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THE RAVENS

Newsletter

Southwestern New Mexico Audubon Society
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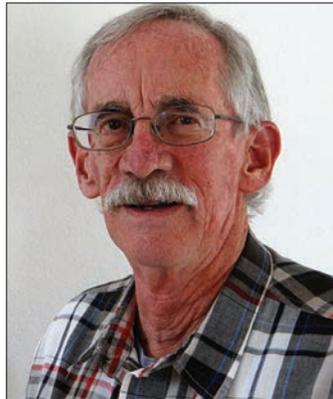
Friday, MAY 5th Program

An Overview of the Birds of the Middle Gila Valley of New Mexico

By Roland Shook

The Middle Gila Valley of New Mexico (aka Cliff-Gila Valley) is known throughout the state for its rich bird diversity with 326 species reported from the total Valley and 234 species known specifically from the Gila Bird Area.

Roland has been involved in scientific studies for several years of the Federally Endangered Willow flycatcher, the Federally Threatened Yellow-billed cuckoo and the State Threatened Common Black-hawk. In addition



Roland Shook

to these species, he has conducted a twenty year study on bird populations in the Gila Bird Area at the southern end of the Valley.

This presentation will discuss methods of obtaining data on bird species and the conclusions that can be drawn from that data. Evidence will be presented on changes, if any, on several



Yellow-billed cuckoo

avian populations and their implications

Program begins at 7PM at WNMU's Harlan Hall with light refreshments afterwards. Everyone is welcome,

NOTE:

This May 5th program is the last one for the season. October will resume our monthly First-Friday Programs.

September will be our Potluck Annual meeting at the Little Walnut Pavilion.

Take Part in the "BIG WEEKEND" MAY 12 - May 14

Celebrating this 101st anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty, SWNMA will host it's 2nd Big Weekend birding event. Based on the same principles as a Big Day, individuals and teams go out and count as many species of birds as they can. The rules are simple:

- ◆ You should register either as an individual or a group:
- ◆ Start time is 12:00 noon Friday May 12 and ends at 12:00 noon Sunday May 14.
- ◆ Bird only within Grant County.
- ◆ Cannot go on private property unless it is a friend's and permission is granted. For example the ranches in the Gila are off limits as is the Glenn Ranch off of Ridge Road. You can look from the edges but do not access the properties.
- ◆ The Silver City Golf Course is off limits except from the edge or if you're playing golf.

Pot-Luck with Gila Native Plant Society May 14 at 2 PM - Little Walnut Pavilion

The event will conclude with a Pot-Luck dinner at Little Walnut Group Picnic area. The Pot-Luck is co-hosted with the Gila Native Plant Society. Participants may show up as early as 1:00, with food being served at 5:00. Bring your food dish and eating utensils. SWNM Audubon will provide hot dogs. All SWNMA members are welcome to attend the post count picnic, but do need to RSVP so we'll know how many hot dogs to bring. If you have questions or to register contact Karen at: k.beck.56@icloud.com, or 575-388-2386

Save the Day-Friday, September 1 for Annual Meeting Potluck Picnic

Southwestern NM Audubon will hold their Annual Meeting Friday, September 1st at the Little Walnut Pavilion. Folks gather about 4 and visit or bird the grounds. Plan to eat at 5:30PM. Bring a food dish for sharing, your own drinks, plates and utensils.



The Velvet Ash grove at The River Ranch.

Sharing A Ranch's Conservation Legacy

Through a cooperative arrangement with New Mexico's City of Rocks State Park, SWNMA has gained the opportunity to access the unique ecosystem of The River Ranch. This results from the generosity of late River Ranch owners, Gene and Elizabeth (Libby) Simons, who had a commercial beef operation after Gene's retirement from a distinguished journalism career that included a Pulitzer Prize. The Simons combined conservation easements through the New Mexico Land Conservancy with property sales and donations to New Mexico Game and Fish and the State Parks Foundation to create one of New Mexico's most recent wildlife management areas. Located along the Mimbres River, adjacent to City of Rocks State Park, this stellar riparian and grassland wildlife habitat is now a limited access public property. What sets The River Ranch apart from other naturalized areas?

- 700 acres of Giant Sacaton grassland savannah, preserved through the Simons' rotational grazing practices
- A unique and historic Velvet Ash grove
- Riparian ecology adjacent to Chihuahuan desert
- Resident and migrant bird species that reflect the diverse habitat

Several Audubon Board and committee members were recently trained by Tony Godfrey, Certified Interpretive Guide with NM State Parks to be River Ranch field trip leaders. Volunteer activities will include assisting Tony with City of Rocks' guided hikes for campground visitors, offering SWNMA Birding Field Trips for the general public, and collaboration with other conservation and educational initiatives.

The River Ranch showcases how progressive conservation stewardship practices create wonderful habitat for birds and wildlife. Stay tuned for announcements of upcoming birding walks at The River Ranch!

By Lisa Fields

Birds & Brews - on 4th Thursdays!



SWNM Audubon's informal gathering in the back room of the Little Toad Creek Inn in Silver City continues on May 25

with a presentation by Martha Cooper, of The Nature Conservancy, who will discuss the peer-reviewed study, "Gila River Needs Flow Assessment" contracted by TNC. The June 22 program will be "Birds in Comcaac (Seri) and Yoeme (Yaqui) Worlds in Western Sonora, Mexico" by Dr. Richard Felger. Tony Godfrey, park technician, will talk about "Birds and wildlife of the City of Rocks State Park" on July 27.

We encourage attendees to order food and drink to support the Toad. Since the room capacity is limited, we require an RSVP to an email announcement of the meeting, which will be sent out a week ahead of time. Audubon members receive the announcement first, as a benefit of membership. If you are not a chapter member but would like to receive notification send your email address to swnmaudubon@gmail.com

How to Lure Orioles to Your Yard

When it comes to orioles, cottonwoods are king, followed closely by willows, sycamores, and maples. These tree species provide not only the insects that orioles seek, but also the long branches the species prefer for weaving their nests, should you be so lucky to have orioles stay and breed.

Orioles enjoy a diverse diet: They also love nectar, particularly from sturdy flowers they can perch on. In the west, Hooded or Bullock's Orioles may visit agave and ocotillo, while in the east, Baltimore and Orchard Orioles feed from trumpet creeper or coral honeysuckle vines. And all orioles adore fruit—particularly dark, ripe fruit. Mulberries and grapes are bonafide favorites.



Hooded Oriole in ocotillo.

Photo: Virginia Short/Audubon Photography Awards

Finally, if you plant milkweed, an oriole pair may use fibers from the stems and seed pods of this important monarch butterfly host plant to weave their nest.

<<Don't Forget! Get your yard ready for spring migrants by growing native plants. Just type your zipcode into Audubon's handy database to discover which native plants in your area will attract certain types of birds.>>

www.audubon.org/news/a-guide-luring-warblers-tanagers-orioles-and-grosbeaks-your-yard

Making Seed Balls to Help Birds

With this simple DIY, you can spread the power of native plants far and wide. Seeds may just be one of nature's coolest wonders. Humans, birds, and a whole host of other wildlife rely on these nutrient-packed incubators for food. From tiny flea-sized spinach seeds to hairy-faced coconuts, seeds come in all shapes and sizes. And, if conditions are right, they eventually grow into the flowers, foliage, and fodder that help make up the natural world. So why wouldn't you want to spread seed love in your area? Seed balls are one way to do just that. These weapons of mass induction are a fun and easy way to beautify abandoned lots, combat invasive weeds, or spruce up your own garden. Not only will you reap what you sow, but you'll also improve habitat for bugs, bees, and birds alike.

INGREDIENTS:

Clay

Clay helps retain moisture as the seeds germinate and provides a protective outer layer from wind, hungry birds, and the harsh midday sun. Soil and seeds can be mixed right into potter's or artist's clay without adding water. Dry pebbles, refined clay powder, or unscented clay kitty litter can be found in most hardware stores and are considerably less pricey than artist's clay. These dry ingredients require the addition of water to bring everything together.

Organic seed-starting soil

Seed-starting soil or fine compost provides seedlings



Notes from Audubon in Deming

Norm Gaume, former Director of the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission and retired water resources engineer, talked at our Deming-in-Audubon Speakers Series in April. He explained how Deming and Luna County could have adequate water resources for the future if AWSA funds were made available for water projects to meet local needs, instead of on flawed plans for a diversion of the Gila River. The Speakers Series continues on the second Tuesday of the month at 5:15PM at the La Fonda Restaurant in Deming. May's speaker will be Doug Wolfe of Center for Biological Diversity and in June fish biologist Dave Propst will speak.

with nutrients until their roots manage to break into the earth. We don't recommend using dirt from your yard, because you may end up collecting weed seeds along with it!

Native wildflower seeds

Make sure to choose seeds of plants that are native to your area. (Avoid commercial premade seed mixes, which may include non-native species.) Which seeds should you pick? Use Audubon's native plants database to find the best plants for your area, as well as local resources to provide guidance and native seeds. If in doubt, get help from your local Audubon, native plant society, or a reputable native plant nursery to avoid spreading weed seeds or planting invasive species. Ideal growing conditions are often listed on the seed packet or readily available from a native plant retailer, so be sure to plant your seed balls in a location that will give them the best chance of success.

Water

If using pebbles, powder, or kitty litter, a little water will go a long way to bind the soil and clay together. National Audubon Society

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Pitchfork Ranch Field Trip Report

Jarrod Swackhamer led two trips March 4 and April 8 to the Pitchfork Ranch where owners A.T. and Lucinda Cole restoring the ranch's Burro cienega and creating exceptional wildlife habitat in the rolling grasslands. This is an area of ranch land steadily being restored to native condition. The Pitchfork Ranch lies at 5100' elevation, just west of the Continental Divide. Although mountainous, the land is primarily rolling Chihuahuan grassland. Riparian habitat (there is usually running surface water along at least part of the streambed) attracts migrants and, depending on the conditions

On the drive down we were thrilled to see a herd of 30 Pronghorn and quite a few bird species. You can learn more about the ranch or contact the Coles at www.pitchforkranch.com.

Two of the most exciting sightings was a flock of about 50 Cedar waxwings that flew up and down the canyon throughout the day, and Jarrod and Brian confirmed the sighting of a Grasshopper sparrow.

We identified a total of 45 species for the day: Scaled and Gambel's quail, Northern harrier, Cooper's and Red-tailed hawk, American kestrel, Killdeer, Eurasian collared, White-winged and Mourning dove, Greater roadrunner, Red-naped sapsucker, Northern flicker, Loggerhead shrike, Woodhouse's Jay, Raven, Horned lark, Juniper titmouse, Verdin, Bushtit, Cactus, Bewick's and Marsh wren, Ruby-crowned kinglet, Western and Mountain bluebird, Hermit thrush, American robin, Curve-billed and Crissal thrasher, Cedar waxwing, Yellow-rumped warbler, Spotted towhee, Canyon

towhee, Rufous-crowned, Black-chinned, Black-throated, Chipping sparrow, Grasshopper, Lincoln's and White-crowned sparrow, Dark-eyed junco, Northern cardinal, House finch, Lesser goldfinch.
By Jackie Blurton



Birding at the Pitchfork Ranch

FIELD TRIPS Note

The Big Weekend is May 12-14, and therefore no separate Field Trip will take place in May.

There are no scheduled trips for the months of June and July, however, there may be a Spur-of-the-Moment trip that will happen. If you would like to be notified when these trips come up, please send your email address to Terry Timme at swnmaudubon@gmail.com

August 5-6, 2017 Hummingbird Festival at Mimbres Culture Heritage Site

This year the Hummingbird Festival will be held at a new location. On August 5 and 6, the festival will be held at the Mimbres Culture Heritage Site, 12 Sage Drive, just off Highway 35.

Activities are now in the planning stages. For more information, call Marilyn Markel at 575.536.9337 or Kathy Hill at 575.536.3161 or cell 307.640.3012



Grasshopper sparrow. Jarrod Swackhamer photo