



THE GILA HEADWATERS: A WEB OF LIFE

By Dave Foreman

The North American Cordillera — known as the “Spine of the Continent” — runs from the Brooks Range of Alaska all the way south to the Isthmus of Panama. The Spine ties together two of the great floristic and faunal realms of the world — the Nearctic and Neotropical.

In the heart of this web of life, the Gila River drains the Mogollon Rim and Sky Islands of southern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico into the Colorado River and then the Sea of Cortez. The Gila’s upper headwaters on the Arizona-New Mexico border cover much of the Apache and Gila National Forests. It is here and in the Sky Islands just to the south that the Nearctic and Neotropical Realms

overlap to make up a world-class landscape of biological diversity, ecological jumbling, and wildness. The Gila Headwaters also make up the largest complex of mountain wilderness in North America south of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

The Gila Wilderness is one of the most ecologically diverse wilderness complex in North America with overlapping and blending influences from the Rocky Mountains, Great Plains, Colorado Plateau, Sky Islands, Sierra Madre, Sonoran Desert, and Chihuahuan Desert. It contains one of the largest free-flowing (undammed) headwaters watersheds left in temperate North America and one of the largest expanses of Ancient Forest (unlogged) south of the Boreal Forest.

continued on page 4



The Wilderness Study Area encompassing the Gila Lower Box Canyon is a true oasis in the desert in southwest New Mexico. A lush thicket of cottonwood, willows, and other riparian vegetation line the banks of the river and wildflowers abound in wet years. This area provides some of the best birding in New Mexico — home to approximately 200 species, it has one of the highest bird diversities in the state. The area provides habitat to many uncommon birds including Bell’s Vireo, Peregrine Falcon, Bald Eagle (in winter), Golden Eagle, Black Hawk, Zone-tailed Hawk, Gray Hawk, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Gila Woodpecker, and Abert’s Towhee. Photo by Mike Howard, Bureau of Land Management, New Mexico.

WATER FOR THE RIO GRANDE

Protecting our precious freshwater resources is one of the best ways to protect habitat and breeding grounds for the birds we all love.

There are times when the Rio Grande has insufficient water to support wild-life — losses of historic wetlands and riparian habitat continue at alarming rates. Each year, portions of the Rio Grande dry out when a majority of flows are removed for irrigation. Drying in the Middle Rio Grande (Cochiti Reservoir to Elephant Butte) can range from a few miles for a couple of weeks to dozens of miles for most of the summer.

Many exciting developments have occurred in Audubon’s program to provide water for the Middle Rio Grande.

At the beginning of 2016, Audubon’s program to dedicate water to the environment had received 200 acre-feet of water in donations from the Pueblos of Sandia and Isleta. We are proud to report that we have another 200 acre-feet, having entered into water exchange agreements with Santa Ana Pueblo and Pueblo de Cochiti, and are working with yet another new partner to bring the **total amount of water dedicated to the Rio Grande to nearly 800 acre-feet!**

The only storage location for Audubon’s environmental water is Abiquiu Reservoir, which is where the water acquired this year will be held, awaiting delivery to the Middle Rio Grande when the river channel begins to dry out. Audubon is working closely with



In the southwest, Summer Tanagers generally occupy riparian woodlands dominated by cottonwood, sycamore and willow. Loss or decline of riparian gallery forests along the Middle Rio Grande would have a negative impact on this species. Photo by Sarah Richter

the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District to make sure our water is delivered when and where it is needed to help alleviate drying and decrease

continued on page 6

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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,

We recently hit another milestone—an unfortunate and alarming milestone. March 2016 set a new record temperature for that time of year. So far, the last six months in a row have had record-setting heat.

With the effects of climate change more apparent every day, the impact to our Land of Enchantment's biodiversity, economy and the future of our children must be addressed with urgent attention. But there is reason to remain optimistic. Audubon is motivated more than ever to ensure a healthy future for birds and people. We are working in communities and in the field, classrooms, and state and federal courthouses. I'm hopeful in the collective power of Audubon's nearly million-people and partners strong network to effect meaningful change.

As you'll read, we remain committed to protecting the Rio Grande and Gila River, both critical habitat and resources for birds and people. We are honored by our partnerships with the Pueblos of the Middle Rio Grande, and grateful for the dedication of our local chapter and so many others to safeguard the Gila.

There is a push to delist the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (SWFL) and compromise it's protections under the Endangered Species Act. Now is not the time to delist a species that clearly has not recovered! Audubon is fighting to prevent the removal of the SWFL from the Endangered Species List, which would not only cause us to lose a bird that is iconic to the Southwestern landscape but also threaten many other species that benefit from the protections currently afforded to the flycatcher.

I was encouraged in April to hear U.S. Interior Secretary Sally Jewell call for a "major course correction" in protecting our landscapes and acknowledge that "...healthy, intact ecosystems are fundamental to the health of our nation." She pointed a finger at climate change, as well as land grabs, for the extreme rates of disappearing natural areas in the West. Audubon values our collaborations with state and federal partners, including national wildlife refuges, open spaces and public lands, as well as with private landowners throughout New Mexico.

In this newsletter, find conservation action opportunities for you to engage and invest in. **Please contribute to our spring fundraising campaign to support Audubon's much-needed conservation and education programs.** I'm grateful for your continued investment in Audubon New Mexico, and hope you feel proud of how your generosity is powering bird conservation efforts. Thank you!



Julie Weinstein
Vice President and Executive Director



The SWFL is at great risk as a result of climate change, particularly from impacts of drought and associated increased frequency in fire. Photo by Kelly Colgan Azar.

WELCOME SCOT PIPKIN, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION!

Scot Pipkin developed a love for the natural world at an early age. Eschewing the beach in his native San Diego, CA, in favor of wandering the hills and chaparral of “East County,” Scot discovered the wonder of learning from the mountains.

As an undergraduate at UCLA, Scot was formally introduced to birding and bird conservation, helping study the Santa Cruz Island subspecies of loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus anthonyi*). This experience, combined with work as an outdoor guide leading backpacking, rock climbing, and hiking trips throughout the Southwest made him realize the power of connecting people to the joys of observing nature. Since that time, he has committed himself to sharing his passion with as many

people as he can, developing and delivering content to pre-K through adults in California, Arizona, and New Mexico. Most recently, he served as Public Access Manager for Tejon Ranch Conservancy, where he developed environmental education programming, trained multiple cohorts of citizen scientists and naturalists, and collaboratively developed a 5-year plan for the evolution of these programs.

In addition to a B.A. in Geography, Scot holds a Master’s degree in Landscape Architecture from the University of Arizona and is particularly interested

in both experiential landscapes and measuring design performance for habitat values. He is thrilled to be working for Audubon New Mexico, where he wishes to build on Audubon’s great tradition of school and community programs, citizen science, and advocacy for the birds.



GWEN PEREA WARNIMENT, WELCOME TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS!



A native New Mexican with multigenerational roots, Gwen has worked for the LANL Foundation since 2013 as Program Director for the Inquiry Science Education Consortium. Gwen is a doctoral candidate in Curriculum and Instruction at New Mexico State University. She has taught in Oaxaca, MX, and has been a teacher, ESL Specialist, and Instructional Coach for the Santa Fe and Los Alamos Public Schools. Gwen also currently teaches graduate-level education classes for New Mexico Highlands University as adjunct faculty.

Gwen presently serves as a member of the Math and Science Advisory Council for the New Mexico Public Education Department. She is a strong advocate for food justice, volunteering in several capacities at the Santa Fe Farmer’s Market and Kitchen Angels. She is a board member for Communities in Schools New Mexico, an exceptional program that offers wrap around support for students by strategically aligning needed services to the most marginalized populations in public schools. She is interested in sustainable agriculture and ranching as well as place-based education that acknowledges an ecology of knowledges.

A teacher at heart, Gwen strives to integrate teaching and learning into a dynamic, creative process that serves to enrich both the individual and the community/ecosystem. She currently resides in Santa Fe and is constantly inspired by the Sangre de Cristo mountains and her two sons.

CREATE YOUR LEGACY

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.

Contact Maryam Miller, Deputy Director, to learn more at mmiller@audubon.org or (505) 983-4609 ext. 24.

Sample Bequest Language:
“I bequeath ___% (or \$___) of my residuary estate to the National Audubon Society, Inc., a not-for-profit conservation organization located at 225 Varick St., 7th Floor, New York, NY 10014, for its New Mexico state office known as ‘Audubon New Mexico.’”

Audubon’s federal tax ID number is: 13-1624102. **All gifts are tax-deductible.**

"Gila" continued from cover

As a result, it harbors some of the greatest non-coastal breeding bird diversity and density in the United States and, with climate change, may provide key habitat for tropical species as ranges expand northward.

Recreational opportunities abound as well. The Gila Headwaters are one of the great birding areas in the United States with three Important Bird Areas that span the Upper, Middle and Lower Gila Box gallery forests and the verdant river valley that connects them. The Gila Wilderness has long been recognized by the U.S. Forest Service as the best horsepacking wilderness in the system. The Aldo Leopold Wilderness, a portion of the Gila National Forest, has been called the "wildest" Wilderness in the West. What lies ahead for this untamed landscape that belongs to all of us?

A CONSERVATION HISTORY



When cattle ranchers proposed a road to improve grazing access into the undeveloped core of the Gila headwaters in 1921, Aldo Leopold penned an article to the Journal of Forestry asserting America's need for wilderness. He argued for "a continuous stretch of country preserved in its natural state." Photo courtesy of the Aldo Leopold Foundation, www.aldoleopold.org

A little over 100 years ago, the legendary Forest Ranger Aldo Leopold began to explore the little-known headwaters of the Gila River in the new National Forests along the New Mexico-Arizona line. He later wrote that when he came to the Southwest in 1909, six big roadless areas (each over 500,000 acres) remained in the nation's National Forests. Two — the Blue Range and Gila — covered the

Gila River Headwaters side by side. He fell in love with this country for long pack trips and quality hunting and fishing.

After World War I, however, there came a boom in motorcar recreation. Leopold became alarmed that soon there would be "Ford dust" everywhere, even in his beloved Gila Headwaters. He wrote a visionary proposal to make the mountain and canyon landscape drained by the three forks of the Gila River a protected roadless area. In 1924, Southwest Regional Forester Frank Pooler designated some 750,000 acres as the Gila Wilderness Area — the first area in the world specifically set aside to safeguard its wildness. In 1929, the Chief of the Forest Service took note of the Gila Wilderness and encouraged other National Forests to designate areas as "Primitive Areas."

These regulatory designations, while better safeguarding the areas, didn't offer permanent protection. Over the next 50 years, the Forest Service whittled away Leopold's original Gila Wilderness from 750,000 acres to 563,000 acres.

From the 1950's to the 70's, the Forest Service, on more than one occasion, proposed to reclassify more than one-third of the remaining acres of Primitive Area from any kind of protection. Conservationists, however, like Southwestern New Mexico Audubon Society (SWNMAS) Chapter members Jim Stowe and, later Bob Langsenkamp, led the overall efforts on the Gila and demanded designation of 714,000 acres as wilderness and managed to dominate the Forest Service hearing in Silver City in December, 1972.

The Forest Service continued to evaluate designation of wilderness areas in the late 70's and 80's. They found hundreds of thousands of acres of wild landscapes on the Gila and Apache National Forests. Conservationists found even more. Among

these areas was Lower San Francisco Canyon in both states. Ornithologists and other field biologists found the "Frisco" to be one of America's ecological gems. The effort culminated in the New Mexico Wilderness Act of 1980 and the Arizona Wilderness Act of 1984. The outcome: a bare-bones Aldo Leopold Wilderness of only 211,000 acres, a Gila Wilderness of 569,600 acres, and a 30,000 acre Blue Wilderness Area in New Mexico. The Arizona bill left the Blue in that state as a Primitive Area. Despite strong work from southwestern New Mexico conservationists, the New Mexico bill did not give San Francisco Canyon Wilderness designation but did make it a congressional Wilderness Study Area.

The 70's also triggered efforts to dam the wild and free flowing Gila River. Although the Gila River had several irrigation dams downstream in Arizona, its headwaters were undammed except for a few little fishing reservoirs. The upper Gila and its major tributaries were overall free flowing—one of the largest watersheds in a natural condition. But in 1978, in order to get support from powerful Senator Clinton P. Anderson of New Mexico for the Holy Grail of Arizona plumbing—the Central Arizona Project—the Arizona delegation had to cut a deal, a deal that gave New Mexico 18,000 acre feet of the Gila's water to be stored in Hooker Dam right where the river flowed out of the Gila Wilderness Area. The preferred high dam would have transformed some 20 miles of the wild, free flowing Gila River within the Gila Wilderness into a dead slack pool all the way back to its confluence with Sapillo Creek. The Hooker Dam scheme showed just how mighty water development was in the West for most of the 20th Century — for the major driver of the Central Arizona Project was none other than conservation icon Representative Mo Udall of Tucson, and Senator Anderson who had been a friend of Aldo Leopold's and a stead-



The Gila River supports some of the Southwest's largest breeding populations of Yellow-billed Cuckoos. Photo by Dan Pancomo

fast backer of protecting the Gila Wilderness. The Gila National Forest took no position on Hooker Dam and the flooding of their vaunted first Wilderness Area, but assured the public that they would put a buoy line across the reservoir on the Wilderness boundary to prevent motorboats from violating the Wilderness. When conservationists organized to back a larger Gila Primitive Area addition to the Gila Wilderness than proposed by the Forest Service, they were just as steadfast against a Hooker Dam.

SWNMAS and Maricopa Audubon Society fought Hooker (and other dams) throughout the 1970s, which was the time in which dam fighters nationally organized and finally put the brakes on the Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation. Hooker was replaced then by Conner Dam, which would not flood the Gila Wilderness but would be put at the end of the Middle Box of the Gila at the upper end of Redrock Valley. The Middle Box was a rough-and-tumble stretch of whitewater and wildness, proposed for Wilderness designation by the New Mexico Wilderness Study Committee and SWNMAS.

Conservationists fought Conner Dam valiantly and it finally drifted away only to have yet one more proposal—an estimated \$1Billion diversion on the Gila River—forwarded by the State of New Mexico in 2015. **Once again, SWNMAS and Audubon New Mexico are fighting hard to stop the**

diversion of New Mexico's last free flowing river and preserve one of the Southwest's largest contiguous multi-aged cottonwood gallery forest and intact native fish communities in the Lower Colorado River Basin. While the State has yet to select a preferred diversion design, despite 10 years and \$5 million dollars-worth of studies, preliminary plans have evaluated several possible diversion sites within the Gila National Forest including the roadless area immediately downstream of the Gila Wilderness and more recently the Freeport McMoRan diversion immediately upstream of the Middle Box and the forest service's Gila River Bird Area in the Big Burro Mountains.

The Gila Wilderness is where the idea and practice of Wilderness Area designation and protection began.

Since the designation of the Gila Wilderness over 90 years ago, Leopold's vision area has been sliced and chipped away at. Since 1978, conservationists have had to fight one dam or diversion scheme after another on the Gila, San Francisco, and Blue rivers. The Gila National Forest is in the early stages of plan revision under the 2012 Forest Planning Rule. The new plan provides us with another opportunity to bestow the highest level of conservation protection on the Gila headwaters. Only protection under the National Wild & Scenic Rivers Act

and large additions to Wilderness Areas will end these threats and over-sights. Senator Tom Udall is currently considering legislative options to designate sections of the Gila River as a Wild & Scenic River.

Senator Udall has already called into question the feasibility and wisdom of the proposed diversion. At a March 2nd hearing of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water, he raised multiple concerns. "The Gila River is a crown jewel of the Southwest and one of the last remaining free-flowing rivers in the United States. The river provides amazing opportunities for recreation, wildlife habitat protection, and has unique historic value. And of course we are also very sympathetic to the water needs of nearby communities, and the agricultural needs. I understand why any proposal that could mean more water resources is a discussion worth having — but from everything I've seen, this project simply doesn't add up."

Named by Audubon Magazine in 1998 as one of the 100 Champions of Conservation of the 20th Century, Dave Foreman has worked for many of the state's and nation's best known conservation organizations. He currently lives in his hometown of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

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AUDUBON REMAINS DEDICATED TO PROTECTING THE GILA RIVER

Audubon New Mexico has hired a Community Outreach Coordinator who will be based in Deming, NM. Kara Naber will lead a local campaign and conduct community outreach and education in Deming and throughout Luna County to promote quality of life and protection of land, water and air, including dollar-wise and water smart projects to securing Southwestern New Mexico's regional water supply. Kara and Audubon's team will continue to advocate for policies and programs that support and secure a sustainable Southwest New Mexico water supply and protect a free-flowing Gila River.

To learn more about Audubon's current efforts, including how you can help protect the Gila River and its surrounding wilderness, visit nm.audubon.org and join the Western Rivers Action Network.

CITIZEN SCIENCE FOR STUDENTS

By Samantha Funk

Citizen science is a powerful tool for students to connect with the natural world through fun activities that generate vital information for bird conservation. Students learn about birds by taking part in science-based activities, and Audubon's science staff gains valuable information to further conservation initiatives. This partnership benefits us all.

Audubon New Mexico is working with classroom teachers to integrate citizen science projects into their curricula, making science objectives more relevant for children and connecting students to local, regional, and global projects of importance.



Students at Turquoise Trail Charter Elementary School observing what birds can be found surrounding the school's property.

The current Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), guidelines for teachers detailing the science concepts and skills their students should be attaining, call for students to combine conceptual knowledge with real-world, hands-on experiences through the practice of scientific inquiry. By their nature, citizen science projects involve participants in one or more steps in the process of science and inquiry-centered learning, supporting the goals of NGSS. Many citizen science projects require little or no equipment and can be carried out by elementary

students. Data collection, with even the youngest students, could be as simple as looking out a window or watching a bird feeder and recording which birds come into view. Projects could take place in a single day, or be carried out over the course of a school year or semester through a series of observations.

Because such projects afford students the opportunity to participate in inquiry-based science, children begin to understand that science begins by simply asking questions and making observations. **Critical thinking skills developed through the process of inquiry help to develop informed stewards who are able to analyze complex information to understand**

and help solve relevant environmental and social problems, such as climate change. Practicing inquiry through place-based environmental learning is engaging and will increase the likelihood of students taking a stronger interest in math and science courses, key areas needed for college readiness.

Audubon New Mexico is committed to providing students the opportunity

to engage in citizen science. This semester our educators has been working with 5th graders at Turquoise Trail Charter Elementary School in Santa Fe on a pilot project that incorporates observation and data collection for birds found at the school. Through a series of classroom lessons facilitated by an Audubon educator, student participants of Audubon's Youth Climate & Bird Ambassadors pilot program are learning about climate change, how birds might be affected by changes in the environment, and how they can help.

When the natural environment is a context for learning, students perform better on standardized tests in all subjects and show increased engagement and enthusiasm for learning. Audubon has specifically designed our environmental education programs toward these goals.

Students have been taking weekly trips outside their school to observe and collect bird data. Audubon has provided binoculars and other tools for the program: bird feeders and seed, field guides, and science notebooks. The data gathered by students is then vetted by our educators and submitted to eBird, an online database of bird observations providing real-time data about bird distribution and abundance (www.ebird.org). Students have observed how local bird assemblages change according to environmental factors such as seasonality. These observations are a catalyst to discuss how future changes in weather patterns, habitat availability, and the timing of natural events throughout the year could affect bird populations.

In recent years, an effort has been made within the network of citizen science project innovators to develop curricula or lesson plans that offer specific educational learning objectives tied to their projects. Find out more at BirdSleuth: www.birdsleuth.org; the Cornell Lab of Ornithology: www.birds.cornell.edu; and Nature's Notebook from the USA Phenology Network's project www.usanpn.org/natures_notebook.

If you are an educator, know of someone interested in engaging children through citizen science, or want to find out how you can help, please contact Scot Pipkin, Director of Community Education at spipkin@audubon.org or (505) 983-4609, ext 27.



Drying river channel in the Middle Rio Grande during irrigation season, 2015.

stress to riparian habitat and the fish and wildlife that depend on the river. **With 800 acre-feet, nearly 25 miles of the river channel will receive some water for almost 3 weeks!**

River flows have cultural importance to the Pueblos, and the need for adequate flows to provide for environmental uses is an area of concern for the Pueblos and for Audubon, "The Rio Grande is sacred to the people of Sandia Pueblo, as is the environment it provides," said Sandia Pueblo Governor Isaac Lujan in November. "With ever increasing demands put on the river, Sandia offers this water as a dedication to the inherent value the river has to all people and the habitat it supports. 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 Pueblo of Sandia and Audubon New Mexico were recognized in January for their partnership at the 22nd Annual meeting of the New Mexico Water Dialogue. Sandia was recognized "for its leadership in dedicating water to augment the flow of the Rio Grande" and Audubon "for teaming with Sandia and other Pueblos to create a mechanism for implementing this shared vision."

"The [Sandia Tribal] Council made the

decision to donate the water because water is culturally sensitive to us, and to other Native American communities. It is Life to us, and we can't place a monetary value on it. The only thing we've asked of Audubon is to put [the donation] to use within this reach of our river, for the fish, the birds, the animals, and to replenish the aquifer... We have to do our part to preserve and protect future generations. This is one small step in trying to do that, for the betterment of not just our community, but of everyone else in this region." - Pueblo of Sandia Lt. Governor Stuart Paisano.

DID YOU KNOW...

This will be the first-ever use of Abiquiu Reservoir's Environmental Pool, which was established in 2005 to ensure that the Rio Grande has a right to its own water. Audubon's water will be stored and then released at a time when the river channel begins to dry.

Audubon is the first and only conservation organization to put water into the Environmental Pool, and will also be **the first to own and deliver environmental water** from Abiquiu Reservoir to the Middle Rio Grande **when the river - and its birds and wildlife - need it most.**

STATE OF NORTH AMERICA'S BIRDS REPORT

This year, we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the first Migratory Bird Treaty, an agreement between the United States and Canada signed in 1916 promising collaborative conservation to protect the migratory birds of North America. In 1936, twenty years after the signing of the Migratory Bird Treaty, Mexico and the U.S. committed to a similar treaty, connecting all of North America in its efforts to protect our shared species.

In this Centennial year celebrating our earliest efforts towards international migratory bird protection, our three countries are uniting once again with a **"State of North America's Birds" report – a first-ever, groundbreaking collaboration to evaluate bird populations in nine key ecosystems across the continent.**

Developed by the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, of which Audubon is a partner, and built using data collected by tens of thousands of citizen scientists across North America, the report shows that more than one third of all 1,154 North American bird species need urgent conservation action and calls for a renewed, continent-wide commitment to saving our shared birds and their habitats.

In spite of these alarming numbers, we know that when people push for positive change, bird conservation succeeds. **Find out more about how Audubon New Mexico's conservation programs help protect our migratory and resident birds – and their habitats – at nm.audubon.org/birds.**

For the most recent "State of North America's Birds" report, go to www.stateofthebirds.org and learn more about the Migratory Bird Treaty Centennial celebrations at www.fws.gov/birds/MBTreaty100.


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.**

WEEKLY HAPPENINGS: PARTNERS FOR WILDLIFE — IT REALLY DOES

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.

MONTHLY HAPPENINGS:

Butterfly & Pollinator Walks with Butterfly Guy Steve Cary: June 15th, July 20th, August 17th, September 21st

Guided Nature Walks with Steven Hamp: June 18th, July 16th, August 20th, September 17th

Native Plant & Wildflower Walks: May 27th, June 24th, July 29th

Drawing & Painting in Nature with Elizabeth: every Tuesday & Thursday, June 14th – July 19th

Stay up-to-date on the latest events happening at the Randall Davey Audubon Center!
 Check out our website randalldavey.audubon.org/events for monthly program times, RSVP information and other 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.

“TAKE A VILLAGE”

By Chris Durlak, Santa Fe Master Gardener Association (SFMGA)

A trip to the Randall Davey Audubon Center (RDAC) will delight the visitor with blooms colorful and fragrant, attractive to both humans and wildlife. But what is not apparent as you look around is the creative, diligent and committed team of workers who have planned, developed and maintained the gardens for the enjoyment and education of visitors, children attending educational programs and the continued education and training of Master Gardeners.

The SFMGA members (affiliated with NM State University Extension Service Program) have been trained in basic horticulture and volunteer time, experience and knowledge in a variety of projects serving the community, including the Audubon Wildlife Gardens Project. SFMGA has partnered with the Center since 2003 to develop special areas that teaches and promotes local, sustainable gardening through reliable, research-based practices.

The Audubon Project goal is to create gardens that demonstrate the use of



The Wildlife, Native Perennials and Native Shrub beds and the Pollinator Garden at the RDAC were planted and are maintained for visitor enjoyment and as learning/teaching opportunities for the SFMGA members, as part of their Audubon Project.

native and xeric plants to attract and provide food and shelter for wildlife including birds, bees, butterflies and insects. Audubon and SFMGA are both committed to promoting the use of native plants in our local gardens and, the gardens showcase this.

These habitats become a vital link in the collective effort to nurture and maintain the living landscape for birds and other wildlife. Some of the native plants that enhance the Gardens at RDAC include Beebalm (Monarda fistulosa), Desert Four O'clock (Mirabilis multiflora), and Wild Hyssop (Agastache cana). Shrubs include Fernbush (Chamaebatiaria Millefolium) and Golden Currant (Ribes aureum).



Of all the bees native to North America, about 30% use some kind of tunnel in which to lay their eggs. The diameter of the tunnels, as well as their preferred length, varies with the different species of bee. So, to attract a wide variety of native bees, it is best to use a wide variety of tunnel sizes.

In another collaborative project, Master Gardeners built a house for native bees in the Pollinator Garden (photo above). Healthy habitats for native pollinators like bees, butterflies, hummingbirds and other insects, native plants are not only visual delights, but also serve as outdoor classrooms.

Master Gardeners work in the gardens most Fridays, from 10-12, from April through September. For more information go to www.sfmga.org.



Not only are these berries food for birds and wildlife, they are also edible for humans. Called "capulin" in local Spanish, chokecherries have been used to make jelly, juice, syrup or wine and the bark used for tea.

NATIVE PLANT SPOTLIGHT: CHOKECHERRY

By Joy Mandelbaum, Santa Fe Native Plant Project (SNaPP) of the Santa Fe Master Gardener Association (SFMGA)

Chokecherry (*Prunus Virginiana*) is an important native plant for wildlife. The fragrant white blossoms, in long slender racemes, provide nectar for butterflies and bees when they burst into bloom in late spring. Native flies and bees also assist with pollination. Western Tiger Swallowtail and Two-tailed Swallowtail butterflies place eggs on chokecherry leaves — food for their caterpillars. By fall, the elongated clusters of dark cherries are enjoyed by several species of songbirds and mammals. Twigs provide winter deer browse. In addition to food, the shrub/tree provides shelter and nesting habitat.

Growing from 8-12' tall, the deciduous chokeberry has shiny dark green leaves that turn crimson and yellow in the fall. A nice addition to gardens, it can take full sun to partial shade. Requiring low water, it can tolerate any well drained soil, from dry rocky slopes to wooded areas or canyon slopes.

Found at elevations of 5,000-8,000 feet, it is a perfect choice for northern New Mexico.

For more information on SNaPP, go to www.sfmga.org.

BIRDATHON!

By Christopher Rustay

This year, Audubon New Mexico's Birdathon team headed to the southeast. Beginning in Ruidoso for some montane birding, the first stop was Alto Reservoir for ponderosa pine birds. Blue-winged Teal had arrived on the pond and Violet-green Swallows were flying amongst Barn Swallows overhead. Virginia's Warblers were singing below the dam and an Acorn Woodpecker, with its raucous call, graced us as we left. We then traveled upslope for the higher mountain birds like Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Brown Creeper and Grace's Warblers.

The next stop was in Pinyon-Juniper forest where the group picked up Plumbeous and Warbling Vireos and a Wilson's Warbler, however the wind, which had been blowing steadily all afternoon, prevented finding other P-J birds generally only found in that habitat such as Pinyon Jay and Juniper Titmouse. Passing through Fort Stanton the team ended the afternoon in the BLM's Fort Stanton-Snowy River Cave National Conservation Area — a recent and rarely birded jewel proven by the Common Black-Hawk nest we found when a female began screaming overhead!

The next morning, bright and early, the group headed out to Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge, an Audubon Global Important Bird Area. Even before getting to the refuge, we spotted an Osprey roosting on power poles and a pair of Mississippi Kites. Stopping in the grasslands on the mesa, we were graced with the harsh "chick-chaw" of the Scaled Quail and

the melancholy song and flight display of several Cassin's Sparrows. Once on the refuge proper, the birds started appearing fast and furious: Snowy Plover, Wilson's Phalarope, Long-billed Curlew, a Sora called from the reeds along with a Common Yellowthroat. We left after three hours but not before finding an American Bittern skulking in the pond outside the headquarters. A Least Tern and two Common Mergansers (the latter rare for Bitter Lake in May) sent us on our way.

We traveled through town to the Kenneth Smith Bird Sanctuary, where the first and only Canada Geese on our journey were discovered, and finished the Birdathon at the South Park Cemetery, a "migrant trap" (groupings of trees in the prairie pull migrant songbirds in for a day or two on their journey north). Unfortunately, by this time the wind was blowing fairly steadily around 30 mph and finding any migrant birds was a little tough. We did find a pair of roosting Great Horned Owls, a Blue Jay and the last species of the trip was a migrant Northern Waterthrush — one of the birds we were hoping for. All in all, a good, albeit wind-blown, Birdathon with a respectable 119 species.



The intrepid Birdathon team (right to left): Ruth Burstrom, Mary Pat Day, Peter Venema, Beth Bardwell, Steve West and Christopher Rustay (leader) and Scot Pipkin (not pictured).

It's not too late to support Birdathon! Please invest in Audubon New Mexico with a gift of \$75, \$150 or \$1,000 — or any amount — today. Your tax-deductible gift will be put to immediate use, helping to meet local, urgent demands for Audubon's conservation, education and restoration programs. **All funds that Audubon New Mexico and our team raises will stay in-state, for the benefit of New Mexico's habitats and communities.**

BIRD CLUBS AROUND NEW MEXICO

You know about Audubon New Mexico's four chapters (hopefully you're an active member of one!): Sangre de Cristo Audubon Society, Central New Mexico Audubon Society, Southwest New Mexico Audubon Society and Mesilla Valley Audubon Society. But, did you know there are other great birding groups across our state? You don't have to live locally to attend one of their programs.

Consider connecting with a local bird club (or an Audubon chapter!) for a field trip or suggestions on best local spots to bird. This is a fun way to tour New Mexico, learn from local birders and see new birds! Also, be sure to check our website for a list of New Mexico's best birding trails: <http://nm.audubon.org/birds/birding-trails-new-mexico>.

United Field Ornithologists (UFOs)
Formerly an Audubon New Mexico

chapter from 1975-2001, they've got a great 2016 line-up of field trips. They also have a very extensive list of interesting bird-related information on their website's "Links" page. Check them out! <http://www.ufoofroswell.com/>

Four Corners Bird Club

Join Donna Thatcher, Education Specialist, and other birders for bird watching from the Riverside Nature Center and a leisurely walk of 1 to 2 miles in Animas and Berg Parks. They meet Tuesdays from 8:00 - 10:00 a.m. in April through September, 9:00 - 11:00 a.m. in October through March. Info: (505) 599-1422. This active birding group is also working to protect and defend the health of the Animas and San Juan Rivers. <http://www.fmtn.org/252/Riverside-Nature-Center>

Lincoln County Bird Club

This club, formed in 1994, is an

active birding group with exciting field trips. But that's not all...check out the list of conservation projects and other accomplishments listed on their website. Way to go, Lincoln County Birders! Check their website or call (505) 415-4554. <http://www.lincolncountybirdclub.com/>

Trans-Pecos Audubon Society

Nearby but not in New Mexico, they make regular field trips in our Land of Enchantment. Birding west of the Pecos River, based in El Paso, TX, this Audubon Texas chapter makes field trips into Rattlesnakes Spring, part of Carlsbad National Park, into the Mesilla Valley, and other birding hotspots throughout New Mexico and into Arizona. <http://www.trans-pecos-audubon.com/>

Do you know of a birding group or club not mentioned? Let us know, and we'll feature them in a future newsletter. Contact Julie Weinstein at jweinstein@audubon.org.

THE MESSENGER

by the Central New Mexico Audubon Society (CNMAS)

On Saturday, March 19, CNMAS and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) cosponsored a free viewing of the film *The Messenger* at The Guild in celebration of the centennial of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

The film evoked the major threats to migratory birds, including habitat loss and fragmentation, window strikes, outdoor cats, chemical and light pollution, and climate change. The film's profiles of the efforts of conservationists,

biologists, artists, activists, and citizen scientists to alleviate these threats provided a message of hope and inspiration.

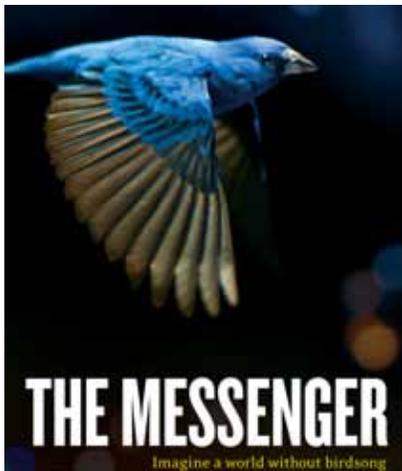
The panel discussion following the movie highlighted major threats to birds in the Albuquerque area, including and what concerned citizens can do help birds in our area, including keeping cats indoors, volunteering to help CNMAS conduct window-strike surveys, supporting Audubon's *Western Rivers Action Network*, advocating for the Rio Grande's right to a percentage of its own water, and eschewing pesticides in yards and gardens. The discussion also widened to include broader ways to help birds, such as eating a less meat-centered

diet, curbing population growth, and buying certified bird-friendly coffee.

Birds and Beans, a certified shade-grown and bird-friendly coffee, donated coffee for the showing. Together, profits from the coffee sales and donations raised over \$200 for the CNMAS conservation committee. In all, the event was a great success with more than 100 attendees!

USFWS and Central New Mexico Community College hold a license to *The Messenger*, which will enable future joint-sponsored events.

A note those who inquired: The CD playing before the show was Rhythm and Roots' A Guide to the Birdsong of South America, a non-profit, crowd-funded album inspired by birdsong. The album can be purchased online with all proceeds donated to a pair of Ecuadorian NGO bird charities.



NATIONAL FOREST PLANNING

by the Sangre de Cristo Audubon Society (SdCAS)

New Mexico is leading the national effort to rewrite its National Forest Plans and northern NM forests are the farthest along in the process. These documents lay out what the Forest Service will be doing over the next 10-20 years, though the lifetime may be much longer. For example, the last Santa Fe National Forest Plan was issued in 1987, almost 30 years ago.

The national guidance for the preparation of new Forest Plans is extensive and very different from past practice, emphasizing ecosystem management and forest and grassland health, with extractive uses only when consistent with those goals. Timber extraction will not play as great a role as the current plan. *Restoring composition and structure in Southwestern frequent fire forests: A science-based framework for improving ecosystem resiliency* (General Technical Report RMRS-GTR-310, 2013) sets the tone for the new Plans.

Both the Carson and Santa Fe National Forests have begun this process and SdCAS, in collaboration with Audubon New Mexico and other environmental groups, is engaged with written comments and attendance at public meetings.

Audubon's primary concern is with birds and wildlife, and our comments have reflected that emphasis particularly as it applies to the "need for change" statements the forests are using to guide the development of their plans. Above all, we requested that the Forest Service develop and embrace an objective and unified system for monitoring wildlife, vegetation, soils, and hydrology that is scientifically justifiable, ecologically based, and consistent across the forest. Only with such a robust system in place can the forests truly engage in "adaptive management."

In the particular case of threatened forest birds, we found the Forest Service assessment of Species of Conservation Concern (SCCs) was quite



Plain and drab but full of personality, the Juniper Titmouse is found mainly in open woods of pinyon pine and juniper, as well as in oak or pine-oak woods. Photo by Alan Schmierer.

weak. Birds like: Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Bendire's Thrasher, Juniper Titmouse, Grace's Warbler, Gray Vireo, and Virginia's Warbler should be listed as SCCs as they are identified by the New Mexico Avian Conservation Partnership as priority species for conservation.

SdCAS is continuing to engage with the Carson and Santa Fe National Forests to ensure that protection of birds and bird habitat has an appropriate level of attention as the plans are developed. Other chapters around the state are likewise engaging in the process on forests in their area.

CHAPTER MEMBERS ATTEND LEGISLATIVE SESSION

by the Southwestern New Mexico Audubon Society (SWNMAS)

SWNMAS Board President Sara Boyett and Treasurer Terry Timme attended Land, Water and Wildlife Day and heard Sen. Morales thank the crowd for their support of his bill, SB 248, which proposed the use of Federal funds controlled by the Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) to provide funding for urgently needed municipal water projects in Grant County. The ISC has proposed a speculative, unnecessary and costly diversion of the Gila River and has awarded non-diversion projects submitted to them, a small percentage of the funding needed. Morales' bill passed the Senate Conservation Committee but there was not enough time to move



State Senator Howie Morales addresses the crowd at Land, Water, and Wildlife day at the State Capitol on Feb. 11, 2016. The SWNMAS banner is above in the background. Photo by Terry Timme.

the bill from the Finance Committee and to the Senate floor for a vote during the 2016 legislative session.

Sara and Terry's advocacy work during Land, Water and Wildlife Day included public outreach and lobbying activities.

The previous week, board members Lisa Fields, Vice President and Patricia Taber, Ravens editor, attended Grant County Day meetings with legislators in the Roundhouse along with the Grant County Prospectors. The two women also lobbied members of the Senate Conservation Committee in support of Senator Morales' SB 248.

The presence of SWNMAS during the legislative session was made possible by financial assistance from Environmental Alliance of New Mexico.



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CLIMATE WATCH

This past winter, with the help of Central New Mexico Audubon Society (CNMAS), the National Audubon Society launched a new citizen science collaboration called Climate Watch.

According to Audubon's Birds & Climate Change report, climate change could imperil 314 species, nearly half of all U.S. birds. Drawing on hundreds of thousands of citizen science observations and sophisticated climate models, Audubon scientists defined climate conditions that birds need to survive and mapped where those conditions will be found as the Earth's climate responds to increased greenhouse gases.

Climate Watch is designed to test the predictions of Audubon's report. Using the new climate watch maps and a test protocol, approximately 80 birders from New Mexico, Iowa,



Wisconsin and New York volunteered in January to survey for bluebirds in areas that are predicted to see greater abundance or decline within their chapter boundaries. Almost a quarter of the volunteers were from the CNMAS. "Our chapter volunteers performed over 120 counts and provided important feedback on the field protocol, the location of suitable and accessible habitat and mapping resources," said Judy Liddell, who coordinated the chapter's engagement.

Audubon will expand the pilot and partner with 30 chapters this June to continue to develop the program. This pilot will be a key step in testing the field activity and in giving strategic direction to development of the support materials and resources for future chapter involvement.

The current Climate Watch focus is the three species of bluebirds: Eastern, Western and Mountain. There are strong climate change predictions for all three species of bluebirds and they are widespread, charismatic, and easily-identified. New Mexico was the only chapter that was able to survey for all three bluebird species during the winter Climate Watch.

If you or your chapter is interested in participating, or if you would like more information on Climate Watch, please contact Beth Bardwell, Director of Conservation, at bbardwell@audubon.org or (575) 418-0288.