



The Roadrunner

Newsletter of the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society

El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society

April 15, 2024 7:00pm Online only via Zoom

Record Setting Big Year: Tiffany Kersten

Tiffany Kersten didn't set out to do a Big Year, but after a series of unanticipated and serendipitous events, she suddenly found herself amidst one. As a sexual assault survivor, she spent 2021 traveling to all corners of the country, tallying birds and gifting personal safety alarms to women she met along the way. Her goal was to see 700 species, and to raise awareness of women's safety in the outdoors. She ended up surpassing her goal and setting a new record, with 726 species. In her presentation, Tiffany will lead us through the fear, empowerment, struggles, and healing that all played vital roles in the personal growth she experienced on this wild adventure.

Bio: Tiffany Kersten is a Wisconsin native who now resides in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas. Hooked on birds since age 12, she graduated from Northland College with a B.S. in Wildlife Ecology. She has spent fifteen years of working in conservation and environmental education with organizations including the US Forest Service, US Fish & Wildlife Service, and the Cape May Bird Observatory. After completing a Lower 48 States Big Year in 2021, she founded her own company, Nature Ninja Birding Tours. Learn more at her website <https://tiffanykersten.blogspot.com/>

We will start the Zoom meeting at 6:50 pm, and the presentation will begin at 7 pm. At the speaker's request, this presentation will not be recorded. Please log in by 7 pm to hear her speak! To join via Zoom, please register here to receive the link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZArDQyvrTgsHtL8JYQw-kGFB-zsH3N7odQ>

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El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Website!

Updated information about upcoming field trips, calendar of upcoming events, and recent bird sightings.

www.trans-pecos-audubon.com

The e-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.

**May 20, 2024 7:00pm in person & via Zoom
Centennial Museum at UTEP 500 W. University Ave**

Rio Bosque Wetlands Park: John Sproul, Park Manager

John Sproul, manager of the Rio Bosque Wetlands Park, will be sharing about the trials and tribulations of having a beaver take up residence in the park. This meeting will be hybrid, and registration details will be sent next month. Our meetings are open to everyone, whether you are an Audubon or Sierra Club member or not.

If you are not currently a member, we encourage you to join the national Audubon by clicking <https://act.audubon.org/a/member-today>. Support the El Paso Chapter of the Sierra Club by donating here: <https://www.riograndesierraclub.org/donate/>.



El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society

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The Audubon Foundation of Texas



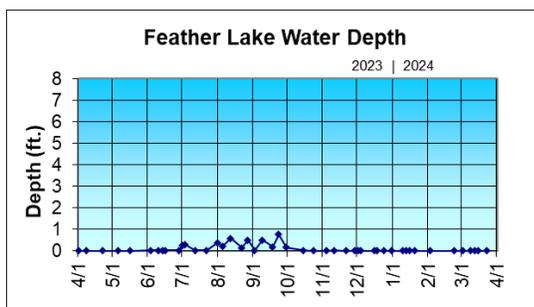
represents Texas
 Audubon chapters in the Earth Share of Texas
 payroll deduction plan for charitable giving.

AT FEATHER LAKE

The irrigation season began in early March. By late March, some irrigation water that had been discharged into the Mesa Drain Interceptor downstream of Feather Lake was back-flowing into the lake, but most of the basin was still dry. New markings on the concrete at the lake's outlet structure suggest El Paso Water's project to install water-control gates at the outlet may be underway soon.

Our next workdays at Feather Lake will be **Sat., April 6** and **Sat., June 8**, both starting at **8 a.m.** We'll be removing saltcedars that have snuck back into the basin. Join us.

Feather Lake is located at 9500 North Loop at Bordeaux in El Paso, 0.3 miles west of Americas Ave.



Want to get involved in the organization? We are looking for new board members, field trip leaders, and help with outreach events. This is a great opportunity to share your love of birds with the rest of El Paso! Please email us at elpasoaudubon@gmail.com for more information.

We are looking for ideas for more presentations. If you have someone in mind, please email us at elpasoaudubon@gmail.com.

Conservation Organizations

Chihuahuan Desert Education Coalition
<http://www.chihuahuadesert.org>

Second Chance Wildlife Rescue
<https://www.secondchancewildliferescue.org>
 Josie Karam (915) 920-7867

El Paso Zoo (915) 212-0966
www.elpasozoo.org

Stick House Sanctuary
<https://www.facebook.com/epwildliferescue>
 (915) 219-2365

Keystone Heritage Park 581-7920
www.keystoneheritagepark.com

Asombro Institute
 (575) 524-3334 www.asombro.org

Friends of Rio Bosque 747-8663
www.riobosque.org

Wildlife for All
 (formerly SW Environmental Center)
 (575) 522-5552
www.wildmesquite.org

Celebration of Our Mountains
www.celebmtns.org

Frontera Land Alliance (915) 351-8352
www.fronteralandalliance.org

CLOUDS ON THE HORIZON

Rio Bosque Wetlands Park is a small island of natural river-valley habitat in a highly modified, biologically degraded landscape. Given these circumstances, the park is very fortunate to have a significant parcel of undeveloped open space, owned by the City of El Paso, still present immediately east of the park in a broad corridor between the Riverside Canal and the Franklin Drain.

The land occupies 99 acres, all zoned Ranch & Farm District, a designation “*designed to protect, stabilize and enhance the development of agricultural resources and to prohibit those activities that would adversely affect the urban-rural characteristics of this district.*” The land has great value to Rio Bosque—as a buffer, as wildlife habitat similar to that found in upland areas of the park, and as an avenue for wildlife movement between the park and other areas.

The future integrity of this open-space corridor is not guaranteed. Two projects that could affect it are currently under consideration. One involves a concrete batch plant Jobe Materials installed last year 1/4 mile north of Rio Bosque to provide concrete mix for the construction work now in progress and planned for coming years at the water-treatment plants north of the park. The other involves an extension of the Border Highway east from Loop 375 for 18 miles to the new Guadalupe-Tornillo port of entry.

Jobe Materials can operate its batch plant in the Ranch & Farm District under a Special Use Permit if it is a temporary facility providing concrete mix for a public-works project. But Jobe wants to make it a permanent facility with a broader base of customers. That requires a change in the zoning from “Ranch & Farm” to “Light Manufacturing.” The El Paso City Council will hold a public hearing on this requested zoning change at its meeting **May 7**. If City Council approves the request, it would set a bad precedent. It would potentially encourage other incursions into the open-space corridor east of Rio Bosque in the future.

The Border Highway extension is further in the future—a 2033

projected start date—but more ominous. It would be a 4-lane divided highway initially, but with wide inner shoulders to allow future conversion to a 6-lane divided highway.

On March 27, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) unveiled three conceptual alternative routes for this project. Two would traverse the open-space corridor east of Rio Bosque. One would be along the west edge of the park. All three would have significant negative impacts on the park.

TxDOT has scheduled two public meetings to gather input on these alternatives:

May 1, 5 p.m., Clint High School (13890 Alameda Ave. in Clint)

May 2, 5 p.m., Western Tech College (9624 Plaza Circle in El Paso, off Pan American Drive)

TxDOT will also have planning documents and maps available on its [website](#) for study and comment from May 1 through May 16.

Want to check out the areas where these actions are being proposed? Join us for one of the upcoming tours at Rio Bosque:

5 p.m., Sun., Apr 21 (Introductory tour)

8 a.m., Sat., Apr 26 (Birding tour)

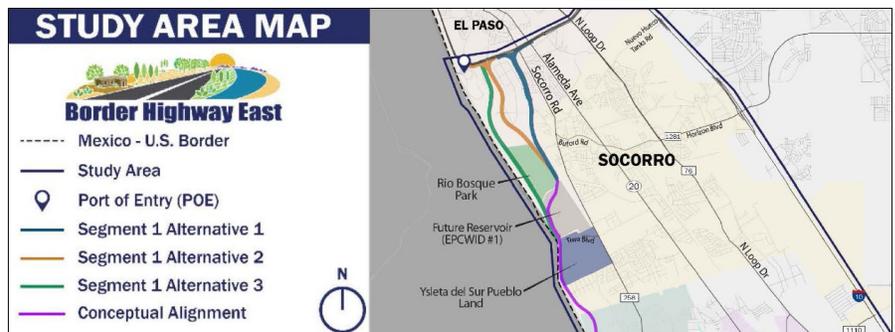
7 a.m., Sun., May 12 (Birding tour)

8 a.m., Sat., May 25 (Introductory tour)

8 a.m., Sun., June 9 (Introductory tour)

6:30 a.m., Sat., June 22 (Birding 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. For up-to-date information on tours, birds and water conditions at the park, check www.riobosque.org.



El Paso/Trans-Pecos
Audubon Society
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

**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 97194
Washington, DC 20090-7194**

Local Chapter Code **C1ZW100Z**

Dates to Remember

April

Sat 6: **Feather Lake Workday**
Mon 8: **Board Meeting**
Mon 15: **General Meeting**
21 & 26: **Rio Bosque**

May

1 & 2: **TxDOT Meetings**
Mon 12: **Board Meeting**
Mon 20: **General Meeting**
12 & 25: **Rio Bosque**

June

Sat 8: **Feather Lake Workday**
Mon 10: **Board Meeting**
9 & 22: **Rio Bosque**
No General Meeting

El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society
<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

The Roadrunner delivered to your mailbox.

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