



President's Letter

Dear Friends,

We've reached that time of the year—the season of giving thanks and giving gifts!

I'm so thankful for you: our members, volunteers, and donors! Your support has enabled us to reach some exciting milestones this year. We established a college scholarship for a student in an environmentally related field of study. We helped develop the Environmental and Economic Justice Strategic Plan—the first of its kind in the nation for a public land site. We hired an Executive Director and launched our new brand—both of which will expand our capacity to support Valle de Oro. The Friends also helped with the completion of the Refuge's Environmental Assessment, which will allow work to begin on the visitors' center and restoration efforts. And that is just a sampling of what your investment has allowed us to accomplish in 2017!

I'm thankful that we have our beautiful Valle de Oro Refuge to enjoy and experience. It is all too easy to forget what a miracle our Refuge is, or how rare Valle de Oro's experience has been. So many elements had to come together to make Valle de Oro the success it has become—land becoming available, a community willing to believe, entities ready to provide funding, and supporters there every step of the way. Plenty of vacant pieces of land exist throughout the country, but only a tiny fraction ever get transformed into the kind of welcoming, inspiring place that the Refuge is today. Give thanks that our grand experiment has triumphed!

Please consider giving a gift of Valle de Oro to keep the vision going: gift a Friends' membership to one of your friends, wrap up some of our fabulous merchandise to put under the tree, or make a donation to the Friends (in your name or someone else's). Giving the gift of Valle de Oro is not only a gift to a family member or loved one, it is a gift to the community—to students

who come to the Refuge on a field trip, to neighbors who live near the Refuge, and of course, to the wildlife that call the Refuge home.

Whether you purchase a membership for a loved one, whether you make a donation, or even if you just buy a T-shirt, supporting the Friends of Valle de Oro shows you care.

Warm wishes to all of our Friends and your families this holiday season!

Sincerely,

Teri Jillson
President

We Need Your Help on Giving Tuesday, Nov 28!

The Friends of Valle de Oro are excited to take part in #GivingTuesday, a national movement dedicated to giving back to the community. This year, consider renewing your membership, encouraging someone new to become a member, or making a donation to the Friends on November 28th, 2017. Your contributions and support help us give back to your Refuge by providing buses for school kids' field trips, compensating local artists who beautify our refuge, creating and funding new apps and virtual tours that help visitors engage with the Refuge, and more.



We need your help, and it's easy.

- Please consider making a year-end gift on Tuesday the 28th. If you wish to give online, you can do so at the Friends website:
<http://friendsofvalledeoro.wildapricot.org/donate>
- Help us get as many people involved as possible by sharing your information about #GivingTuesday to your colleagues, friends, and family members.
- Visit <https://doublethedonation.com/giving-tuesday/> to see if your employer will match your gift and increase your impact. Many companies will double or even triple donations to non-profits!
- Don't have money to give? No problem. We welcome the impact of your voice and actions! Sign up to volunteer, join a new committee or simply help spread the word about the Friends of Valle de Oro. For more information on how to get involved, please contact Aryn LaBrake at aryn@friendsofvalledeoro.org.

Check Out Our New Logo and Look!

The Friends of Valle de Oro has a brand new look! This fresh new logo and look communicates our energy and commitment to supporting the mission of Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge. The new logo features our favorite Refuge regular: the kestrel. This new look marks an exciting evolution of our work. What began as a grassroots community organization project has grown into a strong and dedicated cross-sector team of community members, conservationists, environmental justice advocates, and Friends like you. We'll be announcing more events, and chances to win T-shirts, stickers, magnets and more with our new look.



We thank you for your support so far, and look forward to your continued involvement as we prepare for big projects ahead.

Christmas Bird Count Fun!

You'll have to wait a few weeks to count the presents under your tree at home, but you can come to the Refuge on December 16 to count some presents who live in the trees. Join us for the Refuge's Christmas Bird Count. We will gather at the Refuge's Education Building at 7 am on December 16. The Bird Count will be guided, so do not worry if you have never done it before. RSVP with Ariel Elliott if you wish to participate: vdocbc@gmail.com or [505-933-4924](tel:505-933-4924).

Additionally, Valle de Oro NWR will hold a Bird ID Workshop on December 9th from 9 am to 12 pm at the Refuge. The workshop will focus on identification skills of hard-to-id birds. Open to all and especially for those not confident in their bird identification skills. For more information about the Bird ID Workshop, contact Ariel Elliott.

Volunteer Spotlight: Hannah Redwood

Hannah Redwood is our spotlighted volunteer! Hannah was born and raised in Albuquerque and received her bachelor's degree in Earth and Planetary Science from UNM. After graduating she worked in a variety of educational roles, and although she loved teaching and working with children, she realized she missed working outside. In an effort to get back outside, she took a position on a Rocky Mountain Youth Corps crew in the summer of 2016. Working on a RMYC crew introduced Hannah to a wide variety of conservation work, including trail building, invasive species removal, and environmental education. Importantly, the Youth Corps also introduced her to Valle de Oro.

After Hannah's summer position with the Youth Corps ended, she took an internship position with the Refuge through the Student Conservation Association, doing education and visitor services. As an intern with the Refuge, Hannah's typical week was full of running field trips, staffing tables at outreach events, planning for Refuge and Friends events, coordinating the junior duck stamp competition for New Mexico, and more. Aside from all this, Hannah still found time to help with the Friends' annual Golden



Gala, and coordinating the silent auction. Hannah feels lucky to work with so many amazing staff, volunteers, and Friends members, and she cannot wait to see how this place evolves over the years. Her favorite part of Valle de Oro is the awesome view of the mountains from the Refuge.

Recent News about Valle de Oro NWR

Two local media outlets recently featured glowing stories about the Refuge and the Friends. New Mexico's local PBS affiliate KNME visited the Refuge for an episode of its series New Mexico In Focus. You can view the spot at:

<http://www.newmexicopbs.org/productions/newmexicoinfocus/our-land-valle-de-oro/>.

Over at New Mexico Political Report, an article explains how the Refuge benefits the neighborhood. You can view the article at:

<http://nmpoliticalreport.com/774652/neighborhood-refuge-valle-de-oro-strives-to-be-an-asset-to-its-community-en/>

Send the links on to your friends and relatives outside New Mexico so they can see what great work we do here!

Don't Forget About the Photo Contest!

There is still time to submit your photographs to the annual photo contest! Send all your best pictures of the Refuge to Hannah Redwood at redwood0991@gmail.com by December 31, 2017. Winners will receive prizes courtesy of the Friends of Valle de Oro. This year there is a new special category called Urban Interface, where you can submit images of the zone where the refuge meets urban features. You can find more information on the 2017 photo contest at



2016 Grand Prizer Winner: Canada Geese Fly By, Gordan Vanus

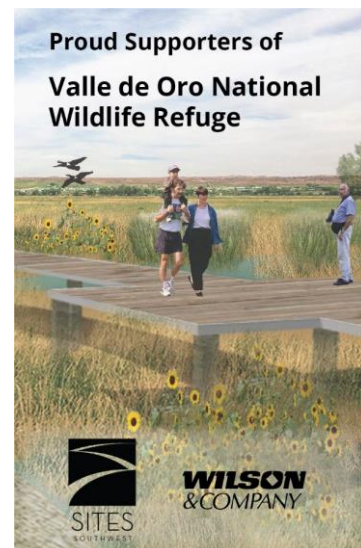
https://www.fws.gov/uploadedFiles/Region_2/NWRS/Zone_2/Valle_de_Oro/Images/VdO%20Photo%20Contest%202017%20.pdf

2017 Golden Gala a Success!

The 2017 Golden Gala, held August 20 at Las Puertas Event Center, broke attendance records and featured a rousing scholarship “auction.” Attendees pledged support for scholarships in the style of a live auction raising over \$1,000 for the 2018-2019 Opening Doors to Nature Education Scholarship. The Friends also presented a check to our 2017 scholarship winner Adrian Toledo, a CNM Sophomore studying Environmental Planning and Design.



Thanks again to our sponsors and supporters, including Wilson & Company and Sites Southwest. Wilson & Company has been providing construction and engineering services in New Mexico for over eight decades. The company offers engineering, architecture,



planning, environmental, survey & mapping, and construction management services. Sites Southwest offers the skills of their landscape architects, community planners, urban designers, and environmental specialists into one creative team. Consider Wilson & Company and Sites Southwest if you need to transform your space.



THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS!



**Silent Auction Donors, Albert V. Chavez & Irene H. Kersting, Anonymous
Myers RV Center, Inc., Lynn Schuler in Memory of Elaine Sterling**

The Visitor Center Is Coming!

We have a HUGE piece of exciting news! The Refuge's Visitor Center has officially gone out for solicitation! This means that the Fish & Wildlife Service (the Refuge's parent agency) has announced it is now soliciting interested businesses to participate in designing and building a Visitor Center. You can view the bid paperwork at

https://www.fbo.gov/index?s=opportunity&mode=form&id=7bb4960e17ecf28470213faee4980&tab=core&_cview=1 to get an idea of what features the Visitor Center will have. The deadline for the bid submission has been extended to Monday, November 27th, so please help us spread the word to design and contracting professionals.

It will still take several years for all the work to be done, but the solicitation represents the crucial first step of this journey.

Buy Friends of Valle de Oro Merchandise

You can cross off all the items on your gift list with Friends of Valle de Oro merchandise! We don't have an online store yet (we are working on that), but you can contact Aryn LaBrake at aryn@friendsofvalledeoro.org or 505-750-3383 to coordinate purchase and pick-up. Our

incredibly popular Dia de los Muertos sandhill crane t-shirts are only \$20.00, and our colorful kestrel hats are \$25.00. We also have children's t-shirts (\$7.00) and tote bags (\$5.00) printed with our popular 2017 Valle de Oro Birthday Party Design! Our \$3.00 Valle de Oro NWR Kestrel stickers make a great stocking stuffer. Our merchandise is created locally by a New Mexico small business.



We Celebrated National Refuge Week

On October 12, 2017, dignitaries, community members, partners, visitors, and Friends gathered at Valle de Oro to celebrate National Wildlife Refuge Week. National Wildlife Refuge Week, observed October 9–15, 2017, is a chance for Americans to rediscover the rivers and trails that make national wildlife refuges accessible to all Americans. Valle de Oro made the week special by organizing and collaborating with our sister Refuges and Friends group along the Rio Grande: Sevilleta and Bosque del Apache. The two-day event kicked off at Valle de Oro with a press conference featuring Congressional and local representatives, and attendees then enjoyed a Refuge tour. After that, participants headed south to Sevilleta and Bosque del Apache for more networking, tours, dinners, and nature walks over two days.



Mark Your Calendars for the Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Friends of Valle de Oro will be held January 20, 2018. During our Annual Meeting we will provide information on the highlights and our impact in 2017 to our Friends Members. We do not have the exact location yet, but be on the lookout for an announcement to hit your email soon!

Be sure to sign-up or renew your membership prior to this member's only event by going to <http://friendsofvalledeoro.wildapricot.org/Join-Us-Become-a-Member>

Birthday Party and 2nd Street Clean-Up

September was filled with service and celebration. We had 16 volunteers for the 2nd Street Clean Up who helped clean-up the the Refuge and the gateway to the Refuge before it's Birthday Celebration. Those volunteers filled two whole pick-up trucks with trash collected from along 2nd Street and some of the Fields at Valle de Oro NWR.



And despite the rain, 675 people helped celebrate Valle de Oro's 5th birthday on September 30, 2017 with cupcakes, hay rides, and music.



Music & Migration and Muertos y Marigolds

Throughout the Fall we have been celebrating the seasonal changes at the Refuge and in the South Valley including the arrival of migratory species and the changing colors by welcoming the Wildlife Society Conference attendees to the Refuge, participating in SOMOS ABQ and the Muertos y Marigolds parade, as well as hosting Music and Migration! Please enjoy some photos of Friends and Refuge staff, volunteers, and supporters engaging with the Friends of Valle de Oro NWR over the Fall season!



Friends of Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge
[7851 2nd St. SW | Albuquerque, NM 87105](https://www.fws.gov/refuge/valle_de_oro)
[505.750.3383](tel:505.750.3383) | info@friendsofvalledeoro.org

