

# The Roadrunner



**Newsletter of the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society**

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## El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society General Meetings

**Monday, October 21, 2013, 7:00 p.m.  
Centennial Museum, at UTEP**

### Magic of the Snowy Owl

Get in the spooky October spirit and join the local Audubon Society as we watch a spectacular DVD about Snowy Owls. This documentary film in the Nature series follows a pair of nesting Snowy Owls as they try to raise 5



young under difficult and challenging conditions on the Arctic tundra. You'll also learn about the challenges the filmmakers faced as they documented this fascinating story. As always, everyone is welcome. Simple refreshments will be offered.

### THE ELECTRONIC ROADRUNNER

THE ROADRUNNER is now also available electronically as a PDF file. If you would like to receive our newsletter in this way via e-mail, just send a note to John Sproul at [jsproul@utep.edu](mailto:jsproul@utep.edu).

**Monday, November 18, 2013, 7:00 p.m.  
Centennial Museum, at UTEP**

### To Be Announced

We are still in the process of obtaining a speaker for the November meeting at the time of publication. Sometimes these "To Be Announced" presentations are among our most successful. If you are wanting an evening out with some wonderful people, put this meeting on your calendar now.



### Albertsons ...

Every time you swipe your Community Partners Card, you earn cash for the Audubon Society.



Now isn't that a good reason to shop at Albertsons?



The Audubon Foundation of Texas represents Texas Audubon chapters in the Earth Share of Texas payroll-deduction plan for charitable giving.

**Earth Share OF TEXAS**

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 Programs: Elizabeth Chase 539-1191  
 Conservation: Luis Sanchez, 599-7381  
 Field Trips: Mark Perkins 637-3521  
 Hospitality: Janet Perkins, 581-2849  
 Way & Means: vacant

**El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society**

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**President: Scott Cutler, 581- 6071**  
**Vice President: Jane Fowler, 598-2448**  
**Secretary/Treasurer: Eddie Chew, 587-9589**

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 Education: Kathleen Whelen, 751-2408  
 Publications: Jane Fowler, 598-2448  
 Newsletter Editor: Kathleen Whelen, 751-2408  
 Sanctuary: John Sproul, 545-5157

**TAXONOMIC NOTES**

The 54th Supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) *Check-list of North American Birds* appears in the July 2013 issue of the AOU's journal, *The Auk*. It summarizes decisions the AOU's Committee on Classification and Nomenclature—North and Middle America made between May 1, 2012 and May 15, 2013 regarding changes in the *Check-list*.

With respect to West Texas birds, the changes are fairly limited. There are changes in the linear sequence on the *Check-list* within the sandpiper (Scolopacidae), mimic thrush (Mimidae), and finch (Fringillidae) families. The scientific name for Flammulated Owl changes from *Otus flammeolus* to *Psilosops flammeolus*. And the bird formerly known as Sage Sparrow is now split into 2 species.

The former Sage Sparrow comprised 5 subspecies. One is now considered a separate species, the **Sagebrush Sparrow** (*Artemisospiza nevadensis*). Sagebrush Sparrows nest mainly in the Great Basin, and their winter range includes our region. The other 4 subspecies remain together as *Artemisospiza belli*, which is now known as **Bell's Sparrow**. Bell's Sparrows are resident in California and Baja California, and one subspecies (*A. b. canescens*) also ranges in winter into western Arizona.



**Conservation Organizations**

Second Chance Wildlife Rescue  
 (915) 920-7867

Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue  
<http://www.cdwr.org>

El Paso Zoo 521-1850  
[www.elpasozoo.org](http://www.elpasozoo.org)

Keystone Heritage Park 581-7920  
[www.keystoneheritagepark.org](http://www.keystoneheritagepark.org)

Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park  
 (575) 524-3334 [www.asombro.org](http://www.asombro.org)

Friends of Rio Bosque 747-8663  
[www.riobosque.org](http://www.riobosque.org)

Southwest Environmental Center  
 (575) 522-5552  
[www.wildmesquite.org](http://www.wildmesquite.org)

Franklin Mt. Wilderness Coalition  
[www.franklinmountains.org/](http://www.franklinmountains.org/)

## AT FEATHER LAKE

When the City of El Paso completed excavating the Feather Lake basin in 1969, it wasn't known as Feather Lake. Formally, it was the Mesa Drain Interceptor Detention Basin. Informally, it was sometimes called the North Loop holding pond. More often, it was called Water Table Lake. Why? The basin had been excavated down to the water table. In those days, the water table was high enough that, even when there was no surface inflow, groundwater usually maintained the lake.

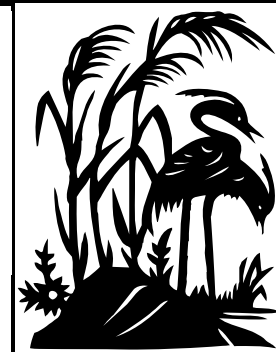
Today, especially with the drought and attendant groundwater pumping of recent years, the water table is lower, and those conditions no longer prevail. This year, in both late July and late August, storm water flooded the Feather Lake basin. Both times the water soaked in quickly, and the lake was dry again in less than a week.

Then came the storms of mid-September. On Sep 10, the basin was dry. By Sep 13, the water was 5.76 feet deep, the deepest it has been since it reached 6.46 feet deep on Sep 5, 2006. Feather Lake is a detention basin, designed to capture and hold large storm flows then release them gradually downstream. Most of the water drained from the lake over the next 4 days until it reached the 2-foot level, at which point a low dam at the outlet keeps water in the lake.

Still, the lake continued to drop as the water soaked into the ground. By Sep 24, it was down to 0.62 feet. By Oct 1, it was dry again. Ah, for the days of Water Table Lake!

Our next workday at Feather Lake will be **Sat., October 12**, starting at **2 p.m.** Once again, water conditions will dictate whether we work in the basin or the uplands. Feather Lake is located at 9500 North Loop at Bordeaux in El Paso, 0.3 miles west of Americas Ave.

## Audubon at RIO BOSQUE WETLANDS PARK

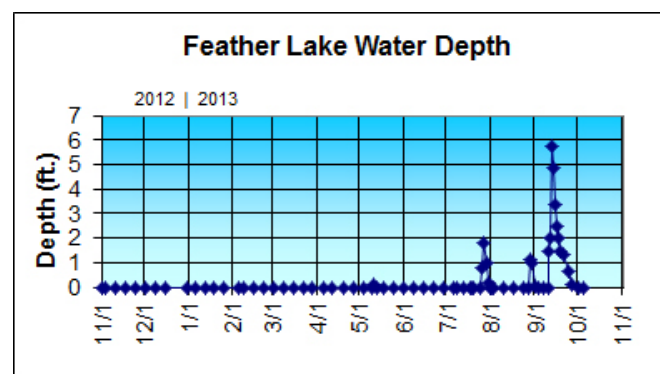


Rio Bosque continues to be mostly dry; water deliveries are not likely to resume before November. For up-to-date information on the park's birds and its water conditions, check [www.riobosque.org](http://www.riobosque.org).

Upcoming free walking tours:

- 8 a.m., Sat., October 12 (Bird tour)**
- 4 p.m., Sun., October 20 (Introductory tour)**
- 3 p.m., Sun., November 10 (Intro tour)**
- 8 a.m., Sat., November 23 (Bird tour)**

The meeting place is a bridge crossing the Riverside Canal. To get there from I-10, take Americas Ave. (Loop 375) to Pan American Drive, turn left onto Pan American and travel 1.5 miles. Information: 747-8663.



**Notes From the Field**

In early August we visited Rattlesnake Springs. We met up with birders from other areas looking for the **Yellow-green Vireo**. No luck, but we did see **White-eyed vireo, Gray Hawk, Painted and Indigo bunting, Vermilion Flycatchers** and **Yellow-throated Vireo**, just to mention a few.



Also in August we went to the reservoirs down the valley. The reservoirs were almost dry with lots of mud flats. We saw thousands of **Wilson’s Phalaropes, White Pelicans, Tricolored Herons** and lots of **sandpipers** and other waders.

In September we traveled to the Sod Farms and Pancho Villa State Park. This was just after the heavy rains we had in El Paso and the area was flooded with lots of ponds. There were lots of waders and shore birds. We did see a **Red-necked Phalarope** and **Baird’s Sandpiper**, and of all places to see an **Osprey**, we saw one in Columbus, NM.

In late September, we went to Cloudcroft. We visited Karr Canyon and Bluff Springs. We had a good turn-out of 18 people and cool temperatures. The aspens were starting to change and looked beautiful. We saw lots of **Steller’s Jays** and lots of migrating hawks overhead.

**Saturday, October 19, 2013  
Percha, Caballo and Elephant Butte  
State Parks.**

We’ll travel north on I25. We’ll be looking for **gulls** and other water birds on the lakes and **grebes**. Percha is one of the top birding spots of New Mexico and we’ll check it out to see what’s there.



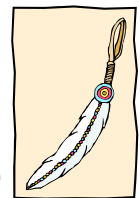
Meet at the south-west corner of the Outlet Mall at Transmountain and Talbot (Talbot entrance to the Mall) at 7:00 a.m.



Bring lunch, drinks, snacks. Nonmembers and beginners are welcome.  
**Contact Mark Perkins at 637-3521.**

**Hueco Tanks Interpretive Fair  
October 19 & 20, 2013  
8:00am-6:00pm**

The fair is a free, family-oriented event focused on natural education and cultural understanding. Tours begin at 8 a.m. both days of the fair; mildly to moderately strenuous; suitable for all age groups. After 10 a.m. both days, visitors can browse informational booths on the environment, local history, desert wildlife, area parks, and native plants.



Performances and presentations begin after 11 a.m. both days of the fair. Families will enjoy local dancers, Native American dancing and drumming, and more. An evening program will start after 6 p.m.  
Saturday, October 19.

## Field Trips

### November 8-11, 2013. Ft. Davis Birds and Stars!



There are many areas to bird in the Ft. Davis area. Balmorhea State Park, Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute and Davis Mountains Preserve to name a few. Most of these areas

have a modest entrance fee. We have gained special access to the entire Madera Canyon Road which is on the Nature Conservancy property. We will also visit the Marathon Post.

Some birds we might see are **Red-naped Sapsucker, Montezuma Quail, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Lark Buntings, Sagebrush Sparrows** and **Osprey**.

If conditions are good for night viewing, we will go the Star Party on Saturday night at the McDonald



Observatory. Several large telescopes will be available for viewing and it will be quite entertaining. Mark and Janet will go up on November 8 and if anyone wants to carpool or caravan with them, let them know. Join us for any or all activities.

**We won't make the trip unless we have at least 6 people confirmed. Contact Mark Perkins at 637-3521 for a detailed itinerary.**

### December 14 and 15, 2013. Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge

(provided the government closure has been resolved).

**Sandhill Cranes, Snow Geese and ducks galore!** Also **Bald Eagles** are seen often. Mark and Janet will go up on Friday, December 13 for the fly-in if anyone wants to join them.



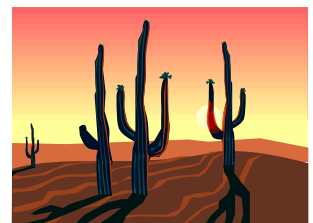
On Saturday, the group will view the fly-out and bird the area. On Sunday, there is a possibility we will go to the Rosy-Finch banding on Sandia Peak near Albuquerque. More on that later. We need to have confirmed at least 6 people in order to make the trip.

Contact Mark Perkins at 637-3521.

### January 18-21, 2014 – Phoenix! Martin Luther King 3-day weekend.

We had such a great trip last year that we want to go again. We'll have new birding spots this year as well as visiting some of the areas we went to last year.

Let Mark know as soon as possible (637-3521) if you want to go.



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**National Audubon Society  
Chapter Membership Application.**

Yes, I'd like to join. Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society and the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Chapter.

Send AUDUBON magazine and my membership card to address below.

Check for \$20.00 enclosed payable to National Audubon Society

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

**National Audubon Society  
Chapter Membership Data Center  
PO Box 422250  
Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250**

**Local Chapter Code C1ZW100Z**

**Dates to Remember Call Mark Perkins for details 637-3521**

October

Sat 12: **Feather Lake**  
12 & 20: **Rio Bosque**  
Mon 14: **Board Meeting**  
Sat 19: **Percha Dam area**  
**Hueco Tanks Fair**  
Mon 21: **General Meeting**

November

8-11: **Ft. Davis, Birds & Stars**  
10 & 23: **Rio Bosque**  
Mon 11: **Board Meeting**  
Mon 18: **General Meeting**



December

Mon 2: **Board Meeting**  
14 & 15: **Bosque Del Apache**  
Mon 9: **General Meeting**

January

18 & 21: **Phoenix**

El Paso/Trans-Pecos Local **Chapter Only Membership** Your \$15.00 will help support chapter activities & you'll receive

***The Roadrunner*** delivered to your mailbox.

Make checks payable to the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society

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