

Central New Mexico Audubon Society

Burrowing Owl

December 2005, January, February 2006 Issue

Volume 35 No. 1

Welcome to Central New Mexico Audubon Society! Come join us. All our meetings and field trips are open to the public. Our missions: "To appreciate, experience, and conserve birds, other wildlife and their habitats; and to encourage and support environmental education in New Mexico."



The 8th Annual CNMAS BIRDING ACADEMY...
Comes full circle: something old (the first Birding Academy in 1999 included a talk on Sparrows) along with something new (Swallows, Swifts and Martins are being covered for the first time!!!).



SAVE THESE DATES:

February 16

"Winter Sparrows"
with Janet Ruth

March 16

"Hummingbirds"
with Joan Day-Martin

April 20

"Swallows, Swifts, and Martins"
with Bruce Neville

All classes are held at St. Timothy's Lutheran Church, NW corner of Copper and Jefferson NE, 7:15 PM. Pay in advance (see form, next page) or pay at the door. \$6.00 per class, or sign up for all three for \$15.00. Nonmembers: Pay \$20.00 to join National Audubon Society, and the classes are free! See the registration form later in the CNMAS pages.

Central New Mexico Audubon Society gratefully acknowledges the generosity of Stephen and Mary Pat Day and The Lannan Foundation for their financial underwriting of our chapter's mailing and publicity costs to promote the Eighth Annual Audubon Birding Academy.



A Ryan Story **The Ryan Beaulieu Memorial Youth Scholarship Fund**

Everyone who knew him, our blue-eyed, bright-smiled friend Ryan Beaulieu, is still telling their story of him. Like any hero (and he was to many of us), his stories get brighter, funnier, livelier, and more meaningful the more we tell them. Here's one to share:

Ryan was among a group of birders who went down to see the Lesser Prairie-Chickens in April this year at their lek booming grounds. So was Pat Franklin, who recently was at the bird banding site at Rio Grande Nature Center. Steve and Nancy Cox were there, of course, and so was Ryan's "little" brother, Dylan. Pat was telling everybody the story of how she was in the same van with Ryan and two other lucky folks traveling to the lek site and said she had never laughed so much in her life. They found and observed Lesser Prairie-Chickens, and Ryan did his customary ecstasy dance and vocals.

Dylan chirped up and said that the Lesser Prairie-Chicken was Ryan's favorite bird; he even wanted a tattoo of one. Dylan then told his own story: How funny it was when Ryan tried

A Ryan Story... continued on next page

Audubon Program **January 19**

"The Richness and Diversity of New Mexico's State Parks"
presenter: **Rob Yaksich**
Interpretive Ranger, RGNC

New Mexico's 32 (and counting) State Parks are as rich and diverse as the state itself. Birding opportunities about during all seasons, and this program will point out a few of them. Be ready to add some new destinations to your travel itinerary.

All CNMAS programs are held at St. Timothy's Lutheran Church, NW corner of Copper and Jefferson NE, 7:15 PM. This program is FREE!



A Ryan Story... continued from previous page

asking the guy in Italy (where the family went in August) if he had a tattoo of a Lesser Prairie-Chicken!

The esteem in which you held Ryan is evident by the outpouring of your hearts through your donations to the Ryan Beaulieu Memorial Youth Scholarship Fund, which has been established to assist other young birders carry on Ryan's passion by providing scholarships to Audubon birding camps and other unique educational opportunities. We are investigating how and if the fund can be converted into an endowment so that Ryan's legacy will be perpetuated. One of our chapter members is actively seeking matching funds. Our board is deliberating how we, the Chapter, can augment and support the fund for – who knows? – generations.

The following individuals and entities have contributed a total of \$4,400 to the Ryan Fund to date. We appreciate more than words can express the outpouring of such generosity and sentiment. Be assured that Ryan's family has been notified of all your gifts. Thank you from our heart and theirs.

Contributors to the Ryan Beaulieu Memorial Youth Scholarship Fund:

Kathryn Albrecht, Bryan & Mary Lou Arthur, Leon & Natalie Beaulieu, Elizabeth Hurst-Waitz/Brave_E, Inc., Patrick & Joan Burke, James & Deane Casciano, Rosemary DeYoung, Guy & Elisabeth Dicharry, Lois & Fred Doyle Sylvia Fee, Lesley Gasperow, Joan & Fred Hashimoto, Melissa Howard, Larry & Margie Hutchinson, Mindy & Larry Koch, Kraig Kurucz, Laurel Ladwig & Trina Altman, Donald & Jan Lewis, Bonnie Long, Manzano Day School, Karen and William Ordemann, Jennifer J. Payne, Barbara Posey, Roco Corporation/Roco Rescue, Steven & Nancy Cox/Rio Grande Bird Research, Inc., Sonia Santa Anna & Marc Fagan, Ken & Mary Lou Schneider, William Talbot, Sally Burke/Thursday Birders, Sei Tokuda, Robert & Roberta Waite, James & Roberta Wick, Lee Hopwood & Nikki Love/Wild Bird Center Westside, George Petrides/Wild Bird Centers of America, Inc., Lynda Geron & Joseph Shumate/Wild Birds Unlimited Westside



Winter Bird and Bat Festival!

Saturday, January 14, 2006, 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Rio Grande Nature Center State Park
2901 Candelaria NW, 505-344-7240

Come join the festivities, featuring guided bird and nature walks starting at 8:00 AM, speakers' program starting at 10:00 AM, live birds and bats, nature and birding walks. The cost for this event? Free!

The Burrowing Owl newsletter is published quarterly in March, June, September, December, by Central New Mexico Audubon Society, PO Box 30002, Albuquerque, NM 87190-0002. Subscription is free to National Audubon Society members, \$12 to nonmembers.

Local Christmas Bird Counts

The 106th Annual

Audubon Christmas Bird Count

Friday, December 16

SEVILLETA NWR - FIVE POINTS

Nancy & Steve Cox (505-345-2385, sora@spinn.net or swcox@spinn.net)

We will meet at the Refuge Headquarters at 6:30 AM.

Saturday, December 17

BOSQUE DEL APACHE NWR

Dave Hawksworth (505-243-0921, dlhawksworth@fs.fed.us)

The counters assemble at 7:30 AM at Refuge Headquarters. You'll be split into groups with knowledgeable leaders. Please let Dave know you'll be part of the count and/or compilation party.

Sunday, December 18

ALBUQUERQUE

Hart Schwarz (505-266-1810, hschwarz@fs.fed.us)

Meet Hart at Corrales Shopping Center, NW corner of Coors and Alameda, between 7:00 and 7:15 AM. The compilation party will be hosted at 6:45 PM at 1260 Rosemont Avenue, NW, just north of Mountain Road and west of 12th Street. Bringing a dish to share is optional, but bringing a chair is NOT – there will be hot food and drink for everyone, but sitting on the floor will be your only option if you don't bring your own chair! Check the CNMAS Website for a map, or get one from your trip leader. Call (505) 259-0709.

Wednesday, December 21

SEVILLETA NWR - FIVE POINTS

Nancy & Steve Cox (505-345-2385, sora@spinn.net or swcox@spinn.net)

We will meet at the Refuge Headquarters at 6:30 AM.

Monday, December 26

SANDIA MOUNTAINS

Rebecca Gracey (505-242-3821, mrgracey@earthlink.net)

We will meet at 7:30 AM in the parking lot by Dion's Pizza in the Four Hills Shopping Center near the intersection of Central and Tramway. We will meet back at Dion's between 5:00 and 5:30 PM to eat and go over the bird sightings.

Remember to call your CBC leaders for final details! A list of other New Mexico CBC trips available at

<http://www.audubon.org/chapter/nm/nm/rdac/cbcschedule2005-6.html>

Burrowing Owl Deadline

Information and articles to be included in Spring 2006 issue of the *Burrowing Owl*, must be received by **February 5**. Contact Turtle-Bear at 265-6094 or turtlebear@jensenbear.com. We are not accepting commercial advertising at this time.



CNMAS Field Trip Schedule

<http://www.newmexicoaudubon.org/cnmas/trips.html>

Saturday, December 3: Bosque del Apache NWR

This will be an all day trip. The sandhill cranes, ducks and geese should be present in large numbers and it would not be surprising to see a number of species of raptors including bald eagles. Dress warmly and bring lunch, water and snacks. Meet at 8:00 AM at the UNM Physics Department parking lot on the NE corner of Yale and Lomas Blvd. Call Sei Tokuda at 266-2480 for details.

Dec. 14, 2005 - Jan. 5, 2006: Christmas Bird Counts

December is the time of Christmas Bird Counts (CBC). Join the crowd! It is a wonderful experience for birders at all levels of expertise. The complete list of New Mexico CBC's (including the contact person to obtain more info) can be found on the web at:

<http://www.audubon.org/chapter/nm/nm/rdac/cbcschedule2005-6.html>

Saturday, January 21: Sandia Mountains

Meet at 8:00 AM at the Four Hills Shopping Center parking near Dion's Pizza (south of Central, west of Tramway). We will work our way to the top of the mountain looking for winter birds such as crossbills, nutcrackers, and, of course, rosy-finches. It is a half-day trip. Dress warm, bring your own food or, better, eat at the Crest House. In case of heavy snowfall, we will spend our time at the foothills. Contact Celestyn Brozek at 925-8611 or e-mail cbrozek@unm.edu for additional information.

Saturday, February 11: Sandia Mountains

Meet at 7:00 AM at the Four Hills Shopping Center parking near Dion's Pizza (south of Central, west of Tramway). The first stop will be at the ski area lower parking lot for Northern Pygmy Owl. You can meet the group there at 8 AM if you rather come a little later. Mountain birds such as crossbills and Pine Grosbeaks will be sought on the way to the crest where rosy-finches should congregate. Your guides will be a rosy-finch expert, Raymond VanBuskirk and Laurel Ladwig. RSVP Laurel at 254-9834 or at pbgrebe@gmail.com.

Saturday, February 25: Socorro & Bosque del Apache NWR

Meet Bob Merkel at 9:00 AM at the Socorro McDonald's on California Street near Exit 150 of I-25. Participants might want to carpool from Albuquerque for the 1+-hour drive. This will be an all-day trip to include peeks at the Rio Grande and "Turtle Bay" on the NM Tech campus. On this date many of the Bosque's charismatic wintering waterbirds will still be here AND there should be some early spring migrants lurking around. Contact Bob through e-mail at bobmerkel@zianet.com.

Central New Mexico Audubon Society assumes no responsibility for injuries, personal or otherwise, incurred while attending society-sponsored activities and will not be held liable for such accidents. You attend at your own risk.

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The 8th Annual Audubon Birding Academy Registration Form

To register for the following classes check circles:

- Winter Sparrows (Feb 16) - - - - - \$6
- Hummingbirds (Mar. 16) - - - - - \$6
- Swifts, Swallows, & Martins (Apr. 20) - - - - \$6
- ALL 3 CLASSES (preregistration only) - - - \$15
- I want to be a new Audubon Society Member
and get 3 free Birding Academy classes - - \$20

NAS chapter code Q51

Total Enclosed: _____

Questions? Call Beth at 505-898-8514.

CNMAS ABA 2006

Feel free to make copies of this registration form.

Name/s: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

I want to get the *Burrowing Owl* via the web -

Email: _____

Send your check, payable to CNMAS to:

CNMAS Birding Academy
P.O. Box 30002
Albuquerque, NM 87190-0002



CNMAS Field Trip Reports compiled by Celestyn Brozek

Saturday, September 24: *Melrose trap*

Leader: Sonia Santa Anna. Sonia and two other early birds left Albuquerque at 4:30 AM and drove to the Melrose trap. They found plenty of birds including several Great Crested Flycatchers, a Black-and-white Warbler, and a Great Horned Owl. Around noon, they drove to Bitter Lake and on the way spotted a first fall Prairie Falcon among the many raptors. Bitter Lake, however, was a big disappointment. It is very dry with only few birds. Highlights were White Pelican and a group of immature and mature Longbilled Curlews. After night at Fort Sumner they revisited the Melrose trap. Nashville, Orange-crowned, MacGillivray's, Yellow and Wilson's Warblers, a Great Crested Flycatcher, a Warbling Vireo, and a first fall Baltimore Oriole male were a good mix there. They also saw a four foot long snake swallowing a Bullock's Oriole.

Saturday-Sunday, October 1-2: *Melrose trap, Clabber Hill Ranch, and Conchas Lake*

Leader: Celestyn Brozek. Celestyn and 12 participants visited first Sumner Lake where a flock of American Avocets spotted the birders and flew over the lake to land at their feet. Melrose trap was "slow" and the trip leader managed to spook the rarest bird there: a Brown Thrasher. The night at Adobe Bell casitas at Conchas lake was frequently interrupted with the hoots of Great Horned Owls. Next morning, a visit to Clabber Hill Ranch brought a magnificent scenery, a flock of Wild Turkeys, a pair of Northern Cardinals, and four falcons: Peregrine, Prairie, Merlin, and Kestrel among others. The trip ended at Conchas Lake. Almost 100 species was seen during the trip.

Saturday, October 29: *Otero Canyon and Cedro Peak trail*

Leader: Rebecca Gracey. The walk started with light rain but the morning turned out sunny with beautiful fall color. Three people were on the hike and 22 species of birds were seen or heard. A flock of 50 Pinyon Jays were seen as well as two Brown Creepers and a Townsend's Warbler.



Rosy-Finches, Hot Chocolate, and Trapdoor Technology by Raymond VanBuskirk

The Rosy-finches have not arrived at the Sandia Crest at the time of writing this article (October 2005). So, in the meantime here's an update on the Rosy-finch banding project. Raymond VanBuskirk and Steve Cox have devised a way to close the doors on the traps at the press of a button. This means **NO MORE PULLING ON THE STRINGS!**

We scouted around the junkyards for small electric motors powerful enough to pull the triggers for the trap doors. We came away with three small 12-volt electric motors that were used as the electric door locks from a Ford Taurus. These motors are attached to the side of the traps and connected to a push button via a 25 foot modified extension cord and a 12-volt battery. We had experimented with the use of wireless but found that the radio wave interference from the towers on the Sandia Crest made the operation of the remote inconsistent. We are still talking of going wireless if we can find equipment that will work under the radio wave interference.

Last winter we banded 120 Rosy-finches at the Sandia Crest and estimated the flock size to be about 150 birds. As site fidelity is one of our primary research objectives, we are waiting with great anticipation for these banded Rosy-finches to return to the Sandia Crest this winter. The Rosy-finches should start arriving soon after the snow starts to accumulate at the Crest. Check the Rosy-finch web page for the arrival of the finches at (www.rosyfinch.com).

Come on up, and check out the progress of the Rosy-finch banding, drink hot cocoa by the fire, and enjoy watching the three species of Rosy-finches at Sandia Crest. Hope to see ya soon!

Thursday Morning Birding Group

Weekly birding outings every Thursday. Meeting time and location, as well as duration, vary. Call Margaret Wallen at 341-0928 for details of outings.

Congratulations On Groundbreaking for the Christina Ann Lannan Educational Annex Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge October 24, 2005



drawing by Sharon Fullingim

Special Thanks to:
The Lannan Foundation
Messengers of the Healing Winds
Thaw Charitable Trust
Burlington Northern - Santa Fe Railroad
Kerr Foundation
Friends of the Bosque del Apache NWR
Board and Members
Global Structures, Inc.
Peter Butterfield



Bonds Through Diversity: Central New Mexico Audubon Chapter and HawkWatch International

Central New Mexico Audubon members: One of the principles of our chapter that is strongly supported by your board is networking and partnering with organizations that fulfill our Chapter mission and the mission of the National Audubon Society mission, which together promote diversity not just in the natural environment, but in the environment of human affairs, as well. To that end, one of the organizations we support financially, albeit modestly, is HawkWatch International. We do so with the specific caveat that funds must be used here in New Mexico to support their local office, managed by Bobbie Posey, and their local projects, including the spring monitoring at the Sandia Mountains site and fall monitoring in the Manzanos. We know that not all Audubon members are HawkWatch members, so we want to share with you the exciting news of some of their work this season.

Satellite Telemetry Program – HawkWatch International (HWI) first began deploying satellite telemetry during the fall migration season in 1999 at the New Mexico and Nevada field sites. Since initiating this program, HWI has increased deployments to include all three western migration corridors - the Rocky Mountain Flyway, the Intermountain Flyway and the Pacific Coast Flyway. HWI fits backpack telemetry units on selected Northern Goshawks, Red-tailed Hawks and Golden Eagles to learn more about the patterns of these species regularly encountered at the western migration study sites. Currently HWI's satellite telemetry program is active in Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming. For more information on the HWI satellite telemetry program, maps of tracked birds and an annual report for the program please check the HWI website:
<http://www.hawkwatch.org/satelliteprogram.php>

As 2005 fall migration season winds down, observers were still seeing the passage of Golden Eagles, Red-tailed Hawks and Northern Goshawks; the three focal species of HawkWatch International's satellite telemetry project. This season HWI deployed four Northern Goshawk units: two at Bonney Butte along the Pacific Range flyway, and two at Commissary Ridge along the Rocky Mountain flyway, and a Golden Eagle Unit at the Manzano Mountain, also along the Rocky Mountain flyway. With the continued passage of these three focal species, the HWI banders remain optimistic about the opportunity to deploy several more units in 2005. (Editor's note: Maybe even right here in New Mexico's Manzanos!)

We at CNMAS would also like to take this opportunity to recognize and thank Bobbie Posey for her constant support, attendance, help, good humor, delightful company, and delicious baked goodies at our meetings. Thanks also to various HWI staffers and volunteers for all the ways they have helped Audubon, whether it be as members, guest speakers, meeting attenders, or events volunteers.

Our New Mexico- Paraguay Connection

Two of our members, Dana and Betty Davis, went to Paraguay last April to volunteer two weeks for Habitat For Humanity. The third week they spent birdwatching with an ornithologist from Britain, Paul Smith, now living in Paraguay. Paul is working there under the auspices of Guyra Paraguay, a nonprofit, nongovernmental Paraguayan conservation organization whose mission is "to lead, promote, and coordinate progress towards the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, with a special focus on birds, through advocacy, research, public awareness, and active community participation."

Paul is working on a number of initiatives, including development of the first-ever "Guide To The Birds of Paraguay." Guyra will provide the distribution maps for the guide, and the organization's ornithologists will assist Paul with the species' texts. Guyra has a publisher for the guide, which will be published as one of the Helm series of field guides, published in the U.S. as Princeton Field Guides.

Paul will be living in Paraguay, traveling country-wide and collecting data, until December of 2006. Dana and Betty asked lots of questions and developed high regard for this motivated young ornithologist during the week he guided them, and their positive impressions have turned into positive actions. They have approached our board with a proposal to raise funds to cover the mere \$5,000 that would cover Paul's travel and documentary expenses of gathering data while in Paraguay. (Imagine! Who of us could do that kind of field work and traveling for only \$5,000???) After investigating Guyra Paraguay, the Board has voted to support Betty and Dana's fundraising initiative for this project.

Any amount is welcome. The funds will be maintained by CNMAS as an earmarked fund. Your check should be made out to CNMAS, specified for "Paraguay Project." For \$100, your name will appear on the acknowledgment page of the first-ever published Guide To The Birds of Paraguay as a donor and supporter (together with Central New Mexico Audubon Society's name.) You will get a thank you from Betty, she will keep Paul informed of donors' names, and CNMAS will disburse the funds. Send your donation to CNMAS, Paraguay Project, c/o Betty Davis, 3420 Vista del Sur NW, Albuquerque, NM 87120. Thank you, and Pura Vida!



Burrowing Owl Subscription Tidbits

- For changes of address or correction to your Burrowing Owl subscription, contact the Membership Chairperson (see Directory on the back page of this newsletter).
- If you are in the CNMAS Chapter area, you can receive the Burrowing Owl by sending your name and address with \$12 to CNMAS, PO BOX 30002, Albuquerque, NM 87190-0002 - this does NOT include National Audubon membership or Audubon Magazine!
- You can also subscribe to our newsletter without being a member of our Chapter. If you live outside the CNMAS region, send \$15 to the above address.
- If you wish to receive notice of our downloadable PDF newsletter (instead of a hard copy) give us your email address in addition to your name and address.
- Members can call (800) 274-4201 to sign up for National Audubon's Paper-Free Renewal Program. Those who sign up will have their membership automatically renewed each year and will receive only one bill approximately 2 months in advance of your membership expiration date.



**Learning Look-Alikes:
Sandhill Crane & Great Blue Heron
by Art Arenholz
artwork by Andrew Rominger**

From October through February, we can easily find the Sandhill Crane and Great Blue Heron in the middle Rio Grande valley. Both are very large (~4 feet tall) gray birds, with long necks, long legs and dagger-like bills. Each walks in a slow, stately manner and the flight of each is strong and deliberate. So how can we tell these look-alikes apart?

Let's look first at some important differences in their appearance. The adult Sandhill Crane shows red and white markings on the head, while the Great Blue Heron's head shows black and white markings. The Sandhill has a prominent "bustle" of feathers that droops over the tail when the bird is standing, but the Heron lacks this "bustle". Look carefully for this feature once, and you will find it helpful from then on.

Next, let's consider some useful differences in their behavior. First, the Crane flies with its neck straight (i.e. fully extended), while the Heron's neck is folded in flight, (i.e. the head is pulled back to the shoulders and the neck is crooked, not straight). A second useful difference: in winter, the crane is rarely alone and the heron is almost always alone. Third, the crane usually feeds in marshes or dry fields (with other cranes), while the heron usually stands (alone) on a ditch bank or wades slowly in shallow, quiet water. Fourth, the crane is very wary (except when eating our corn!), but some herons will stand within a few feet of a fishing human, waiting for a handout. Fifth, the crane is mostly a

vegetarian during winter, eating corn, seeds, tubers and berries, while the heron is a strict carnivore. You can safely call any very large gray bird that is trying to swallow a fish a heron. Last, the voice of the crane is a rolling bugle, while the heron utters a hoarse croak when it is startled.

A single behavioral clue is rarely diagnostic, so it is best to use several clues before deciding on your identification. A single large gray bird standing on a ditch bank might fool you and be a lonesome crane, so look for several clues before calling out your identification.

Great Blue Herons are often incorrectly called "cranes", as are other large egrets and herons. If you use the clues in the following table, you can correctly identify these elegant birds.

SUMMARY

SANDHILL CRANE	GREAT BLUE HERON
Adult head red and white	Adult head black & white
Bustle of feathers over tail	No bustle
Rarely alone	Usually alone
Flies with neck straight	Flies with neck crooked
Feeds in wet or dry fields	Feeds in shallow water
Vegetarian	Carnivore (mostly fish)
Wary	Likes fishermen
Here Oct. thru Feb.	Here all year
Voice: loud, rolling bugle	Voice: loud, hoarse croak

SANDHILL CRANE



GREAT BLUE HERON

