



# BURROWING OWL

CENTRAL NEW MEXICO AUDUBON SOCIETY

AUGUST - SEPTEMBER 1996

VOLUME 25 - No. 5

UPCOMING CHAPTER ACTIVITIES -- MARK YOUR CALENDAR!!!

Welcome! The Central New Mexico Audubon Society meets at 7:30 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month at St. Timothy's Lutheran Church, Copper and Jefferson, N.E. All meetings, field trips, and special events are free and open to the public.

## SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY PROGRAM IN SEPTEMBER

September 19 will be our first meeting since the summer doldrums, and what a reunion it will be! **Phil Norton**, manager of Bosque del Apache Wildlife Refuge, and **Dave Henderson**, director of Randall Davey Audubon Field Office, will be our special guests and featured speakers.

You all know by now that our refuge sustained a major fire on Saturday, June 8, through Wednesday, June 12. Phil, who was recognized as "Outstanding Refuge Manager of the Year" in 1995, will update us on reclamation efforts and give us his insights, perspective, and future plans for Bosque del Apache.

Dave will bring us up to date on the exciting implementation of plans already in motion to expand and fulfill Randall Davey Audubon Center's role as our new New Mexico field office.

You don't need to wait until the 19th to find out how to help reclaim and restore Bosque del Apache. Phil is urging us now to contact our Senators and Congressmen, asking them to help with special emergency funding for our refuge after this destructive fire. In addition, a special Refuge Recovery Fund has been established by Friends of the Bosque, a nonprofit group of volunteers and supporters of the Bosque. They are accepting donations earmarked for this Special Fund at P.O. Box 340, San Antonio, NM 87832.

Come meet Phil and Dave and other luminaries, including founding members of CNMAS. Share in the camaraderie, as well as cake and ice cream! We're 25 years old (a quarter of a century!!), and the future has just begun. Be a part of it -- and us!



## ANNUAL NEW MEXICO AUDUBON COUNCIL CONFERENCE

On September 28 and 29, Sangre de Cristo Audubon Chapter will sponsor this year's New Mexico Audubon Council Conference, "**Reptiles and Amphibians of New Mexico: Worth Protecting?**" Saturday's program will feature National Audubon Society president, John Flicker, and a host of presenters and speakers from 9:00 to 4:00 at Santa Fe Community College in Santa Fe, NM. The Sunday program will focus on field trips for birds and other wildlife. There is a registration fee of \$10/person required to cover the expenses of the program. Call for an agenda and send registration checks to: NM Audubon Council Conference, Randall Davey Audubon Center, P.O. Box 9314, Santa Fe, NM 87504, (505) 983-4609. The Council's goal is to get a Herps protection bill signed into law next year. This conference is a major piece of the strategy. It is important to start thinking about this issue, because it will come to a head in the SHORT period between the November election and the legislative session next January.



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CNMAS Home Page: <http://www.rtf66.com/peacmyer/cnmas.htm>

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## TRIPS FOR AUGUST

Everyone is welcome on field trips: members or nonmembers, novice and experienced birders.

Sun., Aug. 11: Jemez Falls. We'll be searching for the Black Swifts. Bring your lunch. Meet behind the Village Inn at Far North Shopping Center, Academy and San Mateo, at 7:00 a.m. We'll be back by midafternoon.

Sat., Aug. 17: Bitter Lake, Roswell. Join Sonia Najera, refuge biologist, for the Annual Fall Shorebird Migration Count. Meet at Bitter Lake Headquarters at 6:30 a.m. Count will be over by 10:30 a.m. Call Charlotte (345-1271) or Sei (266-2480) for info on accommodations and transportation.

## TRIPS FOR SEPTEMBER

Sat., Sept. 14: Percha Dam and Caballo. Long day trip to look for migrating warblers and sparrows. Meet at 6:00 a.m. at the Physics Building parking lot, Lomas and Yale. Bring your lunch.

Sat.-Sun., Sept. 28-29: Don't forget the State Audubon Council Conference in Santa Fe! (See article on Page 1.)

## TRIPS FOR OCTOBER

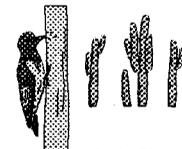
Sat.-Sun, Oct. 5-6: Silver City. This is the peak of fall migration for warblers and sparrows. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the south end of Mangas Springs at McMillan Road. Mangas Springs is about 30 miles north of Silver City on Highway 180. Call Charlotte (345-1271) or Sei (266-2480) for info on transportation and accommodations.

The Burrowing Owl Newsletter is published six times a year by Central New Mexico Audubon Society, PO Box 30002, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 87190-0002. Subscription is free to National Audubon Society members, \$12 to nonmembers.

## UNBELIEVABLE BIRD WATCHING!!!



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Stay at a working ranch and enjoy 250 acres of the most beautiful scenery and the best bird watching in New Mexico. \$12-\$14 FOR DORM SPACE, ALL FOOD INCLUDED!!! PRIVATE ROOMS - \$26/NIGHT.

## BIRDATHON BENEFACTORS

Thank you to all these folks who contributed so generously to make our Birdathon so successful: William G. Gilstrap, Yvonne Gonzales, Tim Porter, D'Elegance, Inc., Julie Dragg, Mary Loughran, Rebecca Gracey, Peacock & Myers, P.C., Paul Adams, Andrew & Maria Cecil, Tamie Bulow, Jean Dilley, Lisa Kerr, Robert Saar, Doris Robertson, Kathleen Cole, Donna Haggerty, Anchor Holm, Susan Thorpe, Barbara Malczewska-Toth, Beverly Ronkos, Jonalyn Yancey, Patricia White, Julie Kelly, Wild Birds Unlimited, Mark Pardo's Hair Salon, Sei & May Tokuda, Malu Gawthrop Cooper, Michael Means, Nancy & Steve Cox, Dianne Cress, Ron & Beth Waitz, S. McKee, Jane Whitmire, and the Thursday Morning Birders: Sid & Jackie Sommers, Helen & Joe Nai, Margaret Wallen, Mary Lou Arthur, Marjorie Cromer, John Tyson, Sylvia Fee Chattin, John Chambers, Les Hawkins, Julie Goodding.

Our grand total this year was \$981.50. Our regional field office, Randall Davey Audubon Center in Santa Fe, received half, and the other half will be applied to educational outreach by our own Chapter. Thank you to one and all!

THE FRIENDS OF THE  
RIO GRANDE NATURE CENTER  
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present

1996  
"Hummerfest"

Saturday, August 10, 1996  
10am to 4pm

Join us in a salute to Hummingbirds before they take off for their winter quarters. Come enjoy and learn about these amazing jewels on the wing.



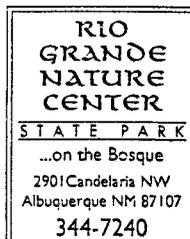
## PROGRAM EVENTS

There will be Bird Walks every half hour from 8-10 am, and another at 1pm.

- 10:00 Mutual of Omaha Wildlife Heritage Center
- 10:15 Mary Alice Root - Distribution of Birds (including Hummingbirds of NM)
- 11:00 Dan True - Hummingbirds
- 11:45 Seigind Neuhauser - Gardening for Hummingbirds
- 12:30 Joan Day-Martin - Banding Hummingbirds
- 1:15 Penny Elliston - Raising Orphaned Baby Hummingbirds
- 2:00 Celestyn Brożak - Hummingbirds, Amazing Creatures

## ALL DAY ACTIVITIES

- Book Signing by Dan True
- Nature Center Hummingbird Garden
- Wildlife Rescue Hummingbirds
- Bird Banding Station
- Bird ID in Pond Observation Room with Audubon Society
- Films: "Hummingbirds Up Close" and "Dances with Hummingbirds"
- Children's Activity Center
- Refreshments



BIRDSSEED

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**Wild Bird Center**  
5200 Eubank Blvd., N.E.  
Albuquerque, NM  
Mon.-Sat. 10-6, Sun. 12-5  
**332-4737**

## TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE OF PLANTS

Three sessions led by Donna Thatcher-Broudy will cover some of the knowledge and uses of wild plants from traditional Native American, Hispanic, and Northern European lore. Learn how indigenous people and early settlers understood and used plants. There will be stories, samples, plant-gathering walks, and an ecological approach to learning. Attend all three sessions if you can, but each one will be useful separately. Call the Rio Grande Nature Center (RGNC) at 344-7240 to preregister.

Sat., Aug. 17: Plants for food, beverages, and seasonings. We'll prepare our own samples! RGNC.

Sat. August 24: Field trip from the river to the tall pines. The outing will end with a bring-your-own lunch, with suggested routes to take on your own for the trip home. More details later.

Sat., Sept. 7: Back at the Nature Center, we'll make some samples during this class, focusing on plants used for dyes, art, and such household items as baskets and soap.

**"Cheep"  
thrills**



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332-4737

### AN INVITATION FROM HAWKWATCH INTERNATIONAL . . .

to each and every member of Central New Mexico Audubon Society to attend HawkWatch's 10-year anniversary celebration. Visit with the New Mexico staff, HawkWatch members and friends, Hawkwatch's Board of Directors and Executive Director, and HawkWatch's founder, Steve Hoffman. In addition, we will offer the following entertainment: live raptors, an art show, music by "The Incredible Woodpeckers," food, door prizes, and a cash bar sponsored by Anderson Valley Vineyard.

HawkWatch International is dedicated to monitoring and promoting the conservation of eagles, hawks, and other birds of prey. We work toward this goal through migration research, environmental education, and policy initiatives throughout the western United States and Mexico. Through our efforts, we hope to combat pesticides, habitat loss, and other threats to the survival of raptors.

The celebration will be held Sunday, September 8, 1996, from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. at the Anderson Valley Vineyard, 4920 Rio Grande Boulevard NW, in Albuquerque. Advance reservations are \$25 donation per person, \$40 donation per couple. At-the-door donations are \$30 per person and \$45 per couple. Advance reservations must be made by contacting the HawkWatch office at 255-7622 by August 23, 1996. For those who can't attend, contributions to help HawkWatch protect raptors are welcome.

A hearty "Thank you!" to the Anderson Field Alliance for donating the insert to this issue. Please note that addition of the insert did not increase mailing costs to CNMAS, and that CNMAS is not a member organization of the Anderson Field Alliance.

### NATURAL LANDSCAPING CLASS

"Let Nature Do the Work - Wild Gardens," is being offered at UNM Continuing Ed. from August 29 -October 17. Teacher Jim Lewis demonstrates how to avoid spading, cultivating, weeding, spraying, fertilizing, and lawn mowing; automatic creation of topsoil; availability of free mulch and ground cover materials; and the use of predators to control pests. The design of natural gardens and the use of native edible plants will be emphasized. First session is in the classroom, with the other sessions in natural gardens and on field trips. Students must attend first class to obtain field trip info. Call UNM Continuing Ed. at 277-CLASS or Jim Lewis at 881-7423.

"Keep close to Nature's heart, yourself; and break clear once in a while, and climb a mountain or spend a week in the woods. Wash your spirit clean."

-- John Muir

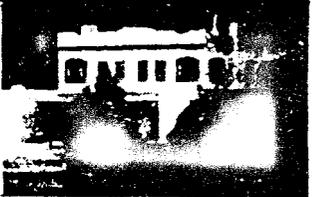
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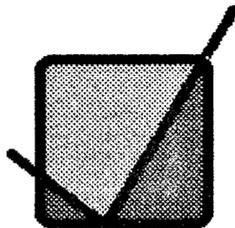


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**VOTE**



**YES**

# FOR PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Mayor Martin Chavez is requesting that the City Council approve a special mail-in ballot asking Albuquerque voters to OK a 1/4 cent gross receipt tax increase (*which would expire in 2 years*) to purchase 4 beautiful pieces of property in the metro area. These properties would be used for *parks and open spaces*.

- *Anderson Field* (on Rio Grande Blvd. and Montano)
- *Oxbow site* (a wetlands on the west side of the Rio Grande),
- *Tres Pistolas* (Three Gun Spring in Tijeras Canyon)
- *Uptown site* (north of Winrock Mall)

Look for the ballot in your mail later this year.

***VOTE YES for enhancing Albuquerque's quality of life.***

ANDERSON FIELD ALLIANCE  
511 SOLAR NW  
ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87107  
344-8627 / 344-8486

*Copying donated ONE STOP MAIL & MORE, 2400 Rio Grande Blvd, 243-5057*

## WHAT IS ANDERSON FIELD?

The Anderson Field is an irrigated agricultural field of approximately 200 acres situated at the northeast corner of Rio Grande Blvd. and Montano. Originally part of the old Simms estate, the land was purchased by the Anderson family for raising alfalfa. In 1995 the Anderson family sold the land. The 200 acres is now proposed for development with 230 home sites.

## WHY IS ANDERSON FIELD SO IMPORTANT?

For years the Anderson family has given the public access to the field for the purpose of walking, jogging, biking, horseback riding, and bird watching. Nature lovers across the city come to the Field to escape the noise and congestion of city life. However, these present-day uses are only a small part of the Field's significance to the City's history.

Archeologists have found evidence of civilization along the middle Rio Grande from as long ago as 12,000 years. Findings of settlements near and around the Field indicate that Native Americans made their homes here at least 1200 years ago. These people, the first Valley "farmers", were the creators of the petroglyphs which grace the escarpment of Albuquerque's west side.

In the late 1600's, Spanish colonists began entering the Valley and established the "Plaza de San Antonio Los Poblanos" in 1740. Anderson Field is believed to be the site of this historic village. Los Poblanos was one of six communities between Old Town and Alameda identified in the Spanish census of 1790. Though its stewards have changed, the Field has remained in agricultural use for the past thousand years, making it perhaps the oldest piece of continuously farmed agricultural land in the United States.

## HOW CAN ANDERSON FIELD BE PRESERVED?

A concerned group of local citizens, organized as the *Anderson Field Alliance*, is actively seeking ways to preserve the Field. The AFA is working to urge a partnership of the City, the County, the Village of Los Ranchos, the State, and Federal resources as well as private donations, to preserve and manage the Field as a community farm, education center, park and open space.

To date, 1.3 million dollars has been earmarked for the purchase of Anderson Field from the local governmental entities and a 3 million dollar appropriations request has been included in the 1997 federal budget by Sen. Jeff Bingaman.

Mayor Martin Chavez will propose that the City Council approve a special election that would ask the city voters to OK a 1/4 cent gross receipt tax increase for the purpose of raising funds to purchase not only Anderson Field, but other open space sites in the metro area. Included for purchase would be Tres Pistolas in Tijeras canyon, the Uptown site (north of Winrock Mall), and the Oxbow, a wetland on the west side of the river. This tax would be for the sole purpose of acquiring these properties and would expire after 2 years. If approved, the election would occur by mail-in ballot later this year.

**You are invited to attend**  
**EVENING IN ANDERSON FIELD, August 11 5PM to dark**  
**MUSIC, FOOD, GAMES FOR KIDS, PRIZES**

FOR INFORMATION CALL CYNTHIA HALL AT 344-8627 OR ANNE COOPER AT 344-8486

## BIRDS OF ANDERSON FIELD

*For years, Anderson Field's rich wildlife has attracted nature lovers. The ditches that vein the field provide water for the alfalfa which in turn provides food and forage for small mammals, insects and birds. Take a walk through the field and see for yourself.*

MOURNING DOVE, MEADOWLARK, WESTERN KING BIRD, HOUSE WREN, DARK-EYED JUNCO, LOGGERHEADED SHRIKE, BARN SWALLOW, ROBIN, HOUSE FINCH, BLACK HEADED GROSBEAK, RUFIOUS-SIDED TOWHEE, BROADTAILED HUMMINGBIRD, YELLOW WARBLER, HORNED LARK, GREAT HORNED OWL, MALLARD DUCK, SAY'S PHOEBE, MOCKINGBIRD, COMMON FLICKER, MARSH HAWK, BELTED KINGFISHER, SNOW GEESE, SANDHILL CRANE, HERRING GULL, BULLOCK'S ORIOLE, BREWER'S BLACKBIRD, COMMON GRACKLE, WESTERN Tanager, AMERICAN GOLDFINCH, CHIPPING SPARROW, TURKEY VULTURE, DOWNY WOODPECKER, RED TAILED HAWK, SWAINSON'S HAWK, VIOLET GREEN SWALLOW, LEWIS' WOODPECKER, BLUE JAY, SCRUB JAY, STELLER'S JAY, PHEASANT, SCREECH OWL, BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE, WESTERN BLUEBIRD, RED WINGED BLACKBIRD, RUBY THROATED HUMMINGBIRD, YELLOW RUMPED WARBLER, BLUE GROSBEAK, BOAT TAILED GRACKLE, WILSON'S WARBLER, HOUSE SPARROW, SONG SPARROW, KESTREL, GREAT BLUE HERON, RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD, BLACK PHOEBE.

## HOW CAN YOU HELP?

*Spread the word about saving these future parks and open spaces. **Be sure to vote in this special election and get your friends to vote. Support the AFA's effort to save these properties by sending in your donation.***

Send your donation to:

Anderson Field Alliance  
c/o K. Eberhard  
223 14th St. NW  
Albuquerque, NM 87104

## TRIP REPORT

By Rebecca Gracey

May 5. Otero Canyon and Capulin Springs. For being as dry as it was, we saw quite a few birds, including Ash-throated Flycatchers, Canyon Towhees, Solitary Vireos, and Rock Wrens.

May 19-20. Silver City. This is always a great birding place, and 13 of us weren't disappointed. It was hot and very dry, except at Mangas Springs, where we saw 30 species, where last year about the same time there were only eight. Lots of warblers (Lucy's and Yellow), flycatchers (Vermilion and Peewees), Vireos and Summer Tanager. We also watched several Clark's Spiny Lizards. They are bright turquoise. There were Black Hawks at Iron Bridge, Red-faced Warblers and Painted Redstarts at McMillon, and Western Bluebirds feeding babies at Pine Flats.

June 8. One-Hundred Count Day. There were two groups. The first group hunted birds from sun up to sun down and found over 100. Starting in a very dry Water Canyon, the count was 48 by noon, including the Red-faced Warbler. On to Bosque del Apache, where by 8:00 p.m. we had our hundred, including Vermilion Flycatchers, Mississippi Kite, American Bittern, Moorhens, and lots of Egrets. One of the best shows of the day was the thousands of Nighthawks (Common and Lesser) that circled the ponds like mosquitoes near sunset. They were spectacular! We all enjoyed watching the Pied-billed Grebe feeding her babies, and laughing at two of the cutest tiny baby coots trying to keep with their mother. The babies had red heads! It was a long but satisfying

day as far as birding went; however, we were there when the fire started. It was terrifying and sad. We watched the tanker plane as it flew right over us to dump its load of fire retardant on the flames.

The second group started at Isleta Marsh, stopped at Willie Chavez State Park, and then was to meet the rest of us at the Bosque. We never connected, but they saw 73 species, including a Yellow-breasted Chat, Common Yellow-throat, and Snipe.

June 29-30. Maxwell. Thirteen lucky people had a great trip. Although it rained off and on, we were still able to see lots of birds, including Willets, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Godwits, Brewer's, Savannah and Grasshopper Sparrows, Lazuli Bunting, a Black Tern, and baby Avocets. At the rest stop at Watrous, we got good looks at baby Kingbirds in the nest and a baby Mockingbird following its mother, begging for food.

## Gone Camping

By Julie Goodding

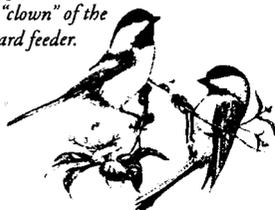
CNMAS is proud to announce our Camp Scholarship Winner for 1996, Carolyn Cleveland. Carolyn is the Environmental Education Coordinator of Albuquerque City's Open Space Division. She impressed the Board with her past experience and the number of people her job brings her in contact with -- adults and children.

Every year this Chapter awards a local educator with a scholarship to National Audubon's Workshop in the Rockies. We hope that one week in Wyoming's Wind River Mountains with NAS experts and staff will provide the energy and inspiration to teach ecology back here. It's a big job, and we're glad we can help in this way.

## Think Of Your Backyard As A Stage

(Nature provides the characters.)

The popular Chickadee is the "clown" of the backyard feeder.



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## KIDS SAY THE DARNEDEST THINGS

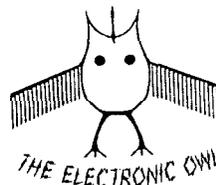
Seventeen children from Wayne Prentice's class at Apache Elementary School in Albuquerque took pencils in hand to write "Thank You's" to the Thursday Birders for sponsoring Audubon Adventures in their class. We wish we could reproduce all of them here, complete with drawings and stars. But let us just say that it was fun hearing from Dianna Heaney, Larissa L. Thill, Alyssa Cloud, Michelle Sivert, Frank Tafoya, Daniella Leggio, Merridith, Nelson Soo, Jodi Fagan, Barney, Aja MacGruder, Lou, Elynda Peck, Jason, Sarah Merchant, Gladys Clear, and Justin E. Goodwin. We join you in thanking the Thursday Birders.

And from Dowa Yalanne Elementary School in Zuni, we heard from Dave Cleary. He sent us a copy of the school's newsletter, written by the children themselves. Here's a sampling, written by fourth-grader Krista Stead:

"Our class is working with owl pellets. Owl pellets are bones that are from an owl's meal. If an owl eats something like a mouse, it swallows the whole thing instead of just tearing off the meat. After they swallow it, they cough out the bones and fur they can't digest. Our teacher, David Cleary, found some owl pellets. He gave each of us in our classroom one to take apart. We then started looking for bones. When we look for bones, we have to be careful not to break them. Otherwise, they won't fit on the skeleton paper. After we find all the bones, we match them up on this paper. If they fit, we glue them on the paper that has a body of a mouse or something else. Most of our pellets are mice bones. Some people are already gluing the bones on a paper and some are still looking for bones and matching them up. Owl pellets are interesting projects to work on."

Elsewhere in the newsletter, the second-graders reported that Spike, Room 8's mouse, had babies -- Minnie, Mickey, Minerva, Miranda, Martin, Max, Margaret, Miguel, and Monroe.

And Magic -- how Nature works.



Are you **CONFUSED** about the Internet? Do you wonder what the WWW (World Wide Web) is? How about those loooooong addresses? Here is the answer from UNM to many of your Internet and World Wide Web questions, complete with an ecological slant.

> Visit <http://algodones.unm.edu>

Scroll down to "Cool Links that Only We Know About". Choose The WWW as an Ecological Resource, and you'll find a clear statement of the who, what, when, and why of this amazing source of information, including many interesting ecological topics.

> You'll enjoy visiting The Ornithological Web Site too at <http://mgfx.com/bird/>

Their focus is on bird conservation, ecology, and education. Check out their weekly fun facts too. Did you know that--

>> Some birds use stars to orientate themselves during migration.

>> Some owls have fringes on their primary feathers to enable silent flight. But this isn't so its prey won't hear the owl, but so that the owl can hear its prey!

>> In Malaysia, where barn owls were introduced to control plagues of rats, each barn owl family killed about 1,300 rats a year!

>> In mid-October 1995, 7 captive bred Sandhill Cranes flew 800 miles from Idaho to Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, New Mexico ending their first winter migration by following an ultralight aircraft! This project is an attempt to establish new migrations routes for the critically endangered Whooping Crane, by testing it out on non-endangered Sandhills.

>> Flamingos feed with their hook-shaped bill by holding their head upside-down and scooping through mud and shallow water; ridges on their bill act to filter debris.

> Enjoy your visits to the Internet and the WWW! Where else can you travel so comfortably, cheaply and easily? Try it. You'll like it! If you have problems, write me, [christy@rt66.com](mailto:christy@rt66.com), CompuServe 72446,1565, or call 281-7776. - cb



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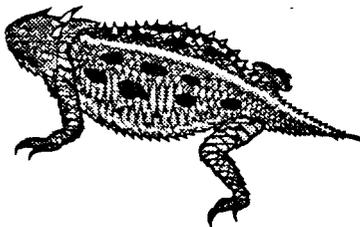
## HELP THE HERPS

Generously shared by Sangre de Cristo Chapter newsletter.

### AN AUDUBON INITIATIVE

The New Mexico Audubon Council, a coalition of the chapters around the State, has begun a campaign for a "Herps Bill" in the 1997 State Legislature. We propose a statute that would prevent private individuals from *commercially* exploiting wild-caught native amphibians and reptiles for profit. This statute will not prevent killing rattlesnakes for personal or public safety or keeping of amphibians and reptiles as pets.

As you learn more about our reptiles and amphibians, resolve to turn that knowledge into appreciation and protection. Let your State Representative or Senator know that you think this is an important issue that deserves his or her support. With education, we can succeed.



### AGENTS CATCH SNAKE CHARMER

According to a National Public Radio report, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service agents reportedly make about 10 wildlife busts a week at O'Hare International Airport in Chicago. Snakes in particular can be big business. They recently caught someone with 37 rare Madagascar snakes in a suitcase. Agents estimated the worth of the snakes at \$80,000.

### BREEDING REPTILES IN CAPTIVITY?

Frank Slavens, Curator of Reptiles at a Seattle zoo, and the author of *Reptiles and Amphibians in Captivity: Breeding—Longevity*, which is *the* catalog for herp inventory and breeding data recently wrote in an internet message to a newsgroup specializing in herps:

"I used to believe that widespread captive herp breeding would lead to reduced importation of wild-caught animals," he wrote, "[but] recent U.S. government data on reptile importation show that the opposite has occurred. Many wild populations ... cannot sustain this additional pressure from collecting. People all over the world who keep and breed reptiles and amphibians in captivity are not stopping to take in the big picture. Because they are having success, they do not contemplate the need to create self-sustaining [captive] populations ... Many believe they are doing some wonderful thing to 'save species.' Meanwhile, what they are doing is generating even more interest so more people want even more herps for pets or 'breeding stock.'"

Slavens' point is not that captive breeding is the direct cause of the problem, but that captive breeding as it stands today is not enough. As herps become mainstream pets, the demand outweighs the supply, so more and more animals are imported to fill the gap. In 1994 the U.S. imported 70,000 Ball Pythons; as many as 15,000 breeding females would be needed to produce this number of hatchlings in one year and eliminate the need for imports.

### RATTLESNAKE ROUNDUPS



Although rattlesnakes are considered something to be avoided by many people, they are in fact economically valuable and supply a domestic and international trade in skins, meat, gall bladders, leather products, and curios. Of the four species of *Crotalus* that are hunted in at least eight states, the western diamondback (*Crotalus atrox*), is the most commonly hunted rattlesnake in New Mexico. The wholesale value of a one pound western diamondback is about \$12 for the raw skin alone, or \$21 for the entire animal. The trade in rattlesnakes is closely linked to "rattlesnake roundups," unique events that are economically and socially important to the town in which they are held and to the people involved in the rattlesnake trade. In recent years, conservationists have become increasingly concerned over the growth of these roundups and the corresponding rise in commercialization of rattlesnake products. In New Mexico, the collection of wild rattlesnakes, whether in the Alamogordo roundup or in other trade, occurs without any state or federal regulations governing the trade or management of populations.

In addition to the lack of state control or monitoring, ecologically destructive collection methods, primarily spraying vaporized gasoline deep into rattlesnake dens to force the snakes to emerge, are practiced by some collectors. After capture, the snakes are often subject to conditions that result in individuals being crushed, suffocated, or starved to death.

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) recently published an article on rattlesnake trade which called for licensing collectors and establishing bag and minimum size limits as well as regulations on the transport, handling, and treatment of snakes. The article also called for an end to "gassing" snakes to drive them from their underground shelters, a practice that kills many snakes. Although the continued popularity and success of roundups, both in New Mexico (Alamogordo) and in several towns in Texas suggests that the practice has not seriously depleted snake populations, the WWF also called for research into the effect of the trade in western diamondback populations. Finally, noting the widespread proliferation of misinformation about rattlesnakes circulated at some of the roundups, they suggested that professional and amateur herpetologists provide accurate scientific information about rattlesnakes for public education purposes at the roundups.

The proposed law regulating commercial collection of herps in New Mexico would allow the continuation of the Alamogordo Rattlesnake Roundup, but would regulate the numbers of snakes that could be collected and the legal means for collecting them. Numbers would be based on the same kinds of limits that are established for other game animals—numbers that do not result in the decline of populations.

*World Wildlife Fund: Traffic, USA*



*Reptiles are part of the old wilderness of earth, the environment in which man got the nerves and hormones that make him human. If we let the reptile go, it is a sign we are ready to let all wilderness go. When that happens, we shall no longer be exactly human.—A. Carr, 1963*

*Mesilla Valley Audubon Society, Roadrunner Ramblings*

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