

# BURROWING OWL

CENTRAL NEW MEXICO AUDUBON SOCIETY, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

DECEMBER 1985 - JANUARY 1986

## CALENDAR

Welcome! Central New Mexico Audubon Society meets the third Thursday of each month at 7:30 P.M., St. Timothy's Lutheran Church, Copper and Jefferson, NE. Nonmembers are welcome at all meetings, field trips, and special events.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19

Holiday Potluck Supper and Regular Meeting

6:00 - Bring a generous potluck dish and your own tableware. Also, bring a table decoration and/or a door prize.

6:30 - Potluck dinner.

7:30 - Regular 20 minute meeting. David Henderson will present the program. David is the New Mexico representative of the Southwest Regional Office of the NAS. He will bring us up to date on happenings in the region and especially at the Randall Davey Audubon Center in Santa Fe.

Call the Amato's (298-3227) or Mary Lou Arthur (256-7359) with questions and especially to volunteer your help.

St. Timothy's Lutheran Church, Copper and Jefferson NE

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21

Sandia Mountains Christmas Count.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 28

Bosque del Apache NWR Christmas Count.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 4

Albuquerque Area Christmas Count.

Please see Christmas Count article by Count Chairman Dale Stahlecker for complete details. Remember, you do not have to be an experienced birder to contribute to this activity. Half-day and feeder counters are welcome.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 16 - Regular Meeting

Jean and Neil Dilley are not only well-traveled Auduboners but expert photographers as well! This month they will show slides of their fascinating trip to Alaska. If you've seen one of the Dilley's programs before, you won't miss this one. See Welcome paragraph for time and place.



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SATURDAY, JANUARY 18New Mexico Audubon Council Meeting

Council Meeting: 1 p.m. on the NMIMT campus. All Auduboners welcome.

Dinner: 7 p.m. with fellow Auduboners from around the state. Place as yet to be determined. Come join the fellowship. Call George or Evelyn Price (831-5028) for information and reservations.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 19 - Field Trip

Bosque del Apache NWR will be the scene of this field trip. Many ducks, geese, and cranes (including Whooping Cranes) should be in the refuge. Meet at refuge headquarters at 6:30 a.m. To reach headquarters, go 8 miles south of Socorro to San Antonio, follow signs. Make a weekend of it by having dinner with us Saturday night and coming on the field trip Sunday. Call the Prices (831-5028) for more information.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 26 - Wildlife Film

Smoky Mountain Magic by Richard Kern is this month's film. Mr. Kern uncovers some of the rich and hidden secrets of the Great Smokies. Call Craig Andrews (881-9387) or Edith Johnson (255-0307) for tickets and/or information. 7:30 p.m., Popejoy Hall.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8 - Field Trip

We will wander the back roads of the south valley as far as Jarales, visiting the Belen and Casa Colorado State Refuges, Belen Valley State Park, and a few ditch roads. The cranes will be staging at the state refuges. Meet us for this popular field trip for breakfast brunch coffee at the Valley Cafe & Auction at 11 a.m. The Valley Cafe is at 7715 Broadway SE, south of Rio Bravo. Call leaders George and Evelyn Price (831-5028) for information.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

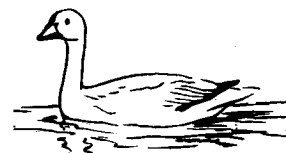
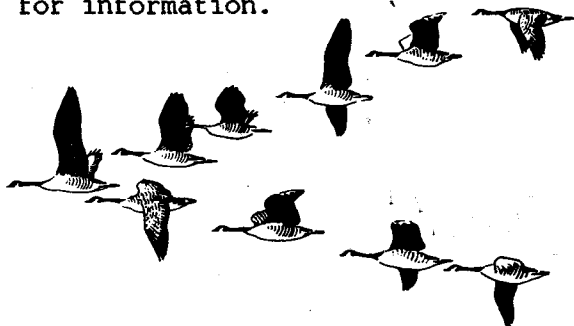
We get calls this time of year inquiring about the Bosque del Apache, the National Wildlife Refuge located around 100 miles south of Albuquerque. Some of the callers are newcomers and others are those who have lived here longer and have always intended taking the trips. Now they have visitors coming and they want to show them around. What follows is a "How To" guide to one of New Mexico's outstanding natural attractions.

If you're planning to make a day of it, take lunch, binoculars, camera, and birdbook. Dress warmly, for the wind can be chilly. Allow about 2 hours for the trip down. Take I-25 south, passing Socorro, continue on to the San Antonio turn-off. Follow signs from there. Main attraction in San Antonio is the Owl Bar and Cafe (AKA Owl Steak House) where you should stop either coming or going for one of their famous chili-burgers.

From San Antonio, continue south 8 miles to the refuge Visitors' Center and entrance which is to the right of the road. On this stretch start looking for birds; we saw a large, handsome red tailed hawk high in a tree on our way down.

At the Museum and Visitors' Center the attendants will show a film and tell you where to best see the geese and cranes. There is no entrance fee, hours are from sunrise to sunset, and the best months for viewing the overwintering geese and cranes are from November to February. A ten mile loop drive takes you past fields, canals, and ponds; you do not have to leave your car to see the birds, which is a nice thing to know for those who are unable to do so.

The Center has a good display of nature and bird books, two of which we recommend: the new Golden Guide edition of Birds of North America in its bright blue cover, and The Field Guide of the



Birds of North America, published by National Geographic.

Leaving the Visitors' Center, cross the road to the entrance of the Refuge. On the right you will see a small building; stop there for your free bird list if you haven't already picked up one at the Center. Now your birding day starts; you sight buffleheads, shovelers, and perhaps a scaup on the pond to your left. Slowly, you drive around the loop, stopping often to enjoy the bird life around you. Then you see the clouds of snow geese--there were 53,000 reported on the Refuge the day we were there! Sandhill cranes feed in the fields.

One of the main attractions, of course, is that rare bird the Whooping Crane. We saw five of them feeding far back in a field, but the binoculars brought them up close. Standing 5 feet tall with a wing spread of over 7 feet, adults are pure white, except for a fringe of jet black wing tips and a splash of blood red on the head. Something like a "Bear Jam" as seen in the National Parks results as cars stop and pull off the road to see this spectacular species. Only this time I guess you would call it a "Crane Jam!"

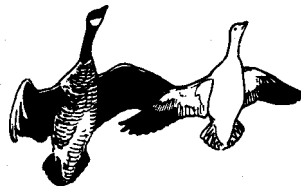
At the Bosque on Saturday, November 23, Dave and I attended a meeting of Audubon chapter presidents called by National Audubon Society's Regional Vice President, DeDe Armentrout. Chapter presidents from Roswell, Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and El Paso attended with Mesilla Valley reporting by mail. David Henderson, Director of the Randall Davey Audubon Center in Santa Fe, also attended.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the development of the National Audubon Society's new chapter policy which should better meet the needs of Audubon chapters and the national organization. Prior to this meeting, chapter boards had met. Using work sheets

provided by National, the boards discussed and organized their input. Many good ideas came out in the 2 1/2 hour discussion; final results of this study should come back to chapters by July 1986.

Following the meeting, we took a tour of the Refuge, joining the long line of vehicles which had come to witness the "fly in" of the thousands of snow geese, cranes, and other water fowl as they returned to the Refuge after a day's feeding in the surrounding fields. It was quite a sight to see them winging in as the sun's rays slanted across the green and brown feeding grounds.

The "fly out" in the morning is said to be just as spectacular. There are no public campgrounds near the refuge, but the privately owned Bosque Bird Watcher's RV Park (with hookups) is near the refuge entrance. If you can't make the 2 hour drive early in the morning, you might want to come the night before and stay at the Park. Another idea--why not join our Bosque Christmas Count on Saturday, December 21?



--Marge Carrick

#### CHRISTMAS COUNT UPDATE

Just a reminder of the schedule for the CNMAS Christmas Bird Counts. Bosque del Apache count on December 21 at 7:30 a.m. at the Refuge Headquarters or call Chuck Hundertmark (897-2818 NOT 897-2821 as in the last issue).

Sandia Mountain count will be December 28. Meet at 7:30 at Pete's "Home of the Halfbreed," 1/2 mile north of the Sandia Crest turnoff on Highway 14, or call Kay Anderson at 821-1606.

The Albuquerque count will be on January 4, 1986. Everybody will be back from the holidays; get out and walk that extra weight off! At the November CNMAS



Board Meeting, Hart Schwarz was unanimously chosen as the new Compiler for this count. Hart is looking for a lot of participants, including feeder watchers, throughout the count circle. He will meet counters at the Corrales Shopping Center at 7:30 a.m. or call him at 266-1810.

Remember the \$3 fee; have it ready for the compiler so s/he does not have to track you down to get it. The \$3 fee is good for all 3 counts. Don't let this small fee (to defray publication costs) keep you from participating. We'll summarize the counts in the next Owl.

Happy Birding - Oops, Holidays!

--Dale W. Stahlecker

#### CONSERVATION NOTES

##### ITEMS NEEDING ACTION

##### Proposed Ojo Line Extension

The Public Service Company is requesting a right-of-way and easements over Forest Service and other Government lands for construction of a 45-mile high-voltage transmission line through either (a) the heart of the Jemez Mountains from Coyote to Los Alamos, or (b) a line from Ojo to the Norton Substation to Los Alamos. PNM prefers the route through the Jemez Mountains, thereby endangering prime wildlife habitat and magnificent scenery. Conservationists all agree the Ojo-Norton-Los Alamos route (b, above) would be much less damaging. To voice your opinion, write to Mr. William C. Allan, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Albuquerque Area Office, P.O. Box 8327, Albuquerque, NM 87198.

##### LaCueva - Rounds Estate Land Exchange

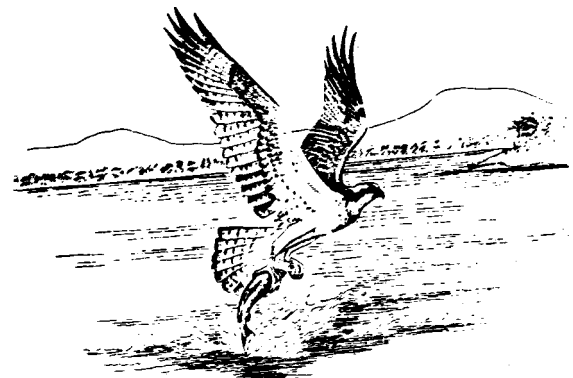
The Forest Service has not made a final determination for the proposed exchange of the LaCueva Forest Service area for the privately owned Rounds Estate lands in the foothills at the end of Indian School Road. The CNMAS and other conservation groups favor a way to protect both areas. Mayor-elect Ken

Schultz has stated during the recent election campaign that he also favors a procedure to acquire the Rounds Estate lands for the City of Albuquerque's open space program. Thus, if the Rounds Estate lands could be acquired, the loss of the more valuable Forest Service land could be prevented. Write soon to Mayor-elect Ken Schultz, City of Albuquerque, City Hall, Albuquerque, NM 87103.

##### ITEM TO WATCH

##### Gila River Alternatives, Central Arizona Project

An interesting alternative to a dam on the Gila River in New Mexico (Conner Dam) has surfaced. This alternative would divert a relatively small portion of the Gila River flood flows to an off-stream site to recharge the Mimbres River aquifer. This would allow Silver City to pump its needed water from the aquifer without the very expensive, very damaging alternative of impounding water. We need to watch this and any new developments closely to insure the least possible damage to New Mexico's last free-flowing major river. Future issues of the Burrowing Owl will keep you informed. For further information, contact the Gila Conservation Coalition, P.O. Box 2946, Silver City, NM 88062.



##### CHANGING YOUR ADDRESS?

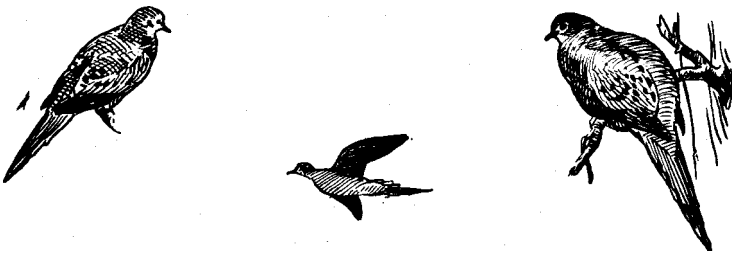
Membership Chairmen Donna and David Broudy would like to emphasize the importance of sending address changes to both National Audubon and to the local chapter. Address changes sent to National eventually reach us, but it takes a while, and in the meantime the Postal Service will not forward THE BURROWING OWL. Send changes to the Broudys at 1128 Girard NE, Albuquerque, NM 87106, 268-9647.

## JOURNEY TO PERU

Travel Works/Journeys Unlimited invites you to explore with us the grandeur and colorful diversity that is Peru. The shining snowcapped peaks of the Andes, the magical "Lost Inca City" of Machu Picchu, and the lush green foliage of the Amazon basin are all part of Peru. The tour features visits to Lima, Cuzco, Machu Picchu, and the Tambopata Wildlife Reserve. Rosa Ramirez Carlson, a native Peruvian, will personally escort the group. This tour will take place May 15-May 27, 1986.

The Tambopata Wildlife Reserve, located in the heart of the Amazon basin, is a bird-watching paradise. The Reserve offers the best jungle birding in South America. Ornithologists working in the area since 1976 have recorded more than 545 species, more species of birds than in any area of comparable size in the world and one sixth of all the bird species known to occur on the entire South American continent.

For more information please call Rosa Carlson or Dian Fortunato at Travel Works, 983-6356, in Santa Fe.



ROSS' RAVIN'S  
By Ross L. Teuber

Hi Folks! This is the time of year when birders are sandwiching thoughts of Christmas Bird Counts between Christmas shopping, preparing for visits from or to family members, and all kinds of holiday parties and activities. My thoughts can't help turning back to my first "Christmas Bird Census," 50 years ago. It was in Des Moines, Iowa; I believe on December 19. We started at 9:00 a.m. and finished around 3:00 p.m. As I recall, there were a total of seven participants, of whom two were high-school boys. I was one of them. The total number of species was 35, and the

total number of individuals was a little over 3500. What a thrill it was for a young birder! I hope many of you will be able to participate in one or more of the local counts. Details may be found elsewhere in this issue of the BURROWING OWL.

Space did not permit mentioning it last time, but early in the spring it was my pleasure to have some correspondence from one of our former members who has now moved to the state of Washington. Many of you will remember Bill and Ruth Stone. From what he has written, they have settled in an area where the birding is fabulous. I'm sure they would enjoy a card or letter from friends here in Albuquerque. Their address is 2329 Chambers Lake Dr., Lacey, WA 98503.

There is much interesting bird news but not too many calls recently. Probably the most exciting was the second sighting of a RUDDY GROUND DOVE in New Mexico by Barry Zimmer on October 29-31. The bird was in the same location, and associated with the same species as when Barry spotted it last February. It was with a flock of 30-50 INCA DOVES and a COMMON GROUND DOVE on private land. This sighting was reported by Bob Odear in the November 1985 NARBA Newsletter. Anyone interested in receiving this monthly newsletter may subscribe through BOB-O-LINK, INC., P.O. Box 1161, Jamestown, NC 27282. Annual subscription rate is \$16.50.

Speaking of the NARBA (North American Rare Bird Alert), any sightings of Aplomado Falcon, Montezuma Quail, Ruddy Ground Dove, Yellow Rail, Flammulated Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, White-eared Hummingbird, Violet-crowned Hummingbird, Elegant Trogon, Slate-throated Redstart, or any species not listed on the BIRDS OF NEW MEXICO CHECKLIST should be reported to me (265-8962) immediately, together with supporting details, so they can be verified and sent to the NARBA as promptly as possible. There is an award of \$25.00 for authenticated first reports received. Also, NARBA will award \$1,000 to the first sighter of the "Rare Bird of the Year" selected by an independent panel of prominent birders.

There is good news and bad news on the WHOOPING CRANES. Most recent communication from the Whooping Crane Conservation Association reports that for the first time there is a good possibility of 100 WHOOPERS in the natural flock at Aransas NWR this winter. This number will include 84 adults and subadults (as of last winter) and 16 chicks from this year's hatch. This is the largest number of chicks ever banded at Wood Buffalo National Park. One of the chicks weighed 5650 grams (12.5 lbs.), the heaviest ever weighed and banded since banding started.

"Our" flock, variously designated the Rocky Mountain Flock, Foster Parent Flock, or Experimental Flock, didn't fare as well. Poor conditions at Gray's Lake resulted in some loss of hatchlings and light weight birds. We expect 40 or 41 to winter in New Mexico. However, as of November 18, 1985, only 6 individuals had arrived at Bosque del Apache. One adult and a chick had arrived at Bernardo a week before. Six were reported there on November 25. Unusual was one at Las Vegas NWR on November 15. Refuge personnel indicated it had "been there for some time," possibly two weeks or more. This bird has been identified as a 1983 chick, PAT 4, an egg from the Patuxent captive flock. Most of the rest of the Gray's Lake birds are still in the San Luis Basin in Colorado as of the date of this writing (11/25/85).

The 375-acre field at Edell's Dairy Farm at Los Lunas, where 3 or 4 WHOOPING CRANES usually spend the winter, has now been acquired by SL Farms, Inc., which will establish a \$2.5 million race horse training rehabilitation facility. The new ownership have expressed an interest in continuing to provide a year-round home for PHEASANTS as well as wintering grounds for SANDHILL, WHOOPING CRANES and GEESE. However, we cannot be sure of just what will actually happen, or of how the change in management will affect the WHOOPING CRANES until the new project is established and we've watched it for a year or two.

Speaking of geese, the marsh hunt of SNOW GEESE at Bosque del Apache in late

October and early November did not accomplish its objective of encouraging a flyover of many of the geese to wintering grounds in Mexico or the Gulf. As of November 18, refuge personnel estimated a population of 47,500 SNOW GEESE. That's 10,000 more than peak numbers last year, and more than double the optimum number for the carrying capacity of the refuge. This cannot help resulting in excessive competition with CRANES, including WHOOPERS, for the available food supply and roosting habitat. The refuge was originally acquired as a wintering area for GREATER SANDHILL CRANES. The big problem--how do you maintain acceptable wintering populations of both geese and cranes and avoid inevitable depredation on adjoining areas, and losses of birds from starvation and/or epizootic outbreak of avian disease?

Some of the most interesting finds were reported in the Fall newsletter of Rio Grande Bird Research. On September 14, they banded their first ever BLACK AND WHITE WARBLER, and on the 19th a NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH, the second for the season. August 14 and September 21 yielded SOLITARY VIREOS of the West Coast race. Their first ever RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH was banded on September 21, and the first GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET on October 19, as well as the second DICK-CISSLE. Most outstanding, and the first ever for the project, was a CANADA WARBLER on October 13. If you'd like to see some of these less common birds, you might want to consider joining the project (\$10.00/yr.) or sending in a donation (tax deductible) in any amount to further their work. You are welcome to visit the operation any weekend when they are banding. They need volunteers. Many of the jobs do not require any detailed knowledge of ornithology or special skills. Membership applications or donations should be sent to: Rio Grande Bird Research, Inc., 6 Tumbleweed NW, Albuquerque, NM 87120.

Some of the fall sightings around the state include: (1) Bosque del Apache: on September 21-22, 100 or more WHITE PELICANS, a LITTLE BLUE HERON, 30+ CATTLE EGRETS, 50+ WHITE-FACED IBIS, 2 OSPREY, 11 SANDHILL CRANES (near San Antonio), 1 BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER,

2 FORSTER'S TERNS, 4-6 BLACK TERNS, and an EASTERN PHOEBE; (2) the Grasslands Turf Farm on September 27, 50-60 MOUNTAIN PLOVER, and 4 PECTORAL SANDPIPERS; (3) Bitterlake NWR on October 5, a SOLITARY SANDPIPER, and 4 WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPERS; (4) October 6 at Rattlesnake Springs, a Harlan's type RED-TAILED HAWK, between Rattlesnake Springs and White City, a late LESSER NIGHTHAWK, and (5) Bitterlake NWR, a late TREE SWALLOW.

On September 30, my Bosque del Apache reporter saw about 100 SANDHILL CRANES there for the first time this fall. On October 8, Paul Steel and I visited the Chaparral Grasslands Turf Farm east of Moriarty and found 40-50 MOUNTAIN PLOVER, and a LINCOLN'S SPARROW. There were, of course, a good variety of hawks and small grasslands birds. Unusual, probably fall migrants, were a pair of LEWIS' WOODPECKERS Paul and I spotted at Corona on October 12.

Also unusual was the sighting of four species of GREBES at Bosque del Apache October 19. This included 2 HORNED, WESTERN (Dark Phase), half a dozen EARED, and many PIED-BILLED. Also present were a WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE, PRAIRIE FALCON, and 3 GREAT HORNED OWLS. Bob Edens, Jr. of the Bosque del Apache NWR staff told me the first WHOOPING CRANE arrived on October 29. As far as I know, it was the only one there for over two weeks. This was quite late for the first arrival, and we are still awaiting the arrival of the majority of the flock as of November 22. My wife, Clara, spotted a lone, late TURKEY VULTURE high over I-40 near Tomasita School on October 30. Soaring and circling high above the vulture was a Buteo-type hawk, too high for identification by naked eye.

On November 2, there was a tail-bobbing EASTERN PHOEBE along the ditch north of Rio Grande Nature Center. On the 11th, Paul Steel, Lawrence Smith, and I made a trip to the Las Vegas NWR, Lake McMillan, and Storrie Lake. This trip yielded 3 adult and 1 immature BALD EAGLES, an immature GOLDEN EAGLE, 4 HORNED GREBES at Storrie Lake and 3 at Las Vegas NWR, as well as 3 light phase at Lake McMillan. There were also a ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK, FERRUGINOUS HAWK, 4 COMMON GOLDEN-EYES, several COMMON MERGANSERS, and a

pair of HOODED MERGANSERS. There were enough other species to comprise a day list of 50 species.

About six years ago, it was fascinating to have a male and female HOUSE FINCH at my feeder with perfectly matched, wide, white wingbars which formed a chevron on their backs when their wings were folded. No more were seen for four years, although one was netted by Rio Grande Bird Research, Inc. at RGNC. Then last year 4 more very similar birds showed up at my feeder. On November 18, a male showed up at my feeder with the same perfectly matched wingbars. The same day Paul Steel had a ROCK WREN in his back yard. The next day, another partial albino HOUSE FINCH arrived. This time a female with several large, white blotches on back and wings which formed no regular pattern. On the same date, for the first time ever, there was a RED-BREASTED NUTHACH. On the 17th, Wendy Orono reported 2-3 immature GOLDEN EAGLES southwest of Belen.

That covers the sightings reported since the last BURROWING OWL. If you'd like to see more names mentioned, and more locations covered, call me (265-8962) and share your sightings so others may enjoy them, too. If you are a beginning birder, new in this area, or a little unsure of what birds you are seeing, see the announcement elsewhere in this issue of a proposed course in Birding for Beginners. Fill out the questionnaire and return it to me at the address listed. In the meantime, enjoy the holidays, join as many Christmas Bird Counts as you can squeeze in, and most of all--have fun! Good luck and good birding.

---R. L. T.



#### LAST MINUTE BULLETIN

A beaten and battered TROPICAL KING BIRD was discovered at the Bosque NWR by John Durrie, Paul Fitzsimmons, and George Boyden. Several other observers consequently found and photographed the bird. If definitely confirmed, this will be the third record for the state. A BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE was seen at the Bosque by Dr. John Hubbard for a fifth state record.

APPLICATION FOR JOINT MEMBERSHIP IN THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY AND THE CENTRAL NEW MEXICO AUDUBON SOCIETY

Joint membership offers you full membership in both the National Audubon Society and the Central New Mexico Audubon chapter at the same rate as membership in the national organization only.

With one annual dues payment, you may enjoy the privileges of membership in, and the satisfaction of supporting, the local and national organizations. You will then receive bimonthly issues of the Burrowing Owl and the bimonthly Audubon, the most beautiful nature magazine in the world. A portion of your dues payment will be allocated to the Central New Mexico Audubon Society.

Table with 2 columns: Membership Type and Rate. Includes Individual (\$30.00/Year), Family (\$38.00/Year), Senior Citizen (\$21.00/Year), Sr. Cit., Family (\$23.00/Year), and Full Time Student (\$18.00/Year).

Name (please print)

Address

City State Zip

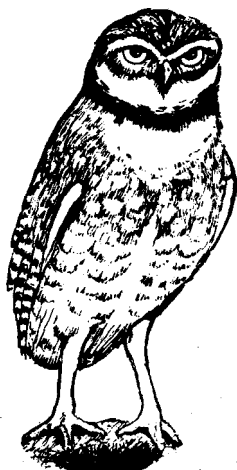
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ADDRESSES

- List of addresses for various officials: The President (The White House), The Honorable Pete V. Domenici, The Honorable Jeff Bingaman, The Honorable Manuel Lujan, Jr., The Honorable Joe Skeen, and The Honorable Bill Richardson.



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