

BURROWING OWL

CENTRAL NEW MEXICO AUDUBON SOCIETY

FEBRUARY - MARCH 1998

VOLUME 27 - No. 2

UPCOMING CHAPTER ACTIVITIES -- MARK YOUR CALENDAR!!!

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

PROGRAMS

Programs begin at 7:30 p.m. Light refreshments are served from 7:15 and always include some delightful homemade treat from Pat Franklin's oven. Come to St. Timothy's Lutheran Church, northwest corner of Copper and Jefferson.

Thursday, Feb. 19 - "**Raptors of New Mexico.**" Presenter Ivan Pupulidy wears many hats -- pilot, firefighter, raptor expert, falconer, and educator. He actively works for preservation of raptor habitat, including the urban interface, and is lead pilot with the Forest Service Office of Aviation and Fire Management. This will be an enthusiastic presentation with great slides and plenty of opportunity to ask questions. Plus, there will be a surprise guest(s). Clue: Bring your binoculars with you, but **YOU WON'T NEED THEM!**

Thursday, March 19 - "**Journey to Gamble.**" Andrew Kraynik, a Sandia Labs scientist, is a longtime New Mexico birder who has often ventured from the sunny Southwest to the far North for some "cool" birdwatching. His journey to Gamble, Alaska, began when he first became fascinated with birds as a boy in West Virginia. Years later he worked his way closer to Gamble by canoeing and birding on the Thelon River in the Canadian Arctic. Eventually he made a number of trips to Gamble and the Pribiloffs. He has slides of all his travels. Come and compare notes with Andy or live vicariously through his birdwatching exploits. Mukluks not required!

AUDUBON FIELD TRIPS

Everyone is welcome on field trips: Audubon members and nonmembers, novice and experienced birders. Bring field guide, binoculars, munchies & water.

TRIPS FOR FEBRUARY

Feb. 15, Sunday - Corrales Bosque. Meet at the northwest corner of Corrales Road and Alameda Blvd. at 8:00 a.m. Dress warmly. We'll be back by noon.

TRIPS FOR MARCH

March 14, Saturday - Mystery Trip. We don't know where we'll go yet, but it will be someplace where we can see birds! So, show up at the Physics Bldg. parking lot, northeast corner of Lomas and Yale, at 8:00 a.m. to find out where we're going. Bring your lunch.

PREVIEW OF APRIL

April 4-5, Weekend - Percha Dam State Park. This is touted as the best birding spot in the state. Meet at the Physics Bldg. Parking Lot, N.E. Yale and Lomas, at 7:00 a.m. Bring lunch; we'll have supper out. This can be a day trip or an overnigher. There are campsites at the park or lodging in T or C. Call Charlotte (345-1271) or Sei (266-2480) so we know how any plan to stay overnight.

THURSDAY MORNING BIRDING GROUP

For information on weekly birding outings (every Thursday), call Julie Goodding at 255-9366. Meeting time and location, as well as duration, vary.

COUNCIL CORNER

As part of its new philosophy adopted under its Strategic Plan in 1995, National Audubon has aggressively pursued its transition from the existing nine regional offices to 50 state offices. Fourteen state offices are now open, each with a Director and support staff. A grant from the Packard Foundation in 1997 has provided matching funds to money raised by each state office.

To invite further participation and promote local development, the National Audubon Society Board of Directors is visiting different State Offices quarterly for its regular meetings.

Randall Davey Audubon Center in Santa Fe will be the site of the upcoming NAS Board meeting **March 18 through March 23**. Each and every member of Audubon is invited to attend any or all of the field trips, committee meetings, and social events planned around this exciting gathering.

ROUGH DRAFT AGENDA

For specific details on items of interest, contact

Randall Davey Audubon Center
(505) 983-4609

Wednesday, March 18

Field trip to Ted Turner's Vermejo Park Ranch, including reception and dinner

Thursday, March 19

Birding Walk, Breakfast, and Tour of Vermejo Park Ranch; return to Santa Fe

Friday, March 20

Between a 6:15 a.m. bird walk until dinner at 6:30, the day is filled with various Committee meetings, including a 9:00 a.m. Board Forum

Saturday, March 21

Another early morning bird walk, with meetings scheduled for Education/Communications, Field Operations, and Science Committees

Sunday, March 22

Morning bird walk, breakfast, and board meeting
Afternoon field trip to Bosque del Apache NWR
Dinner and overnight in Socorro

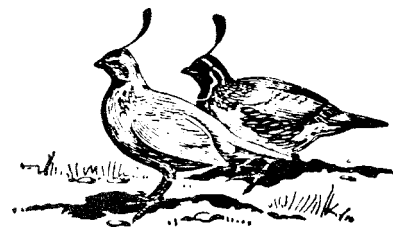
Monday, March 23

Breakfast and Bosque tour
Depart for Albuquerque 1:00 p.m.

MORE BIRDING OPPORTUNITIES

Feb. 7, Saturday - Hart Schwarz, expert birder, will lead a Placitas bird walk, sponsored by Wild Bird Center. Placitas residents will meet at Homestead Village at 8:30 a.m. Other interested persons can meet at the Wild Bird Center, Eubank at Spain NE in The Promenade Shopping Center, at 7:45 a.m. and caravan to Homestead Village. Everyone is welcome.

April 24-26 - 6th Annual Gila Bird & Nature Festival at the Gila National Forest, the Nature Conservancy's Gila Riparian Preserve and Mimbres River Preserve, and nearby areas. Sponsored by the Festival, the Nature Conservancy of New Mexico, local chapters of the Audubon Society and the New Mexico Native Plant Society, the U.S. Forest Service, The Silver City-Grant County Chamber of Commerce, and the Mexican American Chamber of Commerce in Silver City, the Festival includes field trips to observe local and migratory birds, identify flora of the southwestern forests and rivers, visit Mimbres archeological sites, as well as lectures, museum tours, and a Festival banquet on April 25. For information call 1-800-548-9378, or write: Gila Bird & Nature Festival, P.O. Box 2013, Silver City, NM 88062.



The Burrowing Owl Newsletter is published six times a year, February, April, June, August, October and December, by Central New Mexico Audubon Society, P.O. Box 30002, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 87190-0001. Subscription is free to National Audubon Society members, \$12 to nonmembers.

WILDLIFE RESCUE

If you find a sick or injured bird, call 344-2500.

RARE BIRD ALERT

To learn about sightings all over the state or to report a rare sighting, the **NEW NUMBER** in Albuquerque is 323-9323.

BIRDING ONLINE

Online, the New Mexico rare bird hotline is available by suscribing to either BIRDWEST or BIRDWG05. Send an e-mail to: listserv@listserv.arizona.edu (leave the subject blank). In the body of your message type: subscribe birdwest your name, or sub birdwg05 your name, depending on the list you want to join. Be sure to type in your e-mail address on the "from" line if your program does not do that automatically.

BIRDWEST lists rare bird alerts for many of the western states. BIRDWG05 has information primarily about birding in Arizona and New Mexico. It has information about places to go, birds to see, and is an opportunity to share information about birding these areas with other subscribers to the list.

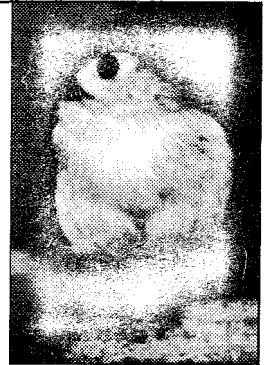
ABOUT "AUDUBON ADVISORY"

Because the Burrowing Owl is published every two months, we cannot keep you up to date on all the environmental initiatives and Congressional actions. Audubon Advisory and Action Alerts are available online through Audubon's read-only listserv. Send an e-mail message to: listserv@list.audubon.org (leave the subject blank). In the message, type: SUB audubon-news. Be sure to include your e-mail address in the "from" line if your program does not do this for you.

Because this is a read-only list, you will not receive hundreds of possibly unwanted messages from other subscribers. You will only receive environmental information and alerts from Audubon. The alerts will tell you who to contact if you want to comment and what Audubon's position is for each issue. This is a great way to learn about and become involved with conservation issues.

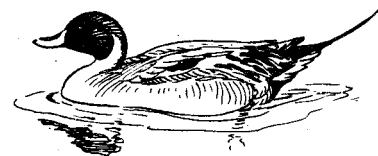
The natural alternative

Backyard birding is an increasingly popular entertainment option. Share it with your friends and family, and enjoy **15% off** any bird feeder with this ad.



Wild Bird Center

The Promenade Shopping Center
5200 Eubank NE (Eubank at Spain NE)
(Just east of Marie Callendar's)
332-4737

**THE STATUS OF WETLANDS LOSS**

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife report, "Status and Trends of Wetlands in the Conterminous United States: Projected Trends 1985 to 1995," issued in September, the U.S. lost 1.2 million acres of wetlands between 1985-95, 1% of all wetlands in the lower 48 states. Agriculture and logging were the main culprits, with the Southeast particularly hard hit.

Of 221 million acres of wetlands existing in colonial times, 101 million remain. Although the Bush-era goal of no-net-loss of wetlands remains elusive, it's within sight. The rate of wetland loss has dropped 60% in 20 years. From the 1950s to 1970s, the lower 48 states lost 458,000 acres a year. The rate slowed to 290,000 acres yearly from the mid-1970s to mid-1980s. The new study estimates recent losses at 117,000 acres per year. Half the progress since 1985 is due to wetland restoration activities, which boosted the nation's wetlands base by an estimated 78,000 acres per year.

--From Common Ground

IN MEMORIAM

We wish to gratefully acknowledge the receipt of a donation from Trish and Andy Braunschweiger to Central New Mexico Audubon Society in memory of Dorothy Torza. We extend sympathy to Dorothy's family and friends, to whom she was such a blessing.

"All Nature seems at work.
Slugs leave their lair --
The bees are stirring --
Birds are on the wing --
And Winter, slumbering
in the open air,
Wears on his smiling face
a dream of Spring!"
--Samuel Taylor Coleridge

**BOSQUE DEL APACHE AND CNMAS
A REPORT BY JEFF MYERS, PRESIDENT**

Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, arguably the jewel of the National Wildlife Refuge system, was previously adopted by our Chapter under National's "Adopt A Refuge" program. In accordance with a Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National has created a replacement program referred to as ARK (Audubon Refuge Keeper). Our Chapter has formally adopted Bosque again under this new program.

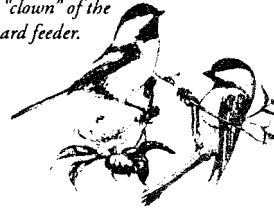
As it has done for many years, the Chapter will, on an annual basis, perform Bosque-related activities in the following categories: public education, citizen science, volunteerism, fund raising, and advocacy. Together with Friends of Bosque del Apache NWR and other groups working with the Refuge, we look forward to making it an even better source of wetland habitat and environmental education.

If you would like to work on a committee to coordinate Bosque-related activities, give me a call at 242-9677.

Think Of Your Backyard As A Stage

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THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1997

On October 9, 1997, with National Audubon Society President John Flicker at his side, President Clinton signed the new law which, for the first time, establishes conservation as the central mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Of notable interest to Auduboners is recognition in the law that "compatible wildlife dependent recreation," including wildlife observation, ought to receive priority consideration over other secondary uses (e.g. grazing, jet skiing and oil drilling.) For the benefit of wildlife, new mandates require the Secretary of the Interior to manage refuges for biodiversity; monitor trends in fish, wildlife and plant populations; and ensure water quality and quantity on refuges. We, as Auduboners, have a lot to be proud of and grateful for.



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As a fellow birder and retired Forest Service Biologist, I'm looking forward to helping my many friends meet their real estate needs. I will donate \$75 to the CNMAS upon closing if you contact me through this ad.

Leon Fager

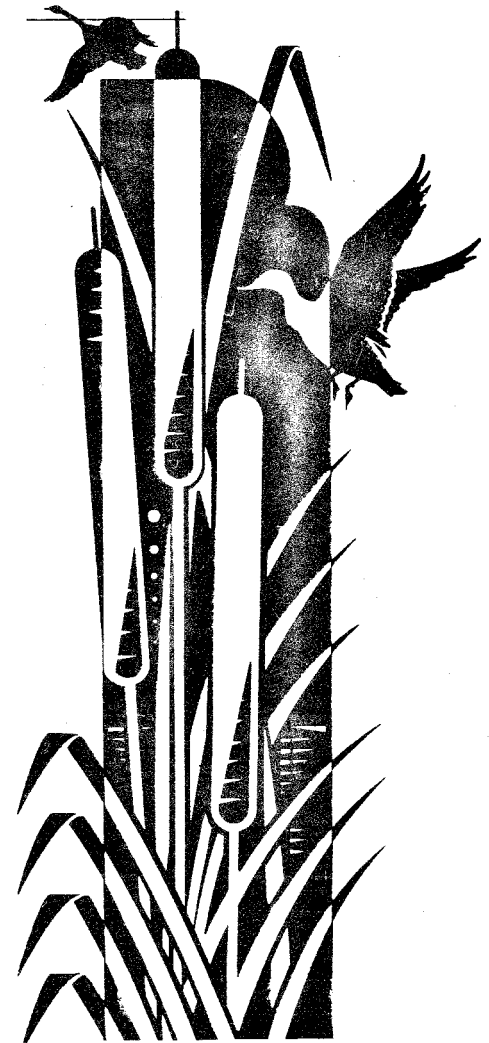
ALBUQUERQUE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT: 12-21-97

By Hart R. Schwarz, compiler

01. Pied-billed Grebe	12	54. Pinyon Jay	79
02. Eared Grebe	1	55. Black-billed Magpie	7
03. Great Blue Heron	28	56. American Crow	2,182
04. Black-crowned Night Heron	1	57. Common Raven	33
05. Canada Goose	324	58. Horned Lark	202
06. Wood Duck	296	59. Black-capped Chickadee	22
07. Gadwall	182	60. Mountain Chickadee	7
08. American Wigeon	442	61. Juniper Titmouse	10
09. Mallard	1,450	62. Bushtit	169
10. Northern Shoveler	51	63. White-breasted Nuthatch	29
11. Northern Pintail	18	64. Rock Wren	1
12. Green-winged Teal	58	65. Bewick's Wren	27
13. Canvasback	12	66. Winter Wren	1
14. Ring-necked Duck	86	67. Marsh Wren	4
15. Lesser Scaup	6	68. Golden-crowned Kinglet	2
16. Bufflehead	2	69. Ruby-crowned Kinglet	70
17. Common Goldeneye	1	70. Western Bluebird	32
18. Common Merganser	54	71. Townsend's Solitaire	15
19. Ruddy Duck	15	72. Hermit Thrush	5
20. Bald Eagle	6	73. American Robin	167
21. Northern Harrier	8	74. Northern Mockingbird	1
22. Sharp-shinned Hawk	8	75. Brown Thrasher	1
23. Cooper's Hawk	13	76. Curve-billed Thrasher	10
24. Red-tailed Hawk	21	77. European Starling	35,296
25. Golden Eagle	1	78. American Pipit	60
26. American Kestrel	32	79. Yellow-rumped Warbler	174
27. Merlin	1	80. Spotted Towhee	61
28. Prairie Falcon	2	81. Canyon Towhee	30
29. Ring-necked Pheasant	2	82. Rufous-crowned Sparrow	1
30. Scaled Quail	45	83. American Tree Sparrow	4
31. Gambel's Quail	8	84. Chipping Sparrow	10
32. Virginia Rail	2	85. Brewer's Sparrow	17
33. American Coot	238	86. Black-throated Sparrow	2
34. Sandhill Crane	149	87. Sage Sparrow	12
35. Whooping Crane	1	88. Lark Bunting	1
36. Killdeer	37	89. Savannah Sparrow	12
37. Common Snipe	5	90. Song Sparrow	229
38. Ring-billed Gull	56	91. Lincoln's Sparrow	1
39. Rock Dove	786	92. Swamp Sparrow	1
40. White-winged Dove	39	93. White-throated Sparrow	2
41. Mourning Dove	167	94. White-crowned Sparrow	1,021
42. Greater Roadrunner	4	95. Dark-eyed Junco	1,602
43. Western Screech-Owl	4	96. Red-winged Blackbird	4,352
44. Great Horned Owl	5	97. Western Meadowlark	128
45. Belted Kingfisher	10	98. Yellow-headed Blackbird	7
46. Red-naped Sapsucker	2	99. Brewer's Blackbird	15
47. Downy Woodpecker	16	100. Great-tailed Grackle	45
48. Hairy Woodpecker	1	101. Cassin's Finch	2
49. Northern Flicker	119	102. House Finch	893
50. Black Phoebe	18	103. Pine Siskin	54
51. Say's Phoebe	14	104. American Goldfinch	163
52. Loggerhead Shrike	4	105. House Sparrow	256
53. Western Scrub-Jay	62		

1997 Bosque del Apache NWR CBC
 Saturday, December 20, 1998
 Steve Cox, Compiler

Species	#	Species	#	Species	#
1 Pied-billed Grebe	5	48 Red-shafted Flicker	22	93 House Sparrow	18
2 Double-crested Cormorant	1	49 Black Phoebe	2		
3 Neotropic Cormorant	11	50 Say's Phoebe	7		
4 Great Blue Heron	15	51 Horned Lark	80	Total Species	93
5 Great Egret	11	52 W. Scrub Jay	1	Total Individuals	47709
6 Black-crowned Night-Heron	4	53 American Crow	1254		
7 Snow Goose (blue form)	100	54 Chihuahuan Raven	3		
Snow Goose	15390	55 Common Raven	2		
8 Ross' Goose	20	raven, sp.	1	Count Week Birds Only	
9 Canada Goose	200	56 Verdin	2		
10 Wood Duck	1	57 Rock Wren	1	Tundra Swan	
11 Green-winged Teal	187	58 Bewick's Wren	1	Rough-legged Hawk	
12 Mallard	1735	59 Marsh Wren	6		
13 Northern Pintail	1189	60 Ruby-crowned Kinglet	7		
14 Northern Shoveler	147	61 Western Bluebird	5		
15 Gadwall	59	62 Hermit Thrush	1		
16 Canvasback	2	63 Curve-billed Thrasher	1		
17 Redhead	8	64 Crissal Thrasher	1		
18 Ring-necked Duck	4	65 American Pipit	24		
19 Common Goldeneye	2	66 Loggerhead Shrike	2		
20 Bufflehead	12	67 European Starling	340		
21 Hooded Merganser	2	68 Y-rumped W. (Myrtle)	1		
22 Common Merganser	3	Y-rumped W. (Audubon's)	8		
23 Ruddy Duck	9	69 Pyrrhuloxia	5		
duck sp.	13500	70 Spotted Towhee	14		
24 Bald Eagle	6	71 Canyon Towhee	3		
25 Northern Harrier	20	72 Chipping Sparrow	3		
26 Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	73 Brewer's Sparrow	40		
27 Cooper's Hawk	2	74 Vesper Sparrow	17		
28 Red-tailed Hawk	12	75 Black-throated Sparrow	3		
Red-tailed (Harlan's) Hawk	3	76 Sage Sparrow	6		
29 Ferruginous Hawk	1	77 Savannah Sparrow	123		
30 American Kestrel	9	78 Song Sparrow	134		
31 Prairie Falcon	1	79 Lincoln's Sparrow	10		
32 Ring-necked Pheasant	10	80 Swamp Sparrow	5		
33 Wild Turkey	52	81 White-throated Sparrow	1		
34 Gambel's Quail	152	82 White-crowned Sparrow	682		
35 American Coot	163	83 Oregon Junco	121		
36 Sandhill Crane	9500	Gray-headed Junco	16		
37 Whooping Crane	3	Dark-eyed Junco	105		
38 Killdeer	4	84 Red-winged Blackbird	1655		
39 Greater Yellowlegs	1	85 Western Meadowlark	85		
40 Least Sandpiper	3	meadowlark sp.	5		
41 Common Snipe	7	86 Yellow-headed Blackbird	9		
42 Rock Dove	53	87 Brewer's Blackbird	56		
43 Mourning Dove	168	88 Great-tailed Grackle	3		
44 Western Screech Owl	3	89 Common Grackle	1		
45 Great Horned Owl	2	90 House Finch	16		
46 Belted Kingfisher	1	91 Lesser Goldfinch	2		
47 Ladder-backed Woodpecker	2	92 American Goldfinch	2		



SANDIA MOUNTAINS CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Saturday, December 27, 1997

Jonalyn Yancey, Compiler

1. Sharp-Shinned Hawk	3
2. Cooper's Hawk	2
3. Red-tailed Hawk	4
4. Golden Eagle	3
5. American Kestrel	8
6. Rock Dove	68
7. Red-naped Sapsucker	1
8. Downy Woodpecker	2
9. Hairy Woodpecker	1
10. Northern (red-shafted) Flicker	37
11. Horned Lark	3
12. Steller's Jay	21
13. Scrub Jay	159
14. Pinon Jay	60
15. Clark's Nutcracker	2
16. American Crow	131
17. Common Raven	52
18. Mountain Chickadee	77
19. Plain Titmouse	23
20. Bushtit	95
21. Red-breasted Nuthatch	27
22. White-breasted Nuthatch	9
23. Pygmy Nuthatch	3
24. Brown Creeper	5
25. Ruby-crowned Kinglet	3
26. Western Bluebird	77
27. Mountain Bluebird	12
28. Townsend's Solitaire	25
29. Hermit Thrush	1
30. American Robin	511
31. Sage Thrasher	1
32. Crissal Thrasher	7
33. Loggerhead Shrike	1
34. European Starling	57
35. Spotted Towhee	18
36. Canyon Towhee	33
37. Song Sparrow	1
38. White-crowned Sparrow	7
39. Dark-eyed Junco	491
40. Western Meadowlark	19
41. Cassin's Finch	7
42. House Finch	100
43. Red Crossbill	3
44. Pine Siskin	113
45. American Goldfinch	6
46. House Sparrow	48

Total Species 46
 Total Individuals 2337



A State-Wide Hummingbird Survey

Sponsored by the New Mexico Audubon Council, Partners in Flight, Randall Davey Audubon Center, and Share with Wildlife

The New Mexico Hummingbird Connection (NMHC) is a wonderful way to contribute to the knowledge of hummingbirds in New Mexico while learning more about hummingbirds yourself. This all-volunteer study was started in 1995 as a means of helping us all learn more about hummingbirds in our state. Participants are asked to watch hummingbirds in their yards at least two hours each week and to take note of what plants, feeders, or water they are visiting, or any other observation of interest. Some participants have found nests, others have noticed courtship displays, while still others have noted how much these fascinating creatures eat.

To become part of this fun study you need only send your name, address, and county of residence along with a stamped self-addressed envelope to: New Mexico Audubon Council, 26 Dogwood Lane, Los Lunas, NM 87031. A \$5.00 donation to New Mexico Audubon Council is suggested to help with the printing costs of the newsletter, special observation calendar, and packet of seeds you will receive. We hope to hear from you about your hummingbird adventures this coming year.

This program is sponsored by New Mexico Audubon Council, Randall Davey Audubon Center, Partners in Flight, and with assistance from New Mexico Share with Wildlife. If you have questions, please contact Lorraine Schulte in Las Cruces (phone 524-7029), Deanna Einspahr in Santa Fe (phone 983-4609), Larry Arnold in Albuquerque (phone 298-3665, email larnold47@aol.com), or Eleanor Wootten, NMHC program coordinator (email ewootten@zianet.com). The direct URL to our program fact sheet is:

<http://www.unm.edu/~bncville/nmos/hummer.html>

National Audubon Society

Chapter Membership Application

Yes, I'd like to join.

Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society and of my local chapter. Please send AUDUBON magazine and my membership card to the address below.

My check for \$20 is enclosed

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Please make all checks payable to the national Audubon Society



Send this application and your check to:

National Audubon Society

CNMA Chapter

P.O. Box 30002 • Albuquerque, NM 87190-0002

LOCAL CHAPTER _____

Central New Mexico Audubon Society

Local Chapter Code — Q51

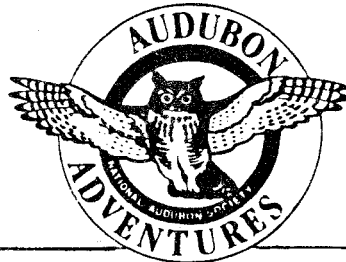
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Use the above form for new subscriptions only. Contact Membership Chairperson for changes of address or corrections in your Burrowing Owl label. Nonmembers can receive the Burrowing Owl by sending your name and address with \$12 to CNMAS, c/o Beth Hurst, 804 Guadalupe Circle, N.W., 87114-1710.

AUDUBON ADVENTURES

Julie Goodding, Education Chairperson, reports two more schools are receiving Audubon Adventures -- Manzano Day School and Montezuma Elementary. An example of the information their students will study, from the "Wetlands" issue:

"Native Americans called these areas 'between lands,' neither water nor land. Wetlands are important to people in a variety of ways. Can you name some berries and grains grown in wetlands that are part of many Thanksgiving meals? There's more: scientists have discovered many wetland plants that contain useful medicines. A wetland acts as a natural water-treatment plant, cleaning water by filtering it through its plant life. Wetlands soak up heavy rains like a sponge, reducing flooding and erosion during storms."



Enclosed please find my check for \$ _____
 (Each \$35 will sponsor one classroom in the Audubon Adventures Program. Any amount you contribute will benefit our educational activities.)

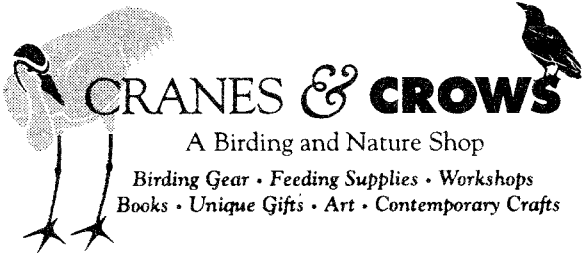
I choose to designate _____
 Elementary/Middle School for my sponsorship
 (designation is optional).

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Help support this educational outreach program! Send your check payable to CNMAS with this form to Ron Waitz, 804 Guadalupe Circle, N.W., Albq., 87114.



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AUDUBON DEFEATS SPECIAL INTEREST RULES

Fending off a Congressional attack on fish-eating birds, Audubon successfully rallied public opposition to legislative provisions requiring the Fish & Wildlife Service to permit unlimited killing of comorants.

Buried in the Interior Appropriations bill was special interest language declaring war on double-crested comorants, which are viewed in some states as having an adverse impact on fish farming.

Behind closed doors, unnamed lobbyists for commercial and sport fishing groups were able to broaden the comorant directive to include all fish-eating birds that "cause problems." This provision was extremely broad and, taken literally, it would have allowed anyone to kill any fish-eating birds causing problems, at any time.

After Audubon blew the whistle on this language, it vanished. No one -- neither Representatives nor Senators -- was willing to take responsibility for the language. According to a follow-up Gannett Newswire story on October 28, several congressional aides said that, "most Senators and House members had no idea what the committee had done until Audubon found out what was going on and rallied public opposition."

This is a major victory for Audubon and an outstanding example of how concerned citizens, and more specifically, Audubon's grassroots network, made a difference.

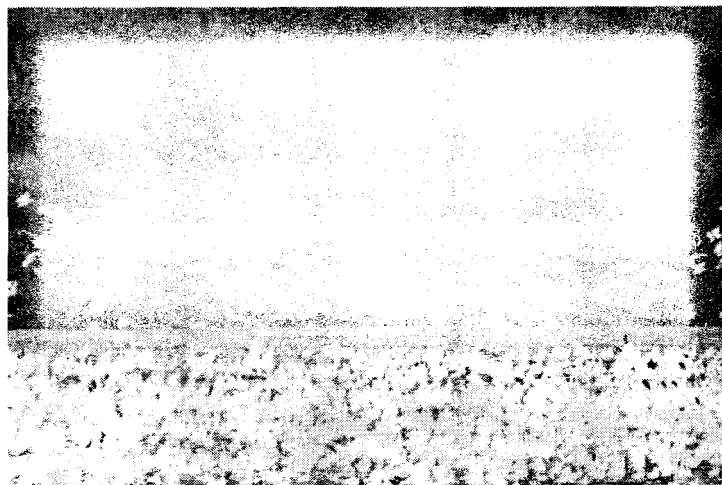


Letter from NAS President John Flicker, Oct. 17, 1997:

SNOW GOOSE NUMBERS THREATEN HABITAT

At our recent meeting [Sept.] in Tucson, the NAS Board of Directors approved unanimously a resolution to protect wildlife habitat and ecosystems in the subarctic currently under threat from damage by burgeoning populations of lesser snow goose. Specifically the Board voted to support the science-based recommendations of the Arctic Goose Task Force to reduce the mid-continent population of the lesser snow goose through expanded hunting. Audubon's concern in this situation is in line with our mission to protect birds, wildlife, and their habitat, using the best tools available.

As a result of land-use practices in the south-central U.S., the snow goose population that winters in that area is exploding. The immense flocks of geese then migrate north each spring, eating virtually all the plants in their Arctic breeding grounds and causing widespread devastation to habitat that otherwise would be mostly pristine tundra west of Hudson Bay in Canada.



Karen Hoffman Atwood

Snow geese (Chen caerulescens) making use of Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area (Lebanon Co., PA) on their journey north in early spring.

Ironically, the problem [...] is one of our own making. Efforts to protect and enhance populations of waterfowl have worked too well for snow geese. The mid-continent population (breeding west of Hudson Bay, and wintering on the southern Great Plains and western Gulf Coast) has grown by almost 300% since the 1960s, and is now estimated at over three million. Land-use and wildlife-management practices have led to unnatural survival levels for snow geese on their U.S. wintering grounds. Their burgeoning numbers are now in the process of destroying their own Arctic breeding habitat.

The snow goose population nesting west of Hudson Bay, Canada, has reached incredible densities (sometimes with as many as 3,000 nests packed into one square kilometer of tundra). The geese are now eating everything in sight. Because they grub out plants by the roots, large numbers of them can literally destroy the tundra. To quote Robert F. Rockwell, Kenneth F. Abraham, and Robert L. Jeffries (Winter, 1997, issue of the *Living Bird Quarterly*), 'Scientists are concerned that the increasing numbers of geese may soon lead to an ecological catastrophe as these voracious feeders turn the delicate arctic habitat they inhabit into a barren wasteland.'

If we do nothing about the situation, the geese will spread across much of the Arctic, devastating huge areas of tundra, and then millions of them will suffer malnourishment, disease, and starvation, leading to a population crash. But by that time, they will have destroyed the habitat for many other species. Studies show that once degraded, this habitat will take decades, at least, to recover. Populations of many other bird species will be hurt by the resulting loss of habitat. These are among the tundra and marsh species that are likely to suffer local starvation and population decline because of the current habitat destruction:

- northern pintail
- green-winged teal
- oldsquaw
- yellow rail
- semipalmated plover
- American golden-plover
- semipalmated sandpiper
- least sandpiper
- dunlin
- stilt sandpiper
- red-necked phalarope
- parasitic jaeger
- Arctic tern
- short-eared owl
- American pipit
- Savannah sparrow
- American tree sparrow
- Lapland longspur
- hoary redpoll

Also possibly affected will be many other bird species such as short-billed dowitcher, Hudsonian godwit, and Smith's longspur, as well as many tundra plants, butterflies, and other organisms.

The problem is urgent. Long-term solutions may involve changes in land-use practices in the southern and central U.S., but more immediate steps are essential. Audubon thus endorses the recommendations of the Arctic Goose Habitat Working Group, an international team of scientists studying the problem.

The Board resolution commits the NAS to work closely with federal, state and Canadian agencies to define the most effective mix of short- and long-term solutions to the snow goose population problem. By acting now, we hope to reduce the loss of critical habitat and to protect the many bird species and other wildlife that depend on this habitat."

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