

Seasonal Sightings: Bird Migrations Along the Middle Rio Grande



2015

Phenological Calendar

Seasonal Sightings

Seasonal Sightings Along the Middle Rio Grande is a project that encourages ordinary citizens to gather data on seasonal changes visible in the bosque ecosystem along the Middle Rio Grande. The timing of seasonal changes, known as phenology, includes the observation of phenomena such as flowering plants, breeding animals, and migration patterns. More specifically, phenology is the study of plant and animal life cycle events and how these are related to variations in climate, latitude, day length, and the changing of the seasons.

The first Seasonal Sightings project, the 2014 calendar, focused on weather, precipitation, and groundwater trends over the past twelve years, as well as observations of the first and last occurrences in the season. This year's calendar focuses on bird migration due to Albuquerque's recognition through the Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds as an important area for bird conservation.



The Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds (UCTMB) is a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service project started in 1999. UCTMB works with cities and partners to protect migratory birds through education, hazard reduction, citizen science, conservation, and habitat improvement in urban and suburban areas.

Albuquerque was named as one of the UCTMB national cities in 2014 due to its abundant local, state and federal protected land that supports wildlife and serves as ideal habitat for nesting and migratory birds. The Rio Grande, the fourth longest river on the continent, flows through the heart of the urban area and is the basis for the Rio Grande flyway. The Rio Grande is one of the most important flyways for migratory waterfowl in North America.

Migration is intrinsically tied to seasonal changes and weather patterns. Studies show that numerous birds are altering their patterns of migration, mating, and nesting due to changes in climate. Citizens around the world can help the scientific community better understand these changes through simple observations. Post your observations on iNaturalist.org or eBird.org today. Become a citizen scientist!

Geocaching: Burque Birding GeoFlight

In coordination with this calendar project, the Burque Birding GeoFlight was developed to highlight birding hotspots throughout the area. There are twelve geocache sites, each of which includes a unique collectible bird card that corresponds to a month of this calendar. Also, a limited number of trackable bird coins are available for cachers who find at least nine of the twelve geocaches on their GeoFlight.

Discover what makes Albuquerque a special place for birds, name the common birds, and have fun geocaching at some of the area's most scenic birding locations. Visit www.bernco.gov/openspace or www.openspacealliance.org for more information; or, create a free account on www.geocaching.com, and search for Burque Birding GeoFlight!



About this Calendar

Featured Photos - The photos featured each month are of birds observed migrating to Albuquerque that time of year. Each month also highlights a birding hotspot where you are likely to see the migrating bird. Visit these sites by participating in the Burque Birding GeoFlight. Don't forget to bring your binoculars.

Dates and Observations - This calendar features many important dates and phenological observations. National holidays, local celebrations, and dates of importance to conservation are highlighted in red. The phenological observations, printed in black, are from the Rio Grande Nature Center State Park's Almanac and are listed on the day they were observed.

Calendar Events - While this calendar cannot contain or include all birding-related events for 2015, there is a companion online calendar at <http://tinyurl.com/ABQBirding> which will be updated regularly with upcoming birding related-events in the Middle Rio Grande region.

Migration Patterns - Each month presents a map in the sidebar with the featured bird's migration patterns. Some birds travel thousands of miles every year—a great feat of nature. The lesser Sandhill cranes, for example, migrate to New Mexico during the winter from the northern part of the country; however, they also travel from Alaska to Siberia, the longest migration route of the Sandhill crane species.

Birding 101

Interest and Patience - The first thing you need is an interest in getting outdoors and watching birds. The second thing is a little patience with yourself and birds. Birds are great at hiding, and it is not always easy to see them at first, much less identify all the species of birds in the area. However, a little patience and persistence can be greatly rewarded when the birds reveal themselves.

Equipment and Material - The most basic equipment is your senses, especially sight and hearing. However, birding is made easier if you have a few other things at your disposal, including a pair of binoculars, a local field guide, and a notebook. Binoculars can range greatly in price and quality, so pick the right pair for your needs and budget. A notebook helps to keep track of what you see and where, and field notes can help you identify birds later. Finally, make sure to be prepared for the outdoors by dressing for the weather and bringing plenty of water and snacks.

Backyard Birding - While it is rewarding to visit an area where there are a variety of birds and to explore open space, you can also watch birds from your backyard by setting up a bird feeder. There are a number of citizen science opportunities, such as eBird, that allow you to record and add your sightings to those of other birdwatchers. Knowing your observations are part of larger scientific studies and comparing them to what other art seeing around the nation can be very exciting.

Have Fun - The most important thing about birding is to have fun. Birding is like most things in life: you get better at it the more you do it, so get outdoors and let your ambitions soar!

Resources

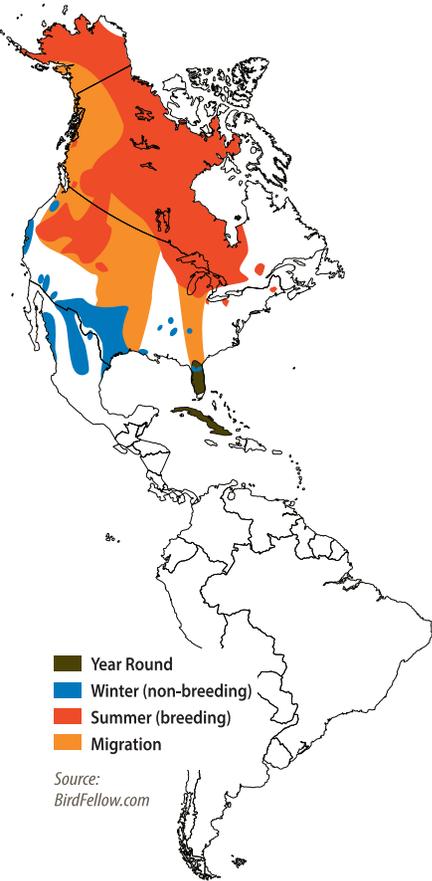
- City of Albuquerque Open Space
www.cabq.gov/parksandrecreation/open-space/
- Open Space Alliance - www.openspacealliance.org
- Bernalillo County Open Space
<http://www.bernco.gov/Openspace/>
- Rio Grande Nature Center State Park
<http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/SPD/riograndenaturecenterstatepark.html>
- Friends of the Rio Grande Nature Center
www.rgnc.org
- US Fish and Wildlife Service and Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge - www.fws.gov/refuge/valle_de_oro/
- Friends of Valle de Oro - <http://friendsofvalledeoro.org>
- Central New Mexico Audubon Society
<http://cnmas.newmexicoaudubon.org>
- New Mexico Ornithological Society - www.nmbirds.org
- www.eBird.org
- www.iNaturalist.org
- www.geocaching.com
- Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds
<http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/Partnerships/UrbanTreaty/UrbanTreaty.html>
- "Birding NM" on Facebook
- "Burque Young Birders' Club" on Facebook



Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*)

Sandhill cranes are large, long-necked migratory birds, some of which winter in the Rio Grande Valley and in wetlands and farm fields to the south. Especially prominent at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge south of Socorro, they are also abundant in the Albuquerque area. Because they are light tan or gray in color, distant sandhill cranes may look like deer when feeding. The lesser sandhills, some of which winter in New Mexico, have the longest migration route of the six distinct sandhill crane sub-species; they fly all the way to Alaska and Siberia. Male sandhill cranes are known as roans; females, mares. The chicks are called colts. A mated pair usually have one or two offspring. Cranes are a social species. They feed on grain, insects, berries, small rodents, amphibians, and reptiles. Cranberries used to be called "crane berries" because cranes feed on them in cranberry bogs. The species has been around for at least two-and-a-half million years. Fossil remains have been found in Nebraska, known for its "sand hills," which may be the source of their name.

Feature photo: sandhill crane, Larry Buck. Photo below: view from the City of Albuquerque Open Space Visitor Center.



January 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 National Environmental Policy Act (1970) New Year's Day	2 Porcupines easily visible in January in leafless cottonwoods	3 Bosque del Apache Wilderness Area established (1975)
4 Some bosque mammals may be hibernating during this coldest part of the winter	5	6 King's Day	7 Male ring-necked pheasants very vocal and visible	8	9	10
11 Aldo Leopold born (1887)	12	13 Many white-crowned sparrows and dark-eyed juncos present	14	15	16 In 2011, a high of 63 degrees was recorded on this day at the Rio Grande Nature Center	17
18	19 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day	20	21 John Charles Fremont born (1813)	22	23 San Ildefonso Feast Day	24 Hermit thrushes are observed primarily in winter
25 Leaf buds apparent on cottonwood trees	26	27 Common mergansers are often present at the Rio Grande Nature Center between Nov. and March	28	29 Edward Abbey born (1927)	30	31

City of Albuquerque Open Space Visitor Center

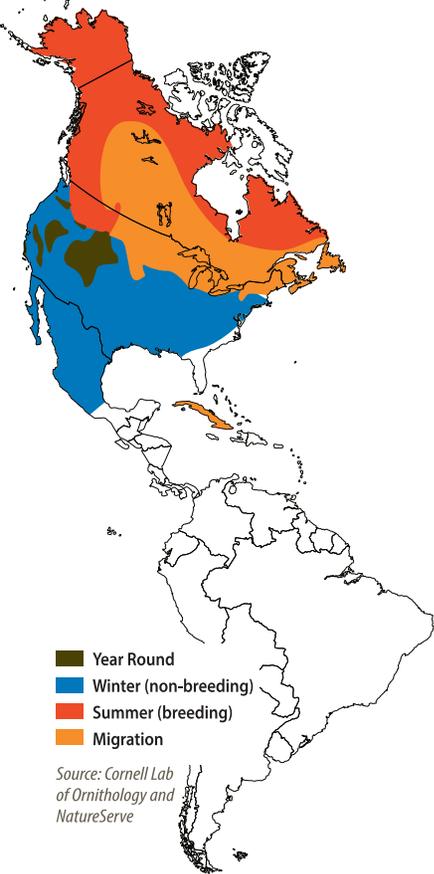
The City of Albuquerque has one of the most ambitious open space programs in the country. In fact, Albuquerque tops the list for the highest percentage of parkland and open space for small cities in the United States! Over 29,000 acres of open space protect unique landscapes and sensitive habitat while providing miles of recreation trails for hiking, biking and horseback riding. Start exploring at the Open Space Visitor Center. Nestled at the west edge of the Rio Grande bosque, the Center overlooks a wetland and 18 acres of agricultural fields dedicated to supporting wildlife. It offers educational exhibits, a dynamic art gallery, demonstration gardens, a trailhead, as well as programs and events.



White-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*)

Common winter residents of New Mexico, white-crowned sparrows migrate all the way to Alaska and Arctic Canada to breed and nest. They occur throughout the United States during winter months, except in higher elevations in the West. They are known for their natural alertness mechanism, allowing them to stay awake for up to two weeks during migration. This large grey sparrow is easy to identify: it has a white stripe over the top of its head bordered by two black stripes, a white stripe on either side of its head, and a narrow black streak behind the eye. Its breast and belly are pale gray; its back and wings, are streaked brown with narrow white wing bars. Its short stout pink or yellowish bill is ideal for eating seeds. Often seen in flocks, white-crowned sparrows like lower branches of thick vegetation, feeding on the ground at protective edges. White-crowned sparrows have a thin sweet whistle voice in spring as they gather for their migration. They love sunflowers and although furtive, can be coaxed to feeders with this favorite seed. One of North America's most abundant neo-tropical migrants because of their widespread habitat, they have been declared a species of Least Concern—they are thriving.

Feature photo: white-crowned sparrow, Lou Feltz. Photo below: Pajarito Open Space.



February 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9 World Wetlands Day Groundhog Day	10	11 Great horned owls nesting	12	13	14 Louis Agassiz Fuertes born (1874)
15	16	17 First of season painted turtles and red-eared sliders can be observed on warm days	18	19	20 First of season mourning cloak butterflies	21 Valentine's Day
22	23 Presidents' Day	24	25	26 Chinese New Year	27 First of season ant activity	28
First of season singing Bewick's wrens				First of season singing spotted towhees		

Pajarito Open Space

Pajarito Open Space is comprised of 20 acres of farmland located in the South Valley. For many years, the property was owned by the Beck family who managed it as a small family dairy farm with surrounding alfalfa fields. Today, a local farmer continues that tradition by growing alfalfa for Rasband Dairy and mixed grains for wildlife. The walking trail around Pajarito Open Space's perimeter is part of Albuquerque Prescription Trails, a program which promotes walking outdoors for a healthier lifestyle. The property offers scenic views of the west mesa and year-round bird watching opportunities. Site amenities include picnic tables and benches as well as several interpretive signs discussing the area's rich history.



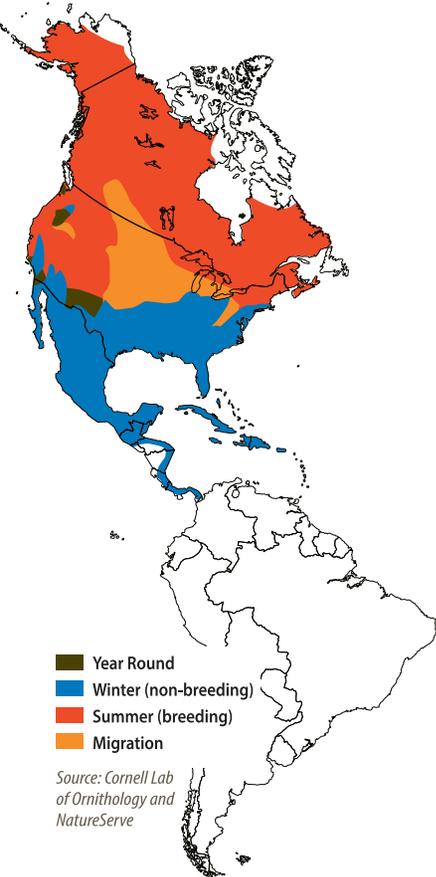


Yellow-rumped Warbler (*Dendroica coronata*)

Yellow-rumped warblers are a lumping of several sub-species that were once known as Audubon's warbler and Myrtle warbler plus a few Mexican and Central American sub-species. They are a mid-sized warbler with a large population, occurring throughout North and Central America, breeding primarily north of Mexico but wintering as far south as Panama. Males have streaked backs of black on slate blue, white wing patches, streaked breasts, and conspicuous yellow patches on the crown, flank and rump. Audubon's have a yellow throat patch; Myrtles have a white throat and eye stripe, but all have noticeable yellow rumps. One of North America's most abundant neo-tropical migrants, yellow-rumped warblers are primarily insectivores, one of the most versatile foragers. They glean insects and larva off leaves and fly like flycatchers for airborne insects. When insects are not available, they may feed on fruit and berries. They will even feed on the excretions of aphids. During winter, they seek open areas with fruiting shrubs or scattered trees such as parks, riparian habitat, open pine and pine-oak forests, dunes, and residential areas.

Feature photo: yellow-rumped warbler, Lou Feltz. Photos below: Atrisco Bosque Trail.

March 2015



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District irrigation season begins	Roadrunners "hoo-ing" and barking		First of season bats		Some Canada goose nests already have eggs	
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Daylight savings time begins				First of season bullfrogs		
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Last of season bald eagles Rio Grande Valley State Park established (1983)	Cooper's hawks nesting	Blue-winged teal occasionally seen March-October	American kestrels mating	First of season great horned owlets	First of season swallows (all species) Bushtits nesting March into April Spring Equinox	
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
World Water Day		Curve-billed thrashers singing				Earth Hour (8:30-9:30 PM)
29	30	31				

Atrisco Bosque Trail

The Rio Grande Valley State Park Open Space is a 4,300 acre riverside forest referred to locally as the bosque (which is Spanish for "forest"). Large cottonwood trees, coyote willow, and New Mexico olive create a cool, shady forest and provide habitat for beaver, numerous bird species, turtles, and snakes. It extends along the Rio Grande from Sandia Pueblo north of Albuquerque all the way to Isleta Pueblo in the south. Visitors can enjoy year-around recreation on multi-use trails as well as wheelchair-accessible picnic areas. The land is jointly managed by the City of Albuquerque Open Space Division and the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District. Atrisco Bosque Trail is an element of the Rio Grande Valley State Park Open Space.

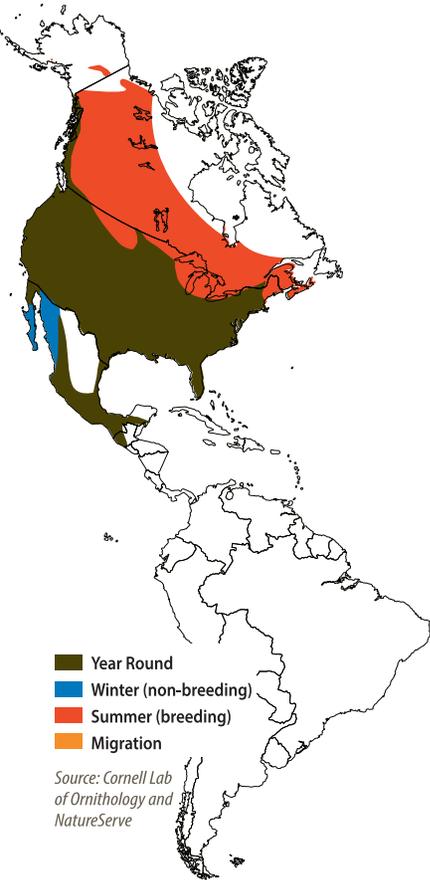


Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*)

Originally described by Linnaeus as an oriole, the Red-winged Blackbird's genus name came from a Greek word *agelaios* meaning "belonging to a flock" and its species name from a Latin word meaning "deep red." It has been described as the most abundant living land bird in North America; it ranges from Alaska and Newfoundland south to Central America. It is also the best-studied wild bird species in the world. The male is glossy black with a red-shoulder and a yellow wing bar; females are relatively nondescript streaky dark brown. In New Mexico males seem to migrate to the southern part of the state while females are present throughout the year. They breed in loose colonies. Females build their nests in marshy areas, especially among cattails but also in alders and willows, rushes and sedges. Nests usually contain 3 to 5 eggs; young birds are often preyed upon by hawks, owls, crows, ravens, magpies and herons as well as by raccoons, foxes, mink, and snakes. Being omnivorous, red-wings feed upon a wide variety of seeds and insects. On the Gulf Coast of Texas where they often glean rice fields in huge flocks with starlings and other blackbirds, they are often called rice birds.

Feature photo: red-winged blackbird, Jim Kennedy. Photos below: Sanchez Farm Open Space.

April 2015



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Swallows, flycatchers, warblers and other flycatching birds return		Osprey migrating through	First of season snapping turtles and spiny soft-shell turtles	First of season black-chinned hummingbirds		Downy woodpeckers creating nest holes First of season snakes
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
	Cottonwoods blooming	National Dark-Sky Week	Put up hummingbird feeders - they usually show up in small numbers in mid-April		First of season ash-throated flycatchers	First Canada goose goslings
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Earliest report of Woodhouse toadlets	First of season blooms on spectaclepod plants	John Muir born (1838)	Three-leaf sumac begin blooming Earth Day		First of season black-headed grosbeaks Arbor Day	
26	27	28	29	30		
Mary Alice Root born (1923)						

Sanchez Farm Open Space

This 14-acre property in the South Valley was owned and farmed by the Sanchez family for more than 300 years before the Bernalillo County's Public Works Division purchased it to serve as a storm drainage facility. Today, the property provides important ecological functions with an established wetlands and bioswales to mitigate water pollution. The site is community farmed with extensive educational programming led by the La Plazita Institute (LPI). Open Space staff and LPI have worked with The Recuerda a César Chávez Committee since 2010 to organize a large-scale César Chávez Day of Service where hundreds of students come to the farm to learn about César Chávez and hands-on farming. Sanchez Farm also has a perimeter walking trail.

Mary Alice Root born (1923)



Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*)

Red-headed, yellow-bodied, black-winged denizen of both coniferous forests and deciduous woods, the western tanager migrates through New Mexico in spring and fall. White wing bars are evident in both sexes, but females lack the red head males display, and are paler in body color. Insectivores and fruit eaters, western tanagers live in open woods throughout the American West as well as in western Canada below the Arctic. They winter in southern Mexico and Central America. Stocky songbirds, western tanagers are smaller than most of their kin (such as summer and hepatic tanagers) but larger than warblers. Primarily insect eaters, they usually nest in conifer forests and feed on various fruits in autumn. They are commonly seen in the Rio Grande Valley during migration, both spring and fall. Their melodic, robin-like songs enhance forested landscapes in summer; their primary colors add to the beauty of their woody habitat. During migration they may appear in almost any shrubby or wooded area.

Feature photo: western tanager, Larry Buck. Photos below: Carlito Springs Open Space.



Carlito Springs Open Space

Located on the southeast face of the Sandia Mountains near the village of Tijeras, Carlito Springs encompasses 179 acres and ranges in elevation from 6,300 feet to 7,000 feet. It is named for the spring that flows from exposed bedrock in the north-central portion of the property. This spring once provided water to a residence and several cabins and continues to feed several ponds and a lush riparian environment, including ornamental gardens and an orchard. This spring water also provide critical habitat for many species of birds and animals. Visitors can enjoy a newly established trail that ascends through pinion-juniper woodlands to the historic structures and spring and loops down to the orchard with terraced gardens and a variety of fruit trees.

May 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 San Felipe Feast Day	2 Green darners dragonflies laying eggs
3	4 First of season blue grosbeaks	5 Ash-throated flycatchers begin nesting	6	7	8	9 International Migratory Bird Day
10	11 First of season wood duck ducklings	12	13 Green herons nesting John Lawrence LeConte born (1825)	14	15 Bike-to-work Day San Ysidro Feast Day	16
17 First of season Russian olive blossoms	18 Black-throated gray warblers migrate through	19 Last of season cackling geese	20	21 Four-wing saltbush blooming	22 World Biodiversity Day	23
24	25	26	27 Yellow salsify blooming and going to seed throughout the summer Rachel Carson born (1907)	28	29	30 MacGillivray's warblers are observed during migration, especially in May, Aug. and Sept.
31	Memorial Day					

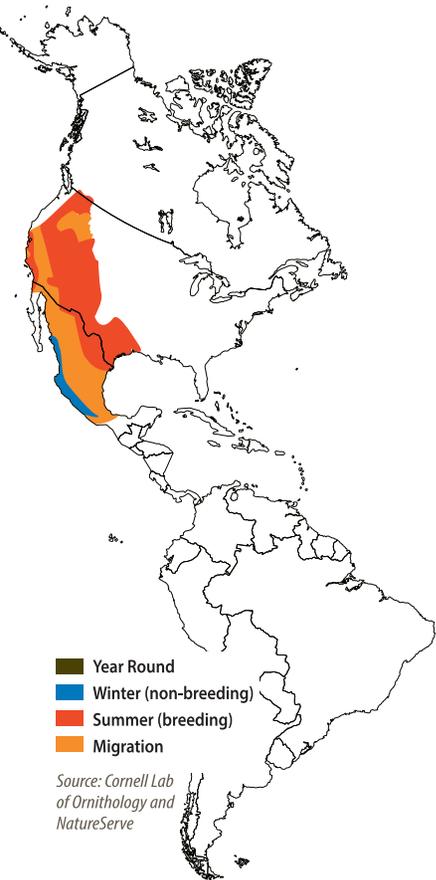


Black-chinned Hummingbird (*Archilochus alexandri*)

The most common summer hummingbird of New Mexico is the black-chinned. In late summer and early fall rufous and broad tailed hummers may appear after nesting in higher-elevations or further north, but black-chinned are the dominant species along the Rio Grande during summer. One of the few species of birds that has been designated of Least Concern in population studies, the black-chinned has been extending its range and increasing its numbers mainly due to the increased popularity of hummingbird feeders and hummer-friendly gardens. Although hummingbirds feed on flower nectar and are important pollinators for some flowers, they also feed on insects. Horse owners observe the tiny hummingbirds hovering over piles of horse manure to capture and eat the flies that congregate. They also collect insects on the wing as horses feed in pastures. Black-chinned females build well-hidden nests of plant fiber, lichen, and spider webs that help camouflage the tiny cups and make the nest pliable so they can expand to hold the growing young. The young are fed on insects as well as nectar because the baby birds need the protein.

Feature photo: black-chinned hummingbird, Lou Feltz. Photos below: Elena Gallegos Open Space, Bill Pentler.

June 2015



Elena Gallegos Open Space

The 640-acre park is a gem in the Open Space system. From an elevation of about 6,500 feet, visitors can view Mt. Taylor to the west, the Jemez Mountains to the north and the vast Tijeras Arroyo to the south. The landscape supports a piñon-juniper habitat. Pack rat nests, coyote and bear scat, and even the elusive cougar may be spotted in the area. Seven covered picnic areas and two reservation areas with barbecue grills provide magnificent views. There is a network of multi-use trails, as well as two hiking trails for foot traffic only which provide access to the Sandia Mountain Wilderness area. On the north boundary of the picnic area is the Cottonwood Springs Trail, a self-guiding trail accessible to all people, leading to a pond and wildlife blind.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 First of season western screech owlets	2	3	4 First of season ornate box turtles	5 World Environment Day	6
7 First of season calling cicadas	8 World Oceans Day	9 Dragonflies begin to appear in large variety and large numbers	10	11	12	13 Sandia Feast Day
14	15 Showy milkweed blooms June-August and is a host plant for monarch butterflies	16	17 Rocky Mountain beeplant starts blooming (blooms into October)	18	19	20
21 Vernon Orlando Bailey born (1864) Summer Solstice	22 First of season Bullock's orioles J. Stokely Ligon born (1879)	23	24 Seeds/fluff from cottonwoods falling like snow Ohkay Owingeh Feast Day	25 Yerba mansa begins blooming in damp, marshy spots	26	27 Samuel Washington Woodhouse born (1821)
28	29 Silverleaf nightshade blooms May-October	30				



Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*)

One of the most colorful of the blue birds is the indigo bunting, a small seed-eating insectivore that may interbreed with its cousin the lazuli bunting in areas where their ranges overlap. Only the male indigo bunting displays the deep dark blue color during the breeding season; he will turn brown in winter months. The female is brown year-round; she alone does the nest-building and incubation. Also closely related to blue grosbeaks, indigo buntings range throughout the eastern United States and parts of southern Canada. West of the 100th meridian they are normally found only in the Southwest. They winter in southern Mexico, Central America, and on the Caribbean Islands. Migration occurs in April/May and September/October at night, the birds using the stars to navigate. They nest in dense shrubs or low tree branches. Incubation takes slightly less than two weeks; chicks fledge 10 to 12 days after hatching. Most pairs raise two clutches a year, leading to its population status as Least Concerned. During summer it eats mostly insects; during winter months, it subsists on seeds.

Feature photo: indigo bunting, US Fish and Wildlife Service. Photos below: Durand Open Space.

July 2015



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Coyote pups seen	2	3	4 Three-leaf sumac has fruit Independence Day
5 Many species of waterfowl molting and flightless and some begin to show "eclipse" plumage (may last until fall or next spring)	6	7 Buffalo gourd blooms May - August	8 Young bullfrogs can be seen	9 Scorpion-weed blooms May - September	10	11
12	13 Migratory Bird Treaty Act (1918)	14 Cooper's hawks fledging Cochiti Feast Day	15	16	17	18 First of season juvenile Great Plains skinks
19	20	21	22 First of season rufous hummingbirds	23	24 Calliope hummingbirds passing through until mid-September	25
26 Santa Ana Feast Day	27 Skunk signs (odor, scat, tracks, road kill) observed in July and August	28	29	30 First of season pied-billed grebes with chicks Cliff Crawford born (1932)	31	

Durand Open Space

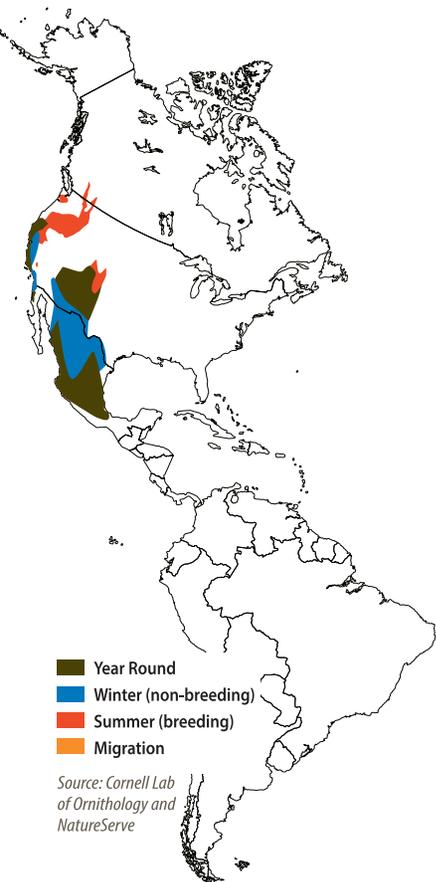
The Durand Open Space property was owned by the Durand family for approximately 100 years and was farmed in alfalfa and used as permanent pasture. In the mid-1950s, the property was put into use as a landing strip for single- and twin-engine airplanes. The strip was closed in the 1970s, and the property reverted to agriculture. In 1999, the Durand family sold the 10-acre property to Bernalillo County to preserve it from development. Visitors can now enjoy a perimeter walking trail around scenic fields complete with picnic tables and benches. The northwest section of the property includes a community gathering space with tables, benches, a shade structure, wooden sculptures, interpretive signs, and a memorial to the Durand family.



Western Bluebird (*Sialia mexicana*)

Western bluebirds have a varied range that overlaps with the range of eastern bluebirds. Although some populations migrate to Mexico in winter, some New Mexican populations California Coastal populations seem to be permanent residents as do those of parts of Arizona and the California coast. A small thrush, the western bluebird has a blue (male) or gray (female) throat. The eastern bluebird has an orange throat, and the mountain bluebird has no orange coloring anywhere. Females are duller-colored than the males. The primary blue coloring lies on the head, back, and wings, which have no streaks. A cavity-nester, all three species of bluebirds will nest in bird boxes, which are often supplied by state and federal agencies to enhance the breeding of these beautiful birds whose natural nesting cavities have often been usurped by non-native European starlings or house sparrows. Bluebirds are found in open woods. Like flycatchers they will fly to the ground to catch insects and return to the same limb. Western bluebirds often travel in small flocks.

Feature photo: western bluebird, Kristin Proctor. Photos below: Ojito de San Antonio Open Space.



Ojito de San Antonio Open Space

Located east of Albuquerque in the Sandia Mountains, the 88-acre Ojito de San Antonio Open Space was purchased by Bernalillo County in 1999. Residents of the nearby historic village of San Antonio had encouraged its purchase to prevent residential development and to preserve an ancient acequia system that has provided life-giving water to residents, wildlife and flora since the 18th century. Ojito de San Antonio is characterized by a grassy meadow surrounded by steep, piñon-juniper forested foothills and is an ideal spot for wildlife viewing. Due to prolonged drought, the springs have gone dry; however, groundwater still supports a lush riparian area. The property was listed as a birding hotspot by the Central New Mexico Audubon Society.

August 2015

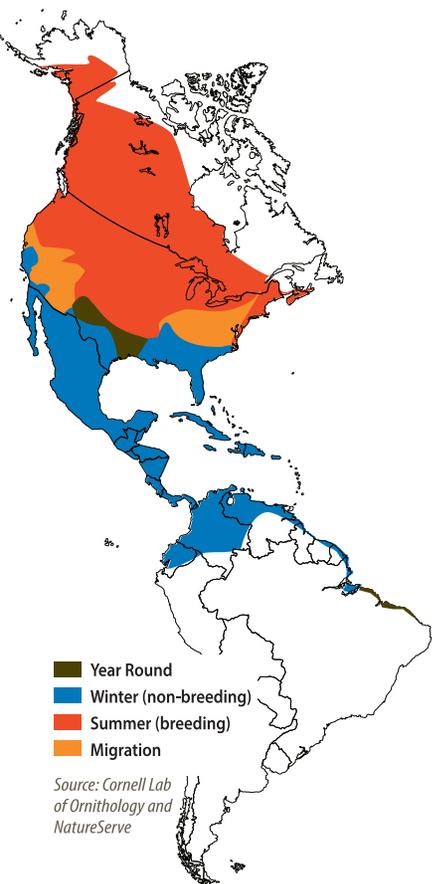
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 Goathead/puncturevine blooming after monsoon rains Early August: many baby fence lizards
2 Brewer's sparrows seen during fall migration: Aug. - Sept.	3	4 Chamisa/rabbitbrush begins blooming Santo Domingo Feast Day	5	6	7 Last of season ash-throated flycatchers	8 Florence Merriam Bailey born (1863)
9	10 Cattle egrets observed occasionally from April - August Picuris Feast Day	11 Last of season ornate box turtles	12 Santa Clara Feast Day	13	14 Ernest Thompson Seton born (1860)	15 Zia Feast Day
16 Sacred datura, a night-blooming plant, flowers from June - Oct.	17	18 Lark sparrows occasionally observed from mid-August through September	19	20 Cottonwoods beginning to show fall colors	21	22
23	24	25	26 Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District established (1925)	27	28	29
30	31					



Blue-winged Teal (*Anas discolors*)

Teal, hot-rods of their clan, are small (less than a pound), fast-flying North American dabbling ducks, the most numerous species of waterfowl after mallards and a primary target of duck hunters: between 200,000 and 500,000 are killed every hunting season. Their relatively large egg clutches, 6 to 14, enable them to keep up with hunting pressure. The male has a greyish-blue head marked by a white crescent, a light brown body with a white patch near the rear, and a black tail. The female is mottled brown with a whitish area at the base of the bill. Both sexes have sky-blue wing coverts, a green speculum, and yellow legs. Flightless during a serious late-summer molt, they seek shelter in prairie potholes and large marshes with abundant vegetation. They are the most abundant species in mixed-grass prairies of the Dakotas and the prairie provinces of Canada. Blue-winged teal breed throughout North America south of the Arctic and winter in southern tier American states to northern South America. Early migrants, they are among the first ducks south in the fall but the last ones to head north in spring, among the last dabbling ducks to nest.

Feature photo: blue-winged teal, Lou Feltz. Photos below: Rio Grande Nature Center, Beth Dillingham



Rio Grande Nature Center State Park

Located on the central Rio Grande flyway, Rio Grande Nature Center State Park offers excellent bird watching throughout the year. Visitors can observe about 250 different species, including roadrunners and wood ducks. A highlight of the visitor center is its glass-walled library, which allows observation of pond residents such as ducks, geese, turtles, frogs, snakes and muskrats in their natural habitat. There are also two outdoor viewing areas overlooking ponds, two gardens with bird-feeding stations and access to trails through the bosque, or riverside forest. The park offers guided bird walks every Saturday and Sunday at 8:30AM as well as naturalist-led hikes, public lectures, teacher workshops and nature-themed festivals.

September 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

Last of season black-headed grosbeaks

Acoma Feast Day

Wilderness Act (1964)

Isleta Feast Day

First of season northern harriers

Purple aster blooming

Labor Day

Broom snakeweed blooming

Kochia blooming

Globemallow's small orange flowers bloom May - October

Last of season blue grosbeaks

Last of season cicadas calling
First of season sandhill cranes arriving from the north

Laguna Feast Day

Sora are reported most often in September
Car-free day

Gophersnakes/bullsnakes are active during the day April - Oct.
Autumn Equinox

Last of season Bullock's orioles

World Rivers Day
Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge established (2012)

Chipping sparrows abundant during fall migration

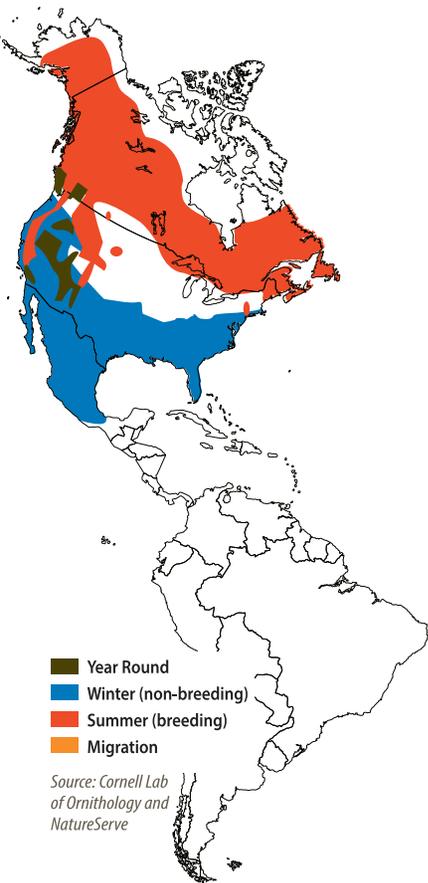
Taos Feast Day



Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus calendula*)

The ruby-crowned kinglet, a tiny passerine with an attitude, is one of the more delightful birds of spruce-fir forests in the United States and Canada, especially in mountainous areas. A winter migrant to much of the southern United States and Mexico, it ranges throughout North America from southern Mexico to the Arctic. A relatively dull colored bird, olive-green in both sexes with subtle white wing bars and a broken white eye-ring, the male kinglet has a bright red patch on the top of its head, which it raises when agitated or in display. Described as “constantly active,” it moves along branches or through foliage with short hops and flies with rapid wing beats, sometimes described as “swift, jerky, and erratic.” Ruby-crowned kinglets nest high in both coniferous and deciduous forests, preferring older growth, taller trees, and dense stands to younger open woods. They eat a wide variety of small insects, seeds, fruits, and berries. The fact that they may lay up to a dozen eggs, the largest clutch of any North American passerine for its size, may be one of the reasons it is classified as of “Least Concern” in status.

Feature photo: ruby-crowned kinglet, US Fish and Wildlife Service. Photo below: Bachechi Environmental Education Building.



October 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Last of season turkey vultures Nambe Feast Day World Animal Day San Francisco de Assisi Feast Day	World Habitat Day	Last of season orange-crowned warblers (observed in April and August-September)	Chocolate flower shows its final blooms for the season		Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (1968) Last of season barn swallows	Last of season common yellowthroats Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, October 3-11
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
	First of season sandhill cranes on Candelaria farm fields	John Taylor born (1954) Columbus Day		Take down the hummingbird feeders—almost all have left for the season		
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Clean Water Act (1972)	New Mexico olive trees turning yellow	Brown creepers show up in October and are seen occasionally through February				First of season cackling geese
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
		Theodore Roosevelt born (1858)		Charles Wright born (1811)		Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District irrigation season ends

Bachechi Open Space

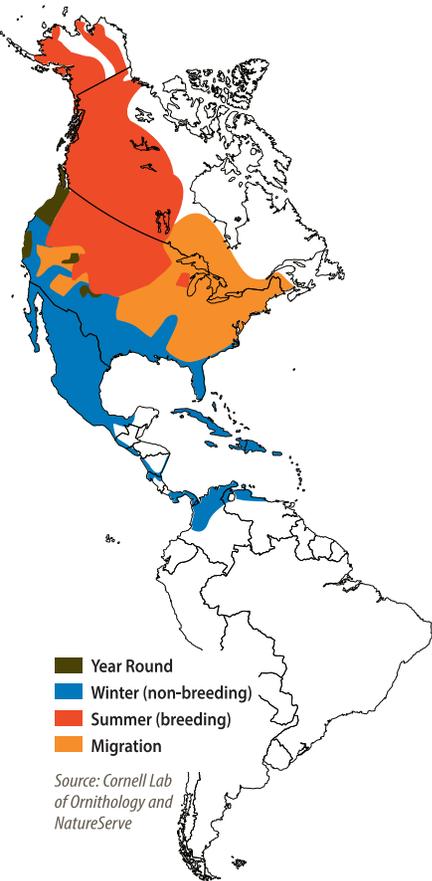
Bachechi Open Space consists of 28 acres of bosque, wetlands, grasslands, and other areas with native vegetation that provides a rich environment for wildlife. The property is located near the Rio Grande and the Paseo del Bosque Trail. Bachechi Open Space promotes non-competitive recreational uses and environmental educational opportunities. It features a network of trails with interpretive signs highlighting the site's features, including an acequia, a pecan grove, an arboretum, and a rose garden. While visiting the property, make sure to pick up information at the Bachechi Environmental Education Building about the many free public events, such as the Naturalist Series and fun activities for the whole family.



Northern Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*)

A dabbling duck with a large shovel-shaped bill, the northern shoveler is circumpolar in distribution. Common only in the northern hemisphere, it breeds in northern Europe and Asia and across most of North America. It winters in southern Europe, Africa, the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia and Central and northern South America. Its conservation status is Least Concern; it is thriving throughout its wide range. The male has an iridescent dark green head, white breast, and buffy belly and flanks. In non-breeding plumage, the drake resembles the rather drab female. Shovelers feed by dabbling for plant food and aquatic invertebrates, swinging their bills from side to side. Their wide, flat bills have small comb-like structures on their edges that act like sieves, allowing the birds to skim crustaceans and plankton from the water's surface. Thus, they are omnivores. A bird of open wetlands—wet grasslands or marshes—shovelers circle in place in the water, stirring up food to the surface, which, in winter, keeps small areas open in otherwise frozen ponds. Shovelers rank third behind mallards and blue-winged teal in overall waterfowl abundance, due to their wide distribution and large clutch size of about nine eggs per nest.

Feature photo: northern shoveler, Larry Buck. Photo below: Tingley Ponds.



Tingley Ponds

Located south of the Central Avenue Bridge on the east side of the Rio Grande, the Tingley Ponds were constructed by the City of Albuquerque in the 1930's as a recreational aquatic area that was hydrologically connected to the Rio Grande. A restoration project completed in 2005 established observation areas close to wetland communities. These are used to educate observers regarding the wetland ecosystems and wildlife. The restoration project also increased fishing opportunities for the public, and established a defined trail system for bicyclists and hikers. The trail system also provides rest areas that support passive recreational activities, including bird watching, photography, and general aesthetic appreciation.

November 2015

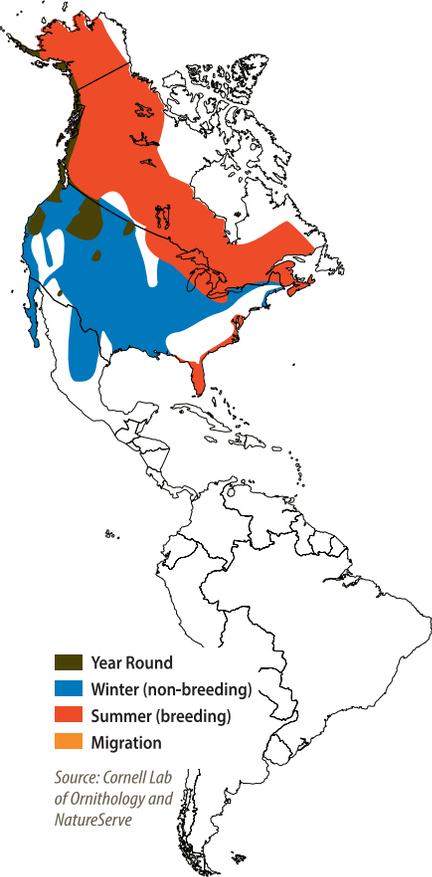
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
All Saints Day Daylight savings time ends	All Souls Day (Día de los Muertos)	Election Day				Large flocks of robins and cedar waxwings come through
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	White-throated sparrow sightings common in November		First of season bald eagles Veterans Day	Jemez Feast Day	Most species of waterfowl that winter over can now be observed	
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
						20-70 sandhill cranes can be regularly observed on the Candelaria Farm fields by mid-November
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge established (1939)	Most of yellow gone from cottonwoods		Brown creepers are reported often in November	Thanksgiving Day		
29	30					
Digging by coyotes observed late November - December	London rocket (a mustard) is observed growing throughout the winter if there is heavy precipitation in fall and winter					



Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)

Largest of North American raptors, adult bald eagles are dark brown with white heads and tails. Sub-adults are a mottled brown until their fourth or fifth year. The female is larger than the male, which is called a tiercel because he is a third smaller than his mate. Adult female bald eagles may have a wing-span of eight feet. This national symbol of the United States, the bald eagle was nearly extinct in the middle of the last century due to bounties on eagles as predators of fish and the use of DDT. The 1976 National Geographic cover in honor of the USA's bicentennial featured a photograph of a bald eagle that was taken in Canada because so few remained in the United States. Living near water, bald eagles feed primarily on fish but augment their diet with carrion and water birds such as coots and ducks. Although they mate for life, if a mate dies or is killed, the remaining adult will sometimes take a new mate. While female eagles usually lay two eggs, the pair will occasionally raise three offspring. No longer considered endangered, the bald eagle remains threatened, but has rebounded remarkably. In New Mexico a number of these magnificent raptors winter along the Rio Grande, even in the heart of Albuquerque.

Feature photo: bald eagle, Michele Weisz. Photos below: Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge, 4 a Greater Good Photography.



- Year Round
- Winter (non-breeding)
- Summer (breeding)
- Migration

Source: Cornell Lab of Ornithology and NatureServe

Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge

Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge is the Southwest's first urban wildlife refuge. It serves as an urban oasis for both wildlife and people. Established on a former dairy farm just a few miles south of New Mexico's largest metropolitan area, the refuge offers a unique environmental education and recreation opportunity in a highly populated area while promoting a wildlife conservation message. It is part of the National Wildlife Refuge System, a national network of lands and waters managed for the benefit of wildlife, habitat and you. The refuge will fulfill the goals of President Obama's America's Great Outdoors initiative to work with community partners to establish a 21st century conservation ethic and reconnect people to the natural world.

December 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
New beaver chew very pronounced: putting up a store for winter		Many bald eagle sightings in late Dec. - early January		Wangari Maathai wins Nobel Peace Prize (2004)	International Mountain Day	Our Lady of Guadalupe Feast Day Pojoaque Feast Day
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	Falcons seen during winter: peregrine falcon, prairie falcon, merlin, American kestrel			Clean Air Act established (1963)		
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
		Variigated meadowhawk observed at Rio Grande Nature Center on this day in 2010 Winter Solstice	Bluebirds, robins, and waxwings seen foraging together on berries		Christmas Day	William Drummond Stewart born (1795)
27	28	29	30	31		
Big leaf mistletoe is found on cottonwoods and produces white berries in December	Seville National Wildlife Refuge established (1973) Endangered Species Act (1973)					



Printing of this calendar has been underwritten by the Open Space Alliance (OSA) under the Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Bird program.

Seasonal Sightings Along the Middle Rio Grande is a Bernalillo County Open Space project made up of the following partners:

Bernalillo County Open Space



Bernalillo County Open Space manages a network of properties with important natural or cultural resources to benefit people, plants and wildlife by protecting and enhancing viewsheds, water resources, wildlife habitat, cultural/historic sites, and prime agricultural lands.

Master Naturalist Program



The Bernalillo County Open Space Master Naturalist Program aims to instill the pursuit of lifelong learning and stewardship of the local environment by engaging citizens in providing education and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources on Open Space properties.

City of Albuquerque Open Space Alliance



The OSA is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to promote public awareness and conservation of Open Space lands, and to educate the public about the natural, historic, cultural, educational, and recreational aspects of Open Space areas. For more information, visit www.openspacealliance.org.

US Fish and Wildlife Service & The National Wildlife Refuge System



The Refuge System protects 150 million acres of land and water from the Caribbean to the Pacific, Maine to Alaska. It manages a network of habitats that benefits wildlife, provides unparalleled outdoor experiences for all Americans, and protects a healthy environment.

Friends of Valle de Oro



Friends of Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge, established in 2011, is a non-profit whose mission it is to support the Southwest's first urban wildlife refuge, educate the community about the exciting conservation, education, recreation, economic, and quality of life benefits associated with the Valle de Oro Urban Wildlife Refuge.

Mid-Region Council of Governments (MRCOG)



MRCOG is a multi-county governmental agency that provides planning services in the areas of transportation, agriculture, workforce development, land-use, water, and economic development. It also provides a forum for communities to meet and address issues of regional concern. The MRCOG mission is to strengthen individual communities by initiating regional planning strategies.

Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District



The Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District provides irrigation, drainage for high water table areas and river flood control for the Middle Rio Grande Valley. It addresses environmental concerns in collaboration with other agencies while recognizing recreational benefits and opportunities.