July 16: Zoom to a Virtual Meeting

This presentation will include a brief member meeting, as required annually of all non-profit organizations, and will be conducted over Zoom. More information about linking to the meeting will be distributed in early July.

The meeting also will feature Christopher Rustay and Robert Munro updating the story of Melrose Woods, a remarkable migrant trap, with 44 species of warblers reported. Christopher Rustay will share some of his experiences with this magical spot and Robert Munro will provide an update about the CNMAS partnership with the State Land Office to protect the area. More information is provided in Robert’s article in this issue.

Board ‘Gives’ Thanks to Rebecca

By Sara Jayne Cole

The CNMAS Board is thanking Rebecca Gracey for 16 years as Thursday Birders Coordinator with a donation of $160 to the First Unitarian Church Food Pantry.

Although the CNMAS mission is to conserve wildlife and their habitat, the board felt it would be meaningful to recognize Rebecca by donating to another cause close to her heart. Those who would like to join her in giving to the food pantry may go to http://uuabq.com.

As a 501(3)(c) non-profit, CNMAS receives a percentage of dues paid to the National Audubon Society. However, we are an independent chapter and rely on donations to fund our many programs. Donation may be made on the CNMAS home page: http://cnmas.newmexicoaudubon.org or mailed to P.O. Box 30002, Albuquerque, NM 87190.

TBs’ True Leader Is Moving On

By John “Lefty” Arnold

In March of this year, Thursday Birders Trip Coordinator Rebecca Gracey announced that she was retiring from her duties after 16 years in that position.

But—no surprise here—she did not just announce it. She said if someone came forward to replace her that would be Plan A. If that person would be willing to schedule two trips each week, that would be Enhanced Plan A. Meanwhile Rebecca suggested Plan B, beginning in the fall. Plan B would be two trips per week with no leaders and no carpooling.

Rebecca’s field-trip ideas elicited numerous positive and well-considered online responses. As (hopefully) the pandemic under which we all are living becomes less virulent and folks emerge from self-isolation, we can return to the enjoyable and genial art of group birding.

After more than 30 years as a weekly event, the Thursday Birders field trips have increased from a dozen or so birders per excursion to more than 30 people per outing, reducing the ability to ensure that everyone is able to hear about and see each bird the group locates. With Rebecca’s retirement and suggestions, the Central New Mexico Audubon board is developing new guidelines for Thursday Birders that will be discussed in the Autumn 2020 Burrowing Owl.

continued on the next page
Questions and Answers Covering 16 Years

continued from the previous page

Here’s a Q & A session with Rebecca about her tenure as Thursday Birders Trip Coordinator:

Q: You began your 16-year journey in 2004. Who had been coordinating trips before that?
A: “For the first eight years, Tami Bulow led the trips and the group collectively decided where to go on the next week’s outing. Then Julie Gooding and Madge Wallen took the reins in 1996, followed by Mary Lou Arthur from 1998 to 2004. She planned trips two to three weeks in advance, leading many of them herself and asking others to lead trips as well.”

Q: Why did you begin to schedule trips three months in advance?
A: “It made it easier for me because once the schedule was done for a season, I didn’t have to worry about it for two months. Thursday Birders averaged 50 trips per year.”

Q: Was it easy to recruit leaders for these excursions?
A: “I had an average of 13 leaders that I would contact each quarter by email. Most people would say yes, making my job easier.”

Q: Did anyone volunteer to lead before she or he was asked to do so?
A: “Once Sei Tokuda contacted me before I started working on the winter schedule and said he would like to lead two trips to the Bosque del Apache, so I put him on the schedule. He was a sweetheart and he loved to show beginners a bird.”

Q: How many trips did you attend and did you lead trips yourself?
A: “If there were 800 trips in the 16 years, I might have missed 25. I led 123, about 15 percent of them.”

Q: “Did you ever encounter serious problems on these trips?
A: “Luckily no one ever got hurt. A couple of times we had to almost carry someone down from the Hawkwatch site in the Sandias, and one time we helped a person in the Manzanos who had a medical condition.”

Q: Do you have a favorite trip?
A: “Once Judy Liddell planned a ‘Birding by Railrunner to a surprise location’ trip. We were met at the train station in Santa Fe, took the shuttle to the Capitol building and then employees from Randall Davey ferried us to their Audubon Center.”

Q: As part of your efforts to coordinate trips, you were involved with several Birdathon fundraisers. How were those events?
A: “The Birdathons were always fun. The first one I led was to Turtle Bay on the New Mexico Tech campus, Water Canyon, The Box and Bosque del Apache on April 29, 2010. We had 26 team members and with that many people we broke into smaller groups at Bosque del Apache. That evening, when we met to go over the list, I was pleasantly surprised to learn what each group had seen. We ended up with 135 species. That was the most fun I ever had on a Birdathon because of the worry of not doing well, and then doing great.”

Coordinator by the Numbers

March 2004 through March 2020:
- Days: 5,875
- Hours: 141,000
- Minutes: 8,460,000
- Seconds: 507,600,000
- Number of Thursdays: 839
- Number of TB trips: About 800
- Number of TB Coordinators: 1
Unique Birdathon Logs 206 Species

Here are the Birds:

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck
Ross’s Goose
Canada Goose
Egyptian Goose
Wood Duck
Blue-winged Teal
Cinnamon Teal
Northern Shoveler
Gadwall
American Wigeon
Mallard
Green-winged Teal
Redhead
Lesser Scaup
Common Merganser
Ruddy Duck
Northern Bobwhite
Scaled Quail
Gambel’s Quail
Wild Turkey
Pied-billed Grebe
Eared Grebe
Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon)
Band-tailed Pigeon
Eurasian Collared-Dove
White-winged Dove
Mourning Dove
Greater Roadrunner
Lesser Nighthawk
Common Nighthawk
Black-chinned Hummingbird
Broad-tailed Hummingbird
American Coot
Black-necked Stilt
American Avocet
Snowy Plover
Killdeer
Long-billed Curlew
Hudsonian Godwit
Baird’s Sandpiper
Least Sandpiper
Semipalmated Sandpiper
Long-billed Dowitcher
Wilson’s Phalarope
Spotted Sandpiper
Solitary Sandpiper
Willet
Franklin’s Gull
Ring-billed Gull
Least Tern
Neotropic Cormorant
Double-crested Cormorant
American White Pelican
Great Blue Heron
Snowy Egret
Cattle Egret
Green Heron
Black-crowned Night-Heron
White-faced Ibis
Turkey Vulture
Osprey
Mississippi Kite
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Cooper’s Hawk
Northern Goshawk
Common Black Hawk
Swainson’s Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
Western Screech-Owl
Great Horned Owl
Burrowing Owl
Lewis’s Woodpecker
Red-headed Woodpecker
Acorn Woodpecker
Downy Woodpecker
Ladder-backed Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
American Kestrel
Peregrine Falcon
Olive-sided Flycatcher
Western Wood-Pewee
Eastern Wood-Pewee
Hammond’s Flycatcher
Gray Flycatcher
Dusky Flycatcher
Cordilleran Flycatcher
Black Phoebe
Say’s Phoebe
Vermilion Flycatcher
Ash-throated Flycatcher
Cassin’s Kingbird
Western Kingbird
Eastern Kingbird
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
Plumbeous Vireo
Warbling Vireo
Loggerhead Shrike
Steller’s Jay
Blue Jay
Woodhouse’s Scrub-Jay
Black-billed Magpie
Clark’s Nutcracker
American Crow

By Kathy Carson

Given the social distancing requirements this spring, CNMAS decided to conduct a different kind of Birdathon with no specific destinations and no teams. This unusual approach compiled individual efforts from wherever people were able to bird during the first two weeks of May and combined that information into a joint list.

A total of 23 birders made 54 counts in Albuquerque-area backyards, a cabin near Las Vegas, a meadow in Angel Fire, a backyard in Socorro, Melrose Woods and Paseo del Rio campground in Truth or Consequences.

Participants pledged cash donations for each bird they logged. The money will be given to the Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area in Valencia County. The total is still being compiled but will be available soon on http://cnmas.newmexicoaudubon.org/events/birdathon.
The Birders
Rebecca Gracey  Kim Score
Bernard Morris  Lannois Neely
Deanna Nichols  Lynn Schuler
Doug Loescher  Melissa Howard
Dwayne and  Owen Sinkus
Marj Longenbaugh  Rebecca Helianthus
Ellen Lenz  Sara Jayne Cole
Jody Addis  Sonja Mendoza
Jorgen Hog  Susan Hunter
Judy Liddell  Virginia Davis
Ken Cole  Perrianne Houghton
Bonnie Long

Chihuahuan Raven
Common Raven
Black-capped Chickadee
Mountain Chickadee
Juniper Titmouse
Verdin
Horned Lark
Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Purple Martin
Tree Swallow
Violet-green Swallow
Bank Swallow
Barn Swallow
Cliff Swallow
Cave Swallow
Bushtit
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Red-breasted Nuthatch
White-breasted Nuthatch
Pygmy Nuthatch
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Rock Wren
Canyon Wren
House Wren
Winter Wren
Marsh Wren
Bewick's Wren
European Starling
Gray Catbird
Curve-billed Thrasher
Brown Thrasher
Crispal Thrasher
Northern Mockingbird
Eastern Bluebird
Western Bluebird
Mountain Bluebird
Townsend’s Solitaire
Swainson’s Thrush
Hermit Thrush
American Robin
Cedar Waxwing
Phainopepla
House Sparrow
American Pipit
House Finch
Cassin’s Finch
Red Crossbill
Pine Siskin
Lesser Goldfinch
American Goldfinch
Cassin’s Sparrow
Chipping Sparrow
Clay-colored Sparrow
Brewer’s Sparrow
Black-throated Sparrow
Lark Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco
White-crowned Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow
Savannah Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Lincoln’s Sparrow
Canyon Towhee
Green-tailed Towhee
Spotted Towhee
Yellow-breasted Chat
Yellow-headed Blackbird
Western Meadowlark
Eastern Meadowlark
Orchard Oriole
Bullock’s Oriole
Scott’s Oriole
Red-winged Blackbird
Bronzed Cowbird
Brown-headed Cowbird
Brewer’s Blackbird
Common Grackle
Common Grackle (Bronzed)
Great-tailed Grackle
Worm-eating Warbler
Black-and-White Warbler
Orange-crowned Warbler
Lucy’s Warbler
Nashville Warbler
Virginia’s Warbler
MacGillivray’s Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
Yellow Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Grace’s Warbler
Black-throated Gray Warbler
Wilson’s Warbler
Hepatic Tanager
Summer Tanager
Western Tanager
Pyrrhuloxia
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Black-headed Grosbeak
Blue Grosbeak
Lazuli Bunting
Painted Bunting
Dickcissel
Melrose Trap Leased to Chapter

By Robert Munro

For those of you who have been following the Melrose Woods project, we have exciting updates! As of May 8, 2020, CNMAS is the lease holder of Melrose Woods.

To make this challenging conservation project a reality the lease was crafted to fulfill the requirements not only of CNMAS but also of the New Mexico State Land office and the holder of the agricultural lease of the area that encompasses Melrose Woods.

Through collaboration, compromise and a shared vision for the successful conservation of this oasis we hope that our agreement may stand as an example for future conservation efforts.

The State Land Office has selected a contractor to complete the first phase of the project, which includes trail building and debris removal. A huge thank-you goes out to all who participated in the online town hall that preceded the selection of the contractor.

Here are a few of the participants’ comments that were integrated into the plan:

- Some unnatural rocky areas will not be eliminated during the debris removal in order to support migrating and resident wrens.
- Specific attention will be given during the trail building phase to not disturb the understory as it is essential habitat for birds.
- Although some fallen wood will be used for trail marking and bench construction, there will not be any wood removed from the site as it provides vital cover.

- Johnson Environmental, based out of Alamogordo, will be charged with completing this first phase of work. Work will commence in June and wrap up within 30 days.

For everyone’s safety, public access to Melrose Woods will be limited to Saturdays and Sundays during the month of June. Please check back with CNMAS on Facebook for any further updates including specific dates of completion.

Mysteries of Migration Probed on Your Screen

By Melissa Howard

“Bird migration is the one truly unifying natural phenomenon in the world. . . . That such delicate creatures undertake these epic journeys defies belief.” —Scott Weidensaul, Living on the Wind, 1999.

Perhaps the most significant development in the two decades since that book appeared is the Internet. The Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology is one of many on-line sources of articles, maps and graphics about migration, and much of its data comes from citizen-science projects like the CNMAS Birdathon report of 74 species seen at Melrose Trap in mid-May.

This is a portion of the Cornell video showing migration data during the night of May 20–21. The middle of the continent shows the most activity, with orange arrows darting in all directions.

Source: www.birds.cornell.edu/home
Video Marks Earth Day at Whitfield WCA

By Allison Martin
Education Manager for Valencia Soil and Water Conservation District

The 50th annual Earth Day celebration looked a little different this year as Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area was closed to the public.

Instead, Facebook Los Lunas Data Center and the Friends of Whitfield gave us funds to create a video to show off ways that everyone can interact with the Earth in their own backyards.

I put together a lesson at Whitfield demonstrating ways to learn about the plants and the animals in the area. Lindsey Diaz, East Valencia Urban Gardens Program Coordinator, described ways to create compost.

The funding not only paid for the creation of the video; it gave six people a chance to win five garden starter kits and one iPad by commenting on the video, which received more than 3,000 views, 67 shares and 33 comments. Here is one:

“This is an awesome video with some amazing ideas for our students. Right now we are talking about ecosystems and invasive plants with our 7th graders. We also touched on human impact, and there was a quick backyard activity we had the students do a few weeks back. What I would love to do now is have them watch this video, compare the changes that they see from the first one, and journal their findings....” —Lillian Montoya

The video can be viewed either on the Whitfield Education Programs Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/WhitfieldPrograms/ or the Valencia Soil and Water Conservation District YouTube channel.

TBs Donate $2,046 for the Birds

By Reuben Weisz

For many years Thursday Birders have donated weekly to support birding, wildlife and conservation organizations. Once a year those dollars are distributed to deserving organizations along with matching donations from CNMAS.

This spring, following Covid-19 guidelines advising against group activities and against handling paper currency, the Thursday Birders suspended weekly outings and collections.

Since then, a total of $2,046 in 2020 collections has been donated to these eleven organizations, with each receiving $186:
• Audubon New Mexico for the Randall Davey Audubon Center
• Friends of the Rio Grande Nature Center
• Friends of Bosque del Apache
• Friends of Valle de Oro
• Friends of the Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area
• Hawks Aloft
• Los Amigos de Valles Caldera
• On a Wing and a Prayer
• Rio Grande Bird Research for the Sandia Rosy-Finch Project
• Share with Wildlife
• Wildlife Rescue of New Mexico

Yellow-breasted Chat
By Joe Schelling
A Plea for Help with Hummingbird Count

A note from Sara Jayne Cole

In 2015, when the National Audubon Society introduced the Citizen Science Survey described here, I spent a few hours being annoyed that I could not make it work. This spring I had time on my hands and, wanting to do something of value to birds while “social distancing,” I revisited the website, and this time it worked. Now I can be one of the many birders contributing to this hummingbird study. Please consider joining me in counting hummingbirds at home.

As spring migration is underway, the National Audubon Society invites birders and nature enthusiasts of all ages to help track the health of hummingbirds with Audubon's Hummingbirds at Home app. This citizen-science project utilizes the power of volunteers to help collect data that provide scientists with crucial information about the bird species and the plants that sustain them.

Every spring hummingbirds visit our yards, looking for nourishment from our gardens and feeders. Many hummingbirds migrate very long distances and must eat several times their weight in nectar daily to stay alive. Audubon scientists recently released a groundbreaking study that revealed some species of hummingbirds could lose more than 50 percent of their current ranges by 2080 if climate change continues on its current trajectory.

As flowers bloom earlier because of warming temperatures, there is a growing mismatch between flowering times and the arrival of hummingbirds in their breeding areas.

By joining Audubon's Hummingbirds at Home project, you can help uncover how hummingbirds are affected by climate change and provide the information necessary to protect them. Using the mobile-friendly web portal and smart phone apps for iPhone and Android devices, people from across the United States can report their feeding hummingbird sightings anywhere. These observations will also enable Audubon to make specific, regional recommendations for those who want to enhance the value of their yards and gardens for hummingbirds.

Hummingbirds at Home helps people set up patches in their yard, garden, porch, window box, local park or just about anywhere where they can do surveys to keep track of hummingbirds and on what they feed. Additional sightings also can be logged outside a patch. Participants can get involved by spending just a few minutes or for as long as they wish. Participating and using the free mobile app or website is free and makes it simple to report sightings and learn more about these remarkable birds. For more information visit www.hummingbirdsathome.org.

For tips on how to create a hummingbird-friendly yard visit: www.audubon.org/content/how-create-hummingbird-friendly-yard.
Central New Mexico Audubon Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit chapter of the National Audubon Society, Inc.

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

Mailing address CNMAS, P.O. Box 30002, Albuquerque NM 87190-0002

The CNMAS membership form is on the web site:


Click “About Us” on the home page.

Officers

President ........................................ Perrianne Houghton
cnmaspresident@gmail.com

Vice President ........................................ vacant

Treasurer ........................................... Lee Hopwood
treasurercnmas@gmail.com

Recording Secretary .............................. Jamie Welles
jamie@jwelles.com

Education .......................... Lynn Schuler
on the pulse@msn.com

Bird-safe Building Coordinator ............ Bruce Dale
bcdale2301@gmail.com

Program Chair ......................... Kathy Carson
kcarson825@gmail.com

Director at Large............................... Robert Munro
rmunro@earthlink.net

Director at Large ....................... Heidi Hawkins

New Mexico Audubon Representative ........ Sara Jayne Cole
birdlajoya@gmail.com

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