizza (south of Central, west of Tramway). We will cover Fort Sumner Lake, Melrose trap, Bosque Redondo Park (depending on the birds we may change our route), Conchas Lake, and then Clabber Hill Ranch for evening owling. We will spend the night at the Adobe Belle casitas which are next to the Conchas Lake headquarters. Early next morning, we will visit Clabber Hill Ranch and Conchas Lake again. Time and weather permitting, we may make our way to Albuquerque via Las Vegas national wildlife refuge. This is a prime time for fall migrants and we hope for many surprises. Even Baird's Sparrows and Short-Eared Owls are possible. The ranch in itself is a beautiful place and worth a visit.

Casitas at the Adobe Belle contains 3 sleeping rooms with double beds, bathroom and kitchen. Three individuals or three couples can sleep in one casita. The cost is \$ 125 per casita, per night. We need to make reservations in advance, so please contact Celestyn Brozek at 505-925-8611 or e-mail [cbrozek@unm.edu](mailto:cbrozek@unm.edu) as soon as possible! Lack of interest may lead to the cancellation of the trip. A deposit may be required.

**Volunteer Your Birding**

Many CNMAS members volunteer their time to share their love of birding. What's required? Your time, and your knowledge and love of wildlife! We are seeking volunteers to set up scopes at events (such as August's Summer Wings Festival at the Rio Grande Nature Center, and Festival of the Cranes in November) and be there to point out the various birds and talk about them (habits, seasonal trivia, etc.). You will also have CNMAS newsletters and/or flyers to provide membership information. Contact a CNMAS board member to join in!

**Birdathon 05: Birding For Dollars** Circle your pledge & Audubon can WIN!

For every bird species the team identifies during Birdathon, CNMAS benefits!

Send your check to:  
CNMAS, PO Box 30002  
Albuquerque NM 87190-0002

10¢	25¢	50¢
\$1	\$2 <sup>50</sup>	\$5
\$7 <sup>50</sup>	\$10	\$20

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*IDE Report...continued from previous page*

contacts and resources for projects that are continuing in my biology and ecology classes. I attended all of the sessions and found that there was plenty of time to ask questions and discuss how the concepts could be applied into my classes. For the past two years my students have collected and cataloged hundreds of arthropods that will be in a digital collection at our school. The project will be enhanced through the ideas suggested by faculty at the Institute. Other projects such as plant collections and surveys will also be expanded by techniques taught in the Institute. I hope that my students will gain the understanding that biological concepts are not only in books, but can be applied in the field. In the future I will change my ecology program and incorporate more field work into the concepts and lessons I teach.

Highlights of the trip included the wildflower identification, live trapping rodents and identification, birding, learning about Sonoran plant taxonomy, desert ecology, geology, herpetology, astronomy, and climate.

I felt that the other participants were eager to discuss thoughts and give insight into their experiences in the field. Throughout the weekend I was able to talk about ideas and projects with other people who have common ideas on ecology.

I have a digital set of pictures of the field camp, which I have captioned, that I will show my students.

Sincerely, Richard W. Winkler

*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.*