

OPEN SPACE *newsletter*



Mayor Martin J. Chávez

A Quarterly Newsletter of the Open Space Division and the Open Space Alliance

Volume 7, Issue 1, January - March 2006

Cranes, Grains and No Automobiles

By Bonnie Schmader

We watched as a small group of sandhill cranes slowly circled overhead, spiraling downward with wings extended. One crane called out, as if giving directions to the others. Soon, more cranes joined the chorus, their “garoo-a-a” calls trumpeting all around us. Then, wings down, feet dangling, they awkwardly landed in the alfalfa field, joining over 150 other sandhill cranes enjoying Central New Mexico’s mild winter climate and nutritious forage. No, this isn’t the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, this is Los Poblanos Fields Open Space, right here in the middle of Albuquerque.

These sandhill cranes have flown a long way to get here, some traveling from as far north as Canada, making New Mexico their winter vacation destination. Following the Rio Grande flyway, these cranes forage on grains and invertebrates in nearby agricultural fields during the day, and spend the night on sand bars and in the shallows of the river, safe from coyotes and other predators. These are families traveling with one, sometimes two young ones only a few months old. When they first arrive here, it’s easy to pick out the young from their parents, as they are noticeably smaller. But by the end of winter, the juveniles are nearly as big as their parents, strong and ready to make the difficult migration back up north.

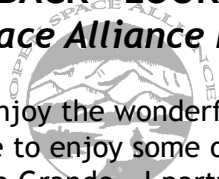
During the winter months, it’s not uncommon to see several hundred sandhill cranes scattered across the 138-acre Los Poblanos Fields Open Space, owned and managed by the City of Albuquerque Open Space Division. Alfalfa is the main crop here, but contract farmer, Scott Rasband also plants wildlife crops such as sorghum, milo and millet as part of his agreement with the City of Albuquerque. In addition, Rio Grande Community Farms plants corn for the annual Maize Maze, as well as at their community garden to enhance forage for cranes and other wildlife to live on during the winter months.

Drawing by Matthew Schmader



cont’d on page 6...

LOOKING BACK - LOOKING AHEAD
Open Space Alliance President



I hope everyone had the opportunity to enjoy the wonderful weather in Albuquerque that stretched late into the fall season. It was an excellent time to enjoy some of the splendid Open Space in our community, especially the cottonwood trees along the Rio Grande. I particularly enjoyed the Paseo del Bosque Trail, just north of the Rio Grande Nature Center.

Some say that fall is the “best time of year”, but looking back on 2005 there were many opportunities that brought people out to Albuquerque’s Open Space areas. During the summer there were the Sunday hikes and Sunset Series at the Elena Gallegos Picnic Area which provided visitors an occasion to learn about the natural and cultural resources on Open Space lands. Low impact recreational opportunities were found in a variety of Open Space areas, including Boca Negra Canyon and in the Rio Grande Valley State Park. There were also plenty of special events for volunteering like National Trails Day, Spring Cleanup in the Foothills, National River Cleanup Week, and Dia del Rio. The Open Space Alliance is pleased to have been a part of many of these special events.

On balance, 2005 was a positive year for the Open Space Alliance. Looking ahead, we see 2006 to be challenging and full of engaging activities. Our Board of Directors has endorsed four priority goals for the upcoming year. They are to:

- 1) Develop Open Space Alliance as a resource, particularly to find and organize financial partners for the Open Space Visitor Center;
- 2) Expand and strengthen Open Space Alliance membership;
- 3) Support Open Space Division special events and ongoing programs; and
- 4) Organize Open Space Alliance projects.

With the New Year, we will be launching an Open Space Alliance web site and an email list-serve for members. Both should enhance communications.

I look forward to a growing membership and success in preserving and promoting Open Space lands in Albuquerque.

Steven Hamp, Open Space Alliance President



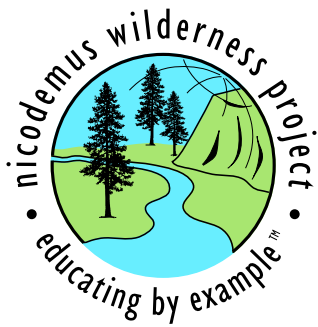
WELCOME!
New Staff



The Open Space Division is pleased to welcome James Marmon to the staff. James fills Jim Sattler’s former position as Park Specialist. Jim Sattler is now the manager of the Resource Management and Visitor Service Section. Though Jim has a new set of responsibilities, he will still be sharing his field expertise and working alongside volunteers on the trail.

James returns to his native New Mexico from Alaska where he worked as the visitor service manager for Tongas Historical Museum and Totem Heritage Center in Ketchikan. James will be managing Open Space park facilities and staff, and assisting with volunteer projects.

If the name Marmon sounds familiar, it may mean that you are an Albuquerque history buff. James is a descendant of Walter G. Marmon who has the distinction of naming some of Albuquerque’s well-known streets in the late 1800’s when the railroad came to town. Some of the streets he named include Broadway, Edith, Coal and Lead.



NICODEMUS WILDERNESS PROJECT

Encouraging Stewardship by Example

The Robert F. Nicodemus Memorial Wilderness Project (Nicodemus Wilderness Project) is an essential contributor to the continued restoration and maintenance of Open Space properties, specifically the Piedra Lisa Open Space. The Nicodemus Wilderness Project adopted the Piedra Lisa Open Space in July 2001 as the first official member of the City of Albuquerque’s Adopt-an-Open-Space initiative. The Project was awarded the Outstanding Adoption Group of 2004 for hundreds of volunteer hours and the exceptional work they have accomplished at Piedra Lisa Open Space.

The Albuquerque based 501(c)(3) nonprofit, Nicodemus Wilderness Project, was founded in 1999 because of the need for environmental restoration, stewardship, and protection of neglected public lands. The project fulfills the ideals of its mission by coordinating wilderness restoration activities that utilize the resources of the local community.

The Nicodemus Wilderness Project has been involved with Make a Difference Day since 2000 with their coordination of hundreds of volunteers on trail cleanup and restoration activities. The Nicodemus Wilderness Project’s president, Robert K. Dudley, and the vice president, Yih-Ming coordinated efforts for this year’s event that included litter removal, restoration work, and trail maintenance. This trail system involves closing off unsustainable existing trails, rerouting trails, restoring and improving drainage on existing trails, and installing trail signage.

APPRENTICE ECOLOGIST INITIATIVE

The Nicodemus Wilderness Project has formed a unique program that engages youth, teens, and college-age youth to participate in wilderness and nature litter cleanup projects within their communities. This program encourages youth to focus on volunteerism, environmental stewardship, and writing.

Interested participants must plan a trip to a wilderness area, mountain, river, park, or shoreline with the purpose of litter cleanup. Each applicant must then submit an essay about the trip along with a photo. The essay will be published on the Nicodemus website, and the applicant will be awarded an official Certificate of Achievement.

For further information on the Apprentice Ecologist Initiative or the Nicodemus projects, go to the following website, www.wildernessproject.org.



Photo courtesy of Nicodemus Wilderness Project

Apprentice Ecologist Initiative participants at Piedra Lisa Open Space



Photo courtesy of Nicodemus Wilderness Project

Another *Apprentice Ecologist Initiative* participant

january

7 BEHIND-THE-SCENES OPEN SPACE VISITOR CENTER TOUR / VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION 10:00 am - Noon

There is still a lot of work to be done before the facility is ready for the public, but renovations to the Open Space Visitor Center are nearly complete. And we want YOU to be the first to see it! In the first hour guests who are Open Space Volunteers can collect awards they earned from 2004. Others are invited to mix, mingle and enjoy a continental brunch. In the second hour, tour guides Bonnie Schmader and Myrna Marquez will show off our new facility and help you visualize what's to come. We will also tell you how you can be involved in the development and operation of this exceptional facility. Please RSVP with Jodi Hedderig @ 452-5210.

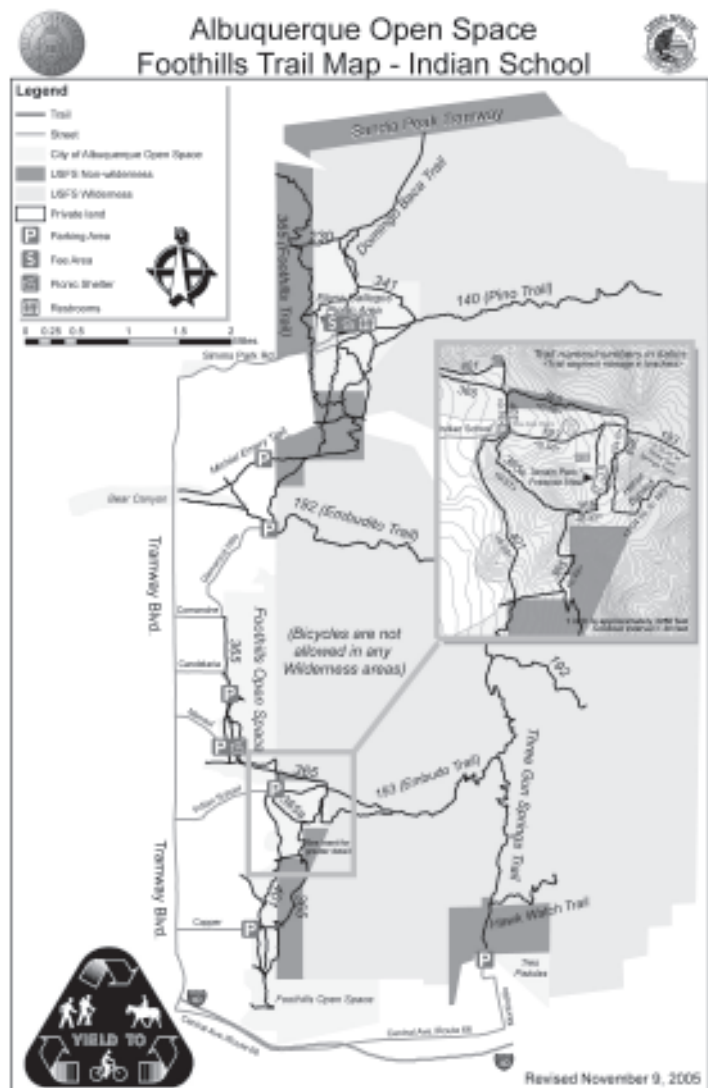


Thanks to the great work of Erik Zsemlye, whom we fondly call the “Open Space GIS Guy,” we are proud to announce that the brand spankin’ new foothill maps are ready!

What’s so great about these maps? Not only do they include all the *official* trails in the foothills painstakingly GPSed by Erik, he has taken the maps a step further by detailing the area around the 6 main Open Space trailheads and turning each into their own map. For instance, the Indian School map to the right shows the full foothills trail system and also includes a detailed inset of the Indian School area.

Where can you get these maps? If you have internet service, you can print them directly from our website at www.cabq.gov/openspace/trailmaps.

These maps will also be available at the Elena Gallegos Information Center in brochure format and posted at each of the foothill’s trailheads in the near future.



THE WILLIS WARBLER

Bird News from Observations Made in Open Space

by Joshua Willis

The fall months of October and November bring colder weather. This adjustment in temperature initiates an ancient tradition for birds -- migration. For those of us living in New Mexico, the winged migration of several bird species lures us into our City's Open Spaces to observe the many sounds and colors these travelers possess.

Open Space around Albuquerque often serve as important rest areas or even winter homes for birds flying south to escape the cold of the northern hemisphere. On any given morning during the fall and winter, one can observe migrating birds interacting with their environment.

Albuquerque's geography is extraordinary due to the diverse landscape within its boundary. A fifteen minute drive can take one to the sparse beauty of the west mesa, the lush canopy of the Rio Grande Bosque, or the rocky terrain of the Sandia Mountain. Each of these places will reveal several species of bird that live and feed on resources specific to that area. And each Open Space facility within these special areas offers unique bird watching opportunities.

My bird observation for this issue comes from Elena Gallegos, located within the foothills of the Sandia Mountain. During the month of November a great number of Northern Flickers can be observed migrating down from the highlands to the warmer winter climates. These birds are fairly large woodpeckers. The flicker has a diverse diet which includes insects, seeds and berries. The juniper trees of Elena Gallegos offer safety and food due to their dense foliage and abundance of juniper berries in the fall. But these trees offer the same resources to another familiar bird, the Scrub Jay. The two birds are similar in size, yet the jay is more or less a permanent resident of the central New Mexico landscape.

The jay seems to feel a need to make itself look bigger in order to ward off the intruding flicker. The jay can be seen at the top of the juniper tree with fluffed chest and watchful eyes. The flicker, however, seems more concerned with feeding and

movement than with the insulted jay. Even so, a posturing match ensues and the two birds negotiate use of the trees.

This example of wildlife is but a small part of the wealth of natural heritage and beauty that is available to us everyday. Our City's Open Spaces are important to, not only us, but the churning natural world. We may aid these special places by making them part of our awareness. Through small observations and volunteering we as Albuquerque residents play an active role in stewardship. These actions ensure a balanced future between our growing city and the accommodating land where we live.

Build a Flicker House



Visit <http://magazine.audubon.org/backyard/backyard0205.html> to download complete instructions for building a flicker birdhouse.

Cranes, Grains...cont'd from page 1

Los Poblanos Fields Open Space is open to the public year-around. Acquired as Major Public Open Space in 1997, the City of Albuquerque's Open Space Division and its partners manage the property as farmland and wildlife habitat. Citizens enjoy the property as well by walking, jogging, horse-back riding and bicycling along the farm and ditch roads. Wildlife viewing is especially popular during the winter months when hundreds of cranes, geese and ducks cover the fields.

In addition to natural history, Los Poblanos Fields is rich with cultural history as well. From Ancestral Puebloan gardens of corn, beans and squash dependent on seasonal floodwaters, to Spanish farms irrigated by acequia systems, to dairy farms, to what is now Major Public Open Space, the land at Los Poblanos Fields has seen many changes and uses.

Los Poblanos Fields Open Space is a bright green jewel in the crown of Albuquerque. It preserves agricultural land and farming - a way of life that is quickly disappearing. It provides resident and migratory wildlife with critical habitat, and it gives citizens a place to enjoy and appreciate the quiet solitude of an agricultural and wildlife habitat area in the heart of Albuquerque. The Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge is a great place to see sandhill cranes and other wildlife, but if you want to save time and gas, drive a short distance to Los Poblanos Fields and take a walk around **your** Open Space lands. If you want to see the cranes, visit between now and the end of February, because come one warm, clear March day when the winds are blowing just right, something in their ancient brains will tell them its time to go. They will launch themselves into wide, low circles while calling to each other, rising on thermals until they are almost out of sight several thousand feet high, reaching crosswinds that will send them back up north on their timeless, cyclical journey.

CRANEOLOGY 101

1. Sandhill Cranes have a variety of vocalizations, but the most common is generally described as a repeated series of trumpeting "garoo-a-a-a" calls that can be heard for over a mile. One of the reasons for this remarkably loud and penetrating call is because of its unusual windpipe. Most birds' tracheas pass directly from the throat to the lungs, but in Sandhill cranes, it is elongated by forming a single loop which fills a cavity in the sternum, coiled upon itself like a French horn.
2. Contrary to popular belief, the red patch atop a crane's head is naked skin, not feathers.
3. Cranes can fly 25-38 mph.
4. Cranes are highly revered by many cultures, especially in the Orient. Cranes are admired for their fidelity, longevity, good fortune, insight, love of peace, beauty, vigilance and nobility.
5. Cranes are among some of the oldest surviving birds; a sandhill crane fossil wing bone was discovered in Nebraska and estimated to be over 9 million years old.
6. Newborn crane chicks grow quickly, enabling them to migrate early and over great distances.

...if you go

Please obey the following rules if you visit Los Poblanos Fields Open Space -- remember, this is a working farm, and an important wildlife habitat area:

- *Day-use area only -- no camping is allowed.
- *No motorized vehicles allowed on interior farm roads or ditch roads.
- *All pets must be kept on a leash at all times.
- *Please pick up after your pet.
- *No firearms allowed
- *No hunting of any kind.
- *No chasing or harassing wildlife -- keep a respectful distance, remember this is their habitat.

Directions: Los Poblanos Fields Open Space is located off of Montano Road, between 4th Street and the river. Turn north on Tierra Viva Road, parking is to the left.

Up and Down

By Edie Murray

(selection from Finding Refuge in Nature: Poem, Essays and Art Inspired by Open Spaces)

An hourglass of time, Sandia.
Movement from the wind
To a breeze across the mesa.

Oneness- mountain becomes mesa,
Together from the source.
A dragonfly above the brush
To a vulture high.

From a gravel in the ravine,
To a rock it came from, protecting it from above.

Man climbing over rocks-
Man resting in the piñon shade,
Uplifted in spirit, yet depressed
At the fleeting moment never to be experienced again.

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Get involved in the Open Space Alliance today and contribute to the future of YOUR Open Space!

Your generous contribution to the Open Space Alliance supports OSA's mission of enhancing our quality of life through: heightening public awareness of Open Space lands; building and strengthening partnerships with groups who share Open Space values; promoting conservation, acquisition, and stewardship of Open Space lands; strengthening volunteerism and community outreach programs; providing financial support.

For information about our current activities, contact Steve Hamp, OSA Board President, at shamp7@comcast.net, or 247-2523.

To join, please fill out the information and return the form with your check or money order.

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP CODE: _____

HOME PHONE: _____ E-MAIL: _____

- () NEW MEMBER () \$10 STUDENT (18 & UNDER) / SENIOR () \$250 SUSTAINING
() RENEWAL () \$20 INDIVIDUAL () \$500 CORPORATE
() \$30 FAMILY () \$1000 LIFE MEMBER

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 Monday through Friday
 873-6620

ELENA GALLEGOS PICNIC AREA
 Winter: 7:00 am to 7:00 pm
 Summer: 7:00 am to 9:00 pm
 all week
 \$1.00 weekdays / \$2.00 weekends
 857-8334

PETROGLYPH NATIONAL MONUMENT
Boca Negra Canyon
Las Imagenes Visitor Center
 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, all week
 \$1.00 weekdays / \$2.00 weekends

RIO GRANDE VALLEY STATE PARK
Rio Grande Nature Center
 2901 Candelaria NW
 (505) 344-7240
 10:00 am to 5:00 pm, all week
 \$3 vehicle / \$15 van or bus

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 7:00 am to 11:00 pm, all week
 (505) 873-6632 (voice/relay)

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