BLM to Revise Management Plan
by Bob Tafanelli & Nancy Stotz

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is preparing to amend its 1993 Mimbres Resource Management Plan, and they will soon (perhaps as early as the end of September) begin asking for public input on how BLM lands are managed in Doña Ana, Sierra, and Otero counties.

In all three counties, a number of conservation issues are likely to be addressed, including the designation of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), public access, resource protection, and recreation (including off-highway vehicle management). One of the keys to habitat protection is controlling road access—having enough roads, but not too many. If you know of roads that should be closed or areas that need road access, now is the time to comment, because we may have to live with this plan for another decade.

Since the BLM will be soliciting input from a wide-range of users, it will be important for conservationists to speak up to ensure adequate protections for areas with significant wildlife and wilderness values. If you are aware of any areas of critical environmental concern please let us know. These areas can have scenic, biological, archeological, historical or other values, so don’t limit your ideas.

In Doña Ana County, additional attention will be given to open space preservation and land tenure designations. In the 1993 plan, the BLM designated roughly 60,000 acres of land—most on the East Mesa between the river valley and the mountains—for disposal (sale or exchange to other governmental entities or private owners).

Through the revision, our community will have an opportunity to revisit those designations and comment on how the disposal process is handled. Please help by providing us with your comments and ideas.

In preparation for the revision, a Draft Vision for a county-wide open space and trail system has been developed by the Citizens’ Task Force for Open Space Preservation (CTF). The Draft Vision proposes additional protections for several “Open Space and Trail Areas” on BLM land. Currently, CTF is requesting feedback from community groups and individuals about the Draft Vision; ultimately, CTF hopes to be able to gather the support of

Audubon Adventures Update
by Lorraine Schulte, Chairman
Audubon Adventures

The Audubon Adventures program that we sponsor and provide to schools in Las Cruces, Alamogordo, and Truth or Consequences continues to be one of Mesilla Valley Audubon Society’s most important projects. Another classroom in Arrey, N.M. will be included this year.

With the support of members and friends, as well as generous donations from VFW Post 1389 and the Tour of Gardens of Las Cruces, and funds raised by our annual Birdathon, we will be providing 90 classrooms with this excellent study program. The kits will arrive early in October 2004. Randall Davey Audubon Center in Santa Fe, New Mexico, will have ready another New Mexico supplement entitled “New Mexico Salamanders” which we will include in the kits before they go to the schools.

Those who have donated to Audubon Adventures since September 2003 are Hi Hopes Garden Club, Lucia Wilcox, Linda and Walter Whitford, Sue and Wally Hill, Mary Anna McCarthy, Seanna Barton, Lorraine Schulte, Pearl Nickell, Mary Williams, Thomas and Jane Teague, Robert Meyer, Shirley Minge, Bill and Donna Jacobson, Mark and Daison Taylor Glaw, Nancy Stotz and Ralph Preszler, Robert Tafanelli, Ann Guode, John Mangameli, Walter Kazmier, Ruth Wiser, Nina Singleton, Ed and Dianne Nelson, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Tillert, Tim Lawton, Mary Lou Wallace, Darrell Mott, funds raised by Jackye Meinecke at Enchanted Gardens, VFW Post 1389 (in Elephant Butte, N.M.), and Las Cruces Tour of Gardens.

Joy McFarland, who is the teacher-contact for this program, contributes many hours of time, making phone calls and personal contacts with teachers and checking on orders. Our program is successful in great part due to her dedication.

Michelle Santisteban is continuing her project “Proposal for Research on the Audubon Adventures Program,” evaluating the effectiveness of this program in educating young students who will eventually become stewards of the environment.

(continued on page 2) See BLM
Not just parrotling: dialects and duets in the Yellow-naped Amazon of Costa Rica. October 20. Dr. Tim Wright, a new faculty member in the Biology Department at NMSU, has studied behavior and communication in wild Yellow-naped Amazons for over a decade. He will present highlights of this research including his discovery of vocal dialects, in which multiple calls change at the same boundaries, much as found in human language. Video of parrots in action will be presented, including mated pairs engaged in duets at nest sites. Finally, he will discuss conservation issues, particularly the adverse effect of the trade in wild caught parrots.

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**Field Trip Report**

**Armendaris Ranch. July 11.** Although the sign-up for the Armendaris bat flight trip was disappointingly small, our group was very impressed with the Armendaris Ranch and with the bat flights. We visited several of the prairie dog colonies and enjoyed watching a large number of burrowing owls that inhabit the colonies. We then visited the only natural source of water in the entire Jornada de Muerto basin—an artesian spring oasis that was an important stop for the waggon trains traveling the Camino Real to Santa Fe. There were several birds in the trees around the oasis (western kingbirds, scaled quail, and American kestrels).

We arrived at the collapsed lava tube around 6 PM and were treated to an early flight of bats (before we had settled in for our picnic dinner). The Swainson’s hawks did not disappoint us and provided a number of opportunities to watch the hawks capture bat sandwiches. We had our picnic during a lull in the bats emerging from the cave. There was a second flight that lasted for approximately 45 minutes with hundreds of bats forming huge clouds, traveling toward the river valley. The bat flights were made more spectacular by our proximity to the mouth of the cave—sufficiently close for even the auditorily challenged to hear the wings of the bats. The remote location and the beautiful landscape also added to the enjoyment of the evening.

Walt Whitford
"Basic Bird Watching" Course Offered

Are you a newcomer to Las Cruces and our "Land of Enchantment"? Do you have a friend, neighbor or golfing buddy who is? Do you want to start a new hobby or learn to identify the intriguing birds you see on your daily walk or in your backyard? If so, now is the time to sign up for the MVAS adult education course "Basic Bird Watching."

Offered through the Community Education Program at Doña Ana Branch Community College, the course will include such topics as viewing equipment, birding books, general bird identification tips and backyard birding. Participants will receive a good introduction to the birds of southern New Mexico by seeing slides of southwestern birds and going on field trips to birding hot spots.

Four classroom sessions will be held on Tuesday evenings, October 19 and 26, and November 2 and 9, from 7-9 pm. There will be two, local Saturday morning field trips on October 23 & 30, and an all-day trip to the Bosque del Apache Wildlife Refuge on Saturday, November 6.

The cost is $40 per person. Class size is limited to 15, so register early. Call the Community Education Department at DABCC (527-7527) for registration information or contact MVAS Education Committee Chair, Donna Wood (donnaavamino@yahoo.com). If you want a fun, educational activity where you meet terrific people, then please join us!

Bird Notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Observers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Varied Thrush</td>
<td>7-3</td>
<td>Mesilla</td>
<td>RWD, GP, BR, LS</td>
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<td>Radium Spgs; Dripping Spgs</td>
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<td>Cassin's Sparrow</td>
<td>7-7</td>
<td>Mesilla</td>
<td>LS</td>
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<td>7-9</td>
<td>Las Cruces</td>
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<td>Western Tanager</td>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>El Paso</td>
<td>JP</td>
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<td>Radium Springs</td>
<td>MSJZ, SWH</td>
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<td>Possible Allen's Hummer</td>
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<td>Las Cruces</td>
<td>HH</td>
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<td>Isack's</td>
<td>DG</td>
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<td>Williet</td>
<td>7-11</td>
<td>La Union</td>
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<td>MSJZ, SWH</td>
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<td>Black Tern</td>
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<td>BH, JJ, SWH, BR</td>
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<td>Pine Siskin</td>
<td>7-21</td>
<td>Radium Springs</td>
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<td>SWH</td>
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<td>SWH</td>
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<td>7-24</td>
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<td>GP, LS</td>
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<td>7-25</td>
<td>Las Cruces</td>
<td>SWH</td>
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<td>Yellow Warbler</td>
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<td>Ft. Bliss, Las Cruces, Radium Spgs</td>
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<td>JP</td>
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<td>JP</td>
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<td>Sage Thrasher</td>
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<td>Las Alturas</td>
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<td>Grace's Warbler</td>
<td>8-19</td>
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<td>Solitary Sandpiper</td>
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<td>Las Cruces Dam</td>
<td>NS</td>
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Observers: Beth Bardwell, Rob and Wendy Davis, David Griffin, Jannette Hale, Barbara and Harold Harrison, Sue and Wally Hill, Jim Paton, Guy Powers, Ralph Presler, Barb Rodriguez, Amanda Skargard, Lorraine Schulte, Marcy Scott/Jimmy Zabriskie, Nancy Stoltz

Please report early, late, or unusual sightings to Sue Hill at 505-382-9758 or hillco@zianet.com

(continued from page 1) BLM

community groups for the final Vision, and to submit it to the BLM as part of the revision process. To check out the Draft Vision and provide feedback, visit the CTF website at www.zianet.com/openspace.

To keep informed about this important opportunity to influence BLM management priorities or to share your ideas or comments:
- Watch the newspaper for articles about public meetings associated with the BLM's planning process.
- Sign up for the MVAS conservation committee list to receive information about this and other conservation issues; email Rob Tafanelli at tafanel@zianet.com or phone 526-9380.
- Visit the CTF website at www.zianet.com/openspace for meeting announcements and other information.

New Mexico Audubon Council Meeting

Saturday, September 18th, 10 AM
Randall Davey Audubon Center, Santa Fe

All Audubon members welcome.
**Sevilleta Open House & Field Trip**

Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge’s annual open house is fast approaching. It will be October 9th, 2004. There will be speakers, exhibits and field trips of all sorts. The open house is the one time each year that this otherwise closed refuge is open to the public.

Of interest to birders will be the birding trip to Pinyon Canyon on Sunday, October 10th. The trip is from 7:30 AM to 2:30 PM. It includes a bag lunch and transportation to the canyon. This is an excellent guided field trip for the avid birder. We will travel through grasslands and hike up arroyos into the heart of the Los Puños Mountains with US Forest Service ornithologist Hart Schwartz. This little canyon has a permanent water source and is a popular stop with a wide variety of fall migrants. On past trips we have seen golden eagles, Ferruginous Hawk, sage thrasher, burrowing owl, black chinned sparrow, Cassin’s finch, Williamson’s sapsucker and MacGillivray’s warbler, to name just a few. Bring binoculars, dress in layers, and be prepared for a full day of birding in the field.

Cost $7 per person. Space is limited to 25 participants. Registration is required. Go to <http://southwest.fws.gov/refuges/newmex/Sevilleta> to print out a registration form that you can mail in via USPS. Registrations accepted via US postal mail only.

For additional information contact:
Kimberly King-Wenn, Outdoor Recreation Planner
Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge
505-864-1021-106

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Roadrunner Ramblings is published six times a year: January, March, May, July, September, and November. Submissions are welcome; please email copy to nwotstz@zianet.com, or call for mailing information. Next deadline: August 25. Printed by insta-copy printing on 30% kraft, 70% PCW recycled chlorine-free paper. Images, except Dale Zimmerman’s roadrunner, are from IMSL’s Master Clips/Master Photos® Collection.