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THE RAVENS

Newsletter

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

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SWNMAS to Hold Elections at Annual Meeting/Picnic at Gomez Pavilion



Please join us for the annual potluck picnic at the Little Walnut group-use pavilion on September 8th, 4pm.

We will begin gathering at 4pm for birding and conversation. Plan to eat at 5pm. Please bring a dish

After sharing food, we will have a short meeting to vote on our proposed motions, as well as the election of officers. First, the board proposes two motions for by-law changes to elected and appointed positions (to be voted on prior to elections):

1. A motion to replace the existing Treasurer / Membership positions with 2 elected Board positions: Treasurer and Membership
2. A motion to eliminate the Publicity position (move responsibilities to Secretary and Communications)

• ***Slate of officers to consider for elected positions:***

President — vacant

Treasurer — pending

Membership — Susy Slade

Secretary — Dave McDonald

• ***Appointed Board Positions:***

Programs/ Events — Megan Ruehmann, Emily Pollom

Education — Jackie Blurton

Conservation — *pending

Communications — Heidi Erstad, Patricia Taber

Leaving the SWNMAS Board is Rachelle Bergmann (current Treasurer/Membership and past Secretary). We are so grateful for her efforts over the years!

Nominees are also accepted on the floor. If you enjoy our offerings throughout the year, please consider joining the board! There are numerous ways to contribute your specific talents.



A special Birds & Brews Thursday, Oct. 5th!

At 4:30pm, join us for a bird stroll down the developed portion of Big Ditch Park*, ending at Little Toad Creek Brewery for some social time and food with friends! We will start the stroll at the north end of the parking lot of Main Street Plaza (near Scratch restaurant/Lion's Club building), then work our way towards The Toad.

We will aim to be at the Toad around 5:15–5:30 for those that want to meet us there. Weather permitting, plan to gather in one of the outdoor spaces in the back of The Toad.

**for those unfamiliar with Big Ditch, there is a set of stairs and uneven surfaces along the way. Sturdy walking shoes are recommended.*

City of Rocks Bird Outing Sat, Sept 16, 2023 | 8:30 — 10:30 am

Join Karen Beckenbach, Susan Mittelstadt, and Bill Norris for a City of Rocks bird outing. Organized and co-sponsored by the Friends of City of Rocks.

Meet at the City of Rocks Visitor Center at 8:30 am. [City of Rocks](#) is about 40 minutes east of Silver City. Take 180 East to NM-61 North. After 3 miles on 61N, turn left towards the City of Rocks entrance. State park pass required (\$5 for daily pass).



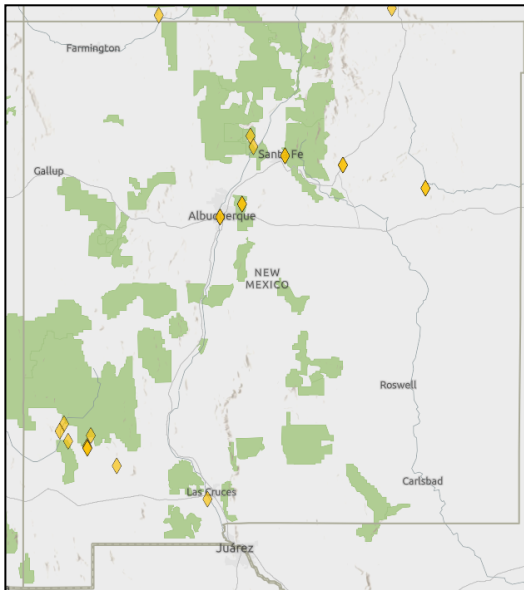
by Emily Pollom

Discussions are taking place around the world about how birding and birding communities can be more inclusive and accessible to all people. Pursuing these goals is both the right thing to do and will help conserve the birds we love. An organization taking the lead on birding and accessibility is [Birdability](#). From their mission statement:

“Through education, outreach and advocacy, [Birdability](#) works to ensure the birding community and the outdoors are welcoming, inclusive, safe and accessible for everybody. We focus on people with mobility challenges, blindness or low vision, chronic illness, intellectual or developmental disabilities, mental illness, and those who are neurodivergent, deaf or hard of hearing or who have other health concerns. In addition to current birders, we strive to introduce birding to people with disabilities and other health concerns who are not yet birders so they too can experience the joys of birding.”



One of the most exciting things Birdability is doing that people can participate in is the creation of a [crowd-sourced map](#) that details birding locations across the



world and documents their accessibility. Participants use a survey form to measure accessibility at sites then enter their results into an online form. With a quick click of a button the information is

10th Natural History of the Gila Symposium

Coinciding with the Centennial Celebration of America's First Wilderness: the Gila Wilderness

Feb. 28, Feb. 29, Mar. 1, 2024
WNMU Global Resource Center,
Silver City



Presentations and Field Trips Featuring Research, Land Management, Conservation, Educational Programs and Policy focused on the Gila Region of SW New Mexico and SE Arizona.

Proposal Submission: Available via Submission Portal: <https://wnmu.edu/gilasymposium>

Groups Represented on the Planning Committee: Black Range Naturalist, Chiricahua Apache Nation, Native Plant Society of New Mexico (Gila Chapter), Southwest Word Fiesta, Southwestern New Mexico Audubon Society, United States Forest Service, University of New Mexico, Western New Mexico University, Wild Land Network.

uploaded to the map and available to anyone with internet access! Southwest New Mexico is leading the way with eight birding sites surveyed and uploaded to the map.

Know a birding spot that's not on the map yet? You can help by completing a survey and uploading the information at this link: <https://gis.audubon.org/birdability/>

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.

Citizen Science, Gila-style

by Donna Stevens

The Audubon Society has a long history of citizen science, although that term wasn't used until relatively recently. In 1900, ornithologist Frank Chapman had the vision to begin a new tradition he called the Christmas Bird Census, now known as the Christmas Bird Count. Over more than a century, birders' keen observational skills have proven to be a tremendous asset to our collective knowledge about bird distribution, migration, and populations.

Citizen scientists are volunteers learning about – and protecting – a place close to home. Suppose you're in the Gila National Forest and you observe a problem that the Forest Service should know about? A rutted road sending sediment into a nearby stream. Livestock or off-road vehicles in a stream. Or, much more happily, you sight a beaver or a rare bird.

The Upper Gila Watershed Alliance (UGWA) is collaborating with the Forest Service on a program for volunteers to record their Gila observations. Using our simple instructions, you can download free Gila NF maps and a data form onto your smartphone or tablet. This short form with simple questions provides a checklist; you'll log your location and take a few photos. If you don't have a smartphone, you can borrow UGWA's tablet that's ready to go, or, using the traditional map-paper-pencil method, complete our paper form and return it to us.

For any of these options – tablet, smartphone, or paper – UGWA will record volunteers' data, upload it to the Forest Service database, and follow through with them. You'll get to do what you love – bird and hike in the Gila – while knowing that your observations, data, and photos are being put to good use.

As an additional incentive, the first 40 volunteers who commit to monitoring will receive a signed copy of Sharman Apt Russell's *Diary of a Citizen Scientist*. Russell won the WILLA Award for Creative Nonfiction and the John Burroughs Medal for Distinguished Natural History for this wondrous book, placing her in the celebrated company of such luminaries as Rachel Carson, Aldo Leopold, Robin Wall Kimmerer, and David Quammen.

Interested? Please email Donna Stevens at director@ugwa.org

Thank you to the Maki Foundation and our anonymous Major Donor for funding

Update on Proposed Expansion of Air Force Military Operations

The issue: The Davis-Monthan Air Force Base near Tucson has proposed modifying its MOAs 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. Three of the MOAs overlap the Gila Wilderness and Chiricahua National Monument. The Air Force accepted preliminary scoping comments from the public in June 2022,

Update:

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement is now anticipated for release in Spring 2024

We encourage SWNMA members to bird the area [shown on the map](#) provided at the [Peaceful Gila Skies website](#). We will be coordinating visits to the area in the Fall of 2023.

Litigation Update on the Proposed Florida Mountains Dolomite Mine

In 2020, [Friends of the Floridas](#), [Gila Resources Information Project](#), and three other public interest organizations filed a federal lawsuit to set aside the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) approval of the proposed American Magnesium mine on public land adjacent to the Florida Mountains Wilderness Study Area. The case received a public hearing before a Federal judge on July 12, 2023, at the Federal Courthouse in Albuquerque. The judge will decide if the BLM properly followed the law when it reviewed and approved the mine proposal. It is unknown when the judge will give his written decision.

Documents related to the mining project can be found on the [official website of the State of New Mexico Mining and Minerals Division](#).

Documents related to the mining project can be found on the [official website of the Federal Bureau of Land Management \(BLM\)](#)

New Mexico and Arizona Audubon Council Meeting

By Megan Ruehmann

This past April 23-25th, SWNMAS had the pleasure of hosting the first ever joint meeting of the New Mexico and Arizona Audubon Councils here in Silver City! Councils serve the purpose of connecting Chapter leaders with one another, creating opportunities



Emily Pollom photo

to learn from each other, collaborate, and brainstorm for the future of our birding communities. Since the formation of the regional Audubon Southwest, it was fitting for us to meet the Arizona Chapter leaders, many of whom share similar conservation issues and even watersheds!

New Mexico had representatives from Mesilla Valley, Sangre de Cristo, Central NM, and SWNMA Chapters. Arizona had representatives from White Mountain, Prescott, Desert Rivers, Maricopa, Northern AZ, Tucson, Yuma, and Sonoran Chapters. Also in attendance were Jonathan Hayes, Executive Director of Audubon Southwest; Appleton-Whittell Research Ranch Director, Steve Prager; Anne Beckett, who represents our region as a National Board Director; and Nadia Rodriguez, who is Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (EDIB) Program Manager for the National Audubon Society.

The Commons was our location for meetings, where we enjoyed the outdoor garden space during breaks and even

had wood-fired pizza. Each morning, participants went birding together at some of our favorite locations, including San Vicente, Little Cherry Creek, Gila River Valley and Mimbres River Ranch. Each Chapter presented projects they are involved in, which helped several people connect due to similar efforts. One of the most important and timely topics of the meeting was an open discussion about EDIB concerns and the recent decision of the National Audubon Society to keep the name unchanged.

We were delighted to host these visitors to our area, and everyone seemed to appreciate the diversity of bird life and habitat while exploring our town.

Thank you to The Commons, La Mexicana, The Murray Hotel, Little Toad Creek Brewery, and our Chapter leaders and Board members for helping make this gathering a success!



Vicki Hire photo