



Refuge Update

July 2023

Published quarterly by the Amigos de la Sevilleta

Board meetings are held the third Tuesday of every month; all are welcome. The next Board meeting is Tuesday, July 18th at 2:00PM at the Visitor Center.

Refuge Manager's Update

Jeff Sanchez

"All Things Not Sevilleta NWR"

First of all, I wanted to thank all that supported the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge 50th Anniversary Spring Fiesta. It was a great success in our eyes. I personally viewed many kids and families experiencing nature and all things Sevilleta NWR. The event brought approximately 250 people out to learn about the refuge, which is great for this remote location.

Now on the other end of things, let's talk about things that are a negative to this sensitive desert landscape. To start off, here's a little refuge background. Sevilleta NWR is unique in that it was established with the strong guiding principle written directly within the official warranty deed, stating its purpose to *"preserve and enhance the integrity and the natural character of the ecosystem...by creating a wildlife refuge managed as nearly as possible in its natural state, employing only management tools and techniques that are consistent with the maintenance of a natural ecological process."* I will not bore you with the rest, but all in all, this refuge was established to

"maintain naturalness." To achieve this, there are many things we can do as land managers to maintain a natural environment. One of those actions includes invasive species prevention and control.

There are several invasive species on the refuge which we are currently working on. Some of these may not be obvious or even thought of as impactful to the environment, such as oryx (Gemsbok) and feral horses. Both Oryx and horses have a controversial or political aspect tied to management actions but can also be extremely destructive to sensitive spring systems and vegetation not historically adapted to their natural needs. Currently, we are assessing Oryx and feral horse populations as well as documenting environmental impacts. Stay tuned for future plans and ideas on how to work through this challenging issue and how it fits within the refuge's goals and human health/safety along our highway (Interstate 25) corridor.



Oryx and her calf on refuge land.

On a less controversial note, we do a lot of invasive species prevention work here. Our outstanding volunteers and staff are continually working on blown-out fences from monsoonal flood events and communicating with local landowners to keep cattle off refuge property. Cattle can be extremely impactful to sensitive spring environments, especially within an area that has limited water resources. I have previously written about the importance of protecting and enhancing our spring environments and how such actions will fall under the refuges biological priorities moving forward.

Some of you may also be aware that there are several rights-of-way for fiber optic lines, power transmission lines and gas lines that run directly through the refuge. With such infrastructure comes a heightened number of contractors and/or out-of-state vehicles/equipment that have legal access to their rights-of-way through the refuge. The refuge requires that all access requesters must obtain an annual Special Use Permit that includes stipulation requiring Utility Task Vehicles (UTV) and heavy equipment to be inspected for any plant materials, seeds, mud, or anything foreign that might carry in an unwanted invader before entering refuge land. You would be surprised how many seeds and plants I find under the skid plate of the UTV or between the tracks of heavy equipment. More times than not a requesting contractor must take their vehicle to a wash station several times to remove materials before returning for re-inspection. The pictures below show a UTV receiving its second inspection after sending it back for re-washing. As you can see, they had to go back a third time. These kind of prevention measures can save us a ton of effort and funding in the future. That is if we can limit the invasion of such species before they become well established. Every effort makes a difference, as it only takes a few seeds or a good breeding season to start an invasion of "All Things Not Sevilleta NWR"



President's Message

Colin Barnett

The Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge is home to a vibrant scientific research community. Scientists from UNM, NM Tech, and other institutions conduct biological studies on such topics as soil chemistry, drought effects, climate change, and the ecology and population dynamics of plants, birds, mammals and insects that inhabit the refuge.

A principal part of the research at Sevilleta is the Long-Term Ecological Research program, which, as its name implies, conducts long-term monitoring of the environment to detect changes year over year. To do this, researchers have erected monitoring stations at various sites on the refuge.

When the project is over, the site must be dismantled.

In May, a group of UNM staff and Amigos members began the slow process of removing no-longer-used material from a site that was constructed to detect the effects of varying rainfall levels on plants. LTER Program Manager Melissa Bacigalupa with help from interim Refuge Biologist Allison Greenleaf (who normally serves as the Mexican Gray Wolf Wild Population Lead Biologist), UNM biology undergrad Khadijah Burke, and Amigos Board members Chuck Kooshian and Colin Barnett, filled two trucks and a trailer with material that needed to be disposed



Inspecting the site where discontinued research equipment needs to be removed.

of. The group separated out the metal, kept any that could be re-used (e.g., pipes) and sent the rest to a recycle facility.

This 6-hour effort removed only a small part of the material left on site. We have many more work days in store!



The team removing large plastic panels from the site.



Metal fencing and wood posts being loaded into the trailer.

Fiesta de la Sevilleta

Penny Lommen

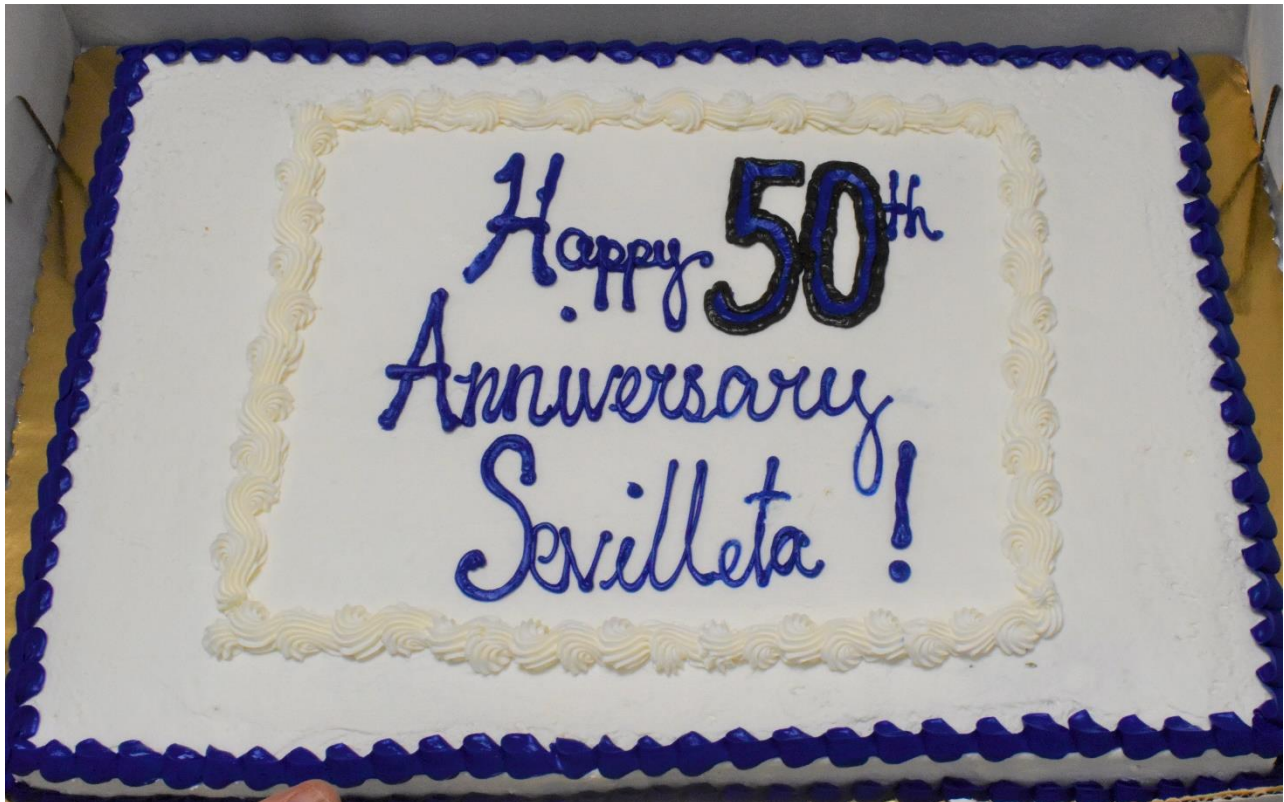
“Hi, how are you? Welcome to Sevilleta!” This is what visitors hear as they walk through our front doors. By the afternoon of the Fiesta, I was so tired of saying that!

Dawn, one of our fantastic RV volunteers and I had been asked to work in the Visitor’s Center and Nature Store. As at any event you are always worried if the event will be a success, will people attend, will the weather hold up, all kinds of things run through your mind. Well, silly us!! Everything was great! People started showing up just before 10:00 and just kept coming. The estimate of

attendance was around 250 people! Dawn and I answered questions, gave directions, and sold lots of merchandise.

Fiesta had great activities for visitors of all ages. We had animals, displays, art activities, informative lectures AND we had birthday cake! What more could you ask for! At the end of the day, we were all exhausted which meant that it had been a fabulous Fiesta.

Happy 50th Birthday Sevilleta and many, many more!



Sevilleta Spring Fiesta Snapshots

Photos by Jim Lommen



**DISCOVERY ZONE
PASSPORT**

May 20th, 2023

YOUR MISSION:

- Proceed to the Sevilleta NWR Discovery Zone.
- Visit the Investigation Stations and get a stamp for **each one**.
- Take your stamped passport back to the Visitor Center and receive your reward.

Good luck and have fun!

(Your Name) _____

**map of the
DISCOVERY ZONE**

UNM Field Station

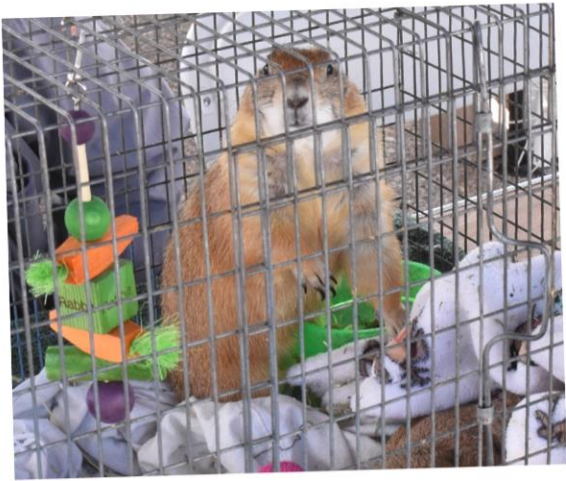
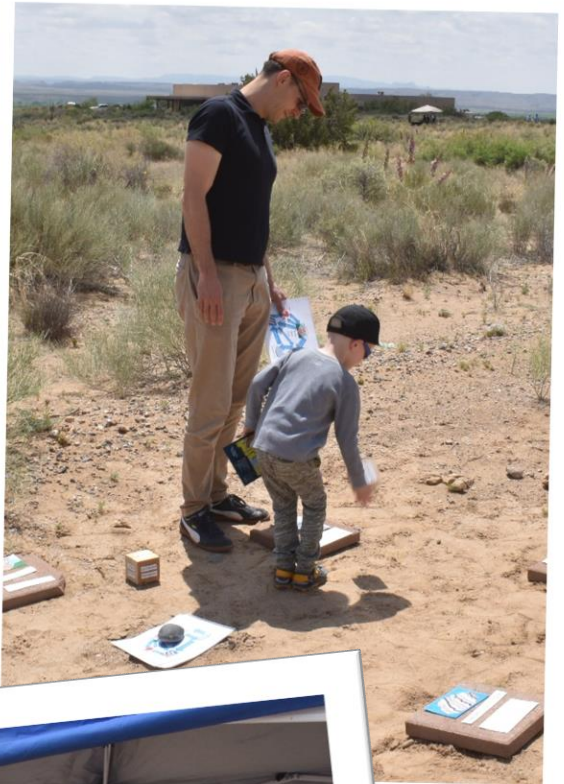
INVESTIGATION STATIONS

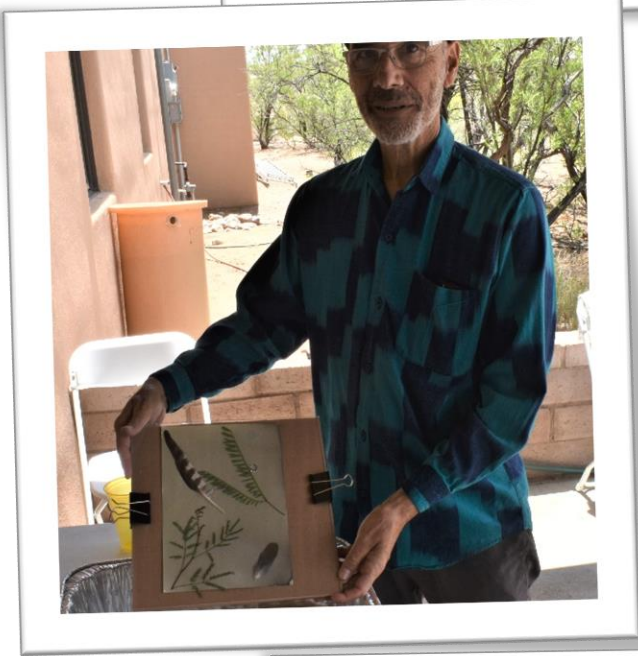
Check in to get your passport

Visitor Center

SEVILLETA
EXPLORER
N.W.R.

Sevilleta NWR









Facebook Activity

Susan Richards

We currently have 932 followers. Our exposure continues to grow. If you use FB please share our posts and encourage your friends to follow us.

New at the Nature Store

The collage features several items: three 'ON THE SPOT' nature guides (South, Cacti & Succulents, Reptiles & Amphibians), a brown stuffed animal, and three t-shirts (purple and orange) with 'SEVILLETA' and 'NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE NEW MEXICO' designs.

Store Hours: Tuesday-Friday, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

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 Hunter, Visitor Services Manager, 505-864-4021ex2106

Editor's Note

Items for consideration in the *Refuge Update* are encouraged.

Please email your submission in Word format to sdrandl72@gmail.com.

Past editions of this Newsletter are available at the Amigos website:

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