



Burrowing Owl

December 2009, January, February 2010

Vol. 39 No. 1

Welcome to Central New Mexico Audubon Society! Come join us. All our meetings and field trips are open to the public.

12th Annual CNMAS Birding Academy The More You Know...

Thursday, February 18: Gray Vireo
With Michael Hilchey & Raymond VanBuskirk



Being bird lovers in the Southwest we are always hearing about the Gray Vireo, but most of us know surprisingly little about them. Michael and Raymond had the opportunity to work with these unique birds over the past year and will share some of what they have learned. They will be discussing where and when to look for this sought-after species, how to identify them, and some general breeding ecology about these juniper specialists.

Thursday, March 18: Pinyon Jay
With Cole Wolf

The Pinyon Jay is one of the West's most fascinating and sought-after bird species. Flocks of hundreds of birds lead nomadic lifestyles, often traveling many miles in search of piñon seeds. Unlike most of our birds, the Pinyon Jay usually begins its courtship in November and breeds during the winter. Like most aspects of its ecology, the exact timing of the breeding season is dictated by the abundance of piñon seeds. Cole has been working on Pinyon Jays on Kirtland Air Force Base for over a year. He will look at the unique ecology of the species, its dependence on the piñon pine, and how to find Pinyon Jays in New Mexico.

Thursday, April 15:
Demystifying the Misidentified
With Christopher Rustay

Learning to tell the difference between different types of birds is a learned skill. Learning to tell the differences between look-alike species can be very difficult, but there is a lot of learning

Birding Academy... continued on page 2

THE ELECTRONIC BURROWING OWL

The *Burrowing Owl* is now also available online as a PDF file. If you would like to receive your newsletter in this way, send an email to Ed Dover at whitecliffs@comcast.net

CNMA Program: On Ecuador Thursday, January 14, 2010

The bio-geographical diversity of Ecuador has resulted in about 1600 species of birds representing 82 avian families packed into a country less than half the size of Texas. Bird life abounds from the coast to the Andes and Amazon basin. Join Michael Hilchey, Raymond VanBuskirk and Laurel Ladwig on a photo-journey exploring the avifauna of the cloud forest, paramo, tropical rain forest and other biomes.

This FREE event will be held at St. Timothy's Lutheran Church, NW corner of Copper and Jefferson NE, 7:15 PM (7:00 for refreshments).



Local Christmas Bird Counts

Sevilleta NWR - Tuesday, December 15

Steve Cox, 505-345-2385, swcox@spinn.net
Meeting time is 6:30 a.m. at the Sevilleta NWR Headquarters.

Five Points - Thursday, December 17

Steve Cox, 505-345-2385, swcox@spinn.net
Meeting time is 6:30 a.m. at the Sevilleta NWR Headquarters.

Bosque del Apache NWR - Saturday, December 19

Dave Hawksworth, 505-575-5343, dlhawksworth@fs.fed.us
Meet at the refuge HQ at 6:30 a.m. There will be a post-count get-together at 5:30 p.m. a location TBD. To help in coordinating with the refuge, please contact Dave ahead of time

Local CBC... continued on page 2

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to let him know you will be participating.

Albuquerque - Sunday, December 20

Hart R. Schwarz, compiler, 505-266-1810, hschwarz@fs.fed.us
Meet Hart at Corrales Shopping Center, NW corner of Coors and Alameda, between 7:00 & 7:15 a.m. Participation fee remains at \$5.00. Bring cash (preferred) or make out your check to Hart Schwarz.

The compilation party will be hosted by Hal & Amy Wagon at their home near Juan Tabo and Montgomery (298-7350) at 6:45 p.m. They will provide posole, as well as coffee and lemonade. Bring your bird list and a dish/drinks to share. Maps to their home will be handed out on the morning of the Count.

Amy & Hal Wagon, 11501 Key West Dr NE, 505-298-7350

Sandia Mountains - Saturday, December 26

Rebecca Gracey, 505-242-3821,

maryrebeccagracey@gmail.com (count organizer)

Nick Vaughn, 505-265-1350, nickvaughn2000@yahoo.com
(data compiler)

Meet north of Albertson's in the Four Hills shopping center on Central, west of Tramway, at 7:30 a.m. There is a \$5.00 participation fee to cover Audubon's expenses for managing the collected data.

The group will meet at Dion's at their new location on Central between Juan Tabo and Eubank at 5:00 p.m. to eat and go over the results of the count. Contact Rebecca if you wish to participate.

View these and other Christmas Bird Count dates:

http://nm.audubon.org/CBC/cbc_schedule.htm



Birding Academy... continued from page 1

involved in this as well. Christopher, who has reviewed many a rare bird picture or heard descriptions, will offer some insights into commonly misidentified birds; even some that come from completely different families! His focus will be on birds often misidentified in New Mexico and some tools of the trade for identifying these birds in the future.

For this year's Audubon Birding Academy, pay \$7.00 at the door per class, or pay in advance (see registration form, right). Classes held at St. Timothy's Lutheran Church, NW corner of Copper and Jefferson NE, 7:15 PM (7:00 for refreshments).



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.



CNMAS Field Trip Reports

Thank you to all leaders!

Saturday, September 12: Shorebirds in the Belen area

Leader: Rebecca Gracey. Fifteen people were on this trip to the Belen Marsh and Whitfield Wildlife Conservancy Area (WWCA). Shorebirds and waders seen at the marsh were Killdeer, Black-necked Stilt, Cattle Egret, White-faced Ibis, Greater Yellowlegs, Least Sandpiper, Western Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, and Solitary Sandpiper. Other species of note were Burrowing Owl, Virginia Rail, and a flock of Yellow-headed Blackbirds. At WWCA two more Solitary Sandpipers were seen. The passerines there were plentiful with five species of warblers seen and seven species of sparrows. A total of 65 species were seen at the two locations.

Saturday, October 24: Melrose Trap and Beyond

Leader: Christopher Rustay. Nine people started the morning at the Melrose trap where we had fantastic looks at a Red Fox Sparrow, a Townsend's Warbler, a Yellow-shafted Flicker, and several montane species (Mountain Chickadee, Golden-crowned Kinglet and Cassin's Finch). Birding elsewhere in Curry County was stymied by high winds although we managed to find a couple of Ferruginous Hawks, a Merlin, a few Eastern Bluebirds, and 40 Chestnut-collared Longspurs at Ned Houk Park. Several of us stopped back at the Melrose trap after the wind had calmed somewhat and the temperature had risen considerably. In addition to the above, we also found

Trip Reports... continued on page 4

The 12th Annual Audubon Birding Academy Registration Form

- Feb. 18 - Gray Vireo ----- \$7
- Mar. 18 - Pinyon Jay ----- \$7
- Apr. 15 - Demystifying the Misidentified ----- \$7
- Register for ALL 3 Birding Academy classes ----- \$20
- Become a **NEW** Audubon member and get the 3
Birding Academy classes for FREE ----- \$20

NAS chapter code Q51 • Source code 79M7

Total Enclosed: _____

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



Field Trip Schedule

CNMAS trips prepared by Cole Wolf

Check <http://www.newmexicoaudubon.org/cnmas/trips.html> for more field trips and updates. ALWAYS check with the leader before the trip.

Saturday, January 23: Bosque del Apache NWR

Leader: Jim Mosley, ff1964@msn.com

Meet at the refuge visitor center at 7:00 AM. The trip will consist of some light walking and driving both loops in search of winter resident birds. Dress for variable weather and bring a scope if you have one. The group may choose to take a midday break for lunch in Socorro and then stay for the fly-in at dusk. Any questions please e-mail the leader. Can't wait to see you at the Bosque del Apache!

Sunday, January 31: Sandia Mountains

Leader: Raymond VanBuskirk, trogon282000@yahoo.com, 505-217-8514

Meet in front of Starbucks in the Four Hills parking lot (south of Central and west of Tramway) at 5:15 AM to search for Northern Pygmy, Saw-whet, and other owls. If you're not up for owling you meet the group at 7:30 AM at Doc Long Picnic Area. From there we'll work our way up the mountain looking for winter finches and other forest birds. At the crest we'll search for Three-toed Woodpeckers and finish the trip in the Crest House where we'll watch the Rosy-Finch banders while we sip hot chocolate.



Saturday-Sunday, February 6-7: Maxwell & Las Vegas NWRs

Leader: Sei Tokuda, stokuda@juno.com, 505-266-2480

This will be a day or overnight trip. We will leave Albuquerque in the morning and drive directly to Maxwell where we will bird until mid afternoon. People who wish to make it a day trip can return to Albuquerque, and those remaining will spend the night in Las Vegas. We will resume birding on Sunday morning at the LVNWR before returning to Albuquerque. The target birds are the wintering waterfowl (Golden-eyes, mergansers, etc.), American Tree Sparrow, Rough-legged and Ferruginous Hawks, and Bald Eagle. Meet at 8:00 AM at the Far North Shopping Center parking lot (NE corner of San Mateo and Academy NE.) on Saturday, February 6. Bring lunch, snacks, water and dress appropriately for the very cold early February weather in northeast New Mexico.

Saturday, March 27: Percha Dam State Park, Caballo Lake, and Animas Creek

Leader: Cole Wolf, colejwolf@gmail.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.

All Central New Mexico Audubon Society meetings and field trips are open to the public.

Meet by the Percha entrance gate at 7:30 AM (there are hotels available in T or C, about half an hour away). We'll spend most of the morning at Percha where we hope to find Vermilion Flycatcher, Lucy's Warbler, and Phainopepla. After checking Caballo for waterbirds we'll bird Animas Creek for Acorn Woodpecker and Bridled Titmouse. We'll finish the trip around Elephant Butte Lake looking for more waterbirds and desert species.

Remember to record your sightings at
<http://www.ebird.org/>



Thursday Birders Field Trip Schedule

Check <http://www.newmexicoaudubon.org/cnmas/trips.html> for more field trips and updates. ALWAYS check with the leader before the trip.

December 3: Hike Bear Canyon

With Donna Royer: 869-6882, dlroyer@earthlink.net

Meet at 9:00 a.m. in the trail head parking lot east of Tramway on Spain (Spain is north of Montgomery and south of Paseo del Norte). Follow Spain until it dead ends on High Desert. Turn right for a short distance to the parking lot. It is an easy two-mile walk.

December 10: Bernardo Wildlife Management Area

With Roger Grimshaw: 407-319-0280, rpgbirds@aol.com

Meet at 8:00 a.m. behind the Hawthorn Suites located on Gibson and University. The refuge is 50 miles south of Albuquerque on I-25. Take the exit to Highway 60. Go under the overpass and get on the east frontage road and drive north . 5 miles to the entrance on the east. Bring lunch.

December 17: Holiday Pot Luck and Toys for Tots gifts Manzano/Four Hills Open Space

With Rebecca Gracey: 242-3821, maryrebeccagracey@gmail.com

Meet at 10:00 a.m. at the Four Hills shopping center north of Hollywood Video or at the open space at the end of Stagecoach Road on the east side of the Four Hills community.

Afterwards attend a potluck lunch at the home of Cindy and Joe Harris. Chili, coffee and tea will be provided. Everyone else should bring other dishes to share with the group. Unwrapped gifts for the Toys for Tots program will be collected from those wishing to contribute.

December 31: Raptors on the eastern plains of Torrance County

With Bonnie Long: 379-1985, cantrade_1@yahoo.com

Meet at 9:00 a.m. in the parking lot of the library in Tijeras, NM, on Route 66 (north side of the highway). The group will drive south of Moriarty past Estancia to look for hawks and Golden Eagles. We will have lunch at the Old Mill in Estancia. We should be back in Albuquerque by 5:00 p.m.

January 7: Coronado State Monument

With Lannois Neely: 890-7881, lfneely@aol.com

Meet at 9:00 a.m. in Corrales in the shopping area on the east



Thursday Birders... continued from page 3

side of Coors/Corrales Road and north of Alameda near the credit union or at 9:30 at the monument. It is located on the west side of Bernalillo on Highway 550/44 on the north side of the road. There will be a \$1.00 admission charge.

January 14: Shining River Bosque Open Space

With Sylvia Fee: 294-4073, nmsylviafee@gmail.com

Meet at the trailhead in the open space parking lot at 9:00 a.m. for a walk in the bosque. It is located south of Paseo del Norte and north of El Pueblo Road on Rio Grande Boulevard. (There is no exit from Paseo del Norte to Rio Grande. Take the 2nd Street exit and take El Pueblo west to Rio Grande Boulevard.)

January 21: Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge

With Sei Tokuda: 266-2480, stokuda@juno.com

Meet at 8:00 a.m. behind the Hawthorn Suites on Gibson and University. Bring lunch. This is an all-day trip. (Admission fee or pass required per vehicle.)

January 28: Alameda Open Space

With Judy Liddell: 271-0912, jliddell5@earthlink.net

Meet at 9:00 a.m. in the open space parking lot on the south side of Alameda Boulevard. It is directly east of the Rio Grande River and west of the traffic light on Alameda and Rio Grande Boulevard. Lunch at Village Pizza in Corrales.

February 4: Sandia Crest to look for the Rosy Finches

With Karen & Gary Boettcher: 281-6726, nmkestrel@yahoo.com

Meet at 9:30 a.m. at the Sandia Ranger Station in Tijeras, NM, on Highway 337 to arrange car pooling. We can buy snacks or lunch at the crest restaurant as we wait inside for the Rosy-Finches to arrive at the feeders. (Parking fee or pass required.)

February 11: Sandhill Crane fly-in at the Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area (WWCA) near Belen, NM

With Linda Heinze: 565-1441, manzanogal@gmail.com

Meet at 3:00 p.m. behind the Hawthorn Suites on Gibson and University. WWCA is located on Highway 47, one mile north of Reinkin Avenue (the main east/west street through Belen) and its intersection with Highway 47. We should be back in Albuquerque around 6:00 p.m.

February 18: Hike in the Sandia Mountain foothills

With Mary Lou Arthur: 299-2565, marylarthur@yahoo.com

Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the trailhead on Copper, just north of Central. It is an easy, two mile walk.

February 25: Longspur & Sage Sparrow quest-San Antonio, NM

With Rebecca Gracey: 242-3821, maryrebeccagracey@gmail.com

Meet at 8:30 a.m. behind the Hawthorne Suites on Gibson and University to carpool to the sites 16 miles east of San Antonio on Highway 380. (North on A129 for the sparrows and north on A127 for the longspurs.) A folding chair will be useful as we wait for the brief visits of the longspurs to the water tank. Bring lunch.

Judy Liddell has a blog where she reports on the Thursday Birder trips she attends. You may read about them at www.wingandsong.wordpress.com

Weekend Bird Walks at the Rio Grande Nature Center State Park

Join Saturday and Sunday morning bird walks at the RGNC located at the far west end of Candelaria. The walks start at 9:00 a.m. during the winter months. There is a \$3 parking fee if you do not have a state parks pass or a Friends of the Rio Grande Nature Center parking pass. Call 344-7240 or visit www.rgnc.org



Trip Reports... continued from page 2

a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, a Nashville Warbler, and extraordinarily, a male Blue-winged Warbler. We recorded almost 50 species on the trip.

Saturday, October 31: Cochiti Lake

Leader: Cole Wolf. Six people made the trip up to Cochiti, where we started at the spillway below the dam. Highlights there were a pair of Common Mergansers, Double-crested Cormorants, great looks at American Pipits, and some lingering swallows. The lake itself was slow, but we enjoyed extremely close views of a Rock Wren near the swim beach. In the campground we found a leaking spigot and watched several species bathe in the water. We ended the morning with a walk through the Peña Blanca bosque and got great looks at Mountain and Black-capped Chickadees and saw several Black-billed Magpies.

Ryan Memorial Walk Sunday, September 20

On a warm and sunny day, Jim Mosley led the first Ryan Beaulieu Memorial walk. Ryan's family member participating on the walk thought it was a great birthday present. Ryan would have turned 22 on September 21. The weather was fabulous and we had a nice turnout of 17 people who came to celebrate and enjoy one of Ryan's favorite places: the Bosque del Apache.



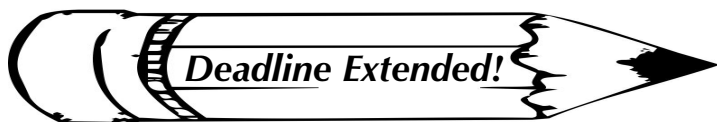
We were excited to have two young people; Emma and Jarred Bolivar, both seven years of age, join the walk. Jarred, aka "Eagle Eye" by his family, was very excited about all the birds he was observing and became Jim's co-lead.

One of the first birds spotted, as the parties were turning onto the Marsh Loop, was a Great Blue Heron standing tall on the west bank of the irrigation ditch. Further down the Marsh Loop heading towards the boardwalk a Harris Hawk was spotted swooping and diving. Once the parties reached the boardwalk, Cormorants, Green Herons, Western Grebes and an American White Pelican were spotted. The highlight of the trip was the Vermilion Flycatcher. It was spotted west of the Rio Viejo Trail and was a life bird for most of the participants.

By the time we ended our morning Jim was already planning next year's Memorial walk. All birders seemed to leave with a smile on their face and a sense of attachment to their experience at the Bosque on this day.



CNMAS Education Opportunities Abound



CNMAS Educator Resource Grant

The Educator Resource Grant is available to all educators in New Mexico. The grant is available for purchase of resources to the classroom/lessons that school or personal budgets do not cover. The supplies must be used for a natural history/science lesson(s), project or experience.

Amount available: up to \$250

Application deadline: January 1, 2010 (for money awarded by February 2010).

Application process: complete the application form in this newsletter, or download the application from the web site: <http://newmexicoaudubon.org/cnmas/>

CNMAS Educator Resource Grant Application

Educator Name _____

School/Work _____

Grade and subject taught _____

Address: _____

Phone # day: _____ evening _____

Email _____

Fax# _____

Principal* (unless home schooled, etc.) _____

* If no principal, please provide name and contact information of one reference.

- **Attach a list of what you need and the cost of the supplies (budget)**
- **Describe why you need these materials, how you will use them and how they will benefit your students**

Eligibility & requirements

This grant is open to all educators of students age 18 and under. Funding can be used for supplies for a project/lesson/unit about natural history/sciences, such as bug boxes, books, lab supplies. At the end of the school year, the grantee must supply CNMAS with a short report on how the money was used and an itemized budget with receipts. A short article will be placed in the *Burrowing Owl* Newsletter for our membership, written by the teacher/students involved.

Deadlines

For application: JANUARY 1, 2010

Money awarded by FEBRUARY, 2010

Mail the application to: CNMAS, c/o Helen Haskell, PO Box 36741, Albuquerque, NM 87176.

Questions? Email Helen Haskell at helennm@yahoo.com, and title the email 'CNMAS Educator Resource Grant'.

Teacher Professional Development Opportunity

The Central New Mexico Audubon Society has an exciting opportunity to offer a teacher from New Mexico. The Institute of Desert Ecology focuses on Sonoran Desert ecosystems with emphasis on relationships between plants, animals and the physical characteristics of the desert rather than on classification and identification. The days start early and optional activities such as owling, black-lighting for insects, and star talks extend into the evening hours. Participants and faculty interact in small groups during the first three days. A final hike ties together the experiences of earlier sessions for the entire group.

When & Where: April 15-18, 2010, Catalina State Park, Tucson, AZ.

Accommodation: You must bring your own tent or camper.

Cost: Central New Mexico Audubon Society will pay full tuition. You must provide your own transportation to the site (car, air) and dinner on the Wednesday evening. We realize that this workshop is partly during school time. Please check with your principal before applying, to ensure that you can attend the Institute, and be out of school. Your school is responsible for providing substitutes and related costs.

Please send a one-page essay and cover letter detailing:

- How you would benefit from this opportunity
- How would you use the experience in your everyday teaching
- Details on where you teach and what grade you teach, name of principal (if applicable) and two references

Please send the application by January 31, 2010 to:

Central New Mexico Audubon Society
c/o Helen Haskell
PO Box 36741
Albuquerque, NM 87176

For more information on program content, visit:

<http://www.tucsonaudubon.org>

Questions? Please email Helen Haskell at helennm@yahoo.com and title the email 'Institute of Desert Ecology'

The Ryan Beaulieu Memorial Education Fund



This is the third year CNMAS is able to accept applications for the Ryan Beaulieu Memorial Education Fund. The fund provides scholarships for youth between the ages of 13 and 20, or educators of youth, to attend a specific program, camp or course, pertaining to the candidate's interest in the natural sciences.

For more information about applications, please contact Helen Haskell at helennm@yahoo.com and visit <http://newmexicoaudubon.org/cnmas/> where you can follow links to the application form and instructions. Applications are taken on an on-going basis but early applications are encouraged. The grant will be awarded by May 31, 2010.



Learning Look-Alikes: Female Blackbirds

by Art Arenholz

drawings by Andrew Rominger

Early in my birding life, I visited a bird-banding site. The bird-bander held up a bird and asked me: "What bird is this, Art?" I studied the bird for a while and finally said: "Well, it looks like a really big sparrow." "No," he said, "it is a female Red-winged Blackbird." That incident is my inspiration for this article on female blackbirds.

Male blackbirds are fairly easy to identify, so we study the plainer females instead: Red-winged, Yellow-headed, and Brewer's Blackbirds, plus their close relatives, the Great-tailed Grackle and Brown-headed Cowbird, and an unrelated look-alike, the European Starling.

During fall, winter and spring, these blackbirds often form large, sometimes huge, flocks. Most of these large flocks have

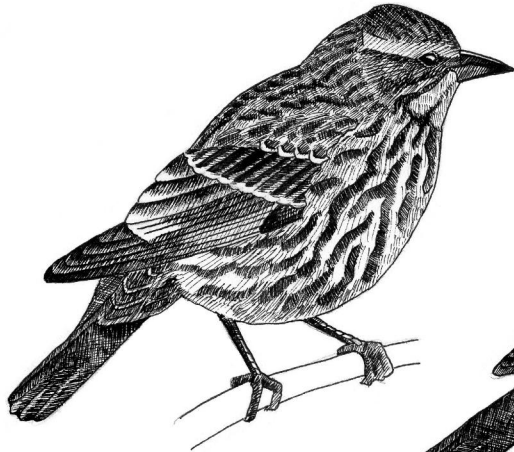
several species in them. At Bosque del Apache, we see them from the observation decks on the east side of the north auto tour loop. Another good place to look for blackbirds is a cattle feed lot, where blackbirds gather to feed on waste grain.

We use several clues to separate these six species. We look carefully at the length and shape of the bill, the length of the tail, any obvious field marks and the overall length of the bird.

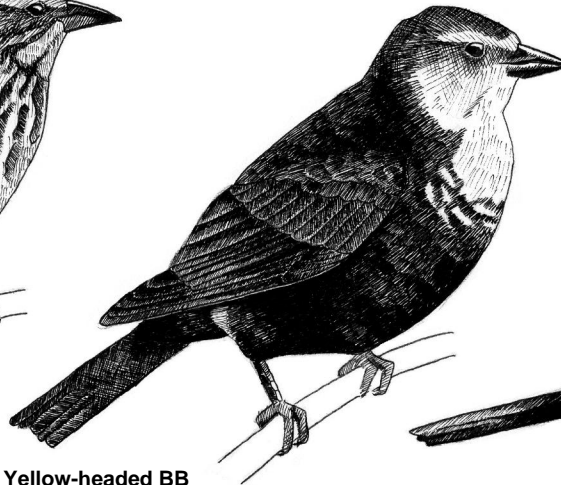
Let's start with these three female blackbirds: Red-winged, Yellow-headed and Brewer's. All three have slender, long, sharp bills and medium-long tails. Each has dark eyes and is about nine inches long.

A **Red-winged** female is dark brown above and strongly streaked below. She has a prominent light-colored eyebrow and, except for the bill, really does look like a huge, streaked sparrow. She builds her nest in a cattail marsh and spends much of the winter in grassy fields and other weedy areas.

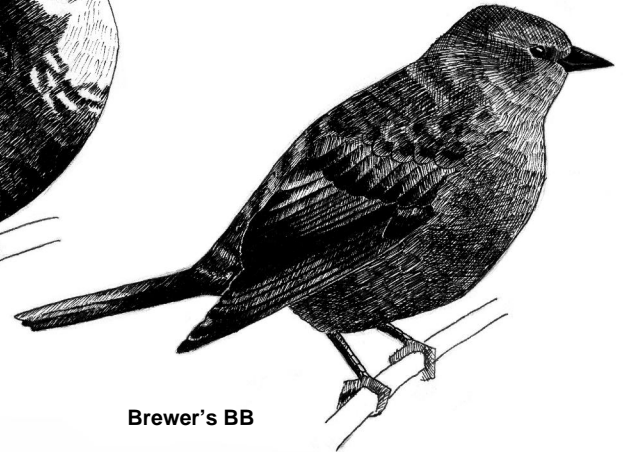
The female **Yellow-headed** is also dark brown above, but she has dull yellow on her eyebrow, throat and chest. Her



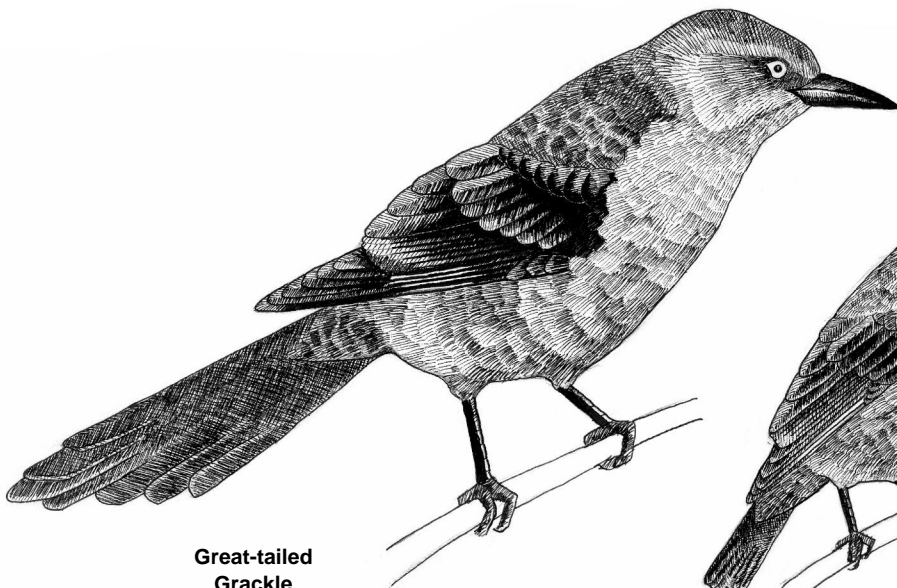
Red-winged BB



Yellow-headed BB



Brewer's BB



Great-tailed
Grackle



Brown-headed
Cowbird



European
Starling

Andrew Rominger 9/09



upper belly is streaked with white, but only in a small area. She also favors a cattail marsh for nesting and spends much of the winter with a mixed flock of blackbirds.

The female **Brewer's** is drab gray-brown above with somewhat lighter brown below. Overall, she shows less contrast than the previous two birds, and she is not streaked. She nests in fields and farms, not cattail marshes, and she joins large flocks in winter.

The female **Great-tailed Grackle** has a similar pattern as the Brewer's female; brown above and lighter below, but there are several important differences. First, the Grackle, at fourteen inches long, is noticeably larger than the previous three blackbirds. Second and third, her tail is proportionally longer and so is her bill. The Grackle nests in trees (not in marshes), often on farms or in towns and cities. She also joins large flocks in winter.

The female **Brown-headed Cowbird** is dull gray-brown above and lighter below. But she is the smallest at seven inches in length and her bill is quite different: short and stubby. The tail is medium-short. The cowbird lays its eggs in the nests of other species and has caused problems for the birds it chooses, like warblers and vireos. Often, the only hatchling that survives is the larger Cowbird chick.

The **European Starling** is iridescent green-black, with a yellow bill, in breeding plumage. During the rest of the year, a Starling is dark and strongly speckled with a dark bill. The bill is long and sharp, and the bird has a very short tail, which is a key field-mark. Starlings are not native to the U.S., and they out-compete many native species. Starlings nest on farms and in towns and cities, and they join the large flocks in winter.

Okay, let's review. Each of these drab birds has at least

three features that can help us with identification. The Red-winged female has a long, sharp bill and a long tail, but otherwise looks like a large, streaked sparrow. The Yellow-headed female is similar, but she has a dull yellow eyebrow, throat and chest. Her streaking is limited to a small area across the lower chest. The Brewer's female shares their bill, tail and size, but she has no streaks, no yellow color and shows the least contrast front-to-back of these three birds.

The Starling shares the size and sharp bill of our first three birds, but the colors are different. During breeding season, a Starling is green-black, with a yellow bill. In winter, a Starling is dark with many light speckles and the bill is dark. A key I.D. mark is the very short tail.

The Great-tailed Grackle is much larger than our other birds, and has a very long tail and a longer, heavier bill. The Cowbird is the runt of this litter, only seven inches long. Her bill is different, too, shorter and stouter than the others.

So by concentrating on the bill, the tail, the field marks and overall size, we can separate these female black birds. Study the females when you find them with the males, and you will be ready when you see a female alone.



**9th Annual High Plains
Lesser Prairie-Chicken Festival
Friday – Sunday, April 16–18, 2010**

Contact Tish McDaniel (575) 762-6997 or chickenfestival@yahoo.com or pmcdaniel@tnc.org
Registration will open on January 1, 2010.



Learning Look-Alikes Order Form

Name _____
 Street _____
 City, State, Zip _____
 Phone _____
 Inscription _____

Quantity

Learning Look-Alikes \$25.00 _____
 with 18 installments of the Learning Look-Alikes

Shipping and handling \$7.00 per notebook

Total \$ _____

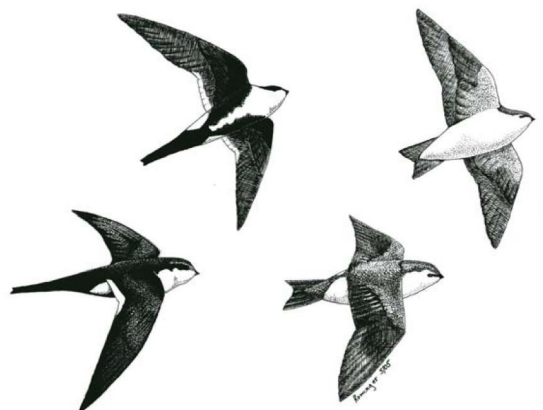
Shipping charge only for shipment of the original notebook. The remaining installments will be mailed to you annually at no additional cost.

Learning Look-Alikes RECEIPT

Name _____
 Quantity _____

The sale of this collectible edition is a fund-raiser for CNMAS, and part of the proceeds will go to the Ryan Fund.

Laurel Ladwig at 505-362-6871, pbgrebe@gmail.com
 Beth Hurst-Waitz at 505-259-0709





The Rosy-Finches Are Here!

by Michael Hilchey

The first report of birds came in on October 27th, the earliest arrival yet! Saturday, November 7, was the first banding day for the Rosy-Finch team. The day was pretty slow, mostly due to the gorgeous weather (Rosies like it cold). Of the 15 or so birds seen, they captured only 2, a new Black Rosy-Finch, and a previously banded Brown-capped Rosy-Finch. Gene, the Crest House manager, reports that he's seen as many as 30 birds in a flock, and this number is sure to grow to several hundred as the cold of the winter sets in.

There will be banding every Sunday from now until March with a few exceptions.

On Sunday December 27th, and Sunday January 3rd there will be no banding due to Christmas Bird Counts. Banding starts at 9:30am at the Crest House and goes till around 2 in the afternoon. Please

come up and join the Rosy-Finchers for some coffee, quesadillas, and of course the birds! Be sure to check out the official Rosy-Finch site: www.rosyfinch.com, for more information on the birds and the banding project as well as any changes to the banding schedule. See you at the Crest!



Take a Mid-Winter Nature Break With the Great Backyard Bird Count

New Mexico bird watchers! You're invited to take part in the 13th annual Great Backyard Bird Count, **Friday, February 12, through Monday, February 15, 2010**. It's another great "citizen science" project that helps researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society learn more about how the birds are doing and how to protect them.

Statistics from 2009:

Total Checklists Submitted: 93,629

Total Species Observed: 619,

Total Individual Birds Counted: 11,550,200

This was the continent's largest instantaneous snapshot of bird populations ever recorded!

Explore the GBBC website at www.birdcount.org

Central New Mexico Audubon Is On Facebook!

Become a Fan and get Facebook updates: go to the following link: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/> and type "Central New Mexico Audubon Society" in the search box. Then click on the link "Central New Mexico Audubon Society" and it will take you to our page. There will be a button that you can click on that says, "Become a Fan."

If you would like to receive an e-mail reminder about meetings rather than joining Facebook, e-mail Judy Liddell, Publicity Chair, at jliddell5@earthlink.net.

Belen Marsh Update

by Judy Liddell

On Oct. 24, the Belen Task Force sponsored a clean-up as a National Make-A-Difference-Day event. Twenty people gathered at 8 a.m. and picked up trash along the road and in the marsh area. Task force members were joined by several neighbors of the wetlands; they want it preserved and kept beautiful. The City of Belen hauled away the collected refuse. A photo showing several of the clean-up crew hefting a lamp post into the back of Eileen Beaulieu's truck appeared in the Valencia County *News Bulletin*.

At the task force meeting at the end of September, the group reviewed rendering of several ways the marsh and the Valencia County Fair Management Association could meet mutual goals. The professional drawings were done by architect, Fred Robinson. Fred based his renderings on the drawings created by task force member Amber West, who paired her interest in birds and habitat restoration to earn her Girl Scout Gold Award. She has been an active member of the task force since its inception.



Bosque del Apache NWR News

Congress has approved wilderness status for a parcel of donated land at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge that includes the peak of Chupadera Mountain.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which manages the refuge, says the designation marks the first time the agency has been able to use a provision in the Wilderness Act that authorizes the Interior Department to accept a donation of land immediately adjacent to a designated wilderness area for preservation as wilderness.

The peak was part of a 140-acre donation made in 2007 by the Friends of the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge. The donation made visitor access to the top of the mountain possible.

Chupadera peak can be seen from anywhere on the refuge, where thousands of cranes and geese migrate each fall.



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 (800) 659-2622
 Audubon Take Action
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New Mexico Dept. of Game & Fish
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Sandia Ranger District
 US Forest Service
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Bosque del Apache NWR
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 Friends of the Bosque del Apache
 (575) 835-1828
 www.friendsofthebosque.org

Rio Grande Nature Center State Park
 (505) 344-7240
 Friends of RGNC
 friends@rgnc.org, www.rgnc.org

Breaking News:

The National Park System has just received a significant increase in funding for 2010

- NPS Operations received roughly \$130 million above last year’s funding level, which fulfills the President’s pledge to increase park operations \$100 million above inflation.
- The NPS portion of the Land and Water Conservation Fund—a fund used to purchase critical lands now on the market for conservation and public recreation—received \$126.26 million. This is an increase of \$61 million over last year’s level and \$28 million above the President’s request.
- Public-Private Partnerships, previously known as the Centennial Challenge, was funded at \$15 million.
- A potentially harmful rider that would have required a public hunt to manage the growing elk population at Theodore Roosevelt National Park was removed. The rider would have overridden longstanding agency-wide policy.
- Most importantly, and beyond the numbers, the NPS is now better able to hire more rangers, fill out the authorized boundaries of many parks, enhance its ability to address the impacts of climate change on our national parks, and preserve America’s Everglades, Great Lakes, and other nationally-significant ecosystems.



**Central New Mexico Audubon Society
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National Membership

The following rates include subscription to the National Audubon Magazine and “The Burrowing Owl”:

- \$35 Member Renewal
- \$20 New Member, special introductory rate for one year.
- \$30 New Member, special introductory rate for two years.

Make checks payable to the National Audubon Society, PO Box 30002, Albuquerque, NM 87190-0002

Local Chapter Membership Only

The following rate includes subscription to “The Burrowing Owl” newsletter only:

- \$15 for subscription to “The Burrowing Owl” only.

This rate also applies to those outside of our Chapter area who still wish to receive “The Burrowing Owl”.

For this rate make checks payable to CNMAS, PO Box 30002, Albuquerque, NM 87190-0002.

We are encouraging members to opt to receiving their copies of “The Burrowing Owl” on line. This will significantly reduce the amount of paper generated by mailing hard copies. We will, of course, honor those requests from members who wish to continue receiving the hard copies through the mail. Please indicate your preference below.

- I would like to receive “The Burrowing Owl” on line. (Be sure to enter your E-mail address on the address section above. You will be notified by E-mail when each new edition of “The Burrowing Owl” is available on line. You will be provided with the CNMAS web address where you can download the newsletter.)
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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.

Burrowing Owl Deadline

Information and articles to be included in **Spring 2010** issue of the *Burrowing Owl*, must be received by **Feb. 5, 2010**. Contact Turtle-Bear at 505-265-6094 or turtlebear@jensenbear.com. We are not accepting commercial advertising at this time.

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Our missions: "To appreciate, experience, and conserve birds, other wildlife and their habitats; and to encourage and support environmental education in New Mexico."

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Rosy Finch Project

Fran Lusso & Dave Weaver, flusso@wfubmc.edu
<http://www.rosyfinch.com/>

Wildlife Rescue

If you find a sick or injured bird, call 344-2500



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