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THE RAVENS

Newsletter

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

November — December 2023

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[Program: FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 3rd — 6 pm](#)



Learn about Local Community Science Birding Projects

Join us in room 111 of Harlan Hall (WNMU) for a program on our outstanding local community science projects. Organizers John Gorey and Linda Moore will cover details and how to get involved with local Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) as well as the Winter Raptor Survey. Data collected through these projects provide researchers, biologists, and wildlife agencies with valuable information to gauge the health of bird populations and thus inform action. Plus, these are great ways to get outside with fellow bird enthusiasts. Come and find out if these research projects are up your alley!

62nd Annual Silver City CBC Saturday, December 16th

Emails will go out in October to previous participants. If you wish to participate in 2023 and you do not receive an email in October please contact John Gorey at johnpgorey@gmail.com. There will be a **potluck dinner** following the count at the Rolling Stones building at 2045 Memory Lane, Silver City. *[At Route 180 4-way stoplights take Memory Lane. Building is on the right side of street before the cemetery.]* Doors will open at 4pm and serving will start at 5pm, followed by a presentation of survey results by each group.

The annual **Feeder Count** will also be the same day, December 16th. The feeder count is a great way to participate if you cannot make it out to help with the routes or you wish to bird from your home. Contact John Gorey at johnpgorey@gmail.com.

Any and all birding skill levels are encouraged to participate!

Gila River Christmas Bird Count Saturday, December 30th

Since bad weather often seems to happen on that weekend, an alternate of Sunday December 31 may be considered at the last moment. Linda Moore will contact previous participants, hoping for their continued support of the count, in late November.

Interested participants should contact Linda by December 15th at raptors.linda@yahoo.com.

A Zoom meeting will be scheduled as the CBC date approaches to discuss routes and helpers.

Winter Raptor Survey January 13, 14 or 15, 2024

The Winter Raptor Survey will take place on Martin Luther King Jr. weekend, January 13–15, 2024. The routes can be done on any one of the three days.

These routes are well established driving routes, many of which require most of a day to complete. Linda will contact previous participants in late December. Other interested participants should contact Linda Moore by December 29th at raptors.linda@yahoo.com with questions or interest regarding either count.



FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, 18th November Lake Roberts

Meet 7am at WNMU Fine Arts Center south parking lot, convoying/carpooling to Lake Roberts at 7:15am. We will be expecting a range of duck species, possibly with other water birds such as cormorants and grebes.

The water fringes should hold a range of sparrows, and with luck we may see a late osprey or an early eagle. Expect to be back in Silver City around 1pm. Trip leader: Brian Dolton.

Sunday, 3rd December Mangas Springs

Meet 7:30am at WNMU Fine Arts Center south parking lot, convoying/carpooling to Mangas Springs at 7:45am. Mangas Springs offers a variety of habitat in a small area and can turn up interesting birds at any time of year. We should be scolded by marsh wrens, and may hear rails in the marsh, while the trees shelter yellow-rumped warblers, kinglets, and a variety of woodpeckers. Cranes occasionally feed here, and snipe can be found if the fields are muddy, while vermilion flycatchers sometimes stay for winter. Expect to be back in Silver City around noon. Trip leader: Brian Dolton.

CONSERVATION IS KEY

Florida Mountains Dolomite Mine

The federal lawsuit by [Friends of the Floridas](#), [Gila Resources Information Project](#), and other groups challenging the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) approval of a proposed dolomite mine in the Florida Mountains received a hearing before the presiding judge on July 12, 2023, but (as of October 20, 2023) no decision on the case has been issued. A decision is likely to be issued sometime in the next couple of months. The case involves the proposed American Magnesium mine on

public land adjacent to the Florida Mountains Wilderness Study Area. In August 2023, the BLM issued a [notice](#) seeking comment on a small expansion to the project that would include a new staging area and an extension of the proposed access road. If the currently pending lawsuit is successful, the BLM will need to go back to the drawing board and fully and lawfully review both the original project proposal and the proposed expansion. **Other documents related to the mining project can be found on the [BLM's official website](#).**

By Dave Becker

Victorian Christmas



Join us Saturday, December 9 from 11 – 4 for Victorian Christmas at the Silver City Museum. We'll have a booth with a nature-themed craft for kids of all ages!

Interested in being a craft volunteer? Contact Emily at Emily.pollom@gmail.com

Big Ditch Outing A Success

Twenty-five birders met for our Birds and Brews in early October at Big Ditch Park in the late afternoon and meandered to Little Toad Creek Brewery for food, drinks and socializing. Bird activity was minimal along the Ditch path that warm day, but we especially enjoyed watching a Broad-tailed Hummingbird feeding on Salvia flowers. It was a pleasant evening appreciating our urban park and it's almost certain that each person met someone new. Hooray for new birding friends! Hope to see you all again soon!



Susy Slade photo

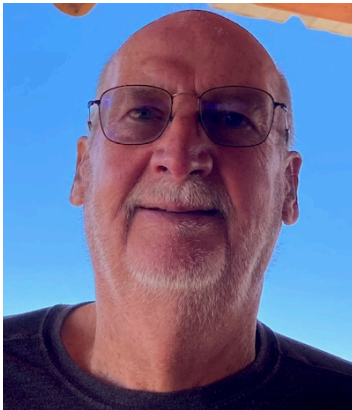
Meet Our Elected Officers



Linda Moore, President

Some of you will probably be disappointed in me as the President of the SWNMA Board. Yes, I love birds and have worked with them in some capacity for many years. But I don't have a life list, I don't really keep track of rare

birds in the area and I usually don't go out of my way to see them if I do hear about them. I consider myself to be a decent birder, but certainly not a great one. I spent many years working with raptors and considering LBBs (little brown birds) to be food for them, and I still struggle with identification of many of those, especially sparrows. Despite all that, I absolutely love going out birding, especially when I can go with someone better than me so I can learn more. That is where I hope to have some influence on SWNMA, for the organization to continue to reach out and provide people with the opportunity to get outside, enjoy nature, and learn a little something about our feathered friends. I truly believe that people will protect that which they enjoy and are familiar with. I hope to meet many of you during my tenure as president, and I look forward to socializing and sharing birding stories and experiences with you.



**Treasurer:
Ian Robinson**

Ian is a retired wildlife veterinarian and conservationist. He moved to Silver City with his wife Dawn Smith in late 2019. Born in England, and a life-long birder, Ian moved to the US in 2006. He is now enjoying learning about the wildlife, and particularly the birds of the Southwest.



Co-Secretaries: Beth Cable and Dave McDonald

Beth enjoys a variety of activities in both work and play: Silver City Watershed Keepers, practicing and teaching yoga, watching birds, science teaching and nature discovery, running, hiking, looking for snow, exploring wild places, jumping into cold water and spending time with her husband Dave McDonald and their dog, Finn. Dave retired from the University of Wyoming and moved to Silver City with his wife, Beth Cable, in 2021. He taught Animal Behavior at UW and did research for 40 years on the social behavior of Neotropical birds (manakins). He is an ardent birder and enjoys sharing the joys of birding with others (e.g., by doing classes for WILL). He also enjoys spending time at their house in Ecuador.



**Membership:
Susan Slade**

Susan and her husband Ken relocated to Silver City in 2010 after retirement from their employment in southern California, she from a K-12 school district and he from construction. Susan became fascinated with birds early, when visiting a bird sanctuary while completing a girl scout badge. She has been a backyard birder ever since. In retirement she is happily learning more about the wonderful birds of southwest New Mexico. She admires the way local Audubon is helping students and the community learn more about birds and the environment that supports them. Susan also enjoys gardening and volunteers with local music and arts groups.

Birding for Everybody and Every Body

While SWNM Audubon believes that birding is for everybody, not everybody can easily go birding around here. Many local birding spots require climbing into canyons, crossing creeks, or hiking along uneven terrain. So, we're starting conversations about the accessibility of natural areas and ways to bring the benefits of birding to all of our members. Our October 8th Big Sit event at Silva Creek was designed with this in mind.

According to the organizer, SWNM Audubon programs committee member Emily Pollom, "The Big Sit is important because it highlights not only community science but also the ways that community science hasn't been accessible, but could be."

The Big Sit, founded in 1992 by the New Haven (CT) Bird Club, challenges participants to identify birds they see from a 17-foot diameter circle. Ninety-eight Big Sit circles registered this year, including one in Guatemala and one in Azerbaijan. Ours was the only one in New Mexico.

Emily praised the Gila Native Plant Society for their care in making Silva Creek Botanical Garden an accessible space, an ideal location for our first Big Sit. In this year's inaugural event, participants identified 26 species, including five different woodpeckers. We plan to make this event an annual tradition for hanging out with old and new friends and finding birds.

SWNM Audubon will continue to share resources and ideas to help our birding community become more

welcoming to everyone. Led by Emily, Board members have completed comprehensive checklists of the accessibility features of several local birding spots, including Mangas Springs, Iron Bridge, Silva Creek, San Vicente, Big Ditch Trail, Little Cherry Creek, Gila River Preserve/Lichty Center, and River Ranch Wildlife Management Area. These checklists are now available on the [Birdability](#) map, allowing people to access this information ahead of time, and to help them decide if a location is one they would like to visit.

We also plan to continue this commitment MORE..... through:

- Providing accessible events (e.g., the Big Sit)
- Posting accessibility information in our bird outing announcements and on our Birding Locations web page
- Expanding the collection of Birdability maps for hot spots in our region
- Supporting groups and organizations seeking to improve the accessibility of natural areas in our region

Are you interested in being a part of this work? We are looking to hear from members who experience accessibility challenges and for members interested in expanding our list of Birdability maps. Please send an email to swnmaudubon@gmail.com and we'll be in touch.

