



Refuge Update

October 2025

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Board meetings are held the second Thursday of most months. The next board meeting will be held on Thursday, November 13th, 2:00-3:30 PM. I at the Visitor Center. You are welcome to attend in person, or contact Colin Barnett colinbarnett88@gmail.com for a Zoom link. (If the federal government shutdown is still in effect, then the meeting will be held via Zoom only.)

Enjoy the Trails

The Refuge is currently closed due to the Federal government shutdown. However, the hiking trails are open. Descriptions of the trails and how to access them when the Refuge is closed are available at [Visit Sevilleta | amigos](#).

If you enjoy birding, consider visiting one or both of our two birding trails. Click [here](#) for a list of species you might see.



Marsh at Unit A. Photo: C. Barnett. The Snow Goose (top, Photo: M. Thompson) and Wilson's Snipe (Photo: J. Timmons) are among the waterfowl you may see at Sevilleta.

Seeking an Amigos President

Amigos de la Sevilleta is looking for a new President to lead our small, all-volunteer, non-profit organization in partnership with the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge. The Refuge is dedicated to wildlife and land conservation and supports the University of New Mexico's Long-term Ecological Research (LTER) program. Currently, the Refuge is engaged in reintroducing Bolson Turtles to the landscape, a project done in conjunction with the Turner Foundation.

Amigos de la Sevilleta provides funds to the Refuge to support their research, conservation and education activities. We raise funds through memberships, donations, and the Nature Store.

The Amigos also attends outreach events, hosts interpretive hikes, and participates in wildlife surveys.

The President acts as the public face of the Amigos group, chairs monthly Board meetings and meets with the Refuge Manager to discuss collaborative efforts. If desired, meeting activities can be done remotely (via Zoom).

We hope you will consider leading our mission to support research, education and outreach efforts at Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge. Please contact us at members@amigosdelasevilleta.org if you are interested or would like more details.



Ladron vista, SNWR (Photo art: C. Barnett)

Junior Ranger Program

Late this past summer a revised version of the *Junior Refuge Ranger* booklet was made available at the Visitors Center. We look forward to resuming the program when the Center reopens.

Benedict the Bolson Tortoise is the new guide. When a youngster completes an age-appropriate number of activities they are sworn in and presented with a Junior Ranger Badge.

The Junior Ranger program is designed to encourage youngsters to become more involved in nature. A booklet is provided which has activities to explore the Visitors Center, gardens and trails.

Please spread the word about this kid-friendly activity. A special Thank You to Ethan Hammer, Refuge Wildlife Specialist, for redesigning the booklet.



On July 17th, Evie and Winnie Prey from Appleton, WI, were our first JRs to be sworn in and presented with their badges by Sevilleta Biologist Samuel Vassello.

Adaptations Tour

On July 25th, Board member Sandy Barnett led an Amigos' tour in the northeastern section of the refuge to showcase some of the remarkable adaptations of plants and animals to life in the High Desert.

Plant Adaptations to Life in Warm/Hot Deserts

Minimize heat load, wind damage, and water loss

1. Light colored leaves/stems
2. Small to no leaves, often oriented to minimize high sun exposure
3. Photosynthetic stems
4. Leaves modified into spines
5. Compound leaves
6. Lobed or serrated leaves
7. Oily/waxy cuticle (leaf surface)
8. Fuzzy/hairy cuticle
9. Hypostomatous leaves (stomata - gas exchange pores - primarily or exclusively on the underside)
10. Sunken stomata
11. Reversible wilting
12. Deciduous



Bannertail Kangaroo Rat mound with multiple entrances, Desert Darkling Beetle, Buffalo Gourd. Desert Box Turtles live in the deep burrows of Bannertails where the air is near saturation with mild summer temperatures. Desert Darkling Beetles and Buffalo Gourds are part of diet of these turtles.

The One-Seed (or New Mexico) Juniper. These bushes have been found to extend their roots to 200 ft below the surface to reach deep groundwater. They also have an extensive network of shallow, lateral roots often 2.5 to 3 times longer than the bush's height to take advantage of rainfall moistening only the top layers of soil.



Annual Butterfly Count



Butterflies are the highlight of summer. We enjoy their bright colors in our yards and in natural areas throughout New Mexico, but are there as many as there used to be? Are some kinds increasing in numbers and others disappearing?

Butterfly surveys are an important way to answer questions like these. The Amigos invites the public

(no experience necessary) to participate in an annual butterfly count each summer. The count is done as part of the [North American Butterfly Association](#)'s monitoring program. This year it was held August 16th. Amigos' VP Chuck Kooshian lead the count along the riparian route while Rebecca Gracey and Mary Ruffle lead the count along the upland route. A total of 15 species were observed.



Palmer's Metalmark butterfly. The larvae feed on Screwbean and Honey Mesquite. (Photo: R. Gracey)



Rita Blue or Desert Buckwheat Blue butterfly. The larvae feed on various kinds of wild buckwheat. (Photo: R. Gracey)

Sevilleta Butterfly Count August 16, 2025

Species (15)	Upland	Riparian
Black Swallowtail		1
Checkered		1
Cabbage		101
Orange Sulphur		14
Sleepy Orange	7	5
Cloudless Sulphur		
Dainty Sulphur		3
Clouded Sulphur		6
Unidentified Blue		
Western Pygmy Blue		
Reakirt's Blue		1
Rita Blue	2	
Palmer's Metalmark	1	
American Snout		
Varigated Fritillary		3
Bordered Patch		
Painted Lady		1
Monarch		4
Queen	3	23
Dun Skipper		
Common Checkered Skipper	1	5
	14	168

Total 182



Seen on the Refuge

This past summer, Amigos' Board members Chuck Kooshian and Allan Sauter volunteered to check wells at the refuge. En route, Allan took two pictures to share with members.



Fossil Crinoids at Cibola Springs. New Mexico was covered by shallow, warm seas multiple times during the Early Paleozoic (southern part) and the Late Paleozoic (statewide). These fossil crinoids testify to this past. They belong to a group of marine invertebrates in the same Class – the echinoderms – as the starfish and sea urchins. The stalked crinoids, such as the fossilized specimens pictured here, are commonly called “sea lilies.” Today’s Crinoids, which include more than 800 species, are sometimes called “living fossils” because they have changed very little over time.



Gemsbok or Oryx. These large ungulates (males weigh 400–530 lbs, females weigh 220–460 lbs.) are native to the arid and semi-arid savannah grass, shrub and woodland savannahs of the Kalahari, Karoo and adjacent regions of southern Africa. However, they can now also be found roaming parts of Texas up through south-central New Mexico. Between 1969 and 1977, New Mexico Fish & Game released 95 captive-born gemsbok into White Sands Missile Range 95. The goal was to establish the species at White Sands and subsequently offer licensed hunters there an exotic experience. However, the animals proved to be more mobile than anticipated. The current wild population is estimated to be between 3,000 and 6,000 animals, with populations ranging from northern Socorro County, New Mexico, and extending southward into west Texas.

Nature Store

When the federal shutdown ends and the Visitor Center reopens, please stop by the Nature Store to see our new items for sale!

A design for the Bolson Tortoise now appears on our new t-shirts, caps and mugs. The t-shirts and caps come in several colors. The mugs have a matt black exterior and your choice of a red or blue interior.

The kids' section has more science activity books, games and mini block animals (they have been a hit!).

Brighten your windows with our new 10-in hummingbirds, bees and butterflies.

Hope to see you at the Nature store soon!

If you are interested in joining our team, you can volunteer at the Visitor Center/Nature Store. Contact Joan Kopietz at joankopietz@gmail.com.



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>

Editor's Note

Items for consideration in the Refuge Update are encouraged.

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

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

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