



Bird Alliance

Central New Mexico

January 2024 Update



This Month's Features

- Candelaria Nature Preserve Tour and Upcoming Bird Walk
- Bob's Bosque and Birds
- ABQ Backyard Refuge Support Project Update
- Winter Back Yard Planning
- BACNM and Audubon Southwest Meeting
- The Rosy-Finch Project

As many of you are aware, we recently announced our name change to Bird Alliance of Central New Mexico. We are very excited to now share our new logo with you all too!

We have been working on this logo over the last few weeks with Guerrilla Graphix in Albuquerque and are very pleased with this final choice. We wanted a design that is representative of our region and felt the Curve-billed Thrasher and cholla are both indicative of Central New Mexico and a beautiful choice.

For more information on our name change, as well as on the importance of our continued association with the National Audubon Society, please see our website under the Home page. Thank you from the Board of Directors of the Bird Alliance of Central New Mexico

Thursday Birders

January 4th

Tingley Beach Trails and Ponds @8:45am

January 11th

Oso Grande Park and Bear Canyon Arroyo @9am

January 18th

Open Space Visitor Center @ 9am

January 25th

Los Poblanos Open Space and Fields @ 9am

Please Check

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

For last minute changes and updates

Candelaria Nature Preserve Tour and Upcoming Bird Walk

By Glenda Morling

Robert Munro, Laura Banks and myself, were recently treated to a tour of the newly developed Candelaria Nature Preserve to discuss partnering on some introduction to birding walks for community members. We walked the site and learned more about the plans for the Preserve, as well as planning a walk with Education Coordinator, Ellie Grisham, and Open Space biologist, Jo Strange.

Our first collaborative walks will be on January 5th and 6th. Please see details under Upcoming Events. We have several Thursday Birders and other chapter members who have volunteered to mentor new birders around the site on the 5th and 6th. Thank you to all of you who have volunteered to help! If readers know of any community members who are new to birding who would like to attend, please share the information about the walk with them. Since the tour, we carried out a Christmas Bird Count at this site and recorded 28 species in our two hour walk.

We are planning for several more collaborative birding walks for beginners and more experienced birders in 2024. We are excited about this new partnership, which helps us meet goals to increase our educational outreach to new birders and to encourage more local participation in birding and interest in environmental issues.

Wing in the New Year

📍 Candelaria Nature Preserve

Friday 5 January 2PM - 4PM	Saturday 6 January 8AM - 10AM
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Join us for a birding bio blitz cohosted by the Bird Alliance of Central New Mexico. Perfect for anyone new to birding, our tour will include an introduction to basics including binoculars, field guides, and identification. Please download the eBird app on your phone, and we will provide the rest.

To register for the tour, scan this QR Code with your smartphone to visit play.cabq.gov

Logos: Bird Alliance Central New Mexico, ONE ALBUQUERQUE parks & recreation, CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE OPEN SPACE PARKS AND RECREATION

Open Space Visitor Center
6500 Coors Blvd. NW
Primary Contact: Ellie Grisham
(505) 768 - 4955
egrisham@cabq.gov

Calendar

January 6th, 2024

10am - Noon

Backyard Habitat Chat - Winter Habitat Ideas

Location: Backyard Refuge Habitat Garden at the Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center

Talk with ABQ Backyard Refuge Program staff and volunteers, including members of the Bird Alliance of Central New Mexico Backyard Refuge support team, and learn about supporting wildlife in winter!

January 18th, 2024

7:00 pm

Bird Alliance Monthly Educational Program

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is the oldest-running citizen science project to study birds in North America. Dr. Mehlman will demonstrate how the project has been sustained over the years, and how count results indicate changes in our species diversity. Dr. Mehlman is an Environmental Consultant who lives in Albuquerque and is the former Director of Migratory Programs for The Nature Conservancy.

Bob's Bosque and Birds

By Bob Wilcox

December 7th is still a 9/11 idea to those of us over 60 years old, but on this year we were thinking mild thoughts of decurves and retrices instead, and better off for it. Thursday birders headed to the Bosque del Apache for a circuit of their wonderful wetlands.

On the way to the Marsh Boardwalk, we spotted a pair of Sharp-shinned Hawks near the road and had good views of Northern Pintails, Shovelers, Buffleheads, and Gadwalls. The Marsh gave us a few lovely treats. There are no Least Bitterns this time of year, but don't forget to look for them in Spring and Summer here. The first gift was a lone American Avocet walking about not very far from our vantage point. Several dozen Long-billed Dowitchers sewed their way along the bars and edges and were joined by 2 Least Sandpipers. We had excellent views of Hooded Mergansers.

A family of Javelinas crossed our path on the south end of the loop. Our next quarry was the famous Long-tailed Duck at Audio 9. Audio 9 is simply a location indicated by sign that corresponds to an audio tour provided by the refuge staff. And when we got there, we were disappointed to find that the only diving ducks were a few Buffleheads in the distance. However, a few minutes of waiting produced a different whitish spot a 100 yds away. This bird worked its way towards us until it was only 30 yds away and definitely matched our field guides for female Long-tailed Duck. The camera brigade got confirmatory photos. Around the corner we found several Lesser Scaups.

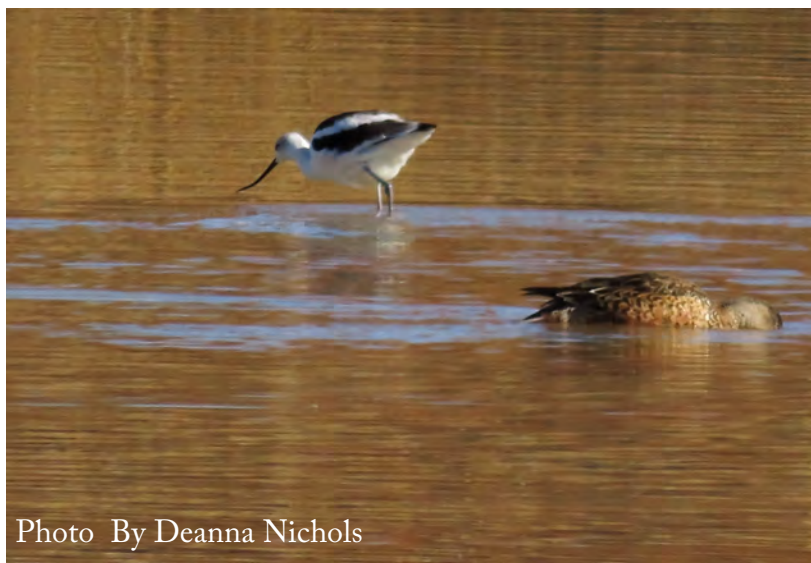


Photo By Deanna Nichols

We worked our way around the loop, until the Coyote Deck on the north loop yielded the classic pile-up of Cranes and Snow Geese. There were a thousand Sandhill Cranes and 2-3 thousand Snow Geese and Ross's Geese crowded together. Every imaginable dabbling duck was feeding between and under them. Quite a spectacular sight. After 15 minutes of that amazing poetry of plenty, we continued around the loop searching for White-tailed Kites seen in the area. No luck. But we did find a Ferruginous Hawk perched on the eagle's snag out from the Flight Deck. I love finding Ferruginous Hawks, so this capped the day nicely for me.

If you visit the Bosque on your own this next month, be sure to study the common ducks before you go, so you can ID them from behind and in the distance

Photo By Phil Trine



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



Birders, inexperienced or experienced, can play a vital role in scientific research and conservation efforts by contributing their observations to eBird from Cornell. Every sighting matters, and your data can help researchers understand and protect bird populations globally. Watch how your growing life list can be a powerful tool for conservation and study:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VKh9L6hjdIM>

ABQ Backyard Refuge Support Project Update



Our team of volunteers, Brian Anderson, Gail Kaufman, Angela Hawthorne, Pete Chandler and Glenda Morling have been busy preparing to mentor interested individuals, chapter members and community members to get their yards certified in 2024.

We are learning how to help others by getting our own yards certified!

Our goal is to help the ABQ Backyard Refuge Program add at least 100 more certified yards during 2024, hopefully many of them from our Bird Alliance membership and from our large Thursday Birder group.

If you have not made your yard into a certified refuge for wildlife, please do consider doing this: it is a lot easier than you think to become certified and you will not only be protecting wildlife and incorporating sustainable native plants in your own yard, you will be encouraging your neighbors to learn more about wildlife refuges and how to protect birds and other wildlife in our community.

We are working very closely on this project with Laurel Ladwig, who was part of the team that created and runs the ABQ Backyard Refuge Program, as well backyard refuge neighborhood ambassadors, master gardener and master naturalist volunteers. We will be kicking 2024 off with an event for the public at Valle de Oro on the morning of January 6th. Come along and learn more about native planting, winter gardening and about how to get your yard (back or front), certified as a Backyard Refuge. We plan to have several more events during the year, including neighborhood informational mornings, plant sharing and visits to certified yards.

Why did we choose to pursue this project?

The United States and Canada have lost 3 billion breeding birds since 1970, many of them common birds we see in our backyards, including juncos, finches and sparrows. The latest news we have is that two-thirds of North American bird species are at risk of extinction from climate change. Research shows that urbanization is not only a cause but also an effect of climate change. Many Bird Alliance of Central New Mexico (BACNM) members and much of the wider New Mexico population live in urban areas.

The National Audubon Society (NAS) recently created a five-year strategic (Flight) plan with a conservation goal of creating 300 million acres of quality, connected, and climate-resilient bird habitat - three times the size of New Mexico! NAS believes that building a community of bird lovers will help ensure this conservation goal can be achieved.

BACNM supports the NAS plan and we see the urgency of taking action to increase the amount of native habitat for birds in urban, suburban and rural communities in our region. We believe that starting in our own backyards is an achievable goal, which will make a real difference to the amount of acreage preserved for birds and wildlife, and that working as a community of bird lovers, with over 1800 members, will enhance the success of this plan.

If you are interested in making your yard more bird and wildlife friendly, or you would like to volunteer with our team, please contact Glenda, glendamorling@gmail.com



Donate to
BACNM Today

<https://donorbox.org/donate-to-central-new-mexico-audubon-society-1>



Winter Back Yard Planning

By Gail Kaufman



Threeleaf Sumac, Flacitas

Albuquerque and surrounding areas have spectacular plant diversity. Open spaces, parks, and even medians and parking lots can provide inspiration for your refuge project. In winter, it is sometimes easier to spot which vegetation birds and other wildlife are utilizing. Many shrubs, grasses, and trees are colorful and interesting all year long. Apps like iNaturalist or Plantnet can help to identify plants to add to your landscape for the next winter season. Leaving leaf litter, tall grasses, and flower seed heads will provide shelter and food for beneficial insects and wildlife. Don't forget to water non-xeric trees and shrubs at least once a month throughout the winter.

Consider designing a native plant container, small in ground planter, or larger project this month. A soil test can help to ensure plant selections that thrive. Check sunlight and shade in your outdoor space and note any changes as the days start to lengthen. Consider these variations when selecting planting locations. Providing habitat improvements on any level will benefit birds, insects, and expand native plant populations to help buffer the effects of climate change.

Resources

- Plants for Natural Gardens by Judith Phillips
- Landscaping with Native Plants of the Southwest by George O. Miller
- Wild Plants of the Pueblo Province by William W. Dunmire and Gail D. Tierney

Winter is a great time to join in the ABQ Backyard Refuge Program! Your yard may qualify right now at any one of the 3 levels. The basic level is Contributing Habitat, which requires just two food sources (your feeders count as one!) and two "Best Practices" (see links below). The next 2 levels are Connecting and Core Habitats that have a few additional requirements including water sources (important all year round), shelter, and native plants. While feeders with sunflower seeds, peanut butter covered seeds, suet, and seed and nut blocks are important for birds in winter, native plants are the best food source. Check your existing trees, shrubs and other perennials to compare to the program's Official Plant List and Plant List Data Base. Of course, non-native plants can provide shelter and food as well.



Beargrass (Lily family), Placitas

- <https://friendsofvalledeoro.org/abq-backyard-refuge/>
- <https://friendsofvalledeoro.org/abq-backyard-refuge-plant-list/>
- <https://www.inaturalist.org/guides/13425>
- <https://plants.usda.gov/home>
- <https://aces.nmsu.edu/ces/yard/2005/110505.html>
- <https://aces.nmsu.edu/ces/yard/1996/090996.html>
- <https://abqmastergardeners.org/resources/soiltesting>

BACNM and Audubon Southwest Meeting

Bird Alliance of Central New Mexico and Audubon Southwest met together in early December at the Audubon SW offices in Albuquerque, to have coffee and discuss our shared interests and goals. This was a very enjoyable and productive meeting: we now plan to get together quarterly to update each other on current initiatives and urgent issues impacting our state and region, so we can share important information with our chapter members. Following the meeting, Jon Hayes, Vice President of the National Audubon Society and Executive Director of Audubon SW said that he hoped "we look back on this as the start of a new era of partnership and collaboration". We all echo Jon's hopes.



Paul Tashjian, Director of Freshwater Conservation and Tucker Davidson, Senior Water Associate, Audubon SW share updates on important water initiatives they are working on in our state. Also pictured, Dana Loy, Bird Alliance of Central New Mexico board member and Climate and Conservation Committee (CCC) Chair, and Pete Chandler, CCC member and ABQ Backyard Refuge Project Support team volunteer.

The Rosy-Finch Project

By Jason Kitting

This winter, the Sandia Mountain Rosy-Finch Project will celebrate 20 years of research! This is now one of the longest run Rosy-Finch research projects. Rio Grande Bird Research (RGBR) has banded over 3,000 Rosy-Finches of all three North American species. In that time, RGBR has looked at answering questions like how often an individual bird returns to the Sandia Mountains throughout its lifetime, what drives Rosy-Finch movement in winter, where do the birds wintering in New Mexico go to breed, where do Rosy-Finches roost at night, and many others. For more detailed information on this research project, follow this link to watch a webinar presented by Jason Kitting for the Western Bird Banding Association.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yuw1AsDFk0w>



If you are interested in viewing the Rosy-Finch flock, the feeder that the birds visit is located at the south end of the lower parking lot of the Sandia Crest House. Be prepared to wait several hours as the flock may only visit every few hours. The feeder is visible from the parking lot and is filled by RGBR volunteers several times a week from November through April. Please remember to only put shelled or "no mess" seed in the feeder to prevent the introduction of invasive plant species. Also remember that the Sandia Crest House is still closed and will be for the foreseeable future.

RGBR bands on Sundays from 7am-noon, January through March

<https://cnmas.newmexicoaudubon.org/conservation/the-rosy-finch-project/>



Thursday Birder Holiday Get-together

On Thursday, December 14th, Thursday Birders rounded off a great year of birding with a Holiday Get-together in the Education Building at the Rio Grande Nature Center (RGNC). The plan was to have a guided birding walk behind the Center first, but there was heavy snow and rain during the night and early morning, so we gathered in the indoor space, relaxed, chatted and enjoyed the many homemade treats shared by our members. We look forward to more successful birding together in 2024!

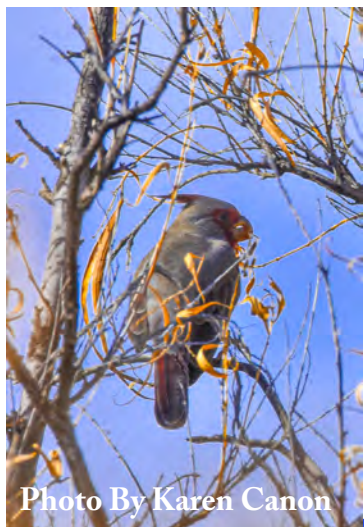


Members' Photos of the Month



Photos By Susan Hunter

Chihuahuan Ravens in Flight Found on Cements Road southwest of Moriarty. I like these photos because they show how these ravens prefer to fly together, instead of being somewhat solitary in nature like Common Ravens. There actually were five or six in the group. - Susan Hunter



Pyrrhuloxia in Tree

We would love to show off your bird photos!

For the "February Update" we want to see your pictures of Ferruginous Hawks OR a bird photo you have recently taken that you would love to share.

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

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

Fun fact about Ferruginous Hawks, 14% of the global population pass through New Mexico in January.

*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 the Central New Mexico Audubon Society permission to use said photos with credit in their newsletters and on their website.

BACNM End of Year Celebration

We had a great turn-out for our end of year celebration at Brewery 377, despite the stormy weather. We will be adding more 'Birds and Beers' events throughout 2024. We hope to see you there!!



 **Audubon**
Join the NAS today



What is this bird?

Are you new to birding? Here are two Goldfinches 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
American Goldfinch versus Lesser Goldfinch



Photo: Brian Kushner (Audubon)

American Goldfinch

- Widespread across North America and can be found in a variety of habitats, including fields, meadows, and gardens.
- Have a slender, pointed bill
- Adults have bright yellow plumage with black wings, white wing bars and a black cap on the head, which is more prominent in males during the breeding season.
- Their song is a cheerful series of warbles and twitters.



Photo: Lou Orr/Great Backyard Bird Count (Audubon)

Lesser Goldfinch

- Primarily found in the western part of North America, from the western United States down to Mexico.
- Bill is shorter and slightly more conical
- Exhibit more variability in plumage. Adult males may have bright yellow plumage, but some can have greenish backs, and others may lack the black cap.
- Almost a 1/2in shorter than the American Goldfinch
- They have a varied song with musical notes and trills.



Did you know?

The Ptarmigan is unique among birds for molting into snow-white plumes for half the year.

<https://www.audubon.org/news/ptarmigan-may-be-tops-adapting-winter-weather#:~:text=The%20ptarmigan%20is%20unique%20among,northern%20climes%20and%20high%20elevations.>