



# Refuge Update

July 2024

Published quarterly by the Amigos de la Sevilleta

*Board meetings are held the third Tuesday of every month; all are welcome. The next Board meeting is Tuesday, July 16th at 2:00PM at the Visitor Center. You can also attend remotely via Zoom.*

## Refuge Update

Samuel Vassallo, Refuge Biologist

Jeff has been out most of June at a meeting of Refuge Managers from across New Mexico, and then on vacation in Washington, so I will be giving a refuge biology update in lieu of the typical manager's update. This month has been a whirlwind of activity with six ongoing major biological projects. Luckily, I have a great team to help me keep up with the needs of the refuge.

Ash Johnston became the newest member the biology team on the first of June. She graduated from the University of Vermont days before starting work as an American Conservation Experience intern. Her primary job for the year she spends on Sevilleta will be to help remove or manage the invasive ungulates on the refuge. Sadly, the grant for fence repairs and improvements we applied for was not funded for 2024, but with Ash taking the reins, I bet we can get them to pony up next year.

My other intern, Endi Piovesana, is quickly learning the ropes after three months on the refuge. He has been hard at work helping me plan and prepare for the release of 20 Bolson

Tortoises this September. Last week we took a trip down to the Ladder Ranch to see the actual tortoises that will be moving to Sevilleta and ironed out the details for their transfer. We are racing to finish the final preparations like conducting pre-release surveys, ordering and



Ash Johnston

attaching the right GPS trackers to the tortoises, building starter burrows, and getting our paperwork and post-release monitoring methodology in order, but with Endi running their errands these tortoises are sure to win their race.



Endi Piovesana

Returning champion volunteers John and Vanessa Montgomery give our team depth with their years of professional experience as conservationists in the southwest. They spend most of their days in the bosque helping me manage our wetland units to create food for wintering waterbirds and surveying for

endangered species. We were all super excited when they encountered Yellow-billed Cuckoos on their most recent survey. We have consistently recorded Southwest Willow Flycatchers on the refuge in prior years, but last year was the first in many that we heard Cuckoos. Cuckoos require a more mature cottonwood canopy in addition to the thick willow understory selected by Willow Flycatchers, so it's wonderful to know that the refuge is providing habitat for both of these endangered species.

The Long-Term Ecological Research station run by UNM is a buzz with researchers studying butterflies.

Lastly, I have a few non-biology updates to touch on. On top of our normal duties, everyone has been chipping in to help our maintenance team who have been working overtime to repair our water filtration system and keep the 8 people living on the refuge supplied with drinking water.

We are excited to welcome back our returning volunteer, Margaret Stocker, who is keeping the visitor center open Wednesday through Friday this summer. I also got a visit from one of the previous biologists, Jon Erz, who told me about some of the refuge's previous projects. I can't believe I have already been here six months; time has been moving so quickly it doesn't feel like more than a few weeks. I guess time flies when you are having fun! I hope everyone stays cool as the weather heats up!



# Fun at Spring to Sevilleta

Rex Myers, Amigos President

A good time was had by all at this year's Spring to Sevilleta in May. Families and friends visited exhibits and toured the refuge on a beautiful day. Two bus tours took folks to the east side of the refuge to enjoy scenery, learn about the area, and also see University of New Mexico Long Term Ecological Research (LTER) sites.



Exhibits at the Visitors Center focused on Bolson tortoise reintroduction coming this fall, research on soil and bees, and the Mexican grey wolf reintroduction program. Participants had an opportunity to assemble a nature notebook, then walk the Nature Trail to observe plants and critters along the path. An Impact Outdoors



station highlighted animals found on the refuge; young and old also created colored animals; and for those who wanted to get dirty, there were flower seed mudballs to assemble. Food and ice cream trucks added fun.



Special thanks to 4-H members from Socorro who helped with various activities, UNM Field Station staff and students, Impact Outdoors, the New Mexico Grey Wolf crew, Turner Endangered Species Reintroduction staff (and the tortoise), as well as refuge staff and Amigos volunteers. Save the third weekend in May next year – we'll Spring to Sevilleta again.

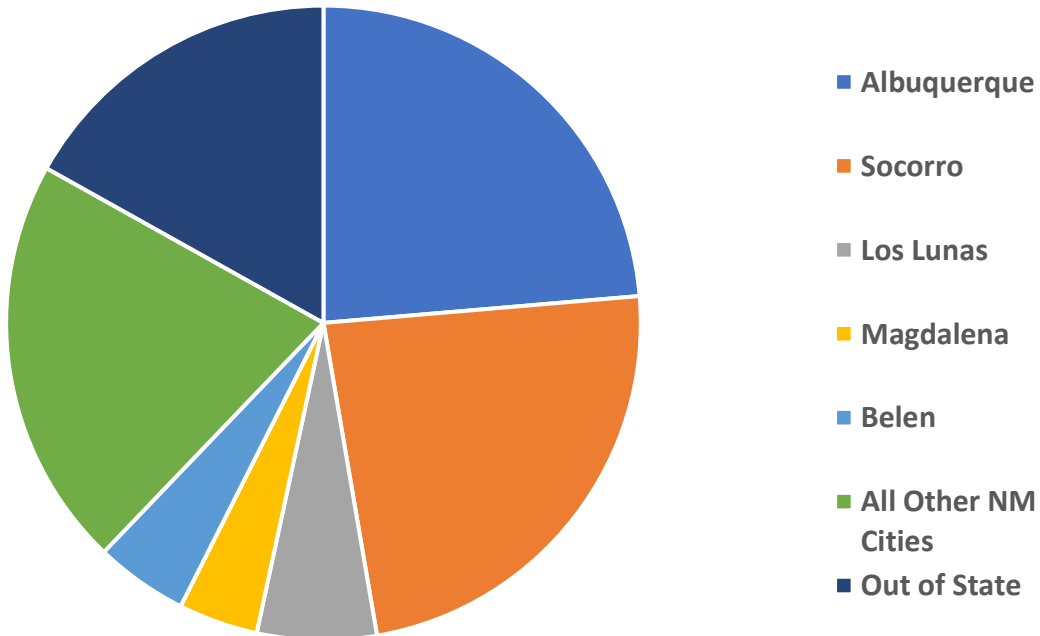
# Who are We?

Rex Myers, Amigos President

One hundred and forty-eight of us are Amigos members. Of those, 123 are New Mexico residents and 25 live in 21 other states. The pie chart below shows that an equal number of us 123 New Mexicans live in Albuquerque and Socorro (35 each), with the rest scattered across

the state. By category, Amigos has 69 individual members, 43 family units, 26 signed on as Red-tailed Hawks, and 9 as Bald Eagles. Bird Alliance of Central New Mexico is our lone institutional member. Thanks everyone! We are delighted to call you "Amigos."

### Amigos Membership



# Join Us for the Butterfly Count August 10th



For many years, Sevilleta has participated in an annual butterfly count for the North American Butterfly Association. This year's count is Saturday, August 10, starting at 9 a.m. at the Visitors Center. If you love butterflies and would

like to participate in the count, we would be happy to have volunteers – no experience necessary. To reserve a spot or ask questions, contact us at: [events@amigosdelasevilleta.org](mailto:events@amigosdelasevilleta.org)



# The Nature Store



## Sevilleta Nature Store:

Highlighting our New Mexico Artists

(Clockwise from bottom left)

Colin Barnett - Sevilleta Postcards

Jim Stansbrough – Tumblers and Bolson  
Tortoise Magnets

Gary Hutchinson – Pewter Key Rings /  
Zipper Pulls

Josie & DeWayne Ross – Kneeling Nun  
Soapworks

Mike Stoy – Garden Tiles

## Contacts

Amigos web site: <https://www.amigosdelasevilleta.org>

Amigos on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/amigossevilleta>

Refuge Web Site: <http://www.fws.gov/refuge/sevilleta>

## Editor's Note

Items for consideration in the *Refuge Update* are encouraged.

Please email your submission in Word format to [sdrandl72@gmail.com](mailto:sdrandl72@gmail.com).

Past editions of this Newsletter are available at the Amigos website:

<https://www.amigosdelasevilleta.org/contacts>