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# THE RAVENS

## Newsletter

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

May — June — July 2024 Vol. 57, No. 3

### Program— Friday, MAY 3

#### A Guide to Identification of Birds of the Lower Gila Valley for Beginning and Intermediate Birders



Photo: D. McDonald

Hang on to your binoculars! Susan and Bill will provide general identification tips for the many bird species which occur in the Lower Gila Valley of NM during the breeding season, including quail, ducks, cuckoos, nightjars, hummingbirds, raptors, owls, woodpeckers, flycatchers, swallows, titmice, wrens, vireos, jays, wood warblers, orioles, jays, tanagers, buntings, finches, and more. Program starts at 7 pm at WNMU Harlan Hall, room 111.

### Field Trip—SUNDAY, MAY 5

#### Lower Gila River Valley Bird Outing

Sunday,  
May 5:  
7:45 am - noon



Photo: D. McDonald

Let's put our May 3 program knowledge to use in the field! Susan Mittelstadt, Linda Moore, and William (Bill) Norris will be our guides to several birding hotspots in the lower Gila River Valley, including Mangas Springs, the Lichy Center (with a stop at the 211 bridge along the way), and the Box Canyon, if time allows. Please wear a hat & hiking shoes/boots and bring binoculars and water. (We'll have additional binoculars on hand if you need a pair). Parking is limited! Please consider ride-sharing.

Location: Meet at the east end of Mangas Creek Lane off of Hwy 180 (near mile marker 96) at 7:45 am. We will caravan from this site to other birding sites.

Ride-sharing from Silver City: Meet at the WNMU Fine Arts Center parking lot (see [campus map](#)), ready to depart at 7:15 am.

Accessibility info: Except for the Lichy Center, the majority of the sites on this outing are on flat surfaces. Restrooms are available at the Lichy Center. Full descriptions of each site can be found on our [Locations](#) web page.

### Election to change our chapter name

**Birds are in trouble.** Since 1970, the population of North American birds has dropped by nearly 30%; that's three billion birds, an alarming number. *Source: Rosenberg KV, Dokter AM, Blancher PJ, Sauer JR, Smith AC, Smith PA, Stanton JC, Panjabi A, Helft L, Parr M, Marra PP. Decline of the North American avifauna. Science. 2019 Oct 4;366(6461):120-124. doi: 10.1126/science.aaw1313. Epub 2019 Sep 19.*

**Birds need our help.** Our chapter exists to do what we can to stop this trend: raising appreciation of the stunning array of birds that live in our area and bring joy to our lives and, in turn, inspiring meaningful differences in bird conservation and habitat protection policies and practices.

**We need to work in community on behalf of birds. Our name needs to reflect that.** The National Audubon Society (NAS) and local chapters across the country have spent time over the last few years learning alarming truths about the commitments and actions of our namesake, John James Audubon, and grappling with what this learning means for our organization. *For background, see the FAQ section below*

Though the NAS Board voted in March 2023 to retain its original name, chapters across the country have been in the process of changing theirs.

Over the last year, our SWNMA chapter board has been

(ELECTION CONTINUED ON LAST PAGE)



Give Grandly is a wonderful opportunity to support the non-profits you love. We hope that SWNMA is one of them! After a few years hiatus, SWNMA will once again be onsite at the Mainstreet Plaza (near the Big Ditch between 7th and 8th Streets) on Saturday May 4th from 9 to 2. Stop by and have some fun with our new 'Wheel of Birds' and grab some activity sheets for the kids. In person gifts on that day can be made with cash or checks. If credit cards are more to your liking, or if you can't make it that day, visit our online donation site at: <https://www.givegrandly.org/organizations/southwestern-new-mexico-audubon-society>

The site will be active from April 20th thru May 20th. Your gift will help SWNMA continue our efforts to protect birds and their habitats, and to offer programs and activities that are free and open to the public.

# 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.*

## Ongoing conservation issues:

### National Audubon and the Neotropics Migratory Bird Conservation Act

Did you know that New Mexico is one of 7 priority states for NAS's plan and ranks 5<sup>th</sup> nationally in birdwatching with 365 migratory bird species?

NAS is working to promote and pass legislation to protect both winter and summer habitats for migrating birds, in the US and in Central and South America and in the Caribbean, through the *The Migratory Birds of the Americas Conservation Enhancements Act (H.R. 4389)* which would reauthorize the program and increase funding for grants to help declining populations recover and support more conservation projects. This latest legislation aims to increase funding for projects in North, South and Central America that will benefit these far-ranging species in all their habitats.

We'll be promoting this effort at public events locally. Want to get involved? Here's a link to the Action Center: <https://act.audubon.org/a/nmbca-2024>

### Proposed Diamond A Ranch Federal Land Exchange

This proposal, if approved, would increase public access to the Gila River near Middle Box via Selby Ranch land, the Gila Wilderness via the Heart Bar lands, as well as the Peloncillo Mountains, and Gray Peak Wilderness Study Area near Rodeo, which has previously not been publicly accessible. It would also help protect Chiricahua leopard frog and Gila trout populations within the lands being exchanged.

SWNMA supports this proposal based on the above information and the value of access to these areas to birders to enjoy the numerous avian species there.

### UPDATE: Proposed Changes to Military Operations Areas (MOAs)

The timeline for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement has been pushed back from Spring 2024 to July/August 2024. We're looking at ways we can help show why these changes will have tremendous negative impact on wildlife and our enjoyment of our wilderness areas. We'll be in touch with those who showed interest last year but look forward to hearing from others interested in helping.

- Dawn Smith

### M.H. Dutch Salmon Greater Gila Wild and Scenic River Act [H.R. 1611, S.776] Legislation Update April 2024

This legislation, aimed to protect parts of the Gila River as a nationally recognized Wild and Scenic River, has not yet advanced in congress. The latest hope is that it will be included in a future public lands package, along with environmental bills from other states thus receiving broader support.

While the bill has strong support of the New Mexico delegation, including bill sponsors Rep. Gabe Vasquez and Sen. Martin Heinrich, members of congress still need to hear that we continue to support their efforts in passing this important legislation. Visit the [NM Wild website](#) for background information, talking points and actions to help with this effort to protect wildlife, clean water, and natural habitats.

- Andy Payne

### Update: Feral Cattle in the Gila Wilderness, April 2024

Near the end of February 2023, the Gila National Forest finished a major effort to remove feral cattle from the Gila Wilderness. Cattle had been roaming the wilderness for decades, increasing in numbers, and destroying critical habitat—especially along riparian areas. Although it took the Forest Service many years to respond to this crisis, their action has been applauded by the conservation community. It's a good example of the Forest Service responding to public comments on an important environmental concern and how effective our voices can be.

While 153 cattle were removed, some still remain (est 16). The Forest Service has said they remain committed to removing all remaining cattle. This commitment needs to be monitored to ensure that the feral cattle population does not grow via reproduction, thus continuing to degrade habitat.

- Andy Payne



Photo by Jonah Sneed



GILA WILDERNESS  
1924 - 2024

Gila Wilderness  
Centennial  
Celebration

The Gila Wilderness became the world's first designated wilderness on June 3, 1924. With a host of community partners, including our chapter, the U.S. Forest has planned events to celebrate the centennial starting in February with the Natural History of the Gila Symposium, closing with the Gila River Festival in October.

The main event will be the **Gila Wilderness Centennial Week, May 27 – June 3**. Events that week include bird and botany outings, a speaker series, film screenings, art, music, primitive skills demonstrations, and a crosscut competition. Other events held throughout the year include hikes, stargazing, youth murals, trainings, books, and other community activities. Check out the full event calendar at the US Forest Service Gila 100 events page.

**Be sure to check out information and registration for three late May/Early June bird outings near and in the Gila Wilderness. And mark your calendar for the main celebration, Saturday, June 1 at Silver City's Gough Park. SWNM Audubon will be there!**

# Annual Joint Picnic — Noon — Sunday, May 19 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 19th at noon.

Audubon supplies wieners, brats, condiments, buns and GNPS rents the venue, provides beverages and cooks.

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



Global Big Day is an annual celebration of the birds around you. No matter where you are, join us virtually on May 11, 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. 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.

## 62<sup>nd</sup> Annual Silver City Bird Count 16 December 2023



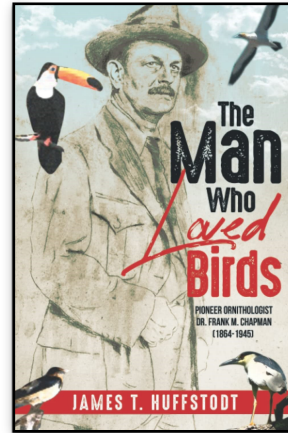
The 2023 CBC total included 114 species and 6,334 individual birds. We had the highest route participation ever in 2023. Also, we had the highest species count ever beating 2020 by 8 species!

In 2022 we had 93 species and 6364 individuals counted so we saw a major jump in species with about the same number of individual birds. It is interesting to note we are maybe due for another big peak year (9000+ individuals) in the coming years. These years 1981, 1999, 2006, 2015 all have unusually high numbers of Dark-eyed Juncos, White-crowned Sparrows, or Chipping Sparrows. The peaks occur when we have these high sparrow numbers which have been lacking as of late.

For lists and more details go to:

<https://swnmaudubon.org/bird-counts>

*John Gorey, Compiler*



### BOOK REVIEW

#### The Man Who Loved Birds

What were ornithology and bird studies like in the late 1800's and early 1900's? How does it relate to our modern-day studies and conservation? James Huffstodt takes us on a journey of the life, accomplishments, and legacy of Dr. Frank M. Chapman. Today, Chapman is best known as the

Father of the Christmas Bird Count, but there is so much more: ornithologist, museum curator, researcher, explorer, artist, photographer, speaker, and conservationist. He wrote popular articles, books, and guides, and began Bird-Lore magazine which later became Audubon. A Renaissance man of the bird world, his life's work had a great impact on modern-day research and conservation efforts.

Mr. Huffstodt's biography offers a well-researched, satisfying, and rich overview of Chapman's work, influence, and research. He creates a narrative that takes you along with the great explorer and has me wanting to read Dr. Chapman's acclaimed works. I highly recommend this book to everyone who loves birds.

*By Jackie Blurton*



### March 21: Birds & Brews

After sprinkles and wind blew through Silver City the day before, we strolled to Big Ditch park to see what birds were out and about. There was plenty of foraging activity behind the Lion's Club, including many Yellow-rumped Warblers, a White-breasted Nuthatch, Pine Siskins (zzzziiipp!) and Black Phoebes. To our delight, a Hairy and Ladder-backed Woodpecker were within feet of each other for a nice visual comparison. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S165533040>

We made our way to The Toad for food, drinks, and a little bird trivia. Do YOU know how many (verified) bird species have been found in NM (fyi, this number changes as a designated committee reviews info)??

# Election to change our chapter name

(CONTINUED from FRONT PAGE)

in discussion on this issue and has concluded that our name needs to reflect our values.

While the name “Audubon” means *birds* and *guided field trips* to some, to others, the name represents a harmful legacy of racism and white supremacy. Knowing what we know now, our actions need to show that we value making our organization a place where everyone in our diverse local community belongs and is respected.

We believe changing our chapter name is the right thing to do. It’s also a step toward engaging more of our local community, broadening support to address the critical challenges that lay ahead.

**The SWNMA Board proposes changing our name to *Bird Alliance of Southwestern New Mexico*.**

Bird conservation work is bigger than our corner of the state and we want to stay connected to that work. Therefore, we’re interested in joining up with the many chapters across the country and in our state who have adopted the name *Bird Alliance*, including Central New Mexico, Portland, Tahoma, San Francisco, Detroit, Chicago, and Madison

We’re excited to follow their lead in using a name that clearly reflects who we are and what we do:

**Bird:** Birds are what bring us together; putting that in our name helps others know right away what we’re about.

**Alliance:** We are part of a network of diverse groups and individuals working together toward the same end.

**Now is the time to hear from chapter members.**

Because our organization’s name means something to members and requires a change in our constitution, **we are bringing this proposal to chapter members for a vote.**

**Voting will be open to all members who have paid chapter dues between May 1, 2023 - May 10, 2024.** [If you are unsure of your membership status, be sure to contact our membership chair at [swnmaudubonmembership@gmail.com](mailto:swnmaudubonmembership@gmail.com). *Please don't wait until the last minute to do so!!*]

We are using a secure system, Election Buddy, to run this important election. Chapter members should expect to receive (by email or post) a unique voter number and instructions to vote by May 1.

**Voting will open at 8:00 am Wednesday, May 1 and close at midnight on Tuesday, May 14.**

## FAQs

**What actions did John James Audubon take that led to this name change discussion?**

While John James Audubon contributed significantly to the care and scientific understanding of birds, he also promoted scientific research in “proving” white supremacy (including stealing indigenous human remains), was an enslaver, and discredited efforts toward the abolition of slavery.

We encourage chapter members to engage in their own learning about John James Audubon’s actions and commitments that have prompted this discussion. Below are articles our chapter Board found to be most enlightening:



**Saturday, May 25: 8:00 - 11:00 am**

Join Susan Mittelstadt in birding this rich Luna County Wildlife Management area on the Mimbres River. The site includes a variety of habitats, so we should expect to see a broad range of birds. Check out the [May eBird list for this site](#) to see the nearly 130 species there this time of year!

Please note that we will need to cross about a 10' span of the Mimbres River by foot to access the main birding areas! Plan footwear accordingly!!

**Getting there:** First find the entrance to City of Rocks State Park and then continue NE on Highway 61 for three miles. Just past the Luna County sign, look for New Mexico Game and Fish signage on the south side of the road at what appears to be a residence. *Just before mile marker 7.*

**Ride-sharing from Silver City:** Meet at the Grant County Convention Center (3031 Highway 180 East; next to Ace Hardware) in time to depart at 7:15.

**RSVP REQUESTED!** To ensure that SWNMA has sufficient access permits, please RSVP (email [swnmaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:swnmaudubon@gmail.com)) if you plan to attend!

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- [The Myth of John James Audubon](#)
  - [The \(Literal\) Skeletons In The Closet Of American Ornithology](#)
  - [What Do We Do About John James Audubon?](#)

**Does a name change mean that our chapter will no longer be a part of National Audubon Society?** Like other chapters changing their names, we will remain a chapter in the National Audubon Society network. While we disagree with the NAS Board decision to retain its name, we want to stay connected to the collaborative power of the 450 individual chapters working together toward the same goals.

**Why is the American Ornithological Society changing its naming practices?** Over the past several years, the American Ornithological Society (AOS) has also been examining its exclusionary history. In November 2023, the AOS determined that it would change all of the English names of 70-80 bird species named after people, refocusing attention back to the qualities of the birds. According to President Colleen Handel, “There is power in a name, and some English bird names have associations with the past that continue to be exclusionary and harmful today. We need a much more inclusive and engaging scientific process that focuses attention on the unique features and beauty of the birds themselves.” See [American Ornithological Society Will Change the English Names of Bird Species Named After People](#) for more information.