



SOUTHWESTERN NEW MEXICO
AUDUBON SOCIETY
Box 1473
Silver City, NM 88062-1473

Check our website at
www.swnmaudubon.org

You will find out about the
activities in this local chapter and
have links to other sites with helpful
and interesting information.

Feds Charged With Not Doing Enough to Save the Mexican Spotted Owl

WildEarth Guardians filed a complaint in federal court in June claiming that the USDA Forest Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are not living up to previous court orders to conserve the threatened Mexican Spotted Owl. The complaint alleges that the agencies have disregarded their obligation to track the bird's dwindling numbers in Arizona and New Mexico and continue to approve activities, particularly construction and maintenance of utility corridors that cause harm to owl habitat, jeopardizing the species' existence. The group is asking that harmful projects on National Forests in Arizona and New Mexico be halted until a new biological assessment is prepared and ESA consultation is conducted by FWS.

The Mexican Spotted Owl, whose population is currently declining at a rate of six percent per year, was provided protection under the Endangered Species Act nearly two decades ago, and past lawsuits by WildEarth Guardians lead to robust protections for the bird over and above ESA protections. One of the strongest requirements was for the Forest Service to monitor the numbers of owls and the effects of its activities on the owl. However, WildEarth Guardians alleges a failure by the agency to collect this critical information; meanwhile FWS has continued to hand out permits

Low Cost Bird Feed ~ Make it Yourself!

As an alternative to commercial mixtures, which may have a high percentage of less appealing "filler seeds" such as red milo, you can create an attractive, low-cost mixture yourself. Pour one 25-pound bag of black-oil sunflower seed, one 10-pound bag of white proso millet, and one 10-pound bag of cracked corn into a clean trash barrel. Mix it up with a broomstick, and be sure to replace the lid tightly. In fact, always store whatever seed you decide to provide in a tight, waterproof container. Metal containers work best to prevent rodents from gnawing their way into your food supply.

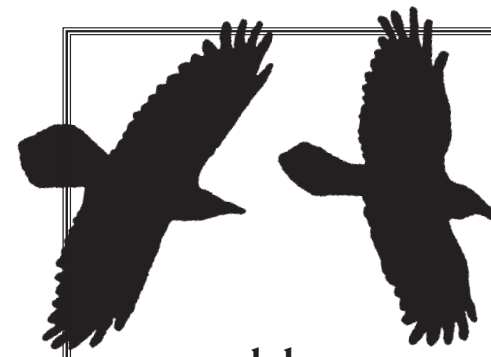
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that allow developers to harm or kill the threatened bird.

"The government is driving blind," said Bryan Bird, of WildEarth Guardians. "Their actions continue to hurt the Mexican Spotted Owl and they have no idea if the species can survive."

Several recent agency moves to weaken safeguards for the Mexican Spotted Owl in Arizona and New Mexico are raising concern. The 1995 Recovery Plan for the owl is due to be revised this year, and documents obtained by WildEarth Guardians through the Freedom of Information Act indicate the obligation to monitor the bird's numbers will be greatly reduced or eliminated. In addition, draft forest plans from Arizona have dropped the owl protections agreed to by the agency to resolve past litigation.

AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVANCY



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THE RAVENS Newsletter

Southwestern New Mexico Audubon Society
A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

January – February 2011

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PROGRAMS

Friday, FEBRUARY 4, 2011



Wintering Raptors of the Great Basin

Alan Hinde of Cambridge, MA will give a power point presentation February 4th, on his ongoing census and banding study he initiated in 1985 with support from the Nuttall Ornithological Club of Harvard University, and Hawk Watch International.

Hinde is a former Director of Banding Operations in the Goshute Mountains of Nevada and the International Bird Center in Eilat, Israel (the only primary raptor banding operation in the Middle East.) He was also a bander for many years at Cape May, NJ.

Programs are held at 7 PM, 1st Friday of the month
at WNMU's Harlan Hall, Alabama at 12th Street,
Silver City. Everyone welcome.

Start the New Year with a Christmas Bird Count Saturday, January 1, 2011

GILA RIVER CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT— January 1, 2011: members of the Southwestern Audubon Society conduct a Christmas Bird Count along the Gila River centering of the town of Riverside near Cliff, New Mexico. Since most of the land surveyed on this CBC is private, it is important for us to obtain permission for counters to access this area.

If you are interested in participating or leading a route, please contact Roland Shook at 388 3441.

FIELD TRIPS*

Saturday, FEBRUARY 5, 2011

Waterfowl at Lake Roberts

On Saturday, February 5th, SWNMAS will be birding at Lake Roberts for waterfowl and checking to see if the wintering Bald Eagles have returned. Bird diversity is good at this habitat-rich location. The trip will stop at several viewing areas around the lake shore. The walking is easy (could be muddy) and rest-rooms are on the premises. Dress appropriately for the weather. Bring snacks, water, binos and if you own a scope it will help you see the distant birds.

Tricia Hurley will be the trip leader. We will meet at the WNMU Fine Arts parking lot at 8:00AM to carpool to the lake.

For more information you can call 575-534-4940.

*There will not be a SWNMAS field trip in January, due to the New Year's Day holiday.

New Booklet Shows How to Bring Conservation to Your Backyard

National Audubon, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and other conservation groups, along with the National Resource Conservation Service have co-produced a beautiful 28-page color booklet named "Backyard Conservation" showing you how farm and ranch conservation practices can be adapted for use in any size front yard or back yard. Some Conservation practices highlighted are mulching, composting, terracing, nutrient management, pest management, tree planting, ponds, wetlands, wildlife habitat, terracing and water conservation.

The booklet is available in English or Spanish for free as a service provided by Southwestern New Mexico Audubon. Pick one up at the next chapter program meeting on Friday, February 4th.



“OUTDOOR DAYS” Give 4th Graders Insight for Their Natural Surroundings



The Gila Conservation Education Center (GCEC) is all about creating opportunities for outdoor learning. SWNMAS is happy to partner with GCEC's programs which instill a sense of stewardship and appreciation for our natural surroundings.

Outdoor learning has become more difficult for schools and the community at-large in today's overly technological society. Teachers have less flexibility for enriching learning events as they struggle to cover more material mandated by state standards and kids spend more time playing on computers, cell phones, and video games than ever before.

The GCEC secured funds from New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, Share with Wildlife program (SwW) to provide four Outdoor Days for all 4th grade classes of the Silver Consolidated School District.

Jose Barrios, G.W. Stout and 6th Street Elementary schools all participated in learning stations covering native plants, birdwatching, Silver City watershed, and solar energy. The Outdoor Days took place at the schools, utilizing natural areas within walking distance to the schools. Jose Barrios visited the schools on-site butterfly gardens and the Silva Creek botanical gardens, Sixth Street took a “Naturalist walk” to the Big Ditch, and G.W. Stout studied birds and critters along Pinos Altos Creek. Harrison Schmitt is scheduled to visit the San Vicente outdoor classroom this spring. All events had great weather and wonderful volunteers and

presenters. Some binoculars donated from a SWNMAS member were put to good use and Karen Beckenbach once again volunteered to lead the Fourth graders for bird watching; thank you Karen!!

The SwW funds are also covering some expenses for this year's 5th grade *Children's Water Festival* which will take place on Friday, April 29, 2011 at The Nature Conservancy's Lichty Center in Gila. This event provides many opportunities for volunteers to help present or set up and escort children. GCEC is a non-profit which relies heavily on volunteer efforts; please visit our web site www.gcecnm.org to learn more about these exciting programs.



Photos by Selina Garcia



SouthWestern New Mexico Audubon Society Chapter (only) MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Includes membership in SWNM Audubon Society, THE RAVENS—local chapter newsletter, the NM Statewide Audubon newsletter, programs, field trips, bird counts, education and volunteer opportunities.



A 1-year Chapter Membership is \$15. and the total amount is used here, in our local Chapter.

Make checks payable to SWNM Audubon Society

Date _____ Phone # _____

New Member

Renewal

Name _____

Mail to: SWNMAS

T. Timme, Membership Chairman

811 Oak Street

Silver City, NM 88061

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

Do you wish to receive the Chapter's local, twice-monthly "Bird Sightings Report" via email? YES ___ NO ___

Email address for Bird Sightings Report _____

Northern Aplomado Falcon Reintroduction in New Mexico Upheld by Courts

The Northern Aplomado Falcon will continue to be reintroduced as a Nonessential Experimental Population in New Mexico as a result of a 10th Circuit Court decision that sided with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in their effort to restore the species and against a legal challenge from Forest Guardians. The Circuit Court decision upheld an earlier, New Mexico District Court decision.

FWS and The Peregrine Fund have been reintroducing the falcon from Texas to New Mexico for 20 years as a Nonessential Experimental Population under the Endangered Species Act.

This designation protects the birds as a threatened species on federal lands, but not on private or state-owned lands (though they are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act regardless of location and experimental status). This approach allows for current land practices and cooperative efforts with landowners to continue.

Forest Guardians asserted that some sightings of Northern Aplomado Falcons in New Mexico (including a pair that successfully nested in Luna County in 2002) indicate a naturally-occurring population that should receive full ESA protection.

Given that it is unreasonable to expect people to know the difference between the released birds and the naturally occurring ones, Forest Guardians asserted that the naturally occurring birds are being jeopardized by the experimental, nonessential status of the released birds. They petitioned FWS in September 2002 to designate Critical Habitat for the falcon in Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas on the basis that it was no longer extirpated from the United States.

In subsequent years, other naturally-occurring falcons continued to be sighted. FWS contended that those sightings were of falcons dispersing into the area from Mexico, and would alone be unlikely to restore the species to the Southwest. The court agreed.

Aplomado Falcons were once widespread in the Southwest. Because of habitat changes, pesticides, and

other human impacts, their range constricted, and they were ultimately put on the Endangered Species List in 1986.



Chihuahuan Desert Grasslands Regional Alliance Formed

Livestock ranchers, environmentalists and countries have joined forces to conserve endangered desert grasslands. The diverse groups are part of the new Regional Alliance for Chihuahuan Desert Grasslands Conservation announced recently by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation.

It will bring together nearly 30 entities that want to study, conserve, rehabilitate and use the Chihuahuan Desert grasslands ecosystem in a more efficient manner.

“It is one of the most valuable but least appreciated ecosystems in the country,” said Juan Guzman Armand, the alliance coordinator. “Our work will be based on coordinated actions by diverse stakeholders, and will also consider traditional, technical and scientific knowledge.”

The Chihuahuan Desert is an area that covers 200,000 square miles and extends from Mexico to West Texas, Southern New Mexico and southeastern Arizona. It is North America's largest desert.

Rick LoBello, education curator for the El Paso Zoo, said that without the grasslands some species of animals in the Chihuahuan Desert would become extinct. “The grasslands are important to Mexico's efforts to save bison, antelope and falcons that rely on them,” LoBello said. “Janos, Chihuahua, has the largest prairie dog town in the world, and they need the grasslands to survive.”

“Having an alliance of this type is significant because it brings together stakeholders in sectors that in the past viewed each other as antagonists,” said Jürgen Hoth of the World Wildlife Fund Chihuahua Desert Program, an alliance member. “This regional agreement can be the most important vehicle from the last 50 years for aligning efforts related to the well-being of a shared North America ecosystem.”