

The Avocet



Volume 38 no. 1 Jan 2023

40th Anniversary Monte Vista Crane Festival March 10-12, 2023

Big anniversaries deserve to be celebrated in style. The Crane Festival Committee is very excited to announce that for our 2023 keynote speaker, we will be hosting a speaker from an organization that is also celebrating a hallmark anniversary. The International Crane Foundation is celebrating their 50th anniversary, and we are pleased to announce that ICF Co-Founder Dr. George Archibald will be the keynote speaker at this year's Monte Vista Crane Festival.

We hope you will join us as Dr. Archibald reflects on the successes, failures, and lessons learned from 50 years of crane conservation. He will share stories of the innovative and exciting ways we can work together over the next fifty years to save cranes, ourselves, and our world.

In 1973, when cranes were in a perilous situation and many were on the brink of extinction, George Archibald, along with fellow graduate student Ron Sauey, established the International Crane Foundation in Baraboo, Wisconsin, as the world center for the study and preservation of cranes. His dream was to save the world's cranes and that notion has been his driving force ever since. Dr. Archibald's visionary leadership in international conservation over the last fifty years has given flight to extraordinary grassroots recovery efforts across the globe.

George Archibald is renowned for his energy, optimism, and for stimulating new ways of thinking about seemingly intractable problems. He leverages the charisma of cranes to unite people from diverse cultures and backgrounds to work together to solve problems facing our fragile planet. He has recruited, inspired, and mentored countless individuals worldwide in the name of cranes. By focusing on the magic of cranes, people eagerly engage in the protection and restoration of entire ecosystems.

Dr. Archibald recently completed the book, *My Life with Cranes: A Collection of Stories*. For more information, and tickets, please visit <https://mvcranefest.org>

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and
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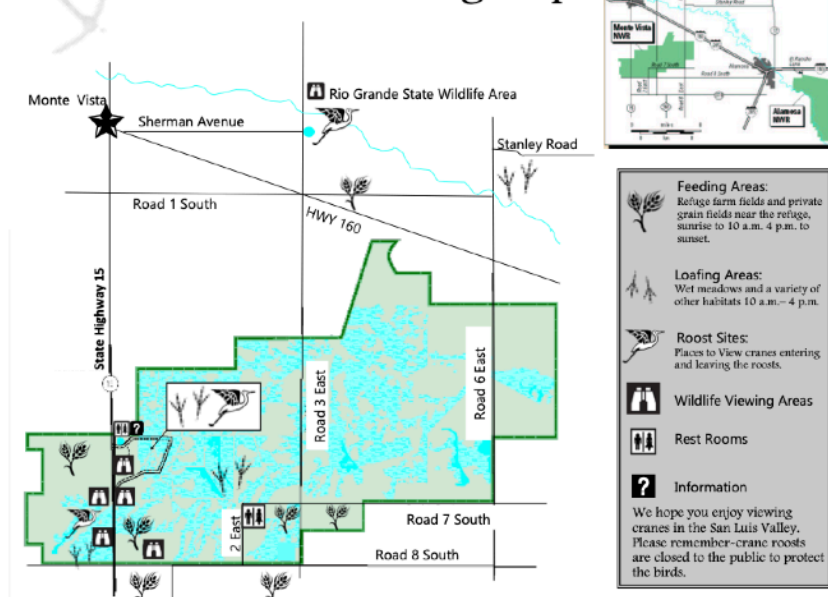
Website:

www.slvrefuges.org

Email:

friendslvnwr@gmail.com

Sandhill Crane Viewing Map



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Monte Vista
National Wildlife Refuge

Sandhill Crane Viewing



Thank you O&V for
continued support

Artwork by Kelly Ortiz

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www.slvrefuges.org

Unless otherwise noted, all photography by Lisa Clements

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Baca NWR. Deb's past



with the Refuges and the Friends. You make this valley great.

A special thank you to the Friends board members who have supported me during my tenure as president. I am sure I won't be able to stay away from the San Luis Valley and all that makes it special. So I'll see you in the future out watching the cranes. Deb

President's Message — Deb Callahan

I will be stepping down as President as of April 2, 2023. Why not April 1, 2023? Unfortunately this is not an April's fools joke. I am trading the wilderness of the mountains for the wilderness of the sea. I am moving to the southern coast of Maine and closer to family. I hope to keep volunteering for the refuge system by volunteering with the Rachel Carson NWR near my new home. I am going to miss the great people



Steamboat Lake. Deb looks forward to kayaking the ocean

The Friends Group applied for and received a grant for a project on the 8 South for a parking area and three Interpretive Signs. The parking area was completed last summer (2022). We hired Kelly Ortiz to create the signs. The Friends Group hopes to have the panels (well, the posts) in the ground by the March 10-12, 2023, Monte Vista Crane Festival.

Following is a preview of the interpretive panels:

The Language of Dance

The refuge farm in front of you is planted to provide food for the cranes. The Refuge partners with local farmers to manage the crops.

Half the field is planted in barley for the cranes and the other half in a cash crop for the farmer, typically alfalfa.

In the spring, refuge staff mows the barley to nourish cranes staging here before migrating to nesting sites throughout the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

Sandhill Cranes dance year round and can resemble giant marionettes pulled up toward the sky. Their dance is a beautiful display that helps strengthen bonds with their mate and to tell other cranes they are getting to close. Cranes partner for life once they find their special mate who appreciate their moves!

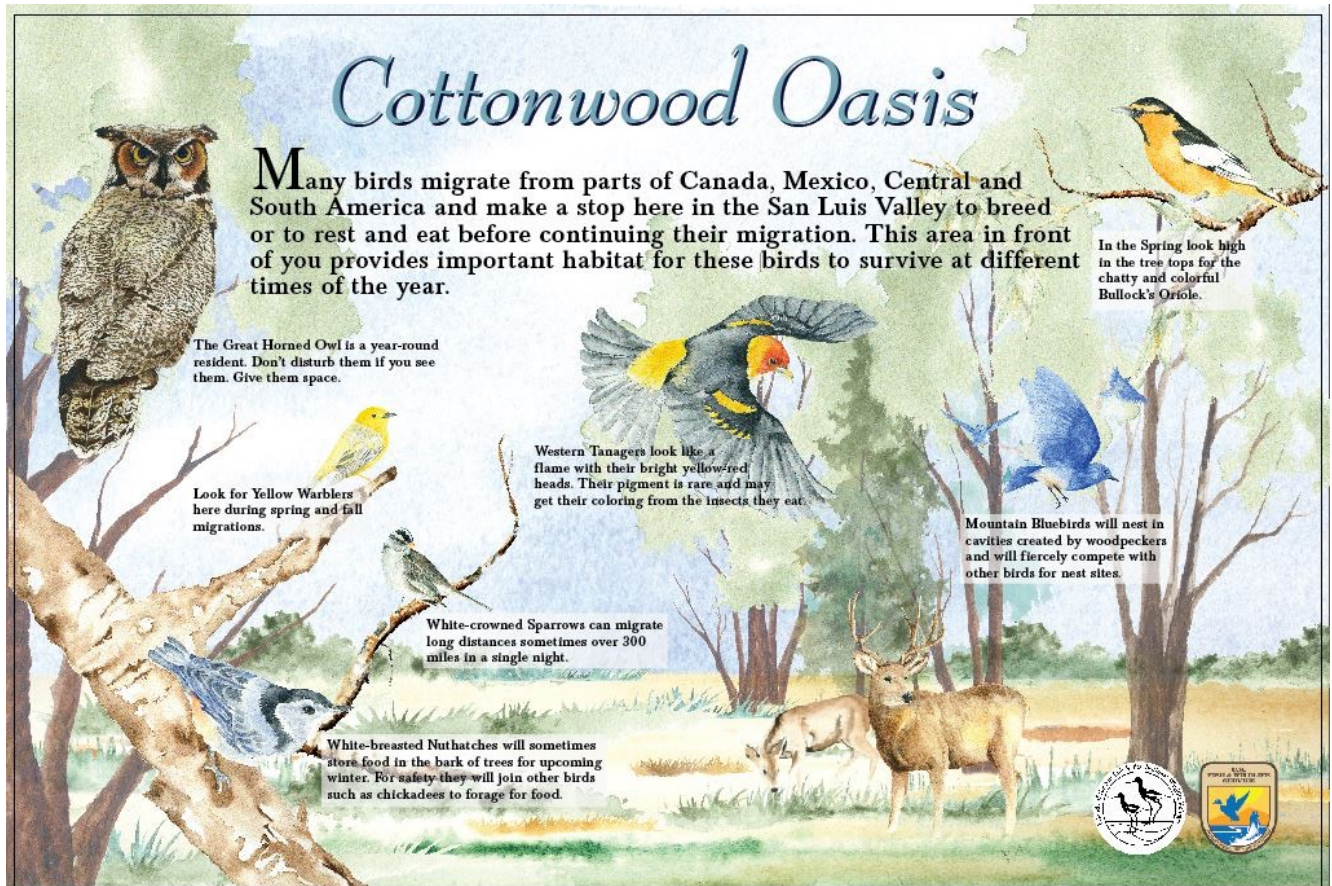
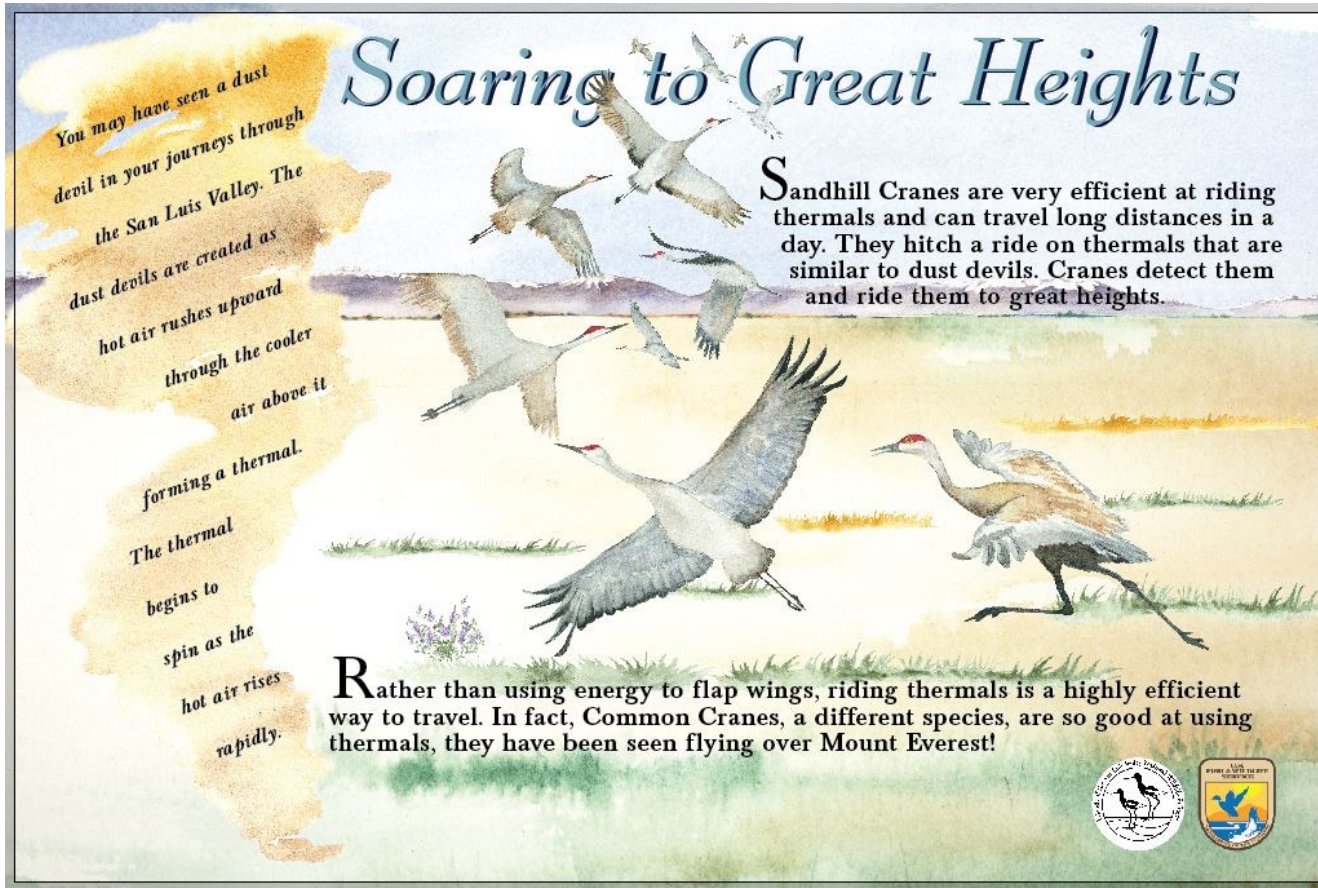
Wing-spread-tilt: Is often used to introduce the dance or invite a partner to dance.

Jump-rake: Is an aggressive move to threaten other cranes.

Wing-spread-hold and jump: A dance for courtship and may reflect high-spirited behavior or play.

Run-Flap: This move is used to gain speed before flight, threaten intruders, and the expression of joy during dance.

Greater Sandhill Cranes spend their winter in and around New Mexico and arrive in early spring on the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge by the thousands to feed and rest.



Kid's Crane Fest — Oct 2022

Thank you Peter Schlegel and others, who provided pictures for KCF



Migration Game



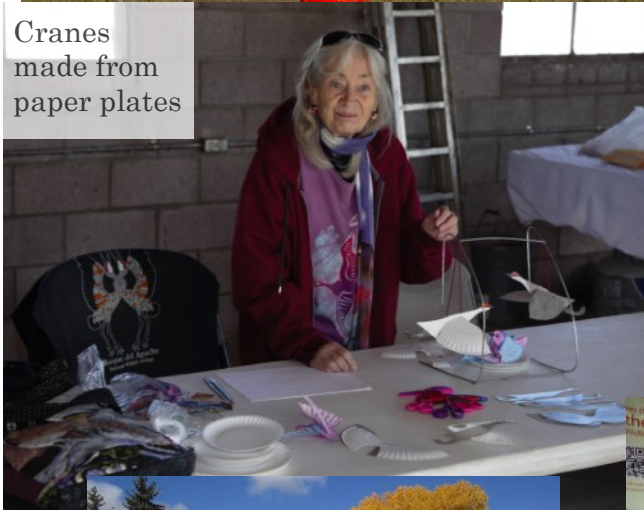
Grill Master Peter



Archery with CPW



Dissecting owl pellets



Cranes made from paper plates



Looks like a nice day for lunch and Kid's Crane Fest



Displays



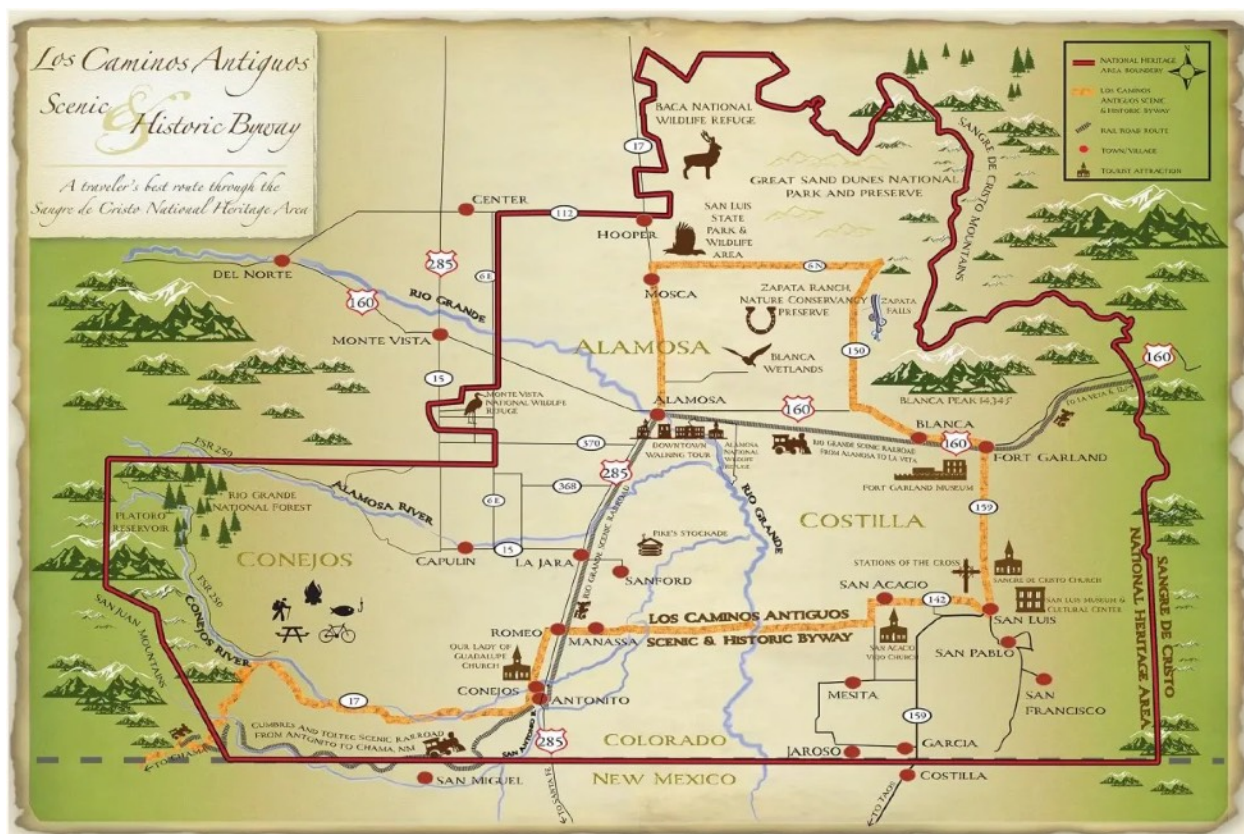
National Heritage Areas Approved for Funding

On January 4, 2023, Colorado U.S. Senators Michael Bennet and John Hickenlooper celebrated the reauthorization of Colorado's three National Heritage Areas (NHA), ensuring they continue to receive National Park Service (NPS) funding through 2037.

Previously, the National Heritage Area designations for Cache La Poudre, Sangre de Cristo, and South Park were set to expire in 2024. The reauthorizations now head to President Biden's desk for signature after Congress passed a package of more than 45 NHA reauthorizations earlier. According to Bennet, people come to Colorado's National Heritage Areas to learn about the rich and diverse history of our state. Ensuring these National Heritage Areas continue to receive funding through the National Park Service will preserve our state's story and culture for future generations. In March 2022, Bennet and Hickenlooper introduced the Colorado National Heritage Areas Reauthorization Act to ensure our state's three NHAs continue to receive National Park Service (NPS) funding through 2036.

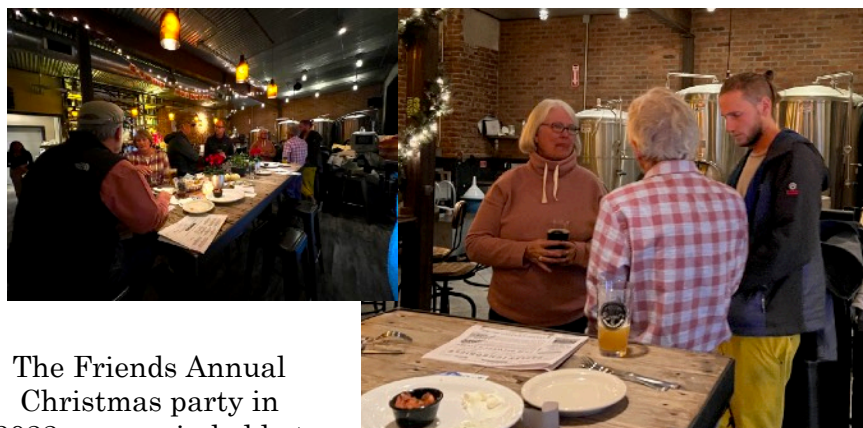
Colorado's three NHAs were first authorized in 2009 following years of grassroots organizing from stakeholders in their respective regions. NHAs leverage federal NPS funds for historic and cultural preservation projects with the support of counties, tourism, and historic preservation organizations. Colorado's National Heritage Areas have all completed notable projects since they were authorized in 2009. Within the Sangre de Cristo NHA, funds have helped share the story of the first desegregation case in the nation, *Mestas v. Shone*.

Thanks to the Alamosa Citizen and the SdCNHA for the map and story



The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area encompasses 3,000 square miles in Alamosa County, Conejos County, and Costilla County, (including all three San Luis Valley National Wildlife Refuges) with 11,000 years of documented human habitation. It is among 55 congressionally designated national heritage areas in the U.S., governed through nonprofit boards.

Friends Christmas Party – Dec 2022



The Friends Annual Christmas party in 2022 was again held at the Roast in Alamosa. A Joyous Season !



Western Wood-Pewee family at Home Lake ~ Evert Brown



Friends and Neighbors Picnic

The Friends and Neighbors Picnic was held at the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge in late September. It began with a tour of the almost completed new Refuge Complex Headquarters. The office is similar of the Baca office building and is located just inside the refuge. Refuge Project Manager Sharon Vaughn conducted tours. Dinner was catered by Cavillos and was again delicioso ! It was a very good turnout of forty-eight Friends members, and neighbors of all three refuges. The new Baca Refuge Manager, Ty Benally, was there and introduced himself. Friends Board Member Doug Ouren presented *Elk and the SLV Refuges: What's Going On Out There?* It was well received. Thank you all for a fun night.



Alamosa NWR Rio Grande Restoration



That's a stove



Beautiful fall day along the river — after cleanup



More garbage

Last fall, the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project (RGHRP) partnered with the City of Alamosa, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to stabilize streambanks, restore riparian areas, and enhance aquatic habitats along the river on the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge.

The RGHRP is a non-profit organization founded over 20 years ago with a mission to restore the Rio Grande River and watershed health. The group works to improve the function of the Rio Grande and provide high quality water throughout the river, support existing agricultural lifestyles, and contribute to groundwater recharge.

In September, 2022, the FWS removed and hauled away 24 old cars, 20 household appliances, numerous tires, and tons of concrete from the river. According to Emma Reesor, executive director of RGHRP, the group had previously worked with the city in restoration efforts along the river in the Alamosa Riparian Park. After that successful effort, they studied the river downstream and began work on the site near the wildlife refuge. Cooley and Sons Excavating of Mosca was retained for excavating, channel and bank shaping, and the installation of rock and habitat structures. The company planted young willow trees along the river.

Both the native Rio Grande chub and Rio Grande sucker will benefit from the restoration efforts. The sucker was largely extirpated from its historic range and has since been re-introduced. The area is also home to the endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher.

The area is open to the public and can be accessed by the Toivo Malm trails off South River Road in Alamosa. The Refuge staff says there will be an

opportunity to plant additional shrubs and cage some willows to protect from beaver, on April 22, Earth Day, in the area.



Before and after tires



River bank contour



New willow shoots





Christmas Bird Count 2022 — Lisa Clements

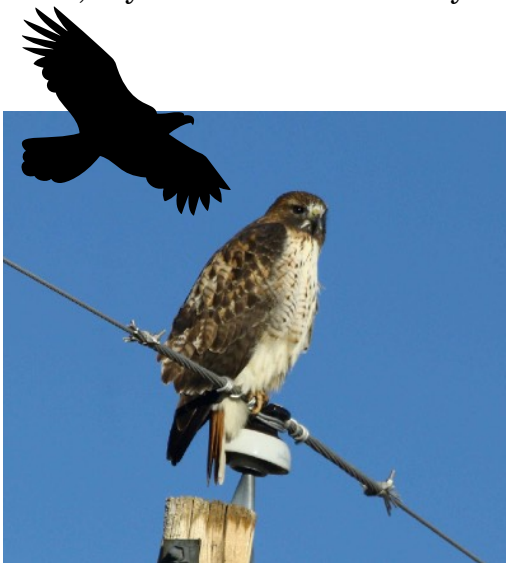
The 121st Audubon Christmas Bird Count saw us meeting in person at 7:30 am at the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge offices. It's been a couple years since we have been able to do that, so it was fun to see everyone gathered, chatting about birds and eating cookies. After a brief safety talk, and handing out the circle assignments (and a couple more cookies), we headed out into the 8 below temperatures.

It was a bluebird day - blue skies, no wind, no ice, no snow, no birds. Oh, wait, there's a Raven. And a Red-tail and is that a Meadowlark? By the end of the day, the temperature had warmed up to 31 degrees and a total of 228 party miles were driven. Counting the two Count Week birds, we netted 47 species and a total 2378 individuals. Best birds were Northern Shrike, Ferruginous Hawk, Yellow-headed Blackbird, and a count week Yellow-rumped Warbler. We missed several species we normally see: Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, Robin, and Northern Pintail. I wonder where they were spending their Christmas holidays?

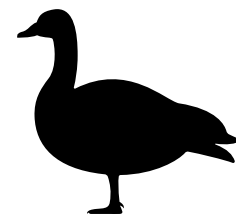
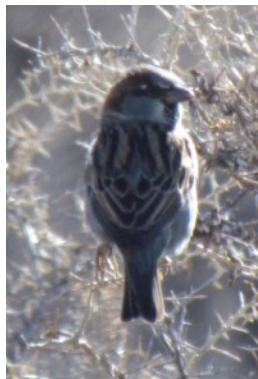
Many thanks to the Rawinski family, Brian and Diane Underwood, Suzanne Beauchaine, Beth Kinney, Linda Cozart, Margaret White, Jenny Nehring, Deb Callahan, and Jan Oen and Don Thompson for helping with the 65th Annual Monte Vista Christmas Bird Count. A fun day of birding together separately. This year's results can be found on the last page of this newsletter.

Next year's count is December 16, 2023. I posted the results on the Audubon CBC website. Also, if you are interested they have a new tool called *Where Have the Birds Gone*.

Thank you, John Rawinski, for the extra sharp photographs of Red-tail Hawk and Red-breasted Nuthatch. Other photos by Lisa Clements



House Sparrow is ready for his closeup



Male Northern Harrier surveys his territory



Red-wing Blackbird braves the ice for a drink



Brewer's Blackbird keeps an eye on me





Welcome New Members and Thank You Renewing Members

The following people have joined or renewed their Friends Membership since our last newsletter:

New Members

Mary Hutchinson, Monte Vista, CO
Mark & Luanna Hutchinson, Monte Vista, CO
Sylvia Villarreal, MD, Rancho de Taos, NM
Bill Davis, Denver, CO
Kristal Stidham, Montrose, CO
Doug & Leah Clark, Monte Vista, CO
Molly McLean, Monte Vista, CO
Kevin Corwin, Centennial, CO
Jama Crawford, Durango, CO

Peter Clark, Monte Vista, CO
Suzanne Beauchaine, Del Norte, CO
Michael Gallagher, Englewood, CO
Ron Garcia, Alamosa, CO
Diana Biggs, Canon City, CO
Susan Putnam, Aurora, CO
Deb Callahan, Del Norte, CO
Sue Norris, Louisville, CO
Jim Bailey, Lakewood, CO
Nancy Bowsher, Nathrop, CO
Donald Thompson, Alamosa, CO
Peter Schlegel, Crestone, CO

Renewing Members

Linda Cozart, Alamosa, CO
Heather Scott, Montrose, CO
Jim Thompson, La Junta, CO
Allene Evans, Austin, TX
Christie Barton, Moffat, CO
Tim Carden, Lafayette, CO
Theresa Braymer, Arvada, CO

Are your annual membership dues due???????

We value your membership. Please renew today! The month and year when your membership dues are due is printed in **Bold** at the bottom of your address label or in your email. Please use the form below when mailing your payment or pay online at slvrefuges.org Thank you!

Membership Application

Please Choose One: New Member _____ Renewing _____ Date _____

Name (Please Print) _____

Street or P.O. Box _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Make Check Payable to:

The Friends of the San Luis Valley National Wildlife Refuges

P.O. Box 857, Monte Vista, CO 81144

Annual Membership Category:

- _____ Senior (62+) or Student \$15
- _____ Individual \$15
- _____ Family \$25
- _____ Sponsor \$50
- _____ Best Friend \$100+
- _____ Life \$1000+






Friends of the San Luis Valley
National Wildlife Refuges
P.O. Box 857
Monte Vista, CO 81144



121st Christmas Bird Count results, continued from page 5

CW = Count Week

American Coot		cw	Eurasian Collared-Dove	72	Peregrine Falcon	1		
American Crow		22	European Starling	502	Pine Siskin	1		
American Goldfinch		16	Ferruginous Hawk	1	Prairie Falcon	2		
American Kestrel		5	Great Blue Heron	1	Red-breasted Nuthatch	10		
American Tree Sparrow		26	Great Horned Owl	11	Red-tailed Hawk	39		
American Wigeon		30	Green-wing Teal	3	Red-winged Blackbird	138		
Bald Eagle		5	Horned Lark	94	Rock Pigeon	88		
Belted Kingfisher		1	House Finch	71	Rough-legged Hawk	4		
Black-billed Magpie		161	House Sparrow	524	Song Sparrow	48		
Black-capped Chickadee		7	Mallard		58	Steller's Jay		20
Brewer's Blackbird		22	Marsh Wren	2	Townsend's Solitaire	2		
Canada Goose		257	Mountain Chickadee	16	Western Meadowlark	4		
Cassin's Finch		1	Mourning Dove	1	White-breasted Nuthatch	5		
Clark's Nutcracker		10	Northern Flicker	11	White-crowned sparrow	6		
Common Raven		41	Northern Harrier	6	Yellow-headed blackbird	1		
Dark-eyed Junco		32	Northern Shrike	1	Yellow-rumped Warbler	cw		

