

## Mesilla Valley Audubon Society (MVAS) Bird Monitoring and Conservation Project

The City of Las Cruces and the federal International Boundary and Water Commission are partnering to enhance the riparian aquatic habitat along the Rio Grande Trail in Las Cruces. The proposed project will channel the City's treated wastewater through a meandering stream with ponds and native plants before it enters the Rio Grande. The City's treated wastewater is a year-round source of freshwater that can help support habitat for our birds and other wildlife.

MVAS is hosting a community science project to help measure how our birds respond to these changes in water management and habitat. Counting the number of birds and bird species in the project area before habitat restoration begins is essential and this is the time to do it, as construction will probably start late in 2020 or early 2021.

Want to be an amateur scientist and help MVAS collect data? You can count birds one time or as often as you want. MVAS will be coordinating data collection over the life of the project to make sure we collect data every month.

The birds you see will likely change by day, and by season. Some birds live here year-round. Others just spend winter here, others only nest and raise their young here, while some use the river like an interstate to migrate along to their wintering and breeding grounds. Birds are good indicators of environmental health.

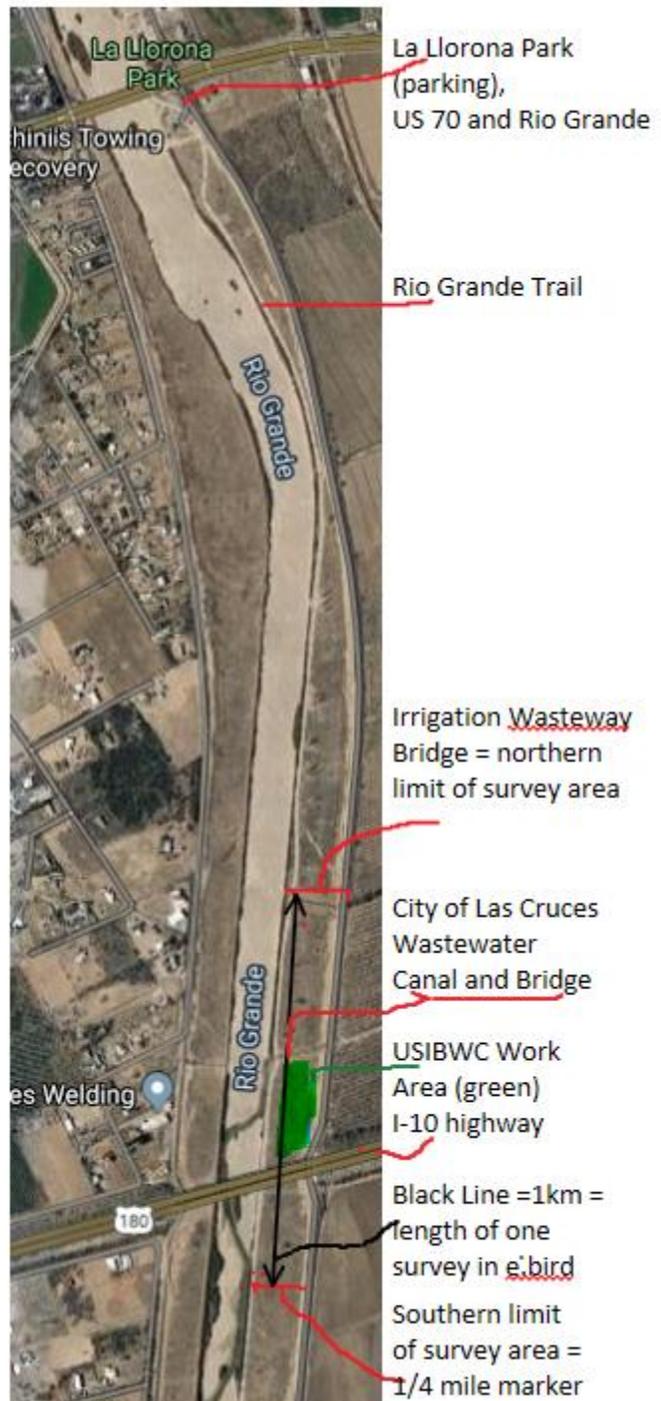
Below is a quick overview of where and how to count birds for this project.

### Bird Count Protocol

1. Always remember bird walking basics. Dress appropriately for the season, wear sunscreen, and bring water with you. Individuals must bring their own (or their friend's) binoculars. Having a bird field guide always helps. For recording data, the eBird app on a mobile phone is great, but a pen and paper is just fine. One can record results on eBird.com at a home computer.

2. Record the bird species and number of birds you observe on [eBird.com](https://www.ebird.com) (desktop or mobile app) under Hotspot: **Rio Grande- Las Cruces: Treatment Water Canal South to I-10**. All bird count survey lists must be collected between 5--60 minutes duration along a 1-kilometer path. If the bird count exceeds either of those parameters, create a second list. Survey data can be collected any time of day.

### MVAS Bird Survey Project Area Map



3. The survey area begins on the Rio Grande Trail one mile below the La Llorona Park parking lot. **Look for the ¼ mile markers on the trail.** Walk past three ¼ mile markers and just above the fourth ¼ mile marker, you arrive at a bridge over the irrigation wasteway canal (see photo to left). Start looking for birds when you arrive at this bridge. Look for birds flying overhead, and in the grasslands, shrubs, trees, and river. Don't worry if you can't identify all the birds, just record the ones you can identify and the number of each species you see. Continue counting birds as you walk past a second bridge over the treated effluent canal, and under the I-10 bridge till you arrive at the third ¼ mile marker below the starting point (see photo to right). This completes a 1-kilometer walking survey along the Rio Grande Trail.



3. Submit your list to [eBird.com](https://ebird.com). MVAS group representatives will download data from [eBird.com](https://ebird.com) and into the MVAS study database.

4. In eBird.com, when entering data, under comments section add "MVAS project".

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People may join the MVAS Bird Survey even if they are not experienced bird watchers. We invite you to come to our monthly meetings and to participate in bird walks in the Las Cruces community. Please visit our webpage (<https://www.mvasaudubon.org/>) to learn what our upcoming schedule is. You don't have to be an expert to participate in community science.

For those birders not familiar with eBird.org, some references are available to help you understand this protocol:

1. <https://ebird.org/home> This is the home page. It opens the whole world of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology.
2. <https://support.ebird.org/support/home> This support page has many sections but is easy to navigate. The first suggested article on this page is "Enter Sightings with eBird Mobile", a good place to begin.