

BOSQUE WATCH



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New Arrivals...

Mother and twins doing well

By Ashley Inslee, Refuge Biologist, Bosque del Apache NWR



Early this March the radio-collared female Mountain Lion, whose territory includes Bosque del Apache NWR, gave birth to two kittens, one male, and one female. Researchers visited the 2.5 pound kittens when they were approximately two weeks old. They were weighed, measured and implanted with microchips by Dr. Eric Anderson from the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point. DNA samples were also taken from each of the kittens at this time. Both kittens appeared to be healthy and based on the radio collar tracking data, the mother has been attentive.

This Mountain Lion mother is no stranger to raising young in the bosque habitats of the Middle Rio Grande Valley. Last summer, remote camera monitoring indicated that she had two juveniles with her. These youngsters dispersed sometime last fall and the female was bred by another radio-collared male early in December 2010. Her collar, which dropped off on schedule in the middle of April, was replaced with a new one that will also drop off this November. The re-collaring process has not hindered her



efforts at being a successful mother. She is regularly hunting on the Refuge and consistently returns to her kittens.

For those of you not familiar with the maternal habits of Mountain Lions, here are some of the basics:

- Females generally have kittens every other year and litters range from 1 to 6 kittens
- Females are very protective of their litters
- Kittens don't open their eyes, nor can they hear until they are about 10 days old
- Survival rates average just over one kitten per litter, yet collared Refuge females have consistently reared two kittens from each litter
- Kittens are weaned between 2 and 3 months of age when they begin visiting kill sites with their mother
- Between 4 and 6 months of age, the young cats will begin to hunt small prey on their own
- The young cats typically disperse, that is, leave their mother when they are between 12 and 18 months old. In general male kittens move further away, but daughters may be tolerated and rear their own young in overlapping areas.



FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Friends,

A few weeks ago I agreed to take over the editorial responsibilities for the *Bosque Watch* newsletter. I did this with some trepidation given the awesome efforts of those who have preceded me. Anxious not to embarrass myself or drop the flag, I went back into the archive and read all the previous publications of *Bosque Watch*. I made a list of topics and contributors as far back as I could reach and was honestly overwhelmed with the diversity of authors and topics presented to our readership over the years.

A number of things became very apparent. First, there are a lot of people involved with Bosque del Apache who are deeply committed to the everyday function and survival of this Refuge, people who are joyfully willing to share their experiences with the larger membership through the newsletter. Second, there is an incredible partnership between the Refuge staff, the Friends and volunteers that shows in many of their comments and activities. There are many voices, many points of view (not a few of which were taken through a camera lens), many paintings, crafts, comments, volunteer hours, and that great outpouring of effort each year to support the Festival of the Cranes. It is all there, reflected in issue after issue of the *Bosque Watch*.

In an earlier life I gained some experience in teaching leadership and management techniques. One of the canons for individuals taking over new responsibilities is... "don't change things just for the sake of

change." In the vernacular, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." Though some sad events have mandated that the editorial work for *Bosque Watch* pass into other hands, *Bosque Watch* ain't broke and in coming issues you will hear many of the same voices, see the same topics and get the same news.

But, with all of that, I have to say that as I listened to all the voices I did note one area, one group of people, who were very silent. You, dear reader, are largely quiet. Do you like the *Bosque Watch*? Do you read it from cover to cover? Are there topics you are tired of? Have we made mistakes? Are there things you would like to see that aren't there now? Do you have things you would like to add, for example, regional events in your area, books you think should be at the Nature Store, comments or questions about the Refuge? Would you like to contribute an article, send a picture, thank a staff member or praise a volunteer?

I would like to hear your voice and to that end the Friends have established a new email address, bosquewatch@sdc.org.

Write to me. I'll be listening for you.

Lise Spargo
Friends' Board Member
and Editor, *Bosque Watch*

Refuge Manager's Report

By Tom Melanson, Manager,
Bosque del Apache NWR

Now that the cranes and geese have departed for their summer grounds and the crowds have dwindled, staff has begun the annual ritual of preparing the Refuge habitat for the next winter season. Some wetlands and impoundments

are being drained, while others are being partially filled. All about the Refuge water is being moved and/or re-released back into the river. In addition, Refuge maintenance staff, fire crews from both Bosque and Sevilleta and others recently cut and removed over 100 jetty jacks (approximately 60 tons of iron) from the Refuge's active floodplain near the northern boundary. This will allow the Refuge to complete the north end fire break in the active floodplain on the west side of the river. The metal will be sold for scrap with all proceeds going to the Friends of Bosque del Apache NWR.

Staff biologists are continuing to monitor elk and mountain lion populations on the Refuge. The latest estimates put the elk population between 50 and 60 adults. Of these, 29 are collared and are being tracked. The calving season is expected to begin in mid-May, during which time the elk population will disperse i.e. males and females separate, throughout the Refuge.

In March, a pair of mountain lion kittens was born on the Refuge and their antics in the den caught on camera by one of the Refuge researchers. As of late May, the kittens had grown sufficiently to accompany their mother on foraging expeditions in the Refuge. In addition to the mother who is collared, our camera array has photographed two other un-collared adult mountain lions moving through the Refuge. In mid-summer, the plan is to capture and collar additional lions.

After much delay, the Refuge is finally moving ahead with the purchase on an alternative fuel mid-duty bus. In March, GSA released its new contracts for bus vendors which included a greater selection

of alternative fuel vehicles than previously offered. As a result the Refuge is moving forward with the purchase of a 20-passenger gasoline hybrid Goshen Coach. This new bus will have a wheelchair lift package and accommodations for two wheelchair users. The new bus is expected to arrive in October or November, just in time for the arrival of fall and the increase of visitors to the Refuge.

Presidential Reflections

By Paul White, President, Friends of Bosque del Apache

I was sitting on my patio the other day, enjoying the warming sun and the parade of birds visiting our backyard feeders. In addition to the motley collection of house sparrows, house finches, European starlings and white-winged doves, we were blessed with more transient customers that included black-headed grosbeaks, Cassin's finches, western tanagers, evening grosbeaks and black-chinned hummers. These seasonal visitors – passers-by on their way to higher ground or more northerly climes – set me thinking about the way that New Mexico has, throughout its history, been enriched by a wide range of birds, animals and people who are often 'just passing through,' on their way to other destinations. Many of their routes have taken them through or near the Bosque del Apache NWR. Awareness of these passages, and perhaps the occasional side trip, can enrich any visit to the Refuge.

Many of us already appreciate the seasonal birding opportunities at the Bosque. Perhaps our most famous feathered transients, the

light geese and sandhill cranes, are long gone during the warm seasons. But warblers and plovers, osprey and vireos, hummers and tanagers pause at the Refuge on their migrations. Although they may be 'just passing through,' their stopovers add variety and color, rewarding birders and casual visitors alike. But let's think beyond birds to some of the people who have passed by, providing some of the rich history of this segment of the Rio Grande Valley.

Consider for example the Ancient Puebloan Peoples (a.k.a. the Anasazi) who lived in the greater Four Corners area through at least the mid-12th century. A combination of climatic changes and pressure from newcomers caused these peoples to leave their ancestral dwelling places, such as Chaco



Canyon, Mesa Verde, and others. The Piro Indians were some of these peoples, Ancient Puebloan migrants

who moved into, through and around the area now occupied by the Bosque del Apache, establishing new homes on both sides of the Rio Grande. Two Piro sites on the Refuge, San Pascual and Qualacu Pueblos, have recently been accepted into the National Register of Historic Places. New Refuge exhibits are being planned for the Point of Lands outlook that will elaborate the story of the Piro and of their passage.

Spanish explorers, conquerors and settlers traveled through the Rio Grande corridor, passing through the Bosque, and en-

countering native peoples along the way. Their route eventually became known as El Camino Real. Some of their encounters with native peoples were positive. In the late 16th century, when a group of settlers led by Juan de Onate were desperate for food and water after their passage north through the desert, they were helped by the Piro Indians. The Spaniards called their pueblo "Socorro," meaning 'to give aid.' Other interactions were less pleasant. More can be learned about the Puebloan peoples who thrived in this region of the Rio Grande Valley into the 17th century at the Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument. The Monument Headquarters, as well as the mission and Pueblo ruins of Gran Quivira, Abo and Quarai, lie at the eastern edge of Socorro County, and are accessible by US 60 east from I-25 at Bernardo. The history of Spanish trade and settlement, missionary practice and military conquest can also be explored at the El Camino Real International Heritage Center, located about 5 miles from Exit 115 off I-25.

Much later, during the Civil War, Confederate soldiers under General H. H. Sibley came to New Mexico with grandiose plans. Having mustered in Texas, they marched north from El Paso intending to take first the gold



Fort Craig

fields of Colorado and later those of California. Having stretched their supply lines however, and getting little cooperation from New Mexicans, they wanted to seize the Fed-

eral food, munitions and medicine held at Fort Craig, about 32 miles south of Socorro on the west side of the Rio Grande. Defense of the Fort was in the hands of Col. R. S. Canby. On February 21, 1862, the two forces engaged upstream from Ft. Craig at an important river ford. The Battle of Valverde was won by the Confederates, but Canby retained his hold on Ft. Craig, denying critical supplies to Sibley's army. Fort Craig National Historic Site can be reached along Route 1, between Exits 124 and 125, south of the Refuge.

These are just a few of the many 'passages' that center on the Bosque del Apache. So, if you're 'passing through' the Refuge one day, spend a little while with some of our transient avian visitors – and then expand your experience by making one of these historical diversions a part of your visit.

Cycles of Life-- Desert Arboretum Update

By Daniel Perry, Naturalist,
Bosque del Apache NWR

If you have visited the Desert Arboretum at the Bosque del Apache NWR recently, you have seen piles of dead and decaying plants. This is in stark contrast to what would have been the view a year ago at this time. It may not look great, and certainly is not what we have



Percy Deal in the Arboretum named after his wife Laura Jean.

come to expect as the norm, but remember, it's all organic material! It's all good!

During early February a river of extremely cold arctic air trapped between weather systems was forced into the southwest. This bitterly cold stream combined with a high wind chill factor produced temperatures well below freezing throughout the region. At the Refuge the minimum nightly temperature fell below zero three nights in a row. On the coldest night the thermometer registered -16° F. According to the National Weather Service, this event brought the coldest recorded temperatures to the region in fifty years. A subsequent internet search produced a 60-year-old record from February 1, 1951 when a temperature of -50° F was recorded at Gavilan, N.M.

The Refuge is located on the northern edge of the Chihuahuan desert and many of the plants growing in the arboretum such as ocotillos and soaptree yucca are at the extreme northern edge of their range. Though these plants, including *Opuntias engelmannii* and *Opuntia macrocentra*, grow naturally on the Refuge, they all showed extensive damage. Even more striking were the effects on some of the more 'showy' plants in this space. Like all gardens, the Arboretum has evolved over time and a number of exotic examples of plants from the more southern desert areas have been introduced for public view. These plants are not native to this northern

desert biome and during the cold snap were even less able to deal with the sub-zero temperatures than their local cousins. In time, as the Arboretum recovers, recent events would suggest that our best strategy is to replace these plants with more cold tolerant, native species such as claret cups, spiny stars, and other hedgehogs and prickly pears cactus.

So, as summer approaches, some but probably not all of the dead material will be removed from the Arboretum. After the moisture evaporates the fleshy cactus pads and other material will be lighter and easier to manipulate. As for the material left behind, nature leaves nothing to waste. All terrestrial life as we know it depends on the power of plants to turn the sun's energy into food. As the dead plants lose their moisture and dry up, the material will be broken down into humus by microbes and insects. This will add much needed organic material to the sandy earth. Small piles of dead stems shade the soil and add cover to the miniature world of insects and lizards that live in the Arboretum. Larger piles of material may form, created by packrats as they line their nests with prickly pear and cholla pads to hurt the paws and nose of the coyote that tries to dig them out!

I have my own thoughts about cactus populations. Perhaps every 50 years, entire populations of cacti appear to die out. Many times through the years I have seen areas once populated by mature plants,



totally empty. Just a few piles of spines remain to show where the adult plants were. Over grazing or drought may be to blame, or sometimes the cacti succumb to insect predators whose burgeoning population has increased sufficiently to kill all the plants. Once done, the insects themselves may disappear, having no host plant to consume. But in time, the cacti return. The saviors of the species are the many long-lasting seeds produced year after year with very thick skins. These seeds, in the soil, under rocks, scattered here and there, lie in wait. A year or five years later, summer rains are sufficient for germination of the waiting seeds and a new population of plants is born and the cycle repeats itself.

Natural gardens are dynamic. They change with the seasons and years. A rainy winter might bring back the poppies that skipped last year because of inadequate rains. Next year's crop of asters will germinate depending upon the abundance of this summer's monsoon. Gardens evolve depending upon natural forces. This winter, there was a major change in the succession of plant species in the garden and it will be many seasons before the Arboretum appears as full of life as it once was. The view may now be a bit desolate, and most people's idea of a full and tidy garden would not include a newly refurbished pack rat nest. However, for the seeds that remain hidden, for lizards and other creatures that live there, the winter's events have brought the opportunity for a new start or a new home. Eventually nesting materials will change and break down and become new soil.

So, don't forget...it's all organic! It's all the cycle of life.

It's the Season – The Bosque's Fire Preparedness Plan

By Lise Spargo, Editor

On a warm May afternoon I sat down in the office behind the fire station at Bosque del Apache to talk to District Fire Management Officer, Julian Affuso. Bosque del Apache is a district headquarters and Julian and his staff are responsible for five wildlife refuges and two fisheries in this district. Although I think Julian would rather talk about educational outreach or how fire is used in a positive way to improve the Bosque del Apache habitat, this year it is hard to dodge the issue. South and Central New Mexico are in the midst of a severe drought and as of May there were wildfires in virtually every quadrant of the state.

While the equipment is ready and the tankers are full of water, the real preparation for this fire season began months if not years ago. Prescribed burns and habitat management are key and as Friends are aware, Bosque del Apache has been the pioneer in programs to eradicate salt cedar and other invasive vegetation on the Refuge. While such ef-

forts improve the habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife, native plant species are also less volatile than the often densely packed salt cedar which chokes the river side. Within the Refuge, fire breaks are integrated into the habitat and maintained on an annual basis. These breaks not only help control the spread of fire, but also allow access to areas of the wetlands that otherwise could not be possible with trucks and bulldozers.

From year to year it's all about temperature, rainfall and fuel when we are talking about fire potential. Once a fire starts, decisions have to be made quickly -- it's too late to sit back and develop a plan. In the face of this imperative the fire district staff has not one but essentially a number of plans or models that project the appropriate response given what is already known about the local fire environment. This includes factors such as fuel (kind and condition of local vegetation), seasonal temperature, relative humidity, wind, access, availability of water, and any other factors unique to a specific location. Remember, this is a district headquarters and the Refuge crew can be called to fight wildfires well outside the boundaries of Bosque del Apache.

Firefighters keep watch on a prescribed burn.



That's the backbone, but in an extreme fire season, Julian says there is a Plan B, a 'Step Up' plan that not only factors in the current extreme fuel and weather conditions locally, but beyond the local district, projects for additional funding, personnel and equipment that can be accessed in real time if there is need. In other years and under different circumstances, wildfires might be allowed to burn themselves out depending on their size and location on this or other refuges, but this year, the plan is unequivocal, all fires must be suppressed. Needless to say, the fire crew constantly monitors weather conditions with the National Weather Service, and ending on an optimistic note, Julian said projections are for a fairly normal monsoon.

It's the season.

(Editor's note: Though outlooks for summer rain are encouraging, right now we are considered to be in EXTREME (RED) fire conditions. According to the national criteria, under RED conditions fires start quickly, spread furiously, and burn intensely. All fires are potentially serious. Development into high intensity burning will usually be faster and occur from smaller fires than in the very high fire class. Direct attack is rarely possible and may be dangerous except immediately after ignition. Fires that develop headway in heavy or in conifer stands may be unmanageable while the extreme burning conditions last. Under these conditions the only effective and safe control action is on the flanks until weather changes or the fuel supply lessens.)

There Goes the Neighborhood!

By Erv Nichols

Bosque del Apache Wildlife Refuge is proud, and rightly so, of the success of its Black-Tailed Prairie Dog town, a joint effort of the Refuge, the Turner Endangered Species Foundation and Stephan Reimus of Boy Scouts of America Troop 129. However, a couple of new residents may be causing a bit of grumbling amongst the 'dogs.'

Early in April, Judy Sears, a Refuge volunteer, reported seeing a small round head and a pair of big yellow eyes staring



Octavio & Kirsten Cruz

back at her as she glassed the mounds around the town. She rightly concluded that it was a Burrowing Owl. Further observation revealed another owl resident in the town. Now, while this brought a good deal of excitement to the humans, what it meant to the dogs we don't know. However, since the owls are known to commandeer prairie dog mounds for their own use, I suspect there is no joy in dog town. Peaceful coexistence seems to be out of the question. There are hundreds of burrows out there, so hey ,can't we all just get along? Besides, I think the little alien like owls are much cuter than prairie dogs.

Burrowing Owls are about the size of a robin with an owly face and long, gray legs sticking out from under buff colored feathers. Unlike most of their owl cousins, they are diurnal, or daytime crea-

tures. Using their exceptional night vision and hearing to their advantage in the low light, they hunt usually in early morning or evening for insects or small rodents. If they see you first, which is a given if you're looking for them, they are likely to become agitated and start bobbing up and down which only adds to their "cuteness."

Breeding season for Burrowing Owls is usually April and the female may lay as many as 12 eggs. Incubation requires three to four weeks, so babies are expected each year in May. Despite the large number of eggs per female there's no real danger of them overrunning a prairie dog town. Our dogs currently number 60 or more, and when we do have chicks, they will bring another attraction and



Erv Nichols

educational opportunity to the Refuge.

While observing the owls is difficult enough even when you know where to look (you can get

location info at the Visitor Center), trying to photograph them is like catching smoke in a New Mexican wind storm. They have near perfect looking camouflage and disappear into the landscape when standing still even when they are atop their mounds looking for food. I have noticed one behavioral weakness however that tends to give them away. They are almost continuously swiveling their heads left and right watching for danger. With patience you may pick out this movement. Find them first

with your binoculars or spotting scope and then put on your longest lens. They are usually in an area about 100 meters behind the fence.

Photographing or just observing, Burrowing Owls are among the most fascinating guys on 2 skinny legs.

(Editor's note: Erv Nichols is a photographer, lecturer, writer and wanderer....and frequent volunteer at Bosque del Apache NWR.)

Ecuador – Land of 1,640 Bird Species

By Jon Morrison, Immediate Past President, Friends Birding Tour Organizer

The Friends of the Bosque are going birding in Ecuador from 14 to 23 March, 2012. Make plans now, this is a trip you do not want to miss.

Ecuador is an exquisite cache of biological and ecological diversity. This equatorial nation of cloud forest, rain forest and Andean landscapes has the highest biodiversity per square mile in the world including some 1,640 species of birds, many of which are rare and unique to the country.

We fly into Quito for the first night, leaving the next morning for the Sachatamia Lodge. A privately owned ecological reserve 1 ½ hours from Quito, Sachatamia encompasses 300 acres of mountain cloud forest at an altitude of 1700m. Located next to the protected forests of Mindo, its unique diversity of



Courtesy Sachatamia Lodge

flora and fauna is further protected by the

ecological tourism policy of the Lodge itself.

At Sachatamia, the rustic wooden country house offers a maximum of comfort and excellent cuisine.

The hundreds of bird species that inhabit the surrounding forest provide the main attraction and the reserve contains one of the two "LEKS" registered in Ecuador pertaining to the **Long-wattled Umbrellabird**, *Cephalopterus penduliger*, which is found within its boundaries.

Our group will depart early on the morning of the 16th to visit the Angel Paz Antpitta reserve. Senor Angel, a resident from the Nanegalito area, decided to protect his property by converting it into an Antpitta and Cock of the Rock Sanctuary. Here, three of the usually elusive Antpittas, Yellow-breasted Antpitta, Moustached Antpitta, and Giant Antpitta, can be seen at incredibly close quarters.

On the 17th, we depart for the Rio Silanche Bird Sanctuary, to find endemics like the Purple-chested Hummingbird, **Chocó Trogon**, Slate-throated Gnatcatcher and Bluewhiskered Tanager. The reserve is a mixture of primary forest and regenerating forest, former plantation and new agro-forestry parcels. A canopy observation tower, extensive trails and footbridges make for easy exploration.

On the morning of the 18th we depart for the San Jorge de Milpe Orchid and Bird Reserve, just outside of Mindo. This upper



Murray Cooper

inhabit the surrounding forest provide the main attraction and the reserve contains one of the two "LEKS" registered in Ecuador pertaining to the **Long-wattled Umbrellabird**, *Cephalopterus penduliger*, which is found within its boundaries.

tropical rainforest valley contains 300 varieties of orchids, enormous numbers of moths, butterflies, reptiles, mammals and insects and over 450 species of birds. A few of the birds we might see are the Toucan Barbet, Laughing Falcon, Gray Headed Kite, and Black Checked Woodpecker. With luck we might see exotics like the **Glistening Green Tanager**, Esmeraldas Antbird, and Blue Fronted Parrotlet.

The night of the 18th will find us at the Hacienda "La Carriona" located in the beautiful Valley of Los Chillos. Constructed more than two-hundred years ago, the hacienda stands as a monument to Ecuador's colonial history. Its stone courtyard and garden hint of the exuberant Spanish Colonial lifestyle, while its name reminds us that it once belonged to the renowned Carrión family.

The morning of the 19th we depart for the Antisana Ecological Reserve, located on the edge of the Amazon prairie. The reserve includes a wide variety of animals such as the Mountain Tapir, Puma and Spectacled Bear, and myriad birds including Black-faced Ibis, Plumbeous Sierra Finch, Noble Snipe, American Golden Plover, and Curved-billed Tinamou. Flora in the reserve includes yellow composites, gentians, paintbrush, orchids, and chuquiraguas. In the evening we check into the San Isidro Lodge, our home for the next two days. San Isidro and its immediate surroundings now boast a bird list of about 310 species, many of which are more readily found here than anywhere else in the country.

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Alonso Quevedo



Scott Olmstead

San Isidro Lodge is situated at about 2050 meters above sea level but the trails dip and climb, passing through habitats from 1,850 to 2,400 meters. For birders it is an ideal base from which to observe Andean birds from the lower reaches of the temperate



Martin Reid

zone down into the heart of the subtropical zone.

Birding groups visiting Cabañas San Isidro over

the years have viewed rarities such as Highland Tinamou, Greater Scythebill, Bicolored Antvireo, Peruvian and Giant Antpittas, and White-rimmed Brush Finch. The **White-faced Nunbird** might even put in an appearance as it has been seen at San Isidro more in recent years than at any other single site on the east slope in Ecuador.

On the 21st, we bird the Guacamayos range rising east of the Cordillera Orienta. This well preserved cloud forest is an important spot for birdwatchers. There are nearly 50 species of tanagers, as well as Gray Breasted and Black Billed Mountain Toucans.

After breakfast on the 22nd, the tour continues to Guango Lodge, just an hour away. Guango lies at a higher elevation (about 2,700 meters) on Ecuador's eastern Andean slope, only 11 kms down the main Interoceanica Highway from the town of Papallacta. Centered in a zone classified as humid temperate forest, this habitat is distinctly different from San Isidro and characterized by its more stunted trees, thicker canopy, cooler climate, and different bird and plant species. Birds of particular interest found in the area of Guango Lodge include

Andean Guan, Gray-breasted Mountain Toucan, Turquoise Jay, Lacrimose, Buff-breasted and Hooded Mountain Tanagers, Gray-hooded Bush Tanager, Black-headed, Black-capped and Black-eared Hemispingus and Slaty Brush Finch.

Guango Lodge's hummingbird feeders also regularly attract some exciting species to include Mountain Velvetbreast, Sword-billed Hummingbird, Tourmaline Sunangel, Golden-breasted and Glowing Pufflegs, Mountain Avocetbill, and White-bellied and Gorgeted Woodstars!

Our trip will end with an evening at the Hotel Hilton Colon. Here we will have a last enjoyable meal to talk about the trip, debrief and share a glass or two of wine. Only 8 more people will be allowed to go on this trip, make sure you are one of them. Information and registration forms for the trip can be found at www.holbrook-travel.com/FriendsofBosque2012. See you in Ecuador.

Price's Dairy Update: Proposal for an urban refuge

By Lise Spargo, Editor

In February 2011, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published a planning update on the proposed development of an urban national wildlife refuge in the Middle Rio Grande just south of downtown Albuquerque. The proposed refuge will encompass the 570-acre Price's Dairy, which is still an active agricultural property. At the risk of dating myself, as a University of New Mexico student in the 1960's

living in the valley south of Albuquerque, I can well remember this sprawling farm along the river. An eastern farm kid myself, I enjoyed watching the familiar seasonal change of activity in what was an only sparsely developed area within the city limits. Much of the land adjacent to the Dairy is now filled with residential neighborhoods and to the south, a gambling casino and resort complex. Industrial development encroaches from the east. As an island in the middle of 21st century development, this project is particularly unique in that it will be the first national urban refuge in the southwest, educating and connecting children to a restored bosque habitat along the Rio Grande, and the larger refuge system in New Mexico. This is to be accomplished with a multi-disciplinary curriculum developed through a partnership of local schools, and a variety of government and private agencies and individuals.

The proposed development of Price's Dairy provides an interesting contrast to the restoration and management of the wetlands at Bosque del Apache NWR. At Bosque del Apache, agriculture is a critical but subsidiary activity designed to provide food for wintering wildfowl. At Price's Dairy, the site would act as a demonstration area highlighting the restoration of bosque and upland habitats but also showing how active farmlands are an integral part of the valley ecosystem. At a time when the resources of the Rio Grande watershed are under increasing pressure, the water associated with the Dairy would be carefully apportioned for on-site habitat restoration and agro-ecosystem demonstration. As published in February 2011, the

Fish and Wildlife Service was then in the very first phase of an 8 step planning process, 'scoping', that is obtaining public feedback on the issues of land protection, environmental assessment and development of a conceptual management plan. Steps 2 and 3, now ongoing, are to include the drafting and in-house review of a plan for the refuge based on public input and agency development criteria. Once the draft is complete it will be submitted to the public for review. As always fund raising and support are major issues but to date the project has proceeded as a unique collaboration of federal, state, county and non-governmental agencies.

If you would like to obtain more information or voice your support for the Price's Dairy refuge, you can write or email Jeannie Wagner-Greven, Chief, Division of Planning at:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
P.O. Box 1306
Albuquerque, NM 87103
505/248-6667
urbanrefugeABQ@fws.gov

Festival of the Cranes, Nov. 15-20!

By Robyn Harrison, Coordinator, Festival of the Cranes

The 2011 Festival of the Cranes is less than six months away and it's time for you to start planning your visit! We've set a target date of August 15 for brochures to be in the mail and for the schedule to be on our website. You'll have a few weeks to browse and peruse so you'll be ready when registration opens on September 1.

Last year we offered our own version of 'online registration', which meant that registrants completed a form and emailed it to our regis-

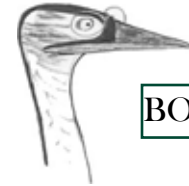
trar. This year we are offering registration through third-party software which means it is interactive: you may register 24 hours a day, instantly see which workshops are full, pay online and receive instant confirmation. Judy Drelicharz, our ever-efficient volunteer registrar, will still be in the office to keep an eye on things, answer questions you have via telephone or email, and mail out nametags and other information. She'll also be taking registrations over the phone or via fax or snail mail for those who prefer those methods.

As for what you can expect from this year's Festival...we'll have the favorites, of course: Digital Photography with Long Lenses, Sandhill Crane Behavior, Walk In/Out to Fly In/Out, raptor talks and Refuge tours, and some new things: Dragonflies, Orienteering, a photo-tour of the Rio Grande, new activities for kids and some great new hikes.

Dr. Travis Perry of Furman University, our lead mountain lion researcher, will give the keynote address on Thursday, November 17. He will give an overview of mountain lion behavior and what he's learned from his research on the Refuge and the Armendaris Ranch, updating us on new findings (babies!) that will make us more aware of our own behavior in mountain lion country.

Saturday night we'll have special guest Mark Obmascik, author of *The Big Year: A Tale of Man, Nature, and Fowl Obsession*. It's the hilarious true story of three men in competition to see the largest number of bird species in North America in one year. Learn what it takes to perform such a feat, and expect to be highly entertained.

See you soon!



BOOK REVIEWS

MONTH BY MONTH GARDENING IN NEW MEXICO

by John Cretti. Cool Springs Press, 2007. \$19.95 at the Bosque Nature Store
Review by Florence Wright

This month by month gardening compendium by horticulturalist John Cretti is a wonderfully detailed and highly readable source of information for gardeners and horticulturalists at every level of expertise. A boon to newcomers to New Mexico, it is equally useful for those who have gardened for years, but who might still have questions and uncertainties.

The chapters are arranged alphabetically by type of flora and within each chapter the months follow a yearly rotation from January through December. The divisions in each month are clearly outlined and provide the specifics of what are the appropriate gardening activities for that particular time of year. The chapter headings are arranged according to type of plant e.g. bulbs, perennials, roses, shrubs, etc. and each contains the same list of specifics relating to that plant type. Thus the first chapter is about annuals and includes a discussion of activities under these headings: Planning, Planting, Care, Watering, Fertilizing, Grooming, and Problems. These sections are clear and precise.

A welcome addition to this basic gardening information is a section of 'Gardening with an Altitude Tips.' Beginning with

important information about basic gardening practices and ideas, it includes pithy notes on topics such as the plants best adapted to New Mexico, the number of plants necessary to plant in a specific garden area, and how to dry flowers from the perennial garden.

One of the last sections of the book contains a terrific bonus to gardeners entitled 'John's Home-made Remedies.' It provides a collection of recipes for remedies to ameliorate common problems in the garden, remedies that are useful in a variety of venues and easily mixed from ingredients found in the home kitchen or laundry. While some of these home remedies have been published elsewhere, it is nice to have them all collected in one section of one book. This year I plan to try the soap spray for aphids and the rose tonic. The final section is entitled 'For Your Garden's Health' and has a list of problems and the solutions for them. Got slugs? You can pick them yourself, but geese and ducks will do the job, as will toads and snakes. If you are not looking for that extra company, there are specific chemical treatments recommended.

Though the presentation is perhaps a bit biased toward the northern Rio Grande area, Mr. Cretti is a very knowledgeable horticultural expert and provides enough information to help those in growing zones in all parts of the state. I would recommend *Month by Month Gardening in New Mexico* as a detailed and easily referenced work that would be a great addition to any gardener's bookshelf.

(Editor's note: Florence Wright is an artist and Master Gardener living and gardening in Santa Fe.)

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