

Golden Gazette

Thank you to those who contributed name suggestions!



Valley Gold Summer Solstice



~by Karen Herzenberg, Natural History Educator and Consultant

Valle de Oro was named for the Valley Gold Dairy, and part of that “gold” came from the sun, literally and figuratively. The sun’s energy helps grow the feed that made the dairy cows produce milk for the dairy, and the sun’s light brought a golden glow to the sky and land each day, especially at dawn and dusk.

Each year the summer solstice falls between June 20 and June 22. This year, Saturday, June 21 will be the day of the year with the most sunlight hours. People throughout the northern hemisphere celebrate this high point of summer and sunlight in June, while people in the southern hemisphere celebrate it in December. The word “solstice” comes from the Latin word for sun (sol) and to stand still (sistere) reflecting the fact that the sun appears to stand still before “moving” south again. Sol, of course, is also the Spanish word for “sun,” and this Latin root gives us the English words “solar” and “parasol.”

Valle de Oro invites you to the refuge for the solstice on Saturday, June 21 to learn more about the sun’s energy and its power over our lives. Volunteers from the Albuquerque Astronomical Society will bring solar scopes for safe viewing of the sun, kids of all ages are invited to make s’mores with solar ovens, and the NM Solar Energy Association will have a booth as well! Join us for a fun afternoon of free, family-friendly activities on the refuge!

For more information, please contact:

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Upcoming Events & Deadlines

June 17: Public Meeting at Mountain View Community Center, 5-7pm

June 21: Trust for Public Lands Day on the Refuge *RSVP required, 9-12pm

June 21: Refuge Open House *Volunteers Needed, 1-4pm

June 23: Valle de Oro Urban Garden Dedication at Mountain View Community Center, 11am-12pm

July 12: Refuge Open House *Volunteers Needed, 9am – 12pm

July 19: 100th Anniversary of the Albuquerque Wildlife Federation, Details TBA

August 16: Refuge Open House *Volunteers Needed, 9am – 12pm

August 23: “Looking to the Future of Wilderness” Sunset walk at VdONWR & movie at Guitierrez Hubbell House, 7-10pm

Ongoing: Valle de Oro Photo Contest, Deadline for entry: Sept. 19

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Have a Field Day!



~Teresa Skiba, FWS Vista Intern

On May 2, just weeks before public schools were released for summer vacation, Valle de Oro celebrated its partnership with Mountain View Elementary School by hosting the refuge's first school-wide field day event!

380 students, teachers and parents visited the refuge to participate in field day activities. Students circulated through activities including Bird Olympics, the skulls and skins table, the education trailer, a nature scavenger hunt, and presentations by Hawks Aloft and Talking Talons. Also, fifth graders participated in archery and an exploratory bosque walk. During lunch paletas from Pop Fizz Ice Cream Parlor were handed out to surprised and excited students and teachers. The day was ended by volunteers gifting bright yellow Valle de Oro cinchpacks to each student with a happy thank you.

Valle de Oro looks forward to making the field day an annual event at the refuge!

Junior Duck Stamp Awards Ceremony



Honoring Young Artists-Conservationists: The Junior Duck Stamp Awards Ceremony

~Adrienne Warner, Friends Member and Volunteer

The day dawned bright and - lucky for us- windless on the fields of Valle de Oro on Saturday, May 3. As part of the May Open House at the refuge, we hosted a Duck Stamp Awards Ceremony to honor the many award-winners of the Junior Duck Stamp Art Contest.

This national program encourages young people from kindergarten through 8th grade to learn about waterfowl and wetland conservation, and to artistically represent one species of duck, goose or swan in a visual display. Eleven of the thirty winners brought their families and art teachers to the refuge, many visiting for the first time.

Since Valle de Oro hosted this program for the state of New Mexico this year, the refuge was an appropriate setting to congratulate winners of the art contest at the Awards Ceremony. Flyover Mallards and foraging Canada geese added to the ambiance and provided really great bird watching opportunities!

After Refuge Manager, Jennifer Owen-White's welcoming remarks, we got right down to business. Each winner was called forward to receive a ribbon and applause, and was invited to talk about his or her artistic process in creating the Junior Duck Stamp design. I was impressed with the degree of preparation the artists put into their creations, as well as the poise of each, as they all spoke in front of the big crowd. The first-, second-, third-place and Best of Show winners also received a pair of binoculars provided by the Friends of Valle de Oro NWR, and although many winners were not able to attend the ceremony, their ribbons and binoculars were mailed to them.

Once each winner was honored, more applause ensued and we posed for photographs. The

Awards Ceremony concluded with cookies and lemonade also provided by the Friends of Valle de Oro NWR.

The 2014 Junior Duck Stamp winners include:

Best of Show: Lily Zhang (Albuquerque)

Best of Show, Conservation Message: Isabel Otero (Los Lunas)

1st Place: Isaiah Abeyta (Los Lunas), Hayden Stuart (Los Lunas), Abigail Whitehead (Roswell)

2nd Place: Nathaniel Arellano (Albuquerque), Isabel Otero (Los Lunas), Daniel Saenz (Pecos), Dylan Zinn (Albuquerque)

3rd Place: Tristin Corey (Los Lunas), Sidney Davis (Albuquerque), Danielle Lopez (Los Lunas)

Honorable Mention: Shannon Barba (Tijeras), Dorothy Booth (Los Lunas), Kylie Colvill (Los Lunas), Jake Cuthbert (Albuquerque), Karlee Dearholt (Los Lunas), Julian Garcia (Glorieta), Adrienne Garcia (Albuquerque), Vincent James (Albuquerque), Lukus Kasuboski (Roswell), Kadin Kasuboski (Roswell), Mattheu Kasuboski (Roswell), Ruben Magnes (Pecos), Gabrielle Nemer (Albuquerque), Nicholas Petty (Albuquerque), Alisha Richard (Silver City), Maggie Sanchez (Magdalena), Brian Talley (Albuquerque), Jachin Whitehead (Roswell), and Tara Wood (Los Lunas).

In addition to the winners, I'd like to congratulate all 210 students who participated in the 2014 contest. It is heartening that these students are part of the next generation of conservationists.

I would also like to recognize the 19 teachers who incorporated Junior Duck Stamp activities into their curriculum and encouraged their students to enter the contest. Many teachers face a tiny to non-existent art supply budget and their resourcefulness and motivation to help their students' endeavors are worthy of much praise. The participating teachers include: Jennifer Armstrong (Kirtland), Susana Arredondo (Anthony), Delfine Baca (Belen), Veronica Barba (Tijeras), Kathryn Caffrey (Albuquerque), Leo Cano (Anthony), Lea Ann Cook (Silver City), Melissa Culler (Kirtland), Matthew Dawson (Kirtland), Terry Duncan (Los Lunas), Stephanie Finch (Magdalena), Theresa Hall (Albuquerque), Candace Hodoba (Belen), Karen Ismari (Pecos), Peggy Mason (Roswell), Brenda McCallon (Albuquerque), Alfonso Otero (Los Lunas), Rebecca Ramzel (Magdalena), and Tina Stallard (Corrales).

The Junior Duck Stamp program is a yearly curriculum resource and culminates in the annual Art Contest. It isn't too early to start planning for next year's contest! Anyone 5-18 years-old can participate, whether instruction is given through public or private school, art studio lessons, or independent study. Please visit www.fws.gov/juniorduck for more information, or contact me directly at ranchodelibro@gmail.com.

Special thanks to Jennifer Owen-White, Karen Herzenberg, the Mountain View Community Center for the loan of the chairs, and you, the Friends of Valle de Oro NWR, for helping to make the Awards Ceremony a rousing success!

Volunteer Opportunities

Hi, my name is Patti Plagge and I am the newly appointed Events Committee co-chairperson. I am a retired Fish & Wildlife Service employee of 30 years and worked with the National Wildlife Refuge program. Now I want to support our newest refuge, Valle de Oro. Diane Reese has done an amazing job as the Events Chairperson and we will now co-chair the Events Team together.

With many opportunities to share the refuge and the Friends' message at open houses, grower's markets, and other community events, it is important to have the support of our Friends and volunteers. We want to spread the word about the refuge and all the great things happening currently, and the exciting upcoming developments as the refuge takes shape. To do this, we need help from all of you!

We are asking the Friends to give an hour or two each month to support events. Not too much to ask, is it? Please consider helping Valle de Oro and the Friends by participating in public events. All it takes are 2-4 hours to be at the Friends events table to share with the public the work we are doing, encourage others to learn about the refuge, and offer the opportunity to become a member of the Friends group and purchase Friends merchandise.

Volunteering as a Friends member at these events will help Valle de Oro NWR directly. Each hour of volunteering translates into additional funding for the refuge from the Fish and Wildlife Service. Additionally, volunteer hours benefit the refuge and Friends group directly by making it possible to receive grant funding. Each hour can be used as an "in kind" service when applying for grants.

Incentives for volunteering are fun! As you accumulate volunteer hours for the Friends you'll receive some great items:

- 25 Hours – Friends of Valle de Oro writing pen
- 50 Hours – Friends Water Bottle
- 75 Hours – Friends Shopping Bag/Tote
- 100 Hours – Personalized Name Badge
- 150 Hours – Friends Cinch Pack
- 250 Hours – Friends T-Shirt
- 500 Hours – Friends Hat
- 750 Hours – Friends Hoodie

And that's not all!!!! As a Fish & Wildlife Service volunteer, you'll get a volunteer hat and t-shirt right away so you can wear it when doing work directly for the refuge. There are great incentives for accumulating hours for that work as well!

Please email me at plplagge@gmail.com to find out more or to let me know when you are able to join the Friends for events. Please reference the Dates section of this newsletter for upcoming events. Thank you and we look forward to having a great time with everyone!

Native Fish in the Classroom Project



~by [Angela Palacios James](#), FWS Fish Biologist

The Native Fish in the Classroom (NFIC) project is an environmental education program designed to engage students, while learning about natural resource conservation. It is a hands-on approach that allows students to raise and subsequently release native fish into their native habitat.

New Mexico FWCO's NFIC project was first developed in 2011 and is based on the national program Trout in the Classroom. Through regional funding, biologists were able to procure four aquariums with all the equipment and accessories necessary to raise fish in a classroom setting. In addition, biologists developed a resource and activity guide specific to Rio Grande

cutthroat trout and fishes of the Middle Rio Grande in New Mexico.

Biologists introduce to the students the field of fisheries, the NFIC project, and the responsibilities that they will soon have when the native fish are delivered to their class. The fish can be either Rio Grande cutthroat trout or several small-bodied species of the Middle Rio Grande. The responsibilities the students are entrusted with provide them an opportunity to develop a personal connection.

Although NMFWCO Fish Biologists provide technical assistance and classroom activities throughout the semester, it's the teachers who deliver many of the lessons provided in the NFIC Resource and Activity Guides. Through the teacher's guidance and participation, the students have the opportunity to expand their knowledge and awareness of the aquatic ecosystems and natural resource conservation. Gratefully, teachers like Brenna Irving, who have been with the project since its inception, make the project what it is and believe it to be a useful tool in the classroom.

"The program benefits my students because it is a long-term project, not just a quick science lesson, in which students can learn how science really works. This project helps them connect to their environment (especially since the fish are from the Rio Grande). I am able to make a lot of connections to science and math concepts from my classroom to the fish tank. Students learn how to make observations and hypothesis. They also learn responsibility and teamwork. Students also have the opportunity to work with biologists, which broadens their possible career interests and also allows them to ask questions." Brenna Irving, 5th Grade Teacher - Valle Vista Elementary School

At the end of the NFIC season, students from every school gather for the NFIC - Releasing the Natives Field Days (Field Days). These Field Days provide an opportunity for students to visit the Rio Grande and release their fish into their native habitats. The simple act of putting a living animal that a student has been responsible for, into a river that flows through their city makes for a concrete connection. In addition, students are exposed to additional natural resources topics as they rotate through various field stations. As the NFIC project has grown, the number of organizations and agencies participating in the Field Day has grown to include Bureau of Land Management - Taos Field Office, Bosque School/Bosque Environmental Monitoring Program, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, Valle Del Oro National Wildlife Refuge, and the U.S. Forest Service. Additional support has also been provided by the Friends of Valle Del Oro National Wildlife Refuge and the Albert I. Pierce Foundation.

Since 2011, the project has grown from 130 students across four schools to 319 students across six schools. Biologists work to improve the program each year, working to making it as purposeful and beneficial to the teachers and students participating in the project. For past videos please visit our [website](#).

Urban Bird Treaty City



~by Teri Jillson, FVDONWR President

Albuquerque is now an Urban Bird Treaty City!

Established in 1999, the Urban Migratory Bird Treaty (UBT) program was created to help municipalities conserve birds that live, nest, overwinter, and migrate through cities. This program works with cities and partners to raise awareness about migratory birds through adult and youth education, hazard reductions, citizen science, invasive species management, and conservation and habitat improvement strategies in urban/suburban areas.

For a majority of people, birds are their most frequent contact with wildlife.

"Birds are a valuable resource, contributing aesthetically, culturally, scientifically, and economically to America's citizens...Birds pollinate plants, disperse seeds, are critical links in the food web, and play significant roles in insect pest control." ~Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds Program Handbook

Birds are widely considered indicators of the health of the environment. Increasing awareness of migratory birds is a good way to engage people in better understanding their environment and hopefully taking action to keep it healthy and safe for birds---and for people. Also the economic value of birds is obvious when you think about the fact that birding is a multi-billion dollar industry in the US.

Jennifer Owen-White, Valle de Oro NWR Manager, with help from other partners, applied for a grant to make Albuquerque an Urban Bird Treaty City---and we were awarded the grant! The partners include Friends of Valle de Oro NWR, Friends of Rio Grande Nature Center, ABQ Open Space, Bernalillo County Open Space, Central New Mexico Audubon Society, and others.

There are many exciting things planned using the money awarded! The Friends of VDO are

particularly involved with educating and engaging citizens in monitoring and advocating for birds and their conservation, and also fostering youth environmental education with a focus on birds. The grant specifies that FVDONWR will host or assist with bird festivals such as Soaring in the South Valley, Backyard Bird Counts, Christmas Bird Counts, Summer Wings Festival, Festival of the Cranes, the Junior Duck Stamp Program and more. We will be involved in engaging school groups with programs and classes, and hosting an educator's event to inform teachers about bird related resources and curricula.

Other activities included in the grant include reprinting the South Valley Bird Guide, setting up a bird banding site at Valle de Oro NWR, creating a backyard habitat guide, doing an ABQ metro area Big Year, creating an ABQ metro area Birding Trail, hosting a bird centered conservation career day for APS students, creating a bilingual section of the Bosque Education Guide focused on birds and habitat, and conducting Bosque Education workshops.

There will be an UBT City kick-off event at the refuge sometime this summer. We will let you know the details when they become available. And remember---you can always check our [Facebook](#) page to keep informed about upcoming events and happenings with the Friends and the refuge.

Each of us makes decisions in our daily lives that have the potential to either help or harm wildlife. In the case of birds, it can be something as simple as keeping pet cats indoors, turning off lights in a high-rise office building at night, and choosing bird-friendly native plants for our backyards. You can also help by volunteering to assist with these UBT program events and projects! Please contact [Teri Jillson](#), if you are interested---the birds and the Friends could really use your help!

Valle de Oro NWR Internship Experience



~by Hailey Suina, FWS Valle de Oro Intern

When the time comes for high school students to choose an internship that best suits their future careers, most do not always get what they want, which is a real bummer because you're stuck with something that hardly involves your passion. I myself, love to write. Therefore I wanted to follow down the path of Journalism and such, so working with biologists and hydrologists was something far out of my comfort zone.

When I first came to intern with the Valle de Oro Wildlife Refuge, I expected to spend every day in the office doing filing, running errands, etc. However, that turned out not to be the case. We were out traveling to Bosque de Apache, touring the refuge and going birding. Visiting the Valle de Oro refuge and overseeing its progress as well as getting the community involved when we worked with the Mountain View Elementary children to help set up a community garden.

The time that was seldom spent in the office was hardly the boring experience me and my fellow interns had expected. We would sit in on meetings with hydrologists and listen to their accounts of how they could control the waterways and move rivers, things that all sounded like an amazing science fiction film. I felt like the odd one out at first because my interests were so different than the rest of the interns, but throughout my whole experience, I learned that writers and photographers are just as important as the hydrologists and the biologists.

I learned that there is so much being done to keep the animals alive and to keep the land

clean and protected, being Native American, my fellow interns and I took such activities seriously, having been taught that the earth is sacred. This experience was an awe inspiring, eye opener for me to see and to learn all that goes into wildlife conservation. My fellow interns and I were honored to be Valle de Oro's first interns. It truly was an experience to treasure, and an opportunity that every teenager should have the privilege to be a part of.

Valle de Oro NWR Public Meeting



The next Valle de Oro NWR Public Meeting is coming up on June 17th from 5-7pm at the Mountain View Community Center. Come see the conceptual designs that were created based on YOUR comments and ideas, and of course give us more input to make them even better!

Please help us spread the word! We hope to see you and all of your friends, family and neighbors there.

Donations Needed

Please consider helping the Friends of Valle de Oro NWR with a donation!

Donations of the following items or a cash donation to purchase them are needed. They would be greatly appreciated in and are tax deductible. Please contact [Kathy Caffrey](#) for more information.

- Laptop with the ability to operate current software
- Hard drives to store photos
- Printer

This information is provided to the Friends of Valle de Oro NWR members and interested parties. For more information about the Friends please visit our [Facebook](#) page or [email](#) us at friendsofvdonwr@gmail.com. To make a submission to the next newsletter, please email us at friendsofvdonwr.newsletter@gmail.com.

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