



ROADRUNNER RAMBLINGS

MESILLA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

www.mvasaudubon.org

Vol. 41, No. 5: Special Edition

Happy 40th Anniversary Mesilla Valley Audubon Society

A History of the MVAS: Looking back 10 years (2009-2019)

2019 is the 40th anniversary of Mesilla Valley Audubon Society's official notification of membership in the National Audubon Society. Prior histories have documented the first 20 years and then the next ten. This article will put the most recent 10 years in perspective.

Much has happened in the last 10 years to impact birding in Las Cruces. It was 10 years ago that Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park came to be, and a short 5 years later that Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks was proclaimed a national monument. These two developments, both with significant input from Mesilla Valley Audubon Society, opened birding and conservation like never before.

At the same time, the process of birding changed significantly with the birth of *eBird.org* in 2002. Its popularity grew rapidly and by 2010 its use by MVAS was cemented by a talk that year by David Griffin at the new Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park. Previously, when considering a place to look for birds, one visited *Roadrunner Ramblings* to check out the list of 10-15 birds seen by MVAS members over the last 2-3 months. We now consult with *eBird.org* to find Hot Spots in a location

where we would like to do our birding and check out lists of recent sightings, complete with photos and species descriptions. After our bird walk, we upload our own bird list onto *ebird.org*, making us all "citizen scientists" by contributing to the community's knowledge of its avian denizens. This can be intimidating to those not familiar with computers and their apps but very empowering to those who begin to master it.



Hooded Oriole. July 2019. Sid Webb's Backyard

What has happened to Mesilla Valley Audubon Society during this time? Presidents over the last decade have included David Griffin, Gil Sorg, and Jennifer Montoya. Unfortunately, there has been no president for 4 of these years, including the current one. Board members have assumed leadership roles. MVAS is still very active with

field trips and bird walks held regularly, taking advantage of new locations as well as the new technology. With the help of Mark Pendleton, MVAS Director for Field Trips for the last 8 years, we have visited El Paso Rio Bosque Park, Sacramento Mountains, Bosque del Apache, Deming, Broad Canyon Ranch, Las Palomas Marsh, Sandia Crest (Albuquerque), A-Spear Ranch, as well as countless trips in Las Cruces, including the Sandhill Arroyo, only one step away from Mark's own back yard. Mark, CJ Goin, Wayne Treers, and Jay Wilbur have served as exceptionally knowledgeable guides who enhance our experience with each outing. Additionally, they have

Anniversary, continued

helped with bird identification classes at Dona Ana Community College and uptown at Wild Birds Unlimited. Taking over the Christmas Bird Count in 2012, Wayne Treers has made sure MVAS has participated every year since then, continuing its perfect record.

MVAS has always been known for its advocacy of education, especially with the “Audubon Adventures” activities in schools. This was initially due to Lorraine Schulte, Charter Member of MVAS and tireless advocate, who stayed active for 26 years. After her departure from the education chairmanship in 2004, her role has been filled by CJ Goin, who has worked both in school classrooms and at Leasburg Dam State Park, where he is often an instructor when students have excursions there. MVAS has also continued with scholarships to teachers in the Las Cruces area and students at NMSU.

For the early part of the decade Bob Tofannelli was Conservation Chairman and made sure we were aware of national and state issues. Closer to home, work in Broad Canyon featured riparian rehabilitation with much group effort north of Leasburg. Further to the north, working with the BLM, 40 acres of Las Palomas Marsh became a study area with MVAS monitoring bird counts to see how they changed in areas free of the cattle usually seen at the riverside. Members active with this project included Wayne Treers, CJ Goin, Mark Pendleton, and David Griffin.

Currently, the US International Boundary Water Commission is working on riparian habitat issues on the Rio Grande and Audubon Society is considered a stakeholder in their interventions. It may result in 2020 in the development of a new riparian habitat setting in downtown Las Cruces, where now there is just a canalized conduit for retreated water that is released into the Rio Grande. The Mesilla Valley Audubon Society’s role in much current conservation activity is to document our bird activity as an indicator of the health of the natural community, in the setting of much local growth, and in the setting of climate change and other natural phenomena. Unlike the setting 40 years ago, when MVAS was just getting started, there are now many other advocacy groups for the conservation issues confronting Las Cruces.

The most recent event to impact MVAS was the sudden move to a new meeting place for our monthly gatherings in August 2019. After a decade of meeting downtown at the headquarters for the Southwest Environmental

Center, a sudden change in their status necessitated a move by MVAS. We are now meeting at Good Samaritan Village and it seems to be working well. Only time will tell what future adventures await MVAS. Stay tuned. Audubon’s plea now, as always, is “Don’t forget the birds!”

(for prior articles on MVAS history, check the Resources page at <https://www.mvasaudubon.org/>)

Sid Webb, 10/4/2019, with help from David Griffin and Gil Sorg



