



THE RAVENS

Newsletter

Southwestern New Mexico Audubon Society
is a Chapter of National Audubon Society, Inc.

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Friday, March 3rd Program – 6PM **Common Sparrows for Beginners and Intermediate Birders**



Photos from *All About Birds*

Co-led by Karen Beckenbach and William (“Bill”) Norris. WNMU Campus, Harlan Hall, Room 111. Co-sponsored by Friends of City of Rocks. Program begins at 6 pm.

Karen and Bill will discuss the various characteristics you need to pay attention to in order to distinguish one sparrow species from another. They will also introduce the more common sparrows such as House, Rufous-

Saturday, March 4 Sparrow Hike **City of Rocks Cienega Trail**

As a follow-up to the Sparrow talk William (Bill) Norris and Karen Beckenbach will lead a hike along the Cienega Trail at City of Rocks SP. The goal is to spot and identify a variety of sparrow species that were covered in the Friday evening talk.

The trail is about 2 miles long with gentle slopes but some areas have loose rocks so walking sticks are recommended if you are a bit wobbly on your feet. We will probably be out 2 – 2.5 hours. The hike is co-sponsored with Friends of City of Rocks.

Meet at the Cienega Trail parking lot at 8:00 am.

crowned, Savannah, Vesper, Cassin’s, Brewer’s, Chipping, Sagebrush, Black-throated, Song, Lincoln’s, White-crowned, Lark, Dark-eyed Junco, and Black-chinned along with their relatives (Towhee and Horned Lark) and sparrow look-a-likes (House and Cassin’s Finch and Pine Siskin).

Seeking Bilingual Birders!

SWNMA Chapter Awarded Dual Language Grant

Our Audubon chapter serves four counties, with Spanish as the home language for 14% (Catron), 27% (Grant), 36% (Hidalgo), and 49% (Luna) of the population; yet our current publications and offerings are English-only.

We’re excited to announce that the National Audubon Society has granted our chapter \$1000 toward providing dual language newsletters, membership forms, event flyers, as well as a bilingual interpreter for one bird outing and educational program in the upcoming year.

We recognize that translation is just a first step; but bridging language barriers will move us closer to fully serving our community, while simultaneously building support for bird stewardship efforts.

At this time, we are seeking to identify local bilingual (Spanish-English) translators and interpreters to hire. Preference will be given to those with Spanish as their home language and those engaged or interested in birding or conservation efforts.

If you, or someone you know, is interested in being a part of this effort, please contact SWNMA Board member Heidi Erstad swnmaudubon@gmail.com before March 31 for more information (tasks, timeline, application, compensation).

CONSERVATION IS KEY

Audubon envisions a world where people and wildlife thrive. We present some of the key areas of conservation concern and challenge for the birds and wildlife specific to our region. We encourage SWNMA members to learn more about and speak up on behalf of these issues.

The Gila Wetlands need your help!

Amigos Bravos, a non-profit dedicated to protecting and restoring NM waters, is working to identify “wetland jewels” in the Gila watershed. This effort will help prioritize wetlands for protection and restoration that serve as keystone areas in the health of the watershed.

As part of the project, Amigos Bravos is looking for local watershed users input on the wetland functions (i.e. habitat creation, groundwater recharge, streamflow maintenance, sediment retention, etc.) that matter most to them and their activities within the watershed. Once the top wetland functions are identified, the project team will utilize high-detailed mapping

USFS to Remove Feral Cattle from Gila Wilderness

During the public comment period which ended on January 9, 2023, the administrators of the Gila National Forest received more than 4,000 comments in support of their plans for removal of feral cattle from the Gila Wilderness. Thank you to all those thousands of people submitting their comments—they had a positive effect.

On Feb 16, 2023 the USFS announced through a press release that they would begin removing the approximately 150 wild cattle that have been ravaging the Gila Wilderness habitat for decades. This is an appropriate decision by the Forest Service and they should be commended for making it.

The press release stated in part: “The Gila National Forest has issued a decision to remove feral cattle within the boundaries of the Gila Wilderness using lethal methods. These feral cattle are not domesticated animals and pose a significant threat to public safety and natural resources. This has been a difficult decision, but the lethal removal of feral cattle from the Gila Wilderness is necessary to protect public safety, threatened and endangered species habitats, water quality, and the natural character of the Gila Wilderness,” said Camille Howes, Gila National Forest Supervisor.

She also stated that, “The feral cattle in the Gila Wilderness have been aggressive towards wilderness visitors, graze year-round, and trample stream banks and springs, causing erosion and sedimentation. This action will help restore the wilderness character of the Gila Wilderness enjoyed by visitors from across the country.”

“A closure order covering the area of operations will go into effect on Monday, Feb. 20, and aerial shooting will commence from Thursday, Feb. 23 through Sunday, Feb. 26. For public safety, Gila National Forest officials are asking people to avoid the [closure area](#) while the order is in effect.”

The closure area is defined as: within the Gila Wilderness, general area bounded by confluence Gila River and Turkey Creek, upstream along Gila River to Alum Mtn, west to Miller Spring Cabin, and west down Turkey Creek to confluence of the Gila River.

Andy Payne

analysis to identify the areas that contribute the most to these watershed functions. A map will be created of the analysis and shared with stakeholders, land managers, and restoration professionals so these areas can be prioritized in future restoration activities and management plans.

We encourage SWNMA members to complete [this super-short survey](#) so that our opinions can be incorporated into their analysis. For questions about the project, please [visit the Amigos Bravos website](#) or contact Policy & Project Specialist Steven Fry sfry@amigosbravos.org.

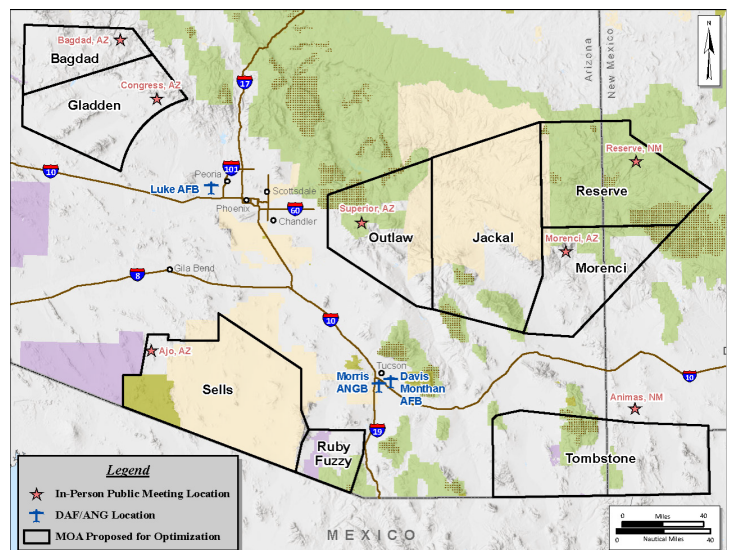
Let's Meet to Oppose Air Force Military Operation Areas Modifications and Expansions

As described in the Nov-Dec edition of The Ravens, the Air Force is working on the *Draft Environmental Impact Statement* (DEIS) for its proposal to expand its Military Operations Areas in southern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico to allow longer periods of use, low-altitude training (including low-altitude supersonic flights), and allowing the use of chaff and flares. (See map below for proposed expansion area). The DEIS is expected to be available for public comment in the Fall of 2023.

SWNM Audubon would like to be prepared with data for this public comment window! **If you are interested in helping to organize data collection efforts from the local birding community, please join us at 9:00 am on Thursday, March 16th at Tranquilbuzz, 300 N. Arizona Street, Silver City. Can't attend but still interested? Please send an email with contact information to swnmaudubon@gmail.com**

More information on the project is available on the [Peaceful Gila Skies Facebook page](#) and at the [Arizona Regional Air Space Environmental Impact Statement site](#).

Dave Becker



Opening Brief Filed Against Proposed Dolomite Mine in Florida Mountains

The suit against American Magnesium's proposed 40-acre dolomite mine on the northwest side of the Florida Mountains (southeast of Deming) has moved into the briefing phase. Friends of the Floridas, Gila Resources Information Project, and three other organizations filed their opening brief on February 21st, arguing that approval of the mine violated several environmental laws.

The opening brief is available on the Current Conservation Challenges page of our web site. The hearing on the groups' claims will be held on June 7th in federal court in Albuquerque. No mining is occurring while the lawsuit is ongoing.

Updates are on the Friends of the Floridas' Facebook page.

Dave Becker

Gila Earth Day & CDT Trail Days



The Gila Earth Day celebration will return to Gough Park on Saturday, April 22, from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. SWNMAS will be present with a booth in the park. Once again the event is combined with Continental Divide Trail (CDT) Coalition's Trail Days which will span April 21-23.



See <https://continentaldividetrail.org/trail-days/> for the Trail Days schedule.

Help Restore the Riparian Habitat in San Vicente Creek

The San Vicente Cienega Trail is one of the top 10 [eBird hotspots in Grant County](#), home to nearly 200 species. Here's SWNMA members' chance to be a part of a local project to improve this important river habitat.

With funding from the NM Environment Department River Stewardship Program, [Gila Resources Information Project \(GRIP\)](#) has partnered with the Town of Silver City, [Stream Dynamics](#), [Gila WoodNet](#), [Lone Mountain Natives](#), and the [Silver City Watershed Keepers](#) to address water quality impairments and threats to riparian habitat in San Vicente Creek.

To protect legacy cottonwoods and other riparian native trees from fire risk, the project removed slash and non-native trees, such as Siberian elm, tamarisk, and Tree of Heaven. Now, grasses, wildflowers, and native trees and shrubs will be planted to restore the San Vicente Creek riparian corridor and stabilize stream banks.

To get involved....

- **Attend a Zoom panel discussion** with Van Clothier, Martha Egnal, and Mike Fugagli of Stream Dynamics, Mark Cantrell of Lone Mountain Natives and Allyson Siwik of Gila Resources Information Project on **Thursday, March 23 at 6:30 PM**. (Also streamed live on the [Silver City Watershed Keepers Facebook page](#)).
- Check out the stream restoration work first-hand on a **field trip along the creek on Saturday, March 25 from 10 AM – noon**. Meet at the Murray Ryan Visitor Center at 9:30 am to carpool/caravan to the project site. Plan to wear sturdy walking shoes and a hat and carry water.
- Join the Silver City Watershed Keepers, Stream Dynamics, Gila WoodNet and Lone Mountain Natives on **Saturday, April 15th from 9 AM – 1 PM** to help restore native vegetation along San Vicente Creek at the site of the stream restoration project. We will **plant additional willows, cottonwoods and native plants**. Sign-up to volunteer at <https://tinyurl.com/SanVicenteCreekRestoration>.

For more information, contact the Silver City Watershed Keepers at silvercitywatershedkeepers@gmail.com or 575-538-8078.

Beth Cable

Saturday, March 4 Sparrow Hike **City of Rocks Cienega Trail**

William (Bill) Norris and Karen Beckenbach will lead a hike along the Cienega Trail at City of Rocks SP.-sponsored with Friends of City of Rocks. Meet at the Cienega Trail Parking lot at 8:00 AM.

See full details on front page!

2022 Silver City Christmas Bird Count

2022 was the 61st year the Silver City CBC was conducted. Weather was very cold early on but temperatures rebounded quickly and it was a pleasant sunny day. A total of 42 people participated with 29 along the 11 established routes and 13 people doing feeder counts.

	2020	2021	2022	Average (61yrs)
Species Count	106	85	93	78
Individual Birds	7490	5755	6364	5219

Species counts were up 9%, and individuals were up 11% from 2021. This is an increase from the average by around 20%. Sometime in the future I will do a comparison of this increasing trend and the survey effort data to get a more accurate picture of how bird numbers have changed in the area. Rare birds were in fact rare in 2022. Here is a list of unusual birds and count numbers from this year's count.

Species	2022	Average	Notes
Dark-eyed Junco	232	584	second lowest count ever (2002)
Mexican Jay	141	49	Record high
Marsh Wren	1	<1	First record since 2006
Rufous Hummingbird	2	<1	6 th record
Belted Kingfisher	4	1	Record High
Black Phoebe	8	2	Record High
Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay	250	54	Record High
Mexican Jay	141	50	Record High
Rock Wren	14	2	Record High by a lot
Cactus Wren	19	5	Record High by a lot
Townsend's Solitaire	40	9	Record High
Vesper Sparrow	36	7	Record High
Savannah Sparrow	39	7	Record High

As noted in the table most Jay species had record years, as did wrens. Townsend's Solitaire and Black Phoebes also had unusually high numbers. Dark-eyed Juncos were remarkably absent during the count. White-crowned sparrows which are often trending similar to Juncos were actually far above average in 2022.

Thank you to everyone who participated this year and I hope to see even more participants in the years to come! A more detailed report will be coming in the following weeks.

John Gorey, Compiler

Gila River 2022

Christmas Bird Count Results

The Gila River Christmas Bird Count was conducted on December 31, 2022 after dodging multiple and varying weather forecasts. The day was lovely for the count, with calm winds and a low temperature in the mid-20's and a high in the mid-60's. Sixteen observers ventured out in the field to identify and count birds prior to welcoming in a new year.

Rare and unusual birds were scarce this year, with a Dusky flycatcher and 2 Orange-crowned warblers being the most uncommon. The 5 Vermillion flycatchers seen were on the high side of previous counts. High counts were also noted for 7 other species – Gila woodpecker, Woodhouse's scrub jay,

Save Birds From Window Crashing

Did you know that up to one billion birds in the United States die each year from flying into glass? And that most collisions happen with buildings less than four stories tall?

With migration season just around the corner, now is the time to take preventative action!

Birds just don't see glass the way we do. Follow these research-based guidelines to give strong clues to birds about reflective surfaces and reduce collisions:

- **Use visible markers** to help birds see your windows using tape, stickers, decals, hanging cords, paint, window film, or screens.
- **Use multiple markings, 2 to 4" apart.** Single stickers are just not shown to be effective.



- **Outside is best!** A recent study found that decals on the inside of windows serve more as interior design than collision prevention!

Visit these sites to learn more and find more simple strategies to reduce bird-window collisions at home:

- National Audubon Society: [Simple Solutions to Prevent Collisions](#) and [Reducing Collisions with Glass](#)
- Bird-window Collision Working Group's [DIY Bird-window Collision Deterrent Methods and Relative Costs](#)
- Swaddle JP, Brewster B, Schuyler M, Su A. 2023. Window films increase avoidance of collisions by birds but only when applied to external compared with internal surfaces of windows. PeerJ 11:e14676 <https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.14676>

Heidi Erstad

Juniper titmouse, Hermit thrush, White-throated sparrow, Northern cardinal and Great-tailed grackles.

Comparing the 2022 CBC with recent year counts, the total number of individual birds was much higher. In 2019 with 6 routes covered, there were 77 species and 1655 individual birds counted. 2020 was 8 routes with 101 species and 4566 birds, 2021 had 10 routes with 105 species and 3456 birds, and 2022 10 routes with 92 species and 5215 individual birds counted.

Linda Moore, Compiler