



REFUGE UPDATE

July 2022

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Board meetings are held the second Tuesday of every month, all are welcome. The next Board meeting is Tuesday, July 12th at 2:00PM at the Visitor Center.

Refuge Manager Notes

Jeff Sanchez, Refuge manager

A lot has happened since my last newsletter entry. The Rio Grande had dried from the south boundary of Bosque del Apache NWR to immediately upstream of the Highway 380 bridge, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher and Yellow-billed Cuckoo surveys have begun, and the research community has expanded exponentially on the Refuge. In addition, we have welcomed early monsoon season precipitation events within the last few weeks, thus recharging the Rio Grande in its entirety within New Mexico and kicking things off for the summer.

These rain events give rise to many desert dwelling animals who require such precipitation events to fulfill their life cycles. Animals, such as the ornate box turtle, desert millipede and Couche's spadefoot toad emerge, sometimes in great number to traverse the once dry landscape in search of food, mates, and new territory to call home. The once dormant plant community has also been awaiting this natural alarm call to begin a frantic growth spurt. I can't wait to experience the flush of desert plant growth and wildflowers that sometimes explodes into a beautiful display of nature.

The upland areas of Sevilleta NWR are unique in that they harbor a diversity of habitats/biomes that are mostly intact due to the protections and establishing criteria of the Refuge. Large scale grazing practices have not been present since Refuge establishment in 1973 and we, as wildlife managers, take care to ensure that "naturalness" is maintained at this unique ecosystem crossroads. Research associated with the Long Term Ecological Research and the University of New Mexico Field Station - Research Experience for Undergraduates programs are leading research projects to help wildlife managers of desert environments find ways to protect similar sensitive ecosystems. This research will also help the Refuge direct management prescriptions for restoration projects and wildlife re-introduction efforts in response to climate change.

One really cool project I would like to share involves a very unique species. This summer, we are hosting a Fish and Wildlife Service Directorate Fellow (Intern), who will be investigating site suitability for the Bolson Tortoise. I know, I made it sound like the Intern was the unique species. Danielle Husband is indeed human and is working

closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Ecological Services Field Office, Armendaris Ranch, Bosque del Apache NWR (BDA) and Sevilleta NWR to assess habitat conditions at these locations for possible future releases on BDA and Sevilleta NWR. If everything aligns, including regulatory compliances such as 10J Experimental Nonessential Population review that will undergo National Environmental Policy Act public review/comment and the current climatic conditions can support this species, then we can start thinking about releasing tortoises on

the Refuge. I can hardly imagine how exciting it would be to see this large tortoise roaming the vast Refuge grasslands after a rain event like it once likely did in southern New Mexico. As climates continue to change, we need to look for ways to save species such as the Bolson Tortoise, as suitable habitats shrink and likely expand northward (in our case). Knowing how wildlife minded the readers of this newsletter are, I will leave the Bolson Tortoise life cycle details and history for you to investigate on your own.

Bolson Tortoise



Old and slow meets old and slow



Young Bolson Tortoise packing a radio transmitter

Spadefoot Toad



President's Message

Colin Barnett, Board President

Sevilleta depends on the Amigos and other volunteers not only for financial support, but also for leading tours, installing trail signs, educating visitors, giving talks, maintaining fences, planting trees, constructing drinkers, and many other vital tasks. I was surprised to learn that an act of Congress specifically authorizes the Department of Fish and Wildlife to accept these donations of time and money. This act, Keep America's Refuges Operational Act of 2022, allows the National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) System to work with volunteers and support Friends organizations, and also encourages donations and other contributions to the refuges nationwide. The act expires this year. The House and Senate need to authorize it for another 4 years.

As President of the Amigos, I submitted written testimony to both the Senate and the House in support of the act. Board members Rex Myers and Susan Richardson also submitted written testimony. If you are interested in learning more, I recommend reading the submitted testimony of Stephen Guertin, Deputy Director for Policy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, given before the House Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife. (Read the section H.R. 6734). The link is:

<https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/testimony/3-29-2022-HNR-WOW-FWS-Leg-Hearing.pdf>

Sevilleta Volunteers: Susan Richardson and Rex Myers

Susan and Rex retired to New Mexico in the Fall of 2017 after careers in higher education. Almost immediately, they began volunteering at Sevilleta, one day a week. Fence work, wolf capture, trail work, sign projects, painting,

butterfly tagging, bird counting – whatever needs to be done. Both also serve on the Amigos Board of Directors – Susan helps manage the Nature Store and Rex is Board secretary



West Mesa Amigos Tour by Colin Barnett

In June, a group of Amigos was given a member-only guided tour by truck, along with stops and a bit of foot exploration, of the West Mesa. Drivers included Amigos President Colin Barnett, Refuge Manager Jeff Sanchez, and Visitor Services

Manager Jeannine Kimble. Member Mike Chavez provided fascinating commentary about the area, as he grew up on what is now refuge land. Board member Steve Randall served as a guide as well.



Visitor Services Manager Jeanine Kimble showed a marker commemorating the death of a driver whose horse-drawn cart crashed out of control at this point in the trail.



Near where we toured, the military created three bull's-eye targets for bombing practice during WWII. You can see the faint outline of the concentric rings of one bull's eye target in the picture to the right.



Tour members explore the mesa and its beautiful vistas.



From quite a distance, our sharp-eyed Refuge Manager, Jeff Sanchez, spotted this Desert Big Horn Sheep resting on its haunches on a steep hillside. Member Dan Benton captured it with his camera.

The Visitor Center by Penny Lommen

Think of the Gene Autry song “Back in the Saddle Again” and bear with me.

Back in the VC again. Back where an Amigo is a Friend. Where many species roam is where I’ll make my home. Back in the VC again!

Yes, I know I’m slightly crazy but I’ll explain this in a minute.

After 25 long months, the Visitor Center was finally allowed to re-open in May and I got to go back to work. We have had many outdoor visitors but really missed our friends inside the center. I had been a weekly volunteer at the Visitor Center for a couple of years up until the pandemic. My job is to greet people when they come in and tell them a little bit about Sevilleta. I then invite them to tour the center, watch the movie and look at all the great exhibits. In the last 7 weeks we have had visitors from at least 17 states as well as Canada! As of the third week in June we have had approximately 350 visitors for

the month! Welcome back everyone!

Over the last few years, I have told you that the source of income for the Amigos comes from memberships, donations and proceeds from the Nature Store. I am happy to report that the Nature Store is once again in operation and sales have been booming! We sell a lot of tee shirts and caps, plush animals for the kids as well as a lot of Sevilleta branded merchandise. Come on over and check us out, it’s not too early to start buying for Christmas!

To explain my song parody, I did this a lot when I was teaching elementary school. The kids loved it and we had great times making up new songs. I particularly like Gene Autry songs because he just happens to be my second cousin once removed on my mother’s side. I think of him every time I see a tumbleweed on the highway!



Front Desk



Nature Store

The Nature Store Has New Stuff by Susan Richards

Over the course of the next few weeks, we will be adding more new items. Stop by when the Visitors' Center is open. Your purchase supports Amigos, which in turn, supports Sevilleta.

New Books and Pocket Guides!



Swedish Dishcloths – lots of designs!





Facebook Activity

Submitted by Susan Richards

We currently have 840 followers so our exposure continues to grow. If you use FB, please share our posts and encourage your friends to follow us.



With a little rain, there are always surprises popping up at the refuge during the summer months.

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

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Editor's Note

Items for consideration in the Refuge Update are encouraged.
Please email your submission in .docx format to sdrandl72@gmail.com

Past editions of this Newsletter are available at the Amigos website

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