



HABITAT!

What to Do and Observe in Each Season
Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge



Volume 29, 2025 - 2026

WELCOME TO BOSQUE DEL APACHE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Welcome to Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, one of over 570 National Wildlife Refuges. We hope you enjoy your time here and take home wonderful memories. As Edward Abbey stated in *Desert Solitaire*, “A man on foot...will see more, feel more, enjoy more in one mile than the motorized car in a hundred miles”. All trails are wonderful and each is different.

If you are feeling adventurous, we have three designated wilderness units to explore, totaling about 30,000 acres. Two of the wilderness units have portions that are easily reachable: the Canyon Trail and the Chupadera Trail. The Canyon Trail takes you through slot canyons and into the Indian Well Wilderness. The Chupadera Trail ends at Chupadera Peak after traversing through the Chupadera Wilderness. The Little San Pasqual Wilderness sits on the eastside of the Rio Grande. It is open desert and offers solitude for those who are up to the challenge of getting there. Each wilderness unit provides an outstanding opportunity to explore and enjoy solitude in an undisturbed landscape.

Bosque del Apache should be explored in all seasons to observe the changes over the year. Most visitors come in the winter to view the sandhill cranes, geese and ducks returning to the managed wetlands along the Tour Loop. Refuge staff are busy year-round managing habitat, roads, trails and facilities to ensure your enjoyment. In spring, quail and turkey chicks are everywhere and the Desert Arboretum starts its annual bloom. The coyotes and bobcats come to the Tour Loop area to beat the summer heat. In autumn, the elk rut and bugle in the early morning and at dusk. The Friends of Bosque del Apache work with the refuge to structure events highlighting each season. Visit Bosque del Apache throughout the year, and you will leave with magical memories.

Thank you for your support which helps refuge staff and Friends to make this Refuge an outstanding treasure for you and all future generations.

Mike Brady, Refuge Manager
Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge

Last Spring, I met a Friends supporter and photographer on the Dabbler Deck. We got to talking and she explained that she was waiting for the (Lesser) Nighthawks to re-appear after their spectacular debut the evening before – when 80+ nighthawks performed a majestic crepuscular ballet, which I had missed. This day, “only” a few returned, but that was enough for me. The photographer said to me as we left, “Just remember, you’ll never visit the same Bosque del Apache twice.” And she was right. The refuge at dawn is a totally different place from the refuge during dusk’s “golden hour” – even on the same day – offering a different mood, often different species and different lighting.

Refuge Manager, Mike Brady, has emphasized the variety of attractions that our “refuge for all seasons” provides, both through the tireless efforts of his team and Friends volunteers or through the unpredictable bounty of Mother Nature. Every trip you make to this magical place can show you something new – a “grey ghost” on a fence post, a loggerhead shrike on the wetland roost sign, a red-naped sapsucker on a spindly branch or a family of javelinas feasting on the South Loop. As the future looks increasingly uncertain, one thing you can be sure of is the collective passion and commitment of the refuge team and the Friends to protect and maintain this special place. We can’t do this without your continued support, in whatever form that takes: be it your body by volunteering, your voice by telling our story to friends, family and lawmakers or your generosity by donating to our cause. Whichever you choose, we thank you for helping to keep our jewel safe.

Jonathan Manley, Board President
Friends of Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge

Front Cover Photos

FALL *(Top Left - Northern Flicker)*
Susan Croyle

WINTER *(Bottom Right - Sandhill Crane)* Paul Brewer

SPRING *(Top Right - Bobcat)*
Kevin Harding

SUMMER *(Bottom Left - Black Bear)*
David Schoch

Back Cover Photo

Pam Dorner

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Learn more about the refuge or
get your questions answered at:
**fws.gov/refuge/
bosque-del-apache**
or call 575-835-1828



FALL

S E P T E M B E R • O C T O B E R • N O V E M B E R



Richard Eltrich

October, and no trip to the refuge is complete without a lunch break at one of our local mainstays – the Buckhorn or the Owl Café. Step out of your car to hear the distant call of the sandhill cranes and scan the skies to find them overhead. Bring your jacket, because moderate days quickly turn cool.

Fall is a sensory experience of the best that New Mexico has to offer. The pleasantly pungent smell of roasting green chiles permeates the air in nearby San Antonio in September and



BC Design Photography NM

presenting the perfect opportunity to capture a graceful skein against the golden cottonwoods. Sunflowers add a punch of bright yellow to the fields and are a colorful contrast to the red-winged blackbirds that swoop and dart as if tethered in one big cloud. Coyotes prowl for ducks weary from their long migration, and deer mingle in open fields, wary of lurking predators.



Julie-Anna Blomquist

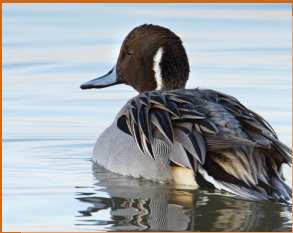
Wildlife Zone, held in late October, offers families opportunities to learn about wildlife not only residing at Bosque del Apache, but around our state. At the family-friendly and cost-free Wildlife Zone at the Bosque del Apache Visitor Center and Plaza, Friends and their conservation partners host booths and give prizes to the kids. There is something for everyone -- hawks, owls, archaeology, prairie dogs, reptiles, birding walks, interactive activities, and even face painting. Learn more more at **friendsofbosquedelapache.org/wlz**



Victoria Bayliss

As fall brings gold to the cottonwood trees along the Rio Grande, there is no better place to take a walk than along the Rio Viejo Trail. The tree canopy is alive with the calling and fluttering of fall migrant songbirds, and you may even see a coyote, mule deer, or turkeys moving through the forest. This easy trail is great for families and those with a limited amount of time to explore. Our Nature Store has many books and guides that can help you with your identification needs.

Grab your journal, sketchbook, or easel and head out on the refuge in the fall. Find peace in the rustling of the cottonwood leaves and the cool breezes as you contemplate the busy northern shovelers and northern pintails with their tails in the air dabbling for dinner. Often where there is water, you will find birds – the Dabbler & Diver Deck, Willow Deck, or Boardwalk, to name a few likely spots. The Desert Arboretum, with its ample benches, also provides a nice respite near the visitor center. There are paved sidewalks leading to the arboretum and hard-packed walks within.



Richard Eltrich

W I N T E R

D E C E M B E R • J A N U A R Y • F E B R U A R Y



Warren Capps

Nothing at Bosque del Apache compares to the thundering sound of wing beats and calls as thousands of snow and Ross's geese lift en masse and fly directly over your head, followed by the sandhill cranes. The backdrop of this "fly-out" spectacle may be a famous New Mexico sunrise made more intense by endless flocks of ducks across the horizon. A comparable experience occurs at sunset as waves of birds return to their nightly roost, referred to as the "fly-in." Birds' preferred sites vary throughout the season, so ask at the visitor center for current details, though consider the Wetland Roost and Flight Deck.



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Our winter resident birds are diverse and charismatic. Raptors abound in the colder months, so watch for majestic bald eagles on snags in the wetlands, and northern harriers hunting in the fields, and listen for red-tailed hawks screeching overhead. White-crowned sparrows often crowd the feeders around the visitor center and there are at least ten other sparrows that winter around the visitor center and Desert Arboretum regularly. The flocks of sandhill cranes and geese often dominate your views, but be aware that there are up to fifteen species of ducks that may be found in their midst. Favorite shots of cranes and geese can be made as a full moon is rising or setting (remember that the refuge is open one hour before sunrise and closes one hour after sunset).



Jonathan Dowell

In early December, we gather for the Festival of the Cranes! Sandhills migrate from Canada and the northern US to winter in the Middle Rio Grande Valley. Winter is the perfect time to learn about migration and the value of refuge wetlands to these overwintering birds. Topics at our festival range from cultural history to natural history, photography to astronomy, and environmental education to bird watching. Field workshops occur at Bosque del Apache and most indoor seminars occur in Socorro Convention Center's comfortable classrooms. Learn more at friendsofbosquedelapache.org/festival

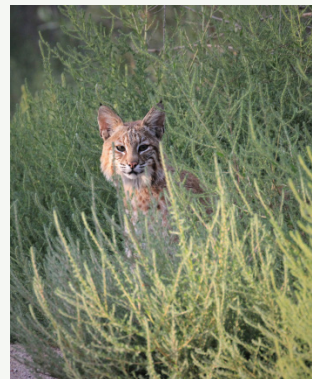


Gerald Guss

The Boardwalk is an accessible trail where you can peer out over a semi-permanent wetland. A great blue heron may burst from the cattails as you pass, or rafts of common mergansers or ruddy ducks may float along the water in the distance.

S P R I N G

M A R C H • A P R I L • M A Y



Patricia Vergeer

If you are eager to shake off winter's chill and stretch your legs, pedal over to the Low Flow Conveyance Channel East Service Road. This gravel roadway offers almost nine miles of easy riding with no vehicular traffic, plus the opportunity to catch a glimpse of some of the more secretive wildlife that call the refuge home. Be on the lookout for bobcats, javelinas, deer, or turkeys, as well as several species of raptors perched in the trees or flying overhead.



Jonathan Dowell

The wetlands that held thousands of ducks, geese, and cranes in the winter are slowly drawn down in the spring, creating expansive mudflats and shallow areas for migrating shorebirds. At least twenty-five species of shorebirds visit the refuge each spring, including various sandpipers, ibis, stilts, plovers, phalaropes, godwits, dunlins, avocets and curlews. Other spring migrants include flycatchers, vireos, and around a dozen different warblers.



Wayne Washam

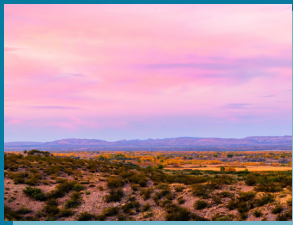
Throughout spring, we celebrate desert blooms and spring migrants! If you love birds and want to learn more about their incredible lives and fascinating adaptive behaviors, mark your calendars the first Friday and Saturday of May for a special opportunity to celebrate and experience spring birding through our guided workshops. Join us for the Friends Annual Meeting, Desert Arboretum Stroll, and workshops at the Spring Migration Celebration. A guide is available at the arboretum entrance year-round and other books are available in our Nature Store. Learn more about Spring Migration Celebration at friendsofbosquedelapache.org/smc



Don Boyd

The Chupadera Wilderness National Recreational Trail is the perfect place to fill your lungs with fresh spring air and celebrate new life on the refuge. If it has been a wet winter, there will be wildflowers by early April, and with monsoon season a couple of months off, you may be in for some beautiful weather up top. The Chupadera Mountains were formed by volcanic activity. As you venture through the red canyon you will encounter spires of solidified volcanic ash. As you ascend you may notice the vertical geological formations of the Rio Grande rift zone, evidence of this area of New Mexico splitting for millions of years to create what is now the Rio Grande Valley.

The John P. Taylor, Jr Memorial Trail is an easy walk, through a restored bosque. From the bench at the end, you may sit and watch the geese and cranes in the fields nearby. Take a moment to contemplate the history of this valley from another beautiful vantage point, the Point of Lands – El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro Overlook. Reflect on the ease of your journey today compared with that of the Spanish traders who passed this point centuries ago, and were helped by the native Piro People during their challenging journey.



Mike & Sue Croyle

Spring is a time to appreciate renewal at the refuge. With good winter moisture there will be spring wildflowers, and new growth of vegetation in the wetlands promises the coming fall's bounty. Wildlife prepare for mating season and the gobble of turkeys, the calling of quail, and the cooing of roadrunners fill the air. The sky over the Marsh Overlook Trail is filled with the frenzied courtship flights of several species of waterfowl, while below coots and gallinules begin establishing nesting sites.



Rinus Baak

S U M M E R

J U N E • J U L Y • A U G U S T



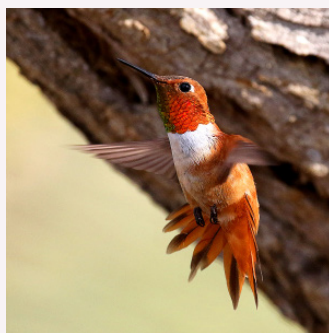
Rinus Baak

Without a boat or a desire to take a road trip, there are a few places in this part of New Mexico where you can drop in a line and take home a catfish dinner. Areas along the Low Flow Conveyance Channel, the Interior/Elmendorf Canal, and the Boardwalk are open to licensed fishermen and youngsters with a licensed adult to come and try their luck. Carp are a fun, and weighty, challenge off of the Boardwalk, which is accessible and safer for kids. The ditches can be more diverse, yielding bluegill, catfish, suckers, and bass. Please abide by all New Mexico Department of Game and Fish and refuge regulations. Visit fws.gov/refuge/bosque-del-apache for more information. You will also notice raccoons, herons, and other wildlife at the refuge trying their luck at fishing.



John Olson

Summer is a great time to visit our Pollinator Habitat Enhancement Project - a new expansion of the Observation Blind Trail on the refuge's North Tour Loop. Friends of Bosque del Apache, refuge staff, donors, volunteers and the River for Monarchs project led by the Institute for Applied Ecology, have teamed up to restore twelve acres of habitat in support of monarch butterflies and other native pollinators. New trails now meander through trees and a wildflower meadow. Soon, we'll have an outdoor education area where the Observation Blind was. Pollinators are critical to all ecosystems, including the Rio Grande and Chihuahuan Desert ecosystems, as they play a key role in plant reproduction.



Jonathan Dowell

The Canyon National Recreation Trail is alive with birds, reptiles, and other desert dwellers in the cool morning hours. The tracks in the sand tell the tales of adventures and battles from the night before. Unravel these stories using field guides sold in the Nature Store. Our Summer Pollinator Celebration, usually occurring in August, spotlights hummingbirds, butterflies, and other pollinators. It is the perfect time to come and "capture" the birds, bees, hummingbirds, and other critters flitting about ensuring the health and persistence of our native plant species. For more info about this event, visit friendsofbosquedelapache.org/spc



Victoria Bayliss

Summers here are hot, so prepare for any trek or bike ride with ample water and sunscreen. The Tour Loop is open to bikes year-round. Pedal down toward the Boardwalk early in the morning to see secretive marsh birds, such as rails and bitterns, and watch as turtles vie for sunning rights on exposed logs. Continue on around the South Loop looking for javelinas and bobcats along the field edges. Alternatively, head straight across on Bosque Road and bike the Low Flow Conveyance Channel East Service Road. The flat, wide roads are great for families or any riders looking to take in some wildlife viewing along the trail.



Cathy Linford

In the hot days of summer, consider finding peace (and shade!) in and around the visitor center and Desert Arboretum. Relax and enjoy watching hummingbirds and orioles at the feeders. Black-chinned hummingbirds arrive in the spring and number in the dozens during the summer. Calliope, broad-tailed, and rufous hummingbirds arrive later in the summer. There is also a shaded quail pond near the arboretum that has a calming trickle of water that draws birds for an early morning dip. Be sure to check out the selection of bird feeders and backyard bird-feeding guides in the Nature Store.

SEASONAL EVENTS ON THE REFUGE

Fall	Wildlife Zone
Winter	Festival of the Cranes
Spring	Spring Migration Celebration, Desert Arboretum Stroll, & Friends Annual Meeting
Summer	Pollinator Celebration

Seasonal wildlife activity and weather may influence the quality of your visit. Different species are easier to observe at different times of the year.



For more info on these (and other events) scan the QR code above or visit friendsofbosquedelapache.org/bda-events



For info about seasonal ranger-led programs scan the QR code above or visit fws.gov/refuge/bosque-del-apache



The Nature Store in the Bosque del Apache Visitor Center is the perfect place to acquire materials to enjoy your time here or to purchase a memento. The Nature Store, operated by the Friends of Bosque del Apache to raise funds for refuge programs, offers the region's finest selection of Southwest and nature-themed books, clothing, jewelry, children's items, artwork, and gifts.



YOU are vital to the success of this fragile and critical habitat!

Your donations help sustain Bosque del Apache, one of the last remaining wetlands in the Southwest. Maximize your support by giving monthly to join the OASIS, ensuring the continuation of important conservation projects in every season.

Friends of Bosque del Apache.org



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