



# REFUGE UPDATE

May 2022

Published bi-monthly by the Amigos de la Sevilleta

*Board meetings are held the second Tuesday of every month, all are welcome. The next Board meeting is Tuesday, May 10<sup>th</sup> at 2:00PM at the Visitor Center.*

## Refuge Manager's Update

**Jeff Sanchez, Refuge Manager**

In my last newsletter entry, I talked about the Rio Grande and how things have changed over the years – we are indeed living in a “new normal”. For this newsletter I would like to build upon that theme and discuss the current projection for the Middle Rio Grande Valley in 2022.

Spring is a great time of year to start thinking about the changing of seasons. With the ever-persistent winds comes allergies for some of us, but also new growth and opportunity. This time of year is welcomed, but at the same time, can be stressful in the desert Southwest as a Wildlife Manager. Typically, in April we begin to learn how the irrigation season and Rio Grande will look for the year. Water Managers in the Middle Rio Grande Valley produce models and statistical analysis data sets, and they formulate predictions to compare the current year's data with past years' information. All of this in an effort to plan a path forward for the current year. Earlier this week, Refuge staff participated in the annual Rio Grande Runoff Meeting where this path forward is presented to stakeholders within the Middle Rio Grande Valley.

Now comes the bad news. The forecast for the 2022 irrigation/water season is bleak, to say the

least. Snowpack in the northern mountains, which drives the availability of water within the Middle Rio Grande Valley, is below normal and the persisting drought conditions are at levels not seen for many years, at least when it comes to longevity paired with intensity of the current drought conditions. There seems to be contradictory models showing that “La Nina” may set up again this year, which most of us desert dwellers know typically yields poor summer monsoonal precipitation contribution. These summer precipitating events are what yield most of New Mexico's life sustaining water on an annual basis. On top of these predictions, the extended drought pattern is even more impactful because of last year's poor water season, also dictated by a “La Nina” weather pattern. To put things into perspective, water managers within New Mexico are predicting that Elephant Butter Reservoir may experience a 60 foot drop this summer. Ouch!!

New Mexico as a whole is already in a huge deficit when it comes to required water deliveries to Texas. This likely means that water availability for farmers, ranchers, municipal users and wildlife managers will be extremely regulated this year. We, as wildlife managers, will have to

monitor populations and look for creative ways to provide habitat for wildlife species and re-direct resources normally set aside for other needs in order to support sensitive species needs/habitat.

I regret the negativity of this article; however, it is my goal to be transparent with you, provide a behind the scenes picture of our efforts and challenges at the Refuge and let the readers

know what is going on in our beautiful desert landscape at Sevilleta NWR.

Stay tuned for the next newsletter update where I will begin to move away from the stress of the Rio Grande corridor and highlight the many great things we are focusing on this year within the upland areas of the Refuge. I promise positivity next time!!!



SNWR Los Pinos SNWR photo: Colin Barnett

## **President's Message**

Colin Barnett, Amigos Board President

Finally! We can again schedule events and activities at Sevilleta that include the Visitor Center and Nature Store, and riding in cars with others. All of these things were expressly proscribed by the Federal government until just now. (If the pandemic ramps up again, then these things may once again be limited or unavailable.)

By the time you read this, you will have received emails announcing two guided trail hikes, and a wildflower hike.

Still to come will be more guided hikes, a bird watching hike, another wildflower hike, a hummingbird banding demonstration, a caravan tour to the West Mesa, and a family-friendly live raptor talk and demonstration.

Some of these events will have a limited number of participants. However, as a member, you will receive advance notice via email and the opportunity to reserve your spot before the general public.

But you don't need an organized event to enjoy the refuge. The Amigos (specifically Rex Myers, Susan Richards, and Marj Richards), recently installed new signage for wayfinding on the trails and for identifying plants. In fact, one of our members sent us the following message:

*"Having just got back from the Ladrones Vista Trail with Chuck and Mike, I want to compliment you on the signage! We didn't get lost once and I especially liked the plant signs - very unambiguous and not likely to need updating for several years. Good job!"*

So what are you waiting for? See you on the trail.

## Open for Business!

Submitted by Jeannine Kimble  
Visitor Services Manager

Cacti are blooming, hummingbirds are buzzing, trees are budding, flowers are blooming, rabbits are hopping, and the lizards are scurrying across the landscape! Spring is in full swing, and we can't wait to see you! The Visitor Center will reopen on Wednesday, May 4 at 8 am.

Please stop by and enjoy the displays in the Visitor Center, have a conversation with our volunteer naturalists, and take a hike to enjoy the beauty of Sevilleta NWR. Don't forget to get your next shirt or hat at the Nature Store!

The Amigos have several programs happening in the next few weeks. Please join us as reservations are not required for the following:

### Wildflower Hike

Friday, May 13	9 am
Saturday, May 21	9 am
Monday, May 23	9 am

Get outside and enjoy the blooms! Join a volunteer naturalist on this wildflower hike! Grab your hiking pole, lace up your boots and join us for this slow- moving moderate hike while

exploring the colorful wildflowers. No reservations required!

### Amigos day of action!

Thursday, May 12 9 am – 12 pm Nature Loop  
Thursday May 26 9 am – 11 am Wildflower loop

Get outside and make a difference! Join the Amigos de la Sevilleta on a trash pick-up along the exit ramps to the interstate, followed by a guided hike. Meet at the Sevilleta NWR Entry sign. Bring a hat, gloves, water, a snack, and a 5-gallon bucket for collecting trash if you have one! The hike will be easy and over uneven terrain. We will supply safety vests, trash bags, and a limited number of trash pickers.



Pin cushion cactus  
in blossom, SNWR  
Photo: Sandy  
Barnett

Visitor Center Hours for May, Wednesday – Saturday 8:00 am- 4:30pm

## Two Special Volunteer Projects

Submitted By Rex Myers

Sierra Club volunteers (about 20 of them) from all over the country converged on Sevilleta NWR to help construct a new drinker at Tomasino Well, enhance landscaping at the UNM Field Station, and improve trails. The weeklong project at the well improved the pump, the storage tank, and transformed the actual drinker into a more natural “pond” shape for wildlife in the area. Paths around the Field Station also look much better, thanks to Sierra Club efforts.

New Mexico Volunteers for the Outdoors spent a

day improving trail and steps up the mesa as part of Mesa View Trail. Some “railroad tie” steps burned last year when tumbleweeds were cleared from the area and monsoon rains also damaged steps and trail. These volunteers reset new steps and improved trail up the mesa. It’s worth the hike to see it. Anyone interested in assisting NM Volunteers can contact the organization at: [NMVFO.org](http://NMVFO.org)

Thanks to both groups for their improvements.



Tomasino Well Drinker



## Trail Work



## Donations

### Submitted By Penny Lommen

Over the past few years, I've mentioned that the Amigos' source of income is derived from three areas, memberships, donations and sales from the Nature Store. There are many Amigos who in addition to supporting us through memberships, contribute extra amounts to help fund our needs.

Three or four years ago we started a Capital Campaign to raise money for new trail signs. In a short time, we collected over \$5000.00! It took us a while to get the signs done but we now have wonderful signs all over the refuge! We have put signs up on all the trails as well as down at the

wetlands. We also installed plant identification markers on the Nature Trail, Wildflower Loop as well as at the Cactus Garden and Visitor Center. Come out and see what your donations have provided!

Bill and Barbara Carey of Albuquerque donated funds to make an existing refuge drinker more reptile/small animal friendly. We've all enjoyed the photos of the larger animals drinking from and sitting in the drinkers. Now lizards, turtles, bats and other small residents will be able to enjoy the newly refurbished Tomasino drinker. Donations come in all forms, not only were the funds for this project a donation but the actual labor was given by a group from the Sierra Club who spent a week at Sevilleta helping out.



appreciate it. As with all donations that we receive, it will be spent wisely in aid of the refuge.

Thank you to everyone who supports Amigos de la Sevilleta. We can't do anything without you and we look forward to seeing everyone again when the Visitor Center re-opens.



Throughout the year, we receive donations of all sizes. We are so grateful for each and every one. Normally we know who has made the donation and we acknowledge their gift with a thank you letter. Recently we received a check which was sent anonymously through a brokerage firm. We have no way of acknowledging this particular gift other than through this newsletter. Thank you whoever you are for this wonderful gift, we so

## New Birding Trail Signs

Submitted By Rex Myers

Susan, Marj Richards, and I completed Birding Trail sign installation in the wetlands today; 20 new posts, lots of signs and arrows; it took about 8 hours.

Egrets, ibis, coots, ducks, geese, a pheasant, black phoebe, swallows - a nice day along the river.



## Facebook Activity

Submitted by Susan Richards

This month our Facebook posts have done quite well.

- Pronghorn post -1394 people reached

We currently have 827 followers. If you use FB, please share our posts and encourage your friends to follow us.



## Amigos 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>

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## Editor's Note

Items for consideration in the Refuge Update are encouraged.  
Please email your submission in .doc format to [sdrandll72@gmail.com](mailto:sdrandll72@gmail.com)

Past editions of this publication are available at the Amigos website  
<https://www.amigosdelasevilleta.org/contacts>