



# REFUGE UPDATE

November 2020

Published bi-monthly by the Amigos de la Sevilleta

## Calendar

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, all planned events have been canceled. There will be a special notification sent to all if things change before the January Refuge Update is published.

**Jan. 13<sup>th</sup>, Annual Meeting by zoom, see pgs. 2 & 7**

## Manager's Update

Kathy Granillo, Refuge Manager

Whew – we made it through 2020. I suspect many of us think that it was a year best left in the taillights, and that hopefully, 2021 will be a year we'd like to remember. Who thought back in March when we entered 14 days of staying at home that we'd still be at home 9 months later? It has certainly been an "interesting" year. There were some good things that happened in 2020 – at least at Sevilleta. We were able to release about 700 prairie dogs into the refuge grasslands, in partnership with Prairie Dog Pals, in a COVID-safe manner. Various research projects continued on the refuge, UNM was able to offer the Research Experience for Undergraduates program with COVID modifications, and we were able to bring a new Heavy Equipment Operator onboard. Refuge trails remained open the entire year, and I know many of you took advantage of that to get outdoors and rejuvenate your spirits. We were also able to get our waterfowl units ready for waterfowl season and worked out an agreement for putting water in them with the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, who had to deal with a severe lack of water for most of the year.

The Amigos continued to help the refuge throughout the year. They worked diligently to get 4 new trailhead signs created and produced. Many of you contributed funds to the trailhead project, for which we are all grateful. One of the signs is installed just off the NW corner of the Visitor Center, and one will soon be installed at the start of the Nature Trail. The two other new signs will be placed soon at the two new birding trails located in our wetland areas near the Rio Grande. Both new trails together offer several miles of easy walking trails. The Amigos also supported one refuge intern who developed a virtual version of Drawn to Sevilleta and the Fall Family Fair, no easy feat.

The Deputy Refuge Manager, Renee Robichaud, retired December 31, and will be greatly missed. Renee had 28 years of Federal service, and now moves on to other pursuits which will include dogs and horses, I'm sure. I hope you'll join me in wishing her the best. We will be able to refill that position, and I'll keep you informed as we do so. I'm also excited to fill a new maintenance worker position in January. That will give the refuge 2 maintenance staff (first time since 2012) and will be much appreciated. Our new employee is Shawn Williams.

I hope to see many of you in the coming year. The Visitor Center will reopen – I can't predict when but most likely once the vaccine is widely available. Please continue to support the Amigos and stay safe!

To quote an oldie but goodie:

You've got to accentuate the positive.

Latch on to the affirmative

Don't mess with Mister In-Between

*(Lyrics by Johnny Mercer and Harold Arlen 1944)*

## Amigos Board News

Ann Adams, Board President

Hola Amigos,

Well, the end of 2020 is in sight...and none too soon! What a remarkable year for all of us, for our families, for our organizations, our country, the world. We've heard how "unprecedented" everything has been and, indeed, we've rarely had a year like it in most of our lifetimes. We know how hard much of it has been but we've also had opportunity in some form or other: getting to know those quarantined with us better, relearning our "reading, writing & 'rithmetic", and learning new skills like ordering groceries for delivery or communicating on Zoom. We've all seen pictures of animals in the wild moving to reestablish territorial boundaries with us humans locked in our homes.

Even your Amigos Board has been learning new skills and on January 13th at 7p.m. we'll be holding the Amigos Annual Meeting by Zoom. You'll hear updates on 2020 finances, membership, accomplishments, and future plans for 2021. There will be videos from the education programs we fund and from the game cameras on the refuge. Since this will be a different sort of meeting experience, you'll be introduced to individual Board members as they update you on our year. We'll all miss the snacks and topical speaker this year, but feel free to enjoy your own refreshments during the meeting. We should be spending about 30-45 minutes together. Instructions for joining the meeting are at the end of the newsletter. Just click on the highlighted link on your computer, tablet, or phone

In summary, it's been a year of pluses and minuses, all daring us to discover our strengths and apply them to the challenges we've faced. But 2021 is ahead and we will rebuild and recover our worlds even better than before. Thanks for being a member of Amigos. I look forward to seeing all of you at the refuge very soon!!

Best,

Ann

**See page seven for the link to the Annual Meeting via zoom**

### **The next Amigos board meeting is January 20th at 4:30 p.m. by teleconference**

All amigos members are welcome and are encouraged to attend.

Contact Ann [ann.d.adams@comcast.net](mailto:ann.d.adams@comcast.net), for the access # if you would like to attend.

*There are openings on the Amigos del la Sevilleta board of directors.*

*Contact Steve Randall at 505-861-1088.*

### **Amigos Contacts**

Amigos web site

<https://www.amigosdelasevilleta.org/>

Amigos on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/amigossevilleta>

Refuge Web Site

<Http://www.fws.gov/refuge/sevilleta>

Jeannine Kimble

Visitor Services Manager

505-864-5021ex106

Past editions of this Newsletter are available at the Amigos website

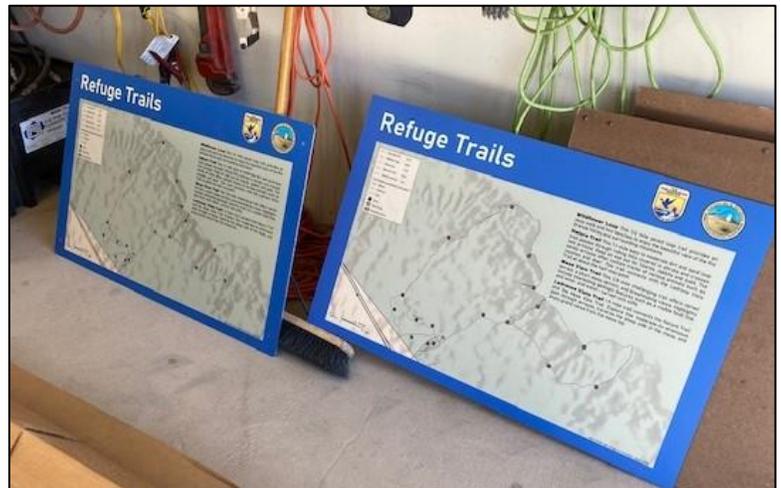
<https://www.amigosdelasevilleta.org/contacts>

## Capital Campaign

Submitted by Penny Lommen and Rex Myers

I am happy to report that the first new trail sign has been placed on the refuge! It is located just behind the Visitor's Center. We started this campaign for new signs in 2018 and thanks to many generous donors, soon had enough money to order the first two signs. Then we hit a glitch. The signs had a map as part of their narrative so the map had to be approved by the regional cartographer before we could get the signs made. Guess who got an immediate request to re-do the hunting maps for all of the refuges in the southwest region? Needless to say, our project fell by the wayside. We finally received word that the map had been approved and the signs were ordered. Thanks to our RV Volunteers, the first sign was placed in the existing frame. Refuge staff and volunteers will be erecting the new frame and installing the second sign soon.

We have funds remaining so our next project will be to create signage for the Wildflower and Nature Loop trails as well as some plant identification markers. We are happy to be making progress and again thank everyone who helped make this possible.



## Volunteers

Submitted by Rex Myers

### Jim Ruff

Volunteer Naturalists include some wonderful folks. Ask Jim what he does, and you get a list of seventeen things. Many of them are behind the scene - working with the watering system, or the Visitors' Center drinking fountain, or the sound system. Those of you involved in a wolf capture, prairie dog relocation, or tree planting may have worked along side Jim. Among his most visible contributions have been moon light hikes up to the mesa – a wonderful experience when we get to do that again. Jim also contributes his musical talents at the Family Fun Fair and other refuge events. Most recently, Jim updated the Hike Socorro County guide, putting it on-line and including the Sevilleta hikes. Check it out at: [HikeSocorroNM.com](http://HikeSocorroNM.com)

Thanks, Jim, for all your contributions to Sevilleta.



## Desert Gem

Submitted by Sandy Barnett

While helping to install the new fencing for the pollinator garden at the Visitor Center this past fall, I noticed a gorgeous little beetle scurrying by as if it were late for some important date. It was difficult to take its picture as the little guy seemed to be in perpetual motion, but I finally succeeded and snapped a photo using my inaturalist app. In short order, the beetle was identified for me.

*Cysteodemus wislizeni*, known as the Desert Blister Beetle, Desert Spider Beetle, or Black Bladder-bodied Meloid. It is endemic to the arid southwestern United States and northern Mexico. This beetle is commonly seen at the refuge.

Described as “poofy” or “balloon-like” in shape, *C. wislizeni* looks like a stippled, iridescent blue/green/purple gem. The beetle measures 10-15 mm in length; males are smaller than females. It feeds on vegetation in the daytime and rests elevated in plants at night. Wherever it goes, *C. wislizeni* is limited to leg-power. The protective casing or forewings (elytra) over what would be the flight wings are partially fused and render the insect flightless.

Blister beetles, as their name implies, are better watched than touched. They produce cantharidin when disturbed, a toxin used in chemical defense against predators and which can cause human skin to blister.



## 2020 Intern Jene Rabe



Not knowing what the future of environmental outreach looked like for the year of 2020, I was excited to be selected as this year's Amigos de Sevilleta funded Park Ranger Assistant intern. My primary goal has been transitioning an established in-person educational program to a virtual program that still connects students to the outdoors. Most educators and I around the country began brainstorming, self-teaching, and re-learning ways that we can utilize technology and reach students without that physical interaction. During the research, filming and editing I referred often to the NM next generation science standards. These helped me understand the connections between grade levels and how students' brains make those connections in understanding ecosystems. Creating the virtual videos was unknown territory to me but I felt more than equipped and confident with the help and support of Jeannine Kimble, other FWS staff, and members of Amigos de Sevilleta. I also had the opportunity to talk with and study how other environmental education programs in the area were being created and disseminated. I was worried that without place-based learning it would be hard to connect but once the posters started being submitted it all became incredibly rewarding. I realized that even connecting one person to the outdoors through virtual learning was important work.

I have also been fortunate enough to help with and learn more about conservation management through the Prairie dog release program here at the refuge. Helping the biologist, Nancy Spencer with prepping the plot, flagging, releasing, feeding and monitoring. This allowed me to learn about the region and wildlife interactions through a conservation lens that focused on a specific purpose. I learned more about the wolf program through my time here at Sevilleta and even got lucky enough to help with the wolf pup vaccinations. It was special to be so close to a protected species. I really fell in love with the (continued on 7)

San Lorenzo Canyon.

I was inspired to even start my own bird checklist. Being from southern NM, I developed a new love and respect for the water in this region and the incredible importance and life-line of the Rio Grande and riparian ecosystem.

This internship has taught me that we should never stop adapting and evolving as outdoor environmental educators. Each of these experiences, each different, solidified my choice to pursue a career in conservation and to continue to work in a job that allows me to connect to others through nature and environmental learning. I hope to continue working with environmental outreach and education and plan to look for work in desert biomes. I will be in ABQ doing volunteer field work with BEMP and delivering NM WILD newsletter until my next adventure. Special thanks to the entire Amigos de la Sevilleta group for providing this position.

### **Zoom Meeting Login Information**

Annual Meeting: January 13, 2020 7:00 pm

#### Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86187604620?pwd=cWd4WVBkMUl1L2N6em91MWloNGUrdz09>

Meeting ID: 861 8760 4620

Passcode: 434397

One tap mobile

+12532158782,,86187604620#,,,,\*434397# US (Tacoma)

+13462487799,,86187604620#,,,,\*434397# US (Houston)

#### Dial by your location

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+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

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+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington D.C)

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+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

Meeting ID: 861 8760 4620

Passcode: 434397

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kgusDXuUu>