



Refuge Update

October 2024

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Board meetings are held the third Tuesday of every month; all are welcome. The next Board meeting is Tuesday, October 15th at 2:00PM at the Visitor Center. You can also attend remotely via Zoom.

Refuge Update

Jeff Sanchez, Refuge Manager

New Faces at Sevilleta NWR!

We are very excited to welcome two new employees to the Sevilleta NWR team! It has been many years since we have had a Wildlife Refuge Specialist (also termed Deputy Manager) and a standalone Administrative Officer on the Refuge team. But this also means we must now say goodbye to our previous Administrative Officer, Melanie Dabovich, who had been supporting both Valle de Oro NWR and Sevilleta NWR concurrently. I honestly do not know how she did it, being that both stations have grown in staff headcount and focus recently. Mel will now focus exclusively on the administrative needs of Valle de Oro instead of both stations. All I can say is that Mel is super talented, welcoming, and supportive, and we will greatly miss working with her on a daily basis. I cannot thank her enough for all her hard work over the years!

Now let me introduce you to our two new employees. Ethan Hammer is our new Wildlife

Refuge Specialist, who will focus on all refuge operations and support the maintenance, biological and visitor services programs. Another way to explain his role would be a “jack of all trades.” Ethan is very driven and comes with valuable experience on heavy equipment, a great work ethic and a vibrant personality. Ethan was born and raised in Iowa and attended Utah State University, where he received degrees in wildlife management and restoration ecology. Before his current role as a Wildlife Refuge Specialist at Cape May National Wildlife Refuge, Ethan worked as a seasonal biotech with the US Forest Service, a Directorate Fellow at Havasu National Wildlife Refuge, and a natural resources management intern with the National Park Service. In his free time, Ethan enjoys hiking, gardening, and photography with his partner.

Please also welcome Justin Luna, who will focus on budgets, timekeeping, purchasing and many

other clerical tasks. He will be supporting the staff here at Sevilleta NWR and at San Andres NWR in Las Cruces. Justin comes with a very welcoming personality, great public interaction skills and exceptional skill in researching and implementing

demonstrating integrity and dedication. Fluent in Spanish, he is grateful his grandma and parents taught him since this skill often comes in handy when least expected.



Ethan Hammer



Justin Luna

policy. Justin was born and raised in Southern Arizona and is passionate about exploring the human mind and the great outdoors as well as enjoys cooking, grilling, and watching nature documentaries narrated by David Attenborough or Morgan Freeman. Although he has 15 years of previous customer service experience, he believes not one person knows everything and anyone can be taught something new by others. As a veteran, he embodies the Army values,

Please stop by the Refuge to welcome Ethan and Justin to beautiful New Mexico and help them get acquainted with the great members of the Amigos de la Sevilleta. I can't wait to have a cook-off with Justin and share locally grown crops with Ethan. 😊



Welcome to Fall

Rex Myers, Amigos President

Autumn is a wonderful time at Sevilleta. The last sunflowers hang on in wetlands as bright yellow smiles, cottonwood bosque goes from green to gold, migrating waterfowl begin to dot Units A and B, lizards still scurry across trails, and days are cool enough to hike Mesa View and Ladrones Vista any time (not just early mornings). If you need an excuse to visit the refuge, Fall is that excuse.

The Visitors Center and Amigos Nature Store have been open Wednesday through Friday this past summer and visitor traffic has been steady.

We've added new Bolson tortoise items to the store as tortoises themselves have been added to the refuge. We've organized a geology hike in San Lorenzo Canyon and had a Sevilleta table at the Isleta Environmental Fair. In early October, we will help with the BLM program at the Socorro Nature Center (5th graders), and we also have a table at Bosque del Apache's Wildlife Zone for kids and families. Finally, I don't think we take enough time to say "Thank You" to all Amigos members who support the refuge with your memberships, presence, and enthusiasm. So, again, Thank You, Amigos.

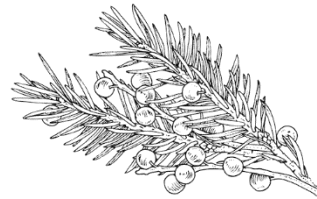


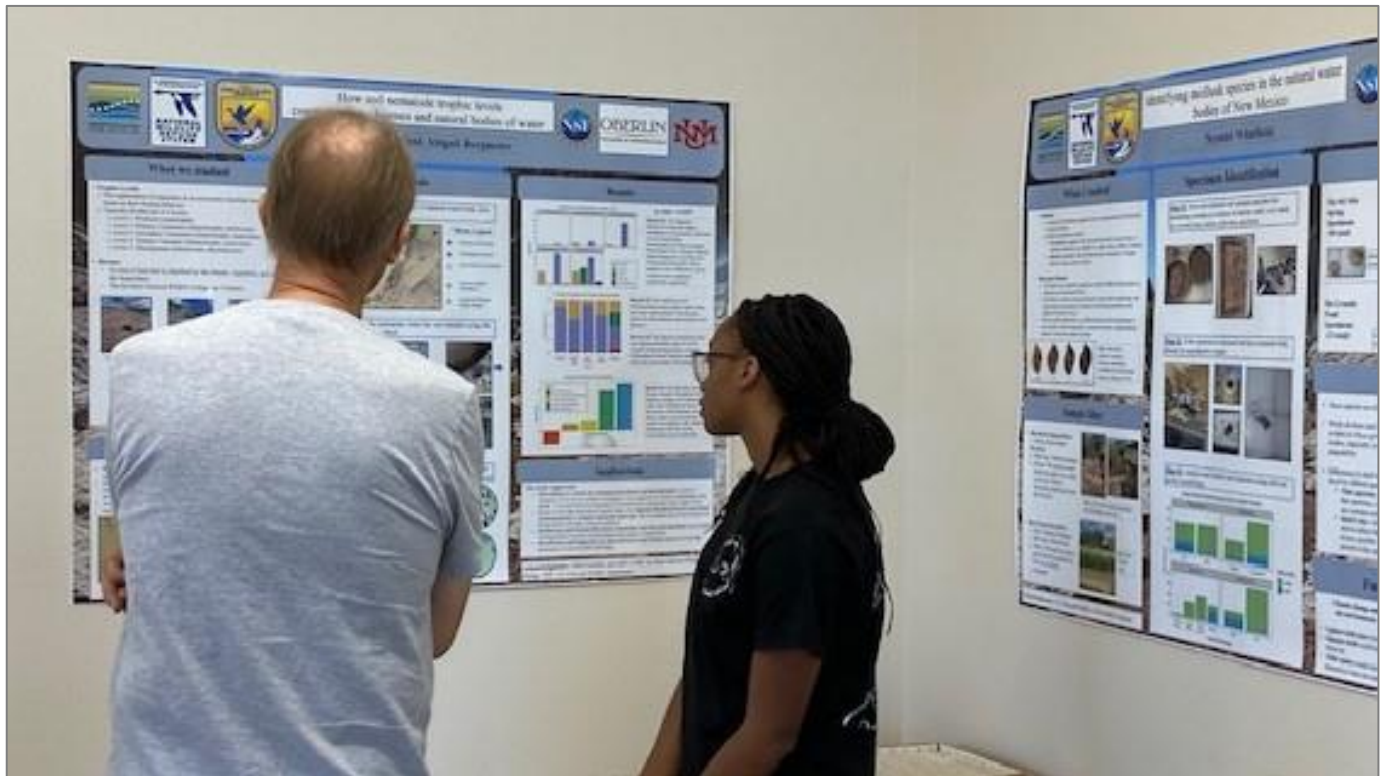
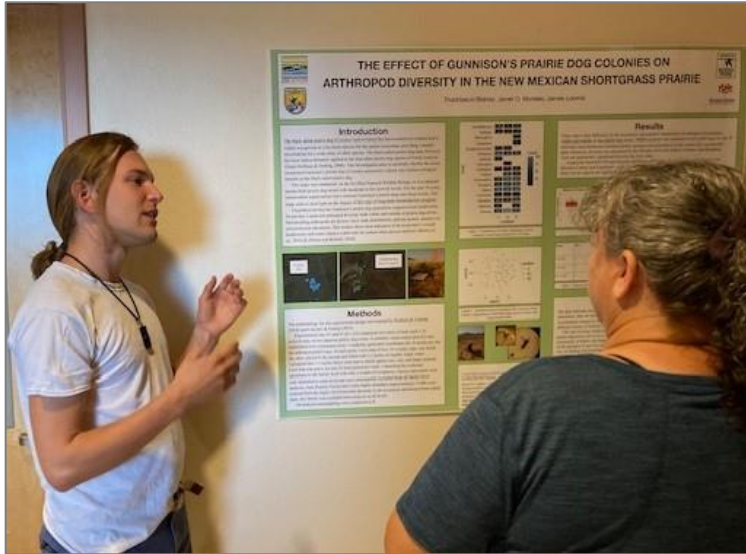
Research Experience for Undergraduates at Sevilleta

Thirteen undergraduate students from across the United States participated in the annual REU program at the UNM Field Station this past summer. Eleven were scientists; two were artists. Using Sevilleta NWR as their laboratory, they explored a wide variety of research questions and presented their work at poster sessions. Their enthusiasm and expertise were wonderful.

Topics included: "Roads, Rodents, and Rampant Weeds," "Assessing Insect Diversity and Abundance Relative to Road Proximity, and "Soil Respiration Responses to Altered Rainfall in a Creosote Shrubland."

Amigos provided funding for a group meal one evening. Individually and collectively, they bought groceries, prepared meals they wanted, and shared their efforts with other students. The entire feast was delicious. The REU program will continue next summer as it has for many years. Amigos plans to continue our support.





“Let’s Talk Turkey”

Jennifer Keyser, Amigos Member

Around this time of the year, many of us start to think about turkey as the centerpiece of Thanksgiving dinner. But turkeys are far more than just a holiday meal. Our native birds are an important part of our wildlife population. They are the “survivors” of many years of challenges, and we should not take them for granted.

Through the early 1900s, wild turkey populations steadily decreased from overhunting and habitat loss. Conservation efforts have helped them recover and expand their range. Now several wild turkey variants can be found on Sevilleita, and at other National Wildlife Refuges.



Rio Grande Turkeys
Buffalo Lake National Wildlife Refuge,
TX/Robert Burton USFWS

New Mexico is home to three wild turkey subspecies. Two of those – the Merriam’s (*Meleagris gallopavo merriami*) and Rio Grande (*Meleagris gallopavo intermedia*) live at Sevilleita. The third, found elsewhere in New Mexico is Gould’s (*Meleagris gallopavo mexicana*). It’s the

largest subspecies and can be found in far southwestern New Mexico, as well as in Arizona and northern Mexico.



Merriam’s Turkeys
Sand Lake Wetland Mgmt. Dist., SD/Tom
Koerner USFWS

Merriam’s is the most common subspecies in New Mexico. They live in mountainous regions, particularly ponderosa pine habitats. At Sevilleita, they occur most often in the pinyon forests of the Pinos and Ladrones Mountains. Adult females weigh between 8-12 pounds, while males range between 18-30 pounds. They can be distinguished from other turkey subspecies by the cream-white feathers on their lower back, and along their tail feather margins. The Merriam’s diet consists of nuts from hardwood trees, conifer seeds, and grasshoppers.

Rio Grande turkeys are mostly found in river valleys, near stream habitats that include large trees for roosting. On Sevilleita, they live in the cottonwood bosque that runs through the center

of the Refuge. This subspecies is smaller than Merriam's and Gould's. Their body feathers are paler, and coppery-colored, while their tail feathers have yellowish-buff or tan-colored tips. "Rios" forage for various seeds, berries, roots, and insects.

A Few More Facts About Wild Turkeys

- They have excellent eyesight, seeing three times more clearly than a person with 20/20 vision.
- Their "gobble" can be heard up to a mile off.
- Turkeys can swim a short way by tucking their wings in close, spreading their tails, and kicking.
- They have excellent eyesight, seeing three times more clearly than a person with 20/20 vision.
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- Young turkeys are called poults. Juvenile males are jakes and juvenile females are jennies. A group is called a rafter.

Sources:

Email exchanges with Samuel Vassallo, Wildlife Refuge Biologist, Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge, August 2-5, 2024.

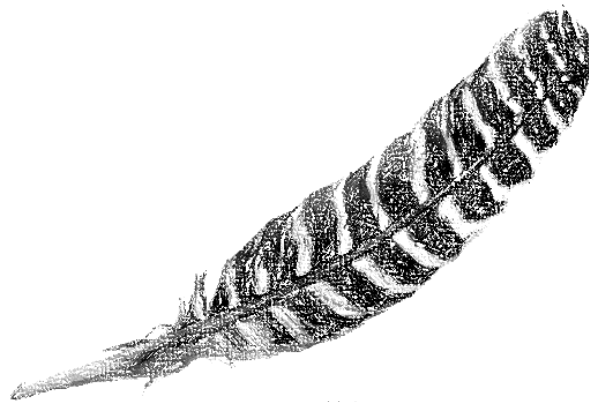
New Mexico Game and Fish Website
<https://wildlife.dgf.nm.gov/hunting/information-by-animal/turkey/>

National Wild Turkey Federation Website
www.nwtf.org

"Wild Facts About Wild Turkeys" by Susan Morse.
www.fws.gov/story/wild-facts-about-wild-turkeys#

"10 Fun Facts About the Wild Turkey"
Audubon Society Website
www.audubon.org/news/10-fun-facts-about-wild-turkey

All About Birds Website. Cornell Lab of Ornithology
www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Wild_Turkey/





Annual Butterfly Count



Two dozen butterfly fans gathered at the Sevilleta Wildlife Refuge on a sunny August Saturday to participate in the 9th annual Butterfly Count. Some scoured the arroyos and upland areas, dappled with sand penstamons and yellow daisies, looking for desert loving butterflies. Others were down by the river checking the lush fields of sunflowers and milkweed for species that prefer greener pastures.

The butterflies cooperated. “We recorded 22 different species today, which makes this one of our best years”, said Chuck Kooshian, Amigos Vice President, who coordinated the event. “Over 300 individual butterflies were counted, and there were a lot more along the roads and trails that we couldn’t keep track of.”

Checkered Whites and various orange and yellow sulphur species were abundant, while only one individual was spotted of certain other species. One singular find among the sunflowers was an American Snout, a small orange butterfly with what looks like a long nose. Several dark orange Queens, a relative of the Monarch, were busy fluttering among the milkweeds. And up on the top of the escarpment, a tiny Reakirt’s Blue landed on a butterfly counter’s glasses.

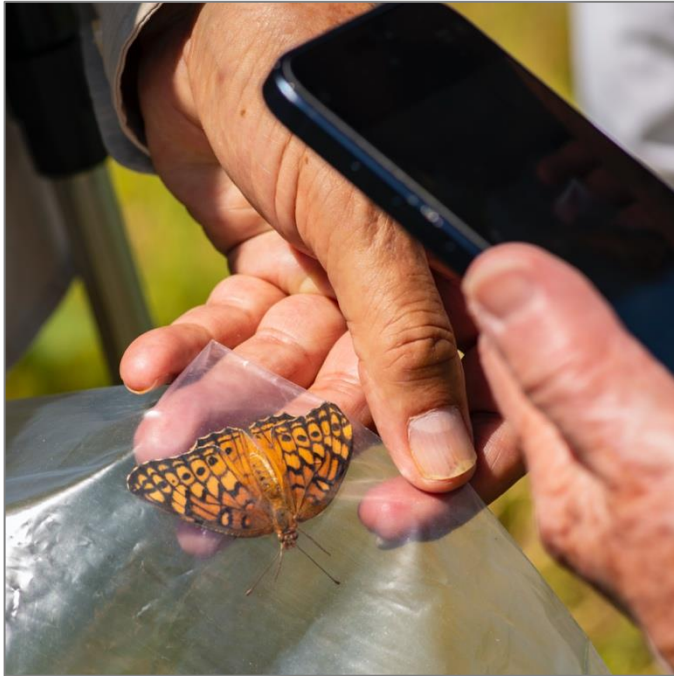
Butterfly counts are just one of the citizen science activities that membership in the Amigos helps to sponsor.



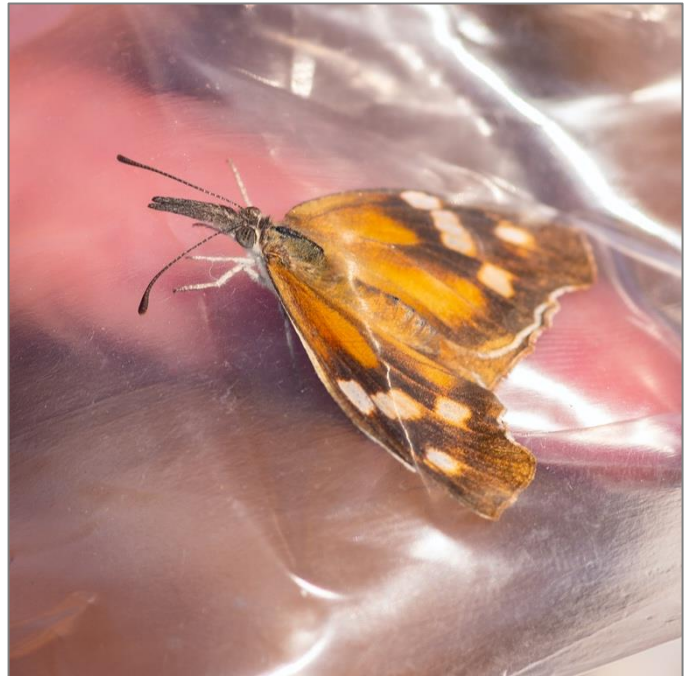
Butterfly hunters



Queen Maria



Variegated Fritillary



American Snout

Sevilleta's Friendly Face in September

The refuge's welcoming presence last month was Chris, a seven-year RV volunteer veteran. She has worked at Fish and Wildlife Service locations from Maine to Texas, as well as been a campground host in numerous locations. Pennsylvania is her home, but she has used retirement to see the US and meet new people as an RV volunteer. Sevilleta has been a "Wow" experience – peaceful and beautiful. She was only able to help us for a month, but thanks, Chris. It's been great to have you at Sevilleta. RV volunteers are so important to Sevilleta.



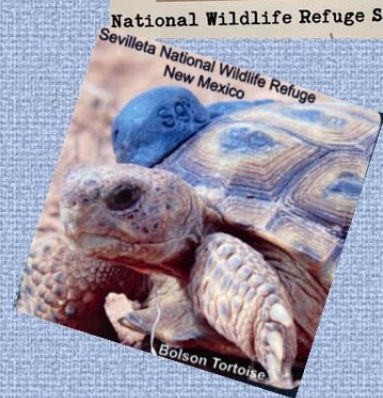
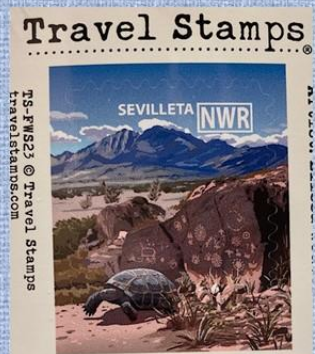


Tortoise Merch is Here!

To celebrate the arrival of the Bolson tortoises to the Refuge, we have some new products at the Nature Store –



- ❖ Pins
- ❖ Magnets
- ❖ Travel Stamps (collect them all)
- ❖ Finger puppets



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.

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

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