



ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

MESILLA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

www.mvaudubon.org Vol. 40, No. 3, Summer 2018

Upcoming Events

Monthly meetings

You are invited to the monthly meetings of the Mesilla Valley Audubon Society, held at **7:00 PM** on the third Wednesday of the month at the Southwest Environmental Center at 275 North Downtown Mall. Early birds may come at 6:30 for a social gathering before the meeting.

Aug 15: (Wednesday) Patrick Nolan, new Executive Director for Friends of Organ Peaks National Monument

Sept 19: Weather Birding Tracking

Oct 17:

Nov 21: Bird Identification Class

Dec 19: Christmas Bird Count preparation

Bird Walks

August 15 (Wednesday): Beginner's Bird Walk at Tellbrook Park. Meet at park entrance on Winchester St at 7:30 AM. Wayne Treer is the leader.

Aug 18 (Saturday): Leasburg Dam State Park. Meet at visitors' center at 8:00 AM. C.J. Goin is the leader.



These cliff swallows should still be at Leasburg Dam this coming weekend when CJ Goin leads a bird walk there on 8/18 beginning at 8:00 AM. Photo: Sid Webb, 2018

The **August 15** Meeting of Mesilla Valley Audubon Society will feature a presentation by Patrick Nolan, the new Executive Director of Friends of Organ Mountain Desert Peaks National Monument. That group has much in common with MVAS and his presentation will surely be an opportunity to discuss how our two organizations can work together in the years ahead. It is a meeting you will not want to miss!

From National Audubon website:

Congress Considers Major Bills this Month Impacting Key Audubon Priorities

Since its founding in 1905, the National Audubon Society has been a major player in conservation efforts. Currently in Washington, Congress is addressing much of this history. The setting for this review of policy is in the debate over legislation covering annual appropriation bills, five-year renewal of the nations Farm Bill, the biannual renewal of the Water Resources Development Act, and the annual renewal of the National Defense Authorization Act. Each of these bills currently have sections that pertain to issues important to conservationists. Allocation of federal funding could have significant impact on activities of the Interior Department/Environmental Protection Agency supporting conservation causes. The concern is that there will be clauses in these bills that weaken the Endangered Species Act or that monies allocated for projects such as the Great Lakes restoration will be significantly reduced. These are issues the National Audubon Society takes very seriously and is urging its members to take action supporting longstanding conservation efforts. For more details, see the Audubon website—news: <https://www.audubon.org/news> . A detailed description of the current status and at risk features of the Endangered Species Act may be found in an excellent July 22 article in the New York Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/22/climate/endangered-species-act-trump-administration.html> .

From Audubon New Mexico website:

In Historic Partnership Audubon and New Mexico Municipalities Release Water to Recharge Vital Habitat along the Rio Grande

As a branch of the National Audubon Society, Audubon New Mexico promotes conservation as a primary principle of its existence. In July of this year, it partnered with the municipalities of Bernalillo, Los Lunas, and Belen and the private organization The Club at Las Campanas, which is associated with the Jicarilla Apache Nation. Together, this group will be responsible for the release of approximately 250 million gallons of water to relieve pressure on a 34 mile stretch of the middle Rio Grande severely impacted by our current drought. It is considered a very important step in conservation of riparian life. This is the first of its kind water release into the Rio Grande and involved Audubon’s support in bringing to the table people from multiple levels of government and independent Indian tribal authorities.. One might hope that Audubon New Mexico will continue its effort and address some of the Rio Grande further south in the state. For details, visit the Audubon New Mexico website: <http://nm.audubon.org/press-release> .



Fidgety Western Kingbird photographed at Tellbrook Park.

Photo: Sid Webb, 2018

Cloudcroft Birding—MVAS explores Otero County



Mark Pendleton and Diane Moor with Alamogordo guests Jim and Pat at rendezvous point in High Rolls Saturday morning prior to the Cloudcroft excursion

Our July 28th tour of the Cloudcroft area was a success, with Mark Pendleton leading the way. We knew we were in for some excitement when a large flock of wild turkeys fled up a mountainside after seeing our cars approach.

Starting at Karr Canyon we found a nice variety of birds before the picnic grounds, which were flooded with campers on a beautiful summer day. Taking advantage of the farmer's fields, picket fences, evergreen trees, scrub, and open spaces we spotted black-headed grosbeaks, northern flickers, a gray vireo, western kingbirds, robins, chipping sparrows, house wrens, red

winged blackbirds, Eastern Wood-pewee, and a red tail hawk circling above.

We made a brief stop at Apache Canyon (not an eBird Hotspot), where we checked out a pond with a Mallard duck, some hummingbirds, a Hairy Woodpecker, and a female Red-winged blackbird. The latter caused great consternation for this observer because it wasn't black at all!

Finally, at Bluff Springs we saw multiple yellow warblers by a small stream, Canyon Towhees, and some more Black-headed Grosbeaks.

We ended the tour with a lunch at the Cloudcroft cabin of Sid Webb and Rafaelita Chavez. Visitors Jim and Pat from Alamogordo had tales of many great birding areas in Alamogordo and other locals nearby, leading us all to dream of a return to Otero County in the future, to build on a very successful outing.



Sid Webb claimed he was late because a family of wild turkeys had blocked the road from Cloudcroft to High Rolls. Nobody believed him. Photo: Sid Webb, 2018

EBird Hotspots

The eBird computer application is a dramatic part of birding in 2018. eBird Hotspots provide an interesting perspective to New Mexico birding. An “eBird Hotspot” is defined as a “public birding location created by eBird users.” Using Hotspots allows users to easily contribute their birding checklists to the public database. All Hotspots are initially suggested by eBird users and are cleared by one of the organizations administrators to avoid duplication. There can be sublocations within a general Hotspot area (e.g. Leasburg Dam State Park—general, Leasburg Dam State Park—Robledo Campground). They do not include backyard lists or private property birding sites not available to the public.

Here in Dona Ana County we have 49 designated Hotspots. Over the years, we have identified 378 species of birds by submitting 11,821 checklists. Thus far in 2018, we have identified 254 species via 1607 checklists. Many of the Hotspots are away from the Las Cruces metropolitan area and provide interesting excursions for any curious birdwatcher

In New Mexico eBird contributors have sighted 540 species via 270,715 checklists over the years, with 403 species via 30,309 checklists thus far this year. Most of the Hotspots eBird has designated are along waterways including the Rio Grande, Gila and Pecos River. Bosque del Apache is the State’s most prominent hotspot, with 360 species and 6211 checklists. The most active in Dona Ana County, Mesilla Valley Bosque, has been the location where 259 species were sighted via 897 checklists. As one would expect, eBird hotspots are concentrated in high population areas, where most of the state’s birders live.

While eBird encourages reporting using its Hotspot maps, it does not discourage its users to look for birds in other locations. It wants its followers to have fun and find the birds wherever they are.

Reminder: Photo Contest for *Roadrunner Ramblings*. We need your photos!



Black Crested Night Heron, Leasburg Dam,
2018. Photo by Sid Webb

Photo Contest Rules: Photos submitted must have been taken in our local area, i.e., Sierra, Otero, or Dona Ana Counties only, and during the past 12 months. Our publications committee judges entries based on photo quality, subject interest, and subject variety. Please include the location taken and name of species in your email. Our newsletter editor makes the final selection for publication. From these, one is chosen as the First Prize winner.

By submitting your photo you automatically grant Mesilla Valley Audubon Society (MVAS) publication rights for one year. MVAS may use your photo in any of our publications, including newsletters and our annual calendar. Photos should be submitted electronically as a high resolution jpg file to this email address sidwebb@gmail.com

Roadrunner Ramblings is published quarterly and is distributed via the web. A copy is mailed to all MVAS members and a copy is posted on the MVAS website. All members of MVAS are encouraged to submit any article of interest to the group and any bird photograph recently taken. Please email a copy to sidwebb@gmail.com (tel: 575 915 5017). To be added to the distribution list, contact Judy Wilbur, jkwilbur@gmail.com or 512-560-4717.

Mesilla Valley Audubon Society, a chapter of the National Audubon Society, is a conservation and natural history organization in southern New Mexico that promotes appreciation and conservation of birds, other wildlife and habitat, through environmental education, issue advocacy, and natural history experiences.

Board meetings are held on the Thursday before the 3rd Wed at 5:30 pm at the Southwest Environmental Center on the downtown mall. All Audubon members are welcome.

JOIN AUDUBON NOW!

- National Membership (special for new members only): Join both the National Audubon Society and Mesilla Valley Audubon Society for the introductory rate of \$20 for your first year of membership. This is a \$15 savings. You'll receive both *Audubon Magazine* and *Roadrunner Ramblings*. Make check payable to National Audubon Society.
- Local Chapter Membership: Join, or renew your membership in, Mesilla Valley Audubon Society for \$15 per year. You'll receive *Roadrunner Ramblings* and be eligible for member-only events such as bird identification classes. Make check payable to Mesilla Valley Audubon Society.

Name _____ email: _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Send this form with your check to

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