

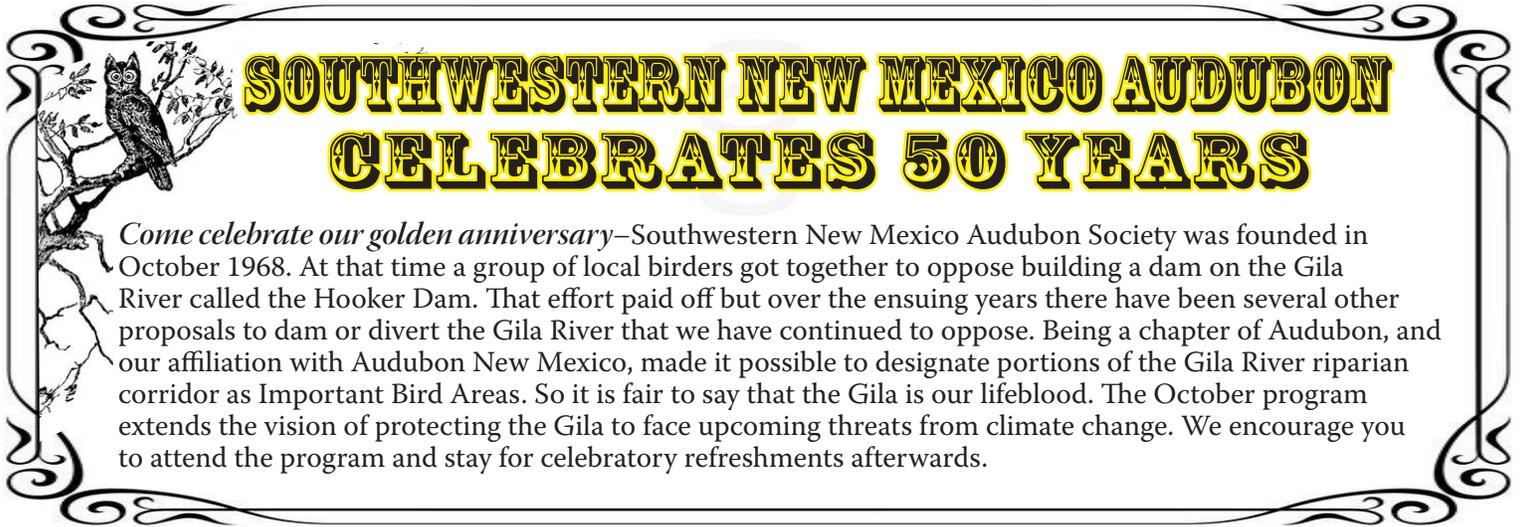
THE RAVENS

Newsletter

Southwestern New Mexico Audubon Society
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swnmaudubon.org

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SOUTHWESTERN NEW MEXICO AUDUBON CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

Come celebrate our golden anniversary—Southwestern New Mexico Audubon Society was founded in October 1968. At that time a group of local birders got together to oppose building a dam on the Gila River called the Hooker Dam. That effort paid off but over the ensuing years there have been several other proposals to dam or divert the Gila River that we have continued to oppose. Being a chapter of Audubon, and our affiliation with Audubon New Mexico, made it possible to designate portions of the Gila River riparian corridor as Important Bird Areas. So it is fair to say that the Gila is our lifeblood. The October program extends the vision of protecting the Gila to face upcoming threats from climate change. We encourage you to attend the program and stay for celebratory refreshments afterwards.

October Program: Climate Refugia



Our October monthly meeting will feature Mike and Carol Fugagli. Their talk is *“Is the Upper Gila River a Refugial Landscape for Birds?”* The program starts at 7 PM on Friday, October 5th at Harlan Hall, 12th and Alabama Streets, on the campus of Western New Mexico University.

The program explains how recent climate-science predicts profound ecological change in the American Southwest by the end of this century, with less than ten percent of the land area of Arizona and New Mexico projected to remain within its climate envelope by the year 2090. Regional land managers are struggling to find ways to secure ecological sustainability in the midst of this unprecedented forecast for risk and change. Drawing from the science of paleoecology, conservation biologists recently have proposed the identification and protection of “climatic refugia” as an

essential conservation tool for the protection of biological diversity during times of crisis. In the Upper Gila Watershed, the river, and its associated floodplains, stand out as classic refugial areas, important for the long-term persistence of our native birds.

Please join us as we take another look at the wide-range of birds that call the Gila River riparian corridor their home, and find out how you can help protect our birds as we work to steward them through the ecological bottlenecks of the twenty-first century.

Mike and Carol lived along the banks of the Gila River for 12 years while home-schooling their son, Hawk. They are now residents of Silver City while Hawk completes his studies at Aldo Leopold Charter School. They have both been involved in bird surveys and banding projects throughout New Mexico.

Mike Fugagli is an ornithologist and naturalist with a keen interest in creating lasting solutions for pressing environmental issues. Involvement of youth in identifying and implementing solutions has led him to designing a project called: *“Thinking ON a Mountain: the Tadpole Ridge Resiliency Project.”* This collaborative, citizen-science based field ecology program will target the region’s junior high and high school students.

Carol Fugagli is also an ornithologist and has been working with Dr. Dale Zimmerman writing a book on East African birds called *“East African Birds Worth Watching.”* She is Education and Outreach Director for the Upper Gila Watershed Alliance and helps organize the annual Children’s Water Festival. With SWNMA, Carol is directing our Cliff Swallow monitoring project at WNMU.

Protecting the Gila River was the impetus for the founding
See Climate Refugia on last page

Audubon's Annual Pot Luck Picnic Friday, August 31

Please join your friends in Southwestern New Mexico Audubon at our annual potluck picnic at the Little Walnut West group-use pavilion on Friday, August 31st. The area has a horseshoe pit and volleyball net, so bring your equipment and play!

We will begin gathering at 4:00. That will allow time for birding and conversation before we start our potluck picnic at 5:00. Please bring a dish to share and your own plates, eating utensils and drinks.

Have you seen these birds?

Phainopepla

With its erect crest and the male's shimmering black cloak, the Phainopepla's name was inspired by the Greek word meaning "shining robe." Studies indicate this species is likely to breed twice a year in two distinct habitats.



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This long-tailed silky flycatcher can be found perched upright on top of a palo verde or mesquite tree in the Sonoran Desert early in the year from February through April. In May, when the heat at lower elevations begins to intensify and the mistletoe berries there dwindle, the birds move upslope into woodland canyons of Arizona, California, and New Mexico, where they breed again through July.

The male is glossy black except for broad white patches under the wings that are obvious in flight. The female is gray with some wing patches. Both sexes have red eyes, an obvious crest and long slender tail. The bill is short and slender. They can be 6.3 to 7.9 inches long.

In recent years, the local movements of this conspicuous bird are believed to be shifting.

Bullock's Oriole

This breeding bird of our riparian forests and Silver City's shade trees has been declining in recent years, and we would like your assistance in documenting its abundance and distribution.



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Male Bullock's Orioles are larger and more colorful with orange and black plumage, a distinctive white wing patch and a black throat and eyeline. The females have more of a dull yellow coloration with gray-brown underparts.

Dale Zimmerman and Carol Ann Fugagli are seeking observations for documentation. If you see either of these birds at any location during the 2018 calendar year, please send an email to: Carol Ann Fugagli: cfugagli@gmail.com

Please report any sightings (with locale, date, and number of birds). We appreciate your assistance!

Book Review

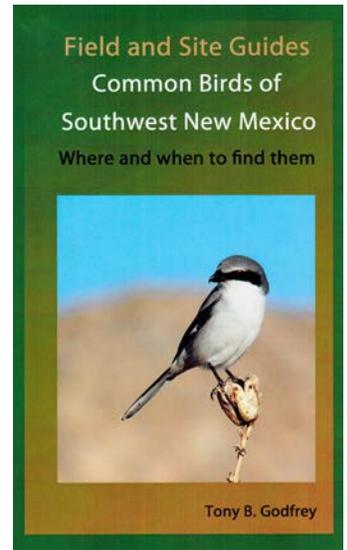
Common Birds of Southwest New Mexico Where and when to find them

By Tony B. Godfrey

This handy book is the first in a series by Certified Interpretive Guide and park technician at City of Rocks State Park, Tony Godfrey. The guide describes ten convenient locations that provide a glimpse at the diversity of birding spots in this region – from desert to mountain to lakeside. Visitors to southwest New Mexico will find useful the directions to each location and the facilities they offer. A nice feature for tourists and locals is the guide to the common birds you can find at each location based on the season.

The highlight of the book is the excellent photographs. If you have seen any of Tony's presentations at our meetings, you know that he is an outstanding photographer. The book includes photos of 157 species with a brief description of the habitat you might find them in and when and where to look.

This book is not meant to replace a comprehensive field guide for identifying birds, but it could become a valuable addition to your bird book library and would also be a great gift to entice visitors to enjoy the birds of our region. A parallel volume titled *Butterflies and Dragonflies of Southwest New Mexico* is just as beautiful and useful. Information on obtaining both is available at City of Rocks State Park or by visiting the website <http://fieldandsiteguides.com/index.html>



Black-capped Vireo Delisting

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) announced the successful recovery of the Black-capped Vireo, thus removing the species from Endangered Species list protection. Thirty years ago, the population was down to about 350 individuals. Today, however, there are more than 14,000 birds estimated across the bird's breeding range in Oklahoma, Texas, and Mexico. No longer will this species be listed among those considered Endangered and Threatened.

The vireo was Federally-listed in 1987, primarily due to the impacts of habitat loss and nest parasitism by Brown-headed Cowbirds. The USFWS concluded that the primary threats to the Black-capped Vireo have been reduced or adequately managed, and vireo populations are now expected to be viable in the future.

Birding Community E-bulletin

Gila River Festival September 20-23

The 14th annual Gila River Festival will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act with guest speakers, field trips and more. Full details can be found at www.Gilariverfestival.org

Health Benefits of Birdwatching Can Include Weight Loss

As part of a class project, Derrick Lopez of Gadsden High School in Doña Ana County, sent us the following information. He has been asked to raise awareness in the general public about an activity that the students used to do when younger. He remembered having gone birdwatching with his grandfather. He asked SWNMA to help him, *“share the benefits of bird watching as it is an awesome activity that a lot of people don’t realize, and also since it is for a class grade.”*

He came across a website called DietSpotlight.com that has a section titled, *“Bird Watching Beginner’s Guide for Hobby, Health & Wellness–10 Things You Need to Know.”* In addition to the potential for weight loss, it is a nice resource for beginning birdwatchers and has links to useful information even for advanced birders.

Thank you, Derrick. It is always encouraging to see young people engaged in birding.

Link for website: www.dietspotlight.com/bird-watching/

Kirtland’s Warbler Proposal

The USFWS is proposing to remove this species from Endangered Species Act (ESA) protection.

The Kirtland’s Warbler has traditionally nested in young jack pine forests in central Michigan, and has recently spread to parts of Wisconsin and Ontario. Still, this warbler has one of the most geographically restricted breeding distributions of any bird in the continental United States.

The current Kirtland’s Warbler population is now estimated to be over 4,600 individuals, actually more than double the recovery goal. In fact, the warbler’s population has exceeded recovery goals for the past 16 years.

We now know that the warbler’s population had declined primarily for two reasons: loss of nesting habitat and brood parasitism caused by the spread of Brown-headed Cowbirds which significantly reduced their nesting success. After ESA listing, the first Kirtland’s Warbler Recovery Plan was crafted, involving multiple partners and outlining steps to increase the population of the warbler. The management of jack pine areas (involving the regular replanting of the trees in appropriate sandy soil) was essential, as was the control of Brown-headed Cowbirds.

Multiple partners have been crucial to the warbler’s recovery. “Without a doubt, this bird’s recovery is the result of cooperation among states, local residents, federal agencies, and conservation groups. This dedicated conservation community is committed to addressing the needs of the Kirtland’s Warbler into the future,” said Tom Melius, Midwest Regional Director for the USFWS.

Before making a final decision on delisting, however, the USFWS must gather and analyze public comments and any new information. Publication of the proposed rule opened a 90-day public comment period, which closed on 11 July.

Statewide Native Plant Society Meeting in Silver City

The annual conference of the Native Plant Society of New Mexico will include lectures, workshops and field trips. The keynote speaker will be Sharman Apt Russell. Other notable talks will be by Nathan Newcomer, Richard Felger, and Olivia Carrill, author of *“The Bees in Your Backyard. A Guide to*

Thanks to Our Generous Friends

May 2018 proved to be a month when members and friends of SWNM Audubon stepped up and confirmed their support by opening their checkbooks. We asked for your support for two independent activities and were heartened by your response. This was the first year that SWNMA participated in both events — Give Grandly and Audubon New Mexico Birdathon.

Give Grandly is an annual fundraiser for non-profits in Grant County. Over \$160,000 was raised county-wide for 54 local organizations. SWNM Audubon received over \$500 in donations online and \$600 at the event held downtown on May 5th. In addition the sponsors donated \$250 to each organization. We are very grateful to all of those who were so generous.

We were also encouraged by your support of the first statewide Birdathon organized by Audubon New Mexico. SWNM Audubon was well represented with three teams of birders: Team *Black Caps*, made up of Julian Lee and Lynn Haugen; Team *Meghan and John*, consisting of Meghan Ruehmann and John Money; and Team *Buff* with Jarrod Swackhammer and Jess DeMoss. Four other teams were fielded across the state and all together they raised about \$5000 in donations. Support also came from nationwide donors, all the way from New York to California.

Each team counted birds during a 24-hour period, on any day during the first three weeks of May. A total of 215 species were spotted statewide. Awards were in various categories. The *Black Caps* won the award for the most unexpected species, a Northern Waterthrush. The *Buffs* received the Night Owl award for the most nocturnal species seen or heard, Flamulated Owl, Great Horned Owl, Mexican Spotted Owl, and Mexican Whip-poor-will. The Best Travelogue award was given to Team *Megan and John* for their delightful commentary on their adventures, which we share here:

“Team Megan and John had a great Birdathon day, counting 116 species total. We stayed in Grant County and hit a handful of favorite birding spots. Camped at Gila Bird Area and woke in the middle of the night to a pair of Western Screech Owls. Species #1! Highlight of the day was how it ended. We parked on the side of the road, turned off the engine and sat in silence waiting for darkness to fall in hopes of a few nocturnal targets. A couple diesel engines roared by and after all was quiet again, a Mexican Spotted Owl silently swooped across the road to perch on a snag in the half-light, watching the ground for prey. Another 2 minutes later, it was out of sight as quickly as it appeared. All while the White-throated Swifts were still chattering high along the cliffs and two Dusky-capped Flycatchers were winding down their mournful whistling for the day. One lone Hermit Thrush was still sending its flute-like notes out into the hills, and soon a few Mexican Whip-poor-wills started up for the night.”

We are very appreciative of the participants in the Birdathon and their wonderful sponsors.

North America’s Bees.”

A Saturday night banquet will feature former Silver City resident and long-time Audubon member Dr. Jack L Carter. The four-day conference will be September 6 - 9. Registration is required and includes meals. Register at www.npsnm.org/events/2018-annual-conference



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Scoping the Gila

An environmental impact statement (EIS) for proposed diversions on the Gila and San Francisco Rivers, called the New Mexico Unit of the Central Arizona Project (CAP), has begun. The first phase, called scoping, is designed to solicit public input. The Bureau of Reclamation, the Interstate Stream Commission and a private contractor (EMPSi), will review the comments and conduct additional evaluations to prepare a Draft EIS. The Draft EIS is scheduled to be completed sometime in early 2019. After it is published the public will have one final opportunity to make comments. The Final EIS goes to the Secretary of the Interior who will make a decision by the end of 2019.

The New Mexico Unit consists of diversion structures, storage ponds, and conveyances (ditches) that would deliver water to a few farmers in the Gila, Virden and, potentially, Pleasanton areas. A diversion structure is a dam that does not store water behind it but can still span the full width of the river.

The New Mexico CAP entity is responsible for the project's design but it is still incomplete. During the 30-day scoping period the public was provided sketchy information on posters and handouts such as, "examples of possible structures are shown, below."

SWNMA and many other environmental organizations are very concerned about the environmental impacts of a NM Unit on the Gila and San Francisco Rivers. We will be a voice for the river when the final comment period opens. We will keep you informed of how you can also make comments on the Draft EIS, which will be the public's last chance to influence the EIS process.

We are also strong proponents for using the millions of dollars from the Arizona Water Settlements Act to help all of the residents of southwest New Mexico. There are many great ways to provide long-term water security for our region that do not involve diverting the Gila River.

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Facing Extinction: Some Examples

It's interesting to view some predictions made by *BirdLife* last month. The organization reviewed a number of species that were once considered quite common and widespread but whose numbers are now plummeting. They looked at seven of these species last month, and some of them might surprise you. Among the seven they include three that occur in North America:

Snowy Owl – Experiencing a rapid decline, most likely driven by climate change. Disruptions to snowmelt and snow cover can affect the availability and distribution of prey.

Atlantic Puffin – Regional overfishing and climate change have created serious food shortages.

Black-legged Kittiwake – Rising sea temperatures are driving catastrophic declines in plankton populations, with an impact to the rest of the food chain, including fish. Plastics at sea (consumed by the kittiwakes) may be another threat.

For more details and the full listing, see here:
tinyurl.com/BirdLifeSurprises

The ESA Is Also Endangered

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) has been the strongest legal protection for wildlife since it was enacted in 1973. The success of the law is confirmed by the delisting of recovered species such as the Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon which probably would have been lost forever without the ESA's protection. There are still many species whose survival depends on continued listing as endangered or threatened. The effects of climate change will likely imperil many more species as described above. Ongoing Congressional attempts to "modernize" the law are poorly disguised attempts to weaken the law. Audubon is one of many organizations that will continue efforts to maintain the ESA.

Climate Refugia *continued from first page*

of SWNMA 50 years ago this month to fight the Hooker Dam proposal. We have continued that effort with our recent opposition to Arizona Water Settlements Act proposals to divert the Gila River. October's program provides a course of action for protecting the Gila for at least another 50 years.

The presentation is free and the public is welcome. A 50th birthday party with light refreshments will follow the meeting. For information contact us by email at swnmaudubon@gmail.com

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