

Burrowing Owl

Central New Mexico
Audubon Society

Celebrating 50 Years
of Birds and Birding

Volume 50, #3

Melrose Woods Begins Its New Life

CNMAAS Dedication Event Sept. 18

Once known as Melrose Migrant Trap and lacking creature comforts for anyone except winged creatures, today Melrose Woods is restored habitat for migrating birds, designated an important birding area (IBA) by Audubon New Mexico.

The dedication event, organized by the Central New Mexico Audubon chapter, will be Sept. 18 from 11 a.m. to noon.

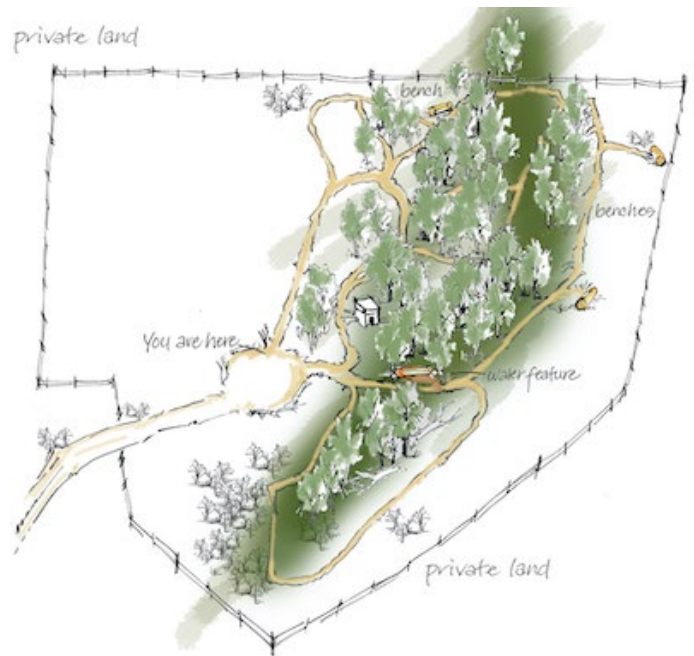
People planning to attend are asked to RSVP to robertroymunro@gmail.com. Details about the dedication will be sent to all who make a reservation.



Melrose Woods, a nine-acre oasis of woodland in the midst of harsh prairie grassland in eastern New Mexico, has long been a vital stop-over for birds that winter in Mexico, the Caribbean and Central and South America.

The woodland provides a haven for rest, food and water to these birds as they journey farther north to nest: over 275 species have been recorded at this mix of cottonwoods, silverleaf poplar and native shrubs.

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Trail map artwork by Debra Moseley-Lord of Siteworks



Wildfire the Catalyst For Melrose Woods

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In 2011, a lightning-caused fire did extensive damage to the woodland. To rectify the damage Central New Mexico Audubon Society (CNMAS), and the New Mexico State Land Office (NMSLO) entered into a five-year business lease, with the cooperation of the rancher who holds the land lease.

Thanks to this unique collaboration, a major restoration project is now under way, including cleaning up trash, removing downed trees and planting native plants and trees, as well as an irrigation system, informational signage and trails for visitors and a permanent source of water for birds.

CNMAS and the NMSLO are proud of this successful collaboration for bird conservation and look forward to celebrating this ongoing project with you on Sept. 18.



Highlights of the Restoration Plan

Robert Munro, who previously headed a Candelaria Grasslands restoration plan for CNMAS, wrote about an on-line town hall in 2020 that yielded key principles for the work at Melrose Woods:

- Some unnatural rocky areas will not be eliminated during debris removal in order to support migrating and resident wrens.
- During trail building the understory—essential habitat for birds—will not be disturbed.
- Although some fallen wood will be used for trail marking and bench construction, no wood will be removed from the site as it provides vital cover.



*Melrose Woods gate
photo by Robert Munro*

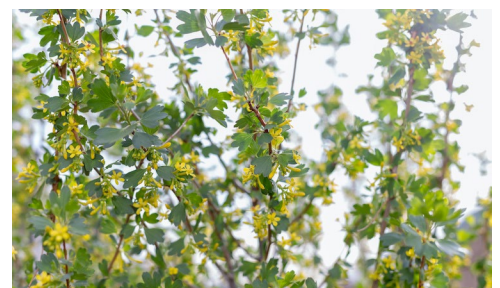
Melrose Woods by the Numbers

Christopher Rustay, a member of the Melrose team, wrote about it in the spring 2020 edition of the Burrowing Owl.

“When you think of the best places on earth to see New World Warblers, your mind might wander to High Island, Magee Marsh or Cape May. While the sheer numbers of warblers you will see at those sites are enormous, three places have them beat for diversity of species, and one of them is right here in the Land of Enchantment: the Melrose Woods.

“eBird tells us that High Island has recorded 41 warbler species while Magee Marsh and Cape May boast 33 and 38 respectively. Two other sites stand above all others: the Farallon Islands in California and our own Melrose Woods, both with 44 species.”

Rustay led the chapter’s first formal excursion to Melrose Woods in the summer of 2020.



Orange Currant is one of the native shrubs at Melrose. The Cape May Warbler is a new addition to the bird checklist.

Fall Programs Reflect Diversity of Birds' Worlds

By Kathy Carson

All programs will be virtual for the foreseeable future. CNMAS members will get an e-mail with the Zoom link prior to the program, or they can request the link by e-mailing cnmasreg@google.com.

September 16, 7–8:30 p.m. Backyard Bird Refuge Program Laurel Ladwig



Artwork by Wren Walraven

Our backyards can be a window into our wondrously complex natural world, filled with extraordinary interactions and interdependencies. Learn about the ABQ Backyard Refuge

Program and how you can build a certified refuge. The program's goal is to create a mosaic of habitat across the city to support resident and migrating wildlife. Explore the ways you can support our wild neighbors (birds and otherwise) by sharing resources and being responsive to their needs.

It's Thursday—Where Are the Birders Going?

The Thursday Birders schedule is now on the web page: go to cnmas.newmexicoaudubon.org and choose Trips then Thursday Birders.



October 21, 7–8:30 p.m. The Language of Birds Nathan Pieplow

All around us, the birds are constantly telling us who they are and what they are doing. Nathan Pieplow, author of the Peterson Field Guide to Bird Sounds, unlocks the secrets of their language. You'll listen in on the pillow talk of a pair of Red-winged Blackbirds and learn the signals Cliff Swallows use when they have found food. You'll learn how one bird sound can have many meanings, and how one meaning can have many sounds—and how, sometimes, the meaning isn't in the sounds at all.



Grackle by
Nathan Pieplow

November 11, 7–8:30 p.m. Conservation Projects of the San Antonio Zoo Danté Fenolio

Join us as Dr. Fenolio talks about the work of the Department of Conservation & Research for the San Antonio Zoo. Dr. Fenolio will describe several of the zoo's projects across the globe, including a collaboration with indigenous groups in Amazonian Peru working to maintain stands of rainforest on traditional lands.



photos by Danté Fenolio

CNMAAS Installs Bird Strike Deterrents at Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area

By Sara Jayne Cole

The CNMAS booth at the Whitfield Earth Day event included information about preventing bird window collisions. Andrew Hautzinger, district director of the Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area, suggested that we use four windows on the front of the building to demonstrate how people could help make their windows bird-safe.

The CNMAS Board agreed to fund the project, using deterrents recommended by the American Bird Conservancy.

On May 24 Andrew and I installed “Feather Friendly” (<https://www.featherfriendly.com>) on one window and ABC three-inch-square Bird Tape on another. We then measured the windows for the Wind Curtains and Bird Screen that would be made and installed later.



Sara Jayne Cole measures the window with completed “Feather Friendly” deterrent. Photo by Andrew Hautzinger (seen behind the window)



Bird Screen on window next to Chavez

On June 30 Perrienne Houghton and I went to Whitfield and met with Johnny Chavez, WCA field crew leader (left), and installed the completed Wind Curtain. Instructions for this great DIY project can be found at <https://www.birdsavers.com>. Next was the Bird Screen (<https://www.birdscreen.com>) which we had to adapt to the awning window by attaching it to the glass using suction cups.

We have learned that ABC Bird Tape is no longer sold by the American Bird Conservancy and because of this we will probably choose another deterrent to replace it later.

Andrew recently reported that they have not heard that sad “thud” since we did the installation on these four problem windows.

I invite you to look at the Window Collision page on the CNMAS website to learn how to make the windows in your home bird-safe: <http://cnmas.newmexicoaudubon.org>

Choose the box labeled Conservation and click on Window Collisions.

The Momentary Reprieve of Rain on the Rio Grande

Rain is good, but adapting to climate change is better.

By Paul Tashjian

Director of Freshwater Conservation
Audubon Southwest

As I crossed the Rio Grande on my way to monitor a river habitat site in Bernardo, N.M., I looked out on the lush greenery of the riparian corridor and juicy storm clouds on the horizon. It has been raining in New Mexico this summer. It started early—around the third week of June. At the time of writing this, the monsoon looks strong and persistent and our muddy river is flowing well through much of the Middle Rio Grande. While the rains may not stay, this is a welcome sight in an otherwise hot, dry, and increasingly arid New Mexico.

The rains are good for birds too. In fact, I'd heard that Southwestern Willow Flycatchers are showing up near the town of Bosque. So I went to check it out. I walked out to the river through dense coyote willow, and heard a distant "fitz-bew", the flycatcher's distinct call. I found myself in joy with my surroundings and forgetting, at least for a moment, that our Rio Grande is in the midst of a megadrought and our water systems are stressed and in crisis.

I reflected on last week's news: 115 degrees in Portland, Ore.; Lytton, a small town in Canada, is on fire after experiencing 120 degrees heat; heat records created across the hemisphere, matching climate predictions for decades from now. This news doesn't seem real to me as I relish the cool weather, wet skies and beautiful river. And it's a reminder that rain is momentary, fickle, and we need permanent solutions to ensure that we can all live in a habitable West.

I drove from that site through Veguita, where the Rio Grande's water crisis was more apparent

as I gazed upon a patchwork of dry farms. Farmers in Central New Mexico received water a month late this year and, barring a good monsoon, they will be out of water in August sometime. South of here, near Las Cruces, farmers have been promised only four inches of water per acre this year, 11% of their normal allotment of 36 inches. This is a scary

time for our farmers, many who are living paycheck to paycheck. As a similar sign of our crisis, the Rio Grande in Las Cruces has experienced over 150 days of a dry river bed so far this year, the Rio Grande near Socorro is dry and in Albuquerque it is experiencing some of the lowest flows in 47 years and may go dry later this summer.

I wanted to check out one more site near Los Lunas where I saw dead young cottonwood and willow trees that line this part of the Rio Grande, victims of last year's bone dry river bed. These trees

are no longer available for nesting summer birds such as warblers, Black-chinned Hummingbirds, Black Phoebes and Western Kingbirds. Today's lush monsoon could easily take a hard turn back to drought next week.

I remember back in the 1990s, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation published a series of documents discussing the potential future water budget for the Rio Grande in New Mexico. The scientists were sounding the alarm bell—there simply wasn't enough

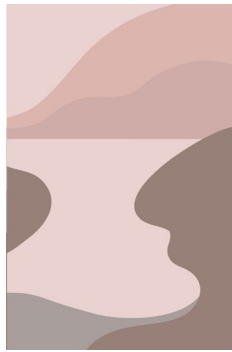


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. . . Reprieve of Rain

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water under a 1950s drought scenario or even under a series of “normal” years. These reports raised interest, but the recurrent El Niño winters kept delivering reliable winter snowpack and full reservoirs, cleaving these prognostications as distant potential realities. Now we’re living these predictions and are scrambling to find some sort of resiliency in the midst of our long term water deficit. This moderate case of denial in New Mexico is nothing compared to our collective denial regarding climate warming. For the past two decades, the drought has compounded year over year, proving the findings and warnings of a myriad of credible climate scientists.

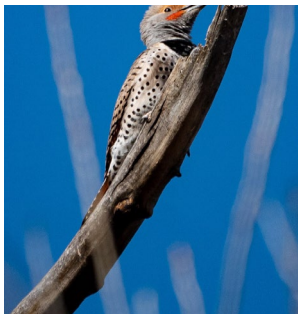


So where do we go from here? How do we protect birds, farmers and one of the most important river systems in the Southwest? Audubon is actively engaged in this critical puzzle, from bringing water back to the Rio through water leasing, to restoring habitat on public and private lands, to promoting policy actions that provide water resiliency. Are you interested in helping out? If so please visit [Audubon.org/westernwater](https://www.audubon.org/westernwater) for information on opportunities from helping to restore habitat to contacting legislators on key issues. Your voices are needed as people and birds in Colorado, New Mexico, Texas and Mexico face our climate crisis and the hard reality of much less water.

This article is reprinted with permission from the Audubon website. Western Water News is a regular feature.

The Secret of Balancing Birds: Extra Organs

Ever wonder how birds can stay upright while clinging to a slender twig whipping in the wind? Turns out that in addition to a balance organ in the inner ear similar to ours, birds also have a balance



Northern Flicker
By Joe Schelling

organ in their pelvis! The Lumbosacral Organ (LCO) consists of fluid-filled canals and accessory lobes of the spinal cord that stick out on either side of the spinal cord in the lumbosacral region. They are thought to be present

in all birds, but are larger and develop earlier in perching birds and weak flyers.

The spinal cord is suspended in fluid in a loose sac of the meninges that forms the lumbosacral canals; the fluid in the canals sloshes as the bird moves. The moving fluid presses on the accessory lobes and activates nerve signals to the brain, very much like the semicircular canals in the

ears, providing information on the body’s position in space. Having two organs of balance allows the bird to keep its body stable while moving its head or keep the head still while moving its body. Imagine what an advantage it would have been to an early avian dinosaur to have even a rudimentary version of this organ: stable perching, more efficient ways of hunting, even safer sleeping!

Adapted from “The Balance Hypothesis for the Avian Lumbosacral Organ and an Exploration of its Morphological Variation,” in *Integrative Organismal Biology* [doi: 10.1093/iob/obaa024](https://doi.org/10.1093/iob/obaa024)

New Protocol for RGNC Walks

Bird walks at the Rio Grande Nature Center are now limited to 12 participants who must register only the week before the walk. You may register by phone (505) 344-7240 or in person during Visitor Center open hours 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Righting History?

Deeds and Values of Birds' Namesakes Under Scrutiny

By Melissa Howard

Perhaps the first was Oldsquaw, renamed Long-tailed Duck in 2000.

Eight years later, amid calls for destruction of monuments to Confederates in the South, activists proposed changing the name of McCown's Longspur, first studied in 1851 by John P. McCown, who later joined the Rebel army. The proposal went nowhere with the American Ornithological Society (AOS) that year and was rejected in 2019.

In the pandemic summer of 2020 the death of George Floyd kindled nationwide Black Lives Matter protests that brought previously silent moderates into the streets. Also that year:

- a white woman called the police when a black birder asked her to leash her dog in Central Park;
- in June Gabriel Foley and Jordan Rutter sent the AOS a petition co-signed by 180 others arguing that “honorific names cast long, dark shadows over our beloved birds and represent colonialism, racism and inequality”;
- the petitioners soon organized a group: Bird Names for Birds; and
- on August 20 the AOS approved changing the common name to Thick-billed Longspur.



The summer issue of *Living Bird*, the magazine of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, reported that the AOS North American Classification Committee

revised its guidelines to apply “present-day ethical principles” to bird names that cause “ongoing harm.”

Nathalie Alonso wrote in *Outside* magazine that the change came “amid a national reckoning with systemic racism” and “marked the first time the organization agreed to change a bird’s name because it was racially offensive.”

By then the terms eponym (a noun) and eponymous (adjective) were being used for the approximately 149 birds named after humans. The names were labeled “verbal statues.”

No changes have been proposed to AOS so far in 2021 but in April the AOS Diversity and Inclusion Committee Zoomed a panel discussion that drew 600 viewers. The participants agreed that some common bird names need to be changed but not all at once and with care for the impacts on science and technology.

“Put simply, the landmark Science research showing that North America had lost 3 billion birds since 1970 wouldn’t have been possible if all the data sources couldn’t rely on a unified, comparable set of bird names,” said the *Living Bird* article.

Many saw the changes as helping birders identify and remember the birds (see Long-tailed Duck). Panel member David Sibley said eponymous names are “a barrier to the free flow of information,” and others hoped the campaign could be “a golden opportunity to broaden the base of popular support for birds.”

More on the next page

Looking Back: Were Some of Them Bad Guys?

Slavery Among Charges Against 19th-Century Ornithologists

In 2019 *Bird Names for Birds* accused ornithologists John James Audubon, John Townsend and Charles Bendire, along with all-round naturalist William Bartram, of “body snatching” and “slavery.” The next year a petition with 2,000-plus signatures called for changing the names of Townsend’s Warbler, Bendire’s Thrasher and Hammond’s Flycatcher.

Townsend, a Ph.D., and Bartram, son of a prominent botanist, were members of major scientific investigations. And many military men posted to the West to fight Indians after the Civil War developed a sideline as naturalists, including Bendire, an Army cavalry officer, and William Hammond, a cavalry surgeon.



Townsend’s Warbler
Setophaga townsendi



Hammond’s Flycatcher
Empidonax hammondi

A Lutheran minister in South Carolina personified the intellectual and moral difficulties that slavery presented. John Bachman was, among other things, a social reformer who founded schools. In 1854 he wrote a paper asserting that whites and blacks belong to the same species, but the Negro’s “intellect is greatly inferior” and he is “incapable of self-government.”

As a naturalist Bachman received help from Audubon. Determined to document as many species as possible, Audubon gave Bachman’s name to the previously known Pine-woods Sparrow and added the Bachman Warbler to the list without seeing it. The warbler is extinct, but Kenn Kaufman has said the sparrow now bears the name of a man “who wrote some really ugly things in support of white supremacy” and should get its original name back.

In 2021 *Bird Names for Birds* sent petitions signed by 2,500 people to the American Ornithological Society calling for removal of the names of Bendire and Bachman — “enslavers,” plunderers of Native American skulls and practitioners of the “pseudoscience of phrenology” — from its classification list.

Audubon himself is still praised for groundbreaking field work and superb art work, but in July 2000 the National Audubon Society “publicly acknowledged that he bought and sold slaves.”

Charles Bendire collected 8,000 birds’ eggs, presented them to the organization which became the Smithsonian and was named an honorary curator.

It is said that in April 1872, while on a Cavalry Dragoon patrol near an Arizona creek, he spotted and followed a low-flying Zone-tailed Hawk. It flew into a cottonwood tree. When it left Bendire saw its nest, climbed the tree and pocketed a pale-blue egg.

And the tale continues. A few weeks later Bendire re-found the tree. He tapped his shotgun on the trunk and the upset sent the adults to a nearby perch. They watched

as he reached the nest—but didn’t know that Bendire had spotted several armed Apaches below. Thinking fast, he popped an egg into his mouth and raced back to camp. There he removed what he later described “as a rather uncomfortably large mouthful”—unbroken.



Bendire’s Thrasher
Toxostoma bendirei

Still more on the next page

Christopher Rustay Weighs In

Points to Consider About Names for Birds

Before we get to my thoughts about name changes, I'd like to ask folks to remember name changes the U.S. birding world has endured over the years. Does anyone remember the Rufous-sided Towhee or the Solitary Vireo? Let's also remember



that in the U.S. there are always at least two names for any bird: the common name, such as American Robin, and the scientific name for its species—*Turdus*—and another Latin descriptive—*migratorius*.

My point is that names, both common and scientific, were changed throughout the last century and into this one, and more changes will come. Names are changed for a variety of reasons, including taxonomic discoveries and historical research. Now a new justification is being cited: birding should be welcome and inclusive for many people. A recent example is the Long-tailed Duck, re-named because “squaw” was a derogatory term for Native American women.

Some early ornithologists practiced techniques that are no longer acceptable—Bendire's 8,000 eggs, for example—or taking multiple bird specimens for study. Now we have an alternative, namely DNA from a single member of a species. I have heard some arguments for continuing to take bird specimens, although most of the work today can be done if the birds are netted and a feather or two is taken for DNA.

However, in today's world, we tend to forget that taking eggs and specimens was exactly how ornithology was done by people who didn't have our good optics that allow identification in the field without disrupting a bird's normal behavior, including the all-important mating.

In my view, changing the name of a bird because the person for whom it was named did offensive things in the past is a newer, somewhat more nuanced, reasoning. Perhaps some people who are part of ornithological history should be honored because of their legacy regardless of what they did in their personal life. To date, I've heard of no one suggesting that the Jefferson Monument in Washington, D.C., should be torn down because Jefferson owned slaves.

But the definition of unacceptable behavior might change over time—slavery certainly has. If a bird was named after someone who, for example, paid for an expedition or self-mythologized with no other contributions to ornithology, I see no reason why a bird name couldn't be changed—or for that matter if the person exhibited egregious behavior towards any Americans.

Once it is decided that bird's name should be changed, my strong preference is for a name that will not cause confusion with the general public. I am not happy when bird names are split and one retains the old name while the other is given a new name (e.g., Winter Wren split into Winter and Pacific Wren). I am also not a fan of naming a bird on a characteristic that doesn't uniquely identify the species (e.g., Yellow-rumped Warbler, when there are currently at least four warblers that have yellow rumps).



Nashville Warbler

CNMAS Highlights 1990—2000

From the Burrowing Owl

1990

Pat Snider wrote an article about the Rare Bird Alert.

The annual meeting speaker was Steve Hoffman, who had completed a survey of birds in the Rio Grande Bosque.

1992

A group of birders including Sei Tokuda and Mary Hewitt found these species at Sandia Crest: Pine Grosbeak, Three-toed Woodpecker, Brown Rosy-Finch and a male Black Rosy-Finch, as well as Golden-crowned Kinglet, Brown Creeper and Red Crossbill.

1993

Jim Place was planning “a celebration of eagles” at Cochiti Lake for the chapter and Hawkwatch International.

1994

The Audubon Adventures program, led by Julie Goodding, helped teachers at 20 schools present information about nature to students in grades 3–6.

1995

President Meyers attended a National Audubon strategic planning conference where two goals were articulated: “Birds, appreciation and protection” and “long-term biodiversity, with an emphasis on birds.”

1996

The chapter supported the Audubon Wetlands Campaign, which in nine years had saved some 600,000 acres of wetland.

Hart Schwartz reported that the Christmas Count “tallied the highest number of species in the 34-year history of the Albuquerque count. Really remarkable were 13 kinds of sparrows.”

1997

Seventeen chapter members joined the 100 Count Day. They found 109 birds at Bitter Lake and Bosque del Apache.

1999

The annual chapter meeting featured a talk by David Henderson, director of the state Audubon office and Randall Davey Audubon Center, on “what is happening statewide on conservation.”

2000

Talking Talons Youth Leadership ambassadors Andrew Rominger and Laurie Wearne—plus Perry Peregrine and Bug Buster Bat—appeared at the November meeting.



Chapter Presidents

Donna Broudy, 1990

Tami Bulow, 1991–92

Jeffrey Myers, 1993–97

Beth Hurst-Waitz, 1998–2000

Christmas Count Leaders

Sandia Mountains

Tamie Bulow, 1992–95

Jonalyn Yancey, 1996–98

Kay Anderson, 1990

Bosque del Apache

Steve and Nancy Cox, 1990–99

Albuquerque

Hart Schwartz, 1992–97

Sevilla

Ross Teuber, 1992–94

Zuni Mountains

John Trochet, 1994

Bluewater Lake

Steve Ingraham, 1990–94

PUBLIC TOURS & LISTENING SESSION SAN ANTONIO OXBOW EXTENSION



TOUR 1

*Clean-up & Listening session

September 4th

9am - 11am

TOUR 2

Walking tour & listening session

September 15th

5:30pm- 6:30pm

TOUR 3

Virtual listening session

October 6th

5:30pm- 6:30pm

Where

San Antonio Oxbow- Extension (Poole Property)

5001 Namaste Rd NW, Albuquerque 87120

Join the Open Space Division for three separate public tours/listening sessions to explore the newly acquired San Antonio Oxbow Extension and provide feedback for your vision of the future of the property.

Please wear appropriate hiking/walking gear and bring a water bottle
*Tools and trash bags will be provided during clean-up. Please bring your own gloves

Short Survey will follow the tour



ONE
ALBUQUE
RQUE parks & recreation

For information www.cabq.gov/openspace

Contact Adryana Montoya

505-768-4203

almontoya@cabq.gov

CNMAS Directory and Contacts

Central New Mexico Audubon Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit chapter of the National Audubon Society, Inc.

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

Mailing address CNMAS, P.O. Box 30002, Albuquerque NM 87190-0002

The CNMAS membership form is on the web site:

<http://cnmas.newmexicoaudubon.org>.

Officers

President	Perrienne Houghton cnmaspresident@gmail.com
Vice President	vacant
Treasurer	Lee Hopwood
Recording Secretary.	Jamie Welles
Program Chair.	Kathy Carson
Membership	Marj Longenbaugh centralnmaudubon@peoplepc.com
Conservation Committee	Katrina Hucks and Shannon Caruso
Scholarships.	Lee Hopwood and Glenda Morling
Education	vacant
Bird-safe Building Coordinator.	vacant

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Beth Hurst-Waitz, Raymond VanBuskirk,
Karen Herzenberg, Sara Jayne Cole