



# ABQ Backyard Refuge Program

## Summer 2023

[www.abqBackyardRefuge.org](http://www.abqBackyardRefuge.org)

### Happy summer!

I want to start by thanking the volunteers and Valle de Oro staff who took over last month while I was out for some medical issues (now successfully resolved!)

Volunteer Stasia Ruskie and VdONWR Park Ranger Brittany Chavarria took over the application processing and sign distribution at a time where we had a record 36 applications in two months! Debby Knotts, who volunteers as our volunteer coordinator, recruited volunteers and organized our participation in the CABQ Pollinator Day while growing our cohort of Master Gardener volunteers. Elliott Gordon did a fantastic job with our social media. If you haven't seen all the amazing photos he shared in June, head over to Instagram and Facebook. I am so grateful to them for jumping in to help and keeping everything running smoothly while I was out. Many thanks! Laurel

### Re-certify your backyard refuge for 2023!

The form for re-certifying your backyard refuge for 2023 is now open! You can access it [here](#).

Thank you to all those who have re-certified your refuge and sent great pictures and testimonials about the program!



### Recruit your community members!

In January, we had certified 229 participants and over 84 acres of certified backyard refuges across the area. As of August 2, we have 305 participants, and 99.125 acres certified. If you have not yet certified your yard / patio / balcony, check out [page 7](#) to see how easy it is to qualify! As always, email us at [abqBackyardRefuge@FriendsOfValleDeOro.org](mailto:abqBackyardRefuge@FriendsOfValleDeOro.org) with any questions.

Cheers, and happy habitat!

Laurel Ladwig  
Program Director



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## Upcoming Event! Build Your Backyard Refuge Day

**Saturday, October 21 9:30am-1:30pm**

If you want to learn more about growing your backyard refuge, join us at the Valle de Oro NWR visitor center for this event. We'll have talks about gardening with native plants, pollinators, and much more. We'll send out an email with more details about speakers and activities next month!

**Full Valle de Oro NWR  
Calendar of Events  
on pages 8 & 9**

# Backyard Refuge Fundraiser!

We now have yard signs to help you spread the important message of caring for our wild neighbors. Producer of PBS New Mexico In Focus Our Land and author, Laura Paskus, wrote two beautiful poems for us and we have illustrated them with wonderful depictions of backyard species from LWren Walraven, friend of all things wild and artist.



The signs are made of the same weather-resistant material as our certified habitat signs and are available with no holes drilled, or pre-drilled holes for mounting either horizontally or vertically.

Both signs are available in the VdO Visitor Center Nature Shop. \$30 for one sign, and \$50 for two.



## Proclaim your love for our wild neighbors!

## August 19th Pollinator Jamboree!

We're going to have a table at the Pollinators in the Neighborhood's Pollinator Jamboree on Saturday, August 19th. There will be speakers and Master Gardeners on hand to answer questions about pollinator habitat. If you want to learn about gardening for pollinators, this is a great way to get started. You can register for the class here: [Pollinator Jamboree](#)



## Partnership with Bernalillo County Master Gardeners

Our (volunteer) volunteer coordinator, Debby Knotts, is also Master Gardener. She is working with a number of Neighborhood Ambassador / Master Gardener volunteers to develop ways for us to support both current and future participants in our program. We'll be rolling out pilot projects this autumn for providing more support for participants at the individual and neighborhood level.

## Early participants - how is your sign?

Participants have reported that the sticker on the signs we used in 2021 - 2022 have warped and buckled in the heat. If this has happened with your sign, please let us know. You can pick up a new one made with more resilient materials at the refuge, or we can arrange delivery.



Email [abqBackyardRefuge@friendsofvalledeoro.org](mailto:abqBackyardRefuge@friendsofvalledeoro.org) so that we can have the proper replacement stickers with your new sign.

*You can bring your old sign to the refuge for reuse or recycling if you don't have a creative use for a thick piece of aluminum!*

## Residential Rainwater Harvesting

Our partners with Bernalillo County have released a new field guide to accompany their rainwater harvesting video series. Learn from the best how plant rainwater and support your backyard refuge!

The Field Guide for Passive Rainwater Harvesting and companion training videos provide guidance on how to design, construct, and maintain residential passive rainwater harvesting features. They are organized into four subject areas: 1) What is Rainwater Harvesting, 2) Design, 3) Installation, and 4) Care and Maintenance.

We recommend reading the guide and watching the videos in sequence to understand the process from start to finish.

For questions and follow-up guidance, contact [waterconservation@bernco.gov](mailto:waterconservation@bernco.gov).



<https://www.bernco.gov/public-works/public-works-services/water-wastewater-stormwater/residential-rainwater-harvesting-training/residential-rainwater-harvesting-overview/>

## It's a beautiful day in the naturehood!

We're partnering with Ciudad Soil & Water Conservation District to develop a class about building a backyard refuge and being a watershed steward. We'll send out details next month!



## Testimonial from a participant:

*"My Backyard Refuge brings me much joy as I share and learn from all my daily visitors."*

*- Brian Anderson, Neighborhood Ambassador and participant since our inaugural year*



Blanketflowers (*Gaillardia sp.*)  
photo by Brian Anderson



## Another way to think about aphids

Aphids are food for baby hummingbirds and other pollinators! Rather than reach for a high-powered hose nozzle or spray, watch to see who the aphids attract. They serve as the base of the food chain for many insects such as ladybird beetles and hoverflies, and can help to foster pollinator diversity in your backyard refuge!

Brought to you by:

SUMMER WATERING RECOMMENDATIONS (JUNE - AUGUST) FOR GREATER ALBUQUERQUE AREA			Watering Method	
Plant Type	How Often?	How Deep?	How Long?	
TREES	2 TIMES PER WEEK	24" INCHES	Drip (desert friendly plants and trees)	Water 75-100 Minutes per time
SHRUBS	1-2 TIMES PER WEEK	18" INCHES		
FLOWERING PLANTS	2-3 TIMES PER WEEK	12" INCHES	Hose Watering (trees and shrubs)	Water 1-2 hours per time
DESERT ACCENTS	1-2 TIMES PER MONTH	12" INCHES		
GROUNDCOVER	1-3 TIMES PER WEEK	12" INCHES		
GRASS: TURF (COOL SEASON)	3-5 TIMES PER WEEK	4" INCHES		
GRASS: TURF (WARM SEASON)	2-3 TIMES PER WEEK	4" INCHES		
GRASS: ORNAMENTAL	1-2 TIMES PER WEEK	12" INCHES		
VINES	1-3 TIMES PER WEEK	12" INCHES		

## We still have mulch!

Pick up mulch from the refuge for retaining moisture in your backyard refuge soil!

Contact **Natasha Robson**, Valle de Oro NWR's Maintenance Worker at [natalia\\_robson@fws.gov](mailto:natalia_robson@fws.gov) to arrange for a Special Use Permit to pick up mulch at the refuge.

Find more tips about managing your water use at [505outside.com](http://505outside.com)

## Thank you, CABQ Open Space!

Our partners at **CABQ Open Space** donated a printing of our *Getting Started* guides in both English & Spanish in support of our grant from the **Trust for Public Land**! This was made possible with the support of leaders of **Albuquerque City Council District 7**, and our partners with **Pollinators in the Neighborhood & Think Like a Bee** helped to fund translation of the Guide into Spanish. We thank you!

If you'd like to pick up a stack to give to friends and neighbors, email us at [abqBackyardRefuge@friendsofvalledeoro.org](mailto:abqBackyardRefuge@friendsofvalledeoro.org) and we can leave a stack for you at the welcome desk in the Valle de Oro NWR visitor center.



## Backyard Refuge Habitat Garden at the Valle de Oro NWR visitor center

Are you looking for inspiration for adding new plants to add to your backyard refuge? Head over to Valle de Oro's visitor center to see our rambunctious garden with a few dozen species that provide habitat for myriad wildlife. We're developing resources to interpret the area and started with an [iNaturalist guide](#). We'll be adding more information about each species over the next year.

Our habitat garden is an exciting work in progress and you can visit over the years to watch it grow and change. We'll have activities for exploring the garden during **Build Your Backyard Refuge Day** on October 21st.

*Please enjoy the space with your eyes instead of your feet while our baby plants grow!*



Black-chinned Hummingbird at *Salvia darcyi*  
photo by Laurel Ladwig

## Join our Neighborhood Ambassadors!

If you have a certified backyard refuge, you can be a neighborhood ambassador!

As a Neighborhood Ambassador, you can help spread the word about the program to help us grow. Please fill out the survey below if you're interested in joining. You can note what you may like to do as an ambassador and also share ideas with us. In the near future, we will hold special classes and events for the group and you can indicate the topics in which you're interested in the survey as well.

There are no set requirements for participation but there will be special perks to reward your contributions to the program. For instance, if you recruit someone to the program, you get the above Neighborhood Ambassador Bushtit picture for your sign!



[Neighborhood Ambassador sign-up survey](#)



The  
**VORTEX**  
Theatre

# HURRICANE DIANE

by **Madeleine George**  
directed by **Bridget S. Dunne**

**JULY 28 - AUGUST 13, 2023**

Thu, Fri & Sat at 7:30pm | Sun at 2:00pm  
General Admission \$24 | Students & SAG/AFTRA \$19  
Reservations: 505-247-8600 | [www.vortexabq.org](http://www.vortexabq.org)

One of our wonderful participants has arranged for our program to be promoted at the Vortex Theatre before and after performances of Hurricane Diane. We'll have volunteers talking about the program before and after the show at some performances, and they'll be distributing our *Getting Started* guide at each performance.

Here's a synopsis of the plot of the play:

The Greek god Dionysus has returned to the modern world disguised as butch gardener Diane, here to gather mortal followers and restore the earth to its natural state. Her first stop is a cul-de-sac in Red Bank, New Jersey, where she'll need all her supernatural abilities to seduce four friends who all want something different from her.

*from the San Francisco Chronicle: "Pulitzer Prize finalist Madeleine George pens a hilarious evisceration of the blind eye we all turn to climate change and the bacchanalian catharsis that awaits us, even in our own backyards... Funny and foreboding, serious and satiric, this bracing eco-comedy spins Greek mythology, Earth goddess humor, lesbian pulp tropes and sharply drawn characters..."*

This is an adult-oriented performance and should be fun!

Tickets are \$24. Students & SAG/AFTRA \$19 **Reservations:** 505-247-8600 | [www.vortexabq.org](http://www.vortexabq.org)

*Write us at [abqBYRvolunteers@friendsofValledeOro.org](mailto:abqBYRvolunteers@friendsofValledeOro.org) if you're interested in talking with patrons before and after the show!*



NATIONAL  
**WILDLIFE**  
REFUGE SYSTEM

# Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge wants to hear from you!



## Community Update Open House

Bring the  
whole family  
for free food  
& kid's  
activities

Spanish and  
American Sign  
Language  
Interpretation  
provided

Thursday  
**August 17th**

5:30pm - 7:00pm  
at Valle de Oro NWR  
7851 2nd Street SW  
Albuquerque, NM 87105

**Come learn about and  
share your thoughts on:**

ALMA Mosaic  
Sculptures

Habitat Restoration

Environmental Justice Program

Youth Employment  
Opportunities

and more!

Photo by David Buckley

For More Information:

505-248-6667 or [valledeoro@fws.gov](mailto:valledeoro@fws.gov)

# Valle de Oro NWR Summer Calendar 2023



Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge  
Refugio Nacional de Vida Silvestre Valle de Oro

All events are **FREE**, open to the public, and take place at Valle de Oro's visitor center unless noted otherwise. All times are in Mountain Daylight Time. Check websites and our Facebook/Instagram pages for more information.

[www.fws.gov/refuge/valle\\_de\\_oro](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/valle_de_oro)  
@ValleDeOroNationalWildlifeRefuge

[www.friendsofvalledeoro.org](http://www.friendsofvalledeoro.org)  
@FriendsOfValleDeOro

7851 2nd Street SW  
Albuquerque, NM 87105

## -Sat. Jul 22-

### Westside Restoration Tour in English and Spanish

Join acting Wildlife Biologist, Cherry, Deputy Refuge Manager, Ariel, and Volunteer, Ana, on a 1.5 mile walk and talk about riparian and wetland restoration on the westside of the refuge.

Register by emailing [valledeoro@fws.gov](mailto:valledeoro@fws.gov).

**8:00 am to 9:30 am**

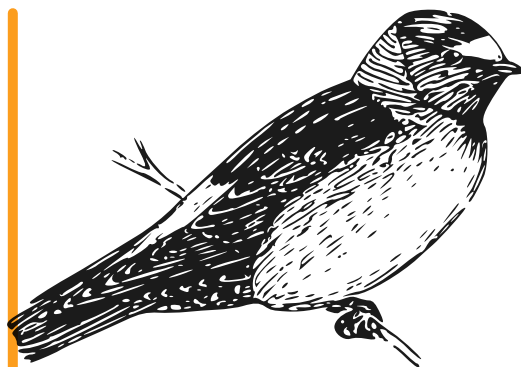
## -Fri. Jul 28-

### Nature Art and Mindfulness

Spend time outside and learn some techniques and benefits of nature drawing. No experience needed and all supplies provided.

Ages: 14+

**9:30 am to 10:40 am**



## -Sat. Jul 29-

### Banding in the Land of Enchantment

Join Jason with Rio Grande Bird Research to see and learn about birds of the Rio Grande Valley.

**3:00 pm to 4:00 pm**

## -Fri. Aug 4-

### Nature Tots!

Children ages 3-6 and an adult are invited to explore nature with Ranger Brittany.

**10:00 am to 11:00 am**

## -Fri. Aug 11-

### Weed Warriors Volunteer Work Day

Join us for this group event to help remove invasive plants around the refuge.

**7:30 am to 11:00 am**

## -Sat. Aug 12-

### Summer Fiesta

Join us for an afternoon of Latin American music by Sin Fronteras. Free fun for the whole family!

**1:00 pm to 3:00 pm**

## -Thurs. Aug 17-

### Community Update

Come learn about all that is happening to transform Valle de Oro at this open house event.

**5:30 pm to 7:00 pm**



## -Sat. Aug 19-

### Archery Pop-up

Join us to learn about archery safety and the basics of shooting a bow. No experience necessary.

Best for ages 10+

**9:00 am to 11:30 am**



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Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge  
Refugio Nacional de Vida Silvestre Valle de Oro

All events are **FREE**, open to the public, and take place at Valle de Oro's visitor center unless noted otherwise. All times are in Mountain Daylight Time. Check websites and our Facebook/Instagram pages for more information.

[www.fws.gov/refuge/valle\\_de\\_oro](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/valle_de_oro)  
@ValleDeOroNationalWildlifeRefuge

[www.friendsofvalledeoro.org](http://www.friendsofvalledeoro.org)  
@FriendsOfValleDeOro

7851 2nd Street SW  
Albuquerque, NM 87105

Color me!



## -Fri. Aug 25-

### Nature Art and Mindfulness

Spend time outside and learn some techniques and benefits of nature drawing. No experience needed and all supplies provided.

Ages 14+

9:30 am to 10:40 am

## -Sat. Aug 26-

### Birds are Real

Join community members, Haley and Emi for a nature sketch walk followed by migratory bird themed lino-printing on tote bags! Register by emailing [brittany\\_chavarria@fws.gov](mailto:brittany_chavarria@fws.gov).

8:00 am to 10:00 am

## -Fri. Sept 1-

### Weed Warriors Volunteer Work Day

Join us for this group event to help remove invasive plants around the refuge.

7:30 am to 11:00 am

## -Fri. Sept 1-

### Nature Tots!

Children ages 3-6 and an adult are invited to explore nature with Ranger Brittany.

10:00 am to 11:00 am

## -Sat. Sept 2-

### Conservation Carnivale

Come learn about local ecosystems by enjoying this interactive science circus!

2:00 pm to 4:00 pm



## -Sat. Sept 2-

### Paint and Sip

Join local artist, Haley Greenfeather English for an outdoor sunset paint and sip on the visitor center back patio. Only nonalcoholic drinks will be served. Register by emailing [brittany\\_chavarria@fws.gov](mailto:brittany_chavarria@fws.gov).

5:00 pm to 7:00 pm

## -Sat. Sept 9-

### Star Party

In partnership with The Albuquerque Astronomical Society, join us to look at the stars and identify constellations!

6:00 pm to 10:00 pm



## -Sat. Sept 16-

### BARK Ranger

Bring your furry friends to learn about our pet policies on the refuge and take the pledge to be apart of our BARK Ranger program. All dogs required to be on leash and non-reactive around others.

9:00 am to 11:00 am

## -Fri. Sept 22-

### Nature Art and Mindfulness

Spend time outside and learn some techniques and benefits of nature drawing. No experience needed and all supplies provided.

Ages 14+

9:30 am to 10:40 am





start here

do you want to share your space with wildlife?



YES!

do you have at least two native drought-resistant plants that provide food?(flowers, fruits, nuts, seeds) OR one native plant that provides food and also maintain a supplemental feeder or water source like a simple bird bath?

no or not sure

download our introductory guide to find out how and why to share space with wildlife!

no or not sure

Check out our plant list or email us at abqbackyardrefuge@friendsofvalledeoro.org with questions!

YES!



can you do two or more of these Best Practices?

no or not sure

YES!



apply here!

Best Practices

Engagement

- Post wildlife or plant observations on citizen/community science website (Examples: iNaturalist, eBird, Nature's Notebook, etc.)
Advocate for land conservation
Volunteer at public lands or with environmental conservation organizations
Attend an ABQ Backyard Refuge or program partner event
Promote the ABQ Backyard Refuge Program at community gatherings or on social media
Recruit neighbors, friends and/or family to seek ABQ Backyard Refuge Certification

Soil and Water Conservation

- Capture rainwater from roof and move overflow water to landscaped areas using a swale, basin, or other method of diversion e.g., a hose attached to a rain barrel.
Have xeriscape elements (water-wise landscaping)
Use drip or soaker hose for irrigation
Limit water use
Reduce erosion with mulch or contouring
Use mulch to keep soil cool and help maintain soil moisture
Make and use compost where plants need it
Scoop the poop in your yard and on walks!

Wildlife Gardening Practices

- Keep pets indoors or in controlled areas
Convert traditional lawn from one species to a diversity of native and drought-tolerant plants
Add native and drought-tolerant plants to supplement or replace existing vegetation
Prune after insect emergence in spring plants and before nesting season begins
Trim trees and plants after wildlife nesting seasons, leaving some dead branches when possible for wildlife
Leave leaf litter for over-wintering wildlife
Eliminate chemical pesticides/herbicides/rodenticides and practice non-toxic methods of Integrated Pest Management
Eliminate chemical fertilizers
Allow plants to flower and go to seed, and leave seed heads over winter for food
Leave some fruit on fruiting trees for wildlife
Leave bare ground for ground-nesting native bees