

CENTRAL New Mexico AUDUBON SOCIETY

December 2023 Update

This Month's Features



- ABQ Christmas Bird Count
- Central New Mexico's Fall Migration
- Photos of the Month
- What is this Bird?

Thursday Birders

December 7th

Bosque del Apache NWR- 7:50am to 3:00pm

Carpooling from South Valley Railrunner Station. Bring lunch!

Email thursdaybirders@gmail.com to reserve your spot TODAY

December 14th

Rio Grande Nature Center - 8:55AM to 12:00PM

December 21st

HOLIDAY SEASON - NO BIRD WALK

December 28th

HOLIDAY SEASON - NO BIRD WALK!

BE SURE TO CHECK THE WEBSITE AS SCHEDULES CAN CHANGE

<http://cnmas.newmexicoaudubon.org/trips/thursday-birders/>

Calendar

Dec 13th, 2023

6:00PM- 8:00PM

377 Brewery 2027 Yale Blvd SE

Join us for some fun at our "Chapter Year-End Get-Together!"

Let's celebrate another year of enjoying amazing birds and working with our friends to protect them!

You can purchase dinner or just a beverage from the delicious menu and enjoy it in our reserved private gathering space. We'll mix and mingle to talk about birds, the weather, good shoes, books, our kids and grandkids, and life in general. Family and friends are welcome.

Dec 17th 2023

Christmas Bird Count

More Details are on the next page!

2023 Albuquerque Christmas Bird Count

Most of you are probably familiar with the Christmas Bird Count (CBC), an annual tradition for over 120 years. If you are not familiar with the CBC, there is a great introduction here:

<https://www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count>. For the count this year, the date will be Sunday, December 17, 2023. We will be following similar procedures as to those used in recent years:



1. There will be an informal gathering at the end of the day for those interested at Hops Brewery (7222 4th St NW, Los Ranchos) at 5:30pm; final CBC results will be e-mailed to all participants.
2. I prefer that all counts be submitted to the compiler via eBird (<https://ebird.org/home>) checklist(s) by sharing them with the "official" Albuquerque CBC eBird account (eBird username ABQCBC). Complete counts with no X's and time and distance are preferred. If you are birding as a group, one person should keep the eBird checklist and then share that with others in the group and with ABQCBC. For tips on using eBird on a Christmas count, see this link: [eBirding on Christmas Bird Counts - eBird](#).
3. If you do not use eBird (or prefer not to), please report your results to me on the Albuquerque Christmas Bird Count Tally Sheet. You can send the sheet (or scan the results) and e-mail them to me or snail mail them to the address at the bottom of the Sheet.
4. Participants will be expected to go out singly or in very small, appropriately socially-distanced groups and to follow all State health and safety protocols in effect on the day of the count.
5. Generally, participants will be able to go wherever they please within the CBC count circle, though advance coordination with the compiler on your location is highly advised. In particular, well-known birding "hotspots" are going to be covered, so finding those secret, known-only-to-you locations would be a great idea, or even counting at your own house.
6. Details and/or photographs of rare, unusual, or seldom-counted species should be reported to the compiler, as always; this can be done directly in the eBird checklist or via a rare/unusual bird reporting form.
7. If you use Merlin to identify bird sounds and you find something unusual, please confirm the identity by sight; rare or unusual species whose identification is listed as "identified by Merlin" only will not be accepted.

If you have questions or want to participate, please don't hesitate to contact me. In the meantime, good birding!

Dave Mehlman, Albuquerque CBC Compiler
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Central New Mexico's Fall Migration

By Jordan Graham



As the fall 2023 migration season concludes, it's always fun to look at the data and why central New Mexico plays a pivotal role in birds' yearly journeys.

This region, marked by the diverse landscapes of the Rio Grande and the rugged peaks of the Sandia Mountains, attracts millions of birds each year. The Audubon Society says that New Mexico has one of the "highest species lists" in the nation. From the restorative havens of the Rio Grande wetlands to the nesting opportunities in the mountain crevices, every aspect of central New Mexico's geography plays a vital role. Let's briefly explore why this area is pivotal to avian migration, and the connection between its habitats and the survival of numerous migratory and native species.



A key feature of central New Mexico is the Rio Grande River. The Rio Grande, which starts in the San Juan Mountains of Southern Colorado, is part of the Rio Grande Flyway. The Rio Grande Flyway is a major migratory corridor extending from far northern reaches of the continent all the way to Mexico. It's used by birds not only for navigation but to rest and refuel on the various plants, insects, and animals that also rely on the river. The Rio Grande wetland ecosystem is rich in resources that provide food and shelter for a large range of birds, including waterfowl, shorebirds, songbirds, and raptors. At the Rio Grande Nature Center in Albuquerque almost 50,000 birds pass through with 176 unique species reported during this year's fall migration. There were even confirmed sightings of a Black-throated Blue Warbler and a Lewis's Woodpecker!

The grasslands and farmlands that sprawl along the Rio Grande quickly become deserts. These play host to numerous species of sparrows, wrens, meadowlarks, raptors, and the infamous Roadrunner. In its arid landscapes, birds ingeniously use the sharp thorns of cacti for protection, crafting their nests amidst their prickly defenses to ward off potential predators. Alternatively, the vast open areas provide an advantageous vantage point, allowing them to easily spot prey, showcasing the adaptability and resourcefulness of those that pass through and live in these areas. Petroglyph National Monument saw 57 unique species and further inland, away from the Rio Grande, the Salinas Pueblo Mission and Manzano Area saw 93 unique species. With confirmed sightings of a Black-throated Gray Warbler at the Petroglyphs.



story continues on next page

Fall Migration Cont.



Sandia Mountains in Rio Rancho, New Mexico in the desert. By Tobyw87 Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=129607060>

In the Sandias and Rocky Mountains, crucial factors define the mountains' role in the yearly migration. Hawks and eagles utilize thermals and updrafts, enabling them to cover vast distances with remarkable efficiency. Moreover, the dense mountain forests offer coveted nesting havens for various bird species, concealed within tree hollows, rocky crevices, and lush vegetation. The mountain meadows and thickets are abundant with essential sustenance, including berries and nectar, catering to high-energy birds such as hummingbirds and finches. The Cibola National Forest area saw 129 unique species with hotspots like Cienega Picnic Area reporting 57 unique species and Sandia Crest reporting 41 unique species with confirmed sightings of Acorn Woodpeckers and Lewis's Woodpeckers around the picnic area.

Overall, Bernalillo and Torrance County had over 200,000 reported bird sightings and 263 unique, identifiable species pass through from September 1st to October 31st, with the peak migration day (based on confirmed visual observations), being October 11th, where over 7,000 birds and 110 unique species were reported flying through! Last and most importantly, our Thursday Birding group saw well over 1,000 birds and 105 unique species, including a Virginia's Warbler 9/7/23 at the Rio Grande Nature Center, and a Townsend's Solitaire 10/26 at Cibola National Forest.

Central New Mexico's role in bird migration is not just a natural wonder but a call to action. As we witness the awe-inspiring journeys of migratory birds, it becomes apparent that our collective efforts are needed to preserve these vital habitats. Engaging in conservation initiatives, like those led and/ or sponsored by CNMAS (now the Bird Alliance of Central New Mexico), is not merely an environmental choice but a commitment to the intricate balance of ecosystems and the survival of diverse avian species. By participating in preservation projects and supporting organizations dedicated to these causes, we contribute to the ongoing story of migration, ensuring that central New Mexico remains a sanctuary for birds and a testament to the coexistence of nature and humanity.

Follow the link to see how you can get involved today. <https://cnmas.newmexicoaudubon.org/conservation/>.

If you have any questions on how I got and interpreted data, please reach out to me at thisnomadiclife@gmail.com. All data is from 9/1/23 to 10/31/23.

eBird Basic Dataset. Version: EBD_relOct-2023. Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York. Oct 2023.

Important Links



Join the NAS today



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



Donate to
BACNM Today

Members' Photos of the Month



← Angela Hawthorne caught a glimpse of this Evening Grosbeak at her feeder near Los Poblanos Open Space.

The Evening Grosbeak's population is in rapid decline. Angela, who's part of the Backyard Refuge program, has a yard that these big finches seem to enjoy.

Tis the season!

Christina Ortega grabbed a shot of just a few of the 100s of Sandhill Cranes out at Los Poblanos →



George Perry got up close and personal with this beautiful female Red Crossbill ↑



← Angela Hawthorne had a surprise guest, a Western Screech-Owl, waiting for her, outside of her porch.

I will generally try to not use the same person more than once a month but Angela's yard is perfectly set up to attract a wide range of birds.

If you have not considered joining the Backyard Refuge Program, please do!

To join the program reach out to Laurel Ladwig from Friends of Valle de Oro National Refuge.

We would love to show off your bird photos!

For the "January Update" we want to see your pictures of Thick-billed Longspurs, Sagebrush Sparrows, Chihuahuan Raven OR any rare/ stray birds like the Yellow-crowned Night-Heron that showed up at Tingley Beach.

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

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

What is this bird?

Are you new to birding? Here are two Bluebirds to look out for this winter in our region and a couple details that will help you tell your little feathered friends apart.

This month we're looking at the
Western Bluebird versus Mountain Bluebird



Photo: Morris Finkelstein/Audubon Photography Awards

Western Bluebird

- Western Bluebirds are medium-sized birds with blue plumage, but their coloring is different from the Mountain Bluebird.
- Males have a bright blue throat and chest, contrasting with a rusty-orange belly.
- Females are more subdued, with grayish-blue tones and a hint of orange on the breast.



Photo: Larry Lamsa/Flickr (CC-BY-2.0)

Mountain Bluebird

- Mountain Bluebirds are medium-sized thrush-like birds with striking blue plumage.
- Males are bright blue, while females are more subdued with grayish-blue tones.
- They may have a pale blue throat and chest.



Did you know?

Black-capped Chickadees weigh less than half an ounce and can maintain a body temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit - even when the air is 0 degrees!

<https://www.fws.gov/story/how-do-birds-keep-warm-winter>