

The Mountain Chickadee

Newsletter of the Sangre de Cristo Audubon Society
Volume 51, Number 3, September 2022



Photograph by Tom Taylor

In This Issue

Local Rivers Gain Protection

This Page

Audubon Ponders Name Change

P. 2

Beavers and Wolves Could Help Restore the American West

P. 4

New Tool for Citizen Scientists

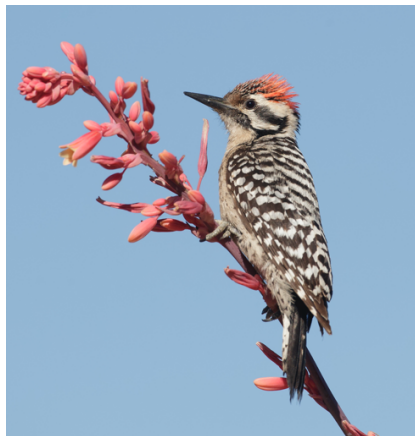
P. 4

Buffalo Are Climate Heroes

P. 5

Viewing the Earth Through a Sacred Lens

P. 7



Ladder-backed Woodpecker
Photo by Nate Chappell

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 Programs and Field Trips! Sign up for Eblasts on our [Website](#)

Local Rivers Gain Crucial Protection

By Robert Guenther

Several northern New Mexico wild rivers now have the federal government's highest level of protection. In July, the state's Water Quality Control Commission designated more than 150 miles of streams on the upper Pecos River watershed, as well as the Rio Hondo and its Lake Fork, the Upper Rio Grande, and the Jemez River headwaters, as Outstanding National Resource Waters (ONRW). That designation affords the highest level of protection from degradation and development under the federal Clean Water Act.

More than 1,800 individuals and organizations, including the Sangre de Cristo Audubon chapter as well as tribal governments, acequia managers, farmers and outdoor recreationists, supported the ONRW status for these waters. Under this designation, existing community users, such as farmers and ranchers, continue to have access to water for existing operations while future development will not be allowed to degrade these waterways. The ONRW status adds an additional layer of protection to the Pecos; in 1990 nearly 21 miles of the river from its headwaters to the community of Terro received the National Wild and Scenic River designation.

The Pecos River looms large in the legends of the American Old West. The phrase, "West of the Pecos," refers to a harsh, wild land where justice often was dispensed at the barrel of a gun. The Pecos' headwaters begin at an elevation of over 12,000 feet and serve as a stronghold for New Mexico's imperiled native Rio Grande cutthroat trout. The alpine portion of the upper watershed also is home to the nation's southernmost population of White-tailed Ptarmigan, while the lower conifer forests support the critically endangered Mexican Spotted Owl and Northern Goshawk as well as elk, deer, black bear, mountain lion and turkey. One Pecos tributary hosts the endemic Holy Ghost ipomopsis — a showy plant with a two-foot stalk of bright pink flowers that grows only in a two-mile stretch of Holy Ghost Canyon. The plant is sacred to the Jemez and Pecos peoples and has suffered over the years as the increasing shade of the forest canopy and deeper leaf and pine-needle litter have blocked the sunny, open conditions needed for it to germinate and thrive. The U.S. Forest Service and New Mexico State Forestry Division have undertaken a restoration program to help protect this rare plant.



White-tailed Ptarmigan/USFWS

(Continued on P. 7)

Chapter Activities

Field Trips

Los Luceros Historic Site Sun., Sept. 4 - 7:00 am

Leader: Jerry Friedman - jerry.friedman@yahoo.com

This is an easy walk at a restored historic ranch featuring gardens, pastures, orchards and riparian woodland trails, 10 miles north of Española on the Rio Grande. Species should include migrants, especially songbirds and probably waterfowl, as well as residents such as Lewis's Woodpeckers. We will meet at 7:00 am at DeVargas Mall in front of Starbucks, or at 8:00 am at Los Luceros.

Pecos National Historic Park Sat, Sept. 10 - 8:30 am

Leader: Albert Shultz - shultzaw@gmail.com

This walk along the easy, four-mile South Pasture Trail passes through grassland, piñon-juniper woodland, and a cottonwood-willow riparian area along the Pecos River. Migrant sparrows, warblers and other songbirds are expected, with possible waterfowl and raptors. Meet at the trailhead parking area at Pecos NHP. This trip is limited to 15 people; contact leader to reserve a spot.

HawkWatch, Capilla Peak, Manzano Mtns. Sun., October 16 - 7:00 am

Leader: Rick Rockman - rockmanrjr@gmail.com

The HawkWatch raptor observation and banding station on Capilla Peak offers up to 18 species of raptors during the fall migration. Meet at parking lot next to Pecos Trail Café in Santa Fe at 7:00 am; park on Calle Espejo, off Old Pecos Trail. We'll carpool and/or caravan from there (or meet us at Capilla Peak campground at approx. 9:15 am). There is a 3/5-mile hike to the HawkWatch lookout. Bring lunch, water, sunscreen and a hat. Limited to 10 people.

Programs

Birds of Guatemala, Western Australia and the Caucasus Mountains Wed., Oct. 12 - 7:00 pm

Speaker: Shane Woolbright

Sangre de Cristo chapter board member Shane Woolbright will discuss a recent winter birding getaway to Tikal and Los Taralles in Guatemala, a spring run for snowcocks into the Caucasus Mountains of Georgia and Armenia, and a summer endemics tour of Western Australia.

The Glory of Diversity in the Tropics Wed., Nov. 9 - 7:00 pm

Speaker: Gail Hewson Hull

Ms. Hull will show photos of birds and other creatures on 17 acres that she owned between 1994 and 2019 at an elevation of 4,000 feet on Costa Rica's southwest Pacific Slope. The presentation will focus on how quickly complex life can return to land degraded by cattle and coffee farming when reforestation, including understory restoration with native species, occurs.

Evening programs are held in the Henderson Pavilion at the Randall Davey Audubon Center and Sanctuary, at the end of Upper Canyon Road in Santa Fe. Everyone is welcome, there is no charge and the building is wheelchair accessible. Abundant parking is available; bring a flashlight. A brief update of environmental issues and chapter activities precedes each program.

Get the latest news about upcoming field trips, and receive advance notifications and instructions for our programs, by signing up for our [email list](#).

Audubon Ponders Organization Name Change

One of the largest chapters in the National Audubon Society network is changing its name to distance itself from John James Audubon, the famed naturalist who was also an enslaver and a strong critic of those who sought to free African Americans from bondage. Seattle Audubon leaders said the action is a bold move to promote "anti-racism," diversity and inclusion, and to provide an example to other chapters around the nation. They said it will probably take six months to find a new name.

The move is part of a reckoning in ornithology, birding and the broader American conservation movement to address historic racism in its organizations and practices. In recent months, conservation groups such as Audubon, Sierra Club, the Union of Concerned Scientists and the Environmental Defense Fund have grappled with national parks and monuments composed of land stolen from Native people and honorary bird names bestowed to men who were Indian grave robbers, enslavers and racists.

National Audubon formed a board task force earlier this

year that will be responsible for making a recommendation to the organization's full board about whether or not to change the National Audubon Society's name. To make that recommendation, the task force is performing historical research and legal and financial analyses. The historical research explores John James Audubon's biography; the organization's origin story; the legacies of both the individual and the organization; and how institutions can engage with these histories.

An engagement firm will gather feedback to understand the impact of any potential decisions and provide data and analysis. Key audiences, including staff, donors, members and volunteers, will be engaged in that process. After considering these inputs, the board task force will present its recommendation to the full board in February 2023. At that time, the board will embark on a decision-making process regarding the Audubon name.

Audubon Southwest

Randall Davey Audubon Center and Sanctuary

The visitor's center, trails, restrooms and gardens at the [Randall Davey Audubon Center and Sanctuary](#) are open



Monday to Saturday, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm. Masks are required for entry into all buildings. We are closed Sundays and in January. Watch birds visit our bird feeders, or walk the trails and enjoy the beauty and serenity of the 135-acre wildlife

sanctuary. Free bird walks are conducted every Saturday at 8:30 am, 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 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!

Festival of the Cranes Returns

After a two-year hiatus, the greatly anticipated in-person Festival of the Cranes returns this year on December 1-3 to Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge. For the third year in a row, Friends of Bosque del Apache also will host the virtual Crane Fiesta on November 18-19.

The Festival of the Cranes will look and feel a little different this year, with improvements for the experience and safety of all guests, given ongoing Covid concerns. All "field workshops" will be held outdoors at Bosque del Apache refuge as usual. All indoor workshops will meet at Macey Center classrooms on the New Mexico Tech campus in Socorro. The large NMT classrooms will enable greater safety, and will provide instructors and attendees not only with reliable internet connections but also a welcome respite from winter weather. Meanwhile the virtual Crane Fiesta November 18-19 will provide a sneak peek for everything coming in December as well as a wonderful variety of virtual webinars.

Regardless of your birding or photography skill, the Festival of the Cranes offers an extraordinary opportunity for premiere photography and birding classes, as well as guided tours and hikes with world-renowned photographers and expert birders. For more information, visit [Friends of Bosque del Apache](#).

State Needs to Fund Its Strategic Water Reserve

By Judy Calman, Policy Director

Audubon Southwest recently joined with eleven other conservation-minded organizations in asking New Mexico's governor and the state legislature to include \$15 million in funding for the Strategic Water Reserve in the budget for the next fiscal year, along with two additional employees to administer the program.

The Strategic Water Reserve is an innovative tool created in 2004 which allows New Mexico to purchase or lease available water, and leave it in the rivers for either endangered species protection or to comply with its compact agreements. In an extremely dry state that is only becoming drier, the reserve could become an essential tool to ensure riparian ecosystems remain intact for as long as possible.

However, it has only received light, sporadic funding since its inception, and the state government has not prioritized identifying or securing additional funds. Significantly contributing to the fund and providing personnel will put us on a better track towards using the reserve effectively.

Our letter to top state officials reads in part: "As you well know, New Mexico is facing unprecedented challenges related to its water resources that are likely to impact water security for the state, our ability to meet the state's obligations under the Rio Grande Compact, the needs of native and imperiled species throughout the state, and the quality of life that waterways bring to all New Mexicans.

"As climate change impacts continue to threaten the water security of our state, demand continues to grow... we believe the time is now to ensure (the reserve) is ready and able to most effectively meet these challenges and ensure a secure and equitable water future for New Mexico."

If Strategic Water Reserve funding is included in either the governor's or the legislature's proposed budget, we will need to encourage the legislature to keep it there during the legislative session in January. We will provide additional updates as this moves forward.



Osprey/Photo by Helen Epley

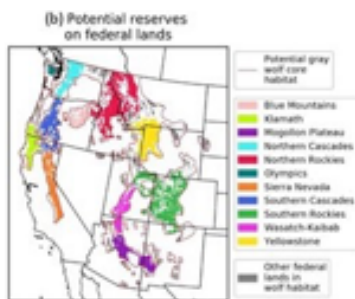
Environment

Beavers and Wolves Could Help Restore the American West

A first-of-its-kind analysis by 20 leading scientists has identified a network of potential reserves where wolves and beavers could be restored across the western United States. Restoring these keystone species could improve degraded habitat relied on by 92 threatened and endangered species, including the Gunnison sage-grouse and the New Mexico meadow jumping mouse, according to the report, [Rewilding the American West](#).

The report shows that gray wolves and North American beavers provide invaluable benefits to the ecosystem, including drought relief and stream restoration. It describes how restoring these two species, and ending livestock grazing on federal public lands, would have wide-ranging benefits for degraded ecosystems. Grazing harms streams and wetlands, changes fire regimes and inhibits the growth of woody species used by wildlife for food.

The report analyzed large areas of potential gray wolf habitat on federal lands in Western states and identified wildlife pathways connecting them that together could create a Western Rewilding Network consisting of 11 reserves on land that is already federally owned. One of the proposed reserves, called the Mogollon Plateau, extends across southwestern New Mexico and into central Arizona. The report identified 92 threatened and endangered species - including fish, birds, insects and flowering plants - that reside within the proposed network. All would benefit greatly from ending livestock grazing, restoring gray wolf populations and reintroducing beavers to suitable habitat.



Having wolves back on the landscape, for example, would assist in natural control of native ungulates like elk and deer, which are overabundant. Reducing native ungulate numbers could help restore the vegetation that other native species need to thrive. Similarly, having beavers back would restore the ecological functioning of riparian areas along creeks and rivers, which provide habitat for up to 70% of wildlife species. In Santa Fe County, the county's Open Space Division is already experimenting with removing cattle and allowing beavers to thrive on a parcel the division manages near Chimayó.

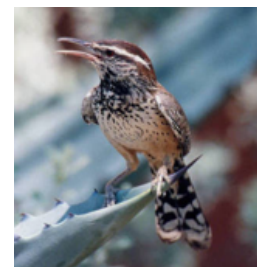
"We're at a crossroads that demands bold action to save life on Earth," said Amaroq Weiss of the Center for Biological Diversity. "That means setting aside vast swaths of land and restoring the natural processes and native species that can keep those places vibrant and healthy."

Center for Biological Diversity

These State Birds Are in Trouble

A number of state birds have experienced major population losses over the last 50 years, challenging assumptions that these common, well-known birds would remain largely unaffected by the declines threatening other species. Recent reports indicate that up to 10 states, including Arizona and Colorado, could eventually lose their state birds due to climate change alone.

The Cactus Wren, Arizona's state bird, is the largest wren found in the United States. While currently not threatened, its population has crashed by more than 60 percent over the last 50 years. One of the biggest threats is habitat loss due to human-caused landscape changes. However, these desert-dwelling birds also fall victim to cat predation, glass collisions and pesticide poisoning.



Cactus Wren/USFWS

Colorado made the Lark Bunting its state bird because of its unique plumage and social habits. Though still commonly seen, this signature bird suffered devastating losses in recent decades, with its current population now only about 15 percent of its pre-1970 size. One of the most likely causes for the decline is the use of agricultural pesticides that contaminate grasshoppers - a primary Lark Bunting food source - which in turn poison the birds.

Maryland's state bird, the Baltimore Oriole; Hawaii's Nēnē (or Hawaiian Goose); and the Western Meadowlark, the official bird of Wyoming, Montana and four other states, are all likewise in trouble, primarily due to habitat loss.

American Bird Conservancy

A New Tool for Citizen Scientists

A new and free machine-learning-powered tool called [BirdNET](#) can identify more than 3,000 birds by sound alone, generates reliable scientific data and makes it easier for people to contribute citizen-science data on birds by simply recording sounds. Developed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, BirdNET doesn't require bird-identification skills; users simply listen for birds and tap the app to record. BirdNET uses artificial intelligence to automatically identify the species by sound and captures the recording for use in research.

To test whether the app could generate reliable scientific data, researchers selected four test cases in the United States and Europe in which conventional research had already provided robust answers. Their study showed, for example, that BirdNET data successfully replicated the known distribution pattern of song-types among White-throated Sparrows, and the seasonal and migratory ranges of the Brown Thrasher. Since the launch of BirdNET in 2018, more than 2.2 million people contributed data.

Climate Crisis

Buffalo Are Climate Heroes

Quietly munching grass is only one of many things bison do to nurture their entire ecosystem, one that is increasingly under threat from climate change. Their aggressive chewing spurs growth of nutritious new plant shoots, and their natural behaviors trickle down the food chain. Once bordering on extinction, bison now serve as a great provider for their ecosystems, an example of how animal conservation and ecological protection can work in tandem.

"Buffalo is the original climate regulator," said Troy Heinert, a member of the Sicangu Lakota (Rosebud Sioux) tribe and executive director of the InterTribal Buffalo Council, a coalition working to restore the animal on tribal lands. "Just by how they use the grass, how they graze, how their hoofs are designed, the way they move. They did this job for us when we allowed them to be buffalo."

Bison, called buffalo by some Indigenous peoples, are the largest land mammals in North America, weighing up to 2,000 pounds. Their giant horned heads and hulking sloped shoulders sit on spindly goat-like legs, giving them an otherworldly quality. Two centuries ago bison dominated much of the continent from Canada to Mexico. For the tribes of the plains region, buffalo was a sacred animal that nourished their people and played an important ceremonial role. But Americans massacred them by the thousands, selling their pelts and organizing vast hunts. By 1900, fewer than 1,000 - of an estimated 30 to 60 million - remained.



Buffalo in Montana/USFWS

In the intervening century, federal, tribal and private herds have brought the species back from the brink of extinction. Indigenous peoples have been integral to this effort from the start, both by managing herds and by introducing legislation to protect and expand bison territory. The InterTribal Buffalo Council will soon count 76 tribes across 20 states among its members, managing a total of more than 20,000 animals on 32 million acres. The estimated number of bison nationwide now hovers in the low hundreds of thousands.

The return of the bison is a victory not only for biodiversity but for the entire ecosystem in which they live. As a keystone species, bison sustain the imperiled environment of the southern plains from the top down. Their hoofs push seeds deep into the ground and aerate the soil. Small birds often fly around bison's ankles because their heavy footfall kicks up insects that the birds can feed on. Even bison's dung - which contains high levels of nitrogen - provides a vital nutrient for plant growth. Their "wallows" - huge depressions created when the animals roll on the ground - can generate microhabitats for other animals. In one

poignant example, bison wallows serve as an ideal habitat for bird's-foot violets, the preferred food source for the larva of regal fritillary, a rare butterfly.

Bison suffer from the effects of climate change, too. Warming temperatures have caused bison to shrink, according to several recent studies, by reducing the protein content of the grasses they eat. Still, many experts in the bison world are hopeful for the future. The ongoing restoration of this animal is a rare success story in nature conservancy.

Washington Post

Ancient Trees Under Threat

A new study has found that climate change has pushed almost a quarter of Earth's best-protected forests to a "critical threshold" for lost resilience - the point at which even a minor drought or heat wave could tip them into catastrophic decline. One-thousand-year-old Bristlecone pine trees in Death Valley, some of the oldest organisms on earth, are among the victims. Voracious bark beetles - a threat to which bristlecones were previously thought immune - are killing them.

The oldest documented Bristlecone pine was a sapling when the ancient Egyptians built their pyramids more than 4,500 years ago. Even the relatively youthful trees in Death Valley are older than gunpowder, paper money and the English language. Their genomes, nine times as long as a human's, contain a multitude of mutations that enable them to adapt to changing conditions.

But arid forests around the globe have experienced a devastating loss of resilience in the past two decades. Satellite imagery shows that these ecosystems are less able to bounce back after fluctuations in weather or periods of drought. The trend has been seen in forests altered by human activities as well as those that remain almost untouched by human action - an indication that climate change, rather than local deforestation or pollution, is primarily at fault. A sweeping assessment of 58,497 tree species worldwide found that nearly 30 percent are at risk of being wiped out, and at least 142 species have gone extinct in the wild.

Great Basin bristlecone pines are not considered at risk of extinction, but as with many old-growth trees, some populations are struggling to survive. However, in a bit of good news, scientists recently rediscovered a living *Quercus tardifolia*, a species of oak long thought to be extinct, in Big Bend National Park in Texas. Researchers trekking through the park's canyons stumbled upon a single specimen - scorched by fire and ravaged by fungal disease but still alive. The researchers plan to collect acorns and cuttings from the tree that can be used to regrow the species in botanic gardens and arboretums.

Washington Post

Let Your Representatives in Washington
Know How You Feel!
See Contact Info on Page 8

Support Grows for Permanent Protection of Caja del Rio

The City of Santa Fe governing body recently unanimously passed a resolution supporting permanent protection of the Caja del Rio plateau, a 107,000-acre parcel of public land west of Santa Fe that is managed by the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service and the State Land Office. With this resolution, the city joins the All Pueblo Council of Governors and the Santa Fe County Board of Commissioners in support of greater protection for Caja del Rio.



Caja del Rio/USFWS

Caja del Rio is principally piñon-juniper savanna and grassland, with canyons plunging into the Santa Fe River and other tributaries of the Rio Grande. These are sacred lands for the area's pueblos, dotted with volcanic cinder cones and featuring a

dramatic basalt escarpment with extensive petroglyphs. The plateau is also one of the most ecologically rich wildlife corridors in New Mexico, providing vital habitat for a wide variety of plants and animals. To learn more about the diverse history and importance of the Caja del Rio plateau, visit cajadelrio.org.

New Mexico Wild

Grasslands Legislation Would Help Wildlife, Ranchers and Landscapes

Federal Legislation recently introduced in the U.S. Senate would help farmers, ranchers, tribal nations and others work to collaboratively address the immense challenges facing America's grasslands and prairies - one of the fastest disappearing ecosystems in the world. The North American Grasslands Conservation Act, introduced by U.S. Senator Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), would invest \$290 million in voluntary initiatives to collaboratively conserve and restore native grasslands to support working ranch lands and to help recover wildlife like the Western Meadowlark and monarch butterfly, and safeguard this vital habitat for future generations.

Grasslands and sagebrush shrub-steppe are some of the most threatened ecosystems in the world. More than 70 percent of America's tallgrass, mixed grass and shortgrass prairies have vanished, mostly due to development. Additionally, on average, about 1.2 million acres of sagebrush burn each year due to invasive annual grasses that fuel catastrophic wildfires. This habitat loss has



Western Meadowlark/USFWS

caused total grassland bird populations to decline by more than 40 percent since 1966. Some species, such as the Western Meadowlark, teeter at the edge of extinction. Other species that had been economically significant throughout American history, like the Northern Bobwhite, have seen declines of nearly 85 percent in the last half-century.

Grasslands are a natural climate solution, and healthy working grasslands not only provide soil, water and wildlife benefits, they also sequester a significant amount of carbon. Researchers have found that the loss of carbon when grasslands are converted to cropland is equivalent to the greenhouse gas emissions from around 27 million cars on the road every year. This legislation would create, for the first time, a North American Grasslands Conservation Strategy to identify key areas of grasslands at risk of degradation, establish goals for increasing grasslands acreage and develop baseline inventories of wildlife species throughout grasslands habitat.

National Wildlife Federation

Bird-Friendly Building Law Upheld

A county circuit court recently ruled in favor of birds and upheld Madison, Wisconsin's bird-friendly building ordinance, defeating the first legal challenge to bird-friendly guidelines anywhere in the nation. The ordinance went into effect in August 2020 and requires new large construction and expansion projects to use modern bird-safe strategies and materials. "It's hard for us to believe that this case was brought in the first place, since it's possible to design beautiful, affordable buildings that also protect birds," said Mike Parr, President of American Bird Conservancy.

The ordinance, shaped with input from ABC and the Madison Audubon Society, had been in effect without issue since October 2020. But in July 2021, a group of local developers, led by the Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty, mounted a challenge. Conservation groups provided important background information for the judge by summarizing the crisis that window collisions pose to birds, and discussing how solutions like Madison's building ordinance can save birds' lives.

Up to 1 billion birds die in the U.S. each year following collisions with glass. These deaths are largely preventable through the use of bird-friendly designs that include reducing the total amount of glass, and using building materials that help birds avoid flying into buildings, such as glass with subtle patterns that are visible to birds. Twenty-two bird-friendly building design guidelines have been adopted by states and municipalities in the U.S. and Canada, and many more are currently pending.

American Bird Conservancy

Viewing Earth Through a Sacred Lens

Best-selling author Robin Wall Kimmerer, who recently spoke in Santa Fe, is a Distinguished Teaching Professor at State University of New York, director of its Center for Native Peoples and the Environment, and an enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. In her books *Braiding Sweetgrass* and *Gathering Moss*, she writes about the natural world and how humans relate to it, artfully and movingly blending what is known as Traditional Ecological Knowledge with her scientific training as a plant ecologist. TEK refers to the knowledge of the natural world acquired by indigenous peoples over centuries of direct contact with it. Interest in TEK has grown in recent years, including among federal agencies, partly due to a recognition that such knowledge can contribute to conservation and sustainable resource use. Here's a Q&A with Ms. Kimmerer:

How do you intertwine scientific knowledge and indigenous wisdom?

I think of indigenous knowledge and western science both as powerful intellectual traditions, which grow from different worldviews, but can both illuminate the nature of the living world and how we might better care for it. They are distinctive, sovereign systems of knowledge which can complement one another. Our capacity to achieve sustainability and a more positive relationship with the natural world is strengthened when we use both.

Tell us more about your journey as a writer.

I've come to understand my writing as an act of reciprocity with the plants and land, a way of returning a gift in return for all they have given me. I realized that writing strictly for a scientific audience was not serving the good of the land - for that I needed to touch hearts as well as minds. It was a challenge at first to reclaim my naturally lyrical way of writing from the formal scientific writing I had been doing. But it was wonderfully liberating.

In engaging with readers and listeners across this very diverse audience, I have sensed a deep longing for connection with the living world. There is a desire to know the plants well again, to feel part of the ecological community and to reclaim our role as givers to the land, not just takers. I can feel people longing for kinship with the land, which extractive economies have tried to erase.

How do we start a healthy relationship with the land?

It starts with paying attention, come to know the ones who sustain you, so that you can sustain them. Inevitably, deep attention brings you to a place of understanding the world as gift - not as commodity - and this realization incites a desire to give a gift in return. Giving back to the land is a way of creating a relationship with the earth. Humility is also a big part of knowing the land, understanding that the land can be our teacher if we're able to listen.

What is one thing you'd like to impart to all people?

We must be ecological citizens who return the gifts of the earth, not just consumers. As we give gratitude for the gifts of the land, can we live in such a way that the land can be grateful for us. Reciprocity is the root of relationship; all flourishing is mutual.

Local Rivers Gain Crucial Protection

(Continued from P. 1)

The ONRW designation is especially important for the Pecos watershed in light of an Australian mining company's application to conduct exploratory drilling for gold, copper and zinc in the Jones Hill area southwest of Tererro and surrounding Santa Fe National Forest lands along the Pecos River. The company's proposed mining project could damage as many as 5,000 acres and five Pecos tributaries, plus the Pecos River itself. In 2021, American Rivers, a conservation group, ranked the upper Pecos number five on its list of endangered rivers in America due to the proposed mine. In addition, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham has publicly opposed the mine, and Sen. Martin Heinrich has introduced federal legislation to bar mining in the entire upper Pecos.

The irony is that this latest layer of protection for the Pecos watershed comes in the aftermath of the biggest wildfire in New Mexico's history – the Hermits Peak/Calf Canyon Fire that scorched more than 340,000 acres in Santa Fe National Forest and private lands, including parts of the Pecos watershed. The fire was recently declared 100% contained, and the most recent fly-over with infrared sensors detected no hot spots, thanks to firefighters' efforts and monsoon rains. Just the same, the danger hasn't passed simply because columns of smoke no longer are rising. The cause of the Calf Canyon



A pile of logs and brush like this one, smoldering undetected, was a key cause of the Hermits Peak-Calf Canyon Fire/USDA

portion of the blaze is what is referred to as a sleeper fire. A pile of logs and brush that was set fire in January to reduce flammable fuels continued to smolder, undetected, through three snow events, and reemerged in April during extremely hot, dry, windy conditions. The same could happen again in the Hermits Peak/Calf Canyon burn areas, so fire managers must remain vigilant.

The Forest Service has conducted several burn-severity assessments to determine the damage within the fire scar, the risk of debris flows in downpours, potential erosion, and vegetative recovery periods. Although more than 13,500 acres were severely burned within the greater Pecos River watershed (with 100% tree mortality), most of this was outside the ONRW area, according to the Upper Pecos Watershed Association. Some Pecos River tributaries are bound to be affected, however, by flooding, debris flows and fish kills. The association, along with the Sangre de Cristo Audubon chapter and other organizations, is anxious to get more information about damage and mitigation efforts in the Pecos River watershed as soon as possible.

Editor's Note: Robert Guenther is the Conservation Chair of the Sangre de Cristo Audubon chapter

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Looking for Rare Birds?

As many birders already know, the dial-in Rare Bird Alert for New Mexico, long maintained by the New Mexico Ornithological Society, has become inactive. Most birders now use the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's eBird to keep up with nearby sightings of rare or unusual species. The massive eBird database enables birders to research everything from recent sightings to species occurrence and diversity at more than 127,000 hotspots in the U.S. alone, and it can be searched in ways too numerous to describe here.

If you're interested in recent sightings of rare species in the Santa Fe area, you can find them at [this link](#). However, please note that this info is for the Santa Fe metro area only and does not include nearby areas; for that info you would need to do a separate search on eBird for each area of interest. You can also sign up to receive daily alerts of rare sightings in your area and/or in neighboring locations. To get started, go to [eBird](#) and sign in, or click on Create Account.

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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