



REFUGE UPDATE

March 2022

“Cooperation with other agencies”

Published bi-monthly by the Amigos de la Sevilleta

Calendar

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there still are no planned events. There will be a special notification sent to all if things change before the next Refuge Update is published.

Refuge Manager Notes

Jeff Sanchez, Refuge manager

Hello everyone, I'm Jeff Sanchez, new Refuge Manager at Sevilleta NWR and I'm very excited to be joining this amazing team!!

For my first newsletter, I am going to kick things off with a look back into New Mexico history (or a stroll down memory lane, for those of us who called Albuquerque home in the 1990's). I remember a time when the City of Albuquerque hosted the Rio Grande River Raft Race every summer. People would take their canoes, kayaks and homemade rafts to float the "Mighty Rio Grande" starting at the Alameda Bridge, just down the road from my childhood home. The river was full from bank to bank with only a few vegetatively challenged islands interspersed throughout. Dozens of competitors would line up on the east side of the river, anxiously awaiting the start of chaos. I recall the homemade vessels, most of which would sink on the spot, some would require dragging instead of floating, and others would break apart into various pieces as soon as the gun went off! Gosh, I even remember one intrepid gentleman floating on two interconnected beverage coolers, both of

which were fully stocked! It's fun, as a kid, to see people making fools of themselves... and sometimes just as fun as an adult, under certain circumstances.

Today, when driving across the Alameda Bridge during the summer, I look over to the race launch site that is now mostly vegetated adjacent to channels that are separated, shallow and tame. The vegetative community is also different, with large plumes of ravena grass growing among stands of Russian olive and coyote willow. I now understand that the former sand bars/islands have succumbed to vegetation due to the lack of powerful erosive run-off pulses that no longer occur, and the timing of flood events favors germination of invasive species rather than native willows and cottonwoods. I remember walking the large levees adjacent to the river and seeing water flooding the beautifully shaded cottonwood gallery and wet inland saltgrass meadows existing well away from the main river channel.

The river is surely not what it used to be, now

that humans have altered its banks, changed its uses and regulated the amount of flow needed for cities, agriculture and other needs, including wildlife in some cases. What I'm getting at here is that we are living in a "new normal", not only dealing with a global health pandemic, but also with historic drought leading to a lack of available water in the Southwest. It is more and more important to look for ways to become water efficient and ensure that water is available for wildlife species that occupy the Middle Rio Grande Valley.

become more "water smart". Agencies such as the New Mexico Department Game and Fish, Bureau of Reclamation, and THE Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District all play a heightened role in the amount of water that is available to humans and wildlife species in the Middle Rio Grande Valley. With this in mind, you will likely see numerous changes within the wetland areas of not only the La Joya wetlands managed by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, but also the refuge wetlands tucked away south of the La Joya wetland complex.

We at the refuge are looking for opportunities to partner with our neighboring entities in order to



Sunset at Hunt Unit B, Sevilleta NWR. Photo: Colin Barnett 2

President's Message

Colin Barnett, Board President

I'm happy to report that at our yearly Annual Meeting (held via Zoom) on February 18, 2022, the members elected the following slate of Officers:

- President Colin Barnett
- Vice-President Sandy Barnett
- Treasurer Penny Lommen
- Secretary Rex Myers

The other members of the Board are:

- Ann Adams Past President
- Steve Randall Newsletter Editor
- Alesia Hallmark Manager of UNM Research Facility and UNM Representative to the Amigos Board. New Board Member (February 2022)
- Susan Richards Manages the [Amigos Facebook](#) account and, along with Penny Lommen and Amigos member Marj Richards, the Nature Store.
- Allan Sauter New Board Member (February 2022)

I'm honored to serve as President and pleased to have such an outstanding group on our Board, each of whom contribute their services well beyond the position they hold. I would like to thank Ann for her past service as President and welcome Alesia and Allan as new Board members.

We have two open slots for Board members. If you would be interested in joining the Board and working with refuge staff to support the refuge,

please contact me at colinbarnett88@gmail.com.

At our February Board meeting, the new Refuge Manager, Jeff Sanchez, told the Board that he is working to set an opening date for the Visitor Center sometime this spring or early summer. When the VC is open, we plan to resume the activities that we provided for our members, pre-Covid, including hikes, tours, and speakers. Even if the opening of the VC is delayed due to pandemic restrictions, we are planning outdoor events, including a presentation on raptors with live birds.

Jeff is also reviewing the refuge's official Biological Priorities. I was surprised to learn that most refuges are encouraged to have 5 ranked Biological Priorities to guide their efforts, as more would dilute the refuge's ability to focus on all Priorities. Currently, these priorities are (in highly abbreviated form) 1. Prairie dog restoration, 2. Conservation of federally-listed species, 3. Control of invasive species, 4. Prescribed burns, and 5. Monitoring of research projects conducted on the refuge. Undoubtedly some of these priorities will change in scope or ranking; we'll be reporting on this in future editions of the Newsletter.

We are energized by the enthusiasm, experience, and plans of the new Refuge Manager, Jeff Sanchez, who is committed to working with the Amigos. He would like feedback for his new ideas, which we will discuss in future editions of this newsletter.

The next Amigos Board meeting is Tuesday, March 22, 2:00-3:30 PM. It will be held outdoors (or indoors with masks if the weather requires it) at the UNM Field Station at the refuge. The meeting is open to all Amigos members. Contact Colin Barnett (colinbarnett88@gmail.com) for details.

March Volunteer: Ann Adams

Submitted by Rex Meyers

Ever think about banding something as tiny as a hummingbird leg? Ann Adams has been doing it every year since 2004 and has put on programs at Sevilleta demonstrating her techniques. An Amigos Board member since 2015, Ann served as president from 2016 through January of this year.

She loves the mission of Sevilleta and the National Wildlife Service and sees a great future for the refuge as we share our love of this wonderful habitat. Favorite place? Cibola Canyon – “It is spectacular.” Thanks, Ann. We agree – Sevilleta is a special place.



North American Butterfly Association Butterfly Count

Submitted by Colin Barnett

The North American Butterfly Association (NABA) has run a Butterfly Count Program in the United States, Canada, and Mexico since 1993. Each of the approximately 450 counts consists of a compilation of all butterflies observed at sites within a 15-mile diameter count circle in a one-day period. The annually published reports provide a tremendous amount of information about the geographical distribution and relative population sizes of the species counted. Comparisons of the results across years can be used to monitor changes in butterfly populations and study the effects of weather and habitat change on North American butterflies.

The Seville National Wildlife Refuge participates in these counts. In August 2021, a

team fanned out to upland and riparian habitats in the refuge to count butterflies. John Wilson (local butterfly expert), Colin Barnett (President, Amigos de la Seville), and Nancy Spencer-Morris, (Refuge Wildlife Biologist) walked the Nature Trail near the refuge Headquarters. Kathy Granillo (then Refuge Manager), and Jeannine Kimble (Refuge Visitor Services Manager/Park Ranger) used a vehicle to cover a riparian area on the east side of I-25. The results, which were submitted to NABA, are given below.

| Species | Upland count | Riparian count | Total |
|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------|-------|
| Checkered White | 149 | 120 | 269 |
| Cabbage White | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| Orange Sulphur | 11 | 0 | 11 |
| Southern Dogface | 0 | 4 | 4 |
| Sleepy Orange | 191 | 52 | 143 |
| Cloudless Sulphur | 5 | 0 | 5 |
| Dainty Sulphur | 13 | 3 | 16 |
| Gray Hairstreak | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| Western Pygmy-blue | 0 | 1105 | 1105 |
| Reakirt's Blue | 15 | 0 | 15 |
| Mormon Metalmark | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| American Snout | 7 | 0 | 7 |
| Variegated Fritillary | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Mourning Cloak | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Painted Lady | 0 | 10 | 10 |
| Viceroy | 0 | 11 | 11 |
| Monarch | 0 | 33 | 33 |
| Queen | 0 | 31 | 31 |
| Total species 19 | Total individuals 1674 | | |



Sleepy Orange and Checkered White. Photos taken on the refuge by the author

Mexican Gray Wolf Recovery Program

Researched and Submitted by Susan Richards

Since 1977, US Fish and Wildlife Service has undertaken a program to assist in the recovery of Mexican grey wolves (*Canis lupis baileyi*) in the US and Mexico. Since 1996, Sevilleta has been home to a remote captive breeding facility where animals are kept in large pens designed to foster wild characteristics and behaviors. In total, there are 50 wolf captive breeding facilities in the US, including not only Sevilleta, but also Ladder Ranch Wolf Management Facility south of Truth or Consequences, and the Endangered Wolf Center in Eureka, Missouri. Pups are reared in a captive breeding facility and then USFWS releases them in

the wild. Among the rarest of the wolf subspecies, 11 captive-reared gray wolves were first released in 1998. The March, 2021 census, found 186 animals in the wild – 114 in New Mexico and 72 in Arizona. That same year, 22 captive-born pups, just 14 days old, (7 from Sevilleta) were fostered into 8 different wild packs to enhance genetic diversity. Beautiful animals, these wolves are returning to their natural habitat thanks to the program.

Thanks to Melissa Kreutzian, manager of Sevilleta's wolf management facility, for providing these photographs.



Cooperating Entities

Submitted by Rex Meyers



Save Our Bosque Task Force

One Sevilleta NWR partner along the Rio Grande is Save Our Bosque Task Force, based in Socorro. Created in 1994, the organization works collaboratively with agencies along the river to support a healthy Rio Grande bosque and riparian ecosystem. SOBTF helped create the Socorro Nature Area east of Lemitar and a series of parks with picnic tables and fire rings stretching from San Acacia to San Antonio. The organization works with Sevilleta to provide trees and willows for planting along the river, helps remove non-native trees, assists landowners who want to improve habitat or create fire breaks, sponsors Bosque Conservation Day each fall for area fifth grade students (Sevilleta participates), and hires summer interns (who live at Sevilleta) to learn about conservation and habitat protection.



Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area

Tucked along Highway 47 near Belen, is a 240-acre gem, the Whitfield Wildlife Conservation area, under the auspices of Valencia Soil and Water Conservation District. Established in 2003, this area is wonderful for hiking, bird watching, and enjoying the beauty of the Rio Grande bosque. Staff and volunteers have constructed moist meadow units and new wetlands, protected existing wetlands, planted food for migrating birds and wildlife, and restored native vegetation. Sevilleta NWR and Whitfield have cooperated with area school programs and in advertising birding opportunities along the middle Rio Grande, including Ladd Gordon Waterfowl Complex.



Facebook Activity

Submitted by Susan Richards

This month our Facebook posts have done quite well.

- Christmas Bird Count - 312 people reached
- New Refuge Manager - 940 people reached
- Animals in Winter - 987 people reached
- Big Cats - 1175 people reached

We currently have 816 followers. If you use FB, please share our posts and encourage your friends to follow us.

2021 Financials

Submitted by Penny Lommen

Amigos 2021 Balance Sheet

| | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Unrestricted Fund | \$16,727 |
| Restricted Fund | \$ 6,868 |
| Nature Store | <u>\$14,634*</u> |
| Total | \$38,229 |

Amigos 2021 Cash Flow

| | |
|------------|----------------|
| Revenue | \$6,085 |
| Expenses | <u>\$4,532</u> |
| Net Income | \$1,553 |

The Nature Store 2021 Cash Flow

| | |
|------------|----------------|
| Revenue | \$3,308 |
| Expenses | <u>\$1,272</u> |
| Net Income | \$2,036 |

*(Includes Inventory of \$5,999)

Net Income \$1,553

*(Includes Inventory of \$5,999)



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>

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Editor's Note

Items for consideration in the Refuge Update are encouraged.
Please email your submission in .doc format to sdrandl172@gmail.com

Past editions of this publication are available at the Amigos website
<https://www.amigosdelasevilleta.org/contacts>