



# The Roadrunner

Newsletter of the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society

El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society

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**No General Meetings  
June, July**

## BIRDATHON 2016 UPDATE

Congratulations to all on a successful Birdathon again this year. We especially thank our sponsors and counters without whom the Birdathon would not be possible. We appreciate your participation and support for our conservation and education endeavors. Thanks, too, for our hard-working members who handle the details--Jane Fowler and Berttye Barnhart who handled the mailings.



As of May 22, our total receipts and pledges were \$5,357. There may still be a few checks yet to come in this year. The money will go to chapter operations, Feather Lake Wildlife Sanctuary, Rio Bosque Wetlands Park, Audubon Texas and the El Paso Zoo.

Our annual potluck for Birdathon was graciously hosted by Janet and Mark Perkins. A good group was present as species seen by at least one counter were tallied. A total of 160 species were seen, compared to 151 last year.



The winners for the highest number of species seen by an individual or party were John Kiseda, Richard Hermosillo, and Joe Cancellare with 111. Very good! The prize for the most money

raised went to John Sproul. The most unusual bird this year was the Ovenbird seen by Jim Paton.

A big THANK YOU to all of our participants and sponsors!

Want to make sure your birding observations count towards more than a sense of satisfaction? Welcome to the future of birding!



You can enter your bird sightings with [eBird](#). Your observations are then added to others in the eBird database that scientists and citizens use to understand more about bird distributions.

eBird was developed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, and it enables anyone to enter bird sightings from anywhere in North America and explore the results.

By sharing your sighting with others through eBird, you'll make it possible to complete the picture we need to better understand and protect birds well into the future.

### El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society

#### Officers

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

#### Committees

**Conservation:** Luis Sanchez, 599-7381  
**Education:** Kathleen Whelen, 820-1895  
**Field Trips:** Mark Perkins 637-3521  
**Hospitality:** Janet Perkins, 637-5269  
**Membership:** Roxanne Schroeder, 533-0061  
**Newsletter Editor:** Kathleen Whelen, 820-1895  
**Programs:** Susie Schneider, 542-3041  
**Publications:** Jane Fowler, 598-2448  
**Publicity:** Janet Perkins, 637- 5269  
**Sanctuary:** John Sproul, 545-5157  
**Way & Means:** vacant

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



#### **Around the Community:**

##### **El Paso Zoo**

Enjoy the Zoo after-hours with extended summer hours on the **third Saturday of the month in June, July and August.** Zoo hours will be extended from 9:30 a.m. - 8:30 p.m.



Membership office and ticket booth close at 7 p.m. Staff will begin to take animals off exhibit at 7:45 p.m. Zoo grounds will close at 8:30 p.m.

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##### **Texas Parks & Wildlife**

**Paws for Predators**  
**Mountain Lions and Wolves**



**Saturday, June 11th, 2016**  
**10:00am-12:00pm**  
**Memorial Garden Center, 3105 Grant Ave**

Join us for these informative presentations on two of our favorite predators, Mountain Lions and Wolves. Special guest speakers will share their expertise in the field of study surrounding these two creatures! The first hour will be all about Mountain Lions and wild cats followed by a second hour focusing on the Mexican Gray Wolves which inhabit nearby New Mexico.

#### **Conservation Organizations**

**Chihuahuan Desert Education Coalition**  
[www.chihuahuandesert.org](http://www.chihuahuandesert.org)

**Second Chance Wildlife Rescue**  
[wildliferescueelpaso.org](http://wildliferescueelpaso.org)  
Josie Karam (915) 920-7867

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

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

**Asombro Institute**  
(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

The very predictable pattern at Feather Lake continues. The basin has been dry all year. We eagerly await the start of the rainy season and hope some serious storms can flood the basin.

The one advantage to the dry basin is the ease of working in it. Boy Scouts have 3 Eagle service projects scheduled for this year within the basin. The first, led by Eagle candidate Daven Cheu of Troop 4, is now in progress and involves clearing the trail on part of the vegetation-choked inner berm within the basin.

Our next workday at Feather Lake will be **Sat., June 4**, starting at **8 a.m.** We'll help with the work taking place on the inner berm and remove trash from within the basin.



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



After a 2-month dry period, Rio Bosque's wetland cells began receiving water May 1.

Water birds responded quickly. American White Pelican, Tricolored Heron, Snowy Plover and Willet were all among the May visitors.

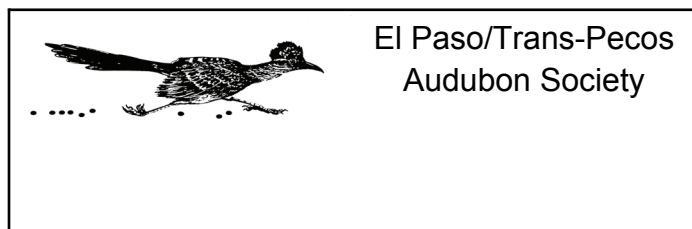
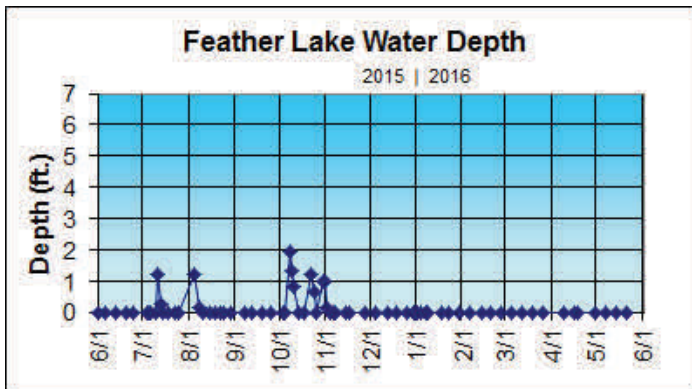
Visit [www.riobosque.org](http://www.riobosque.org) for up-to-date information on the park's birds and water conditions.



Upcoming free walking tours:

- 8 a.m., Sun., June 5 (Introductory tour)**
- 6:30 a.m., Sat., June 11 (Bird tour)**
- 7 a.m., Sat., July 9 (Bird tour)**
- 8 a.m., Sun., July 17 (Introductory tour)**

The meeting place for these tours 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.



## SOUTHWESTERN WILLOW FLYCATCHER UNDER FIRE

In the 1940s and 1950s, members of the El Paso Bird Study Club and its successor, the El Paso Audubon Society, reported Traill's Flycatchers nesting at several sites along the Rio Grande in far southern New Mexico near El Paso. Most of these reports were from Randel's Pool, along the west bank of the river 0.5 miles downstream of the Country Club Road bridge. The last report came in 1958, when longtime El Paso birder Lena McBee reported 2 pairs nesting at Randel's Pool "as of old." In 1973, Traill's Flycatcher was split into two species, Willow and Alder flycatcher. Today, we would consider the Traill's Flycatchers that once nested near El Paso to be the southwestern subspecies of the Willow Flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*).

In 1995, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) listed the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), primarily due population declines caused by loss and modification of the southwestern riparian habitats on which it depends. In 2014, in a [5-year status review](#), the USFWS confirmed that this listing was still appropriate. Now, the USFWS has launched another status review. It is studying whether to remove the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher from the federal list of endangered species. Why the new review?

In February 2015, [Robert M. Zink](#) of the University of Minnesota published a paper in *The Condor*, the journal of the Cooper Ornithological Society, entitled "Genetics, morphology, and ecological niche modeling do not support the subspecies status of the endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*)." In it he states, "I suggest that the Willow Flycatchers of the Southwest represent peripheral populations of an otherwise widespread species that do not merit subspecific recognition, and are therefore inappropriately listed as endangered under the ESA."

Dr. Zink is known to view the concept of subspecies with skepticism, especially as it applies to conservation of rare or endangered species. He has questioned the validity of other listings under the ESA, most notably that of the Coastal California Gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila californica californica*).

The Pacific Legal Foundation (PLF) – a conservative, libertarian nonprofit law firm that frequently challenges federal actions under the ESA – took Dr. Zink's conclusions and ran with them. In August 2015, together with an array of development and livestock interests, the PLF [formally petitioned](#) the USFWS to remove the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher from the list of endangered and threatened wildlife under the ESA. The petition contends the flycatcher should be delisted because 1) it is not a valid subspecies and 2) the threats on which the original listing was based were exaggerated and do not exist.

In its [evaluation of the petition](#), the USFWS concluded the petition does not provide substantial information to support a delisting based on lack of threats to the flycatcher, but that delisting may be warranted based on the information presented contending that it is not a valid subspecies. On March 16, 2016, the USFWS published a notice in the Federal Register initiating a new status review to determine if delisting the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher is, in fact, warranted.

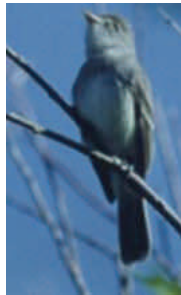
The public-comment period for the status review closed May 16. The National Audubon Society, together with many of its chapters and other conservation organizations, [commented](#) vigorously and effectively in support of retaining endangered status for the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher.



## Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Under Fire

*article continued from page 4*

Figuring prominently in their comments was a commentary that Tad C. Theimer and colleagues at Northern Arizona University published in the May 2016 issue of *The Condor* entitled "Available data support protection of the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher under the Endangered Species Act." Using available data and reanalysis of the same data used by Zink, they concluded there is evidence to support the taxonomic distinctness of the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher and that it should continue to be protected under the ESA.



The status review is now in progress. The next milestone in the process comes August 20, when the USFWS is required under the ESA to provide a 12-month finding on whether the action requested in the petition is warranted.

## Field Trips

### Saturday, June 25, 2016 Cloudcroft, New Mexico

Join us for a day trip in the tall, cool pines of Cloudcroft, NM. Some of the spots we'll bird include Karr Canyon, the Town of Cloudcroft, the Lodge at Cloudcroft, Bluff Springs, and others.



Meet at 6:30 a.m. at the Lowe's parking lot at 4531 Transmountain Road, behind Taco Bell in Northeast El Paso. Bring a lunch. Beginners and nonmembers are welcome.

### Saturday, July 9, 2016

#### Double Sunset Birding in El Paso's Upper Valley



Hopefully, we will see the Mississippi Kites with young, Acorn Woodpeckers, water birds at Keystone Heritage Park, Monk Parakeets, and Violet-crowned Parrots are a possibility.

Meet at Keystone Heritage Park at 4200 Doniphan Drive at 6:30 p.m. Beginners and nonmembers are welcome.



Contact Mark Perkins at 915-637-3521.

### Save the Date White Mountains of Arizona August 5th - 8th, 2016

Join us for this new trip to the White Mountains of Arizona, 285 miles from El Paso. Mark and Janet will arrive on Friday, August 5 and they will bird the afternoon.



Depart on Monday, August 8, to El Paso. Possible areas for birding are in the Greer and Round Valley area, Apache National Forest, White Mountains Apache Reservation, which will require a permit, and the Luna area.



We look forward to seeing you! Contact Mark Perkins for more details at (915) 637-3521 or [jntperk@elp.rr.com](mailto:jntperk@elp.rr.com).

El Paso/Trans-Pecos  
Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 972441  
El Paso, Texas 79997

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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**

June

Sat 4: **Feather Lake Work-day**  
5 & 11: **Rio Bosque**  
Mon 13: **Board Meeting**  
**No General Meeting**  
Sat 25: **Cloudcroft**

July

9 & 17: **Rio Bosque**  
Sat 9: **Double Sunset**  
Mon 11: **Board Meeting**  
**No General Meeting**

August

5 - 8 **White Mountains, AZ**  
Mon 8: **Board Meeting**  
**No General Meeting**



[www.trans-pecos-audubon.com](http://www.trans-pecos-audubon.com)

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

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

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