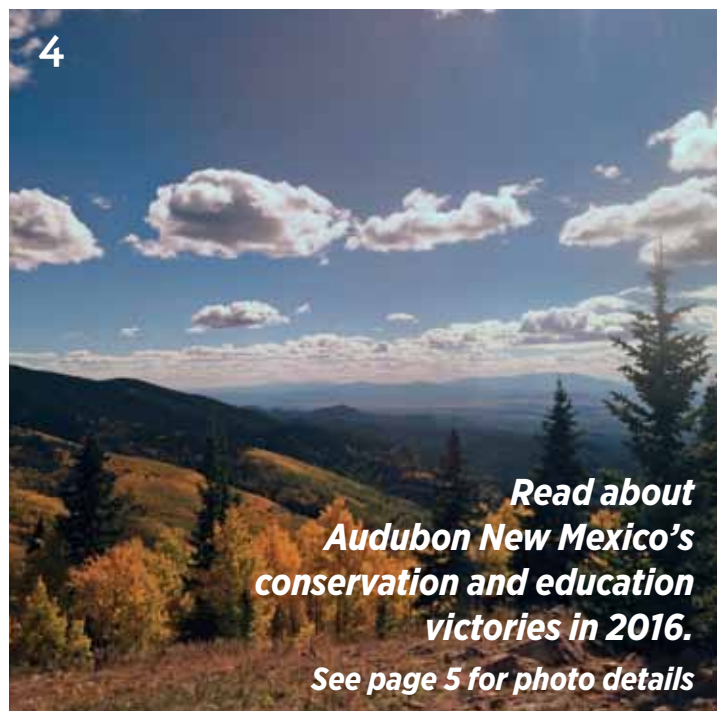




SNAPSHOT: AUDUBON NEW MEXICO AT WORK

Audubon New Mexico works on the ground, in the classroom, and in state and federal legislatures for the benefit of birds and people. Look inside to read more about the victories we celebrated in 2016 across the Land of Enchantment. **WHERE BIRDS THRIVE, PEOPLE PROSPER!**



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MISSION STATEMENT

*Audubon New Mexico's mission is to
conserve and restore natural ecosystems,
focusing on birds, other wildlife, and
their habitats for the benefit of
humanity and the earth's
biological diversity.*

**FROM THE DIRECTOR'S PERCH:
INVESTING IN HOPE FOR BIRDS AND PEOPLE**

Dear Friends,

Thanks to your generous and loyal support, 2016 was a year of historic conservation victories and growth for Audubon New Mexico!

For the first time in New Mexico's history, Audubon New Mexico, in partnership with four Middle Rio Grande Pueblos, the Club at Las Campanas and agency partners, released 260 million gallons of water into the Rio Grande. This precedent-setting water transaction demonstrates how precious water can be managed and allocated in our state, which is especially important in the face of climate change and water scarcity.

The latest statistics on New Mexico's students are alarming, and complex issues of education equity are exposed. Impoverished or economically challenged communities are most threatened by the impacts of climate change. Since we recently ranked as the poorest state in the nation with the highest child poverty rate, many of our communities are vulnerable. We must educate the next generation. Our education programs are specifically designed to support the reversal of these statistics and provide our children with exposure to STEM careers, college readiness skills, and tools to make informed choices.

This year, our K-12 science curriculum reached almost 4,000 individual students from Northern to Southern New Mexico. We deepened our partnership with the Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge, growing our education and engagement reach with an updated curriculum addressing climate change and habitat concerns, bilingual engagement opportunities and adult education programming. Also, for the first time in Audubon New Mexico's history, we'll be launching education and engagement programs in Lesser Prairie-Chicken country.

In 2016, Audubon New Mexico launched a new Conservation Ranching Pilot Initiative to put working lands to work for birds and people. We recognize that partnering with landowners is vital to improve the ecological condition of grasslands in New Mexico, for the benefit of grassland birds.

I'm proud of the unprecedented relationships that have developed across all sectors of our work this year with our partners, funders, communities and volunteers. The demand for our programming exceeds our staff and volunteer capacity, making your support more critical now than ever before.

As you read this newsletter, I hope you are inspired to support critical bird conservation, science education, and the preservation of our state's landscapes with a tax-deductible year-end donation to Audubon New Mexico.

With gratitude,

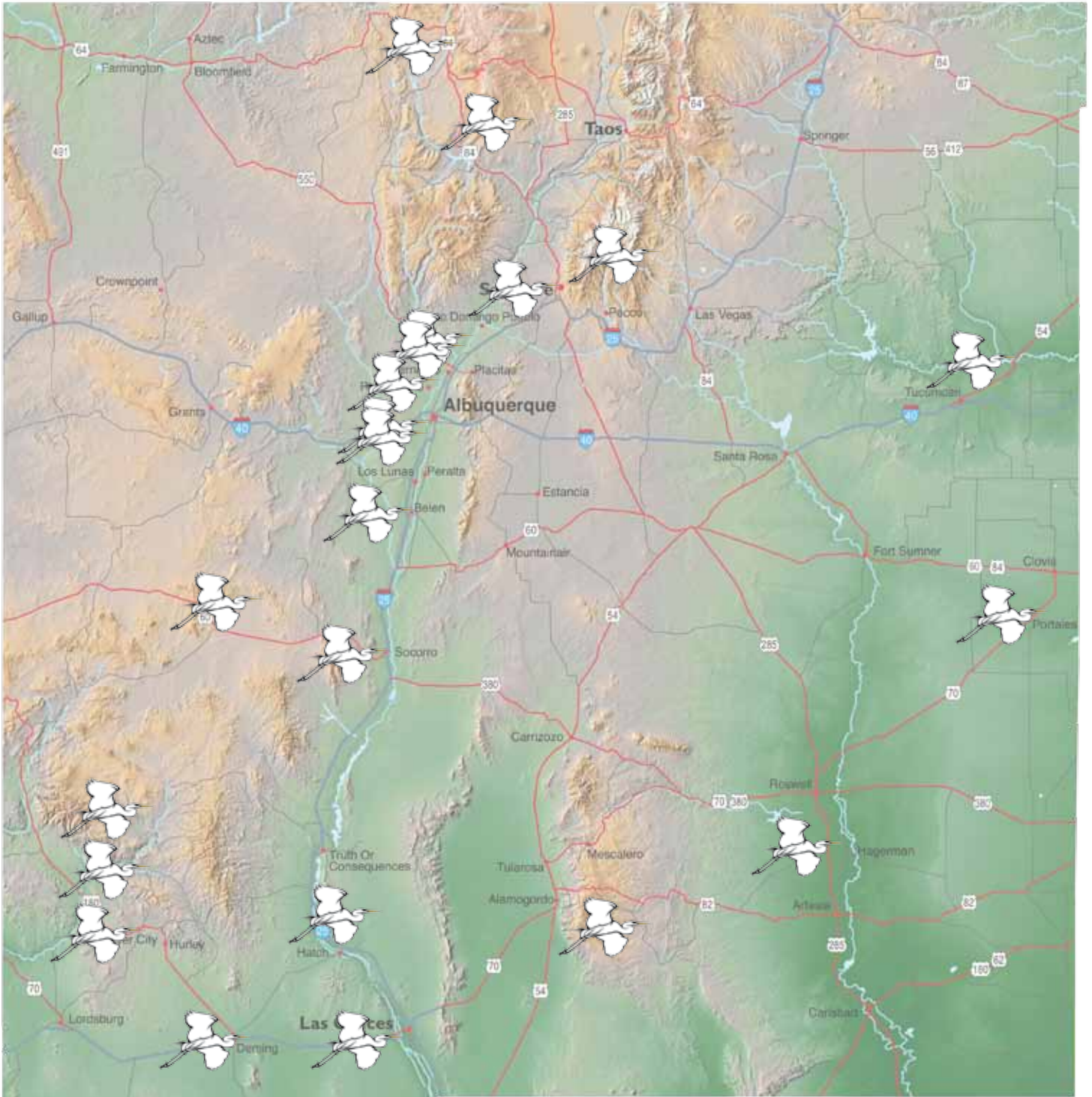


Julie Weinstein
Vice President and Executive Director



*Grasshopper Sparrow,
photo by Matej Novak, FlickrCC*

AUDUBON NEW MEXICO'S CONSERVATION & EDUCATION PROGRAMS HAVE AN IMPACT IN OUR LAND OF ENCHANTMENT



2016 was a year of historic conservation victories and growth for Audubon New Mexico! Each egret on the map marks a geographic location or community where Audubon New Mexico engaged in conservation and education activities. Our priority focus areas include: water, climate, forests, grasslands, and science education. Audubon New Mexico has a multi-faceted strategy to achieve conservation and education success at scale.

Read more about Audubon New Mexico's work, and please consider investing in our conservation and education programs as we expand our wings in 2017!

SARA BOYETT, WELCOME TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS!

Sara has taken a varied and interesting path to Silver City, to where she moved in 2011. She has worked or studied from Chile to Alaska and many points in between. Sara has roots in Montana but New Mexico has also played a significant part in her life since the late '60s when she served as a VISTA Volunteer in San Jon and Tijeras.

She has been an environmental activist, historian, teacher and writer among other things. For many years, Sara's been an active member of the Southwest New Mexico Audubon

Society Chapter—she currently serves as their President—and works closely with Audubon New Mexico staff and local chapter and coalition members to protect the Gila River, New Mexico's last free-flowing river.

She has been an active and outspoken advocate in Audubon's New Mexico and federal legislative activities for several years, and has raised her voice regionally and nationally about the importance of the Gila Wilderness to prevent a Gila River diversion. Sara is currently an antiques business owner and writer. In her work with Audubon,

she is striving to make everyone care about the Gila River and the greater mission of Audubon. We're grateful for Sara's leadership, and welcome her to the Audubon family.



CHRIS GRAESER, WELCOME TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS!



Chris Graeser is an attorney in Santa Fe, focused on land use, real estate, property tax, and occasional cases of

interest. In his law practice, Chris represents individuals and organizations concerned with disproportionate or inadequately planned development and its associated habitat loss. In this role, he supports efforts to defend conservation easements, prevent large-scale mining, and focus growth in suitable areas.

His efforts through groups like the Community Development Commission, Capital Improvements Advisory Committee, and Neighborhood Law Center promote a combination

of land use policy, regulation, and infrastructure improvement to foster a vibrant human environment that complements the natural ecosystem.

From western Massachusetts, Chris made Santa Fe his home over twenty years ago. He enjoys hiking, camping, and exploring New Mexico's hidden treasures with his family. We welcome Chris to the Audubon New Mexico family, and are grateful to add his expertise to our talented list of ambassadors that support Audubon's mission and work in New Mexico.

WELCOME ALANA MORIARTY, COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT MANAGER

Alana joined the Audubon New Mexico team in July. She has over seventeen years of experience in corporate communications, international and government relations, community engagement, public relations, and foundation development. She has held numerous high-level positions for global companies, and has been instrumental in leading teams in over twelve countries from the Philippines to Chile, in developing and deploying innovative strategic programs. Alana is a native Northern New Mexican, with strong experience in developing

global internal and external communication strategic plans, national and international campaigns, and public relations programs through cost effective multimedia channels.

Alana graduated from New Mexico State University with a triple major in Government Relations, Foreign Languages, and Latin American Art History & Culture, and performed graduate studies in Relaciones Internacionales (International Relations) from La Universidad Católica de Córdoba in Argentina.

Alana is passionate about culture, art, travel and the outdoors. Growing up in New Mexico, she learned to treasure the rich cultural traditions of her ancestors and the beauty of our land of enchantment.



SNAPSHOT: AUDUBON NEW MEXICO AT WORK

EDUCATION: Our K-12 science curriculum reached almost 4,000 students across New Mexico and we're expanding our wings to Eastern New Mexico in 2017. (pictured on cover, #1: 2nd grade class from Cesar Chavez Elementary)

GRASSLANDS: ANM launched a Conservation Ranching pilot in Eastern New Mexico to conserve critical grassland habitat. (pictured on cover, #2: Lesser Prairie-Chickens, photo by USDA, FlickrCC)

WATER: In a first-of-its-kind river conservation partnership, ANM released water received from four Middle Rio Grande Pueblos and The Club at Las Campanas. (pictured on cover, #3: Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, photo by Kelly Colgan Azar)

FORESTS: ANM launched the first-ever Audubon Forest Task Force to advocate for birds in forest management plans in all five of NM's National Forests. (pictured on cover, #4: Santa Fe National Forest, photos by Maryam Miller)

POLICY ADVOCACY: ANM remains committed to protect the Gila River from a proposed diversion and worked in partnership with concerned citizens, coalition members and elected officials, locally and nationally.

All of our work would not be possible without the generous support and partnership of our donors, members, volunteers and partners. Thank you all for your investment in Audubon New Mexico.

CALL TO ACTION: AUDUBON NEEDS YOU!

Audubon New Mexico believes in the power of numbers! There are many ways to become engaged in efforts to support the work of Audubon.

JOIN THE EDUCATION TEAM

We're expanding our team of volunteer educators statewide, specifically to support the communities in or around: Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Portales, and Las Cruces. Are you a retired teacher or love working with children? We need your help! **Providing science education is a critical way to ensure a healthy future for birds and people.**

BECOME A CITIZEN SCIENTIST

Support Audubon's needs for bird monitoring and surveying throughout the year and across the state. This is a perfect (and important!) way to go birding, while making a difference in mitigating the impacts of climate change.

INVEST IN THE FUTURE OF NEW MEXICO

Philanthropy is a powerful form of activism. **An investment in Audubon New Mexico is an investment that will benefit you—and future generations of birds and people.** For more information, please contact Maryam Miller at mmiller@audubon.org or (505) 983-4069 x24.

RAISE YOUR VOICE FOR THE GILA RIVER

Use your voice to protect the last free-flowing river in New Mexico! Write letters to the editor, attend key meetings, and inform your elected officials about this important issue.

To learn more about becoming an Audubon New Mexico volunteer, please contact Carl Beal at cbeal@audubon.org or (505) 983-4609 x30. Thank you!



CLIMATE:

ANM and Central New Mexico Audubon Society partnered to participate in Climate Watch, a new Citizen Science program to study how birds are responding to climate change. Find out how you can participate in the 2017 Climate Watch! Contact Beth Bardwell, bbardwell@audubon.org. (pictured: Western Bluebird, photo by Shawn McCready, FlickrCC)

CREATE YOUR LEGACY

A gift through your will can be transformational. To ensure the long-term success of Audubon's conservation and education programs in New Mexico, please consider investing in the health and sustainability of our state's birds, wildlife and people by including Audubon New Mexico in your estate plan.

Sample Bequest Language:
"I bequeath ___% (or \$___) of my residuary estate to Audubon New Mexico, a not-for-profit conservation organization located at 1800 Upper Canyon Road, Santa Fe, NM 87501."

Audubon's federal tax ID number is: 13-1624102. **All gifts are tax-deductible.** Contact Maryam Miller, Deputy Director, to learn more at mmiller@audubon.org or (505) 983-4609.

DELIVERING ESSENTIAL SCIENCE EDUCATION STATEWIDE

New Mexico ranks as one of the lowest states on the Child-Welfare Index and 48th in the country on national science proficiency exams. Only 21% of 8th graders were at or above “proficient” in 2015, leaving almost 80% of New Mexico’s 8th graders scoring “basic” or “below basic” in science. Our 4th graders scored 25% at or above “proficient,” with 75% scoring “basic” or “below basic.”

(National Assessment of Educational Progress)

Science is critical in our daily lives — it is life-giving and life-saving.

Sadly, science is not getting the rightful attention it deserves in our educational systems. Resource gaps for students include: access to high quality, engaging, hands-on, and inquiry-based science education; exposure to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) career paths; and time spent in nature, learning to protect our natural resources.

Our communities’ and country’s future depends on the strength of our scientific spine. The skills derived from a STEM education are the mission-critical elements of the jobs of tomorrow, for they are directly linked to economic productivity and competitive products. STEM jobs are increasing at 3 times the rate of non-STEM jobs, providing higher-wages and innovation to problem-solve.

Studies show that when the environment is an integrative context for discovery, environmental education: increases student engagement and enthusiasm for learning; increases performance on standardized measures of achievement in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies; and enhances student pride and ownership in accomplishments.

In response to science education deficiencies and to foster future generations of scientifically literate citizens and leaders, Audubon New Mexico (ANM) continues to expand environmental education programs with hands-on, inquiry-based outdoor science curriculum that meet New Mexico State science and Common Core standards and benchmarks, enhancing and supporting Life Science Curriculum.

OUR EDUCATION PROGRAMS: EMPOWERING STUDENTS WITH SCIENCE & ENGAGEMENT



ANM’s education staff and volunteers deliver educational enrichment opportunities to a diverse range of New Mexico’s communities. In this past year, our *Birds of a Feather Explore Together* curriculum and other programs reached almost 4,000 unduplicated students throughout the state. Our curriculum addresses how birds play a critical role in indicating the health of our world and how changes in their circumstance warn of threats to habitats and natural systems critical to all life.

We are grateful for our partnership with community-based education organizations such as the Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge, State Parks and the Bosque Ecosystems Monitoring Project in Las Cruces; volunteer

educators at Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area; schools and educators; and the Outdoor Education Collaborative in Santa Fe, consisting of ANM, Santa Fe Botanical Gardens, and the Santa Fe Watershed Association. In 2017, we look forward to developing new partnerships statewide.

ANM’s K-12 programs address critical resource gaps impacting the success of school-age children. There is a great need in our community for access to engaging, hands-on, and experiential science and E-STEM (Environmentally focused Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics education).

NORTHERN NEW MEXICO: Santa Fe

The 135-acre wildlife sanctuary and education campus at the Randall Davey Audubon Center is a valuable resource for Northern New Mexico. This year, our educators engaged over 1,000 Santa Fe-area students in outdoor science education, which increased their knowledge in the areas of literacy, math, and history



through a blended scientific approach to provide both an educational and inspiring experience.

Thanks to generous grants from the City of Santa Fe's Children & Youth Commission, Brindle Foundation and others, almost 500 students received Audubon New Mexico's 4th Grade *Field Studies* and *Outdoor Science Field Studies* curricula. The 25 classrooms that received these programs actively explored habitat around their schools and compared it to flora and fauna at our wildlife sanctuary. Through games and hands-on outdoor activities, students learned important science content and process skills.



Audubon educators also delivered programs to an additional 25 classrooms from 8 schools, partnered with Girl Scout troops, piloted a new Citizen Science curriculum, and engaged elementary students in service learning projects. Looking ahead, ANM is excited to develop its relationship with the Santa Fe Indian School, northern NM Pueblos, and other regional educational institutions.

DID YOU KNOW?

Audubon New Mexico offers a 10-week, science-based summer camp program at the Randall Davey Audubon Center in Santa Fe, providing educational, outdoor discovery for children from the ages of 5 to 12 years old.

CENTRAL NEW MEXICO: Albuquerque

Working with the Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) staff—the first urban wildlife refuge in the Southwest—located in Albuquerque's South Valley and with generous funding from the Albuquerque Community Foundation, ANM curriculum was delivered to over 500 students that have very limited access to science programs.

Looking ahead, we will continue to partner with Valle de Oro NWR, providing curriculum and programming focused on the effects of climate change specifically designed for middle and high school students and adults in the Albuquerque area.

Belen/Los Lunas

ANM will continue partnering with the Friends of Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area and the Valencia Soil and Water Conservation District to deliver the Audubon *Birds of a Feather Explore Together* curriculum to 900 students. The innovative curriculum delivery method of these dedicated volunteers provides a working model that we plan to institute in other locations.

ANM is excited to expand partnerships with the Middle Rio Grande Pueblos, National Wildlife Refuges, and other regional educational institutions.

SOUTHERN NEW MEXICO: Las Cruces

Down south, ANM continues partnering with New Mexico State Parks and Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program (BEMP) to deliver bird-related

programming at Mesilla Bosque State Park. Through these efforts, over 1,200 students from 11 schools and 17 classrooms developed knowledge about birds through experiential activities focused on bird adaptations as well as the scientific dissection of owl pellets. By studying adaptations, students learn the ecological context of birds and how they survive in such diverse habitats. These hands-on studies also provide learning opportunities for other science fields in anatomy and physiology.

EXPANDING OUR WINGS IN EASTERN NEW MEXICO

ANM is excited and grateful to announce that in 2017, we'll begin

continued on p. 12



BIRDERS AND FORESTERS: INVALUABLE PARTNERSHIP

By Meg Scherch Peterson

Here I was, an hour into a slow, tough slog through three feet of cold stream water behind forester Jay Gatlin, who was clearly at home in this bog, as sunny and cheerful as a yellow warbler. And, as if right on cue, the warbler's "sweet sweet, so sweet" melody sailed across the silent marsh.

Gatlin makes a point of involving local birders whenever possible in the US Forest Service's work. A wildlife biologist out of the Camino Real district office of Carson National Forest, she's invited me for the past few years to participate in annual surveys of the endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher. By 8:00 am this spring morning, we had neither seen nor heard a flycatcher, which let my mind wander and think about the Audubon New Mexico Forest Task Force.

After more than thirty years, the five national forests in New Mexico—Carson, Santa Fe, Cibola, Lincoln, and Gila—are developing new forest plans. Since these plans will guide management for decades, Audubon New Mexico (ANM) assembled a task force to ensure the new plans prioritize declining bird species and their habitat.

ANM's Forest Task Force includes

one Audubon volunteer for each of the five forests. For the past year, we've shared updates on the planning process with a particular focus on the identification and clarification of avian Species of Conservation Concern (SCC). These are species (other than those already federally recognized as threatened or endangered) about which the best available science indicates substantial concern for their ability to persist. Once a bird is identified as a SCC, the forest plan is designed to sustain habitat to secure a viable population of the SCC.

Collaboration among members of the task force is crucial to ensure consistent results and interpretation of the planning rule across forests.

"A diverse state like New Mexico, with over nine million acres of public land under Forest Service jurisdiction, benefits greatly from utilizing the expertise and local knowledge of the state's birders," says Beth Bardwell, ANM's Director of Conservation. "The State's avian experts have identified many declining birds and the forest habitats they depend on as the most in need of protection in New Mexico. We must do all we can to help these species at risk before they become imperiled and subject to federal listing and costly

ANM is advocating for these species to be included on the SCC list: Brown-capped Rosy Finch, Virginia's Warbler, Lewis's Woodpecker, Grace's Warbler, Flammulated Owl, Band-tailed Pigeon, Gray Vireo, Juniper Titmouse, Black-throated Gray Warbler, and Bendire's Thrasher.

management recovery efforts. Forest plans are a critical element to ensure their long-term survival."

As I reflect back on my slog through the bog, I remember that we are all in this together. I remember that forest service personnel are dedicated to many of the same values as are birders and conservationists.

Gatlin, for example, assumed leadership of a Christmas Bird Count and even roped in another five foresters. Together the Carson NF team spent a cold, snowy morning counting birds along the drainage of the Rio Grande del Rancho south of Taos. And it was Gatlin—even before I volunteered with ANM—who encouraged me to get involved in the forest service planning process. Gatlin and Alyssa Radcliff, Forest Plan Revision Wildlife Lead, would sit down with me and explain how the SCC list was developed. While I would later disagree with some of the conclusions, I acknowledge that staffers at Carson have followed through on their commitment to involve the public, after all, the forests belong to all of us.

As that morning of the survey wore on, we continued to trudge up and down embankments and gingerly to cross beaver dams. About three hours in, we finally saw a non-descript little gray bird perched atop a dead snag. Together—birder, forester—we shared in the excitement and, yes, in the relief of recording a Southwestern Willow Flycatcher that day.



Carson National Forest, photo by Maryam Miller

NATIVE AMERICANS AND CONSERVATIONISTS COLLABORATE TO RETURN VITAL FLOW TO THE RIO GRANDE

By Sandra Postel

Publication: *National Geographic's Freshwater Initiative in Water Currents*
Published: September 28, 2016

The first time I saw the channel of the Rio Grande completely dry, I was stunned. Here was the second largest river in the Southwest, which flows through three U.S. states and Mexico, and instead of water between its banks there were tire tracks. And I wasn't standing at the tail end of the river, but rather on a bridge in central New Mexico, in the Rio Grande's middle reach. For a freshwater conservationist, it was a sad sight.

Even worse, it was not an aberration. Each year, portions of the Middle Rio Grande dry up when its flows are diverted into irrigation canals for delivery to farmers in the valley. A few miles of the channel might dry up for a couple of weeks, or, if the monsoon rains are disappointing and irrigation demands are high, the dry stretch might extend thirty or more miles for much of the summer. Either way, for a time the river is no more.

So earlier this year when I learned about an innovative idea spearheaded by Audubon New Mexico to return some flow to the Rio Grande at its driest time of year, I felt a surge of hope for the river and the life it supports—from native fish like the Rio Grande silvery minnow to birds like the Southwestern Willow flycatcher, both federally endangered and dependent on the Rio Grande for habitat.

Audubon New Mexico, a Santa Fe-based non-profit conservation organization, had reached out to Native American tribes in the Middle Rio Grande Valley with a proposition: if the tribes transfer to Audubon a portion of their allotted water from the San Juan-Chama diversion project,



Photo by "I am New Mexico," FlickrCC

which brings New Mexico's share of Colorado River water into the state, Audubon would ensure that the water benefits the Rio Grande and seek funding for habitat restoration on tribal lands.

The idea struck a positive chord with a number of the tribes, and a unique partnership was born. Four Middle Rio Grande Pueblos — Sandia, Isleta, Santa Ana and Cochiti — joined together and each supplied 100 acre-feet of San Juan-Chama water. Before summer, the 400 acre-feet from the four tribes was augmented by a nearly equal donation of surplus water by the Club at Las Campanas, a private Santa Fe golf club, bringing the total volume of water to benefit the Rio Grande to nearly 800 acre-feet, or more than 260 million gallons (980 million liters).

"We will increase flow in the river channel for a 35-mile stretch for nearly 24 days," said Julie Weinstein, Audubon New Mexico's Executive Director, in a statement earlier this month. The organization worked closely with the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District to determine the best sites to deliver water back to the river to maximize ecological value.

The Rio Grande's corridor through New Mexico supports over 200,000 waterfowl and 18,000 greater sandhill cranes. It provides the largest number of contiguous breeding territories for both the endangered flycatcher and the threatened Yellow-billed Cuckoo in their entire range.

With over 80 percent of the wetland and riparian habitat gone along the river in New Mexico, sustaining and rebuilding habitat is crucial. As part of this collaboration with Audubon, the Pueblo of Santa Ana is planting trees and restoring habitat along the river. As water stress intensifies in the western United States, saving desert rivers requires securing enough flow at the right time and in the places so as to enable the fish, birds, and wildlife that rely on those aquatic habitats to nest, breed and feed.

This Audubon initiative represents yet another creative approach to restore flow to a depleted river. It is the first-ever use of the Abiquiú Reservoir's "environmental pool," created in 2005 to help provide ecological flows for the Rio Grande. And it represents a unique partnership of diverse interests in the river.

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CONSERVATION RANCHING: SAVING BIRDS AND RESTORING GRASSLANDS

Working lands represent one of the best hopes for conservation. Ranches and farms cover more than one billion acres of the United States. Forests, many of which are managed for timber, account for an additional 747 million acres. These working lands add up to more than half of America's acreage.

Native grasslands are among the most altered and imperiled ecosystems in the world—and one of the least protected. These critical ecosystems are dwindling at an alarming rate, as tracts are fragmented and degraded through poor grazing practices, unsustainable agricultural uses, proliferation of invasive plants and vegetation, and encroaching human development. **With the decline of grassland habitats comes the decline of grassland birds, which have suffered steep, consistent population loss over the last 40 years—more than any other group of birds.** According to the 2014 State of the Birds Report, the indicator for 24 grassland breeding birds reveals a 40% population decline since 1968.

With 85% of native grasslands in the U.S. privately owned, Audubon understands and values best management practices that benefit grassland health for birds. Birds are highly sensitive to landscape changes which makes them excellent indicators of over-all ecosystem health. To that end, Audubon recognizes that partnering with landowners is vital to improve the ecological condition of this vast land in a way that benefits grassland birds. A thoughtful approach requires support not only for the birds but for the ranchers.

AUDUBON'S SOLUTION: MARKET-BASED INCENTIVES FOR BIRD-FRIENDLY RANCHING PRACTICES

Given the magnitude of threats to grassland ecosystems, Audubon recognizes that we must work with private landowners in partnership for conservation outcomes at scale. Partnering with ranchers and other landowners is the key to making working lands work for birds, people, and communities. We should not have to choose between the economy and the environment.



Ute Creek Cattle Company, photo by Tuda Libby Crews

This past August, ranchers, resource conservationists, educators, scientists, working landowners, government agencies, and bird conservation organizations arrived at the Ute Creek Cattle Company in Bueyeros, NM, for a grassland bird workshop. The workshop delivered data on grassland birds, their breeding grounds in the southern shortgrass prairie, and started conversations on how we can work together towards the shared goal of healthy working landscapes.

Tuda Libby Crews is a 7th generation rancher who grew up ranching in Bueyeros and established the Ute Creek Cattle Company with husband Jack Crews in 2001. Their mission is to sustain people, profit, water, conservation, cattle, and community. "When you consider ecological benefits to birds, wildlife, water, conservation and rangeland health, return on improved habitat far outweighs the investment," said Tuda Libby Crews. "We never could have achieved this scope of land improvement without the partnerships and collaborative agreements forged with agencies and NGO's. By working together we've implemented best conservation practices on the ground to keep our working landscape working for future generations."

Workshop participants witnessed riparian restoration, water conservation, and a wild bird sanctuary while also learning about habitat needs and



Healthy grasslands are important habitat for birds. Look for these species of conservation concern which depend on a mosaic of short grass, tall grass and scattered shrubs within our shortgrass prairie to feed and nest: Lesser Prairie-Chicken, Cassin's Sparrow, Burrowing Owl, Mountain Plover, Grasshopper Sparrow and McCown's and Chestnut-collared Longspurs. Photo by Ron Knight, FlickrCC

population declines of grassland birds, grazing practices, drought resiliency, and new pilot initiative cropping up across the Central Flyway from Canada into Mexico called Audubon's Conservation Ranching Program.

AUDUBON'S CONSERVATION RANCHING PROGRAM:

Conservation in the age of adaptation.

Audubon has developed and will deploy science-based bird-friendly grazing protocols with insight from outside experts and private landowners. These protocols are aimed at adapting current management practices on private grasslands to holistic management practices that promote the conservation of grassland birds, and provide other environmental benefits, including soil health, water quality, and carbon sequestration. Similar programs have been successfully implemented in the Southern Cone Grasslands of Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay.

Audubon's Conservation Ranching Program is a rare opportunity where economic incentives align with ecological outcomes. Research indicates that there is an aggressive market demand for premium meat products, certified as environmentally sound and produced with sustainable

practices. This market will continue to grow 20% or more annually. It is on the trajectory to become a \$15-20 billion market segment within the next 10 years—ultimately the largest incentive for ranchers to participate in this program.

CONSERVATION CURRENCY: Seldom are there economic opportunities that align, support, and sustain nature's ecosystems.

Through careful and deliberate study that included consultation with numerous market experts, conservation partners, landowners and our own membership, we have learned how Audubon can apply its purpose, mission and brand in support of the development and preservation of bird habitat. Our approach is to create incentives for cattle ranchers to manage their grasslands for the benefit of grassland birds in locations throughout the Central Flyway and northern Mexico.

If you are a rancher, private landowner or wish to invest in Audubon's Conservation Ranching Program, please contact us today. To learn more about Audubon New Mexico's Conservation Ranching, please visit: <http://nm.audubon.org/conservation/grasslands-initiative>.



photo by Dusty Downey

"Rio Grande" continued from p. 9

"The Rio Grande is sacred to the people of Sandia Pueblo, as is the environment it provides," said the pueblo's governor, Isaac Lujan, in a statement announcing the project. "Sandia hopes this donation can be used as an example of what can be done for the health of the river and the community when stakeholders work together."

The water Audubon secured was temporarily stored at Abiquiú Reservoir north of Santa Fe and then released to flow downstream later in the summer. After the water's use for irrigation, engineers are returning it to the river at strategic locations so as to maximize habitat benefits and channel flows.

With the precedent set by this pilot project, the door is open for more partnerships to secure more flow to improve the health of the Rio Grande.

Change the Course, the national freshwater restoration initiative founded by the Bonneville Environmental Foundation, the National Geographic Society and Participant Media, and which I helped to create, provided financial support to Audubon New Mexico's innovative project. With our conservation partners, Change the Course has restored billions of gallons of water to depleted rivers, including the Verde and San Pedro in Arizona, the Yampa in Colorado, the Colorado Delta in northwestern Mexico, the Flint in Georgia, the Gila in New Mexico – and now the Rio Grande.

River by river, the movement of water stewardship and restoration we are working to build is growing.

Sandra Postel is director of the Global Water Policy Project, Freshwater Fellow of the National Geographic Society, and author of several books and numerous articles on global water issues. She is co-creator of Change the Course, the national freshwater initiative that has restored billions of gallons of water to depleted rivers and wetlands. She is working on a book about repairing and replenishing the water cycle.



photo by Don Usner

delivering a new middle school curriculum in Eastern New Mexico thanks to generous funding from the Center for Excellence in Hazardous Materials Management (CEHMM). This curriculum will focus on regional environmental issues and shortgrass prairie conservation, with special emphasis on Lesser Prairie-Chicken conservation and the shinnery oak vegetation community. ANM will provide access to STEM education, 21st century working landscape conservation practices, and illustrate the breadth of conservation careers in that region.

This pilot program will connect student groups with agency partners, land-owners, and local college students as guest speakers and mentors. ANM believes that this multi-generational approach will further raise awareness of STEM careers in their home region as well as encourage greater community dialogue around local environmental issues. Through this program, students will be provided with opportunities to learn more about the Lesser Prairie-Chicken and other species of concern in the region, as well as how the conservation of these species affects the broader grasslands ecosystems of eastern New Mexico.

THE YEAR AHEAD

Thanks to the financial support from the Brindle Foundation, City of Santa

Fe's Children & Youth Commission, Albuquerque Community Foundation, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and individual donors, Audubon educates next-generation stewards from Northern to Southern New Mexico, and soon to be new areas in our state, provides a fundamental science education to protect our state's precious natural resources.

In 2017, we are excited to develop partnerships in new reaches throughout New Mexico to serve even more communities, increase emphasis on citizen science opportunities, and highlight the impact that climate change will have on the environment, birds, and our eco-economy. By working with our Board of Directors' Education Committee, ANM will also focus on how environmental education can benefit early childhood and family learning in New Mexico, ways to enhance and evaluate our curriculum to ensure long-term success, and building a statewide network of educators who will deliver Audubon's highly demanded content in New Mexico.

INVEST IN SCIENCE EDUCATION

In recent years, demand for Audubon programs has far outweighed our staffing capacity. It is not uncommon for 20-30 classrooms to be left on the waitlist for scholarships, field trips or classroom visits with an Audubon educator.

New Mexico students need your support to address our communities' demand for critical science education. Additional generous financial support is imperative to continue providing quality programming for students that could not otherwise afford it. **Please invest NOW to benefit the future of New Mexico's children.**

expertise on an assessment of the City of Deming's long-term water security, the benefits of water conservation, as well as specific tools, strategies and funding opportunities to increase stewardship of water. Jorge holds unique perspective and expertise as Senior Water Policy Analyst from Western Resource Advocates and lead author of several reports analyzing regional and local water supplies to identify best management practices and strategies to secure a long-term water supply.

Figueroa led informative meetings with community leaders in economic development, faith, and elected officials as well as a public meeting, and appeared on several English/Spanish radio programs.

"Deming's water and economic future is bright and secure without tapping the Gila River. A Gila River diversion is not a good investment or a necessary solution even in the face of looming drought," said Figueroa. The assessment found that the City of Deming can ensure water for future generations beyond 2050 at far less cost through existing and future investments in water conservation, reuse, and water transfers.

Moving forward, ANM will continue to work with ally groups and elected officials, and engage the communities of Deming and Silver City to demand their fair share of Arizona Water Settlement funding from the New Mexico CAP Entity and during the upcoming legislative session for water-smart and dollar-wise alternatives to a diversion. ANM is grateful for numerous partnerships, locally, regionally and federally, dedicated to preventing the costly and unnecessary diversion of New Mexico's beloved Gila River. **A free-flowing Gila River is a crown jewel and destination that is vital to our region's recreational economy, wildlife and our New Mexican traditions and culture.**

THE SECRETIVE YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO

The western population of Yellow-billed Cuckoos has undergone significant declines in range and abundance due to habitat loss and degradation of low-elevation riparian woodland habitat. **Within New Mexico, one of three states with the highest historical number of western yellow billed cuckoo pairs, past riparian habitat losses are estimated to be about 90 percent.**

New Mexico Partners in Flight cites an estimate of 100-200 pairs remaining in New Mexico. Other western states within the bird's historical range, like California, have only 30-33 pairs remaining, compared with an estimated 15,000 pairs in the late 19th century. The western population of Yellow-billed Cuckoo was listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act in 2014, and the state of New Mexico identifies it as a species of greatest conservation need.

Thanks to a partnership with Turner Enterprises, Audubon New Mexico

is working to increase our comprehensive knowledge about where the secretive bird breeds and the characteristics of its breeding habitat, knowledge essential to the Cuckoo's conservation and recovery. **This year, Audubon conducted presence-absence surveys during the Cuckoo's breeding season along Las Animas Creek, a perennial creek in the Rio Grande basin and a designated Audubon Important Bird Area.**

Riparian vegetation along Las Animas varies from dense and lush small trees and shrubs that are completely inundated during high flows to mature gallery forests of massive Arizona Sycamore and Fremont's Cottonwoods that dominate the higher and drier terraces. From these surveys, we were able to detect ten individual Cuckoos, a success for both the bird's population status and the state, which now has new information to build on New Mexico's understanding of its distribution and occupied breeding habitat.



photo by Carolyn Lehrke, Flickr Creative Commons

AUDUBON CHAPTERS IN NEW MEXICO

For more than a century, Audubon has built a legacy of conservation success by mobilizing the strength of its partnerships, most importantly Audubon chapter members.

In 1968, **Southwestern New Mexico Audubon Society** was founded as a chapter of the National Audubon Society and marked the beginning of Audubon's presence in New Mexico. This was followed shortly by the founding of **Central New Mexico Audubon Society** in the Albuquerque area in 1971, **Sangre de Cristo Audubon Society** in Los Alamos and Santa Fe in 1972, Southeastern New Mexico Audubon Society in the Roswell area in 1975, and both the **Mesilla Valley Audubon Society** in Las Cruces and Gallup Audubon Society in 1978. *The Gallup chapter faded after their primary cause (protection of the Bisti Badlands) was successful. The Roswell Chapter morphed into Friends of the Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge in 2001.*

Our chapters work diligently on conservation, education and advocacy efforts in local communities. This past year, our chapters were focused on:

- Advocating for the protection of Gila River and conservation of local ecosystems.
- Campaigns to protect birds from outdoor cats, window strikes & light pollution.
- Educating and engaging local communities in citizen science.
- Advocating for avian Species of Conservation Concern to be included in NM forestry plans.

To learn more about each chapter's local leadership, please visit: <http://nm.audubon.org/chapters>.

CALLING ALL CITIZEN SCIENTISTS: WE NEED YOUR HELP DURING THE BUSY BIRD COUNT SEASON!

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT (CBC):

December 14th - January 5th

We're calling on birders throughout New Mexico to do what you love (go birding!) for the benefit of science. We need long-time CBC participants, newcomers, and novice birders alike. By becoming a citizen scientist, you're helping to document birds in our Land of Enchantment, so we can monitor how they're responding to a changing climate. With invaluable data gathered over time, we can protect birds and their habitat through science-based conservation solutions.

Each year, Audubon's CBC mobilizes over 70,000 volunteer observers in more than 2,400 locations in the Western Hemisphere. It produces the most comprehensive data set depicting the fluctuation, range and movement of bird populations across the continent. Scientists rely on this trend data to better understand how birds and the environment are faring and what needs to be done to protect them. In fact, data from more than 100 years of CBCs is at the heart of Audubon's Climate Report.

This December, you will have a chance to make a difference. For dates and locations of CBC circles near you, check out our website: <http://nm.audubon.org/nm-christmas-bird-count>. Contact the count leader to join. There is no fee to participate.

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT (GBBC): February 17th - 20th

Mark your calendars! The GBBC engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of bird populations around the world. Anyone, anywhere in the world, can be a citizen scientist!

Here's how it works: count birds at any location for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count and enter your sightings online. It's that easy! This is a great opportunity to get kids (of all ages) outdoors.

Last year, participants from more than 100 countries submitted a record 162,052 bird checklists during the GBBC and broke the previous count record for the number of species identified. In fact, the 5,689

species reported during last year's count represents nearly half the possible bird species in the world! The information gathered by tens of thousands of volunteers helps track changes in bird populations on a massive scale. Find out how you can get involved at <http://nm.audubon.org/great-backyard-bird-count>.

SANTA FE GBBC EVENTS

January 21st & February 4th

For those of you in the Santa Fe area, join Audubon New Mexico for a FREE GBBC training event at REI Santa Fe on January 21st or February 4th from 10:30-noon. Learn to identify birds that you are likely to see during the GBBC and how to submit a checklist online.

February 18th

Come discover the birds in Randall Davey's backyard at the Randall Davey Audubon Center! From 10:30 to noon, Audubon educators and volunteers who will be demonstrating bird ID and how to submit a digital bird checklist. Members of the Santa Fe Master Gardeners will also join us to talk about their Santa Fe Native Plant Project (SNaPP) and how to use native plants for bird habitat in your own backyard.

BIRDATHON

Although winter birding in New Mexico is top notch, from geese and cranes in the bosques to the sparrows and raptors of the grasslands and everything in between, it's never too early to start dreaming of spring migration and Audubon's largest annual fundraiser - Birdathon!

This year, we're getting an early start planning our Audubon New Mexico state office team route and identifying opportunities to engage folks who may not want to commit a full 24 hours. If you think you might be interested in participating on a Birdathon team or activity, let us know and we can get you connected to the appropriate team leader.



Stellar's Jay, photo by Shawn McCready, FlickrCC

RANDALL DAVEY *Audubon* CENTER & SANCTUARY

Nestled at the mouth of Santa Fe Canyon, the Randall Davey Audubon Center & Sanctuary is a 135-acre wildlife sanctuary with trails, an environmental education center and Audubon New Mexico's state office. It's also the site of the historic home and studio of artist Randall Davey. **We are open Mon - Sat, 8am to 4pm, closed on Sundays.**

HOLIDAY & WINTER CLOSINGS

The Randall Davey Audubon Center will be closed November 24th - 26th, 2016 for Thanksgiving, and December 24th through January 31st, 2017 to give our hard working volunteers a well-deserved break! ANM's offices will be open Monday - Friday in January.

Due to the potential for inclement weather and poor road conditions during winter, there may be additional closures. Please call ahead to ensure we're open at (505) 983-4609.

WEEKLY HAPPENINGS:

RANDALL DAVEY HOUSE TOURS:

Tours of the historic home and studio of Santa Fe artist Randall Davey are held every Friday at 2pm, \$5.

BIRD WALKS: Join us every Saturday morning at 8:30am for a FREE hike with expert birders.

Stay up-to-date on the latest events happening at the Randall Davey Audubon Center!

Check out our website randalldavey.audubon.org/events for special events, or follow us on facebook at www.facebook.com/AudubonNewMexico

VOLUNTEER!

Come spend a few hours a week contributing to the success of our center and sanctuary. Volunteer in our nature store, on the trails, in the gardens, as a Davey House docent, bird walk leader, or education assistant. Applications available at randalldavey.audubon.org. Contact Carl Beal at (505) 983-4609 x 30 or cbeal@audubon.org.



The Cardinal Penstemon provides food for this female Black-chinned Hummingbird at the Randall Davey Audubon Center, photo by Warren Berg

NATIVE PLANTS FOR BIRDS

Audubon recently launched its *Plants For Birds* campaign, designed to help inform and encourage individuals and communities to grow native plants that benefit wildlife.

At the Randall Davey Audubon Center & Sanctuary, you can see first-hand native plants of northern New Mexico, many of which attract over 190 species of birds ranging from common to rare as well as other wildlife. The Santa Fe Master Gardeners have partnered with Audubon New Mexico since 2003 to create gardens at the Center that demonstrate the use of native and xeric plants in order to attract and provide food and shelter for birds, bees, butterflies and insects.

In fact, the Pollinator Garden has just won third place in the International Master Gardener Search for Excellence Recognition program in the Demonstration Garden category!

Congratulations, Santa Fe Master Gardeners! We are so grateful for our unique partnership.

As we move into the winter months, start planning ahead for spring planting to create your bird-friendly backyard. Research native plants now at www.audubon.org/native-plants for the upcoming spring and summer seasons and prepare to attract more birds, giving them the best chance of survival in a modern landscape of fragmented habitat and in the face of climate change.

Where birds thrive, people prosper. Every plant helps. Together, we can rebuild a natural and sustainable landscape through the beauty of plants. To learn more about our partnership with the Santa Fe Master Gardeners and native plants found at the Center, visit: randalldavey.audubon.org/plantsforbirds.



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UPDATE: PROTECTING THE GILA: NM'S LAST FREE-FLOWING RIVER

The Gila Wilderness is one of the most ecologically diverse wilderness complexes in North America, containing one of the largest free-flowing (undammed) headwaters watersheds left and one of the largest expanses of Ancient Forest (unlogged) south of the Boreal Forest. As a result, **the Gila Wilderness harbors some of the greatest breeding bird diversity and density in the United States** and, with climate change, may provide key habitat for tropical species as ranges expand northward.

Audubon New Mexico (ANM) has been working to prevent the proposed Gila River diversion for the past five years. In 2016, ANM focused attention locally and contracted our first community organizer to help implement a comprehensive campaign to elevate awareness and engagement of Deming/Luna County residents to advocate for withdrawal of support for the Gila River diversion.

Behind the scenes, we developed a comprehensive communications and outreach plan to align messaging for diverse audiences. On the ground, Audubon outreach included one-on-one and group meetings, tabling at community events, field trips and speaking engagements. Significant outcomes included public comments at meetings, published letters to the editor, and meetings with key



Preliminary surveys by ANM volunteers suggest that the Gila River could be a Globally Important Bird Area for Bell's Vireo. Photo by Brian E. Small/Vireo

local, state and federal elected officials, as well as raising national attention.

Most recently, ANM deployed Jorge Figueroa to visit Deming and surrounding cities to share his technical

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