



Refuge Update

April 2026

Published quarterly by the Amigos de la Sevilleta

Board meetings are held the second Thursday of most months. The next board meeting will be held on Thursday, May 14th, 2:00-3:30 pm at the Visitor Center. You are welcome to attend in person, or contact Kitty Pokorny (kitty@truffulatree.org) for a Zoom link.

Refuge Update

Ethan Hammer, Wildlife Refuge Specialist

This quarter brought steady progress across several refuge projects, reflecting both on-the-ground accomplishments and the continued support of our partners, volunteers, and staff. From the Bolson tortoise to visitor-experience enhancements, the refuge remains an active and evolving landscape.

At the broader organizational level, Service-wide changes continue to shape the workforce. A Deferred Resignation Program was recently offered, and workforce adjustments are ongoing. As the National Wildlife Refuge system continues to re-shape, we look forward to building additional partnerships and fulfilling our refuge purposes.

During this quarter, the refuge secured nearly \$180,000 in funding from headquarters to support the removal and restoration of a decommissioned firing range. This project will improve the site's habitat quality by eliminating legacy infrastructure and removing toxic lead,

which reduces environmental risks to wildlife.

In addition to restoration work, progress continues in our species-focused efforts. Work on the Bolson tortoise program is advancing steadily, with construction of a new tortoise pen now underway. The approximately one-acre enclosure will be smaller than the existing pen but located in a more accessible area to better support research and education. Meanwhile, all thirty tortoises in the current pen successfully overwintered, with several individuals already emerging as temperatures warm.

Looking ahead, visitors can expect updates to several refuge amenities. Plans include installing new signage, including a main entrance sign featuring the refuge's ambassador species, the Bolson tortoise. The visitor center exhibits are also being considered for expansion, with the goal of incorporating aspects of the refuge that are not currently interpreted in depth and

providing a more comprehensive visitor experience.

Volunteers remain vital to refuge operations. This quarter, the refuge welcomed back the Sierra Club for another annual weeklong project, as well as the New Mexico Volunteers for the Outdoors. These groups, along with the LTER program, contributed significantly to habitat restoration efforts by assisting with the

removal of infrastructure from past research projects. Their efforts, along with those of our Amigos de la Sevilleta volunteers, have had a meaningful impact on the landscape. We were also pleased to recognize these contributions during our annual volunteer appreciation banquet. Thank you to all who dedicate their time and energy to the refuge!



Texas Horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma cornutum*) photographed on the refuge. Note how well its coloring camouflages the lizard, helping it to avoid detection by predators. When threatened, the lizard may inflate its body, making its spiny scales protrude and thus rendering it a less appetizing meal to predators. Harvester ants (*Pogonomyrmex spp.*) are an important food source for Texas Horned Lizards, as are these ants to many other species of *Phrynosoma*. (Photo: A. Sauter)

President's Message

Joan Kopietz

Hola, Amigos!

Our Amigos group was busy last month with volunteer projects around the Refuge and at the Visitors Center Nature Store. This month I would like you to consider ways you can engage with the Amigos. We can always use more volunteers working at the Visitors Center and on various maintenance projects for the Refuge, but some of you may have other talents to share.

We know many of our members have expertise or training in natural history and wildlife topics and we want to develop a list of people willing to provide engagement opportunities for the Amigos and the visiting public. Maybe you are willing to give an educational talk at the Visitors Center, lead an interpretive field trip at Sevilleta, or provide an educational opportunity for youth. You could also lead a hike or help with new Visitor Center displays. I'm sure you can come up with ways we can use your talents, and we would like you to share them with us! If you are willing to help us with this effort, please

contact me at joankopietz@gmail.com or members@amigosdelasevilleta.org

In my February message sent to members, I mentioned that Friends groups from New Mexico wildlife refuges are collaborating to support each other. In that spirit, I would like to make you aware of an upcoming event from Friends of Bosque del Apache.

April 30 - May 3 The Friends of Bosque del Apache are hosting a Spring Migration Celebration in conjunction with their annual meeting. This is a multi-day celebration with events including expert-guided birding field trips, nature journaling classes, reptile field tours and much more. The keynote speaker at the Friends annual meeting is author and photographer, Mark Seth Lender. Registration for events is required. For more information, visit friendsofbosquedelapache.org/smc/ for more information.

Hope to hear from you!



Sevilleta's Compact Carnivore

Jennifer Keyser, Amigos Member

The bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) is the most common North American wild cat. It lives from Southern Canada, through most of the contiguous United States down to Oaxaca in Mexico. It inhabits every county in New Mexico and can be found throughout Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge (NWR).

This cat's widespread range is due to its adaptation to a variety of habitats, and to the many prey types it will hunt. Bobcats favor rocky areas with plant cover but can also be found in mountain forests, riparian canyons, brushland, and suburban locales. (It is an opportunistic predator.)

These carnivores prefer rabbits and hares but will eat birds, lizards, rodents, snakes, carrion, and even small deer. They can bring down animals that weigh more than they do. Males



Bobcat catching rabbit in Montaña de Oro State Park, CA (Photo: L. Tanner)

can weigh from 14 to over 40 pounds, and females between 11 to 35 pounds. Their body length can vary from 20 to 50 inches. Although smaller than the Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*),



Bobcat roaming in Texas. (Photo: Courtesy K.M. King/iNaturalist)

the bobcat is more aggressive and may drive lynx away from habitats where the two meet.

The bobcat has several striking physical features. Its face appears wide, due to prominent ruffs of longer hair below the ears. This ruff functions as protection for its cheeks and face during fights and rough play. Their ears are pointed, with short black tufts. They also have a distinctive stubby or “bobbed” tail, from which the cat gets its name. The tail, which is about three and a half to seven inches long is used for communication and for agility and balance. And the coat, which is tan to grayish-brown, or even reddish-tinged is spotted. This pattern provides excellent camouflage as the bobcat predares by stealth, rather than pursuit.

The usually solitary bobcat changes its behavior during breeding season (February through March). After a successful mating, the gestation period ranges from 60 to 70 days (with an

average of 62 days). Litters are typically between two to four kittens, each of which weighs two-thirds of a pound at birth. Males do not help in raising the kittens. Mothers nurse their young for two months. Young cats stay with their mother for several months, usually through their first fall or winter.

Current estimates of bobcat populations run from 1.4 million to over 2.6 million, making its conservation status that of an International Union for Conservation of Nature Species of Least Concern. However, they do face specific threats to their numbers including multiple human impacts, such as road accidents.

A few more facts about bobcats follow:

- They can run up to thirty miles per hour.
- Bobcats can leap up to 10-12 ft to catch prey.
- They are excellent swimmers.



Can you see the bobcat? Using binoculars over his iPhone, Sam Vassallo, Wildlife Refuge Biologist, took this photo at Sevilleta.

Sources

Colorado Parks & Wildlife Website. Bobcats, Mountain Lions and Lynx FAQs. November 6, 2024. [Asset Share - Cpw DAM](#)

Email exchanges with Samuel Vassallo, Wildlife Refuge Biologist, Sevilleta NWR, February 2, 2026 and March 5, 2026.

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife “Learn about bobcats” [Learn about bobcats | Mass.gov](#)

N. M. Department of Game and Fish (Facebook), updated August 8, 2021 www.facebook.com/nmdeptwildlife/posts/10161187865134148

Smithsonian National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute Website. <https://nationalzoo.si.edu/animals/bobcat>

Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bobcat>

The Hummers have returned to Sevilleta!



Male Rufous Hummingbird at the Visitor Center.
(Photo: J. Kopietz)

The [Black-chinned Hummingbird](#), *Archilochus alexandri*, is back for the summer breeding season, having over-wintered as far south as Mexico. It is the most common and earliest-to arrive hummingbird species on the refuge. Males typically arrive before the females during spring migration to establish and defend breeding territories.

Other hummingbirds that frequent the refuge include three *Selasphorus* species: the [Broad-tailed Hummingbird](#) (*S. platycercus*) that preferentially spends the summer in cooler, higher elevations than the Black-chinned, and two species that make an appearance during their mid to late summer southward migration – the [Calliope](#) (*S. calliope*), and [Rufous](#) (*S. rufus*) hummingbird.

Furry Visitor Welcomed!

This is Jazz, a friendly, well-behaved guy who recently popped into the Visitor Center with his human family who hailed from North Dakota.

Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge trails are all dog-friendly! Dogs must be on a leash, or under control (unleashed, at heel) at all times.

So bring your four-legged friend out for a hike and enjoy the big sky and fabulous views!



(Photo: J. Kopietz)

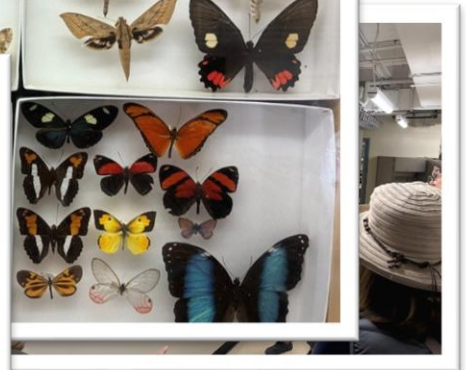
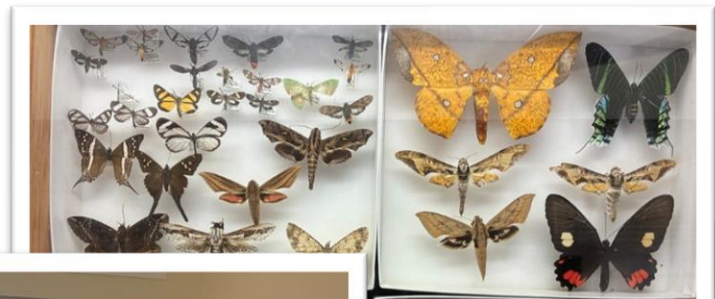
Tour of the Museum of Southwestern Biology

Allan Sauter, Amigos Board Member

A group of 8 Amigos got an inside tour of the Museum of Southwestern Biology on the UNM campus. Two Collection Managers, Sara Brant and Tomas Giermakowski and two Grad students, Rae French, and Simon Doneski showed us the Parasite, Amphibian & Reptile collections as well as the Genomic (frozen tissue samples), Herbarium and Arthropods holdings; they answered scads of questions. What an amazing place!

Sevilleta NWR holds an important role in this collection due to Sevilleta's size and relative pristine nature. For the sake of world-wide scientific studies, many incredibly unique and valuable creatures are stored in this amazing facility.

Thanks to Joanne Kuestner for arranging the tour!



Volunteer Days

Joan Kopietz, Amigos President

The Sierra Club arrived on the Sevilleta March 2nd for a week of work and friendship. This is the fifth year Sierra Club members, as part of the National Outings Program, have worked on the refuge.

The volunteers come from all over the United States and represent many fields such as computing, education, engineering, horticulture, medicine, scientific research, politics and more. Some are novices to working on the Sevilleta but many have returned more than once.

This year, work gloves on, sleeves rolled up and ready to get busy, 15 Sierra Club volunteers dismantled an LTER (Long Term Environmental

Research) project called the Lizard Ranch. It consisted of They removed and hauled this long-abandoned metal project, which many hikers have asked about upon spotting it from the Mesa View Trail. (Editor's Note: It consisted of nine 60x60 ft square enclosures bounded by sheet metal and originally covered with shade cloth.)

The returnees mention their increased affection for the Southwest and their appreciation for getting to know the hardworking staff of the Sevilleta NWR.

Thanks Sierra Club for all your hard work and looking forward to seeing you next year.



On March 7 the Amigos de la Sevilleta joined with the [New Mexico Volunteers for the Outdoors](#) to dismantle rain collection equipment from a [Long Term Ecological Research \(LTER\) Network](#) project in the Los Pinos Mountains. The research structure has not been used for many years and the plastic part of the structure was decomposing. It was time for it to come down.

The weather was perfect with a bright sun, a cool breeze and ultra blue skies when 20 volunteers arrived at the site, and like an army of ants, got to work dismantling. Stacks of metal and plastic had to be hauled down a hill to waiting pick-up trucks which took the debris to dumpsters down the road. The work only

stopped for a short lunch, in the shade, before they forged back up the hill to complete the work.

The New Mexico Volunteers for the Outdoors has been organized since 1982. Members work on over 30 projects a year to improve the outdoors and promote involvement and stewardship of New Mexico's public lands. Their mission is to "Make the outdoors great with you."

Thanks to the NMVFO and Amigos for a job well done.

Click on this [link](#) to watch a fun video of the clean-up.





Nature Store



The Nature Stores added many new items in March. The expanded inventory now includes Bolson Tortoise ball caps in khaki as well as in the original black.



Forgot your binoculars for your visit to Sevilleta? No problem. There are pairs available to borrow at the Visitor Center.

Contacts

Amigos Website: amigosdelasevilleta.org

Amigos on Facebook: facebook.com/amigossevilleta

Un Amigo: members@amigosdelasevilleta.org

Refuge Website: fws.gov/refuge/sevilleta

Editor's Note

Articles and photographs for consideration in the Amigos newsletter are encouraged.

Please email your submission in Word format to sandybarnett95@gmail.com

The Amigos newsletters are available at amigosdelasevilleta.org/contacts