



SUMMER 2018

President's Letter

As the summer comes to an end, we're ramping up for an exciting fall at the Friends of Valle de Oro NWR! On September 29, the Refuge will host Build Your Refuge Day. This event will replace the usual birthday celebration and will feature opportunities to build the Refuge's first trail and give input about the new Visitor Center, which is currently in the design phase. Of course there will still be live entertainment, giveaways, food trucks and hayride tours, paid for and supported by the Friends---join us for this FREE event! The Friends' annual Golden Gala fundraiser will be held on October 19, and our first Friends' "members only" Birds and Burritos is on Saturday, November 10th. All of this comes as construction moves quickly along at the Refuge. You can register to volunteer for or attend these events on the Friends' [newly designed website](#).



With all of these exciting events and updates happening, the Friends require financial support more than ever. As we continue supporting the mission of Valle de Oro NWR funds are crucial in keeping the Friends and Refuge moving forward with its exciting plans to become an outstanding educational and recreational community resource. Fortunately, we have a number of fun and easy ways you can give.

One fun way to help is by volunteering or attending the Golden Gala. Our fourth annual event is one you won't want to miss with a buffet dinner, silent auction, music, entertainment and an after-party outside on the patio. Keep reading for more Gala details!

The Friends have other ways to give that do not even involve leaving your house. One simple way to support the Friends is by selecting us when shopping on AmazonSmile. Select Friends of Valle de Oro NWR when setting up your Smile account and a portion of your Amazon purchases will go back to the Friends. It's that easy!

You can also help us share the great work of Valle de Oro through our gofundme page. Over the last year, the Friends of Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge has received several requests to send representatives to conferences and meetings with public lands representatives, peer Friends groups, and conservation professionals from around the nation. This includes an opportunity to receive the 2017 Group Achievement Award and address The Wildlife Society at their National Conference in Cleveland in October! So we're raising money to start a Travel Fund to support air travel and lodging and spread the word about Valle de Oro and the Friends, beyond our backyard. Our goal is to share the successes and lessons learned in our work to establish programs and restore habitat at your Urban Wildlife Refuge while ensuring community engagement in the process – and we need your help to do it.

You can now get Valle de Oro and Friends merchandise online! Please visit our NEW online Nature Store for some exciting logo merchandise to advertise your support of Valle de Oro or to give as gifts. Proceeds from merchandise sales benefit the Friends and Refuge education and outreach programs.

And as always, one of the best ways to support the Friends is to become a member and encourage your friends and family to join, as well! Your dues go to our groundbreaking work supporting the Refuge all year long. We aim to keep our annual membership dues low in order to be accessible to all who want to get involved, but remember, you can always make an additional annual donation while renewing your membership if you have the capacity to support our work at a higher level.

Thanks for being a friend to the Friends!

Sincerely,

Teri Jillson
Friends of Valle de Oro NWR President

Get Ready for the 4th Annual Golden Gala: *Nurture Your Nature!*

Tickets are currently on sale for this year's Golden Gala! Join us at Isleta Resort & Casino on Friday, October 19th for a night out with the Friends! This fun event benefits the important work of the Friends and the Refuge so you won't want to miss out.

Join us for the silent auction, buffet dinner, and an after party on the patio - complete with live entertainment and bar. **Isleta is also offering a special hotel room rate for our event through September**

28th so act fast! More details about hotel reservations and the link to purchase event tickets can be found on the [registration page](#).



This year we're excited to be offering different ticket prices - so the Golden Gala is sure to fit your budget! Individual tickets that includes dinner, a drink, and the after-party on the patio are \$65, a pair of tickets are \$120, and new this year are \$15 individual tickets for just the after-party. We have a limited amount of tickets for this year's event, so be sure to reserve your seat right away! **Tickets are on sale through October 5th, which is quickly approaching.**

We are still collecting donations to our silent auction through the end of this week. **The deadline to donate auction items is Friday, September 28th.** Donating an item to be auctioned off is a great way to support the Friends while highlighting your skills or cleaning your home of lightly used goods. Are you an artist, hobbyist, or crafter? Do you have a skill, service or talent to share? Like to bake for others or take friends on nature hikes? Do you own or work at a retail establishment? Do you have the ability to request donations of tours, backstage passes, experiences, or services? Often these experience oriented items bring in high bids during our auctions and they usually don't cost a lot of money to the person donating; therefore they make a huge impact. To learn more about donating a silent auction item, please review our [Silent Auction Donation Packet](#). We thank you for considering a donation to our auction.

The Friends also request volunteers for this event - if you are interested in helping with event planning, preparation, or coordination the night of the event, please contact Aryn LaBrake at aryn@friendsofvalledeoro.org or 505-750-3383.

Summer Art Program



In June, a group of students, ages 10-17, gathered for a week-long class at Valle de Oro to explore "Learning About Nature Through the Eyes of an Artist" led by Cinnamon Weaver, Board member of Friends of Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge. The class was free and sponsored by the Friends. As the students learned more about the plants, animals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and insects that live on the Refuge, they expressed their new knowledge through artmaking using a variety of art material. As part of learning about the Standards of Excellence on the Refuge "Equitable Access" and "Ensure that all visitors feel safe and welcome", the students created a "Diversity" banner, which now hangs in the Refuge's educational classroom.

Build your Refuge Day – September 29th, 2018

Want to help develop and restore Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge? Now is your chance! This September we're celebrating the Refuge's sixth anniversary, National Public Lands Day, and the 50th Anniversary of the National Trails System by hosting a large-scale service day. The event will be held this Saturday, September 29 from 10am to 2pm. It's free and fun for the whole family. By joining us, you will be able to help build the first trail on the refuge (training and tools provided), voice ideas for education and interpretation programs, and contribute to the design of the visitor center. Also we will have kid friendly activities, refuge tours, food trucks, giveaways, live music and free aguas frescas. Please wear closed-toed shoes for trail building and for organized groups over 10 people, please RSVP to valledeoro@fws.gov so we can schedule a time for service activities. Come be a proud part of your community and help Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge grow!

Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge's

BUILD YOUR REFUGE DAY

come be a proud part of your community and help us grow

- build the first trail on the refuge, all training and tools provided
- voice ideas for education and interpretation programs
- contribute to the design of the visitor center and entrance way

FREE EVENT! family friendly refuge tours kid's activities
food trucks music free aguas frescas
 please wear closed toed shoes for trail building

Saturday, September 29th, 10am to 2pm
Trail Building 10am to 1pm
7851 2nd St. SW, ABQ, NM 87105

For organized groups larger than 10, please RSVP to valledeoro@fws.gov

Refuge Welcome Center

You can always visit the Refuge daily from one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset. And now, in case you haven't heard, the Valle de Oro NWR Welcome Center is staffed and open to visitors 6 days a week! The Welcome Center's new hours are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday from 8:30am - 4:00pm and Thursday and Saturday 8:30am - 12:00pm. The Refuge staff have been working to convert the old farm house into an information center, and while there are still many updates to come, we are excited to open it up to the public as a resource until our new Visitor Center is completed. The Welcome Center is staffed by amazing volunteers to answer questions, share maps, document wildlife sightings and more. We also have a bathroom and water dispensers to help you prepare for your time on the refuge or refill after a visit.

The refuge is actively seeking volunteers to help pick up certain weekly shifts. Do you want to volunteer some time to introduce visitors to the refuge and answer questions? For more information contact Antonio "Toby" Valdes at (505) 401-0789 or antonio_valdes-dapena@fws.gov.

Sign-Up to Volunteer

Have you set up an account in our volunteer database yet? It's an easy way to sign up for event support, keep track of volunteer hours you have contributed, and stay up to date on all things Refuge related! Some opportunities available right now are assisting the marketing and outreach committee, supporting the Golden Gala, leading refuge tours, and more! We're so appreciative of our volunteers, we even hold a volunteer banquet every year. Sign up for an opportunity and help take part in your Refuge today!

Valle de Oro Transformation Thursdays

Discover Valle de Oro NWR Transformation Thursdays!

Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge is keeping supporters updated with its Transformation Thursdays emails and social media postings. In case you did not know, construction and restoration work is ongoing at and near the Refuge, and the Refuge has decided to send out information about construction progress via weekly emails and social media postings.

The construction projects include 2nd street near the Refuge, an entrance road into the Refuge, a water piping



project on 2nd street, an intersection improvement at 2nd and Desert and work on our first wetland and trail at Valle de Oro NWR! Whew! That's a lot to keep track of, so if you want weekly construction updates, please send an email to VdOlistens@fws.gov.

You can view all past updates on the Refuge's Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/ValleDeOroNationalWildlifeRefuge/>.

Summer 2018 Beer Fundraiser



The weather held off and a new group of Friends supporters really turned out for our beer fundraiser in July! Held at the Canteen Brewhouse, we quickly sold out all our pint glasses during the kick-off event and had our specialty beer flowing all month. A silly typo on our 2018 pint glasses - which said "wildfire refuge" instead of "wildlife refuge" – resulted in a new partnership with the Wildfire Network, who joined us at the kick-off event to discuss their important work educating our community on wildfire resiliency. Thanks to everyone who joined us for a beer and supported the Refuge! We will hold our bi-annual beer fundraisers again in February and July of 2019, and can't wait to continue to grow this fun event! Keep an eye out for more details and we will see you at a local brewery with the next rendition of a Valle de Oro NWR beer very soon!

Education Scholarship Winner Announced!

We are SO EXCITED to announce, and introduce you to this year's *Opening Doors to Nature Education Scholarship* recipient! Ashley Miglionico began working with Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge as a Youth Ambassador through a partnership with the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps New Mexico chapter. From her experiences at the Refuge and supporting the Friends of Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge and other environmental



organizations, she solidified her interest in pursuing a career in the environmental field. She is a Senior and exemplary student at The University of New Mexico. As Ashley put it, "I have chosen the field of environmental science and conservation because to me, it's my passion, not a job. Nature is what I connect most to and we are close to losing most of our natural world... I want to stop that from happening. This scholarship will help me reach these goals by funding my vital and irreplaceable education... I have a lot of goals in the realms of my career and I am determined to reach them."

Please join us in congratulating Ashley! For your chance to meet Ashley, be a part of our official scholarship award ceremony, and to raise funds for next year's Opening Doors to Nature Education Scholarship, consider joining us at the Friends of Valle de Oro NWR's Golden Gala: Nurture Your Nature where together we can make a difference in the lives of our future conservation stewards!

Becoming a Friends Member

We at the Friends of Valle de Oro NWR appreciate every bit of enthusiasm from our neighbors, visitors, and friends, but we especially appreciate those who have made the commitment of becoming an official Friends Member. If you love what the Friends do, and if you want to support the Friends, one of the best ways to show your support is to purchase a membership.

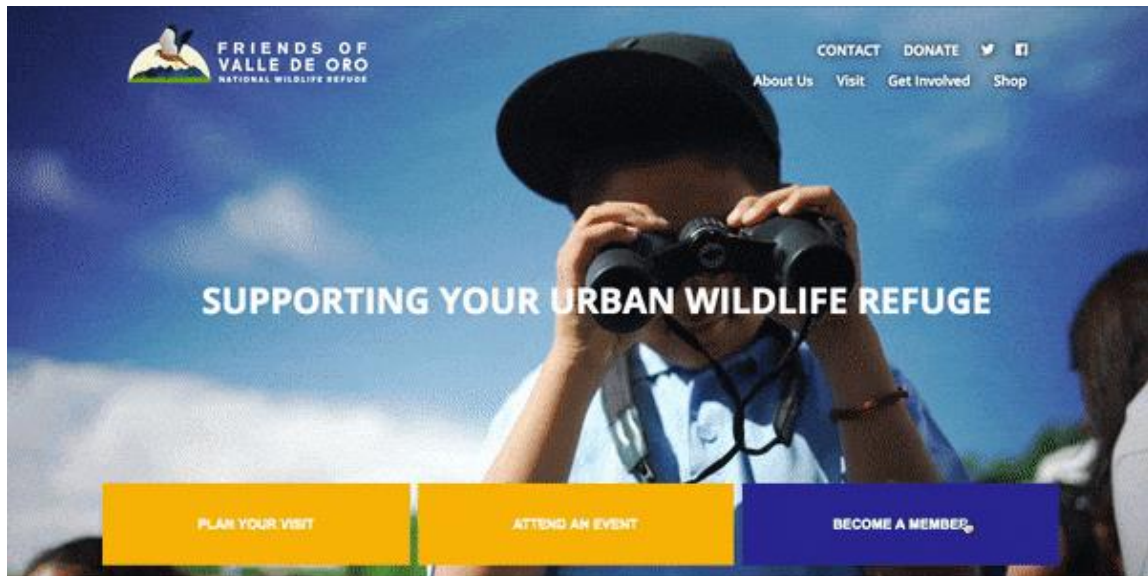
All it takes to become a member is a yearly donation of \$25—or \$40 for a family membership, and \$15 annually for students and seniors. Your membership dues are tax-deductible.



Why become a Member? First, it is a completely easy way to give, and we will even send you yearly reminders, so you never have to worry about remembering to renew your membership. Second, we are now offering Members only events and benefits – like our upcoming Birding and Burritos and a 10% discount on merchandise on the Online Nature Store or at special events using your members-only discount code.

If you sign up as a member by midnight tonight, you will also receive a free Friends tote bag! Please sign up on our website: www.friendsofvalledeoro.org

The Friends have a New Website and Online Store!



We're thrilled to announce our new [Friends of Valle de Oro website](#)! After months of work to get our website aligned with our new brand, we are so happy to release it to the world. The new website has a beautiful design and updated features including:

- Easy membership sign up
- Integrated donation page
- Event listing and calendars
- Online nature store

Our Online Store is open for business!

Now you can buy stickers, posters, t-shirts and more using our online nature store. Purchasing merchandise is a great way to support the Friends and Refuge programs as proceeds from merchandise sales goes back to our organization. You can visit the shop and check out some of our great merchandise for sale. Visit the shop here: [Friends of Valle de Oro Online Nature Store](#)

New Perk: Friends members get 10% off all purchases. If you are not already, consider become a Friends member to receive your discount! If you are already a member, you should have received and email notification about the Online Store which included your discount code.

If you have any questions, please contact Aryn LaBrake at aryn@friendsofvalledeoro.org or 505-750-3383.

The Friends of Valle de Oro NWR are Award Winning!

Environmental Justice Awards



On Friday, September 14th, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) Regional Office acknowledged the Refuge's Environmental Justice Leadership Team including staff and partners from Valle de Oro NWR, the Friends of Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge and Los Jardines Institute for their recent awards including:

- **2017 Department of the Interior Environmental Achievement Award in Environmental Partnership**
- **2017 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Environmental Leadership Award in Environmental Justice**

Representatives from the USFWS Regional Office and National Offices, as well as from partner organizations and community members came together to celebrate our joint successes while enjoying refreshments and music by the Spotted Buffalo Drum Group at the Mountain View Community Center, Nature Explore Classroom. It was a beautiful day, and we appreciate the recognition for our Environmental Justice Leadership Team's time and resources spent surveying the Mountain View Community, collecting research, writing and publishing the, first ever for a public land site, Valle de Oro NWR Environmental and Economic Justice Strategic Plan! Thank you to all who contributed to those efforts and celebrated with us!

2018 Wildlife Society's Group of the Year Award

In October, representatives from the Friends of Valle de Oro NWR will be attending The Wildlife Society's 25th Annual Conference in Cleveland, Ohio to receive a National Award! The Friends are honored to be their 2018 Group of the Year Award recipient and celebrated on a national stage for our work in establishing Valle de Oro NWR and engaging our community in conservation efforts. Thank you to the Vice President of The Wildlife Society, Gary White, for nominating us for our efforts, and especially to the donors who helped cover the costs of our trip to Cleveland and made receiving this award possible, including Trina Altman, Laurel Ladwig, The New Mexico Chapter of The Wildlife Society, and the Southwest Chapter of The Wildlife Society! The Friends have been invited to more conferences to spread the word about the exciting work happening at Valle de Oro NWR thanks to community partnerships and engagement to build a thriving community for wildlife and people. If you would like to contribute to the Friends ability to attend these opportunities, please visit our [Go Fund Me page](#) for more information and to donate. By supplementing travel costs, the Friends can continue to allocate its resources to education and community efforts at Valle de Oro NWR.

2nd Street Clean-Up Day was a HUGE success!



This past weekend, we held our biannual litter clean-up event to help clean-up 2nd Street along the Refuge before our big Build Your Refuge Day. Through the efforts of 35 volunteers, including Friends members, volunteers, students from Atriso Heritage High School's Jaguars for Positive Change, and the new Rocky Mountain Youth Corps Youth Ambassadors crew, we were able to

collect 6 truck loads of trash along 2nd Street and Build Your Refuge Day event location! Thank you to all who contributed to this amazingly successful effort. Be sure to keep an eye out for future cleanup days in the Spring and the Fall each year to help support the beautification of our Refuge and neighboring community. To sign-up for future volunteer clean-up day, please join our Volunteer Database or keep an eye out for announcements via email and Facebook.

Valle de Oro Placemats in Local Restaurants



Next time you are at a local Albuquerque restaurant, keep an eye out for new placemats for the kids from Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge, designed by LWren Fine Art and Refuge volunteers and staff! Stop by Coor's Cafe, Standard Diner, or Abuelita's New Mexican Kitchen to get a fun and informational placemat. The Friends are so excited to support this effort and provide a benefit to local restaurants, as well as as an educational and outreach tool for Valle de Oro NWR. We look forward to seeing them at more restaurants soon!

What's better than BIRDS and BEERS?

Whether you are into birds, beer, or both, this is the birding hotspot to be from 5pm-8pm on the last Thursday of every month in ABQ at the O'Neill's Pub 4310 Central Ave SE, Albuquerque, NM 87108. BRANT Nature Tours, a local ecotourism company, is very excited to bring this very popular event back to the

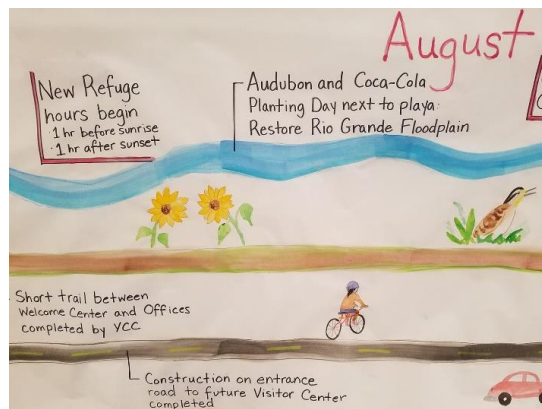
ABQ community through an urban wildlife refuge partnership with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and Friends of Valle de Oro NWR! Birds and Beer is a monthly event where like-minded, bird-



birds & beers
a BRANT initiative

oriented individuals of all ages and backgrounds can meet, discuss, and collaborate on what's happening bird-wise in our local communities. Activities consist of quizzes, photo and story sharing, games, and any other creative and engaging activities that our facilitators can come up with. Bring a friend and see you on the last Thursday of every month at 5:00pm. Remember, the food and drink is on you but we'll provide the entertainment, and we've got some great prizes for the winning team. Follow [Birds & Beers on Facebook](#) for more information, or join us at the next event!

Summer 2018 Photo Collage



2018 Photo Contest

Our photo contest is underway again! When you're out at the Refuge make sure to snap pictures of your visit and you could be a winner next year. Email your photos to valledeoro@fws.gov by December 31st 2018 for your photos to be considered.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge

2018 Photo Contest



Photographers Wanted!
Valle de Oro NWR invites photographers from all levels of expertise and age groups to enter the 2018 Valle de Oro NWR Photo Contest. The contest is open to all visitors—public, employees, Friends and volunteers.

Highlight your local Refuge!
We are looking for striking images of Valle de Oro—on the ground, in the air, or any perspective. Images should capture the beauty of the refuge highlighting its wildlife, landscapes and visitors.

Categories
Photographers should choose the most appropriate category to enter each image in:

Wildlife/Plants
Images of any wildlife or plants on the refuge, including mammals, birds, insects, plants, fungi etc.

Landscapes
Images of landscape, habitat or generalized wildlife, such as a field of geese on the refuge.

People
Images of visitors enjoying the refuge, connecting people and nature, children, staff, volunteers, or farmers.

Restoration
A special category for 2018! Images of construction and restoration work happening at the refuge.

All photos must be taken on Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge property. (See map on back for Refuge boundary) Each participant may submit up to six (6) photographs total.

Images will be judged on originality, technical excellence, composition, overall impact and artistic merit.

Prizes will be awarded by the Friends of Valle de Oro NWR. Winning images will be displayed as part of a travelling exhibit throughout Albuquerque.

Your entries must be an electronic submittal at 300 dpi, images should be no smaller than 5x7 inches and no larger than 9x12 inches.

Email your entries to Hannah Redwood at valledeoro@fws.gov.

Photos that have been digitally altered beyond standard optimization (removal of dust, cropping, adjustments to color and contrast, etc.) will be disqualified. This includes the digital addition or deletion of objects and high dynamic range images.

All images will become the property of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and may be made available as public domain images on the web or other publications. Entrants retain the right to use their photos for any other purpose. Submission of your entries automatically waives any rights to your submittal and provides public domain rights to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Entrants must not infringe on the rights of any other photographer or person, submit images that involve the willful harassment of wildlife, damage to the environment, or trespass on tribal or private property.



Grand Prize Winner of 2017 Contest. / Matthew Zmuda

Winners and their images will be announced January 2019.

Email any questions and inquiries to valledeoro@fws.gov.

Give us your best shot!

Deadline
for submitting entries is
December 31, 2018.

Valle de Oro
National Wildlife Refuge
7851 2nd Street, SW
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87105

Refuge is open from 8:00 am–5:00 pm,
7 days a week

Directions

- From I-25 take exit 220 (Rio Bravo Blvd.);
- Take Rio Bravo Blvd., SE for 1 mile;
- Turn left on 2nd Street SW. Travel for 3 miles;
- Entrance to the refuge is on the right.

Friends of Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge
[7851 2nd St. SW | Albuquerque, NM 87105](https://www.google.com/maps/place/7851+2nd+St+SW,+Albuquerque,+NM+87105/@35.5214,-106.6114,15z)
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