



# THE RAVENS

## Newsletter

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

May — June — July 2023

Vol. 56, No. 3

### PROGRAM FRIDAY, MAY 5TH, 6-7PM

#### *Introduction to Common (and a Few Uncommon) Birds Along Cherry Creek Canyon*

Susan and Bill will provide tips for beginning and intermediate birders on how to use visual, auditory, behavioral and habitat cues to identify common (and a few uncommon) birds that occur in Cherry Creek Canyon in the spring and early summer. These include swifts, hummingbirds, woodpeckers, flycatchers, swallows, nuthatches, titmice and chickadees, wood warblers, thrushes, vireos, grosbeaks, tanagers (and a few surprises).

**Location:** WNMU campus, Silver City, Harlan Hall Room 111.

**Co-Presenters:** Susan Mittelstadt & William (Bill) Norris.

**Attending via Zoom** will be an option for this program, so stay tuned for the Zoom link emailed to members.



*Black-throated Gray Warbler*

*Wikipedia Commons*

### FIELD TRIP TO CHERRY CREEK SATURDAY, MAY 6TH, 7-10AM

Participants should meet at the WNMU Fine Arts Center parking lot at 7 AM and plan to carpool to the site. Please, no dogs on trip. Co-Leaders: Susan Mittelstadt and William (Bill) Norris.

## What To Do If You Find A Baby Bird



*Fledgling Northern Cardinal*  
by Laura Frazier

As the nesting season ramps up, so do encounters with baby birds. If you find a baby bird, the first thing to do is to determine if it is a nestling or a fledgling. If the bird is fully feathered and alert, it is probably a fledgling and should be left alone. Most baby birds people find are fledglings that have left the nest but haven't quite gotten the

hang of flying yet and are still under their parents' care. Move away from the bird, and if you wish, watch from a distance to see that an adult is in the vicinity and caring for the bird.

If you find a bird that is unable to hop or walk and has areas of bare skin, it could be a nestling, in which case you can try to find a nest in the vicinity. If you can find the nest, you can place the bird back into the nest and then move away to watch from a distance.

When in doubt, your best course of action is to contact a wildlife rehabilitator.

The [Humane Society of the United States has a website that lists wildlife rehabilitators by state.](#)

With the Gila Wildlife Rescue site  
<https://m.facebook.com/people/Gila-Wildlife-Rescue>

Cornell Lab of Ornithology

# Annual Joint GNPS/SWNM Noon—Saturday, May 13 at Gomez Peak



The Gila Native Plant Society has graciously invited Southwestern New Mexico Audubon Society to join them in their annual spring picnic.

Gomez Peak pavilion is where we will meet and

eat May 13th at noon.

Audubon supplies wieners, brats (veggie/vegan included), condiments, buns and GNPS pays for the venue rental, provides beverages and cooks.

Please be sure to to bring your own plate, utensils and cup—and bring a dish to share.

Potluck all around!

## 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.*



Posted May 2023; Expires Dec 2023

## Lands in SW New Mexico / SE Corner of Arizona Affected by Proposed Expansion of Military Air Force Operations

### DID YOU KNOW THERE'S A PLAN TO EXPAND MILITARY OPERATIONS AREA ACTIVITIES IN THIS AREA?

The U.S. Air Force wants to...

- Increase the size of operation areas by nearly 1000 square miles
- Increase operation time by 20 hours a week
- Fly fighter jets as low as 100 feet above ground
- Fly supersonic jets (extreme noise & pressure waves) as low as 5,000 feet above ground
- Release chaff\* and burning flares at 2,000 feet above ground (\*aluminum & coated silica fibers)

### WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

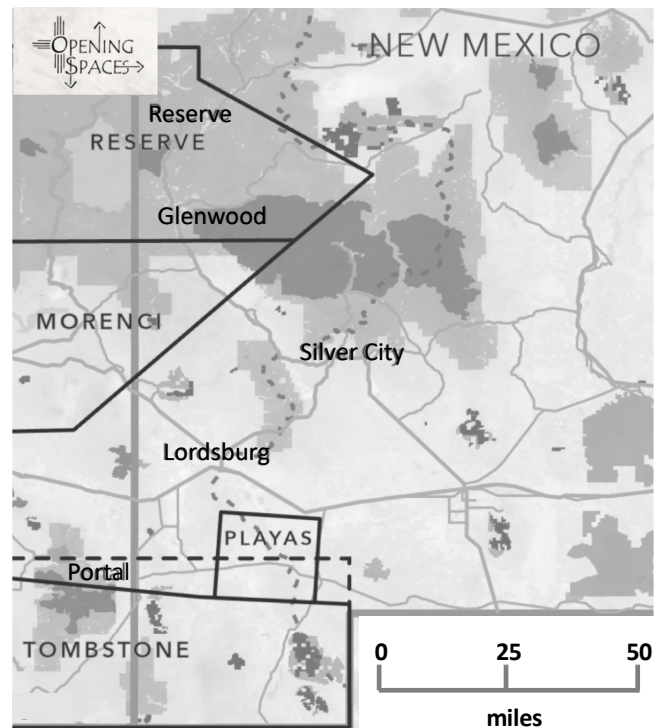
This proposal will dramatically increase fire risk, pollute waterways, negatively impact the health of wildlife in fragile sky-island ecosystems, and take a toll on the well-being of those who live in and enjoy the quiet beauty of this area.

### WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Peaceful Gila Skies is building a case against these proposed changes. As part of this coalition, Southwestern New Mexico Audubon Society is collecting data on birds seen and experiences of birders in this area.

### HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- Submit 2023 eBird checklists or email us a list of birds seen in the affected areas (including when and where)
- Email your 2023 birding experiences in the affected areas to [swnmaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:swnmaudubon@gmail.com) (e.g. frequency of visits, military aircraft observed, rare or unusual birds seen, experience of solitude...)



#### Existing Military Operations Zone

Will be impacted by increased hours of operation, use of supersonic flights, decreased altitude of flights, and dropping of flares and chaff

#### Proposed additional area

Will increase the size of the military operation areas by nearly 1000 square miles

Read about the timeline and details of the proposed expansion at [peacefulgilaskies.com](http://peacefulgilaskies.com). Find out more about this effort at [swnmaudubon.org](http://swnmaudubon.org) -> Current Conservation Challenges.



# Horned Lizards in New Mexico

It's the most wonderful time of the year! Residents of Southwest New Mexico often feel a certain energy that comes with April's arrival: wildflowers, community events, Spring bird migration. Added to that list for me is the sleepy emergence from winter dormancy of my favorite New Mexican, the horned lizard!

In New Mexico we can find three species of horned lizards: Greater-short horned (*Phrynosoma hernandesi*), Round-tailed (*P. modestum*), and the Texas (*P. cornutum*). In the Gila National Forest, greater short-horned lizards are the most common species, flourishing in higher elevations. Round-tailed and Texas horned lizards are more commonly seen at lower elevations. They can be differentiated by their horn arrangement.

Cryptic coloration allows them to hide in plain sight though they have other defenses as well. When threatened they may gulp air to inflate themselves like a balloon, expand their ribs, or even, famously, squirt blood from their eyes by rupturing capillaries in their sinuses. While gruesome looking, this defense can prove effective at deterring certain predators, especially canines.

These lizards have a strong relationship to ants and often wait near mounds for a wandering ant to walk by before snatching it up with a quick flick of their short tongues.

Horned lizards require mosaic habitat, meaning a mix of grasses, shrubs, and trees with room for movement in between. At night as well as in the winter, they bury themselves in loose dirt or, in the case of the round-tailed horned lizard, disguise themselves by hunching between pieces of gravel while sleeping.

---

## Southwestern New Mexico Audubon Society Board Discussing Name

As many of you are aware, the National Audubon Society spent the last year considering a name change over its association with John James Audubon's racist legacy. While the national society announced last month that it will retain the name, chapters are free to make their own local determination. We wanted to let members know that the SWNMA board is in the process of taking up this issue for consideration.



SWNMA programs are planned far in advance, so sometimes we miss good birding possibilities. That's why we encourage member-initiated ***Spur-of-the-Moment field trips***. You don't have to be an expert, you just need a desire to get out there with fellow birders! [If you email us](#) the date, destination, and when/where to meet, we'll pass that info to our list of interested others. Want to get on the list? Just [send us an email](#).



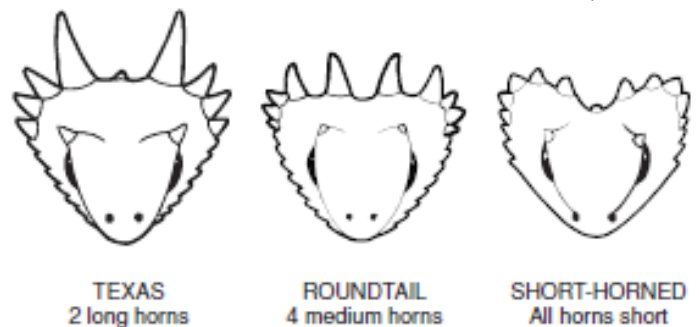
*An adult greater short-horned lizard in Grant County.*  
Emily Pollom

Reproductive adaptations also allow them to exist in extreme environments. Texas and round-tailed horned lizards lay their eggs in underground borrows while greater short-horned lizards give live birth of up to 48 babies! Live-birth allows this high elevation species to move their embryos into favorable microclimates each day, as temperatures can fluctuate between very hot to quite cold at night.

There are many ways to help horned lizards thrive. For starters, drive slowly. Many horned lizards lose their lives to cars. Steering clear of broadcast insecticides, avoiding soil compaction, keeping cats indoors, and leaving ant mounds to prosper are also wonderful ways to support horned lizards. Participating in citizen science is another fun option. Please consider adding your horned lizard sightings to the project "Horned Lizards of New Mexico" on iNaturalist. Joining the Horned Lizard Conservation Society at is another great way to help fund research of these charismatic animals.

We're incredibly lucky to share this environment with one of North America's wildlife gems. With care and consideration, we can make sure that horned lizards are putting smiles on people's faces for generations to come!

Emily Pollom



*Different horn arrangement of horned lizards in New Mexico.*  
John Gorey  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept.



### May 13: Global BIG Day

Global Big Day is an annual celebration of the birds around you. No matter where you are, join us virtually on 13 May, help celebrate World Migratory Bird Day, and share the birds you find with eBird.

Be a part of birding's biggest team! [Global Big Day](#) is an annual celebration of the birds around you. No matter where you are, join us virtually on 13th of May, help

---

## 2023 Winter Raptor Survey

Eight of the nine winter raptor survey routes were run in January, with one being canceled due to inclement weather and poor road conditions. These routes are registered with the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA). If GPS information is provided, routes are entered into the database on their website. The data is then available for researchers or anyone to use. Access to the data can be found at [www.hmana.org](http://www.hmana.org) by clicking on research, winter raptor survey, then view recent surveys. Any of the surveys in New Mexico are the ones run here, covering a large area from the Arizona border into Otero County. A typical route takes most of a day to complete, and runs anywhere between 100 to 200 miles or even more.

The routes are typically run on the weekend of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, but this year the weather made some adjustments necessary. Still, there was a good showing of raptors, with a total of 253 raptors counted. The most numerous species, not surprisingly, is the red-tailed hawk, with 135 counted this year. American kestrels were the second most numerous with 81 counted. Other species seen were Northern harriers, Sharp-shinned hawks, Cooper's hawks, Ferruginous, Bald and Golden eagles, Prairie falcons and Merlins. Our Otero county friend observed two Harris' hawks, while a White-tailed kite was seen in the Bootheel, not the first time one has been seen there.

Greater roadrunners and Loggerhead shrikes are also counted as 'honorary raptors' since their habits are certainly prey based. These data are not entered into the database, but included just for fun. This year seven roadrunners were seen, and 21 shrikes. The shrike number is uncommonly low, as 69 were seen in 2020 as a high number with around 40 as the average seen yearly.

*Linda Moore*

celebrate [World Migratory Bird Day](#), and share the birds you find with eBird.

Participating is easy—you can even be part of Global Big Day from home. If you can spare 5 or 10 minutes, report your bird observations to eBird online or with our [free eBird Mobile app](#). If you have more time, submit several checklists of birds throughout the day. You never know what you might spot. Your observations help us better understand global bird populations through products like these [animated abundance maps](#) brought to you by eBird Science.

---



### **Bushtits** Poem and photo Andy Payne

**The Bushtits are back  
like bandits in bunches**

**They stop by here daily,  
For multiple lunches**

**But I do not begrudge the  
sizable sums of seeds  
and suet they seek**

**And when they descend  
I smile,  
and them happily greet:**

**Yay! The Bushtits are back  
like bandits in bunches**

*There is a suet feeder somewhere underneath all those  
(how many?) Bushtits*