

BURROWING OWL

Central New Mexico Audubon Society

December 1990 - January 1991

WELCOME!

The Central New Mexico Audubon Society meets at 7:30 pm, on the third Thursday of each month, at St. Timothy's Lutheran Church, Copper and Jefferson NE. Nonmembers are welcome at all meetings, fieldtrips and special events.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

CHRISTMAS COUNTS

--Thursday, December 6th

December means Christmas Counts for many of us. In 1900 Frank M. Chapman persuaded 27 of his friends to join him on a bird count instead of participating in the traditional Christmas Day bird hunt. There are over 42,000 birders now participating in this holiday sport nationwide. Leaders of the various counts will be available to answer questions about Christmas Counts and provide information about the count areas.

PROTECTING RIVERS

--Thursday, January 17th

Five years ago the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors recommended that by the year 2000 we provide protection for 2000 rivers. Verne Huser has been a professional river guide for over 30 years, working primarily in the West. Last year he received the Outstanding River Advocate award from American Rivers Incorporated. He has written five how-to and where-to books on rivers and has edited an anthology of river literature. He will share his slides of rivers which have been accorded protected status. While guiding us along these rivers, he will discuss protective designations, reasons why rivers have been selected and protected, and some new ideas for protecting rivers.

FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE

By Laura Jenkins

Please call Laura Jenkins (293-7527) at any hour for possible changes of plans on out-of-town trips.



There are no field trips in December because of the many Christmas Counts--see listing, next page.

I will be driving the Sevilleleta Count and can take one or two more. Only four-wheel drives are permitted on this Wildlife Refuge and Research Station, which is not normally open to the public. If you are interested in joining me, please call.

COCHITI LAKE

Sunday, January 6th, at 7:00am.

Meet: Parking lot, Goodwill Store, 5000 San Mateo, just north of Montgomery.

Bald eagles are the main attraction at Cochiti, but there are many birds along the river. This is an easy drive and a short, level hike. Children are welcome. Bring lunch or return at noon.

BOSQUE DEL APACHE (RESCHEDULED)

--Saturday, January 26th, 10:00 am

Meet: UNM, parking lot behind Physics and Astronomy...North off Lomas on Yale, right into lot.

The November Bosque trip was canceled because of bad weather; however, seven hearty souls egged on by the Tokudas and Nettie Ireland went anyway. The sun came out and they had a wonderful day. We will try again on a different schedule. We will leave 10am, stop in San Antonio for a chili burger at the Owl Cafe and stay for the fly-in at dusk. Bring snacks and water.

CHRISTMAS COUNTS**--December 15-29th**

Christmas Counts will be held even if the weather is less than ideal. In case of extremely bad weather, call the Count Leader, or Tamie Bulow, for an update.

Counters should be prepared to be out all day, if at all possible. If the weather is cooperative, be prepared for lots of walking. Bring lunch, snacks, warm beverages and dress warmly. Fieldguides and binoculars will be needed to actively participate in the sport. Birders of all levels of expertise (spotters are important!) are encouraged to participate. Experienced birders are especially urged to assist in the counts. Each count participant will pay a \$5.00 fee to American Birds to cover the costs of compilation and publishing. Please have the correct change; checks should be payable to the count compiler or payee left blank.

Individuals with feeders in their yards can also participate. To join one or more of the counts sponsored by CNMAS, call the compilers listed below. Also, please call if you have owls in your area.

BOSQUE DEL APACHE COUNT**--Saturday, December 15****--Leader: Steve Cox (345-2385)**

Meet at the Bosque del Apache Visitors Center at 7:30am. Counters will be allowed to enter areas normally off-limits to visitors, such as the north side of the refuge. Other count areas include the ponds, the feeder and grounds at the Visitor Center, the mesas on the west side of the refuge, and the east side of the Rio Grande (cross at San Antonio--requires a 4-wheel drive or pickup). Please call if you plan to join this count (345-2385).

ALBUQUERQUE COUNT**--Sunday, December 16****--Leader: Hart Schwarz (266-1810)**

Meet at the Corrales Shopping Center, corner of Coors and Alameda NW, at 7:15am sharp, near the 1st National Bank. The count will end about 5:00pm. At 7:30pm join the group at Claudia Crawford's, 433 Maple NE, to compile the day's counts. Bring Christmas cookies to share.

The Albuquerque count area is centered at Alameda. Approximately six group leaders, all experienced birders, will lead groups to San Gabriel Park, the Rio Grande Nature Center, Corrales, Shady Lakes, the Sandia foothills, and the West Mesa, including Taylor Ranch, Petroglyph State Park, Paradise Hills, and Rio Rancho.

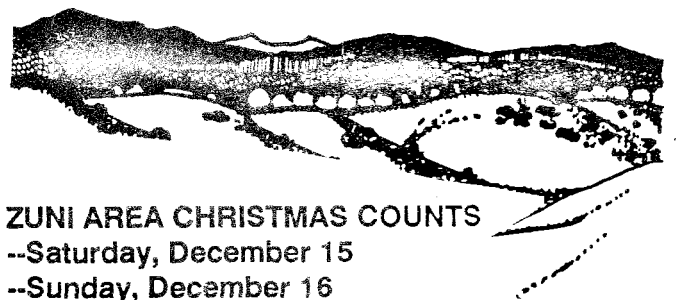
SANDIA MOUNTAINS COUNT**--Saturday, December 29****--Leader: Kay Anderson (821-1606)**

Meet at what was formerly "Pete's Home of the Half-Breed" restaurant on NM Highway 14, 1/2 mile north of the Sandia Crest turnoff at 7:30am. The center of the count area is San Antonio, on the east side of the Sandias. Areas usually counted include Sandia Crest, San Pedro Wash and Gutierrez Canyon, Canyoncito, Doc Long picnic area and Cienega Canyon.

SEVILLETA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**--Saturday, December 15****--Thursday, December 20****--Leader: Ross Teuber**

Two counts will be held on the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge. The Refuge is generally closed to the public, but will be accessible to CNMAS Christmas Count birders. A 4-wheel drive is mandatory. The first count, Saturday, December 15, will cover the west side of the Refuge.

The second count, December 20th, will be at a new count area, Five Points, located on the east side of the Refuge. Again, 4-wheel drive is essential. Four to six teams (2-3 each) are needed to cover this area. Because of the limited access to this area, and the very real need for 4-wheel drive, no one should come without calling Ross first (265-8962).

**ZUNI AREA CHRISTMAS COUNTS****--Saturday, December 15****--Sunday, December 16****--Contact: Dave Cleary**

For more information on the Zuni area Christmas Counts contact Dave Cleary, PO Box 1045, Zuni NM 87327 (782-4917).

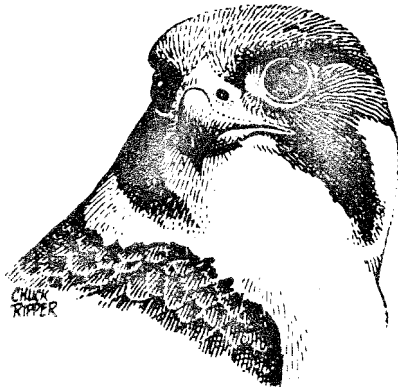
CONSERVATION NOTES

By Lew Helm

Ban the Hovercraft

Those of you who live close to the bosque in Albuquerque or visit the area probably have heard the disgusting roar of a machine whose use should be banned. The sound can be likened to playing snare drums in church. Not only does the noise disrupt wildlife but it also contributes to the cacophony of vehicles, airplanes, and industrial machines associated with our society.

Open space such as our bosque and the river should be off limits to motorized vehicles of all types. While there may be some justification for using hovercraft in search and research operations, these machines have no place during ordinary patrols by police, fire department or their rescue personnel. We question the need to have these monsters out there except for bona fide rescue situations. Certainly, recreation use of the machines along the river within Albuquerque or Corrales should be stopped. Contact the Albuquerque Open Space Division or the New Mexico State Parks to voice your opinion.



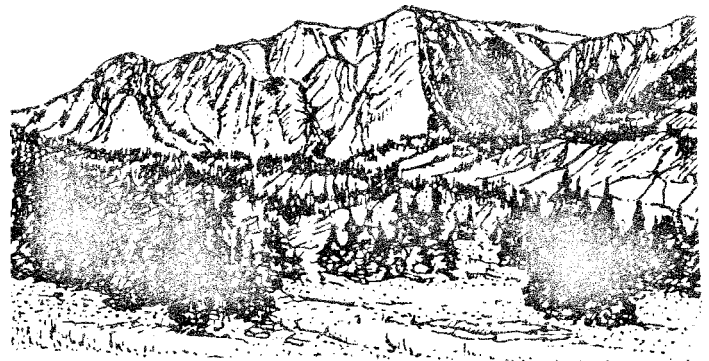
Bird Show at the Zoo

A very worthwhile educational program at the Rio Grande Zoo is in trouble. Funding problems threaten cancellation. These shows for the past two or three years have entertained and enlightened thousands of school-age children not to mention many adults. What better way to impress on youngsters the importance of birds in the intricate web of life. Support our top-rated Zoo and urge contributions for this outstanding program.

Status of Two Endangered Species Up For Review

The status of the Mexican spotted owl will be decided by the US Fish and Wildlife Service by December 21, 1990. The Mexican spotted owl, the southern subspecies of spotted owls, is not numerous. A recent study of these small raptors in New Mexico and Arizona finds that only about 330 spotted owl territories have been identified in the two states. These owls prefer old-growth tree stands and canyon habitats. Their territories are scattered mainly in national forests in New Mexico and Arizona where the birds are at risk of timbering operations. At present, timber sales in national forests must exclude cutting in stands documented as spotted owl sites. Stay tuned for the latest information on the status of these birds and the fate of the old-growth ecosystem they depend on. The FWS must decide whether this subspecies will be listed as an endangered or threatened species.

The other endangered species is the Jemez Mountains salamander, a species which is found only in the Jemez Mountains. It is found primarily within the Santa Fe National Forest although its range does include parts of Los Alamos National Laboratory, Santa Clara Pueblo lands, Bandelier National Monument, and private lands. The low populations of this salamander could very well be caused by increased timber cutting operations within its range. Also, the proposed expansion of the pumice mine along the East Fork of the Jemez River poses a threat. The FWS must decide at an early date whether to recommend listing of the salamander as an endangered or threatened species. Anyone with information on the salamander should contact John Peterson, Field Supervisor, Ecological Services Field Office, 3530 Pan American Highway NE 87107 in Albuquerque, or call 883-7877.



EDUCATION NOTES**ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FAIR A SUCCESS**

--by Marian Washburn

Teachers costumed as Little Miss Muffett, Raggedy Ann, clowns, and goodness-knows-what added unexpected spice to the environmental education fair held at the UNM Continuing Education Building on October 31.

Marge Carrick, Education Chairperson, would ordinarily have been the one to assist Janie Cox and Karen Copeland of the Randall Davey Center, but an ailing son needed her presence in Phoenix, so she asked me to help and I was glad she did.

Senator Jeff Bingaman had sent invitations to the fair, the purpose of which was to acquaint teachers of this area with the resources at their command for teaching about environment and conservation. It is estimated that about 300 teachers attended -- and if the volume of paper they carried away is any criterion, they have plenty to work with!

There must have been representatives of at least thirty organizations allied in the cause of preservation of the environment. They covered, among other fields, water conservation, the problem of solid-waste disposal, green space, global warming, acid rain, rain-forest depletion and wildlife habitat destruction. I can't enumerate all of them because Dan and I stayed at the Audubon table and did very little circulating. I did notice that the Talking Talons group next to ours drew considerable attention.

Janie and Karen had set up a backdrop with pictures, maps, and artifacts. On the table were give-aways, such as posters on water conservation and acid rain. Copies of Audubon Adventures were given to teachers until the supply was exhausted. There were books for sale--books for all ages and grades.

We had ample supply of the Burrowing Owl. These we passed out along with a cordial invitation to attend our meetings. Marge had also included a stock of fliers regarding the program she and her assistants take to the schoolroom on request. Many of the teachers were not aware of this program and were very much interested. We could have used even more of these than we had.

Later in the afternoon there were speeches and workshops to which we insisted Janie and Karen go. We attended to the trickle of visitors who continued to make the rounds.

At the close of the afternoon, I felt that it had been a very worthwhile and profitable occasion. Judging from some of the responses we had, many teachers would be glad to include environmental and conservation subjects but did not know how to go about it. If they use properly the material they received at this fair they should have no problems.

One teacher mentioned specifically that she had been a recipient of a scholarship to Camp of the West in past years and felt that it had been extremely helpful.

Several suggestions were voiced by teachers who stopped at our display. One expressed a wish that some kind of practical project could be worked out for children younger than third grade--one in which they could take an active part. At present there is almost nothing for children younger than third grade. This I have reported to the Board of CNMAS.

I am sorry Marge could not have been present for the fair, but I thank her for letting me fill in for her. It was fun, and I truly hope that it becomes an annual event, for I think it does a great deal for the Audubon Cause.

Environmental Resource Fair for Educators

Senator Jeff Bingaman organized this second environmental conference around three activities: (1) providing environmental education materials for teachers, (2) seminars on four environmental topics--global climate change, water supply/availability, solid waste/recycling, and biological diversity, and (3) workshops allowing an exchange ideas and tools for addressing these issues. Students were also invited to attend. The study of environmental issues should be an important part of the curricula in schools. Senator Bingaman hopes that this conference will give teachers the information they need to help their students better understand our changing environment and that future conferences can be held throughout the state. Your comments to his office would be most appreciated.

NEW MEXICO AUDUBON CONFERENCE

The State Audubon Conference, held at Jemez Springs, reiterated CNMAS' concern for environmental issues. Wilma Anderson from National, and David Henderson from Randall Davey, were among the participants. Besides good fellowship, the group pulled together NM's official environmental priorities--National Audubon Society sets its priorities based on local concerns.

Local chapters reached agreement on these five issues:

- . Protecting old-growth forests and concern for forest management practices
- . Encroachment onto public lands by private enterprise--ski resort expansions
- . Recycling, solid waste reduction and management, and the bottle bill
- . Restructuring the NM Game Commission, favoring a greater emphasis on nongame/endangered species protection
- . Support for in-stream flow legislation removing the requirement that diversion must be a condition of retaining water rights.

AUDUBON ACTIVIST



Upon returning from the conference, CNMAS received a notice of the proposed timber sale at Elk Mountain. President Tamie Bulow, following the directives of our meeting, responded in a letter to the Forest Service that, "One issue that came from all chapters was the concern for our wildlife's habitat, especially the rare and irreplaceable old growth forests. The species that rely on such habitat for their utter existence and propagation of their species will have no alternative. This intentional destruction of wildlife is not worth any trade-off, nor is it likely to get species to modify their existence: neither the elk, the spotted owl, nor other sensitive species can change their habits of existing....We are very concerned for the rare New Mexico old growth forests, specifically Elk Mountain. We urge the Forest Service to protect the area from logging in order to protect and preserve the wildlife that resides there."

And as plans continue to develop for the road across the newly established Petroglyphs National Monument, CNMAS President wrote to the Unser Boulevard Middle Project, "CNMAS, with staff support from your Department, unanimously recommended the gas pipeline alternative route for Unser Boulevard to cross the escarpment. We are very concerned that your Unser alternative alignment "B" is currently included in your preliminary range of escarpment crossings. This route was resoundingly rejected by landowners, conservation and community groups, National Park Service staff, and city staff about two years ago. It bisects the Boca Negra unit of the monument, impacts a part built with federal Land and Water Conservation funds, and impacts the tiny habitat of *Toltecolus chihuuanus*. We feel this alternative should be dropped from further consideration for the same reasons it was discarded two years ago....Paseo del Norte alignments south and north are both severely impacting to the biological integrity of Petroglyph National Monument. We feel they are equally unacceptable. We recommend withdrawal of these northern and southern routes altogether."

FROM THE PRESIDENT

In recent Audubon Chapter meetings here, we have heard from a number of environmentally active organizations who have requested our assistance, financial donations, verbal or written support, or participation in various activities. While each cause is extremely worthy, it raises the question: what can this chapter do to get more of you to participate? While we have over 1100 local members, our Board of Directors consists of approximately 1 percent of our membership. Our meetings and field trips attract another 3 to 4 percent. The remaining 95 percent are what concern me. I am requesting only five minutes of your time and a postage stamp. What are three causes, suggestions, activities or programs that would be of interest to you personally?

Please take this time now, so we can evaluate your proposals and make this chapter more meaningful to all of us. The outcome will appear in the next Burrowing Owl! Please, participate, then activate!

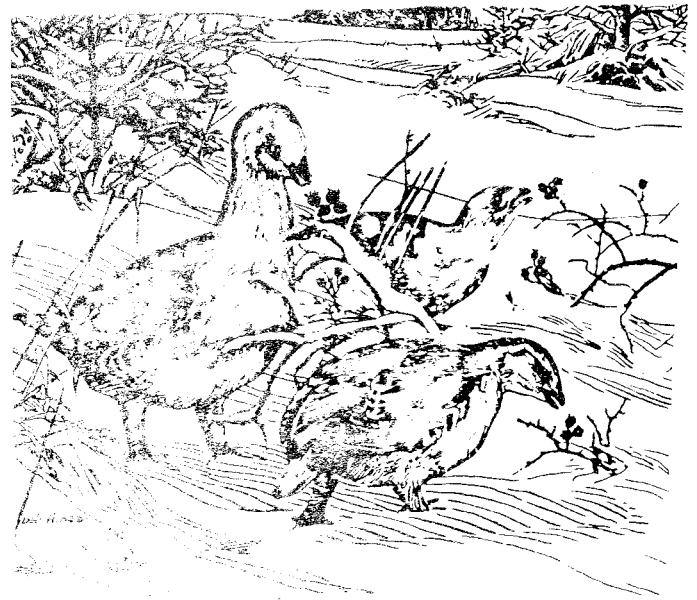


PTARMIGAN TRANSPLANT SUCCESSFUL --by John P. Hubbard

Although reports of the White-tailed Ptarmigan (*Lagopus leucurus*) persisted in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains of New Mexico through the 1970s, the available evidence suggested that the only viable populations in the state were on Wheeler Peak and northward. South of there (eg, on Santa Fe Baldy and Lake peaks), the few recent records seemed to be of occasional southward-dispersers--which were insufficient to establish or maintain resident populations there. Given that seemingly-suitable habitat for ptarmigan appeared to be present in the Sangres south of Wheeler Peak, in August 1979 the area was assessed by Clait E. Braun (ms.) for a possible transplant of the species. Dr. Braun is a member of the Colorado Division of Wildlife and a renown expert on this grouse. He concluded that excellent habitat existed in the tundra region of the Jicarita-Santa Barbara peaks and vicinity (west of Mora), with marginal habitat present southward to Santa Fe Baldy and Lake peaks (east of Santa Fe).

Based on Braun's assessment, his agency, the NM Department of Game & Fish, and the US Forest Service undertook a cooperative transplant of Colorado ptarmigan into the Jicarita-Santa Barbara peaks area in 1981. Forty-three birds were released there, about half of these in the early spring and the remainder in late summer. Sightings in the area in subsequent years indicated that the transplant was successful, with both adults and young ptarmigan being seen. Efforts to census the birds have been planned or undertaken several times, but either heavy snow (spring) or dense vegetation (summer) have presented accurate counts from being obtained. However, Braun estimated that 50-75 breeding birds could be sustained in the area of optimal habitat, which covers an estimated five square miles. He also expected a few birds to disperse southward from the area, mainly in winter and with a low potential of becoming established as a viable population. However, two recent summer sightings on Santa Fe Baldy suggest that a small population has become at least temporarily established there--which is 15-16 linear miles southwest of the Jicarita-Santa Barbara peaks site. These sightings were of one bird photographed by Wanda L. Park on August 23, 1985 and four (one photographed) by Clifford L. Crawford, on August 25, 1990.

As for the future, Braun has pointed out that suitable habitat for the White-tailed Ptarmigan is limited in New Mexico--with the best areas being centered in the Costilla, Wheeler, and Jicarita-Santa Barbara peaks areas. The species also occurs in what Braun regards as marginal habitat on the Latir peaks, which may indicate that ptarmigan in New Mexico can "make do" on some sites that might not be considered very suitable in Colorado. For example, Braun considers shrubby willows (*Salix* spp.) as essential as winter food for ptarmigan, and these plants do indeed occur in the best habitat for the species in New Mexico. However, they are rare in such places as the Latir peaks and Santa Fe Baldy, where ptarmigan also occur--in low numbers. Ptarmigan may also be more sensitive to livestock grazing of tundra habitat in New Mexico, whereas Braun believes such activity is not necessarily detrimental in Colorado. In a word, we still need to learn more about this interesting species in New Mexico, and now we have another population with which to do this--as well as just to plain enjoy and appreciate.



THURSDAY MORNING BIRDING GROUP

For information on the Thursday morning birding group to nearby areas, please call Tamie Bulow, 298-6110.

NOTEWORTHY NEWS AROUND TOWN

Effective immediately, the Rio Grande Nature Center State Park, located at 2901 Candelaria Road, NW, will increase their entrance fee from \$.25 general admission to \$.50 for children and \$1.00 for adults.

Just opening at the NM Museum of Natural History is an excellent overview of the history of the conflict between man and wolves. Scenes depict wolves in their natural environment as well as presenting the mythology and folklore about wolves. With the reintroduction of the Mexican Wolf in New Mexico currently under evaluation, this exhibit is very timely; both the positive and negative sides are thoughtfully presented. The exhibit runs until April 14th.

**TIME TO TAKE ACTION**

This issue begins CNMAS' effort to participate in recycling. The use of colored paper helped identify the Burrowing Owl from the hoards of other mail vying for your attention; however, while using recycled paper may make this task a bit more difficult, it seems worth this trade-off. Your comments are welcomed.

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