



March 2024 Update

This Month's Features

- ✦ Farewell to the Burrowing Owl
 - ✦ Nurturing Hummingbirds
 - ✦ Bird Alliance Goes to the Roundhouse
 - ✦ Great Backyard Bird Count Includes local Thrashers
 - ✦ Poisons Threaten Habitat... Again
-

Thursday Birders

March 7th

Bernardo Wildlife Refuge

8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Leader: Robert Munro

March 14th

Rio Grande Nature Center State Park

8:30 a.m. – 11 a.m.

Leader: George Perry

March 21st

Tingley Beach Trails and Ponds

8:00 a.m. – 11 a.m.

Leader: Mary Raje

March 28

****SPRING BREAK NO WALK****

Calendar

March 21st

Bernalillo County Extension Office

1510 Menaul Blvd NW, Albuquerque, NM 87107 or
join us via Zoom

7 p.m.— 8:30 p.m.

Bird Alliance Monthly Program

Make your yard into a refuge for birds, insects and native plants. Come and learn about the ABQ Backyard Refuge Program from its director, Laurel Ladwig. Anyone with a home or business can help create a rich mosaic of new and vibrant habitats for birds and other wildlife in our community!

March 23rd

Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge

9:30 a.m. — 12:30 p.m.

Build Your Backyard Refuge Day!

March 29th

Open Space Birding!

1 p.m.— 3 p.m.

More Information to come! Check the website for more information.

Check <https://www.bacnm.org/Thursday-birders/>
for last minute changes and updates

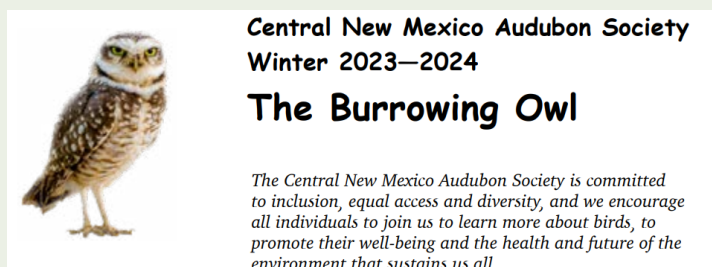
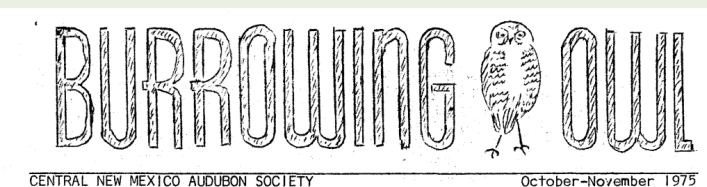
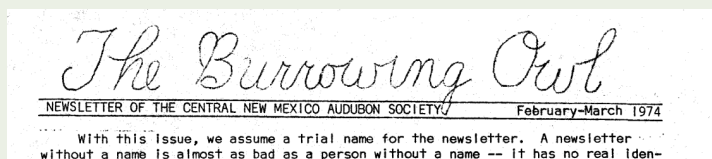
<https://www.bacnm.org/calendar/>

Farewell to the Burrowing Owl

From this month onwards, we will no longer see the quarterly Burrowing Owl. This publication has been a big part of our chapter's identity for the past 52 years! Our first newsletter was in 1971, with the earliest one titled the "Burrowing Owl" dating back to February - March 1974. This first Burrowing Owl points out that the name was chosen rather arbitrarily, named for the letterhead the editor was using at that time. The most recent editor, Melissa Howard, has worked patiently with our board since 2016, to produce informative and interesting articles full of both local and national bird and environmental news.

Melissa recently retired from the Burrowing Owl, and is looking forward to seeing monthly newsletters in the future. We would like to thank Melissa for her hard work and dedication to supporting our chapter. She will be missed.

Thank you to Joe Schelling for his help with this information. Thank you too, to Marj Longenbaugh, who has archived all past Burrowing Owls, available on our website: <https://www.bacnm.org/newsletter-archive/>



The Burrowing Owl newsletter titles have been through many iterations since the newsletter began. Burrowing Owls are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. However, they are endangered in many states due to loss of the habitat they share with burrowing mammals, such as prairie dogs that are being eliminated through pest control measures.



Audubon

Join the National Audubon Society Today

<https://act.audubon.org/onlineactions/DH8fxTkoC0qHjXF9fZCtRw2>



Nurturing Hummingbirds

By Jordan Graham

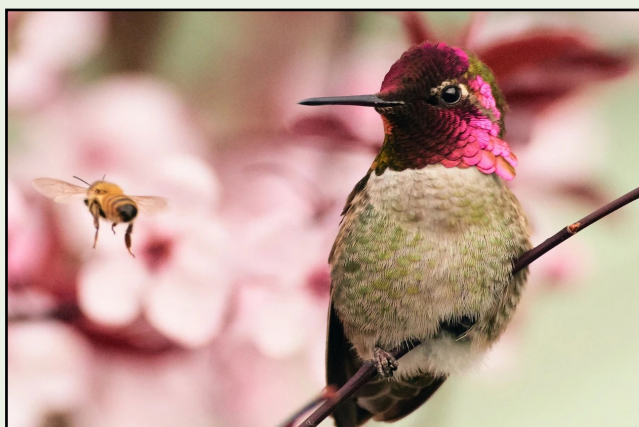


Photo By Alan Peterson/ Audubon Photography Awards

As the spring winds kick up a tempestuous fuss, there exists a creature so marvelously improbable that even the most imaginative minds of the universe would struggle to conceive its existence. Behold the hummingbird: a minuscule marvel suspended in mid-air, its wings beating at a frenetic pace that defies the laws of physics. Flitting and darting with the erratic grace of a drunken ballerina, Black-chinned and Broad-tailed hummers are the emissaries of spring migration in Central New Mexico. With some of the more zealous males getting a jump on things as early as mid February.

For those eager to host these airborne acrobats during their seasonal sojourn, a handful of simple strategies can transform your yard into a buzzing haven of activity.

Maintain Cleanliness

The key to keeping hummingbirds coming back is to keep their dining spots immaculate. Regular cleaning of feeders is essential. I personally rotate multiple feeders, ensuring that two are kept full while the others undergo thorough cleaning every two to three days. This practice prevents the growth of harmful mold and bacteria, safeguarding the birds' health and ensuring a pristine dining experience.

Optimal Nectar

Creating your own hummingbird nectar is not only cost-effective but also ensures that your visitors receive the best nutrition. Stick to a simple recipe: one part refined white sugar to four parts boiling water. **DO NOT USE** honey, raw sugar, or red food coloring, as these can be harmful to hummingbirds. I personally make a batch of nectar a quart at a time (1 cup sugar, 4 cups water) that can be stored in the fridge for up to two weeks. I will only fill feeders with a small amount of nectar, adjusting quantities as the season progresses and competition for resources increases.

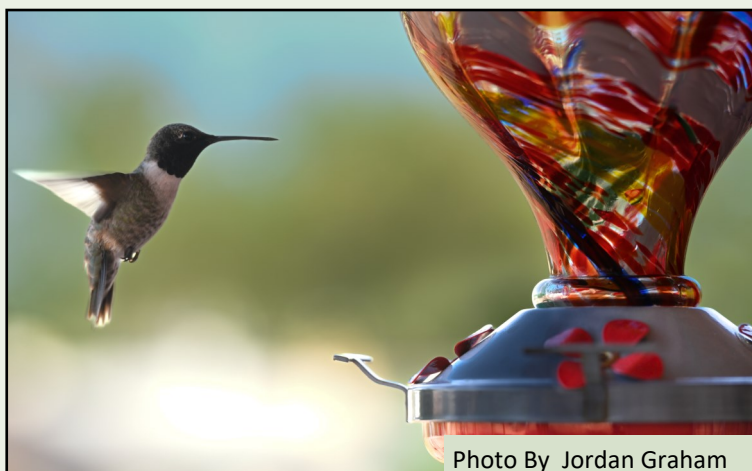


Photo By Jordan Graham

Strategic Placement

Do not be fooled by its diminutive stature, for within this tiny enigma lies the spirit of Huitzilopochtli. These pint-sized warriors fiercely defend their feeding territories. To minimize aggression and provide fair access to all, scatter multiple feeders throughout your yard, ensuring they are not within sight of each other. By offering distinct feeding zones, you create opportunities for more birds to feed peacefully.

Embrace Native Plants

Enhance your hummingbird habitat by planting native wildflowers. These vibrant blooms not only attract hummingbirds but also add splashes of color to your landscape. By cultivating native flora, you not only provide natural food sources but also contribute to the conservation efforts of programs like the Albuquerque Backyard Refuge Program. Here is a dash of native botanical charm for your gardening consideration.

Giant Hyssop
Licorice Mint
Golden Columbine
Great Red Indian-Paintbrush
Sacred Datura
Blanketflower

Native Four O'clock
Palmer Penstemon
Rocky Mountain Beardtongue
Texas Red Sage
Bluebell-of-Scotland
Cardinal Catchfly

Dotted Gayfeather
Narrow-Leaf Fireweed
Oswego-Tea
Scarlett Skyrocket
Showy Milkweed



Photo By Jordan Graham

Provide Nesting

Nesting sites are indeed crucial for hummingbirds, providing them with safe havens to embark on the journey known as parenthood. Here's where to look (or what to plant) for the most common hummingbirds you'll see around Central New Mexico.

Black-chinned Hummingbirds often nest in deciduous trees, shrubs, or cacti, typically selecting sites that provide good cover and protection. They may also utilize man-made structures such as porch lights, wind chimes, or other overhangs for nesting.

Broad-tailed Hummingbirds prefer coniferous or mixed forests for nesting. They often select sturdy horizontal branches in trees or shrubs for building their nests, typically at heights ranging from five to 20 feet above the ground.

Rufous Hummingbirds are known for their versatility in nesting sites. They can be found nesting in a variety of habitats, including forests, meadows, and even urban areas. They often choose well-concealed locations such as small branches, twigs, or shrubs for their nests, usually at mid-level heights.

Anna's Hummingbirds are adaptable and can nest in various environments, including urban and suburban areas. They frequently select trees, shrubs, or other vegetation for nesting, with preferences for locations offering good shelter and protection.

Calliope Hummingbirds prefer high-altitude habitats, such as mountain meadows and coniferous forests. They often choose conifer trees or shrubs for nesting, typically building their nests close to the trunks or branches for added stability and protection.

As the days grow longer and the air fills with the buzz of rapidly-beating wings, these efforts ensure that our aerial acrobats find sustenance and sanctuary in our yards. With a little care and foresight, we can continue to marvel at the grace and beauty of these remarkable creatures for seasons to come.

Editor's Note: Rufous and Calliope Hummingbirds mainly nest in the Pacific North West. According to Audubon and eBird data, their migration routes also tend to be more west through Arizona for spring, and then east through New Mexico for the fall. Anna's Hummingbirds are considered "strays" to central New Mexico, but are full time residents from Southern Arizona and up and down the Pacific West Coast.

<https://explorer.audubon.org/home?legend=collapse&layersPanel=expand>

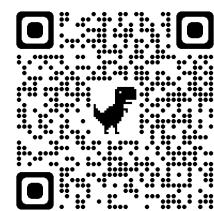
A Brief Postscript: Even a single terracotta pot garden can make a difference! Throw some seeds in one today. You can find native seeds free at the ABQ library! <https://abqlibrary.org/seeds>



Join or donate to

Bird Alliance of Central New Mexico

<https://www.bacnm.org/join-donate/>



Bird Alliance Goes to the Roundhouse

By Dana Loy

Members of the Climate and Conservation Committee of the Bird Alliance of Central New Mexico carpooled to Santa Fe on January 9, Environment Day, to meet with legislators to discuss birds and their habitats. This annual event provides an opportunity for organizations throughout the state to advocate for the environment. Hundreds of concerned New Mexicans attended the event.

Judy Calman, a registered lobbyist for Audubon Southwest, helped our group track down senators and representatives and request their support on important issues, such as the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund. Judy is Audubon Southwest's Policy Director and advises the Bird Alliance on advocacy issues.

Through the Climate and Conservation Committee, the Bird Alliance seeks to help strengthen laws and regulations related to the many threats facing birds. In early February, all Bird Alliance members received an online Action Alert for signatures in support of the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund.

The Action Alert was sent to Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham and New Mexico legislators. By traveling to the Roundhouse for Environment Day and meeting one-on-one with our senators and representatives, the Bird Alliance helped deliver that message in person.



Bird Alliance Climate and Conservation Committee members with Judy Calman at the Roundhouse. From Left: Dana Loy, Judy Calman, George Perry, and Connie Jo Baca.



Volunteer leaders and recorders receive instructions for their groups before the walk. Photo by Glenda Morling

Great Backyard Bird Count at the Botanic Gardens

A record 67 participants showed up on Saturday, February 17th, for this year's Great Backyard Bird Count at the Botanic Gardens. The count yielded 42 species, and the bird of the day was a Red-naped Sapsucker, observed by several groups.

eBird

<https://ebird.org/about/ebird-mobile/>



Great Backyard Bird Count Includes Local Thrashers

by Anita Holtz



Anita Holtz: Ojito Wilderness Area



Crissal Thrashers like to forage on the ground and are good at hiding. Spring is the easiest time to see them when the males sometimes sit up higher to sing. They have beautiful rufous undertail coverts and a strongly curved bill.



Curve-billed Thrashers are the most common in Albuquerque and most likely to be found in the neighborhoods.



Sage Thrashers have a straighter bill and frequent juniper bushes in the foothills. They have white tips on their outer tail feathers, visible when they fly.



Photo: Loi Nguyen/ Audubon Photog-

Did you know?

Hummingbirds' tiny feet are only good for perching. If they want to travel even a couple inches, they must fly! They can fly up, down, right, left, backwards, and even upside-down!

Poisons Threaten Habitat... Again

By Dana Loy

In 2023 the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) requested a permit to spray the pesticide carbaryl over the Rio Chama Watershed. Opposition from conservation groups stopped the plan, but now APHIS is back, with a proposal to continue the program and to target native grasshoppers in Rio Arriba County. Four insecticides are being considered for use over a very broad area.

The Bird Alliance of Central New Mexico, along with other environmental organizations, has submitted public comment calling for safeguards and conditions, and specifically asked that carbaryl not be used. Carbaryl destroys local insect pollinators, threatens other species such as the Mexican Spotted Owl and the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, and is a possible carcinogen to humans. Grasshoppers like sunny, dry places to lay their eggs, and many New Mexico lands are stripped and dry from overgrazing and drought. But while native grasshoppers do eat grass and other plants, they also are part of grassland ecosystems, supporting dozens of bird species and other wildlife. They are ecologically important and part of natural rangeland food webs, according to UNM PhD biologist David Lightfoot.

<https://www.nmwild.org/2024/01/31/biologist-dr-david-lightfoot-weighs-in-on-grasshoppers/>

The National Audubon Society, through its "Flight Plan," calls for a connected network of climate resilient lands and waters across the Americas. Because of increasing environmental challenges, especially climate change, New Mexico must expand its space for birds and wildlife by protecting and restoring public lands. Our state needs quality habitat, connected habitat, and climate-resilient habitat. Insecticidal aerial spraying of our native grasshoppers, especially with carbaryl, is not an option for New Mexico and would be a step in the wrong direction.



Southwestern Willow Flycatcher
Photo: USFWS



Participants new to birding receive some tips from Open Space wildlife biologist Jo Strange, on focusing and using binoculars before the walk. Photo by Glenda Morling

Open Space and Birding Alliance Partners on birding Event

Volunteers from Bird Alliance joined with Open Space staff to offer a birding walk or stationary birdwatching on Saturday, February 24th. The event attracted many community members, some of them new to birding. Participants commented on how helpful it is to bird alongside more experienced birders. The next Open Space, Bird Alliance birding event will be on March 29th beginning at 1p.m., location to be announced soon.

URBAN BIRD PROJECT

By Jason Kitting

Here's a look at one of our most abundant and familiar native species! The plain, yet handsome, little House Finch (*Haemorrhous mexicanus*). During the Urban Bird Project, a new bird species which can be found in urban areas in central New Mexico will be introduced every one or two weeks on Mondays. Special thanks to Brandt Magic for providing us with both of these great pictures.



Photo Brandt Magic

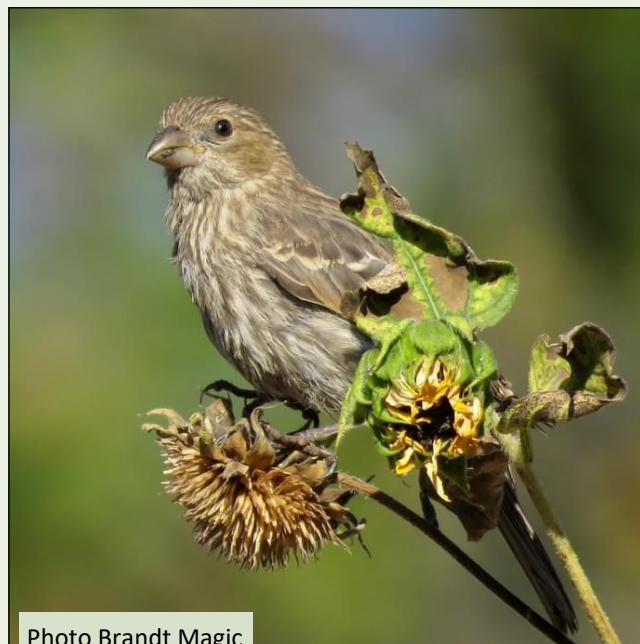
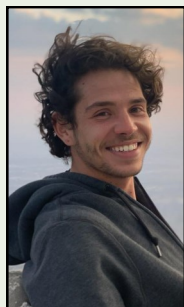


Photo Brandt Magic

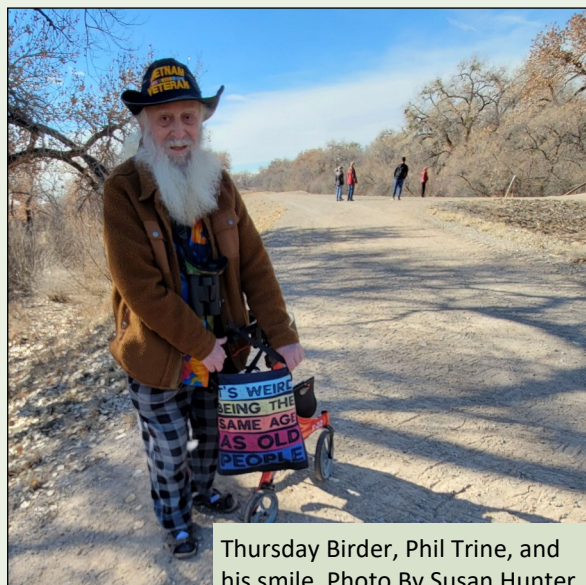
House Finches (HOFIs for short) are a small, adaptive finch species found across most of North America. Males have red heads, breasts, and rumps (pink, orange, yellow, and mixed are also seen), while females and juveniles are completely gray and streaky. HOFIs can be found in a variety of forested, shrubby, and urban environments and are common visitors to bird feeders and bird baths. These birds are part of the American Rosefinch complex, which also includes the Cassin's Finch and Purple Finch. All three species can look very similar to each other, but some of the fieldmarks unique to HOFIs include a down curved beak and thick, "messy" streaking along the flanks.

HOFIs are native to much of the west coast and the southwestern United States, but are found all the way to the east coast. Back in the 1940s, these birds were common pets (called Hollywood Finches) and a particular pet store in New York released a group of these birds on Long Island. They immediately started breeding and expanding their range, and within 50 years, they were found across most of the eastern US and parts of Canada. Today, thanks to expanding urban areas, the native western birds, and the introduced eastern birds, have expanded enough to create an almost continent wide population.



Jason Kitting is our board social media expert. He has recently begun the Urban Bird Project, where he is posting information and photos about birds commonly found in yards, in and around Albuquerque. These postings can be found on the Bird Alliance Facebook page, and will soon be available on our bacnm.org website.

Members' Photos of the Month



Thursday Birder, Phil Trine, and his smile. Photo By Susan Hunter



Spotted Towhee
Photo By Susan Spalding

We would love to show off your bird photos!

For the "April Update" we want to see your pictures of Say's Phoebes, Rock Wrens, Red-faced Warblers, Gray Flycatchers OR a bird/ BACNM community photo you have taken that you would love to share.

Email your photos to Jordan Graham- thisnomadiclife@gmail.com

PLEASE PUT "BACNM April PHOTO - 'YOUR NAME'" as the header/ subject!

Fun Fact: According to the USFW, about 40% of the global population of Red-faced Warblers pass through New Mexico in April

*not all pictures can be posted. I might have to do some minor cropping for formatting and layout. By sending us your pictures you give Bird Alliance of Central New Mexico permission to use said photos, with credit, in their newsletters and on their website.

Bird Alliance Needs Your Help!



It takes a volunteer army to run our chapter and keep the community engaged.

We need volunteers to:

- ✦ participate in conservation efforts
- ✦ guide bird walks
- ✦ help with outreach and education
- ✦ join fundraising events
- ✦ complete local and national bird counts
- ✦ assist with our public communication and messaging
- ✦ advocate and engage in urgent local climate and conservation issues

If you would like to contribute to our mission to protect and enjoy birds

[Contact Us](#)