

# The Mountain Chickadee

Newsletter of the Sangre de Cristo Audubon Society  
Volume 47 Number 2, June, 2018



Photograph by Tom Taylor

## Upcoming Activities Mark your Calendar

### Illustrated Evening Programs

Wednesday, September 12

**TBA**

**Note the location at the Randall Davey  
Audubon Center and time: 6:30 PM.**

### Field Trips

Every Saturday

**Randall Davey Audubon Center**

Sunday, June 10

**Orilla Verde**

Saturday, Sunday July 21-22

**Alamosa Area**

Sunday, August 26

**Santa Fe Ski Basin**

Sunday, September 23

**Stubblefield Lake & Maxwell  
National Wildlife Refuge**

September TBA

**Whitfield Wildlife  
Conservation Area and Belen  
Marsh**

**Details inside. Remember to check the  
Sangre [Website](#) for information.**

## How Birds Got Their Beaks

Birds are dinosaurs, linked to their extinct relatives by feathers and anatomy. But birds' beaks—splendidly versatile adaptations that allow their owners to grasp, pry, preen, and tear—are nothing like stiff dinosaurian snouts, and how they evolved has been a mystery. Now, 3D scans of new fossils of an iconic ancient bird capture the beak just as it took form.

Ichthyornis, an ancient seabird from about 90 million years ago, has long been famous for having a body like a modern bird, with a snout lined with teeth like a dinosaur. But in the original Ichthyornis fossil, discovered in the 1870s in Kansas, the upper jaw is missing, and the toothed lower jaw resembles that of other dinosaurs. So paleontologists assumed that early birds made do with a fixed upper jaw, like most other vertebrates.



Recently, by bringing details from multiple specimens together, new 3-D scans offer an early glimpse of key features of bird skulls, including a big brain and the movable upper jaw that helps make beaks so nimble. In 2014, paleontologists in Kansas found a new specimen of Ichthyornis. They shared the fossil with colleagues at Yale University.

Instead of extracting the fossil from the limestone in which it is embedded, the researchers used computerized tomography to scan the entire block of rock. Then they scanned three previously unrecognized specimens that they found in museum collections, and combined all the scans into a complete model of Ichthyornis's skull. They also re-examined the original fossil from the 1870s, housed at Yale's Peabody Museum of Natural History. Among unidentified pieces stored with the fossil, they found a small fragment that, when scanned, turned out to contain two key bones from the upper snout—bones that were missing in the new specimens.

The resulting 3D model captures Ichthyornis's transitional position between modern birds and other dinosaurs, scientists reported in *Nature*. Despite its dinosaurlike teeth, Ichthyornis had a hooked beak, likely covered by a hard layer of keratin, on the tip of its snout. It also could move both top and bottom jaws independently like modern birds.

That means beaks appeared earlier than thought, perhaps around the same time as wings, Bhullar says. The agile jaw probably allowed the bird to preen its feathers and gave it a pincerlike grasp. At the same time, Ichthyornis retained powerful jaw muscles like those of velociraptor.

This mosaic of dinosaurian and avian characteristics shows birds in the act of evolutionary transformation and offers a reminder that evolution rarely takes a straight path.

# Audubon Activities

## Illustrated Evening Programs

Wednesday, September 12

Sangre de Cristo Audubon Society's evening programs will resume in September. Meetings with illustrated talks on bird conservation and other topics concerning the natural world are held on the second Wednesday of September, October, and November and again in February, March, and April at 6:30 PM in the Education building at the Randall Davey Audubon Center and Sanctuary at the end of Upper Canyon Rd. in Santa Fe. Abundant parking is available. Everyone is welcome. There is no charge and the building is wheelchair accessible. A short update of environmental issues and chapter activities precedes the program.

### Field Trips

Every Saturday  
**Randall Davey Audubon Center**

Every Saturday, a naturalist will lead a walk around the RDAC grounds, an Audubon Important Bird Area, at 8:30 AM. Binoculars can be provided. Dress appropriately. All welcome. For information, call: 983-4609.

Sunday, June 10  
**Orilla Verde**

Leader: Jerry Friedman  
505-753-1946, jerry\_friedman@yahoo.com

On this half-day trip we'll be looking for raptors and a variety of songbirds. Participants can informally gather at DeVargas Mall (in front of Starbucks) at 6:45 AM to arrange car pooling before driving to the Rio Grande Recreation Area Visitor's Center in Pilar for an 8:00 AM departure. Contact leader for trip status.

Saturday, Sunday July 21-22  
**Alamosa Area**

Leaders: Mary Ristow 505-690-7336, mristow@newmexico.com.  
Linda Mowbray, 505-989-8295  
BirdingLinda@Yahoo.com

The Alamosa area includes Monte Vista and Alamosa National Wildlife Refuges, important wetlands on BLM land, Great Sand Dunes National Park and a state park. This two-day trip will explore these places, looking for resident birds. Please discuss this trip early with Mary or Linda. Limit 12 people. We will plan to stay overnight, but people could participate in this trip on either day. Call or email the leaders to discuss details of the trip.

Sunday, August 26  
**Santa Fe Ski Basin**

Leader: Tom Taylor, 505-424-3238  
tn21tay@comcast.net

This half-day trip is at high altitude with moderate to steep hiking. However, good birding should readily be found due to the mixed flocks found this time of year. Townsend's and Wilson's Warblers, Warbling Vireos, plus both kinglets and Gray Jays are anticipated. Appropriate for all levels of birders. Meet at DeVargas Mall (in front of Starbucks) at 7:00 AM or at the ski basin at 7:45 AM. Contact leader for trip status.

Sunday, September 23  
**Stubblefield Lake & Maxwell National Wildlife Refuge**

Leader: Roger Clark  
505-231-7369, rogercarolclark@gmail.com

This should be a wonderful time of year to observe a wide variety of waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors, summer residents, neo-tropical migrants and arriving winter residents. This is an all day trip so folks will need to bring food, plenty to drink and sunscreen. Some walking but easy. After a quick check at Springer Lake, mid to late afternoon, we'll head back to Santa Fe. Meet at The Agora Plaza in Eldorado at 5:15 a.m. Sunrise is at 6:58 and it's approximately two hours from the Agora (distance is 138 miles). There is lodging in Raton less than 30 minutes away from Maxwell for those that wish to stay overnight there. I can arrange a meeting time and place in Maxwell for anyone who stays in Raton.

September TBA  
**Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area and Belen Marsh**

Leaders TBA

The Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area in Belen is rapidly developing as a mini-Bosque del Apache, and the Belen Marsh is an excellent spot for ducks, shorebirds and rails. We are currently seeking a leader for this trip and will announce it through the Newsletter and eblasts. Look for an eblast from us later this summer. You can sign up for both the Newsletter and the eblasts at our web site: [www.NewMexicoAudubon.org/sdcas](http://www.NewMexicoAudubon.org/sdcas).

**Announcing the 13th Annual Gila River Festival**  
**"Gathering the Gila"**  
**September 21 – 24, 2017,**  
**Silver City, New Mexico**

The 13th annual festival, Gathering the Gila will engage participants in an exploration of the bountiful native foods, plants, and medicines found throughout the Gila River and its watershed. Presented by the Gila Conservation Coalition, the Festival will feature dynamic presentations and hands-on activities designed to foster a deeper intimacy with the Gila River, including river outings, field trips, workshops, storytelling, cooking, and foraging. **Full schedule and on-line registration available at [www.gilariverfestival.org](http://www.gilariverfestival.org)**

Sangre de Cristo Audubon Society Field Trips are designed to promote understanding and appreciation of wildlife and their habitats. Our aim is to cultivate awareness of outdoor ethics in an atmosphere of friendly companionship. Field trips are free and open to the public. Some area entry fees are required and driving costs are shared. Participants are expected to carpool whenever possible. On all field trips, wear walking shoes and clothing appropriate for the weather. Bring water, lunch, and binoculars. No pets, please. Always call the trip leader before the trip. Trips may be cancelled for a variety of reasons.

# Audubon New Mexico Randall Davey Audubon Center and Sanctuary

The grounds at the Randall Davey Audubon Center are open Monday to Saturday, 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM, closed Sundays (and in January). Stroll the gardens as birds visit the birdfeeders, or walk the trails and enjoy the natural beauty and serenity of the 135-acre wildlife sanctuary. Additionally, the Davey Center is an environmental education center and offers a variety of educational events. Please check the [website](#) for details.



The Center is located at the end of Upper Canyon Road on the far east side of Santa Fe.

## Historic House Tours

Step back in time as you stroll through the old Santa Fe style home (originally a lumber mill built in 1847 by the U.S. Army) of the artist Randall Davey (1887-1964). This docent-led tour will give you an opportunity to view some of Davey's most spectacular works of art, as well as a beautiful collection of Spanish Colonial and European antiques. Tours are held each Friday at 2:00 PM. Reservations are recommended. Cost is \$5 per person. For information call 505-983-4609.

## Ground Broken for David Henderson Pavilion

On May 23rd, a group of Audubon supporters, friends of David Henderson, and donors convened to break ground for the David Jay Henderson Pavilion at the Randall Davey Center and Sanctuary. The pavilion will provide much needed space for expanded education and community programs at the Center and is the result of a sustained effort on the part of Audubon New Mexico and its supporters to memorialize the work of David Henderson for birds



and wildlife in his 25-year career with Audubon New Mexico. David came to New Mexico in 1985 from CA and immediately dove into the conservation work of the state. NM was a state without a really mature conservation

infrastructure. Audubon had been at it since the early 70s in its outposts in Silver City, Las Cruces, Roswell, Gallup, Albuquerque and Santa Fe/ Los Alamos. mostly with a focus on local issues. David brought a broader scope and vision, one of a statewide voice for the birds and for wildlife, and he became their voice.

## Audubon New Mexico News: Freshwater Conservation

Beth Bardwell, Audubon New Mexico's Director of Conservation, retired at the end of April. Over the years, Beth developed A-NM's freshwater conservation work and built important alliances with other water users, Indian Pueblos, funders, and government agencies. As Director of Conservation, she sought to bring structure to A-NM's work in grasslands, citizen science, and forests, in addition to the groundbreaking freshwater conservation initiative. She will be missed.

Audubon New Mexico's work to preserve conservation flows in the Rio Grande in central New Mexico will continue under the leadership of Paul Tashjian as Associate Director of Freshwater Conservation. Paul has over 26 years of experience in hydrology with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Southwestern Region. Paul's expertise includes water management and water protection for wildlife, river restoration, water law, and wetland workshop coordination. He was the founder and coordinator of the Bosque Hydrology Group, an inter-agency, inter-university think tank that focused on the physical restoration of the Middle Rio Grande from 1995 through 2008.

He has served in numerous leadership positions focusing on the conservation of the Rio Grande watershed, including most recently the lead for Rio Grande Wetland Reviews and the lead for the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Rio Grande Emphasis Area Team. His recent work includes quantifying and protecting National Wildlife Refuge water rights, conducting studies and workshops to improve wetland management, and coordinating river restoration projects associated with Southwestern National Wildlife Refuges. He will continue and expand Audubon's efforts to lease water for delivery to the Isleta Reach south of Albuquerque for the benefit of fish and wildlife.

## Climate Watch Surveys Continue

The National Audubon Society (NAS) Climate Change initiative will again conduct bluebird and nuthatch counts between January 15 and February 15, 2019. Participating volunteers, counting either on their own or with a partner, will pick one day during that period to do 12 point counts in their assigned area.



Volunteers enter the numbers of each bird seen or heard at each point count into eBird using the Climate Change protocol. By tracking each species over several years, NAS is able to test projections about increases or decreases in a given habitat.

If you are interested in participating, and haven't been a volunteer on a past count, please e-mail Judy Liddell, JLiddell@MSN.com Past volunteers will receive an e-mail from Judy in mid-December. While a few people have volunteered to count in Valencia County, additional individuals are needed there.



# Environment News

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## Court Sends Wolf Rule Back to Feds

A rule issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2015 that expanded the endangered Mexican gray wolf's habitat by millions of acres has been remanded to the service for further revision, a federal judge in Arizona decided in early April.

The Revision to the Regulations for the Nonessential Experimental Population of the Mexican Wolf describes procedures for the wolf's release, population area and management in the United States. But environmental groups felt it did not do enough to save the species.

"The bottom line is that this rule only gave the wolf a short-term chance of survival," said Bryan Bird, director of Defenders of Wildlife's Southwest Program.

Several environmental groups sued over the rule, arguing it violated the Endangered Species Act and did not provide for the recovery of the wolf.

While the rule did expand the wolf's habitat, it also eased restrictions on killing the animals if livestock is preyed upon, capped the number of wolves in the U.S. at 325, and did not allow wolves north of Interstate 40 in New Mexico and Arizona. Many aspects of the rule directly contradicted the earlier recommendations of top wildlife biologists, the groups argued. Among those was a recommendation that three interconnected U.S. populations containing a total of at least 750 wolves were necessary for the species' recovery.

A group of wolf biologists commented to FWS in 2014 expressing concerns over the way their data were being used. "This case is unique in that the same scientists that are cited by the agency publicly communicated their concern that the agency misapplied and misinterpreted findings in such a manner that the recovery of the species is compromised," U.S. District Court Judge Jennifer Zipp wrote in the decision. "To ignore this dire warning was an egregious oversight by the agency."

There are currently 114 Mexican wolves in the U.S.  
The Albuquerque Journal, April 3, 2018

## Hunt-management Plans are Unscientific

Governments often claim, and society often believes, that science guides policy for natural resource management, including hunting policies across the United States and Canada. But no standard exists for what science-based management entails. Researchers identified four fundamental hallmarks of science for natural resource management. Fewer than half were present in most hunt management plans surveyed across U.S. states and Canadian provinces and territories. Broader application of a science-based framework could improve policies and mitigate risks.

Sci. Adv. 10.1126/sciadv.aao0167 (2018).

## More Than 1 Million Adelie Penguins Discovered on Danger Islands Off Antarctica

Antarctica is pretty much the most isolated place on the planet, which is why it's also one of the most fascinating. Naturalist Brian Keating just returned from a visit and spoke about the exciting new discovery of a 1.5-million strong penguin colony on islands so remote, no one realized the animals were there.

Prior to the discovery, it was thought that the population of Adelie Penguins on Antarctica was in decline. "Ice-loving penguins, like the Adelie Penguins, have moved south, and populations that existed in the thousands as recently as a decade ago, are now gone." Then came the photos, shot from satellites. "They spotted the poo," said Keating, who traveled with a group of scientists studying penguins and whales in the area. "Put 1.5 million penguins in a little area, it's going to color the landscape — and that's what it did."

A ground team confirmed what they thought they were seeing," Keating said. "They counted 751,527 pairs — and they've been around for a long time. They examined satellite photos dating back to 1959 and they believe the colony has been stable over that time.

Canadian Broadcasting



## Pesticides Affect Non-target Species

Neonicotinoid pesticides are the most widely used type of insecticides, but there are concerns that they are toxic to nontarget species such as bees and butterflies. Researchers combined field and laboratory experiment aimed at assessing the impact of neonicotinoids on the common blue butterfly (*Polyommatus icarus*). Wildflowers planted along the margins of fields of neonicotinoid-treated wheat were contaminated with the pesticide at levels similar to those in the treated crops. Common blue butterfly larvae exposed to neonicotinoid-contaminated plants showed increased mortality and reduced growth in the early stages of development. Wildflower margins that specifically aim to boost pollinator populations may chronically expose these species to harmful levels of neonicotinoids.

Environ. Sci. Technol. 52, 3990 (2018).  
Reviewed in Science, 13 April 2018

# Environment News

## Higher Latitudes Wetter, Lower Latitudes Drier

A 14-year NASA mission has confirmed that a massive redistribution of freshwater is occurring across Earth, with middle-latitude belts drying and the tropics and higher latitudes gaining water supplies. The results, which are probably a combination of the effects of climate change, vast human withdrawals of groundwater, and simple natural changes, could have profound consequences if they continue, pointing to a situation in which some highly populous regions could struggle to find enough water in the future.

“To me, the fact that we can see this very strong fingerprint of human activities on the global water redistribution, should be a cause for alarm,” said Jay Famiglietti, a researcher at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory and one of the authors of a study published in *Nature*.

The results emerge from the 2002-2016 GRACE mission, which is short for Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment, supplemented with additional data sources. The GRACE mission, which recently ended but will soon be replaced by a “Follow-On” endeavor, consisted of twin satellites in orbit that detected the tug of Earth’s gravity below them — and monitored mass changes based on slight differences in measurements by the two satellites.

Among the massive features on Earth, water and ice are the ones that change most regularly. Thus, the GRACE data has been used to detect the vast losses of ice in Greenland, Antarctica and Alaska, as well as changes in ocean currents and the scale of the California drought.

The new research pulls together these and other findings to identify 34 global regions that gained or lost more than 32 billion tons of water between 2002 and 2016. As the study notes, 32 billion tons is about the amount of water contained in Lake Mead, which is in Nevada and Arizona. So all 34 areas saw very large changes.

The study emphasizes that the 34 separate changes that it detects do not all have the same cause — not even close. There’s strong suspicion that the melting of glaciers and ice sheets is tied to climate change. On land, it’s possible that some droughts and rainfall increases might also be, though the study is cautious about that, noting that natural variability can also be a major factor. Still, the idea of mid-latitude drying and higher- and lower-latitude wetting is a common feature of climate change models. And there are other human-induced changes, relating not to climate change but, rather, to direct withdrawals of water from the landscape.

Washington Post, 5/17/2018



## Chinese Government Puts the Brakes on Industrial Reclamation in Shorebird Habitat

The Yellow Sea is the hub in the middle of the East Asian–Australasian Flyway— the grand migratory bird highway of the Eastern Hemisphere that stretches from Australia to Siberia, and even to far western Alaska. Since the 1950s, more than 50 percent of China’s intertidal shorebird habitats along the Yellow Sea coast have been dredged and filled, as rapid economic development fueled a boom in tidal flat reclamation projects. But the tide might now be turning for shorebirds, as the Chinese government announced in January that it will halt business-oriented coastal land reclamation “in the strictest-ever control over reclamation,” according to China’s State Oceanic Administration.

The restriction on tidal habitat destruction is great news for the 25 species of migratory shorebirds that travel the East Asian–Australasian Flyway and are showing steep and troubling population declines. Far Eastern Curlews have suffered more than 80 percent population loss in the last decade due to Yellow Sea habitat loss. Spoon-billed Sandpipers have become one of the world’s most endangered species, with fewer than 500 individuals left.

The Chinese government’s announcement stated that future reclamation projects would be restricted to those that pertain to infrastructure, public welfare, or national defense, so it remains to be seen exactly how these new policies will play out along the Yellow Sea coast. But conservationists are hopeful. The measures are very comprehensive and very strict. Many reclamation projects which are not in line with the rules will be stopped immediately, so it is a great win for conservation already.

Cornell laboratory of Ornithology



## Vanishing Megafauna

Today, it is well known that human activities put larger animals at greater risk of extinction. Such targeting of the largest species is not new, however, researchers have shown that this biased loss of large-bodied mammal species from ecosystems is a signature of human impacts that has been following hominin migrations since the Pleistocene. If the current trend continues, terrestrial mammal body sizes will become smaller than they have been over the past 45 million years. Megafaunal mammals have a major impact on the structure of ecosystems, so their loss could be particularly damaging.

Science, 20 April, 2018



## President's Column

Tom Jervis

With each issue of the Mountain Chickadee, I always find far more content that is in the "doom and gloom" category. There always seems to be an abundance of bad news. Good news is harder to come by.

Well, the sky **is** falling, the climate is changing in ways that we don't fully understand, with consequences that we don't fully understand. But we do know that temperatures are rising on a global level, more quickly in the arctic than elsewhere. The consequences of arctic warming are manifest, from melting sea ice to melting permafrost to coastal erosion. This is not in doubt.

At home, we are in the midst of an epic drought, You don't need studies to see that. But the connection to the global climate is somewhat tenuous. It is possible that the depth of this drought is the result of a "perfect storm" of the consequences of the El Niño-southern, the North Atlantic, and the Pacific Decadal oscillations, and who knows what else. But the drought is also consistent with predictions of global climate models, which predict a significant drying of the American Southwest. Even if the depth of this drought is influenced by "normal" atmospheric fluctuations, it would be prudent to consider the possibility that the situation is at least indicative of a "new normal" for the Southwest.

The vast majority of water in the Rio Grande is used for agriculture, and agriculture cannot compete with cities for water. The cities of Albuquerque, Las Cruces, and Santa Fe will eventually buy out those farms and their water. Phoenix has a bigger problem. They are dependent to a great degree on the Central Arizona Project diversions from the Colorado River. They too can buy out the agricultural enterprises in California that provide us with vegetables, but the Colorado is finite, and San Diego and Las Vegas also want that water, There is not going to be enough to go around to support the growth that all of the above-mentioned cities anticipate—maybe not even support them in a no-growth scenario. Enjoy your vegetables while you can!

So where is the good news? Slowly—too slowly—we are beginning to realize and reverse the negative impact we have had on the natural world. The Chinese are cutting back their development of coastal wetlands which would otherwise decimate huge populations of migratory birds. The Europeans are banning pesticides that kill non-target pollinators and birds. A million and a half Adelie Penguins are discovered in Antarctica. And organizations like Audubon continue their dedication to preserving the natural world. Your support of those efforts makes a difference.

## Car Vandal Identified

The residents of Snellville, Gwinnett County, Georgia, were recently the victims of a series of petty crimes. Specifically, there was a pattern of smashed side-view car mirrors in the community. When more than two dozen people around the Nob Hill section of Snellville reported the same kind of broken glass mirrors on their cars, the police were sent out and were determined to apprehend the culprits.

The hypothesis was that the damage was likely being caused by young boys with BB guns, or possible vandals running around with hammers smashing the mirrors. But according to local Channel 2 Action News out of metro-Atlanta, the culprit was a Pileated Woodpecker, defending territory against "rival" birds! At the end of the day, local police reported that the case was solved.

E Birding Community E-Bulletin

## Migration Forecast Available

Migration is the best time to be a bird watcher. Twice a year, hordes of birds travel thousands of miles to grace your home turf for a few days or weeks. But they don't come in a steady stream—more like a cascade of arrivals coming in flurries and pauses. That's why even during peak migration, some days are dead while others are packed with new arrivals.

Now, the [BirdCast project](#) from the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology can help you know when those flurries are about to arrive, so you can plan when to get up early. They've boiled down decades of migration science, coupled it with real-time weather data, and created two simple tools: a 3-day migration forecast, and an up-to-the-moment replay of migration activity. Find out more by visiting: <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/heres-how-to-use-the-new-migration-forecast-tools-from-birdcast/>.

Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology

## Europeans Ban Neonicotinoid Pesticides

In a move that illustrates growing awareness of the toxicity of the world's most widely used class of pesticides, the European Union has voted to ban almost all outdoor uses of three neonicotinoids due to their buildup in the environment, particularly in waterways, and the persistent harm that they pose to bees and other pollinators. The ban on imidacloprid, clothianidin and thiamethoxam is set to go into effect by the end of 2018.

"We've known these chemicals are wiping out wildlife for five years now, but the EPA has yet to take action," said Steve Holmer, Vice President of the American bird conservancy. "We urge citizens to speak out in support of a legislative effort, the Saving America's Pollinators Act, H.R. 5015, to restrict the most harmful neonicotinoid pesticides."

American Bird Conservancy

# Political Issues

## Financing Biodiversity Conservation

The 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was one of the first international environmental agreements negotiated. In the same year, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) for funding biodiversity conservation in developing countries was launched. Yet 25 years later, biological populations and diversity continue to decline both on land and in the oceans. The main reasons are chronic underfunding of global biodiversity conservation; the lack of incentives for global cooperation; and the failure to control habitat conversion, resource overexploitation, species invasions, and other drivers of biodiversity loss. Now advocates are calling for a Global Agreement for Biodiversity modeled on the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement, with national targets, policies, and timelines. The overall goal is ambitious: to conserve at least 50% of terrestrial, inland water, coastal, and marine habitats by 2050. Formal involvement of the private sector, particularly in areas such as seafood, forestry, agriculture, and insurance, will be crucial to raise the necessary funds.

Science, 4 May, 2018

## Trump Roils Auto Efficiency Standards

Executives from top car companies visited the White House in May amid a looming legal conflict between the Trump administration and primarily Democratic-led states over climate rules for automobiles. The Trump administration is readying a proposal to freeze auto-efficiency standards beginning in 2021, rather than continuing to strengthen them as originally outlined by the Obama administration under a deal reached in 2011. At the same time, that proposal would challenge the ability of California, long a national leader when it comes to vehicle standards, to set its own rules. California and other states supportive of stronger standards have already sued the EPA over its move to change course.

But the sweeping nature of such moves has caused concern in the auto industry, and after the meeting, the industry released a statement suggesting that they had discussed with the president the possibility of some form of negotiation with California.

Before their meeting with Trump, the executives—whose industry had previously asked for regulatory relief from the incoming Trump administration—stressed their desire for a uniform national standard, saying a patchwork of state standards would create an untenable regulatory tangle.

“We are not asking the administration for a rollback,” said Bill Ford, chairman of Ford Motor Co., at a recent automaker meeting, according to Bloomberg News. “We want California at the table, and we want one national standard.”

Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers President Mitch Bainwol before Congress cited a “regulatory nightmare” if California and allied states wind up with one regulatory system for vehicles while many other states have another. He called for the Trump administration to keep up annual increases in fuel economy standards and “incorporate California.”

Meanwhile, environmentalists and sympathetic states are bracing for a major battle to defend one of the largest components of the Obama administration’s attempt to cut the nation’s greenhouse gas emissions. “The rollbacks are irresponsible, harmful and unjustified,” said Luke Tonachel, who heads the clean vehicles program at the Natural Resources Defense Council. “There’s a robust record supporting the fact that [the standards] are good for consumers and the environment, and help protect jobs.” Anti-regulatory groups have pushed for the rules to be rolled back.

Washington Post, 5/17/2018

**See contact information on the next page.**

## NM PRC Approves Misguided Wind Farm

New Mexico’s Public Regulation Commission approved the Sagamore Wind Project in Roosevelt County in late April. Properly sited, wind energy development in New Mexico should be encouraged and welcomed. But the Sagamore project is proposed for perhaps the worst possible location in eastern New Mexico from a wildlife standpoint. In particular, it is in habitat identified by the Western Association of Wildlife Agencies as important for the future of the Lesser Prairie-chicken in New Mexico. In fact the area includes several occupied Lekes, or dancing grounds, where the birds perform their spectacular displays. Its footprint also includes a substantial portion of the playa lakes area near Clovis, NM, which is important to many migrating and wintering birds.

Sagamore Wind Energy aggressively pushed this project through the PRC, using specious arguments about the effect of wind turbines on the Lesser Prairie-chicken and other birds and denigrating the wildlife value of the area. In so doing they have defied advice from the NM Department of Game and Fish and the Federal Fish and Wildlife Service, which is about to decide on the status of the Lesser Prairie-chicken under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and have put the future of the Lesser Prairie-chicken in further doubt.





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**[Sangre de Cristo Audubon Society on the World-Wide Web](http://www.newmexicoaudubon.org/sdcas/)**  
**<http://www.newmexicoaudubon.org/sdcas/>**

## WHERE BIRDS THRIVE, PEOPLE PROSPER

### New Mexico Rare Bird Alert

is on the Web

**[New Mexico Rare Bird Alert](#)**

Matt Baumann, Compiler  
mbaumann22@gmail.com

### Audubon en Español

Audubon ha lanzado su sitio web en español para conectar con las audiencias hispanas y disfrutar juntos de la naturaleza y la protección de las aves y sus hábitats. Visita Audubon en Español (<http://www.audubon.org/es>).

Contact your Congressional Representatives  
Let them know that protecting the environment is important to you!

Senator Martin Heinrich  
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202-224-2841 (fax)  
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