



Newsletter

Spring 2024 www.friendsofwhitfield.org

From common to creative

The Common Black Hawk gets creative when on the hunt, fluttering its wings to startle fish and other prey.

And, birders, it's been spotted at Whitfield.

Story on page 3.

Photo: Jorge Dangle

“Our ability to perceive quality in nature begins, as in art, with the pretty. It expands through successive stages of the beautiful to values as yet uncaptured by language.”

- Aldo Leopold

Letter from the President

Greetings Friends!

There's a lot that I don't know. For instance, according to New Mexico Wild's Executive director Mark Allison, Aldo Leopold was "the driving force behind the creation of the world's first place protected for its inherent wilderness." Its here in New Mexico! The Gila Wilderness! Holy Pantagonia! I did not know that.

But now that I do it makes my next announcement all that more apropos. In October the Friends will be holding a special event with an appearance by ALDO LEOPOLD. Well, not him exactly but a one man show about Aldo performed by Steve Morgan, himself a naturalist. This is an event you won't want to miss. We'll have more details in our next newsletter.

The Board of Trustees of the Friends of Whitfield want to extend our heartfelt thanks and gratitude to former VSWCD District Director, Andrew Hautzinger. Andrew was very supportive of the Friends and the work that we performed for the Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area. He was there at the ready when we needed him and always willing to lend a supportive ear. You will be missed, Andrew.

In the meantime, Johnny Chavez has stepped up into the role of Acting District Director for the VSWCD until a permanent replacement is found. The Friends are here for you, Johnny!

OH, OH! The Friends are partnering with TOTAL NM for a fundraiser/concert in June! Check out the flyer on page 5!

Now, as Aldo Leopold once said, "get off your duffs and out into NATURE. And make sure its Whitfield you're at."

Actually, I said that. But I'm sure Aldo would agree.

Cheers!

Rob Raucci
President, Friends of Whitfield Board of Trustees

Friends of Whitfield Board of Trustees

Mission Statement:

Friends of the Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Complex (FWWCC) is a non-profit volunteer organization dedicated to supporting the Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Complex by promoting habitat restoration, education and conservation.

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Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area

is located at 2424 Hwy 47, Belen, NM
<https://goo.gl/maps/AKxgnLJGgKD3za7t8>

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Birding in Season: Common Black Hawk

(Buteogallus anthracinus)

by Laura McCann, VSWCD Environmental Education Manager

Despite its name, this good size hawk is a rare visitor over Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area. Towards the end of March, I was told by two of our local birders that they had spotted a Common Black Hawk while walking at Whitfield. This inspired me to go looking for one myself! Before going out, I did some background research as this is not a species that I commonly see...

First, I checked out what a Common Black Hawk call sounds like. Often you will hear a bird before you



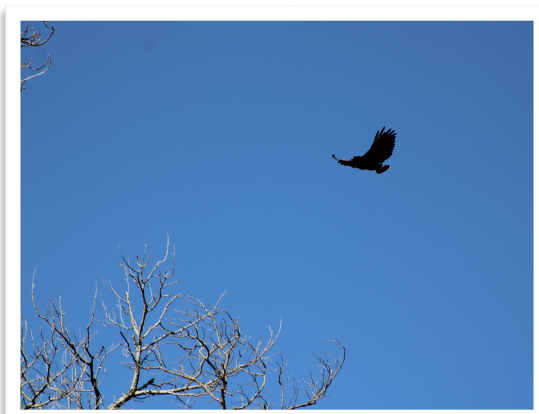
All photos by Laura McCann

spot it. Interestingly, their call is not a descending screech like a Red-tailed Hawk, as you might suspect. Rather it is high pitched and similar to an Osprey. You can listen to their calls on the Cornell Lab of Ornithology website: Common Black Hawk Sounds, All About Birds, Cornell Lab of Ornithology. As a reminder, it is best

practice NOT to make bird calls in the wild since this can confuse or disturb wild



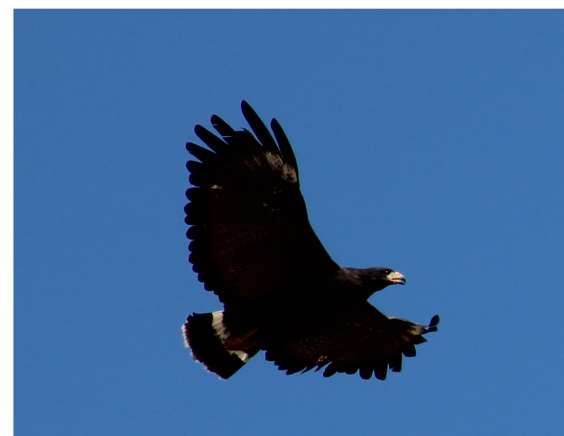
birds. After getting familiar with their voice, I looked into other facts about this species.



On the same website mentioned above, or on a variety of birding apps, you can find pictures and/or drawings of native birds. Using the iBird app, I reviewed images of the Common Black Hawk and noted identification markers unique to this species. It is soot-colored with an orange-yellow cere (above the beak) and legs. It is about the size of a Red-tailed Hawk but has bulkier wings and a distinct white band on the tail.

Reading more about the Common Black Hawk, I discovered they prefer to hunt close to a running water source, such as a river. They eat fish, frogs, other birds, snakes, and even insects! Now it made sense that this bird would be seen soaring over and near Whitfield- our land is close to the Rio Grande and the adjacent bosque, or forest.

Finally, just to be sure, I looked at a range map in the Raptor ID App from HawkWatch International. This is how I knew we were in this bird's territory. Apparently, they have a limited range in New Mexico and are only here in the spring and



(continued on page 7)



HOW TO HELP AN INJURED BIRD

If you find an injured bird, carefully put it in an appropriate size cardboard box with a lid. (Don't give a small bird too much room, or a big bird not enough room). Next, place the box in a warm, dry, and quiet place inside. Do not poke holes in the box! The bird can see through these and become stressed. Don't worry; they can breathe through the cracks. Do NOT give the bird food or water. Birds often go into shock when injured, and their bodies are not ready to eat or drink.



Within 24 hours, get the bird to a licensed Wildlife Rehabilitator. If you do not know who is legally permitted to rehabilitate birds in your area, contact your state's wildlife authority. They should have a list of individuals or organizations with proper permits. In New Mexico, you can contact the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish:



www.wildlife.state.nm.us
(505) 476-8000

If a bird has hit a window and is still alive, it may just need a little time to regain its senses, then may be able to fly away. Just keep cats, dogs, or humans away from the bird until it is safely on its way. Remember, it is **ILLEGAL** to rehabilitate wildlife without a permit. THANK YOU for doing your part to help rescue an injured bird and transport it to a Wildlife Rehabilitator!





LET'S GROW OUTSIDE MUSIC FUNDRAISER!

**JUNE 15TH, 2024
12:30-3 PM**

**UNM VALENCIA CAMPUS
ARTS AND SCIENCE
BUILDING**

**FOOD, MUSIC,
RAFFLE TICKET
\$40**

**MUSIC
THE RIFT VALLEY RAMBLERS
LINCOLN COUNTY**

**SCAN THE QR
CODE TO
PURCHASE
YOUR
TICKETS!**

**FOOD
PROVIDED BY
H2 ACADEMIC
SOLUTIONS**

**RAFFLE
DRAWING!**



SCAN ME

THE RIFT VALLEY RAMBLERS

**ALL PROCEEDS DIRECTLY SUPPORT OUTDOOR EDUCATION
PROGRAMS AT THE WHITFIELD WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AREA AND
TOTAL NM'S PROGRAMS AND OPPORTUNITIES SUPPORTING
OUTDOOR SPACES AT SCHOOLS! THANK YOU!**

Creating a Thriving Pollinator Garden in New Mexico

by Ted Hodoba

Pollinator gardens have become increasingly popular as more people recognize the vital role that pollinators, such as bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds, play in our ecosystem. In New Mexico, where the diverse landscape supports a wide variety of flora and fauna, establishing a pollinator garden can be both rewarding and beneficial. By providing a habitat rich in nectar and pollen, you can attract and support these crucial pollinators while adding beauty to your outdoor space.

When planning a pollinator garden in New Mexico, it is important to consider the unique environmental conditions of our area. The arid climate and high altitude present challenges that gardeners must account for when selecting plants for their pollinator garden. Here are some tips for creating a successful pollinator garden in New Mexico:

1. **Choose Native Plants:** Native plants are well-adapted to the local environment and often require less water and maintenance than non-native species. Some native plants that attract pollinators in New Mexico include penstemon, bee balm, Apache plume, and milkweed.



2. **Provide a Variety of Blooming Plants:** Pollinators rely on a diverse range of flowering plants for food. To attract a wide range of pollinators, choose plants that bloom at different times throughout the growing season. This will ensure that there is a continuous source of nectar and pollen available. Some good choices include Gregg's mistflower, sunflowers - both American (*Helianthus* sp.

and Mexican - *Tithonia*), coneflowers (*Echinacea* sp.) and Salvias,

3. **Include Host Plants:** In addition to nectar-rich flowers, consider including host plants that caterpillars



and larvae can feed on. For example, Milkweed is the sole food source for Monarch butterfly larvae, making it essential for supporting these iconic pollinators.

4. **Create Habitat Diversity:** Pollinators require more than just food – they also need shelter and nesting sites. Incorporate a variety of plant heights, structures, and materials in your garden to provide nesting opportunities for different species of pollinators.

5. **Avoid Pesticides:** Pesticides are harmful to pollinators and are a major cause of pollinator decline. Instead of pesticides, opt for natural pest control methods in your garden. Encourage natural predators like ladybugs and lacewings to keep pest populations in check without resorting to chemical treatments.

6. **Provide Water:** Pollinators need water to survive, so make sure to include a shallow water source in your garden, such as a birdbath or shallow dish filled with pebbles for butterflies to perch on.

At Whitfield, the area in front of the Visitors' Center is landscaped with plants that attract pollinators. These include desert willow, hedgehog cactus, chocolate flower, Autumn sage and others.

("Black Hawk," continued from page 3)

summer. I have included a screenshot of part of the range map with this article. Otherwise, Common Black Hawks are more "common" south of the border in Mexico and into Central America and northern South America.

Excited, I journeyed out into Whitfield hoping to spot one of these hawks! I had my binoculars and a camera with a long-range lens with me. I went on my adventure in the morning, as this is when sources had said these raptors are most likely to be active. I figured the best place to explore would be on the west side of Whitfield, closer to the Rio Grande. Imagine my joy when I heard the call of a Common Black Hawk! Using the Merlin App, I verified this was the call I heard. Then, I looked overhead and saw one of these beautiful hawks soaring in the clear blue sky. Even better, I managed to get some nice photos to share with you! I hope you enjoy them.

Now it's your turn... Next time you hear about an interesting bird in your area, you can also do some research and go exploring to find a new winged neighbor. Happy birding, my friends! 🐦

("Pollinators," continued from page 6)

By following the tips above and choosing the right plants, you can create a vibrant pollinator garden that will attract and support a diverse array of pollinators in New Mexico. Not only will you be contributing to the health of local ecosystems, but you will also have the pleasure of watching colorful butterflies, buzzing bees, and graceful hummingbirds visit your garden throughout the season. 🐝

Ted Hodoba is a longtime friend of the Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area serving as manager of Whitfield for 11 years until his retirement is 2020. Ted holds a masters degree in natural resources management and environmental planning.



Friends Business Sponsors

We couldn't do the work that we do without the support of our members and of course that includes our business sponsors!

Some business sponsors are members of our local community, some have a national presence, but it makes no difference. These businesses believe in supporting our mission to promote the education, restoration and conservation of the Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area. For that we humbly thank them.

And if you should happen to cross their path, please thank them as well. All of us together, we make Whitfield great!



DESERT GREENS EQUIPMENT / NEW MEXICO TRACTOR SALES
PROVIDING SMALL AG & TURF SOLUTIONS



Volunteer News - Spring 2024

by Frank Mazza, FOW Volunteer Coordinator

What do the National Wild Turkey Federation, the Wild Sheep Foundation, and the Friends of Whitfield have in common? Volunteers from the three organizations



joined forces on April 29 + 30 to plant 150 trees and shrubs in a section of the conservation area entitled the turkey sanctuary. Several years ago, the National Wild Turkey Federation helped Whitfield establish the sanctuary through a grant that purchased plants that not only appeal to turkeys but also provide food and shelter for a variety of birds and wildlife. Fast forward to two years ago and the Big Hole Fire. That fire destroyed much of that habitat. The Valencia Soil and Water Conservation District applied for and was awarded a second grant to reestablish the



sanctuary. On the last Friday and Saturday in April upwards of 20 volunteers planted oak trees, willows, and several other tree and shrub species with the goal of enticing turkeys back to Valencia County. They can join a healthy population of pheasants,

coyotes, hawks, birds, and other creatures that already reside at Whitfield.

The workdays noted above are one example of the importance of our volunteers. There have been several recent events at Whitfield including the Star Party, the Ag Appreciation Day, and the Earth Day Fiesta where volunteer help was so valuable. And these events are in addition to the work of the Friends of Whitfield board of trustees, all volunteers, have been involved in, including a complete review of our bylaws, and conducting our membership drive. We can always

use more volunteers, even if it's only for an hour or two a month. The benefits of volunteering have been well



documented, not only for the organization but also for the person giving their time and talent. 🐿️

Frank Mazza, Volunteer Coordinator

FrankMazza@friendsofwhitfield.org or 802-772-5068

Did You RENEW?

As a member your support directly impacts the work we do for the Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area.

It's easy to renew or become a new member by registering on our secure website at:

<https://friendsofwhitfield.org/become-a-member/>



Your grocery purchases can help keep a local Valencia County treasure alive and thriving!



The Friends of Whitfield have teamed up with Smith's to provide an easy way for YOU to support the Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area.

Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area is the only conservation area in Valencia County. Nestled along the Rio Grande in Belen, this 97-acre tract of enhanced wetlands not only serves as a resting place and home to over 200 species of birds but also to hundreds of native plants, shrubs and trees

One of the ways you can help is through Smith's Inspiring Donations program. It makes donating to Friends of Whitfield easy based on the shopping you do every day. Once you link your Smith's Reward Card to Friends of Whitfield, all you have to do is shop at Smith's and swipe your Shopper's Card. Here's how it works:

1. Create a digital account.

A digital account is needed to participate in Smith's Inspiring Donations. If you already have a digital account, simply link your Shopper's Card to your account so that all transactions apply toward the organization you choose. If you don't have a digital account, click [HERE](#).

2. Link your Card to our organization.

Selecting the organization that you wish to support is as simple as updating the Smith's Inspiring Donations selection on your digital account.

1. Sign in to your digital account.
2. Search for your organization [here](#). The name to search for is: **Friends of Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area**
3. Enter the name or NPO number of the organization you wish to support. **Our NPO number is: US071**
4. Select the appropriate organization from the list and click "Save".

Friends of Whitfield will also display in the Smith's Inspiring Donations section of your account. If you need to review or revisit your organization, you can always do so under your Account details.

3. The Friends of Whitfield earns.

Any transactions moving forward using the Shopper's Card number associated with your digital account will be applied to the program, at no added cost to you. Smith's Inspiring Donations will donate 0.5% of all eligible spending to organizations that customers have linked to their Rewards Card.

If you have any questions, please contact Smith's [Customer Service Center](#).

