

# The Mountain Chickadee

Newsletter of the Sangre de Cristo Audubon Society  
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Photograph by Tom Taylor

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Mountain Bluebird - Photo by Diane Taylor

*The Sangre de Cristo Audubon chapter represents a landscape that has been occupied for millennia by peoples of diverse cultural backgrounds. We honor that diversity and believe that just as we strive to protect biodiversity, we must include and respect the diversity of the many people and cultures that call northern New Mexico their home.*

**Keep Up on Our Latest Events and Field Trips!  
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## Melrose Woods: An Innovative Partnership

The place known as Melrose Woods is not imposing or grand. A compact grove of white poplars and towering cottonwoods, it sprouts out of a wrinkle in the earth, surrounded by windswept grasslands for many miles in all directions.

But for migrating birds, the woods are a crucial rest stop on the western edge of the flat, arid Llano Estacado that sprawls across the New Mexico-Texas border. Long known as a species-rich birding spot during the spring and fall migrations, Melrose Woods has now gained notoriety for another reason: it's the focus of an innovative partnership between the New Mexico State Land Office and the [Central New Mexico Audubon Society](#) chapter to conserve the site and improve its recreational possibilities. In fact, as of May of last year CNMAS officially became the lessee of 22 acres of state trust land that encompass the woods, and work has already begun protect the site and make it more visitor friendly.

Melrose Woods – previously known as the Melrose Trap – is a refuge for errant birds on their way to and from the tropics along America's central flyway. More than 250 species have been sighted there, and CNMAS had been interested in preserving the site for many years. But discussions with state officials gained momentum in 2019, when Commissioner of Public Lands Stephanie Garcia Richard created the [Open for Adventure](#) program to increase recreational opportunities on state trust land. An agency known primarily for managing oil and gas leases was now promoting public recreation, and Melrose Woods became one of its pioneer projects.



A view of Melrose Woods in winter

One hurdle was that the property – located in Roosevelt County, about 10 miles west of the village of Melrose - was already part of a larger lease to a local rancher. But he had allowed birders to visit the site informally for years and agreed to let the state "overlease" Melrose Woods to CNMAS. The chapter agreed to pay the state \$500 a year and to install signage and a visitor's kiosk, while the state took on the responsibility of removing debris dumped at the site, and improving parking and trails for visitors.

"Rarely do government agencies have enough resources to make these things happen on their own," said Craig Johnson, outdoor

**(Continued on P. 3)**

## How Birds Helped Me Find Calm During the Pandemic



Christina Greer

When the coronavirus hit New York City and the number of deaths and infections skyrocketed, I stayed inside my 800-square-foot apartment as much as possible. Then I decided to head to Dover, Delaware, to stay with my father for a few weeks.

As I got adjusted to my new living arrangement with my dad (something I had not done since high school), I would awaken every morning to the sounds of the Dover bird community - cooing doves, bubbling wrens, geese settling in on the water. I felt a bit like Snow White waking from a deep slumber each morning to the sounds outside. After long days of Zoom meetings with co-workers and friends, I would sit on my father's terrace and settle in for what I began calling my "evening bird drama" of bird songs, chirps and calls. The sweet sounds helped my muscles ease just a bit, and for minutes each day I forgot we were living amid a pandemic. I am by no means an expert birder, but to my surprise I saw Cardinals, Blue Jays, orioles and many different warblers. Being able to observe nature during a lockdown fed my soul. Even though I did not venture far past my father's terrace, I still felt connected to a world that surrounded me.

As my time in Dover ended and I made my way back to Brooklyn, I began to follow different birders on Twitter,

including some who posted sightings of birds in NYC parks that were only blocks away from my apartment. When I walked through the Brooklyn Botanic Garden and Prospect Park, I looked up to enjoy the lone woodpecker, or the hawk hanging out watching traffic.

These past few months have been incredibly stressful for many. For me, discovering birding has been a salvation and a salve during this time. To wake each morning to hear the sounds of a wren or thrasher or even a pigeon reminds me that I am alive and a part of something larger, even if I will be in my apartment the entire day. Birds have become a symbol and reminder of internal peace, and I am most grateful for this discovery during this uncertain time in our country and the world. I am also so grateful I discovered the birding community on Twitter.

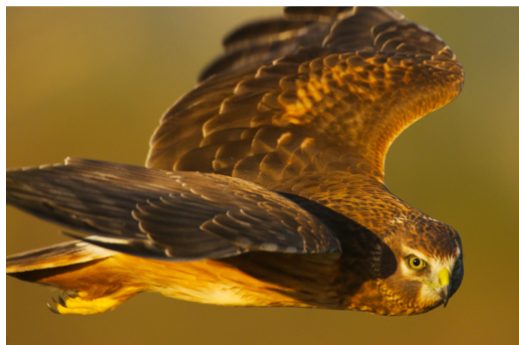
This past year has been quite difficult for so many Americans. For me as a Black American and a political scientist, it's been busy, emotionally and intellectually draining, and sometimes frightening. Birding has been an addition to my life that helps me keep what is truly important in context and as a priority. It has made me feel more connected to myself, the land and my fellow citizens. As we wait to emerge from the grip of this pandemic, we must practice patience as a virtue. And there is no better practice in patience than waiting for a bird to emerge or listening for its call.

Dr. Christina Greer is an associate professor of political science at Fordham University. These excerpts are from an essay first published by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology

## Audubon Activities

### Sangre de Cristo Chapter Field Trips Remain Suspended

Field trips conducted by the Sangre de Cristo Audubon chapter have been suspended for now due to the coronavirus pandemic. We hope to resume field trips this spring, but that will depend on the course of the pandemic and on the status of health restrictions imposed by the state of New Mexico. Any new field trips or other updates will be announced via email and on our [Website](#).



Northern Harrier - Photo by Alan Peterson

### Chapter Meetings and Programs

#### The Pinyon Jay: Biology, Threats and Conservation - Kristine Johnson March 10, 2021 - 7 p.m. via Zoom

The Pinyon Jay is the fastest declining bird of piñon-juniper woodlands, and is a species of high conservation concern in New Mexico. This talk will cover Pinyon Jay biology, the bird's fascinating mutualism with piñon pines, threats and recommended conservation actions.

#### Birds of the Chiricahua Mountains Renata Golden

April 14, 2021 - 7 p.m. via Zoom

This talk will focus on the birds of southeastern Arizona's Chiricahua Mountains, and where best to see them. In addition to Cave Creek Canyon, learn about lesser-known Horseshoe, Sulphur and Whitetail Canyons - and about results of Christmas counts here over the last 20 years.

Sign up on our [email list](#) and receive advance notifications and instructions for our Zoom meetings

# Audubon New Mexico

## Randall Davey Audubon Center and Sanctuary

In consideration of health concerns, the Randall Davey Audubon Center & Sanctuary will remain closed until further notice. All regularly scheduled programming and events have been cancelled or postponed. This includes the Saturday morning bird walks and weekend house tours. Please check our social media posts for virtual events, and check back for further information about reopening and resuming of regular programming. Thank you and stay healthy! [RandallDavey](#).



### Recent Donations

The Sangre de Cristo Audubon Society is grateful to the 15 donors who gave us \$1,948 in contributions in 2020, including two donations in memory of William Bernard and one in honor of Ann Sherrard. Our heartfelt thanks for the support.

### Climate Watch Returns for 2021

By Albert Shultz

After a suspension for the summer 2020 season, Climate Watch returned this winter. This national community-science program, designed by Audubon to track long-term population trends and distributions for selected songbird species, utilizes volunteer birders to perform a set of 12 point-counts of five minutes each in habitat for particular species. This was our chapter's third year of participation, and for winter 2021 there were 13 individuals counting in 10 areas for nuthatches and bluebirds. The results were quite variable - some counts recorded more birds than ever, while others recorded practically none. Even the no-bird counts are important, however, because the data is combined with that from counts throughout the ranges of these species to better assess frequencies of observations. Additional participants have come forward and are hoping to be able to join the next summer count in May-June.

For more information on Climate Watch, contact Albert Shultz by email at [shultzaw@gmail.com](mailto:shultzaw@gmail.com), or by phone: 505-757-2754; or see the website [AudubonClimateWatch](#).

### Like Birds? Join Audubon!

Santa Fe and Taos areas: [AudubonSantaFe](#)  
New Mexico statewide: [AudubonSouthwest](#)

## Melrose Woods

(Continued from P. 1)

recreation program manager with the State Land Office, who helped craft the agreement with CNMAS. "But if everyone puts a little skin in the game, good things can happen."

Moving forward the Audubon chapter has developed a restoration plan that includes revegetation and irrigation. The state land office will shoulder the cost of planting dozens of cottonwoods, sand plums and other bird-friendly native plant species; installing a drip system from a nearby well to provide water for the new plantings as well as for birds; and completing fencing around the site to keep out wandering cattle.



Robert Munro taking a tree sample at Melrose Woods

"We believe by this spring we'll have many new cottonwoods and shrubs, and year-round water that the birds will be able to access," said Robert Munro, a CNMAS board member who is coordinating the chapter's partnership with the state at Melrose Woods. One compromise the chapter made, he noted, was to continue to allow hunting on the property.

Johnson pointed out that the state land office sees Melrose Woods as one of many projects that could help alleviate overcrowding at popular public-recreation sites in the future. Through the Open for Adventure program, the agency has also partnered with the Village of Ruidoso to provide hiking and biking opportunities on Moon Mountain, for example, and with the City of Gallup to provide hiking trails near Red Rock Park. "Without creating these new venues, we are going to be subject to overcrowding," Johnson said.

Munro believes the partnership to preserve Melrose Woods stands out for two reasons. "It's vital to bird conservation," he said. "And I hope it stands as an example for conservation groups and government agencies in the future - that there are opportunities that benefit all and help conservation." Johnson affirmed that. The partnership between CNMAS and the state land office is unusual and innovative, he said, and "it's something we seek to replicate."

Melrose Woods is open to birders from dawn to dusk, 365 days a year. There will be a few days early this spring when the site may be closed while irrigation work and plantings are completed. Those dates will be advertised on all CNMAS social media; if you are thinking of visiting, please check to assure you will have access to the woods. Camping is not allowed.

## A Bird's-Eye View of Blinking

When Jessica Yorzinski chased great-tailed grackles across a field, it wasn't to see who blinked first. But she did want the birds to blink. Dr. Yorzinski had outfitted the grackles with head-mounted cameras pointing back at their faces. Like other birds, grackles blink sideways, flicking a semitransparent membrane across the eye. Her study, published recently in *Biology Letters*, showed the birds spent less time blinking during the riskiest parts of a flight.

Dr. Yorzinski, a sensory ecologist at Texas A&M University, had wondered how animals balance their need to blink with their need to get visual information about their environments. Humans, she said, "blink quite often, but when we do so we lose access to the world around us. It got me thinking about what might be happening in other species." She worked with a company that builds eye-tracking equipment to make a custom bird-size headpiece. Because a bird's eyes are on the sides of its head,

the contraption held one video camera pointed at the left eye and one at the right, making the bird resemble a sports fan in a beer helmet. The headpiece was connected to a backpack holding a battery and transmitter.

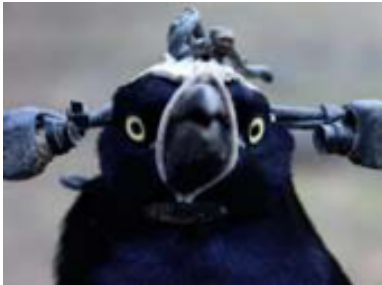


Photo: Yorzinski - *Biology Letters*

Dr. Yorzinski captured 10 wild great-tailed grackles to wear this get-up. She used only male birds, which are big enough to carry the helmet and backpack without trouble. Then she encouraged them to fly by chasing them across an outdoor enclosure. Afterward, she broke down the flight videos into stages, from standing and taking off to landing again. There were clear patterns: while the birds were in flight, their blinks were quicker than when they were on the ground. And just before landing, they barely blinked at all. She also saw that the birds blinked most often at the moment they hit the ground. This might have been because they needed to blink after holding their eyes open, or to protect their eyes from debris.

An avian scientist not involved in the study said the short flights Dr. Yorzinski observed don't reveal enough yet to say anything broadly about how birds blink in flight. Still, Dr. Yorzinski's findings are similar to those regarding human pilots. One study showed that pilots in simulators blinked more quickly, and less often, while they were in flight, especially during demanding periods and while landing. For people and grackles, "Maximizing visual input during these critical stages of being in flight and landing makes a lot of sense," Dr. Yorzinski said. Think of a bird alighting on a branch: "If they were off a little, they might be landing on nothing and fall to the ground."

New York Times

## Fish-Eating River Bird Flies Off Endangered Species List

Chalk up another victory for the Endangered Species Act: A little bird called the Interior Least Tern has recovered from a recent brush with extinction and can now be removed from the endangered species list. With the help of the act, its numbers have increased nearly tenfold over the past three decades.

"This small, scrappy bird has struggled to survive for so long," said Stephanie Kurose of the Center for Biological Diversity. "The tern's epic journey toward recovery shows what a powerful tool the ESA is for fighting the ongoing wildlife extinction crisis."

Interior least terns live along major rivers in the Midwest and South, including the Missouri, Mississippi and Red rivers and the Rio Grande. In winter they migrate to Central and South America and the Caribbean.

Center for Biological Diversity

## "Extinct" Babbler Found after 170 Years

Locals in Kalimantan, Borneo, have helped rediscover the lost Black-browed Babbler, missing since it was first described and collected by scientists around 1848. Muhammad Suranto and Muhammad Rizky Fauzan rediscovered the elusive Black-browed Babbler in October 2020 during a weekly trip to gather forest products in Southern Kalimantan Province. After accidentally capturing a bird, which neither recognized, they took some photos and then released it unharmed. They sent the photos to the a local birdwatching group, hoping they could identify it.

The group suspected it might be the Black-browed Babbler, and immediately contacted ornithologists Panji Gusti Akbar, Teguh Willy Nugroho, and Ding Li Yong, who compared the photos to a current field guide description and photos of the only known specimen of the species. "It was a bit like a 'Eureka!' moment," said Gusti Akbar, of the Indonesian bird conservation group Birdpacker and lead author of the paper. "It's mind-blowing to think that it's not extinct and it's still living in these lowland forests, but it's also a little scary because we don't know if the birds are safe or how much longer they may survive."

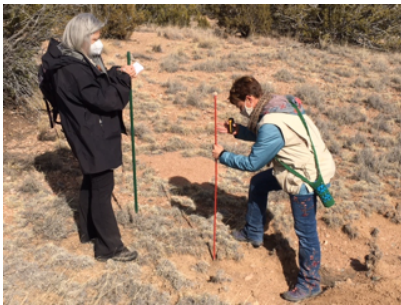
Due to COVID-19 safety precautions, scientists have not been able to travel to the area where the Black-browed Babbler was found, but they are working on a second paper to document its ecology and are hoping to work with local government agencies to plan expeditions later this year. "When the species was first discovered, now-extinct birds like the Great Auk and Passenger Pigeon were still alive," said Yong, a co-author on the paper and a Singapore-based conservationist with BirdLife International. "There is now a critical window of opportunity for conservationists to protect the babbler and other species."

American Bird Conservancy

# Climate News

## Planting Piñon Pines for Pinyon Jays

Nav Khalsa and Peggy Samaha are roaming the piñon-juniper grasslands of southern Santa Fe County, looking for the best places to plant. Pausing here and there, the two women use a metal rod to create a shallow depression in the damp soil, and a long plastic tube to guide a seed into it. They quickly scratch some dirt over the planting before heading off to find another site.



Peggy Samaha (left) and Nav Khalsa planting piñon-pine seeds

The dark-brown, pistachio-sized seeds will sprout into young Piñon Pines as part of a new county program to provide crucial food and habitat for Pinyon Jays – native birds that are particularly vulnerable as climate change threatens the abundance and health of the trees they depend

on to survive. The jays primarily eat Piñon Pine seeds, foraging in large, noisy flocks to pick them out from green pine cones, and eating them on the spot or caching them for later. The birds often nest in Piñon Pines, too.

Pinyon Jays have rapidly declined in recent decades, with their numbers falling 85% between 1970 and 2014. Conservationists estimate that the species could lose half its remaining population by 2036. “Climate change is the biggest threat to Piñon Pine and Pinyon Jay populations,” said Peggy Darr, open space resource management specialist for Santa Fe County. “Increasing temperatures and decreasing precipitation kills trees, and also causes decreased seed production in surviving trees.”

Darr created the Piñon Pine planting project, which began last fall and has already led to the planting of more than 1,000 seeds. The work is performed by volunteers recruited from the Northern New Mexico Master Naturalist Program, an annual, in-depth course jointly sponsored by the county, the Santa Fe Botanical Garden and Audubon.

Because it will take time for the seeds to develop into mature seed-producers themselves, the county also plans to improve the resiliency of existing Piñon Pines by placing erosion-control structures around the bases of select trees. The structures will collect additional water and give the pines a better chance of survival and increased seed production, Darr said.



A young piñon pine

The county hopes to eventually plant new Piñon Pines at several of its open-space properties. But so far the effort has been focused on Thornton Ranch Open Space near Galisteo, which has a nesting flock of Pinyon Jays. And

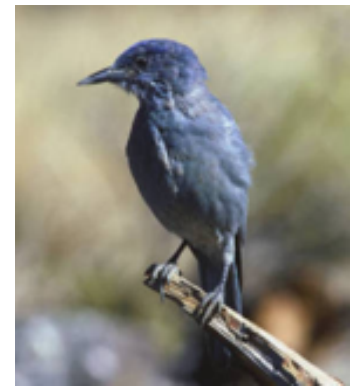
that’s where Khalsa and Samaha were working recently, looking for downslope, “climate resilient” sites with a little moisture. Often they selected places in the shade of junipers, where the pines seem to flourish.

Once again Khalsa used a pole to poke a shallow hole in the earth, and Samaha dropped a seed down the tube to its new home. “Grow big and mighty,” Khalsa said encouragingly, and the two women moved on.

\* \* \*

From *The Genius of Birds* by Jennifer Ackerman:

Pinyon Jays use impressive social reasoning to figure out where they fit in their flock’s social order. Avid socialites of the crow family, these jays live in large permanent flocks with firm social hierarchies, like chickens. They depend on an understanding of third-party relationships to work out how to behave toward an unfamiliar jay, whether to be aggressive or submissive... Pinyon Jays can infer the social status of a stranger by the way it behaves with other birds, thereby avoiding unnecessary conflict – and possible injury. This ability to make judgments about relationships using indirect evidence is called transitive inference and is considered an advanced social skill.



Pinyon Jay - Photo by USFWS

## New Reports Tout Benefits of EVs

Two new reports show the significant opportunity that clean cars have for America’s public health, environment and jobs. Key findings from ["Clean Cars, Clean Air, Consumer Savings"](#) by the Environmental Defense Fund include that by 2030, the buyer of a new battery electric vehicle will save more than \$7,200 over the life of the car compared to a gasoline-powered car. A new 2030 battery electric vehicle will also deliver nearly \$8,000 in added societal benefits as a result of reduced climate and particulate pollution.

Meanwhile, M.J. Bradley and Associates’ latest ["Electric Vehicle Market Status Update"](#) said carmakers worldwide will spend more than \$257 billion through 2030 developing new electric models, including more than \$22 billion to open new or renovated plants in the U.S. The electric vehicle industry employed almost 130,000 people across the U.S. in 2019; the expected new or renovated U.S. plants will directly employ another 24,000 people. By 2023, the number of electric vehicles available to U.S. consumers will increase to 76, and will include SUVs and pick-up trucks.

Environmental Defense Fund

Let Your Representatives in Washington  
Know How You Feel!

See contact info on Page 8!

## U.S. Senators Introduce Bill to Protect the Upper Pecos Watershed

U.S. Sen. Martin Heinrich (D-NM) has introduced a bill that would prohibit hard-rock mining in the Upper Pecos Watershed, the site of a proposed mine near Terrero. Co-sponsored by U.S. Sen. Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM), the Pecos Watershed Protection Act would withdraw all federally-managed minerals in the watershed and would prevent leasing, patent or sale of all publicly-owned minerals, including oil and gas as well as gold, silver, copper and other hard rock minerals.

The act was crafted in response to a community outcry over Comexico LLC, based in Fort Collins, Colo., looking to explore mineral deposits in the area. Prospective hard-rock mining in the area called up bad memories of a disastrous toxic waste spill from a closed mine in the 1990s that killed fish for 11 miles in the Pecos River. The spill created a cancer-causing plume in the water, damaged crops along the river and cost taxpayers millions of dollars to clean up, said Lela McFerrin, vice president of the Upper Pecos Watershed Association.

In addition to the bill to protect the upper Pecos, Heinrich and Lujan also introduced the Buffalo Tract Protection Act, which would withdraw four parcels of Bureau of Land Management lands in southern Sandoval County from any mineral development, including gravel mining; and legislation to establish Cerro de la Olla Wilderness within the Río Grande del Norte National Monument in northern New Mexico.

Heinrich said all three bills stand a good chance of being enacted into law, especially with the new Democratic majority in the Senate. But he noted that with Democrats' narrow majority, it will require working with Republicans to create a bipartisan package.

News Reports

## Forest Service Grazing Policy Under New Scrutiny

The U.S. Forest Service has extended the comment deadline for the revision of its livestock grazing directives, inviting public comment and signaling the likelihood of major changes from the Trump-era draft document. The directives being considered for revision under the Biden administration primarily address grazing permit administration, but could have far-reaching effects for on-the-ground management of livestock grazing programs.

While the forest service has provided an opportunity for public comment, it has thus far conducted no environmental analysis to examine the impacts of the proposed changes nor provided any alternatives for the public to consider. This narrow approach, initiated by the previous administration and favored by industry, completely ignores the ecological impacts of grazing and fails to address the connections between public lands grazing and the climate crisis.

"The Forest Service has never developed a comprehensive policy and program for grazing. Now the climate and biodiversity crises offer the greatest opportunity and imperative to do so," said Mary O'Brien, a botanist and Director of Project Eleven Hundred.



Photo by George Wuertner

The public lands grazing program, which occurs on nearly 100 million acres of forest service-managed lands in the western U.S., is a leading cause of ecological degradation contributing to the loss of native plant and animal

biodiversity, decreased resilience to aridification, impaired watershed function, and poor water quality, all of which are compounded by increasingly severe and extended periods of drought and higher temperatures. These impacts along with the amplifying effects of the climate crisis demonstrate a clear need for a comprehensive review of the grazing program in line with the Biden administration's commitment to climate consciousness.

WildEarth Guardians

## Border Wall Work Continuing Illegally?

Video footage shared with the Center for Biological Diversity seems to show construction equipment leveling Arizona mountains in critical habitat for endangered jaguars, in an apparent violation of President Biden's proclamation halting border wall construction. The footage was reportedly shot in mid-February by members of the Tucson Samaritans, who passed it on to the Center.

"The Biden administration should investigate this immediately and stop any construction that's still occurring," said Laiken Jordahl, borderlands campaigner at the Center. "The new administration must cancel these contracts permanently and work with border communities and tribal nations to repair all that Trump destroyed."

Jaguars and many other animals use remote areas to migrate across the landscape. A 2017 Center report identified 93 threatened and endangered species along the 2,000-mile border that would be harmed by Trump's wall.

Center for Biological Diversity



## President's Column

Tom Jervis

Three months ago in this space I waxed enthusiastic about the results of the November election and my hopes for the future. Little did I know what was coming; that Trump would continue to deny reality and even foment an attempted coup d'état. But thankfully, that is all mostly behind us; democracy reasserted itself, and a new president is moving forward with a broad agenda for climate solutions and protection of natural areas, and a stated commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

So what now? As I also pointed out in December, there are still forces arrayed against conservation and the protection of nature. They won't retreat; they'll just change tactics. Congress is narrowly divided in both houses, and although protection of the environment has broad popular support, passing significant new legislation will still be a hard fight.

If any good has come from the last four years, it is the realization for many that the protection of nature and natural areas is not a done deal. Protection of special places, plants and animals, the presumption of clean air and water, and even presumptions about our health and safety are fragile and require vigilance. So it is important that we all continue to PAY ATTENTION.

In New Mexico, many of our natural areas are federally owned and managed. The agencies that oversee them are required by law to involve the public as they develop projects and make decisions. If you have a favorite place, reach out to the local offices of the forest service or bureau of land management, find out what actions they are planning, and get involved in that process. Most of the people working in these agencies respect the environment and the integrity of the biological processes that support it, but special interests also have influence and too often create an imperative that is counter to wise management of an ecosystem. If you sense that something is "funny" but don't know what to do, reach out to organizations like Audubon or others for assistance.

These organizations can help you understand the issues and comment in a way that is both meaningful and impactful. By paying attention and getting involved in the decision-making process, you will also learn a lot about land management and how actions by federal agencies impact the values that you hold dear. Most importantly, you will become part of the change you want to see in the world and have the satisfaction of knowing that you've done something important for the environment.

## How Birds Survive Winter

Winter heralds the arrival of Dark-eyed Juncos and other avian visitors to our area. But just seeing these birds raises some tough questions: How can birds that weigh less than an ounce survive sub-zero temperatures night after night? What do they eat? Where do they sleep? Wild birds generally can stay warm by themselves, even in extreme circumstances. Most winter birds utilize a set of super-warm, downy feathers to keep the cold at bay. These feathers trap pockets of warm air next to birds' bodies. Fluffing their feathers helps birds maximize this advantage, while also giving them a plump appearance.

During the winter, birds also stay busy looking for high-fat and high-protein foods during the day. This builds up fat reserves they burn during the night to stay warm. Being successful at the "fat reserves" game requires significant food consumption:

chickadees are known to eat more than 35% of their body weight every day. Birds also have extremely high metabolic rates, and shivering helps them generate even more warmth during periods of colder weather. And by



Dark-eyed Junco

Photo by Steve Byland/Shutterstock

huddling together, birds can share heat and help each other stay warm. This tactic is used frequently by smaller birds like finches, nuthatches, wrens, bluebirds and others.

Even in winter, birds are extremely resourceful at finding food. Sapsuckers tap into the sap flowing under tree bark, leaving sap wells for other birds to feed from. Chickadees and nuthatches are able to locate and eat dormant and larval insects by carefully inspecting crevices and cracks in tree bark. Cedar Waxwings, Yellow-rumped Warblers and American Robins feed on the berries of junipers, honeysuckle, holly and other plants. Jays, titmice, finches and other birds feast upon fallen acorns and pine nuts.

Where do birds sleep in the winter? Blue Jays and Northern Cardinals take refuge in dense evergreen foliage; finches roost together on coniferous trees, but will sometimes burrow and create sleeping hollows in snow; woodpeckers, titmice, and nuthatches prefer to roost in tree cavities. Yet despite these and other natural defenses, birds remain vulnerable to freezing weather. Mortality rates depend upon the intensity of the freeze, how long it lasts, and the birds' condition. Frostbite can also take a toll: There are well-known instances of Mourning Doves losing tips of their toes, for example.

To help birds through spells of extra low temperatures, stock bird feeders with suet, peanuts and black oil sunflower seeds. Scatter seeds in sheltered areas, too - not all birds come to feeders. Since birds need to stay hydrated year-round, a heated birdbath can also be useful, but make sure to add rocks or other objects so that birds can drink without getting wet, which could be fatal in winter.

American Bird Conservancy

