



# THE RAVENS

## Newsletter

Southwestern New Mexico Audubon Society  
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*Horned lizard.*

### Friday, APRIL 3rd Program

#### **THE MEN BEHIND THE BIRDS**

Of the 300+ birds of Grant County, a good number bear somebody's name.

Who are these people who've lent their names to everything from sparrows to sandpipers, kingbirds to woodpeckers? From Baird to Townsend, from Cassin to Wilson, we'll take a tour through the naturalists, explorers, and dilettantes who have achieved a kind of immortality.

Brian Dolton will present this program. Brian is originally from England but has been a Silver City resident for eleven years. He does not have any birds named after him. Program begins at 7 pm, at WNMU's Harlan Hall. Light refreshments follow.



*Bendire has his own personal Thrasher —  
but who was Bendire?*

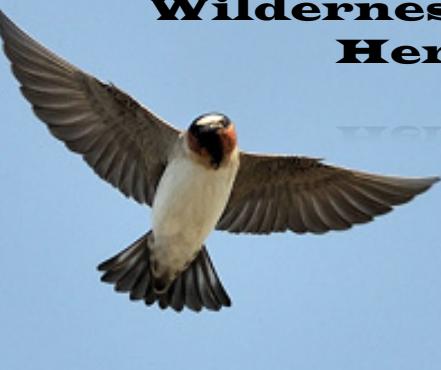
Check our website for more  
Newsletters and Activities  
[swnmaudubon.org](http://swnmaudubon.org)

Emily Pollom will be presenting on the natural history, conservation concerns, and citizen science efforts of horned lizards. A charismatic icon of the American Southwest, these lizards actually range from Canada throughout Mexico. They are highly adapted for survival in a variety of environments but face threats such as invasive ants, insecticide use, and habitat loss. Please join us to learn about what might be America's favorite lizard and what we can do to support them!

Emily grew up in Kentucky but since graduating with a degree in Conservation Biology in 2009, has traveled through the US contributing to different research projects ranging from Roseate Tern restoration in New England to Bald Eagle conservation in Arizona. She now calls Silver City her home and is enjoying delving into the ecology and conservation needs of New Mexico's flora and fauna.

Program begins at 7 pm at Harlan Hall, WNMU.

## Wilderness Starts Here!



SWNM Audubon's Cliff Swallow (CLSW) monitoring project on the Western New Mexico University campus is documenting the

breeding success of these birds. For the past two years, trained volunteers have observed and recorded the breeding biology of returning Cliff Swallows to estimate the number of young fledged from nests located on campus buildings.

Cliff Swallows begin to arrive in early April. These colonial birds migrate in large groups, taking just a couple of weeks before several hundred arrive after their arduous journey from various countries in South America. Over the next three months, the swallows industriously build their artistic nests from little mud balls gathered from small muddy pools, usually from around leaking irrigation spigots or remaining puddles from late winter rains. Eggs are laid, incubated, and young are fed insects until mature enough to leave the nest and forage on their own.

The monitoring team usually works in pairs and adopts a particular building or area to focus their weekly observations. Volunteer Susan Slade declared, "It was so interesting to see the changes each time I visited the nests! These birds are amazing!" No experience is necessary, and we embrace an 'on the job' training approach. A new volunteer will team up with an experienced observer to ensure consistent data. Current team volunteers are: Rachelle Bergman, Lisa Fields, Carol Ann Fugagli, Elroy Limmer, Ken Sexton, Susan Slade, Patricia Taber. If you would like to join the CLSW monitoring team or have questions, please contact Carol Ann Fugagli at: [cfugagli@gmail.com](mailto:cfugagli@gmail.com)

The CLSW monitoring team launched a 5-year campaign called 'Wilderness Starts Here' referring to the fact that wilderness begins right outside our doorstep whether it's our home or a building on campus. Stay tuned for our outreach in our community about the benefits of swallows! These birds eat many mosquitoes and other small insects as well as gifting us with stunning aerial acrobatics and graceful beauty. We view their presence as welcome, and a true blessing. Through education and nest monitoring, we believe attitudes can become positive, and these beautiful, small, feathered companions will continue to return.

## 2019 Annual Silver City Christmas Bird Count Results

Thanks to everyone who participated in the Silver City Christmas Bird Count, which took place on December 14. The day had mild temperatures and sunshine.

The CBC encompasses a 7.5 mile radius from the center of Silver City. There are 11 routes, each of which has 2 to 4 participants who drive and walk their route and record the number of individuals and bird species seen.

A special thanks goes to John Gorey who took the lead in the count this year by helping me sign up the participants for their routes and doing the detailed job of compiling the results for the report to Audubon. Great work John. His report totals are included here.

Another special thanks go to Mary Margaret Soulé who rented us the building for our annual Potluck dinner the evening of the count.

Counts like the CBC have yielded important information about birds for Audubon's Climate Change Report. It's Citizen Science at its best and we have contributed to that. My grateful thanks to all of you for participating in this important annual event. I hope you will join us again next year.

Jackie Blurton

### 2019 CBC Silver City — DECEMBER 14, 2019

**Participants:** 35 Route Counters (11 routes)  
20 Feeder Counters (16 counts)

**Effort:** Hours Routes: 48.35; Total people Hours: 147.5; Miles Driven: 223.97; Miles Walked: 18.56; Total miles walked: 49.97.

Hours Feeder counts: 53; Total people Hours: 67.5. Combined feeder and route hrs: 101.35 Combined people hrs: 215.

**Count Information:** Total species: 89; Total # of individual birds: 5266; Routes: 3818; Feeders: 1448.

**10 Most abundant:** Dark-eyed Junco 760; Western Bluebird 511; Gambel's Quail 457; House Finch 373; Raven sp. 314; House Sparrow 240; White-crowned Sparrow 214; Brewer's Blackbird 202; White-winged Dove 194; Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay 123.

**Rare / Unusual Birds** <10% of Counts: Bendire's Thrasher-NEW! Clay-colored Sparrow 2<sup>nd</sup> Record; Sandhill Crane 3<sup>rd</sup> Record; Orange-crowned Warbler 4<sup>th</sup> Record; Mexican Duck 5<sup>th</sup> Record; Hooded Merganser 5<sup>th</sup> Record; Broad-tailed Hummingbird 5<sup>th</sup> Record; Red Crossbill 5<sup>th</sup> Record; Band-tailed Pigeon 6<sup>th</sup> Record.

**New High Counts:** Bendire's Thrasher 2; Juniper Titmouse 54; Phainopepla 68; Hairy Woodpecker 16.

**Birds typically seen but not this year:** Killdeer seen on 50 of 59 counts; Brewer's Sparrow seen on 47 of 59 counts; Horned Lark seen on 43 of 59 counts; Great-horned Owl seen on 38 of 59 counts; Vesper Sparrow seen on 36 of 59 counts; Ring-necked Duck seen on 31 of 59 counts; Scaled Quail seen on 30 of 59 counts.

John Gorey, Compiler

## To Feed or Not to Feed: Audubon



**Backyard feeders are good for birds, as long as you follow these simple guidelines.**

A lot of people like to feed birds. More than 40% of Americans make it a regular habit. But a nibble of backyard suet or peck at the communal feeder may hold hidden risks for birds, reports a recent study in *Ecology Letters*.

Daniel Becker, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Georgia's Odum School of Ecology, and his team wanted to better understand how the various ways we humans feed wild animals—whether intentional (feeders or tourist hangouts) or not (landfills or loose garbage cans)—affects their risk of infectious disease. So Becker and his team analyzed what was out there—20 published research papers on host-pathogen interactions in human-fed wild populations—finding intentional feeding changed wild animal behavior and diet enough to give parasites and viruses the upper hand.

"Feeders can bring unexpected species together and bring birds together more frequently than normal, creating ideal conditions for parasites and other contaminates," Becker says. That birds often crowd into tight spaces to get at the tasty morsels also makes it easier for pathogens to leap between birds.

Feeders, they found, have contributed to outbreaks of House Finch Eye Disease (*Mycoplasma conjunctivitis*) and virulent strains of the respiratory disease *Trichomoniasis*. Dependable human-supplied meals can also alter wild animals' behavior, they found. In one study, Spanish White storks skipped their typical North-African winter migration in favor of sticking around their landfill-loaded breeding grounds. This means sick birds that would normally be subject to "migratory culling," as Becker delicately puts it—meaning they wouldn't survive the flight—are allowed the chance of continued life, becoming a constant source of exposure to their peers at the benefit of the pathogen infecting them.

### How to Feed the Birds Without Feeding Disease

So should we stop feeding birds? "Absolutely not," says Becker, "there are plenty of simple things we can do to avoid many of these potential outcomes."

Feeding birds is particularly important in the wake of

### Help Us Introduce Youngsters to Birdwatching



## Donate Your Old Binoculars

We had our first classroom activity with Ms Yvette Troy's 3rd graders at José Barrios, and have outdoor activities planned for the spring. We hope to expand activities with other elementary school children; stay tuned! We'll be needing binoculars for this project and would appreciate donations of any binoculars you no longer use. You may bring them to any monthly Audubon program. Our next programs are March 6 and April 3.

harsh winters. Migrating species on the east coast are returning to snow-covered soil prompting wildlife groups to ask for the public's help in feeding.

Stephen Kress, director of Audubon's Project Puffin, says safe bird feeding includes completely scrubbing out feeders with a 10% non-chlorinated bleach solution at least a few times a year, and certainly between seasons. It also means researching the favorite foods of the species you want to attract, the feeder styles they like best, and where to hang feeders.

"Bird seed mixtures targeted to a wide range of species are the cheapest, but most wasteful, packed with fillers like milo that most birds pick through, resulting in a mess under the feeder," says Kress. The mess can quickly become a sludgy mixture that can make birds sick, so it should be cleaned up in the winter or raked out when conditions are drier, says Kress. To avoid exposing ground-feeding birds to the goo, he adds, put up a platform that drains well.

"To avoid this you can buy specific seeds for specific feeders—for example cracked corn and millet to put in one and then just sunflowers in another," he says. "This decreases interactions between the species that eat the different seeds, and waste, dramatically."

So go ahead and feed the birds—but if you do, realize you're taking on the task of cleaning up after them, too.

Find more tips from Kress [www.audubon.org/news/11-tips-feeding-backyard-birds](http://www.audubon.org/news/11-tips-feeding-backyard-birds)

Celebrate Birds with us  
at the EARTH DAY CELEBRATION  
**APRIL 18, 10 – 2**  
in Gough Park- Silver City



# It's Bird Time at School!

Board member Lisa Fields has had a great time with two lessons about birds in Ms Yvette-Torrez Troy's third grade class at José Barrios Elementary School. The first lesson focused on types of beaks and the relationship to what birds eat. The students played a game, "Bon Appétweet," and collected data about which food types their "beaks" were best and worst suited to be able to eat.

The second lesson was about feathers, type, form and function as well as feather anatomy. The students used hand-held magnifiers to examine how the feather vanes' barbules "zip" together. Both sessions included short, on-line videos. The class also made pine cone bird feeders to hang up at home, and several of the students have been observing their backyard birds!



*Counting the seeds "eaten" during the Bon Appétweet.*



*The clothespin "beak" works well on gummy worms.*

## Collaborative Grant Awarded to SWNMA

This year our chapter is developing bird education classes for local elementary schools, and expanding birding field trip opportunities beyond our membership. We are pleased to be the recipient of \$1000 from the Audubon Collaborative Grant program to help fund these new initiatives.

We have purchased six additional pairs of binoculars to share in classrooms and on field trips. These funds will also be used to develop and purchase durable education materials for classroom programs. Lessons have already started at José Barrios Elementary School where chapter Vice President Lisa Fields and 3rd grade teacher Yvette Torrez-Troy are incorporating online resources with classroom instruction, and planning outdoor activities at the nearby Silva Creek Botanical Garden.

Other opportunities include introducing students to the Cliff Swallow population that returns to our area each summer. Collaborative Grants are managed by National Audubon and evaluated by both the NM State Audubon office and the national network team.



*Identifying the types of feathers from pheasants and turkeys.*

# You're invited to the Arizona and New Mexico Audubon Chapter Gathering

**April 24th – 26th  
at the  
Murray Hotel  
Ballroom  
200 W Broadway  
Silver City, NM 88061**



Join fellow chapter leaders, volunteers, and members in Silver City for a weekend of birding, interactive workshops, and peer-to-peer networking. Keynote speaker Terry Root, Professor Emerita at Stanford University, will provide a talk about climate change and what the latest science says about our warming world. Terry is the Nobel Prize winning lead author of the “Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change 4th Assessment Report” and a former member of Audubon’s National Board of Directors. Additional special guests include National Audubon staff David Ringer, Chief Network Officer, Elizabeth Sorrel, Vice President of Audience Engagement, and Njambi Good, Vice President of the Central and Pacific Flyway.

Please stay tuned for a survey for agenda topics. In the survey, you will have the opportunity to vote on agenda items, suggest new topics, or request that your work be highlighted in a workshop or poster session. This event will be most successful if we receive equal representation from all 12 chapters in Arizona and New Mexico so we encourage you to extend this invitation to your full board and membership! Additional details below:

**Location:** Murray Hotel and Ballroom, 200 W Broadway, Silver City, NM 88061

**Schedule:** Programming begins with a reception Friday evening and goes through Sunday morning

**What to bring:** Binoculars for field trips (optional) and a poster or table displaying your work (optional)

**Lodging:** Call for the Audubon block of rooms at the Murray Hotel 575-956-9400

**Field Trips:** Birding outings will be offered for Saturday and Sunday morning. A Schedule will be announced closer to the date

**Registration:** \$50

Additional details and registration information coming soon!