

Sevilleta Sentinel

Amigos de la Sevilleta Quarterly
Spring, 2014



AMIGOS Tour & Picnic

Saturday, May 3, 2014
9:00 am to 2:00 pm

Spend a spring day at Sevilleta NWR. Wear a hat and sturdy shoes.

Cost is \$30 per member in good standing.

This year, we're charging a flat \$30 for the tour & picnic, as well as changing our membership cycle. See Page 5 for details.

To reserve: (505) 864 4021
Space is limited, reserve early.

Send checks to:
Amigos de la Sevilleta
PO Box 1248
Socorro, NM 87801

Directions to Sevilleta NWR:
Take I-25 to Exit 169, follow signs to Visitor Center (about 50 miles south of Albuquerque).

www.amigosdelasevilleta.org

Destination: Los Pinos & Pino Canyon

This year's members-only tour and picnic takes us to the east side of the refuge, up into the pinon-juniper covered Los Pinos Mountains. Sights along the way include Sevilleta's diverse flora and fauna, current LTER projects, cultural remnants and striking rock formations. Sevilleta staff and native plant expert Judith Phillips will serve as guides.

Scenic Pino Canyon has mostly Pre-Cambrian Age metamorphic rock--schists and gneisses. An old line camp remains from the days when Sevilleta was a ranch, and ancient petroglyphs are visible on the canyon walls.

The primitive road into the canyon washed out last year, making the canyon floor rocky and uneven underfoot. Be sure to bring your walking stick if you wish to hike up the canyon. (And bring your camera, in any case.)

Following our tour, we will picnic at the mouth of Pino Canyon on excellent Middle-Eastern fare – including falafel, grilled lamb, gyro, tabouli, and freshly-baked pita.

It promises to be a highly enjoyable day. Join us!

Field Note: Monarch



Monarch may be the most familiar butterfly to most people. People usually know that they migrate, they eat milkweed and keep the plant poisons in their bodies, and they are boldly colored black and orange.

They are part of several of Seville's biodiversity and often visit home gardens and flower-rich roadsides. However, they are declining in numbers for a variety of reasons, some better understood than others. Our changing agricultural practices and highway maintenance eliminate rough edges where wildflowers and monarchs persist.

In response, more people plant natives that support wildlife. Collecting seeds from native wildflowers in the fall and planting them in home gardens is one way to help. An increasing number of garden suppliers provide native plants. Press your nursery to provide true natives.

If you did not collect milkweed seeds last year, do so this year. Alternatively, buy some native milkweeds and add them to your landscape. If the Monarchs could thank you, they would.

John Wilson

New Board Members

Two new board members were elected at the annual meeting. Welcome!

Jennifer Keller

Jennifer Keller has taught kindergarten and first grade in Socorro for 10 years. She integrates science into every aspect of the curriculum and has coordinated an Outdoor Classroom Project in cooperation with USFWS. Jennifer has held a permit for Wildlife Rehabilitation for 16 years and works mostly with raptors, songbirds and waterfowl. She holds a B.A. in Environmental Science and Conservation from Ohio University in Athens, Ohio.

Sarah McLain



Growing up in New Mexico allowed me to gain an appreciation and passion for the environment at a very young age. I was introduced to environmental engineering when I was exploring career options that would allow me to help the environment and keep the human impact at a minimum. During my freshman year at New Mexico Tech, I realized that the best way for me to help would be through the Law. I plan to finish my education in environmental law to advocate for our natural resources and wildlife.

Message from our President



Our second annual members meeting was a huge success, with over 100 attendees. The weather was at its best, the talk on wolf restoration by Mike Phillips was inspiring, the music by Bernie Romero and Friends was great, and the food, as always, was delicious. Many members took this opportunity to renew their membership and a goodly number of new members signed up. Most of the board is continuing (Tamara Coombs was elected vice president), and we have two very welcome new members; Jennifer Keller and Sarah McClain. You can read their bios elsewhere in this newsletter. We look forward to working with them. If you were unable to attend this year, do think about trying to make it next year.

The board is gearing up for an intensive strategic planning session on April 6th. We will publish the results of this effort in the next newsletter. We have also formed a committee to review the status of the gift shop. Great improvements have been made under the management of Dennis Pritchard and we want to keep up that momentum.

If you haven't visited our website recently, please check it out at <amigosdelasevilleta.org>. Bear Albrecht has done a magnificent job of bringing order to this site. It is a good source to find out what is happening at Sevilleta and to check out upcoming events.

We encourage correspondence with our members. If you have any ideas or suggestions of how we can improve our efforts to support Sevilleta NWR, we would love to hear from you.

Please contact me, or any other board member, with your thoughts.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ian Jenness". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ian Jenness, President

TOURS: April & May, 2014

Sorry, both tours are FULL. Due to cutbacks, the Amigos tour on May 3 is the only tour until September.

Check amigosdelasevilleta.org in August for new tour listings.

Please Rain on Me!

Friday, April 11

8:00 am – 2:00 pm

Learn some fascinating facts about the natives! Join native plant expert and author **Judith Phillips** for a tour of Sevilleta NWR. Grab your camera, hiking boots, water, binoculars, and lunch. Hiking will be over uneven terrain.



Feathered Friends Hike

Saturday, May 10

8:00 am – 2:00 pm

Help us celebrate International Migratory Bird Day as you explore another side of Sevilleta NWR. Join Refuge Manager **Kathy Granillo** for a hike in the riparian area in search for wonderful winged migrants and residents (above is a Scott's oriole). Grab your hiking boots, water, binoculars, and lunch. We also suggest mosquito repellent. To learn more about International Migratory Bird Day, visit www.birdday.org

THE SMALLER MAJORITY



The wildlife photographer Pieter Naskrecki calls his favorites subjects, insects and other invertebrates, “the smaller majority”. Visitors to the Sevilleta come to see its larger inhabitants; pronghorn, prairie dogs, song and water birds,

raptors, big reptiles like the gopher snake and rattlesnake; even tiny ones like the round-horned lizard. But to an observant naturalist the diversity of such things as insects on a natural range like the refuge is almost mind-boggling.

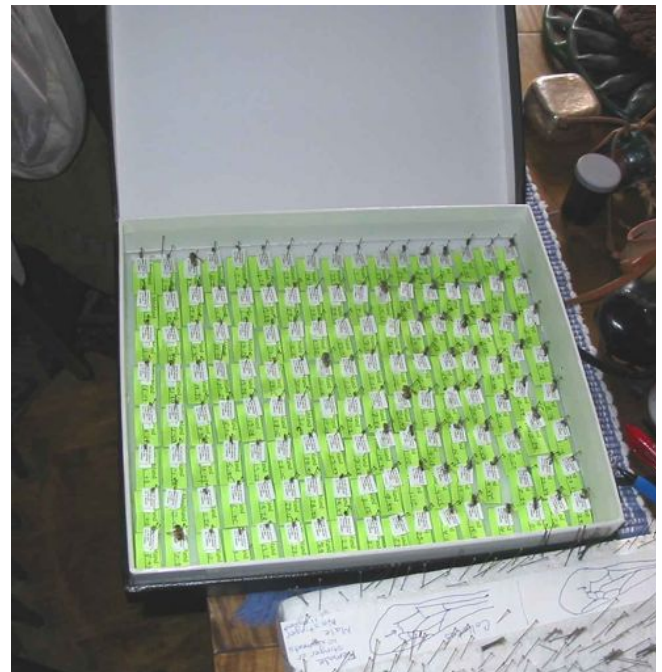
In future newsletters I will speak about many of the Sevilleta’s small creatures. But the first subject that drew me there was bees. About ten years ago the UNM entomologist Karen Wetherill invited me to the Sevilleta to help her with her work. She needed to collect all the species of native bees that were found on creosote brush.

If you were asked about bees you’d certainly know the honeybee (*Apis mellifera*); you probably know bumblebees, and if you were a gardener you might know the carpenter bees, native pollinators. (The honeybee is an introduced species).

At the time that I first became a bee wrangler on the Sevilleta, there were over 600 known native species of

bees in New Mexico. Karen had already found about 50 *new* species. There are now over 2000 and counting.

I collected large black bees much bigger than bumblebees, and species so tiny that they could not be pinned, only glued to a side of a pin under a magnifying lens. What’s more, these last ones had to be sorted by gender, and I had to manipulate the tiny dead bees under the binocular microscope to expose their genitalia, the only way to distinguish some species from others. Next time, I will tell you more about bee diversity.



Bee box, with over 100 native bee specimens.

Stephen Bodio

Author Stephen Bodio stepped down from the board of the Amigos this winter, but will be writing about Sevilleta “critters,” his own experiences on the refuge, and about research at the UNM Field Station.

Help Us Raise Money

Saturday, April 26, 8:30-11:00 am

Meet at Socorro Chamber of Commerce

101 Plaza Street, on the Historic Plaza

Call 505 864 4021 to sign up



Please join Amigos board members in performing a *double* good deed!

We'll meet at 8:30 am on April 26, then head to our clean-up project planned for 9:00-11:00 am. If we can get 20 volunteers to work for two hours we can earn \$300 for Amigos de la Sevilleta and help to Keep Socorro Beautiful at the same time.

For the Keep Socorro Beautiful project, the Socorro Chamber of Commerce will lend volunteers all the necessary equipment (from gloves to garbage bags). Youth participating also receive a t-shirt, courtesy of the City of Socorro and the Keep Socorro Beautiful program. Amigos can earn up to \$300 for our efforts (payment is \$7.50 an hour, per person, not to exceed a collective 40 hours).

The Chamber promotes the volunteer group conducting the clean-up through its Facebook page and website, which will give the Amigos some publicity.

We need to complete a form for the Chamber with the names of all clean-up crew members, so do call Sevilleta at 505 864-4021 if you would like to participate.

See you there!

Deb Caldwell

Membership & Amigos Tour



The Amigos are shifting to an annual calendar membership, January to January, to simplify record keeping and improve our service to members. Those who renew or join during the year will pay a prorated fee.

As mentioned on the front page, the charge for the annual Amigos tour and picnic is no longer combined with the membership fee. The May event is \$30 per member.

If you are renewing, or joining in order to take the Amigos tour & picnic, here is the cost (in red) for the May event plus prorated membership:

Regular individual (\$25/yr) **\$46**

Regular family (\$45) for two **\$92**

Senior individual (\$20) **\$42**

Senior family (\$35) for two **\$84**

Student (\$10) **\$38**

We'll be posting a table of prorated membership fees for the year on the Amigos website <amigosdelasevilleta.org> and at the front desk of the Visitor Center, but don't hesitate to contact me if you have any membership or fee questions.

Hope to see you on May 3,

Tamara Coombs, VP & Membership Chair

tcoombs@centurylink.net



Manager's Corner

First, the not-so-good news :

We are still awaiting our FY 14 refuge budget. It should approximate last year's, but without the salary for our two vacant positions. As you may recall from earlier reports, we also lose the associated 20% of their salary which counts toward project funds. We have been without our administrative clerk for about a year now and without our maintenance worker for 10 months.

Due to cutbacks, the Visitor Center will be closed on Saturdays in June, July and August.

Now, for the good news:

On February 22, we planted 720 Gooding's Willows in wetland Unit B to continue our wetland restoration work. Staff from Socorro Soil and Water Conservation District augered all of the holes for the trees. For trimming and planting pole, we had the help of 20 members of New Mexico Volunteers for the Outdoors plus refuge staff and volunteers. (see photographs).

Our prairie dog reintroduction efforts started up again in March with the trapping of prairie dogs at the NM Game and Fish Department's Bernardo Waterfowl Management Area for relocation to refuge grasslands.

We have been trapping at the refuge grasslands to assess the population of the prairie dogs already living on the refuge in order to determine how well the newer arrivals survived the winter. The first winter is hardest, because the tunnel systems aren't as deep as they become in mature colonies.

We plan to release at least another 350 prairie dogs this year. Most of the prairie dogs that we release come to us from Prairie Dog Pals. They rescue prairie dogs from remnant populations in the Albuquerque area as those areas are slated for development.

Thanks to a new USFWS program aimed at bringing more young people into the agency, we will be hosting a student this summer to conduct a research project for the refuge on the small mammal communities associated with the prairie dog colonies.



In March, the Sierra Club National Outings program brought 26 high school kids from the Lake Forest Academy in Chicago and their 12 adult chaperones to the refuge as volunteers. They helped with prairie dog monitoring, built new den boxes for the captive wolf facility, assisted UNM with the take-down of the infrastructure from a research project and picked up old metal.

We so appreciate all who volunteer at Sevilleta.

Kathy Granillo
Refuge Manager