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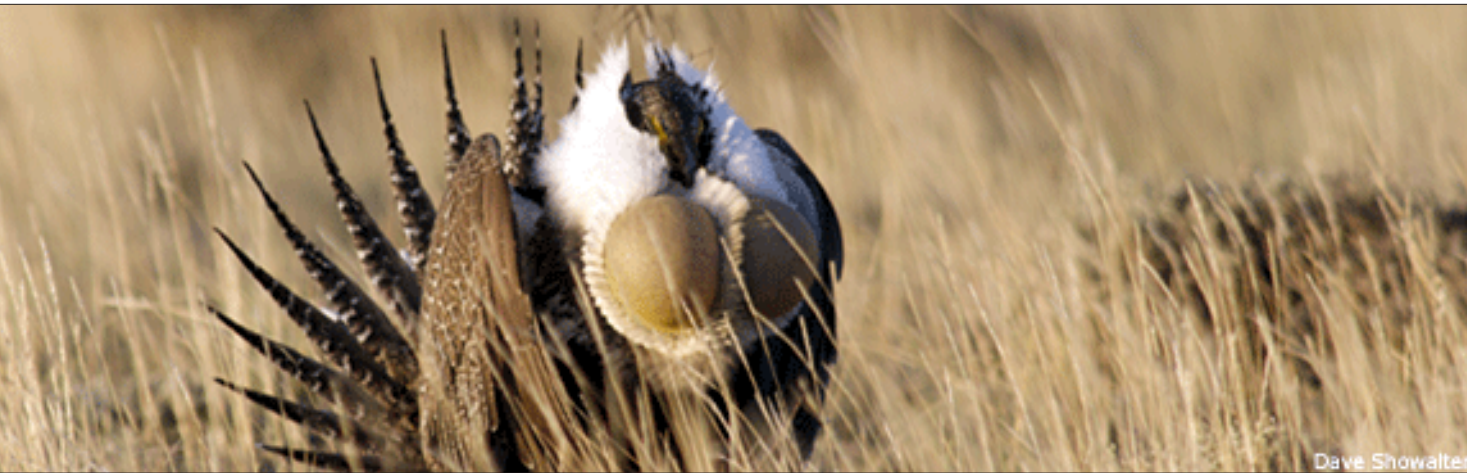
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DAVE SHOWALTER

AUDUBON POLICY ACTION HIGHLIGHTS

Sage Grouse Decision Expands Audubon Mapping Initiative

On March 5 Audubon's Dr. Frank Gill praised the "science-based plans" for protecting Sage Grouse. The new approach represents an expansion of BLM and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service use of Audubon maps to govern the use of eight million acres of Federal land in Wyoming. Now, the plans call for expanded mapping of grouse densities to cover up to 60 million acres across 11 states where the species occurs.

In making their decision, U.S. Fish & Wildlife drew upon a study co-authored by Kevin Doherty of Audubon Wyoming that recommends aggressive steps to shift drilling activity away from sensitive habitat areas. "This is more than about the bird," said Brian Rutledge, Audubon Wyoming Executive Director; "This is about the sagebrush ecosystem. This bird is a litmus test for how we have taken care of the sage."

As Rachel Carson wrote in *Silent Spring*: "The sage and the grouse seem made for each other." The grouse eat sage, nest under it, and hide within it to escape predators. In the past decade these imperiled birds have been hit by drought and West Nile virus, but nothing has been so devastating as habitat loss, diminishing their numbers to the point where they are under consideration for protection under the Federal Endangered Species Act.

FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, JUNE 19, 2010

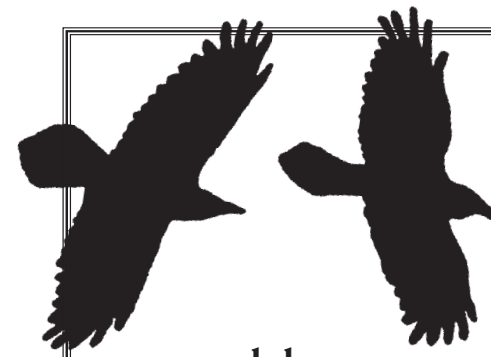
This Field trip will meet at 7:30AM at the WNMU Fine Arts south parking lot to carpool to Glenwood. Be prepared for the sun and carry binos, snacks and water.

**Glenwood Fish Hatchery
and the Catwalk**

The Catwalk is a National Recreation trail along the canyon of Whitewater Creek. It will be easy walking at both sites with some uphill walking at the Catwalk.

We will be looking for the Common Black Hawk and the American Dipper along with any other interesting birds that we can find. We should arrive back in Silver City sometime in the late afternoon.

For more info contact Jerry Bird (575-534-4940).



swnmaudubon.org

**THE RAVENS
Newsletter**

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

May – June 2010 Vol. 42, No. 3

May is Time for Spring Bird Counts

Southwestern NM Audubon annually holds two Spring Bird Counts each May. Because of these counts, we will not be having our monthly Field Trip.

Traditional Gila River Bird Count

Saturday, MAY 1, 2010

SWNM Audubon Society has historically counted birds along the Gila River for the past 40 years or so. Participants are assigned routes from the Arizona border near Virden to the Cliff Dwelling, East, West and Middle Forks of the Gila River. The goal is to count and identify all the bird detected. Based upon several years of data, a picture of the species composition along the Gila River during this time of year can be determined. Since routes are assigned, please call Roland Shook (575 388 3441) prior to April 9th or Jerry Bird (575 534 4940) after April 8th for a route assignment.

Saturday, MAY 8, 2010

International Migratory Bird Count

2010 International Migratory Bird Count for Grant County will occur on Saturday, May 8. I hope that you will all be able to take part this year. We need people to count, drive and/or compile the birds seen for each territory. Don't worry if you are not very familiar with the birds, when I find out who can come, we will make up teams to cover each area of county. Please mark this date on your calendar and let me know whether or not you can take part this year.

Thank you, Jerry Bird (coordinator) at 534-4940 or at silvercitypearl@yahoo.com

**3rd Natural History of the Gila
Symposium Scheduled for Oct. 14–15**

The Third Natural History of the Gila Symposium will be held on October 14-15, 2010 in the WNMU Besse-Forward Global Resource Center on the Western New Mexico University campus in Silver City, New Mexico.

Keynote speakers will be Dr. Exequiel Ezcurra of the University of California at Riverside, Drs. Benjamin Tuggle of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Dr.

PROGRAM

Friday, May 7, 2010

**The 40 Most Common Bird Songs in
Our Area and How to Learn Them**

Bob Wilcox, former SWNM Audubon President, will present a program entitled "The Forty Most Common Bird Songs of Our Area and How to Learn Them."

Birding by ear is for many, not easy, but once mastered it becomes an efficient means to detect and identify birds. You will not want to miss this program.

This program will be a big help for those of us who are taking part in the Migratory Bird Count on May 8th. Join us for this informative program and gain the skill of identifying birds by sounds of their songs.



Programs are held at 7 PM at WNMU's Harlan Hall, Alabama at 12th Street, Silver City. Everyone welcome.

***Hummingbird Festival of the Gila
July 24 & 25 at Lake Roberts***

Jack, the owner of the "Breathe Inn" restaurant and inn located at the intersection of Hwy 35 & Hwy 15. is planning to make the Hummingbird Festival of the Gila an annual event at the Inn, beginning this July 24th and July 25th 2010.

The Festival's banding portion and a couple of programs on hummingbirds will be presented through Joan Day-Martin's Hummingbirds of New Mexico organization. All the rest of the festival planning will be done by The Breathe Inn. Their phone number is 575-536-3206. Other information can be found on their web site (through the Silver City Chamber of Commerce lodging info).

Corbin Newman of the U.S. Forest Service.

Featured talks will include diverse topics including zoology, botany, geology, fire management, ethnobiology, hydrology, restoration and archaeology.

This event is geared towards a broad audience including the general public, students, scientists, and natural resource managers. For more information, please visit our website www.gilasymposium.org

Mockingbirds in Fickle Climates Sing Fancier Tunes

Why are some birds simple singers and others vocal virtuosos? Researchers at the National Evolutionary Synthesis Center (NESCent), the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and McGill University suspect that inconsistent climates may play a role.

A large-scale study of mockingbirds in diverse habitats reveals that species in more variable climates also sing more complex tunes. "As environments become more variable or unpredictable, song displays become more elaborate," said Carlos Botero, a postdoctoral researcher at NESCent in Durham, NC. NESCent is an NSF-funded collaborative research center operated by Duke University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and North Carolina State University.

Local climate patterns are good indicators of how challenging life is in a given location, Botero said. "Survival and reproduction become more complicated when weather patterns are unpredictable because you don't know when food will be available or how long it will be around," he explains. What's more, the consequences of picking a mediocre mate are magnified in harsher climates.

"In really difficult or demanding environments you would expect females to be choosier," he said.



JIM PARIS PHOTO

Male mockingbirds primarily sing to impress mates. Superior singing skills are a cue that a male is a good catch. "Complexity of song display – how many song types a bird sings, how hard the songs are – is a good predictor of the quality of the individual," said Botero. "Males that sing more complex songs tend to carry fewer parasites, and have offspring that are more likely to survive."

Since birdsong is a learned behavior, Botero and colleagues suspect that song-learning ability may also be a display of learning ability in general. The bird-equivalent of sparkling conversation, complex songs may indicate which males have not only brawn, but also brainpower. "Birds that sing better are telling others, at least indirectly: Hey, I'm a good learner," said Botero.

More importantly, singing skills may be a sign that males are clever enough to cope with iffy environments. "Individuals that are more intelligent tend to be better able to compensate for the difficulties of unpredictable climates. For example, if some individuals are able to invent new foraging techniques, then they are going to be better at surviving harsh winters than the poor guys who only know one way to forage," Botero said.

To see if there was a correlation between climate and song, Botero searched sound archives around the world and embarked on a solo tour of the southern hemisphere

to record bird songs in the wild.

Botero used computer programs to convert each sound recording – a medley of whistles, warbles, trills and twitters – into a sonogram, or sound graph. Like a musical score, the complex pattern of lines and streaks in a sonogram enables scientists to see and visually analyze sound.

The connection between birdsong and climate is new and somewhat surprising, Botero explains. "We're connecting two dots that were far away before."

CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY

Thinking Inside the Box Good for Mexican Thick-billed Parrot

American Bird Conservancy's Mexican partner Pronatura Nordeste is reporting another successful year for the Thick-billed Parrot nest box program. The endangered Thick-billed Parrot breeds primarily at three sites in Mexico's western Chihuahua state. Due to harvesting of timber and fires, the large trees that provide nest cavities for the birds have almost disappeared. Many of the remaining tree cavities are damaged with cracks and openings, and others have built up large numbers of parasites from repeated use year after year. Weather conditions and nestling parasitism have seriously reduced fledging success from these remaining natural cavities. In 2008 and 2009, ABC helped fund Pronatura and the Instituto Técnico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey to erect nest boxes at two of the sites, Madera and Mesa de las Guacamayas, to replace these lost and unusable nest sites. First year success was minimal, with only three boxes occupied, but experience with nest box programs for other species in Colombia indicated that parrots need time to become accustomed to the boxes and to begin using them. This indeed seems to be the case here too, as in 2009, eight boxes were used by the birds, with 20 eggs laid and 18 young fledged. "The birds are clearly beginning to use the nest boxes we have provided, and we expect the number of boxes used in 2010 to increase further," said David Wiedenfeld, ABC's Assistant Director of International Programs. "The greater availability of nest sites and increased fledging success at those sites should greatly aid in increasing the populations of this endangered parrot."



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ABC & PRONATURA NORESTE



Results from 2010 Count records more than 600 species across the continent

The 13th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) results are in and it was a record-breaking year for participation. During the four-day event in February, more than 97,200 bird checklists were submitted by an estimated 63,000 volunteer bird watchers from across the United States and Canada. From reports of rare species to large-scale tracking of bird movements, the GBBC provides insight into the lives of bird populations.

The GBBC is a joint project of the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology with Canadian partner Bird Studies Canada. It is open to bird watchers of all ages. The results provided a snapshot of the whereabouts of more than 600 bird species.

This year participants recorded more American Robins than any other bird species—primarily because of a massive roost in St. Petersburg, Florida. Participants reported 1,450,058 robins in Saint Petersburg alone. For perspective, the entire rest of the continent tallied 400,321 robins. Reports such as these help document hotspots for robins and year-to-year changes in their movements across the continent.

At the other extreme, one of the most dramatic results from this year's count was the absence of other bird species, including winter finches such as Pine Siskins and redpolls. Pine Siskins moved south in such great numbers last year that they burst onto the GBBC Top-10 list of most numerous birds for the first time ever. Over time, the GBBC has captured dramatic swings in the numbers of these species reported from year to year. These fluctuations may be influenced by the birds' food supply and reproductive success far to the north. This year, they presumably didn't need to travel as far south to find enough food.

Results from this year's GBBC also documented the

continuing expansion of an introduced species across the continent. 12 years ago, the Eurasian Collared-Dove was reported in 9 states during the GBBC— more than 14,000 doves were reported in 39 states & provinces.

"The new and the unusual are always a thrill during the GBBC," said Robert Petty, Western Director of Field Support at Audubon's Education and Centers. "Notable sightings this year included a Crimson-collared Grosbeak in McAllen, Texas--the first time the species has been reported during the count since 2005." Birders off the coast of San Diego were treated to a Red-billed Tropicbird—the first verified sighting of this species for the Great Backyard Bird Count. Highlights from Canada included a Rustic Bunting seen in Creighton, Saskatchewan. In Marathon, Ontario, a Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch was a spectacular sighting because it was far outside its normal range in the Rocky Mountains.

GBBC data become more and more valuable with each passing year," said Dick Cannings, program director for Bird Studies Canada. "Over time we'll be better able to see significant changes that may occur in the numbers and distributions of birds which may be tied to climate change, habitat loss, disease, or other factors."

Top 10 birds reported on the most checklists in 2010
1) Northern Cardinal, 3) Mourning Dove, 4) Downy Woodpecker, 5) Blue Jay, 6) American Goldfinch, 7) Tufted Titmouse, 8) House Finch, 9) American Crow, 10) Black-capped Chickadee.

Visit the "Explore the Results" pages on the GBBC web site at www.birdcount.org to find the list of Top 10 birds reported in your state, province, or city.

NEST CAMS ARE BACK!

The always-popular NestCams are back in action. Anyone can get a live peek into nests and nest boxes across the country. Live cameras for Barn Owls, Barred Owls, and Wood Ducks are online right now with Eastern Bluebirds and other species soon to follow at www.nestcams.org

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

New Member Renewal

Date _____ Phone # _____

Name _____

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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 _____