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# THE RAVENS

## Newsletter

Southwestern New Mexico Audubon Society  
is a Chapter of National Audubon Society, Inc.

March — April 2019

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*PROGRAM MARCH 1<sup>st</sup> at 7:00PM*

## Birding in Costa Rica

March's monthly meeting will feature WNMU Professor Emeritus Roland Shook. Dr. Shook is a past president of SWNMA and of the New Mexico Ornithological Society. He continues to be active in ornithology directing annual bird surveys for threatened and endangered species. He has also organized and compiled numerous local and regional bird counts.

Costa Rica borders Nicaragua to the north and Panama to the south. Twice the size of Vermont, the Republic of Costa Rica lies wholly within the tropics. Costa Rica supports an avifauna of approximately 900 species of birds. With a strong environmental ethic, almost one-third of the land area is protected within reserves.



*Collared Aracaris*

This talk will focus primarily on traveling and birding in the central and northern parts of Costa Rica. Photographs of the northern Caribbean lowlands, the central highlands, including Monteverde, and the Pacific coast will be presented. In addition, photographs of birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians will be shown. If you are interested in visiting this Central American country, this program will give you an overview of travel, lodging, and many natural areas of Costa Rica.

Birding Costa Rica will be presented March 1, 2019, in Room 219 of Harlan Hall on the campus of WNMU. Harlan Hall is located on the corner of 12th and Alabama streets. This free program is sponsored by the Southwestern New Mexico Audubon Chapter. Light refreshments will be available after the program.

## *When the Swallows Return to Silver City*



The April monthly meeting of the Southwestern New Mexico Audubon (SWNMA) Society will feature Carol Ann Fugagli and Audubon's Cliff Swallow Monitoring Team. The title of their talk is "*When the Swallows Return to Silver City.*" The program starts at 7PM on Friday, April 5<sup>th</sup> at Harlan Hall, 12<sup>th</sup> and Alabama Streets, on the campus of Western New Mexico University.

Carol Ann and the team will discuss the four species of swallows that make Silver City their summer home, with a focus on the Cliff Swallows that nest on the campus of WNMU. Last year Carol Ann helped direct a citizen science project by SWNMA to monitor where the swallows nested on campus and how productive their nesting season was.

Cliff swallows build nests made of mud under the eaves of buildings to protect the nest from wind and rain. The swallows collect mud from any available source and carry mud pellets in their mouth to the nest site. Each nest requires anywhere from hundreds to as many as 10,000 mud pellets. Cliff Swallows are colonial nesters and their colonies may contain just a few, to hundreds of nests at any one site. Carol Ann and the monitoring team will share their findings from the 2018 nesting season, and will discuss advantages versus disadvantages of colonial nesting behavior and its evolution.

The monitoring team included several volunteers from SWNMA: Rachelle Bergmann, Ken Sexton, Lisa Fields, Chris Overlock and Patricia Taber. They worked last summer to map which buildings the swallows nested on and monitored weekly how they were thriving.

*See SWALLOWS on next page*

## Swallows Return to Silver City

Continued from previous page

Carol Ann Fugagli is a local ornithologist who has been working with Dr. Dale Zimmerman on a book about East African birds titled *“East African Birds Worth Knowing.”* She is Education and Outreach Director for the Upper Gila Watershed Alliance and organizes the annual Children’s Water Festival. She and her husband, Mike, moved to Silver City from their home in the Gila Valley so their son could attend Aldo Leopold Charter School.

The presentation is free and the public is welcome. Light refreshments will follow the meeting. For information contact us at [swnmaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:swnmaudubon@gmail.com)



Cliff Swallows nest at numerous locations around Silver City, and some of the buildings on the WNMU campus are a favorite.

C. FUGAGLI PHOTO

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## Engage More with Your Chapter

Every other year SWNM Audubon elects new officers to the Board of Directors at the annual picnic and meeting in



September, and 2019 is our election year. The elected positions are President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Also elected are two Directors-at-Large. You can also help by becoming a member or chair of one of the chapter committees: Membership, Programs, Conservation, Field trips, Publications, or Education. If you are interested in volunteering to help your chapter, the time commitment is relatively small. The board meets from 3:30 – 5:00 on the first Wednesday of the month in the conference room at First Savings Bank, 13<sup>th</sup> and Hudson. If you are interested in becoming more active in the chapter, please feel free to attend any of our board meetings or contact either Terry Timme at [swnmaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:swnmaudubon@gmail.com) or Elroy Limmer at 575-538-5513.

## Join us for Earth Day on April 20



This year Earth Day will be celebrated in Silver City on April 20 between 10AM and 2PM in Gough Park. The theme of Earth

Day this year is *Protect Our Species*. Stop by the SWNM Audubon booth to pick up useful information about what you can do to protect local Birds, Butterflies, and Bees.

## Birding Is Great for Your Health

A short video recently posted by CNN’s “Staying Well” department describes the relaxing aspects of watching birds. “Nature is absolutely essential to human health,” says Dr. Nooshin Razani, at the University of California San Francisco’s Center for Nature and Health. “Over the course of an hour to an hour and a half, you’re walking through natural settings, symptoms of depression or anxiety improve,” she continues.

The video claims that observing birds can calm the mind and bring the moment into focus. See for yourself: [www.cnn.com/videos/health/2018/10/30/sw-birding-for-health.cnn](http://www.cnn.com/videos/health/2018/10/30/sw-birding-for-health.cnn)

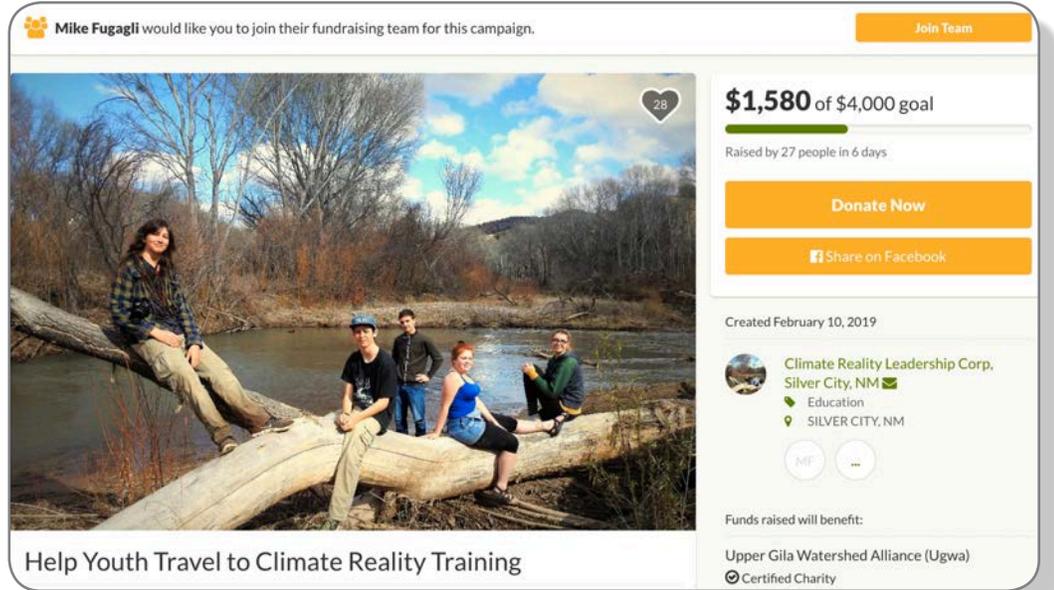
# You Can Help Send Students for Climate Leadership Training

If you were at our February program you heard Mike Fugagli mention that he is trying to raise money to help send 4 Aldo students to Atlanta for climate leadership training. To donate go to [www.Gofundme.com](http://www.Gofundme.com) and search for Mike Fugagli. That will take you to the fundraiser. The following is a description of the fundraiser:

The Upper Gila Watershed Alliance (UGWA), through its collaborative, climate-based, youth-empowerment program called "Thinking ON a Mountain," is raising \$4,000 in travel, food, and lodging expenses so that a team of young climate-activists from

Aldo Leopold Charter School, in Silver City, NM, can attend The Climate Reality Project's Leadership Corps Training in Atlanta, GA, March 14-16, 2019

Led by former Vice President Al Gore, Jr., the training in Atlanta will focus on climate justice, and the idea that climate change, at its heart, is a civil rights issue. Over the next year, these well-prepared and energized students will deliver at least ten Climate Reality



The screenshot shows a GoFundMe page for a fundraiser titled "Help Youth Travel to Climate Reality Training". The page features a main image of five young people sitting on a large log by a river. The fundraiser has a goal of \$4,000 and has raised \$1,580 from 27 people in 6 days. The page includes a "Donate Now" button, a "Share on Facebook" button, and information about the beneficiary, Climate Reality Leadership Corp. in Silver City, NM. The page also mentions that the funds raised will benefit the Upper Gila Watershed Alliance (Ugwa), a certified charity.

presentations in the Silver City region, educating our community with climate facts and strong voices for inter-generational equity.

We're so proud of these young eco-monitors, who are willing to open their eyes, their minds, and their hearts to Aldo Leopold's "world of wounds." Let's get them to Atlanta! And then let's get them back here and listen to what they have to say.

## *Heart of the Gila Partnership*

We all value living next to the Gila Wilderness, but most of us are probably not aware that trails into the wilderness are being lost due to a decades-long lack of funding for maintenance. The disappearance of trails impacts not only hikers as well as limits fire management and biological monitoring access but also access for hunting and fishing. This lack of access can lead to greater ecological damage from off-trail travel. It also decreases the opportunities to promote tourism which is fundamental to New Mexico's current and future economy.

Fortunately, the Heart of the Gila Partnership has hired Melissa Green as Trails Program coordinator. She has 11 years of boots-on-the-ground experience in the Gila and Aldo Leopold Wilderness areas. She will coordinate with the Gila National Forest to manage wilderness trails projects by numerous volunteer groups such as Gila Backcountry Horsemen, National Smokejumper's Association, and others.

The Heart of the Gila Partnership is holding a fundraiser on March 1<sup>st</sup> from 5-7PM at A-Space Gallery on 7<sup>th</sup> Street, downtown Silver City. Please note, that this is the same evening as Roland Shook's program on Costa Rica, but you can make it to both events if you leave the fundraiser a little early. Melissa will give a talk titled, "Why Wilderness Trails." There will be a special guest appearance by Phil Connors, author of "A

Song for the River" and Fire Season." Jay Hemphill will have a slide show called "Gila Landscapes." To attend the fundraiser, send an email to [heartofthegilatrails@gmail.com](mailto:heartofthegilatrails@gmail.com) or call/text 575-519-8217.

If you can't attend the fundraiser but are interested in supporting this worthwhile project, you can get more details and make donations on their website at [heartofthegila.org](http://heartofthegila.org)





## A Few Surprises for United States in Update

The IUCN (*International Union for Conservation of Nature*) Red List of Threatened Species maintains a record of how close species may be to extinction.

BirdLife International is responsible for annually measuring the health of the world of birds for this tally. Every year, BirdLife updates which birds are stable, which are in recovery, and which have slipped toward extinction.

In the most recent release, there were a few surprises for us in North America. First the troubling stories: *Common grackle* populations have been dropping. With numbers plummeting by more than 50% between 1970 and 2014, the species has now been classed as Near Threatened by IUCN. Pest-control measures may have contributed to this decline.

*Eastern Whip-poor-will* data have revealed that the species population fell by over 60% between 1970 and 2014. With a dependence on flying insects for food, the species may be declining due to pesticides, intensive agriculture, and other factors reducing insect availability. The species has been up-listed to Near Threatened this year.

*Rufous hummingbird* could be sliding to extinction in plain sight, and the species has also been up-listed to Near Threatened this year. Its reliance on nectar and on insects during the breeding season may combine to put the species in jeopardy. This hummer may become a victim of climate change as early-blooming flowers in some locations could mean that hummingbirds arrive from migration too late to take advantage of this vital food source. Forest fires and changes in post-fire habitat conditions could also be contributing to the species' decline.

### Next, the upbeat stories:

*Red-headed woodpecker*, with formerly declining populations, may have stabilized. Now placed in a "Least Concern" category, the species' population is considered healthy and stable enough that it is unlikely to face extinction anytime soon.

*Henslow's sparrow* has stabilized, thanks in part to habitat management. In particular, the species has benefited from the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), where farmers are paid to remove land from cultivation and instead plant species that will improve the health and quality of the habitat.

Some of these changes fit into familiar patterns, with habitat alteration, pesticides, and climate change playing a role. Whether or not you agree with all these findings, they deserve consideration. You can find a summary here: <https://birdlife.org>

### SAVE THE DATE:

#### **Olympic Birdfest, April 12-14, 2019**

Enjoy guided birding trips, boat tours, live auction, raffle, gala banquet, and more. The featured speaker: John Marzluff, professor of wildlife science at the University of Washington and author. Join our festival pre-trip: a three-day, two-night birding/sightseeing cruise of the San Juan Islands, April 9-11, 2019 or extend your festival with our Neah Bay post-trip on April 14-16, 2019: three days exploring northwest coastal Washington. To learn more and register, visit [www.olympicbirdfest.org](http://www.olympicbirdfest.org)

### *Getting Closer to Hemp Birdfood*

Recently, the Farm Bill passed with bipartisan support, and it includes a section on industrial hemp. It defines hemp – *a close relative of marijuana that can be used to make a variety of products* – as an agricultural commodity and removes its inclusion as an illegal drug. The Bill eliminates "hemp" from the definition of marijuana under the Controlled Substances Act and creates an exemption for the miniscule amount of psychoactive THC found in hemp.

This is important because it frees this particular cannabis from onerous restrictions, and specifically frees it up for creative production– including as birdseed.

In the meantime, Minnesota is moving quickly to experiment with industrial hemp seed as bird food. The Minnesota Ornithologists' Union has teamed up with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and the owner of All-Seasons Wild Bird Stores Ltd to carry out a wild bird food preference study to validate the value of hemp as a desirable and high-energy food for birds.

The bird-feeding experimentation is moving well. Dr. David L. Horn of Millikin University in Decatur, Illinois, is working on the results of Phase I testing that began in late summer 2018. Phase II begins this month with a structured pattern of observations at three feeding locations. This will be complemented by observations of 22 volunteers throughout Minnesota who will be tabulating results. All observations should be completed by February 15.

The project has also generated interest from Minnesota farmers. It is a crop that can be grown locally; it does not require use of pesticides or insecticides for production, and the high oil and protein content of the seeds make them a very desirable food for the birds.

Feeder-hosts have already documented over two dozen species of birds feeding on the hemp seed. So far, House sparrows and squirrels have shown little interest in hemp. The final results of the bird-feeding experiments will hopefully tell us more.