

# The Mountain Chickadee

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

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A female Broad-Tailed Hummingbird faces off against a hummingbird moth over blossoms on a hummingbird mint  
Photo by Tom 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.*

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## Guadalupe Canyon: Scarred by the Border Wall

By Shane Woolbright

Editor's Note: Chapter board member Shane Woolbright visited Guadalupe Canyon, in southern New Mexico and Arizona, three times in the last 18 months to investigate the border wall and its impact on birds and other wildlife in the area. Here is his report:

Guadalupe Canyon runs parallel to the international border between Mexico and the United States for about four miles, beginning in easternmost Arizona before entering New Mexico. The canyon has long been among the most famous birding sites in the U.S., and the New Mexico side has a dozen species rarely found in this state, including the Thick-Billed Kingbird and the Violet-Crowned Hummingbird. To the west of Guadalupe, in Arizona, lies the San Bernardino National Wildlife Refuge, established to protect rare artesian seeps and ponds in the upper Rio Yaqui watershed.

So it was with horror that birders and others with a respect for nature found out in late 2020 that former President Donald Trump would continue to push construction of a wall along this stretch of the border, which not only supports the highest avian diversity in New Mexico but also is an important wildlife corridor. From Douglas, AZ for 20 miles heading eastward, a huge gash was bulldozed and dynamited through the desert, the wildlife refuge and into Guadalupe Canyon. Built into this gash was a 30-foot-high steel fence with a 40-foot-wide adjacent roadway; construction of a line of highway lighting poles (each with 500 watts of LED lighting) along the roadway was thankfully halted by President Joe Biden about one mile into the canyon. But crews kept working on the project up to the day of Biden's inauguration.



The border wall near Guadalupe Canyon  
Photo by Shane Woolbright

The lighting system was considered an abomination by refuge personnel and other wildlife experts, but typical of Trump administration incompetence, the contractors (and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) neglected to acquire rights for the electric utility in Douglas to extend power to the wall. So fortunately the lighting here was never energized and thus far has not interfered with nocturnal animals. The wall itself, however, is still a barrier to wildlife that once moved back and forth across the border, including jaguars, pronghorn antelope and birds such as the Northern Pygmy Owl and Scaled Quail which do not fly more than a few feet above the ground. Combined with the effects of long-term drought, wildlife has suffered in the area, although monsoon rains this summer have helped immensely.

(Continued on P. 3)

## A Border Wall Primer for New Mexico

Former President Donald Trump promised to build a wall along the 1,950-mile border between Mexico and the United States to prevent immigrants from illegally entering this country. When he left office after losing his re-election bid, about 425 miles of wall had been built; however, not all of that is contiguous, and 373 miles of it simply replaced dilapidated or outdated fencing that already existed. Only 52 miles of border "wall" went up in places where there were previously no barriers.

Nevertheless, all of the new, 30-foot-high steel fencing, much of it illuminated by high-intensity lighting, is highly disruptive to wildlife, including low-flying birds. Construction activity itself disturbed vast tracts of land and removed untold millions of gallons of water from precious desert aquifers. To build the wall, federal agencies waived 41 laws that protect public lands and endangered wildlife.

A broad coalition of environmental groups has called on President Joe Biden to remove more than a dozen of the most harmful sections of wall and restore ecologically sensitive areas damaged during construction. Four of these wall segments are in New Mexico, including a 4.5-mile section that divides a wildlife corridor encompassing Guadalupe Canyon (see article on P. 1). The other three are:

A 5.8-mile section in Hidalgo County. The wildlife corridor here is important for pronghorn antelope and jaguar, and is the only place where white-sided jackrabbits occur in the U.S. It is also a transborder migratory route for the Janos-Hidalgo international bison herd. The wall here will push illegal traffic onto more difficult adjacent private lands that are much more difficult to patrol due to steep terrain.

A 2.4-mile section in Luna County that cuts through the rugged Carrizalillo Hills, blocking wildlife from moving between the Sierra Alto mountains in Mexico and the Cedar Mountains Wilderness Study Area and surrounding BLM lands. Species affected include mountain lions, bobcats, coyotes, javelina, gray foxes, badgers, mule deer and endangered Mexican gray wolves.



Pronghorn Antelope  
Photo: Greg Joder, AZDGF

A 34.6-mile section in Luna and Dona Ana counties that blocks movement of wildlife between Mexico and the mountain ranges of the Florida Mountains Wilderness Study Area and Organ Mountains

Desert Peaks National Monument. Species affected include pronghorn, mountain lions, javelina, gray foxes, mule deer and endangered Mexican gray wolves.

Trump often boasted that Mexico would pay for his border wall. In fact, to date Mexico has paid absolutely nothing for it. U.S. taxpayers, on the other hand, have ponied up \$15 billion for the wall through the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Defense and the Treasury Forfeiture Fund. President Biden stopped construction of the border wall on his first day in office, and the Department of Homeland Security recently announced it will review the wall's environmental impacts. However, the federal government has not committed to removing any of it.

## Sangre de Cristo Chapter Activities

### Meetings and Programs

#### Coastal Bears of Alaska

Ed MacKerrow

September 8, 2021 - 7 p.m. via Zoom

Join scientist and nature photographer Ed MacKerrow, Ph.D, on a photographic journey with the bears and other wildlife of coastal Alaska. Salmon are the lifeblood of Alaska, and symbiotic inter-species relationships form in salmon-choked rivers each year. A discussion of the places visited, man's impact on the bears, and bear behavior will follow the multimedia presentation.

#### Svalbard; the (Really) Far North

Tom Jervis

October 13, 2021 - 7 p.m. via Zoom

The Svalbard archipelago (formerly Spitzbergen) in the north Atlantic is home to Polar Bears, Walrus, Arctic Foxes, Belugas and of course many birds. Chapter president Tom Jervis will present photos of all of the above from a cruise

taken in May of 2019, and will talk about some of the unnatural history of the archipelago.

#### A Short History of Bird Photography

Tim Wallace

November 10, 2021 - 7 p.m. via Zoom

Some of the earliest bird photographs were taken in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Tim Wallace will present some of these photos, anecdotes, and stories about them and their authors.

**A brief update of environmental issues and chapter activities precedes each program. Sign up on our [email list](#) and receive advance notifications and instructions for our Zoom meetings.**

### Field Trips Canceled

Field trips conducted by the Sangre de Cristo chapter have been canceled for the rest of the year due to the resurgence of the coronavirus. We hope to resume field trips next spring. Sign up for eblasts with the latest news about upcoming field trips on our [email list](#).

# Audubon Southwest

## Randall Davey Audubon Center and Sanctuary

The Randall Davey Audubon Center and Sanctuary has reopened, with masks required for all indoor spaces. The grounds are open Monday to Saturday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., closed Sundays (and in January). Stroll the gardens as birds visit the bird feeders, or walk the trails and enjoy the natural beauty and serenity of the 135-acre wildlife sanctuary.



Bird walks are conducted every Saturday at 8:30 a.m., except in January and on holiday weekends. The Center is located at 1800 Upper Canyon Road, 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 every Friday at 2:00 p.m., with masks required. Cost is \$5 per person. Please reserve your spot by calling 505-983-4609 X28, or click [here](#) for more details. Thank you and stay healthy!

## 2021 Festival of the Cranes Canceled

The [Friends of Bosque del Apache](#) has canceled the 2021 Festival of the Cranes, traditionally held in November at the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, due to uncertainty surrounding the coronavirus pandemic. However, you can still enjoy [Crane Fiesta 2021](#), which will be a mix of virtual media with live webinars and other virtual events. Enjoy some of your festival favorites: the Expo Tent, premium photography webinars, exciting birding webinars, and even the Wildlife Zone.

## Gila River Festival

The [Gila Conservation Coalition](#) welcomes you back to the 17th annual Gila River Festival, (Re)Connect with the River, September 16 - 19, 2021 in Silver City, NM, the Gila National Forest, and along the Gila River. This year's hybrid (in-person and virtual) event celebrates our connections to nature, to one another and to the Gila River watershed. Speakers include philosopher Kathleen Dean Moore, New York Times best-selling author Doug Tallamy and others. Expert-guided field trips and workshops on birding, medicinal native plants, fly fishing and more will be offered. Register at [Gila River Festival](#).

## Guadalupe Canyon (Continued from P. 1)

While the damage to Guadalupe Canyon is bad enough, the impact on the nearby wildlife refuge is much more severe. The wall required huge amounts of water for a deep concrete foundation that holds the enormous weight above. In addition, the narrow road immediately north of the wall was widened to accommodate earth-moving equipment and other vehicles, and during construction more water was used to spray the roadway constantly. All that water came from an aquifer that lay below a heavy layer of clay, with artesian seeps feeding ponds that sustained dozens of species of dragonflies, damselflies and butterflies, along with six species of rare fish. An average of one million gallons of water per day was withdrawn from this aquifer during wall construction, drying up the artesian flows.

Solar energy is now being used at the refuge to pump a few thousand gallons of water per day out of wells to feed the ponds and wetlands, but since solar does not work at night, the level of flow, oxidation and other factors may be stressful to the fish. Research on this is under way, and the refuge has applied for funding for more solar panels and battery storage so the pumps can run 24/7 and mimic the former flows. But meanwhile, there is also concern that magnesium chloride that was likewise used as a dust suppressant will kill aquatic life when it washes from the roadway.

During my visits, the small stream usually found in Guadalupe Canyon was not present. This may have been due to the lack of any winter precipitation the past two years, but in any case, my bird list for April of this year was quite short and had few of the Sonoran desert species that birders come here to see. My July list was especially short, with only a handful of common species seen on the New Mexico side of the canyon.



The 30-foot-high wall looms over Guadalupe Canyon  
Photo: Shane Woolbright

Overall, the 20 miles of border wall that runs through Guadalupe Canyon – with 2,000 light towers, 4,000 lighting units, ditching for underground conduit (and the electric cable inside the conduit for the lights that were never connected) - cost more than \$800 million, or \$40 million per mile. Biden's cancelling of the construction contracts left the contractors free of any liabilities for environmental damage, and huge piles of materials and equipment still sit in large work zones bulldozed out of the desert every few miles along the route. Meanwhile, the Border Patrol agents I spoke to said the number of people crossing the border is unchanged. There are even reports that the broad new roadway running from Douglas to New Mexico makes it easier for migrants to get picked up by friends in the U.S.

# # #



# Environment

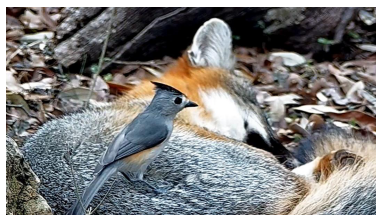
## What the Pluck?

As anyone who has ever tried to eat French fries on a beach will attest, stealing is not an uncommon behavior among birds. In fact, many birds are quite skilled at bold and brazen theft. Magpies, bowerbirds and kites have been documented looting everything from discarded plastic to expensive jewelry to decorate their nests.

And then there are birds who want hair, and will go to great lengths to get their beaks on it. Hair from dogs, raccoons and even humans has been found in the nests of birds, and for a long time scientists assumed that this hair was either shed by mammals or scavenged from their carcasses. However, a new study in the journal *Ecology* shows that several species of bird, including chickadees and titmice, don't just scavenge hair; they steal it. The study, based largely on analysis of YouTube videos, shows numerous examples of birds pulling tufts of hair from living mammals, including humans. This phenomenon, which the study calls "kleptotrarchy," has been well-documented by birders on the web, but this is the first time scientists have formally recognized it.

While birding, Henry Pollock, a postdoctoral researcher in ornithology at the University of Illinois and co-author of the study, witnessed a Tufted Titmouse steal over 20 beakfuls of a sleeping raccoon's fur. But when Dr. Pollock scoured the scientific literature to see if something similar had ever been documented, he found only 11 recorded cases of birds stealing hair from living mammals. Dissatisfied, Dr. Pollock looked outside of the scientific literature, and a simple search on YouTube yielded nearly a hundred videos of birds making off with the fur of mammals. Some 93% of the videos depicted Tufted Titmice plucking hair from domestic dogs and humans. The remaining 7% of videos featured Parids, a bird family that includes tits, chickadees and titmice, sneaking up and stealing hair from raccoons, cats, dogs and even a porcupine. It became clear to Dr. Pollock that this behavior was not only widespread but was also well known among those who are enthusiastic about birds.

Dr. Pollock suspects that birds commit these acts of theft to insulate their nests against the cold of early spring. A survey of scientific literature about 51 Parid species' nests found mammal hair in 44. The seven species with fur-free nests all live in areas with warmer climates. Dr. Pollock hopes that further research will help determine the costs and benefits of kleptotrarchy, and how widespread it is among birds. He also hopes that this study will



A Black-Crested Titmouse prepares to steal fur from a sleeping fox  
Photo: Texas Backyard Wildlife

demonstrate the value of community knowledge and other nontraditional sources of information.

New York Times

## Those Amazing Woodpecker Tongues

Although seldom seen by the casual birdwatcher, woodpecker tongues are a big part of what makes these birds unique. In combination with powerful chisel-like beaks, long, specialized tongues help woodpeckers access food other birds can't.

Like all birds, woodpeckers have tongues tucked inside those large beaks. Different woodpecker species use their tongues in different ways, depending on exactly what and how they eat. They all tend to have surprisingly long tongues, though, which help them reach deep into crevices in search of beetle larvae (grubs) and other prized morsels. Storing an exceptionally long tongue inside a relatively small head is a challenge, and a woodpecker's tongue is coiled around the back of its owner's skull, helping to protect the bird's brain from injury during high-speed pecking.

The total length of a woodpecker tongue can be up to a third of the bird's total body length, although the exact proportions vary from species to species. This includes both the part that sticks out past the end of the beak, and the part that stays anchored in the head. If our tongues were the same proportion, they would be around two feet long. Occasionally those long tongues can even get woodpeckers into trouble. Scientists who catch woodpeckers for study sometimes have to carefully detangle the birds' tongues from their nets.



The Northern Flicker has the longest tongue of any North American woodpecker  
Photo by Mike Parr

In North America, the tongue-length champion is the Northern Flicker, with a tongue that can stick out two inches past the tip of this bird's bill. But different woodpecker species have different tongues that are specialized for snagging various types of food. The Northern Flicker's extra-long tongue is sticky and relatively smooth, perfect for snaking deep into anthills to capture and retrieve ants. Pileated Woodpecker tongues, on the other hand, are relatively short, with barbed tips for extracting prey from bark crevices. Sapsuckers, which mostly consume tree sap, may have the most interesting apparatus of all. Their brush-tipped tongues can lap up oozing sap by capillary action. Hummingbirds have a similar adaptation for drinking nectar out of flowers.

American Bird Conservancy



# Climate Crisis

## Penguins Could Gain Protection Under the Endangered Species Act

Following a petition and lawsuit from the Center for Biological Diversity, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently proposed the Emperor Penguin for protection under the Endangered Species Act. The species is gravely threatened by sea-ice loss driven by the climate emergency, and a 2020 scientific review by 18 penguin experts concluded that Emperor Penguins are vulnerable to extinction.

Emperor Penguins need reliable sea ice for breeding and raising their chicks. With sea ice disappearing or breaking up earlier in the year, entire Emperor Penguin colonies are declining or vanishing in parts of Antarctica. In recent years colonies at Halley Bay and Cape Crozier suffered catastrophic breeding failures when sea ice broke up early before chicks were ready to swim, resulting in the drowning deaths of thousands of chicks. The Emperor Penguin colony population at Point Géologie, notably featured in the film *March of the Penguins*, has declined by nearly 50%. Melting sea ice, ocean acidification and industrial fisheries have also diminished the availability of krill — a key food source for Emperor Penguins.



Emperor Penguins  
Photo: Glenn Grant, NSF

Scientists project that 80% of the world's emperor penguins will disappear by the end of the century without major cuts in carbon pollution. But if nations meet the Paris Climate Agreement's 1.5 degrees Celsius climate target, the penguins will suffer only a 30% decline, with the population stabilizing by the end of the century.

An Endangered Species Act listing would provide critical help by increasing attention and resources. Listing would also promote international cooperation on conservation strategies, increase funding for things like personnel and training assistance for conservation programs, spur research and provide concrete tools for threat reductions. U.S. federal agencies would be required to reduce threats to this iconic penguin, including the greenhouse gas pollution driving the climate crisis and industrial overfishing of key prey species.

Center for Biological Diversity

## Federal Funds for Renewable Energy Would Bring Huge Benefit to State

Renewable energy could bring a multi-billion-dollar boost to New Mexico's economy along with thousands of jobs, if supported by federal stimulus money, according to a recent report by Advanced Energy Economy, a national renewable-energy trade association. The report estimated that

investments of \$20 billion in renewables from a federal stimulus package could add \$117 billion to New Mexico's gross domestic production, would save state consumers, municipalities and businesses about \$6 billion on energy costs each year, and would generate \$7.5 billion in tax revenue annually. Lea Rubin Shen, policy director at Advanced Energy Economy, said funds directed toward renewable energy installations, energy storage and electric vehicle infrastructure would also create a more reliable grid and "create good jobs at a time when many in the state are looking for work."

Mark Allison, executive director of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, noted that New Mexico will be burdened with aggressive oil and gas activities for decades, given that it will take years for the industry to develop all the leases companies have already purchased. Nevertheless, he said, "Federal stimulus for lower-carbon energy development and infrastructure could help offset the impacts of ongoing extraction and mitigate the effects of pollution on the climate."

New Mexico's renewable energy industry grew by 32 percent last year and accounted for about a quarter of electricity produced in New Mexico, according to a recent report from the American Clean Power Association. Much of New Mexico's wind and solar installations are centered in the rural eastern portion of the state, with a cluster of wind installations reported on State Trust land in Lincoln and Torrance counties.



Solar Panel Array  
Photo: Bureau of Land Management

Several solar projects are also underway in Eddy and Lea counties, per records from the New Mexico State Land Office. There were 11 active leases for solar projects on New Mexico public land generating 303 megawatts, records show, with 35 lease applications pending for an additional 3,145 megawatts. For wind, New Mexico had 16 active leases for a capacity of 619 megawatts with 12 pending applications to add another 2,570 megawatts of power.

Carlsbad Current Argus

"Climate change is the greatest threat to a sustainable future but, at the same time, addressing the climate challenge presents a golden opportunity to promote prosperity, security and a brighter future for all."

Ban Ki-Moon, Former Secretary-General of the UN

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## Hydrogen as Fuel: Not Very Green

It is seen by many as the clean energy of the future. Billions of dollars from the bipartisan infrastructure bill have been teed up to fund it. But a new study on the climate effects of hydrogen casts doubt on its role as a fuel to help tackle greenhouse gas emissions.

The main stumbling block: Most hydrogen used today is extracted from natural gas in a process that requires a lot



Natural gas power plant  
U.S. Dept. of Energy

of energy and emits vast amounts of carbon dioxide. Producing natural gas also releases methane, a particularly potent greenhouse gas. And while the natural gas industry has proposed capturing that carbon dioxide — creating what it promotes as emissions-free, “blue” hydrogen — even that fuel still emits more across its entire supply chain than simply burning natural gas, according to researchers.

“To call it a zero-emissions fuel is totally wrong,” said Robert W. Howarth of Cornell, the study’s lead author. “What we found is that it’s not even a low-emissions fuel.” He and his fellow researchers found that the greenhouse gas footprint of blue hydrogen was more than 20% greater than burning natural gas or coal for heat. Such findings could alter the calculus for hydrogen. Over the past few years, the natural gas industry has begun heavily promoting hydrogen as a reliable, next-generation fuel to be used to power cars, heat homes and burn in power plants. In the United States and elsewhere the industry has also pointed to hydrogen as justification for continuing to build gas infrastructure like pipelines, saying that pipes that carry natural gas could in the future carry a cleaner blend of natural gas and hydrogen.

While many experts agree that hydrogen could eventually play a role in energy storage or powering certain types of transportation — such as aircraft or long-haul trucks, where switching to battery-electric power may be challenging — there is an emerging consensus that a wider hydrogen economy that relies on natural gas could be damaging to the climate. (At current costs, it would also be very expensive.)

In Washington, the latest bipartisan infrastructure package devotes \$8 billion to creating regional hydrogen hubs, a provision originally introduced as part of a separate bill by Sen. Joe Manchin, Democrat from West

Virginia, a major natural gas producing region. Some other Democrats have pushed back against the idea, calling it an “empty promise.” Environmental groups have also criticized the spending. “This is a fossil-fuel subsidy with Congress acting like they’re doing something on climate, while propping up the next chapter of the fossil-fuel industry,” said Jim Walsh, a senior energy policy analyst at the nonprofit Food & Water Watch.

Amy Townsend-Small, an associate professor in environmental science at the University of Cincinnati and an expert on methane emissions, said more scientists were starting to examine some of the industry claims around hydrogen, in the same way they had scrutinized the climate effects of natural gas production. “I think this research is going drive the conversation forward,” she said.

New York Times

## To Manage Wildfires, Fireproof Homes

As the American West struggles with the worst drought in 1,200 years, wildfires are burning at unprecedented levels. Researchers from the universities of Montana and Wyoming recently found that wildfires are burning more high-elevation forests now than at any time over the last 2,000 years. Clearly, our forests urgently need protection.

But some lawmakers, federal and state agencies, and timber industry proponents claim that wildfires should be stopped by more logging. They say fires won’t burn if we suspend environmental safeguards and allow tree “thinning” and associated road construction. Of course, fires don’t burn without fuel, and decades of fire suppression have prevented fire from playing its natural role, in some ecosystems more than others. However, most fires leave some patches unburned, or burned at low to moderate intensity. Fire also plays a crucial role in providing habitat for species that rely on burned areas, and most forests need fire to regenerate. In other words, wildfires — including high-intensity fires — are key to healthy forest ecosystems.

Communities adjacent to forested areas must be protected. But policies that purport to “restore” landscapes by logging and thinning do little except give property owners a false sense of security. The best way to protect public health, safety and communities in fire-prone forested areas is to focus on the Home Ignition Zone, which includes homes and the immediate area extending 100 to 200 feet around them. The [National Fire Protection Association](#) says its guidelines for this zone will “interrupt the fire pathway and keep flames small, which creates a defensible space to help slow or stop fire from spreading.”

The best way to manage wildfires is to let them play their natural ecological role wherever possible. No one talks about hurricane-proofing the Gulf Coast, or tornado-proofing Oklahoma, and we can’t fire-proof forests, either.

Counterpunch



## President's Column

Tom Jervis

The big news in the desert Southwest this summer is the declaration of an official "shortage" on the Colorado River. While this step is newsworthy, it is hardly a surprise; the Colorado has been dropping pretty steadily for decades. What may be new is that the declaration might actually lead to some serious consideration of our water use.

For now the shortage will be felt primarily by agriculture, far and away the biggest water user in the Southwest. Maybe, as others have noted, this will begin a shift away from grotesquely water-intensive crops like alfalfa and pecans towards less water-intensive crops, and from flood irrigation towards drip or at least more efficient methods.

For us along the Rio Grande, there is, of course, a tradeoff: flood irrigation helps to maintain the aquifer that nourishes the bosque and other vegetation along the river that is home to many of our birds. But the hard fact is that regional agricultural diversions will eventually suffer, even though the current shortage on the Colorado River has not yet impacted the flow from that river system into the San Juan-Chama project that augments the flow of the Rio Grande.

As for domestic use, boosters in Santa Fe and elsewhere have for too long focused more on a "housing shortage" than on overpopulation and shrinking water supplies. There is a shortage of affordable housing here, particularly acute in a community that depends on generally low-wage tourism jobs, but that goes perennially unaddressed. Meanwhile, although Santa Fe has a commendable record of low water use per household, more housing inexorably leads to more water use overall.

The Colorado River "shortage" should be a wake-up call to municipalities throughout the Southwest to act, not a cause for vague statements that our future water supply is "secure" while whistling past the graveyard of climate change. We are entering an election season for Santa Fe City Council and Mayor. Candidates for those positions, and for similar local positions in nearby jurisdictions, should be grilled on their plans for future water supplies. They should likewise be questioned about whether continued population growth makes any sense at all in the desert Southwest, especially given the effects of a changing climate. I hope we'll hear something other than more platitudes.

## Livestock Grazing Along Gila, Other Rivers Will Finally Be Curtailed

The Center for Biological Diversity, U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have agreed that parts of several rivers in western New Mexico and eastern Arizona must be protected from cattle grazing. The rivers covered by the agreement include the Gila, San Francisco, Tularosa and the Blue. The accord comes more than 20 years after the agencies first promised to keep cows off these riparian habitats to safeguard rare plants, birds and other animals.

The waterways are home to numerous endangered and threatened species, including Southwestern Willow Flycatchers and Yellow-Billed Cuckoos; Gila chub, loach minnow and spokedace fish; Chiricahua leopard frogs; and northern Mexican garter snakes. "This should finally keep livestock from trampling these fragile southwestern rivers," said Brian Segee, endangered species legal director at the [Center](#). "It's our hope that the simple step of removing cattle from these waterways will give imperiled species a fighting chance at survival and recovery."



Cattle on Negrito Creek near Reserve, NM

The three-year agreement requires the Forest Service to ensure that more than 150 miles of streamside endangered species habitat in the Gila National Forest and

Arizona's Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest will be protected from cattle grazing. The Forest Service has agreed to monitor riparian areas, maintain and repair fencing, and remove trespass cattle when detected by the agency, the Center or the public. The agency also pledged to address invasive species and other conservation challenges to imperiled southwestern species.

In a historic 1998 legal settlement with the Center, the Forest Service agreed to prohibit domestic livestock grazing from these and other streamside habitats while it conducted a long-overdue consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Service on the impacts of grazing on threatened and endangered species. But beginning in 2017, Center staff and contractors conducted surveys that found widespread, severe cattle damage - including manure and flattened streambanks - on all major waterways in both national forests, imperiling several rare species. In January 2020 the Center sued the Forest Service and Fish and Wildlife Service for violating the Endangered Species Act by allowing cattle to trample the rivers and streams. The new agreement settles that lawsuit.

"We hope this agreement renews the agency's commitment to protecting endangered wildlife and our spectacular public lands," said Segee. "The government agrees with us that livestock grazing and endangered species don't mix."

Center for Biological Diversity



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## New Mexico Rare Bird Alert is on the Web

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

Matt Baumann, Compiler  
mbaumann22@gmail.com

Report sightings to  
505-264-1052 (leave a message) or contact the compiler

## 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>).

Es de nuestro reconocimiento que la Sociedad Audubon de Sangre de Cristo es digna representante de un precioso pedazo de tierra que ha sido ocupado durante milenios por personas de raíces culturales diversas. Respetamos profundamente dicha diversidad y creemos que del mismo modo bregamos por la protección de biodiversidad, debemos incluir y honrar la diversidad de los muchos pueblos y culturas que reconocen el norte de Nuevo Mexico como su propio hogar.

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

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Toll free 1-800-443-8658  
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