

The BOSQUE WATCH



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Our Own Friend! John Bertrand National Volunteer of the Year!

by Sandy Seth

The Friends of the Bosque and the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge are thrilled and honored to announce that our very own Friend John Bertrand has been chosen to receive the 2008 National Volunteer of the Year Award for the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)!

We knew we were lucky to have John donating his time and talents to the Friends of the Bosque and the Refuge,



John Bertrand
National Volunteer of the year.

but now the whole nation will know what a wonderful volunteer he is!

Many fine volunteers across the nation were nominated, and John was chosen for his unparalleled dedication and his remarkable accomplishments. The award committee was “especially impressed” and felt that John was “indeed a worthy recipient of this award.”

The National Volunteer of the Year Award is a tremendous honor, and recognizes the outstanding accomplishments of deserving volunteers in support of the operation

See Bertrand, page 2

PRESIDENTIAL REFLECTIONS

It is late February, and on a quiet day I can hear the cranes overhead as they shuffle and gain altitude over the Rio Grande. Seasons are changing, and birds are on the move. So, too, the Friends is changing and moving. After many years of dedicated service, Jon Morrison has stepped down as President but remains on the Board as an At-Large Member. Welcome to new Board Member, Gary Singer, and goodbye with thanks to Polly Tausch. Special thanks also to Tom Harper who will become Festival Coordinator Emeritus, handing over leadership to new Coordinator, Robyn Harrison. I am honored by the trust you have placed in me as President. A regular visitor to the Bosque and longtime Friend, I am relatively new to active involvement with the Board. I will count on all of you, veteran members, colleagues on the Board and Refuge staff, for your wisdom, guidance and experience. I will work especially closely with Jerry Goffe, Vice President, and will share this space with him in coming issues – although he always speaks to us so eloquently through his photographs.

Other Friends are also on the move – and being noticed. On behalf of the Board and all Friends of the Bosque, let me offer a special word of recognition to John Bertrand. In April, John will be honored by the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) as their Volunteer of the Year. Congratulations, John! You are an example to us all. Accompanying John to the NWRA annual Friends for the Future conference will be our Executive Director, Leigh Ann Vradenburg, and our Vice President, Jerry Goffe. In February, Leigh Ann represented us at a convention of the Association of Partners for Public Lands in Denver.

These are, of course, only a few of ‘our birds’ on the wing. As our organization moves into a new year, I am reminded by those cranes overhead that they know exactly where they’re going, precisely the route they must follow. As great as our accomplishments have been in recent years, there is much we still need to do to chart a sure and steady course for the future. My

highest priority in coming months will be continuing our efforts to determine direction, and to establish and achieve specific goals and objectives for our great organization.

Back to that clattering of crane voices overhead, impelled to move by the changing season, but comfortable and at peace in the wild. I am reminded again of why I love the Bosque and one of the reasons we exist as an organization. And I recall the words of Wendell Berry, in

The Peace of Wild Things:

*When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives
may be,*

*I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great
heron feeds.*

*I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.*

—Paul White

Bertrand, from page 1 and management of the National Wildlife Refuge System. John fulfilled and surpassed all the criteria for the award, demonstrating commitment to conservation of our natural resources and refuge management through tremendous personal dedication. He has donated tens of thousands of hours helping us here at the Bosque del Apache as well as at several other refuges (Sevilleta NWR, Alaska Maritime NWR and Selawik NWR.) His work has benefited each refuge and benefited the birds and wildlife who rely on them for their survival.

The Award will be presented at a reception honoring John April 5th at the National Friends Conference in Shepherdstown, WV at the National Conservation Training Center. During the trip, John, along with Leigh Ann Vradenburg and others, plan to talk with our New Mexico Representatives and Senators in Washington.

I was honored to prepare the nomination for the Award which included letters of support from a variety of people and Friends' groups all over the country. If you wish to read details about the criteria, the nomination and John's summary of volunteer service (which is fascinating,) please go online to: www.FriendsoftheBosque.org/bertrand Also, you will find a link to these pages on the main page of our web site.

The first portion of the nomination reads: "John Bertrand's deep commitment to our National Wildlife Refuge System and belief in the conservation of natural resources which the NWR supports is a driving force in all his many hours of volunteer work. He is dedicated to conveying the value of the refuges to the public, the importance of habitat and the birds and wildlife who depend on it for survival and is always mindful of the needs and goals of the refuges. He is a convincing and

avid spokesperson for the refuges, and does so through an innovative variety of ways - from traditional means such as the newsletters and magazines he writes for, edits, manages and distributes, along with stories and interviews for newspapers and television statewide, to his creation of eye-catching signs and displays.

"His innate talents for writing and speaking clearly and convincingly along with his organizational, diplomatic and promotional abilities, honed from a strong newspaper background make him an ideal person to encourage and inform the public, increasing involvement in our refuges and conservation of our natural resources.

"John Bertrand's ability to communicate, his tireless drive and energy combined with his love of the refuges for which he has volunteered has generated increased membership in Friends' organizations and increased interest and participation in refuge events.

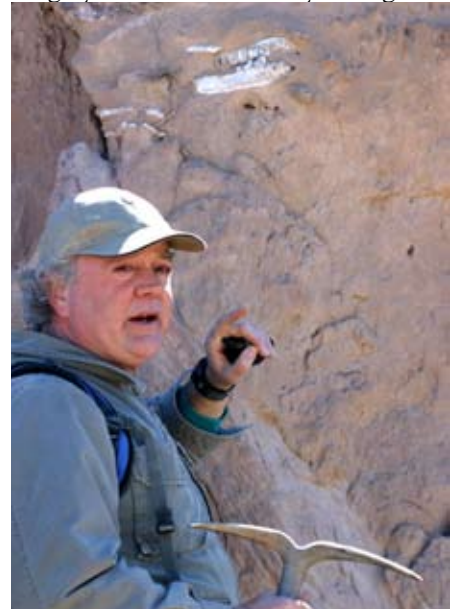
"In New Mexico, John has been one of the main driving forces in making the Bosque del Apache NWR a beloved place in the hearts of the public, in making it a place to protect and value."

How do you inspire people to care for and love their world, their National Wildlife Refuges? How do you move them to respect and love the birds and wildlife and their habitat? One of the answers is to encourage more devoted and talented people like John Bertrand to help. Let this great news that John is being nationally recognized with this Award motivate you to volunteer because those who do contribute are rewarded, those who dedicate their lives to show people that our refuges are invaluable and our world priceless are people we all respect and admire. Many who help are deeply fulfilled knowing that they have given something back to the creatures with whom we share this world. By giving, John has been doubly rewarded.

REFUGE MANAGER'S COLUMN

BOSQUE CONTINUES TO INTRIGUE

Last month, a rather unique ten million year old fossil was discovered on the Refuge. On February 22, Geologists Dave Love and Richard Chamberlin, with the New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources, and Colin Cikoski, a NM Tech graduate student, were conducting a geologic mapping project on the Refuge when they came upon the fossilized remains of an oreodont, a sheep-sized herbivore that lived during the Miocene epoch, roughly 10 to 15 million years ago.



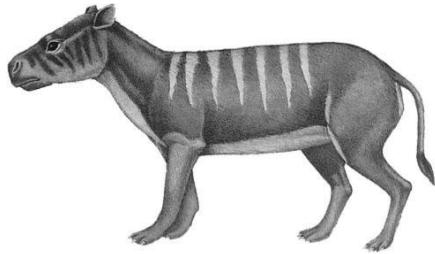
Paleontologist Gary Morgan points out Oreodont fossil in situ.

—Aaron Drew photo

Most oreodont specimens that scientists study today were collected in the west, mostly South Dakota, Nebraska, Oregon, and Wyoming. Very few have been discovered in the southwest, which makes the Bosque del Apache fossil especially exciting for paleontologists.

Love, who first noticed the fossilized remains as a white distortion in the khaki-colored sandstone of a steep canyon wall, took pictures of it then notified the

Refuge and New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science. Later, a team led by Gary Morgan, Assistant Curator at the museum, visited the site to excavate the fossil. It was then that Morgan identified the fossil as an oreodont, based largely on its teeth



Oreodont as paleontologists believe it looked during Miocene Age, 10-15 million years ago.

and shape of its jaw.

“The discovery of the fossil gives us a better picture of what the Bosque must have looked like ten million years ago,” says Chamberlin. “When this particular animal died, the Miocene Bosque was a grassland savannah, with rolling hills, shallow rain-filled basins, streams, and sand dunes. Though arid, the landscape was not the desert that it is today.”

The Bosque oreodont lived in the latter part of the Miocene epoch. They were plant eaters with large heads, small trunks, had rather short legs with hoofed feet, and resembled



Oreodont skull and jawbone protrude from arroyo wall. —Aaron Drew photo

a cross between a pig and a camel. They browsed on leaves in the ancient streamside forests. This one probably collapsed in a stream and its remains were covered by several feet of sand

carried both by the wind and by the stream, itself. Years later, the area was covered by several feet of water, which deposited additional layers of sand and cobble. Time and the elements slowly cemented the sand and cobble together in a process known as diagenesis. Millions of years later, these same elements would slowly uncover the remains, which, until recently, were embedded in the steep wall of an arroyo.

“Oreodont fossils are uncommon in the southwest,” says Gary Morgan. “Previous specimens were discovered only in the northern part of New Mexico, near Espanola. The Bosque del Apache oreodont is one of the most complete fossils and one of the southernmost examples of this species discovered in New Mexico.” In addition to the upper and lower jaw, the rest of the fossilized remains included the skull, and part of a skeleton.

Through an agreement with the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science the fossils will be added to the museum’s collection. In the future, the fossil, or a replica, may be put on display at the Bosque del Apache NWR Visitor Center.

—Tom Melanson

RIOFEST HEADS FOR 3RD ANNUAL

In the wake of a most successful 2nd Annual RioFest International Environmental Film Festival in January, planning is underway for next year’s event, according to RioFest Advisory Board member Carol Lynn Tiegs. RioFest was founded in 2006 by the Friends of the Bosque del Apache. Friends Board members Jon Morrison and Cat Stevens-McGrath serve on the RioFest Advisory Board. It is anticipated that the 2009 Fest again will be scheduled in January at Macey Center on the NM Tech campus.

Nearly 200 enthusiastic viewers attended the 2nd Annual RioFest Jan. 25-26 at Macey Center, Tiegs said.

Eighteen films were screened during the two-day festival. Audience-choice awards were given to the films *2000 Thousand Miles on a Horse* produced by Tom Jennings (first place - \$100), and to *The Man Who Killed the Easter Bunny* produced by Larry Zetlin and Jim Stevens (second place - \$50).

Singer-environmentalist Katie Lee’s live narration of her photographic *Love Song to Glen Canyon* at Saturday evening’s closing gala brought the audience to its feet in a standing ovation. The Glen Canyon DVD, photographed by Lee and partners in the ‘fifties’ before the Glen Canyon Dam obliterated the canyon’s priceless beauty, is available on the web at Katydid@datydoodit.com.

According to Tiegs, the 2nd Annual RioFest was a success not only artistically but also financially. “We have at least \$1,000 on hand from this year’s festival to apply to next year’s,” Tiegs said.

In addition to proceeds from ticket sales, the 2008 RioFest was supported by a grant from from the City of Socorro and by sponsorships from: Socorro Striders & Riders, Gambles Hardware, Steppin’ Out, Ace Hardware, Fullingim-Isenhour & Leard Galleries, Stage Door Grill, Bubble Machine Laundry & Dry Cleaners, Environmental Dynamics, Southwest Feeds, NM Wilderness Alliance, Holiday Inn Express, Best Western of Socorro, Socorro Rotary Club, and Wandermouse Web Works.



Katie Lee onstage at RioFest.

—Peter Rhalter photo

REACHING NEW FRIENDS

By Leigh Ann Vradenburg

As many of our feathered friends are heading north, the Friends of the Bosque are heading to the Hill, Capitol Hill that is. This April 4th-7th, Jerry Goffe (Friends V.P.), John Bertrand (Refuge/Friends P.R.) and I as Friends Executive Director will participate with Friends groups from around the nation in the Friends Forward Conference at the National Conservation Training Center. This conference is a follow up to the conference that former Friends President Jon Morrison and I attended in 2005 in which Friends groups identified and evaluated partnerships and issues outside of conventional refuge boundaries. This year's conference is particularly relevant to the Bosque del Apache NWR, as John Bertrand will be recognized as the National Wildlife Refuge Association 2008 Volunteer of the Year (see separate article). Immediately following the conference Friends groups will receive a briefing

and be sent out to meet with Senators and Congressmen on Capitol Hill. For the Friends of the Bosque, this will be a continuation of efforts initiated last fall in which we met with staffers for all five New Mexico delegates to give them a status report on the Bosque del Apache NWR. [See *Seeking Congressional Support* on page 15].

Our elected officials are not the only partners with which we are hoping to foster relationships this spring. At the end of February, I attended the Association of Partners for Public Lands annual conference in Denver. Although this conference largely targeted the National Park Service and their Friends or Associations, there was a wealth of information that was relevant to the Friends of the Bosque and nonprofits in general. I discovered new online resources and traded many business cards for future follow up. As we are looking to take the Friends to the next level of accountability, responsibility, and fundraising for the

Refuge, we will be using some of the strategic planning, fundraising, and membership recruitment techniques covered at the conference.

On our journey of organizational growth, we will continue to foster our day-to-day communication with Refuge staff. An open, effective line of communication is one of the greatest benefits of full-time Friends staff, and it becomes a necessity during large projects, such as when we built the Lannan Educational Annex and purchased Chupadera Peak. This May, Refuge Outdoor Recreation Planner Shawn Gillette and I will attend a training in Oregon on "Sustainable Funding Revenues for Non-Profit Partnerships". This training, presented by the Fish and Wildlife Service, will clarify roles and responsibilities in a Federal/non-profit partnership and provide participants with tools to create sustainable funding strategies.

It is going to be a wonderful spring, and the Friends are gathering the tools and planting the seeds to blossom in 2008.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD: Harrison Succeeds Harper As Festival Coordinator

By John Bertrand

The Bosque del Apache Festival of the Cranes begins its third decade this year with a new coordinator at the helm. Robyn Harrison has been appointed to the position, succeeding Tom Harper, who has been the guiding hand for the Festival since 2000. Harper has agreed to work alongside Harrison during the months leading up to the Nov. 18-23, 2008 event...the Festival's 21st.

Harrison brings to the Festival a background in public relations and journalism. Until last July, when she resigned after six years to pursue other interests, Harrison was Education and Outreach Director at the National Radio Astronomy Observatory (NRAO) at New Mexico Tech in Socorro. Her byline has appeared frequently in New Mexico Magazine, most recently over a 2006 profile of Park Borgeson, then Friends of the Bosque del Apache Public Relations Committee



Photo courtesy of *Mountain Mail*

Chairman. NM Magazine also published her 1999 piece on the opening of the Chupadera Wilderness Trail.

For a profile in February, Harrison told Mountain Mail: "The [Festival] coordinator's job is perfect for me because it's a big project with a beginning and an end and always the chance to change things the next year. It's exactly the sort of thing I like to do.

"[Tom Harper] has done so much as far as giving us a path to follow, a direction...All the things he's done make it easy to take over."

Looking ahead, Harrison told

The Watch: "I would like to add some events for children on the weekend; that may not happen this year, but that is one of my goals." She wants to schedule events to keep everyone interested, even those who are not avid birders. And she is committed to maintaining the Festival's minimum impact on wildlife.

Harrison claims bragging rights as a NM native by virtue of her Hobbs, NM birthplace, although she moved six months later with her family to Oklahoma and remained there throughout her school years. Before returning in 1998 to New Mexico, she earned a Masters of Education Degree at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, was a school librarian and reading teacher in rural Oklahoma schools, and a feature writer for the Bismarck Daily Tribune in North Dakota.

One of Harrison's first acts upon returning to New Mexico was to attend the 1998 Festival of the Cranes and she was hooked; she says she has attended the Festival every year since, and in 2005 she

began serving in the Friends hospitality tent at the Festival. Last year, she served as a member of the volunteer media committee for the 2007 Festival, and was engaged by Socorro's Mountain Mail newspaper to produce its 24-page tabloid 2007 Festival of the Cranes supplement.

Harrison and her husband Tom Hyden are part of the cutting-edge organic food revolution. Three years ago, they purchased a ten acre property on Farm-Market Road in Luis Lopez just north of the Refuge. From their gardens and two large greenhouses, they supply organic green vegetables and tomatoes for the local market, delivering year-round to a private client list, and selling at the Farmers' Market on Socorro's Plaza during the summer.

"I think Americans need to change the way we think about food, and start eating better," Harrison commented.

UPDATE ON CHUPADERA

The Friends' goal to see Chupadera Peak nestled securely as part of the Refuge's Chupadera Wilderness is nearing fruition. Refuge Deputy Manager Aaron Drew, working with FWS Region 2 Real Estate Manager Barbara Rose, has completed the physical examinations and paperwork required for the Refuge to accept the 140 acres, which includes the peak, purchased by the Friends in September. Transfer of title to the Refuge is expected to take place by mid-April, according to Rose.

Preliminary plans are in place to extend the Refuge western boundary fence around the 140-acre tract soon after it becomes part of the Refuge.

Drew, working with Nancy Roeper, Wilderness specialist at the Wash. D.C headquarters of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, expects the Wilderness designation to be approved shortly after title transfer. Wilderness protection, which is being sought under Section 6 of the Wilderness Act, requires a sixty-day notice to Congress before the designation becomes final.

QUILTING BRINGS BOSQUE VOLUNTEERS TOGETHER

By Shawn Gillette, Refuge Outdoor Recreation Planner

Take nine highly motivated volunteers, add a dash of natural beauty in the form of the Bosque del Apache NWR, toss in beads, felt, batting, plenty of thread, and a tremendous amount of pride, and what you finish with is an incredibly beautiful work of craftsmanship. The Bosque Quilt is the accomplishment of Refuge Volunteers **Dorothy Greenwood, Sandra Dunkerson, Evelyn Thomas, Kathleen Presley, Linda Guthrie, Judy Fillpot, Bonnie Nemmers, Liz Johnson, and Theda Farmer.**

The ladies worked over 100 hours to create the 90" x 90" quilt, which features 25 individual 12" squares that depict themes characteristic to the Refuge. "This was a labor of love," says Dorothy Greenwood, whose idea it was to create the quilt. "The creativity shown in some of the individual squares is absolutely breath taking." The quilt features a combination of different quilting techniques, including appliqué, intricate bead work, embroidery, and more.

The Bosque Quilt is displayed in a place of honor in the atrium of the Refuge visitor center as a testament to the work of these dedicated volunteers and of their love for the land that inspired their creativity.



FRIENDS' EDUCATIONAL SERIES

April 4: 8 p.m. Meet at the Canyon Trailhead 1.3 miles south of Visitor Center. **Star Stories from Around the World** with Amy Estelle.

April 26: 8 a.m. – 11 a.m. - Meet at the Canyon Trailhead on NM-1, 1.3 miles south of the Visitor Center.

Flowers that bloom in the Spring, Tra La Led by naturalist Bob Merkel on and near the Canyon Trail—a moderate 2-mile walk from the sandy arroyo plain, up to the bajada, through the canyon and its exposed geology. Each area has its own assortment of scenic features and plant. Bring water, sun protection, hiking shoes, camera, bug spray (*just in case*). Call 505-835-1828 for reservations (*limit 25*).

May 10: From 8 a.m., Visitor Center **International Migratory Bird Day Celebration**

Each activity limited to 24 people. Call 835-1828 for reservations. [Indicate if you are signing up for one activity or all three.].

8 a.m.: Naturalists will lead a one-hour birdwalk around the grounds of the visitor center including the arboretum. Beginning birders are welcome!

10-2: arboretum visit with emphasis on cactus propagation by cuttings and how to harvest and prepare nopals (cactus pads) for nopalitos. Bring your own lunch. (*Nopalitos prepared in various ways will be served during lunch break.*)

2-4 p.m.: - Refuge Tour in the refuge bus to see migrating waterfowl and shorebirds.

June 9: 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Visitor Center **Hummingbird Banding with Bill Talbot**

Experience capturing and banding hummingbirds that call the Refuge their reserve home during the spring and summer months. Observe Bill note measurements, conditions, sex & age. An added bonus may include hearing the beat of their tiny but powerful heart, or a touch of exhilaration at a chance to release back into freedom one of New Mexico's most enchanted creatures. Bill will give a slide presentation at the close of the day inside the visitor center.

BOOK REVIEW

PEREGRINE FALCON

Stories of the Blue Meanie

By Jim Enderson

How can anyone love a “Blue Meanie”? That is the silly nickname of the Peregrine Falcon, which was originally called a “duck hawk.” However, Jim Enderson, in 14 chapters and an epilogue, makes the bird wonderfully appealing as he explains the sport of falconry, which Aldo Leopold called the perfect sport. Surprisingly, he insists on the pronunciation “falcon,” like “falling,” not the “falcon” like “fallacy.” Very well, early languages used a “u,” so he can be historically correct.

We all remember Rachel Carson’s campaign in *The Silent Spring* against DDT. Although she died in 1965, her battle was carried on by students and professors throughout the country. Enderson tells about the scientific studies that could not determine how the chemical was decimating the bird population since their bodies did not seem to contain the chemical. Finally they discovered that the chemical made the shells thin so that they broke and no babies were born.



The author traveled everywhere—Scotland, England, Zimbabwe—in search of peregrine eyries and recruited many helpers. In Scotland,

the falcons had made two major recoveries unaided, but it seemed that Britain does not have as many falcon admirers as other places. In Africa, the explorers found irrelevant danger from an elephant whose path they had blocked with their camp.

Since peregrines naturally like

cliffs to launch their dive or “stope,” they like cities with their tall buildings. Where there was really no place for them, scientists devised “hack boxes,” which they placed all over the continent where peregrines had disappeared. Young birds were placed in boxes and fed till they were thought ready to fly. Occasionally horned owls or eagles would eat the young, but eventually the boxes were successful in repopulating empty places. Many birds were raised in Sweden and Germany with this technique.

The author calls the peregrine a “superb habitat generalist” because he found it everywhere and found that it migrates from the Arctic to Rio de Janeiro and from Nome, Alaska, to the Culiacán Marsh. He says that anywhere prey can be found, the peregrine thrives. He rejoices in their penchant for migration because it brings them to us for birdwatching and because it reminds us to conserve such environments.

Finally the restoration of the peregrine succeeded, with 7000 breeding pairs in existence. Sadly they don’t live long, after all this hard work; three or four years at the most. The country had recovery teams everywhere ready to rejoice and “delist” the bird, that is, remove it from the endangered list. However, Enderson says, that’s when it turned weird. Some groups refused to agree to removing the falcon from the list, preferring to change the term to “threatened.”

One difficulty was that the birds repopulated in various places but not necessarily where they were expected. Enderson says they apparently had not read the plans. Another fuss was about “aliens,” birds who may have come from the east coast rather than birds who were native to California. Considering this nonsense, Enderson tells about a family whose male was of tundra origin, and whose female had a parent from California and the

other parent from Chile. There were so many arguments of one kind or another that Enderson’s recovery team still exists, was never disbanded. One new result of the recovery was that many peregrines were now urban because of the hacking box work and because of the public’s welcoming the falcons to their cities. The author thinks that the peregrine would have recovered without human help but so slowly that most birdlovers, including himself, could not bear to wait. Enderson says that never before was so much done for a wild animal. We can all be grateful that so many were inspired to work at the recovery.

—Barbara DuBois

BLUE

We call the peregrine blue
We call the heron blue
But they are not true blue
The bluebird is blue
The bluejay is blue
New Mexico skies are usually blue
New Mexico is full of blue doors
Blueberries are blue
Bluebonnets and bluebells
Students write exams in bluebooks
Gainesborough painted the “Blue Boy.”
Forget-me-knot, the state flower of Alaska, is blue.
We used to use bluing in the laundry
Most blue jeans are blue, though fashion has given them more colors
We blue-pencil manuscripts to edit them.
An architect uses blueprints
A blue ribbon rewards first prize but a blue spruce and a blue whale
are more like the peregrine and heron,
bluish-green and bluish gray.

—Barbara Dubois

MORE 'MERIT' IN SCOUT BADGE PROGRAM

By Dennis Dunkerson

Boy Scouts of America and Bosque del Apache NWR have had a long term relationship. The Refuge offers two campgrounds that are very popular with scouts all over New Mexico. Most troops using the campgrounds choose also to help the Refuge by doing a service project during their visit. These projects help the Refuge and allow the scouts to do a community service.

Recently it was decided that the scout's experience at the Refuge could be further enhanced by offering programs that helped them earn merit badges. The current version of the program was

implemented after several discussions with scoutmasters and the regional scouting office in Albuquerque. What we learned was that the leaders we talked to wanted a program that helped the scouts without taking away the need for them to show initiative in completing the requirements.

They also wanted a program that was consistent from year to year and offered several different badges to allow for advance planning. They wanted the program to focus on specific badges rather than doing parts of several different badges in one session. They wanted the program to be flexible enough to allow the troop to split into two groups working on different badges. Finally, although our volunteers are

registered scout counselors for all of the programs they offer, the leaders said it was more important to keep the traditional scout/counselor relationship rather than try to finish the badges at the Refuge. They believe that the process of making and keeping appointments with their counselor and completing requirements based on a schedule worked out with the counselor is an important benefit of that relationship.

With the above in mind, four merit badge programs were introduced in the 2007-2008 season. They are Bird Study, Nature, Fish and Wildlife Management, and Photography. Although Bird Study has proven to be the most popular, we did have scouts work on all of the badges and several troops took



Instructor Dennis Dunkerson and BSA Troop 129 members discuss options during the February 9 Fish and Wildlife Management merit badge training session.

advantage of the option to split the troop for two different badges.

All of the merit badge programs include an audio/visual classroom program that lasts about an hour and covers all of the knowledge requirements for the badge. For example, Bird Study includes lots of bird photos taken on the Refuge. Fish and Wildlife Management

includes videos of Refuge employees talking about their job on the Refuge. Each of the classroom sessions lasts about an hour and is followed by a one to two hour tour of Bosque del Apache. The tours vary according to the badge requirements. Bird Study is a birding tour. Fish and Wildlife Management emphasizes management practices on the Refuge and environmental problems, such as invasive plant species. Photography turns the tour into an assignment to do a photo story of a Refuge tour. Projects, such as building a bird feeder, are left for the scout to do on his own.

All four of these programs have been very well received even though they are very much in their infancy and will continue to evolve as we

gain experience. Also, we are committed to adding more badge programs next year if we have the opportunity. The most likely candidates include Astronomy, Environmental Science, Soil and Water Conservation, and Personnel Management. It is our goal eventually to offer 10 to 12 different badge programs. In addition to attaining that level we are committed to develop training materials that will allow the program to continue when we are no longer available. We already

have plans to produce videos of classroom sessions to supplement any written training materials we develop. We also intend to allow the Refuge to use our photos and videos in these programs for as long as they want.

Volunteers Dennis and Sandy Dunkerson conducted our 2007-08 fall and winter scout program. They will return next fall.

COSTA RICA – A Friends Birding Adventure

By Jon Morrison

We just returned [February 29] from the first Friends of the Bosque-sponsored birding trip to Costa Rica. Thirteen people from California, Arkansas, Texas and New Mexico who contributed \$1750 each for the outing made up the group. The trip was organized as a fundraiser for the Friends and for a non-profit conservation agency in Costa Rica to be selected by the group.*

We had no idea what to expect and needless to say we were all blown away at the beauty and diversity we found. Costa Rica is a small country, the size of West Virginia, but it has more bird species recorded (877) than are found in Sibley's Guide to Birds that includes all of North America north of Mexico, excluding Greenland (810). How can such a small country have so many? It's all about geography and habitat. Costa Rica is wedged between the North American and South American continents and even though it has lost more than 80% of its rain forest, it still has large areas of tropical rainforest, cloud rainforest, mangrove swamps and everything in between.

When we arrived in Costa Rica at our hotel, the Hotel Bougainvillea, it became evident, as Dorothy said in the Wizard of Oz: "Toto, I don't think we're in Kansas anymore". There were Blue-crowned Mot-Mots, Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds, Blue-gray Tanagers, Pacific Screech owls for starter, plus a few of our friends, Northern Orioles, Black and Turkey Vultures, Inca Doves and more. Our guide Mario Cordova and intrepid driver Luis picked us up and we were all on the adventure of a life-time.

After breakfast, we left for Costa de Pajaros and stopped in Orotina to look for birds in the city park. I don't know about you, but when I go

to a city park, I see House Sparrows, grackles and pigeons and in the spring a few warblers. In Orotina, we saw Turquoise-browed Mot-Mots, Rose-throated Becards, Black-and-White Owls and a Two-toed Tree Sloth thrown in for good measure. Our first two nights out were at La Ensenada Lodge, a 865-acre private wildlife refuge on the Gulf of Nicoya. We were greeted by Grooved-billed Ani (they were everywhere), White-throated Magpie Jays, Spot-breasted and Streaked-back Orioles, Rose-throated Becards, Turquoise-browed Mot-Mots, Orange-chinned and Orange-fronted Parakeets, Black-throated Trogons and more. Everywhere you looked, it seemed you would uncover a new bird.

The accommodations were very nice and the food at the restaurant, served buffet style, was excellent. We also got to experience Costa Rica's national liquor, Guaro, which is made from sugar cane. One of our group said it tasted like Everclear. Breakfast brought Gallo Pinto, (rice and black beans), which in many households in Costa Rica is eaten at all three meals during the day. We were also exposed to Salsa Lizano, created in 1920 and now the National salsa of Costa Rica...it is put into just about everything.

The next morning we took a boat trip toward Palo Verde National Park in the Rio Tempisque lowlands, an area that includes deciduous, riparian and evergreen forest, mangrove swamps and fresh and saltwater marshes. A few of the nearly 50 species of birds we saw on the three-hour boat trip were, Yellow-headed Caracara, Mangrove Black Hawk, Mangrove Warbler sub-species of the Yellow Warbler) and the Panama Flycatcher. There were at least fifteen different species of shorebirds. In the afternoon, we took a tractor tour of the refuge and saw a Zone-tailed Hawk, Plumbeous Kite, Lesser Night

Hawk, Wood Stocks, Northern Jacana, Bare-throated Tiger Heron, Laughing Falcon and Hook-billed Kite. This is just a taste of what we saw that afternoon. The birding at the lodge was incredible. You should have been there.



Costa Rica's Arenal Volcano rumbles 1.7 miles from Arenal Observatory Lodge.

—Jerry Oldenettel photo

Then on to Arenal Observatory Lodge: Arenal is an active volcano and the lodge is 1.7 miles from the cone. All night you would hear what seemed to be thunder, but it was Arenal throwing out molten boulders the size of small houses crashing down the side of the cone. The birding again was incredible. Crested Guans, Cinnamon-tailed Hummingbirds, Black-crested Croquettes (a hummingbird having a bad-hair day) and Long-billed Hermits were sighted. In the morning the trees were just full of different types of birds, making it hard for everyone to see them all. We found more than forty species in less than a day. You should have been there.

Next stop was Selva Verde Lodge in the tropical rainforest. There were more types of tanagers (Blue Gray, Palm, Passerini's and Summer, to mention a few) and more hummingbirds than I thought possible. Plus Chestnut-billed and Keel-billed Toucans, Montezuma Oropendolas, Parrots, Bananaquits, and several types of wood creepers and Euphonia's. We also saw a variety of non-winged critters...Poison Dart Frogs, River Otters, Caimans, and Proboscis Bats.

You should have been there.

Then on to our quest for the bird most associated with Costa Rica, the Resplendent Quetzal. We traveled to the cloud forest and stopped at Mirador de Quetzal for lunch. We hiked about a mile which included a steep hill and found our quarry. Pictures do not do this bird justice.



Resplendent Quetzal, sacred to Mayans and Aztecs. —Jerry Oldenettel photo

The bird was sacred to the ancient Mayan and Aztec people, and royalty and priests wore its feathers during ceremonies. Seeing the bird, you realize why. You should have been there.

Our final stay was at Savegre Lodge in the Cloud Rain Forest. It was 46° in the morning and only warmed up into the mid-to-upper-50°s during the day. We were 10 degrees from the equator and cold! Ah, but the birding was incredible! Quetzals, Costa Rican Pygmy Owls, Black-thighed Grosbeaks, Yellow-thighed Finch plus many species of hummingbirds were to be found at the lodge. You should have been there.

We went to many more places and saw more than 300 species of birds in seven days of birding. We also had a digital photography

workshop, a cooking class and horse back ride for those interested. For pictures from the trip, check out Jerry Oldenettel's site at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/jroldenettel>.

Next year, the Friends will sponsor a Costa Rica birding encore limited to sixteen participants in mid March ...this one for fourteen days, visiting the south Pacific area of Costa Rica, then returning to the cloud forests. As with the 2008 outing, the trip will be a fund raiser for the Friends of the Bosque and for a Costa Rica non-profit to be designated by participants. Watch for details on the Friends website and be in the next Bosque Watch. You should be there!

**The name of the Costa Rican recipient of our donation was not yet available as The Watch went to the printers.*



Turquoise-browed motmot —Jerry Oldenettel photo

'RED OR GREEN'—IT'S YOUR CHOICE

By Bob Merkel, Corresponding Secretary

Each time a new issue of our quarterly newsletter *Bosque Watch* or our annual *Habitat!* is published, the contents are posted in a downloadable format on our website. Some 350 or so Friends members now receive *Watch* and *Habitat!* in this electronic format. (On the day each issue is posted, a link to the site is e-mailed to our e-subscribers for easy access.) Our incentive to urge even more members to read *Bosque Watch* and *Habitat!* on-line is, of course, the monetary saving the Friends achieves on printing and postage.

With that in mind, e-mails recently were sent to all the Friends who had provided us e-mail addresses but were not already signed up to see *Bosque Watch* and *Habitat!* on-line. Of 300-plus Friends who received the e-mail, more than 100 responded "Yes," they would prefer to receive the link by e-mail*.

Now we are having some second thoughts. One Friends member told us she prefers the hard-copy newsletter because she is more likely to actually read it! If you are more likely to sit down and read *Bosque Watch* and *Habitat!* in hard copy form, then we would actually prefer sending them to you that way. Despite the additional expense, the ultimate objectives of providing *Bosque Watch* and *Habitat!* to Friends members are twofold: To inform you about Bosque del Apache NWR and events taking place here *AND* to encourage your continued support of the Refuge by renewing your memberships each year.

So! Our request to all Friends is this: Please feel entirely free to choose between getting hard copies OR getting the on-line link to *Bosque Watch* and *Habitat!* Let us know your preference, or change your preference, by phoning the Friends at 575- 838-2120 or by e-mailing us at <friends@sdc.org>

** A number of the remaining e-mail addresses we used for this mailing were actually rejected. Please let us know if you have changed your e-mail address.*

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DR. PAUL WHITE ELECTED PRESIDENT AT FRIENDS ANNUAL MEETING

A modest turnout of Friends at the Jan. 26 annual meeting elected Dr. Paul White as President for 2008, succeeding three-term President Jon Morrison, who will remain on the Board as a Director-at-Large. Gary Singer was elected as a new Board member for a two-year term. Mark Domzalski was designated as Friends liaison in Washington, D.C., and the resignation of Polly Tausch, a new-comer to the Board a year ago, was accepted. Remaining incumbent officers and directors will retain their positions for 2008. [See complete roster of officers and directors at right.

Following the Annual Meeting, biologist John Vradenburg outlined Refuge long-range habitat management strategies in an informative presentation. Vradenburg then conducted a tour of the thousand-plus acre NAWCA rehab areas on the south end of the Refuge, and pointed out the location of a proposed viewing over-look of the area which will have access from Highway I. Vradenburg also indicated a separate monument location nearby monument location accessible from the Wildlife Tour Route which will honor the late senior biologist John Taylor, architect of the NAWCA restoration, and will credit a \$50,000 contribution to the NAWCA project from Ducks Unlimited.

Paul White, in his first year as a Board member in 2007, drafted the structural reorganization plan adopted last fall which outlines areas of responsibility for the Board as the Friends' policy-making body, and the Executive Director position which was created in 2007. A physicist, White has worked more than 30 years at Los Alamos National Laboratory. Before retiring January 10, Paul served as Director of the National Security Office, functioning as a 'National Security Advisor' to the Laboratory Director. Before coming to Los Alamos, Paul was Chair of the Department of Science and

Mathematics at St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas.

Paul and his wife Margaret are devoted birders, long-time members of the Friends, and are regular visitors and frequent participants in Bosque events. Paul is also an avid amateur photographer.

Gary Singer is a Past President of Congregation Albert, and currently serves on the Board of Jewish Family Service. He recently served as a member of the Board of Directors of the Jewish Community Endowment Foundation. Singer's business career focused on the consumer goods industry, where he was a senior marketing executive with AC Nielsen, a large marketing research firm. In addition to his volunteer efforts, Singer

BOARD WELCOMES MEMBERS TO MEETINGS

Friends members are welcome to attend Board meetings held bi-monthly. The next meetings will be held on May 7 at 10:00 a.m. at the Albuquerque Open Spaces Visitor Center, 6500 Coors Blvd. NW in Albuquerque; and on July 19 at 10:00 a.m. in the Christina Ann Lannan Annex in the Visitor Center at the Refuge.

continues to work toward establishing himself as a professional photographer. He has served as co-instructor with photography workshops presented on the Friends Educational Series.

Jon Morrison, among his many accomplishments during his term as President, was responsible for completing the Christina Ann Lannan Educational Annex to the Visitor Center, initiating the drive to purchase Chupadera Peak for the Refuge, and organizing the RioFest International Environmental Film Festival founded by the Friends in 2006. He also organized this year's inaugural Friends Costa Rica Birding Adventure... a fundraiser for the Friends. [See article beginning on Page 8.] While serving as Vice President, Morrison took the lead in establishing the Friends Educational

The Friends of the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge is a registered 501 (C) (3) non-profit corporation incorporated in New Mexico. The Friends promotes appreciation and conservation of wildlife and habitat through environmental education and natural history experiences at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge.

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Initiative, which has expanded into the Mapping the Rio project working with local schools under the direction of Friends Education Director Alex Rykken. (See accompanying story on Page 12.

RIVER PARTNERS: MAPPING THE RIO WATERSHED

VIEW STUDENT WORK APRIL-MAY AT MACEY

The Friends' Mapping the Rio Educational Initiative will be featured in a month-long exhibit beginning April 28 on the mezzanine at Macey Center on the NM Tech campus. The exhibit will highlight artwork and projects created by students enrolled during the past two years in the Mapping the Rio program at Parkview, Zimmerly, Cottonwood Valley Charter and San Antonio schools. Included will be children's poetry and art, Rio Grande photos, a large relief map of the river from its source to the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, and a wetlands/wildlife/river mobile. Also planned for showing Monday evenings during the exhibit is a series of New Mexico environmental films. Visit www.friendsofthebosque.org/rio to confirm dates and times.

Mapping the Rio is conducted by Friends Education Director Alex Rykken. Rykken currently is working with spring classes at Zimmerly Elementary in Barbara Savery's 5th Grade and at Parkview in Jennifer Keller's kindergarten class. During the winter, Rykken completed eight-weeks of classroom and field exercises, focused on Sandhill Crane behavior, with San Antonio Elementary's 3rd Grade and Cottonwood Valley Charter's 4th Grade.

The accompanying review by Audry Olmsted of *Rio Grande Documentary--A Journey Down the Rio Grande*, a DVD created by Rykken and associates in conjunction with the Mapping the Rio project. The DVD is available to purchase at the Bosque Nature Store.

A JOURNEY DOWN THE RIO GRANDE

By Audry Olmsted
El Defensor Chieftain managing editor

Every single drop of water is life, and every person has a role in protecting and preserving that life. This is the essential message conveyed in a DVD project that maps the Rio Grande from its headwaters in the Colorado Rockies to the Bosque del Apache.

Alexis Rykken is an instructor for River Partners: Mapping the Rio program through Friends of the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge. For a year, Rykken and Cecilia Jacka photographed the river for a documentary. The result of that effort can be seen in "Rio Grande Film Documentary: A Journey Down the Rio Grande," which debuted



last fall during the Festival of the Cranes. The film combines hundreds of photographs of the river and the animals and habitat that surround it. Narration is by Carlos Marrero and Matilde "Tita" Van Fleet, who give some history about the river as well as other facts about restoration and preservation. The documentary is also accompanied by a variety of music.

The film is relatively short...only

about 20 minutes in length. The photographs are quite beautiful and truly depict the diverse regions the 'Rio Grande runs through, from wooded forests to desert landscapes and every transition in between. I would liken watching this montage of photographs to watching an episode of National Geographic on television when I was younger — where you get to watch the scenery, but you are not overpowered by facts that make you feel as though you are in geography class. The information is doled out at a nice, even pace and you get to learn little tidbits such as that the Rio Grande, is the fifth largest river in North America, and beavers and their dams were really influential in shaping the rivet as we see it today.

I was able to just sit back and enjoy the scenery while listening to information about the Rio Grande,

and hear just how connected we humans are to the river, including the humbling notion that the river has been on this earth for millions of years and we are mere visitors to its habitat and home. The educational film leaves you with the idea that we do need each other to survive.

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'SNOW' THAT DOESN'T MELT

By Bob Merkel

How many times have I been asked, "why is there snow on the ground," by people who've just driven to the Bosque del Apache Visitor Center? Too many to keep track of. And it can look like a thin dusting of snow all over the low places along Route I north of the Center. It's near the railroad tracks and out in the flats between the highway and the west edge of the flood plain. In some areas, the white, powdery bare ground surface is interrupted only sparingly by just one peculiar kind of low shrub, Quinine Bush.

But that stuff isn't snow at all. Suppose you walk over to a patch of it and just reach down, grab a little in your hand, and give it a taste. Yeeeech! It's salty. Turns out it's a precipitate of the calcium sulfate salt called gypsum. Therein lies a story about geology, about the Rio Grande valley, about botany, and about our human effects on the landscape.

Long, long ago, before there even was a Rio Grande, seas covered parts of what is now the state of New Mexico. The climate was not very different from what it is today, though, with hot summers and little rainfall. Maybe it was drier; more like, say, the Persian Gulf of today. In nearshore areas sands accumulated in deltas, beaches, and shallow bays. Evaporation was so intense in the summers that in many areas the seawater became supersaturated and gypsum crystallized in the spaces among the sand grains or sometimes even in solid layers. Today's mountains contain the sedimentary rocks that were formed around and

under those ancient seas and you can find places today where the gypsum is abundant. One well-known example is White Sands; it's composed of gypsum eroded out of rocks in the nearby San Andres Mountains.

Much of the Rio Grande watershed between the Continental Divide and the eastern New Mexico mountain ranges is the same. Gypsum dissolves out of the rocks (it's much less soluble than regular table salt - - sodium chloride - - but much more soluble than other components of the rocks) and becomes part of the Rio Grande waters. When the river floods, the gypsum-salty water spreads over



Quinine Bush

its flood plain and soaks into the ground. Trees like Salt Cedar, shrubs like Four-wing Saltbush, and low plants like Salt Grass are perfectly happy to grow in this soil but many other plants cannot thrive in it. One particular plant, the Quinine Bush (*Allenrolfea occidentalis* if you really want to know), is known as a gypsophile; it grows only on soils heavily saturated with gypsum. In some areas near the highway, nothing else is growing at all and a lot of the ground is bare.

These areas near the highway are naturally lower in elevation than the banks of the Rio Grande a mile or

two farther east. Historically, every time the rushing river flooded over its banks, the flood waters would slow down and drop gravels and sands onto the land. This process builds up a so-called natural levee adjacent to the river. Only finer silts and clays deposit as thinner layers of sediment in the farther reaches of the flood plain. In the 90+ years since the Elephant Butte dam was completed and more and more river water has been withdrawn for our use, the Rio Grande has shrunk and its bed has filled in to the point that the bottom of the river is higher than the part of Bosque del Apache you can visit to see the birds.

Today the low flats you drive by are cut off from the river by a high levee to contain the river, by the Low Flow Conveyance Channel (which delivers water to Elephant Butte Lake and eventually Texas), by roads and ditches, by a highway, and by the railroad. Water can only reach the flats by being pumped up from the water table (to fill the artificial

ponds used by cranes and waterfowl during the winter) - - or by runoff out of the arroyos that drain from the Chupadera mountains. So much has changed since Piro pueblos lined the valley, since Juan de Oñate led the first Spanish settlers through here on El Camino Real, since Mexican independence, since the United States acquired this land in 1848 and unleashed hordes of eager immigrants, and since the Refuge was established in 1939 to protect this beautiful place and re-establish, insofar as possible, its function as a winter home for migratory ducks, geese, and cranes.

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

By John Bertrand

It's late on a March afternoon. The sun is shining through my west-facing window in the office space Bosque so generously provides for me as I struggle to finish assembling the April Bosque Watch. In a tree outside is a gang of Red-winged

Blackbirds; scattered among them is a Yellow-head Blackbird. Their melodious song fills the air with music.

The scene brings back memories of my first season (1993) as a Bosque volunteer.

That spring, I shared duties at the Visitor Center with Marilyn Wolden, the indomitable matron of our intrepid reception desk crew of volunteers. Marilyn loved the Yellow-headed Blackbirds

which showed up at the Visitor Center for a few weeks each March and April.

Marilyn shared her knowledge (and her opinions) of the Refuge fearlessly with visitors, come one, come all. But mixed in with her wisdom were two *idées fixes*, neither of which any one of us could disabuse Marilyn. The first was Marilyn's stock reply to anyone who called in March after the cranes and

geese had departed to ask what was on the Refuge to see. "The birds have all gone. . .there are no birds here," Marilyn would reply staunchly (even as the Yellow-heads outside were trilling their song). The second of Marilyn's *idées fixes* concerned the migration of hummingbirds. Marilyn was unshakable in her belief, which she asserted aggressively to visitors, that our Rufus and Black-chinned hummers migrated to the Far North hitch-hiking on the backs of the geese.

Marilyn and husband Gene, whose permanent home was in Wisconsin, arrived at Bosque in 1992, and were faithful volunteers



Yellowheads gather in tree at Visitor Center (John Bertrand photo)

for several years. Gene, a retired construction contractor, was in charge of constructing the Refuge's present six-stall storage facility, adding a bay onto the mechanics shop (now the firehouse), and designing and building four of the tour loop observation decks.

Marilyn is no longer with us. . .she struggled bravely in her final volunteer season in 1995 to carry on, as an advancing cancer sapped her vitality. After Marilyn's passing, Gene returned for two more years to oversee construction projects.

When the Yellow-heads return in March to Bosque, I remember Marilyn with fondness.

GETTIN' MORE DONE WITH THE SUN

Bosque del Apache NWR will make a leap forward this spring in its program to become more energy independent. By early July, a 12 kilowatt (kw) photovoltaic generating system on the farm building at the headquarters complex is scheduled to begin generating electricity for the Refuge's needs, and to transmit excess energy back to the electric grid. The 12 kw system is in addition to a 6 kw array installed last November on the fire management building.

The two arrays will be connected separately to the Socorro Electric Coop's grid. The fire house array already is generating electricity for Refuge use and cutting the size of its monthly electric bill. Electricity generated in excess of the building's needs is reflected as credits on the Refuge's bill from the Coop.

Along with solar collection panels on the roof, the \$145,000 farm building installation will include a metering system linked to the Refuge's and Friends of the Bosque del Apache's websites. Viewers visiting the sites will have access to real-time and cumulative readings on the amount of electricity being produced by both the farm building and the fire house arrays.

Although the principal goal of the solar installations is to make the Refuge "greener", the conversions promise long-term savings for the Refuge as well. Typically in our sunny New Mexico region, solar systems can recover their cost through reduced energy bills in a reasonable time.

Separately from the 6 kw and 12 kw arrays, solar water heaters were installed last fall in the volunteers' lounge and two staff residences, drawing energy from solar panels mounted on the roofs. Even these small installations can provide

substantial savings. In February, 2006, the volunteer lounge, which draws energy for three washers and driers, drew 1,634 kilowatt hours of electricity from the Coop's line. A year later, with solar in place, usage of Coop electricity by the lounge building in February dropped to 1040 kilowatt hours, a reduction of 594 kwh. Although changed weather conditions may have affected the outcome, at the Coop's current rate of 9.25-cents per kwh, this is an indicated saving of \$54.95 for the month for just that one installation.

SEEKING CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT

On April 7, our Friends delegation attending the annual conference of friends organizations will visit New Mexico's senators and representatives in Wash., D.C. to enlist their support for refuges in the fiscal year 2009 budget, and to call attention to some specific funding needs for Bosque del Apache NWR. The National Wildlife Refuge System's budget goal for operations in the coming fiscal year is \$514 million.

The Refuge System has, for a number of years, faced flat or declining budgets until the one-time \$39 million increase approved by Congress for fiscal year 2008; however, while this increase was indeed substantial and badly needed, refuges nationwide continue to struggle with the impact of inadequate budgets.

In the last three years, Bosque del Apache NWR has lost staff and program support required to achieve basic operational objectives for habitat management, invasive species control, and public use programs. In this same three-year time-frame, the Friends of the Bosque contributed more than \$750,000 in non-federal money to Refuge programs, and

volunteers donated \$1.3 million in work hours to ensure that these programs have not faltered. Much of the fiscal contribution by the Friends organization was for Chupadera Peak acquisition and construction of the Lannan Educational Annex. Volunteer organizations provide laudable and needed supplements to the Refuge System, but should not be looked to as substitutes for the Refuge programmatic and operational support that is properly a Federal responsibility.

The message for FY09 that we are carrying to Congress is two-fold: to request support for adequate funding to meet the needs of refuges nationally, and to make them aware of critical short-falls at Bosque del Apache. Bosque's requests will be presented in a graphic presentation covering equipment acquisitions in support of ongoing invasive species elimination initiatives and facilities/maintenance enhancements in support of public use programs.

The commitment of the Friends organization to the Bosque del Apache has allowed us to supplement the economic and educational opportunities for our region; however, we can scarcely maintain, much less grow the Refuge's capabilities without increased Federal financial support. Please join us in encouraging Congressional support for increased funding for the Refuge System in FY09 by contacting our Senators and Representatives listed on the back of this newsletter.

COMING IN JULY

Since 1996, Friends of the Bosque del Apache has contributed in excess of \$1.2 million to Refuge programs and improvements. The July issue of Bosque Watch will feature a review of the programs and improvements these dollars have paid for. Watch for it!

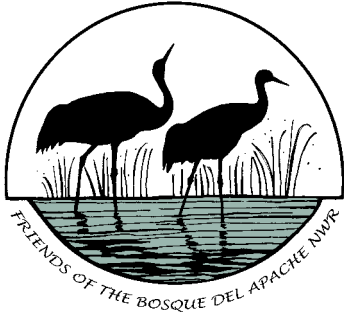
MASSIVE BURN PLANNED FOR EAST SIDE

As the April Bosque Watch was going to the printers in late March, the Refuge fire team was preparing to conduct a 20,000-acre prescribed burn on the east side of the Refuge. The burn would take place on the Little San Pascual Wilderness and is the first phase of a larger 50,000-acre Prescribed Burn to be conducted in partnership with the Bureau of Land Management, White Sands Missile Range, NM State Trust Lands and private landowners.

The burn area is comprised of Chihuahuan desert grass and shrub lands. The primary objective of the burn is to maintain and restore Chihuahuan grasslands. Over time shrub species have increased in this area of the refuge slowly converting the grasslands into desert scrub. Cyclic burning under a hot prescription has proved a useful tool to combat or reverse this trend. Fire can remove decadent vegetation and facilitate the recycle of nutrients.

One of the goals in a Wilderness area is that it is left in its natural wild condition, with little evidence of human pressure. "This is not to imply that Wilderness areas are left unmanaged," Refuge Deputy Manager Aaron Drew explained in a press release announcing the burn. "After years of fire suppression and historic grazing before the Refuge was established, the Little San Pascual Wilderness has taken a different direction from the natural plant succession which existed in the area during naturally occurring fire conditions, such as lightning strikes," Drew noted.

Lack of fire has promoted the unchecked growth of desert scrub species, which have dominated the area, reducing the number of native grasses and shrubs that wildlife depend on for food.



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Friends of the Bosque del Apache
Membership Application - Please Print

Name		Family Members		
Street		City	State	Zip
Phone		Email		

Check to receive Newsletter electronically

Membership Level: Individual \$20 Family \$25 Student \$15
 Senior \$15 Special Friend \$60-99 Best Friend \$100-499
 Friend Indeed \$500-999 Lifetime \$1000+

Interests: Help with Friends activities Help with the Festival
 Serve on a Friends Committee.

Please mail with your check to: **Friends of the Bosque del Apache**
P.O. Box 340, San Antonio, NM 87832

SPEAK UP!

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

President George W. Bush. The White House, Washington DC, 202.456.1111
President@WhiteHouse.gov
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Director. 500 Gold Avenue SW, Albuquerque NM 87102, 505.346.2545
Hon. Dirk Kempthorne, Secretary of the Interior, 18th & C Streets NW, Rm. 6151, Washington DC 20240, 202. 208.7351

N.M. Senators
Hon. Jeff Bingaman U.S. Senate Washington DC 20510, 202.224.5521, 505.766.3636
senator_bingaman@bingaman.senate.gov
Hon. Pete Domenici U.S. Senate, Washington DC 20510, 202.224.6621, 505.766.3481
senator_domenici@domenici.senate.gov

N.M. Representatives
Hon. Steve Pearce House of Representatives Washington DC 20515, 202.225.2365
pearce.house.gov/
Hon. Tom Udall House of Representatives Washington DC 20515, 202.225.6190
www.tomudall.house.gov/
Hon. Heather Wilson House of Representatives Washington DC 20515 202.225.6316 *wilson.house.gov*

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