

Bosque Notebook



Some see the refuge and wonder why?
We see the refuge and wonder, why not!

Volume 13 Number 6

Published by the Friends of the Bosque del Apache November–December 2006

November 14–19 The 19th Annual Festival of the Cranes

The Festival of the Cranes has grown from a weekend affair into one of the nation's top wildlife attractions. This year's event is no exception: six days with over 100 events, each planned with care and led by interesting, vigorous experts from around New Mexico, other states and at least one international expert.

Birding has always been paramount at the Festival and cranes are its centerpiece. Two superb experts, Paul Tebbel from The Wildlife Center in Española and Keanna Leonard from the Rowe Audubon Center in Nebraska discuss sandhill crane behavior on four mornings, sunrise to noon. They'll teach the sophisticated vocal and body-language communication and behavior of these extraordinary birds.

Other birding events cater to beginners, backyarders and Black Belt experts. Birding by ear, mountain birding and the awesome fly-out and fly-in each morning and evening are among the events led by experts on ducks, raptors and falconry.

The Festival also honors New Mexico's history by tracing the Camino Real (the Royal Road from Mexico City to Santa Fe,) used by the early Spanish explorers beginning in 1598. Sections of the trail in the backcountry of the Bosque del Apache NWR, usually closed to the public, will be one of the Festival tours.

Photographers will want to attend the class in long lens photography. This

Continued on page 4



Photographs Sought for Middle Rio Grande Field Guide

A proposed field guide to the middle Rio Grande region needs your photographs. Titled *A Field Guide to the Flora and Fauna of the Middle Rio Grande Bosque*, it will cover between 600 and 700 species of plants, invertebrates and vertebrates, including those in the Bosque del Apache NWR. It will be published in color by UNM Press.

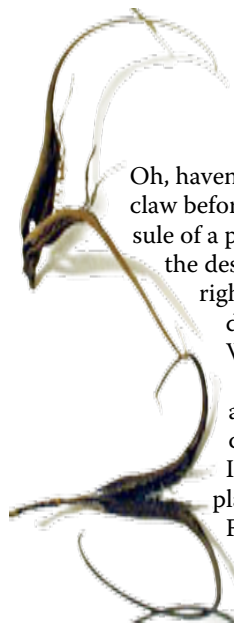
The editors are seeking photographs to accompany the species information. Each species account has information on season of occurrence (or activity above ground for mammals and herps, time of flowering for plants); habitat associations; natural history; and status. The habitat types are the river channel (including sandbars and open river banks);

ponds and wetlands; cottonwood bosque; open areas (for example burned areas); saltcedar stands; and ditches.

The field guide is a joint project of the Drylands Institute and the University of New Mexico. It is sponsored by the Middle Rio Grande Bosque Initiative, PNM and the UNM Biology Department. The project is a non-profit endeavor: all royalties will be used to purchase copies of the field guide for classrooms in the Middle Rio Grande Valley. For that reason, photographers will be credited with names next to their photos but cannot be compensated.

The field guide represents the combined efforts of five UNM researchers with an impressive background in its subject matter. They are led by Dr. Jean-Luc Cartron, who heads the Drylands Institute's New Mexico office and is an adjunct professor of biology at the University of New Mexico. He is joined by Dr. Sandra Brantley, Dr. David Lightfoot and Jane Mygatt (all senior collection managers at the herbarium in the Museum of Southwestern Biology) and Dr. Timothy Lowrey (the herbarium's curator).

Additional information is available from Dr. Cartron at jlec@unm.edu.



What on Earth Is This?

by Bob Merkel

Oh, haven't you seen a devil's claw before? It's the seed capsule of a plant that grows in the desert. In fact, it grows right here in Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge.

I knew about and had seen devil's claws long before I learned what the plants looked like.

For two years after we moved to New Mexico I'd go on wildflower walks

with local experts but none were ever found. Locals did explain, though, that the plant had big leaves like the *Datura* or *Jimsonweed*.

Then came the 2006 monsoon and everything changed. A big-leaved plant growing near the visitor center looked like a healthy sunflower seedling; they have big leaves too. But close examination showed that it wasn't a sunflower at all. It had to be the devil's claw. Finally!

Flowering Plants of New Mexico by Robert DeWitt Ivey confirmed it.

Last summer's abundant rains were just what the seeds were waiting for. They sprouted in several arroyos and other lowland places in addition to the visitor center area. For me it was a golden opportunity to see and photograph the whole plant, the flower and the developing fruits.

Seeing the green fruits helps to understand the claw's Latin name, *Proboscidea parviflora*. It's the only New Mexico member of the unicorn family and the green fruit does resemble a very long nose — a proboscis — just like an elephant's nose.

I began to wonder how the fruit changes from a long, green and sticky nose to a dry devil's claw. Turns out the green skin shrivels and peels away to expose the hard, hooked capsule underneath. The capsule dries, splits lengthwise down the middle almost to the stem, and the two halves spread wide apart. Ivey's book includes a little drawing of a devil's claw caught around an animal's leg and shedding seeds as the animal walks. So that explains how the seeds get scattered hither, thither and yon to wait for the next really wet summer.

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Government decisions determine the fate of the Bosque del Apache. You can help by letting key decision makers know you how you feel about the refuge and other natural resource issues.

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A Year of Accomplishment with Big Plans for the Future

by Friends President
Jon Morrison

This November, the Friends will be 13 years old. It started as a small group whose goal was to help Bosque del Apache fulfill its role as a refuge for sandhill cranes, snow geese and other water fowl. It worked on getting electrical lines that ran through the refuge buried to prevent the loss of birds who flew into them. It took over the running of the store to provide more funds for needed projects. But most of all we Friends always dreamed of the possibility of a new visitor center to provide for the increasing number of visitors to the refuge.

After many attempts, we added a new entrance with a fantastic educational room and auditorium annex. The educational wing was funded by a gift from the Lannan Foundation from Santa Fe in honor of Christina Lannan who loved the refuge. Other grantees who made this fantastic transformation were the Messengers of Healing Winds, The Thaw Foundation, and BNSF Foundation.

The Friend's Bosque Nature Store moved into the old auditorium with new displays for books, clothing and jew-

elry. We have a real store! The new store will help make your shopping more enjoyable. Remember membership in the Friends gives you a 10 percent discount in the store. All profits from the store are used by the Friends for programs and the refuge.

The Friends' environmental education initiative led by Alex Rykken is going into its second year after a very successful inaugural year. The eight week program was presented to at least one class in each of the elementary schools in the Socorro School District and one school in Los Lunas. It's a great program, with big plans for the future.

What are we planning for the coming year? In January, the Friends will sponsor its first environmental film festival. The dates are January 19-20 and it will be held at Macy Center on the campus of New Mexico Tech in Socorro. Mark it on your calendar. More information can be found at www.riofilmfest.com. It's going to be great.

Our drive for the mountain is ongoing. The Friends have raised approximately \$10,000 toward the \$63,000 needed to purchase Chupadera Peak.

Those who give enough to purchase one acre (\$450) or more will be listed on a plaque for all to see. We will also be pursuing grants and other funding sources to make it a reality in the coming year.

At last year's festival, I laid out my vision of where the Friends of the Bosque del Apache NWR should be going. I saw us growing from a large organization with small impact to one that made its presence known here and across the country. We need you to help. Become a volunteer for the refuge and the Friends. To quote Mary Piercy from her poem *To Be of Use*:

"The work of the world is common as mud./Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust./But the thing worth doing well done/has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident."

The Friends live in a world of possibilities of what can and will be done for the refuge. Join us in the road ahead.

San Antonio Elementary Produces Festival Banners

In a pilot project, students at San Antonio Elementary made banners for this year's festival with help from volunteers from the Friends of the Bosque del Apache. The banners will be hung in and around San Antonio through the festival or possibly Thanksgiving. Socorro Electric Cooperative will assist in hanging some of the banners on electrical poles and local businesses can hang a banner at their business.

This is a great project for the kids and fosters the partnership between the refuge and the town of San Antonio, which is just north of the refuge. We hope this will be an annual event so all children will have the opportunity to see their work on display for the thousands of tourists that come through San Antonio during the festival.

Mark Your Calendar

November 16

**Friends of the Bosque
del Apache**

Board Meeting

10:00 a.m. Lannan Annex

Board meetings are open to all.

Call (505) 835-1828 for more information.

19th Annual Festival of the Cranes



three-day course for intermediate to advanced wildlife photographers is given by two professionals, Jerry Goffe from Albuquerque and Gregory Basco from Costa Rica. Lots of shooting is planned, plus plenty of technical instruction including Photoshop and printing techniques. It's an excellent opportunity to hone your skills at the Bosque del Apache NWR, which is one of the nation's premier sites for bird photography.

After a day in the field, the evening sessions offer a series of keynote speakers. Julie Zickefoose, of Ohio,

will present a program on hummingbirds. Julie is a regular on NPR and a widely published natural history writer and artist.

Joan Garland, outreach coordinator for the International Crane Foundation in Baraboo, Wisconsin, will discuss her world-wide work with cranes, particularly whooping cranes, and her work as a founder of the crane migration route from Wisconsin to Florida using an ultra-light airplane.

Other events include tours to areas usually closed, showing the operational workings of a national wildlife

refuge; visits to the Very Large Array (one of the largest radio-telescopes in the world); and a trip to Trinity Site, the site of the first atom bomb test.

Lectures and workshops delve into wildfires, water management, area buffalo and local history. Exhibitors, an arts and crafts tent and, of course, the wonderful wildlife of the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge round out the six day extravaganza for the 19th annual Festival of the Cranes.





Want More Information?

Programs are available from the Festival of the Cranes, P. O. Box 340, San Antonio, NM 87832. Phone 505-838-2077. Information is also available at www.friendsofthebosque.org/crane.

The Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge is in central New Mexico, south of Socorro. Take exit 139 from I-25 to Highway 1 and turn south to the refuge.

November 14-19



Feathered Monkeys

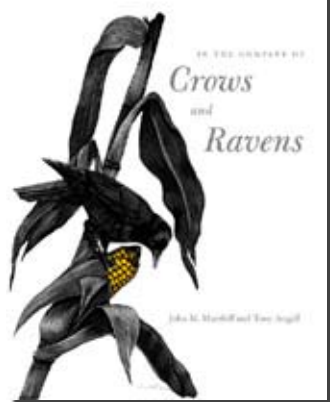
WE DON'T ADMIRE THESE BLACK birds as much as more colorful birds like goldfinches or bluebirds but crows and ravens pervade our culture, according to *In the Company of Crows and Ravens*, a delightful guide to the lives of these large birds.

Authors John M. Marzluff, Denman Professor of Sustainable Resource Sciences and professor of wildlife science, College of Forest Resources, University of Washington, and Tony Angell, a freelance artist and writer in Lopez Island, Washington, combine more than 60 years of scientific and artistic fascination with crows and their bird relatives. They argue crows and ravens have culture — their behavior differs in different places and situations — and we coevolve with these clever birds. Their book is an argument in support of these theses.

To coevolve, we need species that are long-lived, intelligent and social: namely, crows and ravens! The authors point to language to show how the birds affect humans in a chapter on the profusion of crow and raven references and allusions in our language: as the crow flies, crow's nest, crowbar, crow's feet, raven-haired. In Britain, 400 place names use "crow."

Their intelligence is shown by their tool-using skills. They drop walnuts on the road where cars crack the shells. They drop whelk shells on rocks to free the meat. To succeed, the bird drops it where it won't fall back into the ocean and judges how high to fly before the drop. If a bird flies too high, the energy from the meat might not replenish the energy to fly high. Also, the bird judges the shell so it is not too big or heavy. If ravens didn't drop whelks, there would be one job less for scientists.

They have social customs and culture. They preen each other; they help each other (a bachelor often stays around to help feed new birds or they watch over sick or dying birds); they play by picking up a paper or a child's toy, dropping it, then picking it up again; on windy days they fly loops and rolls; they steal and roll tennis balls, baseballs and golf balls; they tease each other; they mob, that is, they crowd and make a racket in case of an approaching enemy — an owl, an eagle, a raccoon, a cat, a fox, a coyote, or a human being.



"Crows and people share similar traits and social strategies. To a surprising extent, to know the crow is to know ourselves." — the Preface

Although crows and ravens make plenty of noise, can they talk? Do they have language? They can certainly mimic like mockingbirds. A recorded call for help elicits the same response from a mob of crows in France as it does here.

The most fun is that researchers have shown that crows can count. The experiment is fascinating: a bird has learned that he can get five treats from five boxes. The scientist moves the treats so that each box might have one or two. The bird eventually figures out where the five treats were. An empty box doesn't fool him; he seems to be counting.

Even primitive peoples seem to have coevolved: since they had to put up with scavenging birds, they used the birds to lead them to prey. Agriculture influenced crow and raven culture by furnishing easy food while people were influenced to include the birds in religion, art and pop culture.

Coevolution is demonstrated clearly by the shift of people from farms to cities. When people created garbage and on road kills from cars, the birds changed their ways.

All these behaviors and more outlined in this book strengthen the authors' belief in the culture of crows and ravens. We and the birds "share a remarkable, ecological, evolutionary and cultural history."

This enchanting book has appendixes, notes, references and an index. Tony Angell has adorned it with elegant drawings — black and white, naturally!

In the Company of Crows and Ravens. By John Marzluff and Tony Angell. Illustrations by Tony Angell. New Haven: Yale University, 2005, 384 pages, cloth, \$30.

Black

We like to say, "black as night,"
but night is sometimes navy blue.

We like to say, "black as coal,"
but coal can look gray.

Jet is coal that is polished till it gleams
for jewelry.

Ebony is black, wood with dark bark.

Obsidian is volcanic glass,
black, but sometimes flakes to gray.

Hematite can be black or red;
Onyx can be any color, not only black.

I know a wolf named "Raven,"
solid black, but with a white throat.

The bird is shiny black
but with a purple sheen.

The crow is beautifully black,
but may have white feathers or wing patches.

Sable is black in heraldry or mourning,
but JET is the only black without
reservations, the only true black.

I wouldn't want to be an ant.!

— Barbara DuBois

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Bosque Beat

by Jane Wilson



"Dude, we have hit the jackpot!"

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It's Coming!

The 19th Annual Festival of the Cranes is scheduled for November 14–19. See page 1 for more information or visit <http://www.friendsofthebosque.org/crane/>.