ABQ Backyard Refuge Program
January Update
www.abqBackyardRefuge.org

Happy winter!

This is just a quick update about program events and opportunities this week and month!

Re-certify your backyard refuge - 2022 deadline extended!

Many people expressed their intention to re-certify before the December 31st deadline and didn't get their application submitted. So, if you certified your space in 2021, you now have until **January 31st** to re-certify your backyard refuge and receive your Swallowtail Butterfly sticker! Just use **this form** to give us an update on your space. You can share observations and improvements you've made in the past year and get this lovely sticker for your sign!

Recruit your community members!
We now have 229 participants and over 84 acres of certified backyard refuges across the area. 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 with any questions.

Cheers, and happy habitat!

Laurel Ladwig, Director

Laurel

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 this survey 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

Save the Date!
Build Your Backyard Refuge Day
March 18, 10am-1pm

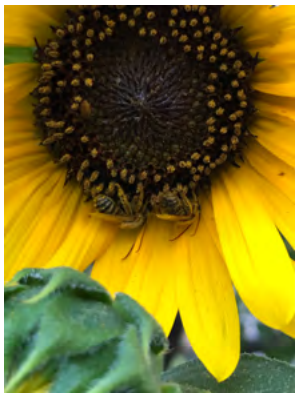
If you want to learn more about growing your backyard refuge, join us at the Valle de Oro NWR visitor center for this event. We'll have talks about gardening with native plants, pollinators, and much more. We'll send out an email with more details next month!

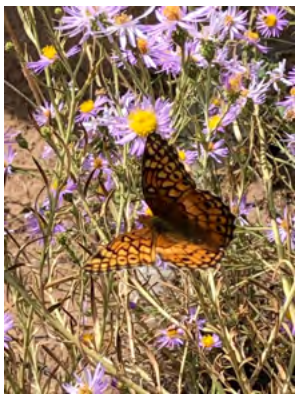
Full Valle de Oro NWR Calendar of Events
on pages 5 & 6

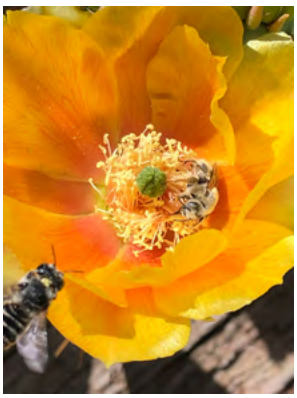
A cycle of discovery in the garden

by Sara Van Note

As the landscape turns pale and leaves and seeds scatter, I'm rewarded and surprised by a new garden journey, through my photos. Suddenly I've time-traveled to the spring, when my prickly pear was laden with golden blossoms and swarmed with native bees. They dived into the flowers, coating themselves with pollen, oblivious to my close observation. Next I'm transported to June, when the first rains invited a Woodhouse's toad to emerge, and a scarlet flame skimmer dragonfly dried its wings on a hibiscus shrub. I replay my disbelief at discovering a shiny, cobalt-blue Great Plains skink in July. Then in August, long-horned bees, bumblebees, and other native bees joined bumble flower beetles to sip nectar from native sunflowers. They were followed by stealthy predators: praying mantids and assassin bugs. Most amazingly, over the course of a week, male long-horned bees nestled in the sunflowers overnight, seeking warmth and shelter. And in October, I captured the last of the bees and butterflies visiting native violet asters. I'm grateful to witness these small but important moments through the seasons, and through the garden cycle.







Testimonial from a participant:

"It is rewarding to find wildlife in our yard!
I spend more time observing and noticing what lives here and what comes through."

Adult Antlion, Carpenter Bee, and Skunk!
photos by Tish Morris

505Outside

Brought to you by: Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority

WINTER WATERING RECOMMENDATIONS

Plant Type	How Often?	How Deep?
TREES	1 TIME A MONTH	24 INCHES
SHRUBS	1 TIME A MONTH	18 INCHES
FLOWERING PLANTS	1 TIME A MONTH	12 INCHES
DESERT ACCENTS	NONE	NONE
GROUNDCOVER	1 TIME A MONTH	12 INCHES
GRASS: TURF	2 TIMES A MONTH	6 INCHES
GRASS: ORNAMENTAL	1 TIME A MONTH	12 INCHES
VINES	1 TIME A MONTH	18 INCHES

(FOR GREATER ALBUQUERQUE METROPOLITAN AREA)

Watering Method	How Long?
Drip (desert friendly plants and trees)	Water 75-100 Minutes per time
Hose Watering (trees and shrubs)	Water 1-2 hours per time

Find more tips about managing your water use at 505outside.com

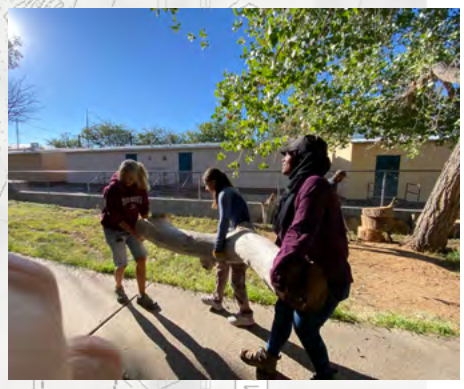
We still have mulch!

Pick up mulch from the refuge for retaining moisture in your backyard refuge soil!
Contact **Joe Mackey**, Valle de Oro NWR's Maintenance Worker at **joseph_mackey@fws.gov** to arrange for a Special Use Permit to pick up mulch at the refuge.

Juniper Titmouse, *photo by Laurel Ladwig*

There is an irruption of Juniper Titmice across the Albuquerque area! They are usually found in the Sandias and foothills, but this year, they are showing up all across the city.

ID Tips: Juniper Titmice are larger than Bushtits (and don't travel in a "cloud"), and are foliage gleaners like these smaller cousins. Both species eat insects, but like suet in the winter and are sometimes found at seed feeders. Their crest is an obvious field mark. Titmice are smaller than Juncos and don't forage in leaf litter.



Thanks to a generous grant from the **Trust for Public Land** and great partners such as **City of Albuquerque Open Space Division, Albuquerque Public Schools, and UNM Landscape Architecture,** we were able to install an outdoor classroom and habitat garden at Zuni Elementary School this autumn.

MRWM Landscape Architects created a beautiful design and we had volunteers from the school community, City Open Space, Bernalillo County, MRWM, UNM Department of Geography & Environmental Studies, UNM Sustainability Studies, and ABQ Backyard Refuge Neighborhood Ambassadors.

ZUNI ELEMENTARY GARDEN CONSTRUCTION PLAN

SCALE: 1"=10'-0"

Valle de Oro NWR
Winter Calendar 2023

All events are free and open to the public unless noted otherwise. All times are in Mountain Standard time. Check websites and our Facebook/Instagram pages for more information.

https://www.fws.gov/refuge/valle_de_oro/
@ValleDeOroNationalWildlifeRefuge

https://friendsofvalledeoro.org/
@FriendsOfValleDeOro

Jan 14

Mural Loop Interpretive Walk
An easy 1-mile guided walk with presentations on the refuge's history and future plans. Program meets at the amphitheater.
10:00 am to 11:30 am

Jan 20

Environmental Justice at VDO
Virtual event, will be recorded.
Did you know Valle de Oro is the only public land site with a specific plan to address environmental, economic and social injustice? Tune-in to learn about our 2023 environmental justice priorities, what the work looks like on the ground at the refuge this year and how to partner!
10:00 am to 11:00 am

Jan 21

Bosque Education Guide Workshop
Pre-registration and fee apply.
All educators are invited to join us for a curriculum training specific to our special Middle Rio Grande ecosystems. For more info and to register: https://www.nmnaturalhistory.org/events/bosque-education-guide-workshop-1
8:30 am to 4:30 pm

Jan 26-27

Pond Volunteer Afternoons
We're draining our pond for some annual maintenance! Join us to help remove excess cattails and algae on either afternoon. Participants under 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.
12:30 pm to 3:30 pm

Feb 4

Birds and Breakfast
Before the Annual Meeting, members of the Friends are invited to join us on a special bird walk with Laurel Ladwig, the Albuquerque Backyard Refuge Program Coordinator!
8:00 am to 10:00 am

Feb 4

Friends Annual Member Meeting & Photo Contest Award Ceremony
Join us as we review 2022 and look forward to 2023. Expect presentations about how the refuge will evolve in the next year and how you can get involved. We will also announce 2022 photo contest winners.
10:00 am to 12:00 pm

Feb 4

Story Time at the Visitor Center
Listen to stories with activities for families with children ages 5-10 years old.
10:00 am to 11:00 am

Feb 11

Conservation Careers Fair
If you're looking for a job or just interested in the possibility of a career in conservation, come talk to professionals from a variety of local organizations at the visitor center.
11:00 am to 1:00 pm

Feb 17

TAAS Star Party
Join us for an evening of telescopes and stargazing with The Albuquerque Astronomical Society!
7:00 pm to 9:00 pm

Feb 18

Tile Making & Story Collection
Join our partners at ALMA for a tile making workshop to go towards this summer's new mosaic sculptures. We are also inviting neighbors and friends of the refuge to tell their stories about this land to be incorporated into the sculpture designs.
11:00 am to 2:00 pm

FRIENDS OF VALLE DE ORO NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE

NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM

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All events are free and open to the public unless noted otherwise. All times are in Mountain Standard time. Check websites and our Facebook/Instagram pages for more information.

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@ValleDeOroNationalWildlifeRefuge

https://friendsofvalledeoro.org/
@FriendsOfValleDeOro

Feb 18

Mural Loop Interpretive Walk
An easy 1-mile guided walk with presentations on the refuge's history and future plans. Program meets at the amphitheater.
10:00 am to 11:30 am

Feb 24

How to Draw a Duck Workshop
Learn from a local artist how to draw a duck for the annual New Mexico Junior Duck Stamp Contest.
Open to Kindergarten through 12th grade. Registration required. Email brittany_chavarria@fws.gov to register.
1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Feb 25

Presentation on John Heinz NWR
Valle de Oro NWR is honored to host visiting Park Ranger Wingyi from our fellow urban NWR, John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum. Come meet Wingyi and learn about this very special refuge in Philadelphia that is celebrated as the very first Urban National Wildlife Refuge in the system!
2:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Mar 2

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

Mar 4

Mural Loop Interpretive Walk
An easy 1-mile guided walk with presentations on the refuge's history and future plans. Program meets at the amphitheater.
10:00 am to 11:30 am

Mar 4

Nature Tots!
Children ages 3-5 and an adult are invited to explore nature with a refuge ranger! Celebrate the return of spring with a story time, nature exploration, and a craft to take home! Registration is required. Please pre-register by sending an email to Wingyi_Kung@fws.gov
1:00 pm to 2:00 pm

Mar 11

EJ Air Network: Air Pollution and Our Health
Did you know according to EPA standards Albuquerque's air quality was unhealthy for more days than not in 2022? What does that mean for our health especially in the time of pandemic? And what are we doing at Valle de Oro to make our air healthy to breathe here and beyond the refuge? Join-us in-person or online to find out more!
10:00 am to 11:30 am

Mar 15

Jr Duck Stamp Competition Deadline
Mail or drop off entries to: Brittany Chavarria at 7851 2nd Street SW Bld. A, Albuquerque, NM 87105
Find more info at: https://www.fws.gov/birds/education/junior-duck-stamp-conservation-program.php.
Midnight

Mar 18

Mural Loop Interpretive Walk
An easy 1-mile guided walk with presentations on the refuge's history and future plans. Program meets at the amphitheater.
10:00 am to 11:30 am

Mar 18

Albuquerque Backyard Refuge Program Workshop
Learn how to build your own backyard refuge!
Time TBA

FRIENDS OF VALLE DE ORO NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE

NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM

start here

do you want to share your space with wildlife?

ABQ Backyard Refuge Program

YES!

no or not sure

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

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

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

YES!

no or not sure

can you do **two** or more of these **Best Practices?**

YES!

Congratulations!

Your space qualifies as a backyard refuge!

[*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