

# BOSQUE WATCH

SUMMER 2022

Photo by Don Boyd

## The Refuge Visitor Center Again Welcomes the Public



*USFWS Volunteer Wayne Washam trains summer interns Jacqui Torrez and Olivia Knight on front desk operations.*

The day has finally come when refuge staff can reopen more of their public operations! As you know, the tour loops and trails reopened almost two years ago, after being closed briefly because of the pandemic restrictions. However, the Visitor Center remained closed. We are excited that the popular Bosque del Apache Visitor Center reopened on May 5, 2022. Long-time US Fish and Wildlife (USFWS) volunteers

Cathie Sandell and Wayne Washam welcomed visitors, all of whom were very excited to see the Visitor Center open. One of our first visitors shared that he had been touring multiple national wildlife refuges and had found all visitor centers closed until reaching Bosque del Apache. Upon hearing that it was actually the first day of the Visitor Center reopening, he exclaimed, “Congratulations to me!”

***The Visitor Center will be open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday—Saturday during summer 2022. Please come visit us!***

# The Much-Anticipated Return of Festival of the Cranes (*and Crane Fiesta*)

How long have you been waiting for your chance to attend our in-person Festival? Well, we have good news for you! We invite you to join us this winter for virtual Crane Fiesta and the return of our in-person Festival of the Cranes! For the third year in a row, we will once again host our virtual Crane Fiesta November 18-19, and we invite our friends from near and far to join us from wherever they are in the world for a wonderful variety of virtual webinars. Additionally, we are delighted to announce that, after a two-year hiatus, our greatly anticipated in-person Festival of the Cranes will return this year on December 1-3. Festival of the Cranes will look and feel a little different this year as we work to improve upon the visitor experience and ensure the safety of all our guests, given ongoing Covid concerns.

## WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT AT THIS YEAR'S FESTIVAL OF THE CRANES

Thanks to our great partnership with New Mexico Tech (NMT), all indoor workshops will meet at Macey Center classrooms on the NMT campus in Socorro. The large NMT classrooms



*Sandhill cranes preparing to fly out.*

*Photo copyright Barbara Magnuson, 2021.*

will allow us to keep the event safer, will provide instructors more reliable internet connections for their presentations, and will be a welcome (and warm) respite from the New Mexican winter. If you have attended Festival of the Cranes before, you likely remember that in the past, our largest classroom space was a tent, and, unfortunately, the New Mexico weather isn't always cooperative in December. We will hold all field workshops outdoors at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife refuge, as usual.

Some of our most popular presenters will return to offer education, including the following: Sandra Noll, Erv Nichols, Paul Tebbel, Keanna Leonard, Matt Mitchell, Anne Lacy, and Lisa Langell. And we'll welcome many new faces as well, such as Alexander Harper, Dr. Mostafa Hassanalian, Barnaby Briggs, and many more!

## ANNOUNCING EXPO ROOM (*Replacing Expo Tent*) AT THE REFUGE

Our vendor space, usually hosted in the outdoors Expo Tent, will now be located inside the refuge Visitor Center's Lannan Room. The Expo Room, as we're now calling it, will be smaller this year, but will still feature many of the same great vendors you remember. Among others, Hunt's Photo and Video will have a booth in the Expo Room and will assist with many of the photography field tours as well,



*Sandhill Crane prancing in Bosque del Apache wetlands*

*Photo by Birgit Davidson, 2021.*



Sandhill Cranes fly to the safety of Bosque del Apache wetlands at dusk

Photo by Gerald Gus, 2021.

so registrants will have another expert in their workshops!

### **FRIENDS DINNER AND EXCITING KEYNOTE SPEAKER AT NMT MACEY AUDITORIUM**

Our Friends Dinner keynote speaker will be Barnaby Briggs, who has a long and impressive global career in environmentalism. In addition to his work as a consultant implementing ESG (environmental, social, and governance) programs, he is chair of the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT), one of the world's largest and most respected wetland organizations. WWT works globally to safeguard and improve wetlands – and some of their most threatened species – for wildlife and people. Briggs has worked in North and South America, Asia, and Africa! He is also chair of the Climate Partnership, a ground-breaking forum that brings together representatives from commerce, government, education, and the local community to fund meaningful projects that bring tangible improvements to the environment, biodiversity, businesses, and people.

Briggs has a breadth of practical experience working with local communities, scientists, farmers, schools, and commercial interests, to make measurable change happen. He is also a passionate advocate for the value that wetlands like the refuge can bring in terms of reversing climate change, advancing biodiversity and improving health outcomes for visitors. He is a keen birder, bird bander and moth enthusiast, with a very English sense

of humor. Not only will you learn a great deal from attending this keynote, but also you'll be entertained.

### **CRANE FIESTA: FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO CAN'T COME IN PERSON (Or Want a Sneak Peek)**

Now that we've highlighted some of the exciting changes you can expect to see this year during Festival of the Cranes, let's take a step back to Crane Fiesta. Crane Fiesta will provide a sneak peek for everything coming in December; but more than that, it will give everyone, regardless of travel concerns or distance, the chance to experience the awe of the sandhill cranes and the beauty of Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge. From the breathtaking sights and sounds of the fly-ins and fly-outs, to the exceptional photography and birding workshops, we hope that you'll plan to join us from the comfort and warmth of your own home this November!

Stay tuned for more info as we will announce our speakers for Crane Fiesta soon.

### **MORE FESTIVAL NEWS AND AN ONLINE CATALOG COMING SOON!**

We'll also send out additional information in our Fall 2022 Bosque Watch newsletter and update the Friends website with more details as we get closer to our winter celebrations.

We hope you can come and celebrate with us during this year's events!

# Catching Up With New and Familiar Faces on the Refuge

Welcome to our four new and enthusiastic college interns who are working with our biology and visitor services staff this summer! We have one visitor services intern, Olivia Knight, and three biology interns: Laurel Trout, Marissa Myers, and McKenzie Hagenbuch. They hail from universities across the US. The Friends and the refuge collaborate in hosting these interns, and we couldn't have such a strong internship program without your generous support! This is our fifth consecutive year offering Friends funding for this wonderful program. Thanks to your generosity, we've offered stipends to twenty-two interns over the past five years! As each of these interns tells you about her qualifications, interests, and summer projects, we know that you will share their enthusiasm and be as excited to welcome them as we are.

In addition to the interns, we welcome three other important people to the refuge. First, welcome back Lane Lopez, our new Civilian Climate Corps Fellow, who is on an eighteen-month assignment here. You may recognize Lane: he recently served two summers as a biology intern. With us since November 2021, is our "new" wildlife biologist Claire Revekant, who hit the ground running and just now had time to be interviewed! And finally, we caught up with Ed Sprigg, Strike Team and PUPS Lead, who has been stationed at Bosque del Apache since 2016, but who reports to our regional office in Albuquerque and serves most of the New Mexico national wildlife refuges.

## Welcome Summer Interns

### OLIVIA KNIGHT

I am originally from Raleigh, North Carolina, but I moved up to Bethel, Maine, to attend Gould Academy about five years ago. I currently attend the University of Maine as a rising sophomore; I'm studying wildlife ecology. This is my first time in New Mexico and the southwest in general, so I am very excited to be able to study in such a different environment from what I am used



*Olivia Knight, Visitor Services Intern.*

to! This summer I am filling the Park Ranger position under Amanda Walker and Jessica Jia. I am focusing on environmental education, such as informing both long-time and new visitors about Bosque del Apache, leading field trips for schools, designing social media posts, and roving around the entirety of the tour loop, which allows me to inform visitors about updated sightings and information. I am feeding the birds of the season each morning at both of our feeder locations and shadowing Friends staff member Cari Powell to learn about botany in the Desert Arboretum. I will also be shadowing our biology team to support studies of the endangered yellow-billed cuckoo. I am so excited to have the opportunity to both learn and teach in such a special area and be able to bring all my refuge experiences back to school and beyond. I am an avid birder, hiker, camper, skier (although I won't get much of that around here), and fly-fisherwoman, so I am thrilled to see and experience things that I have never had the opportunity to before. I am certainly planning on packing a million things into a three-month time period and seeing as much of New Mexico as I can. I could not be more ecstatic! I would like

to thank all the refuge staff who work so hard to make these opportunities possible for us and the Friends of Bosque del Apache for not only making this happen, but also for providing your unwavering kindness and support.

## LAUREL TROUT

Hi! I am a biology intern at Bosque del Apache this summer. I am from Durango, Colorado, and go to school at Western Colorado University in Gunnison. I am majoring in biology, and next semester I am starting the master's program in ecology. Outside of school, I enjoy various outdoor activities, including running and hiking. I have been a member of the Western Colorado University Trail Running Team for two years and ran my longest race yet, a 33k, last semester. At Bosque del Apache, I am helping survey the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher and the yellow-billed cuckoo. I will also be



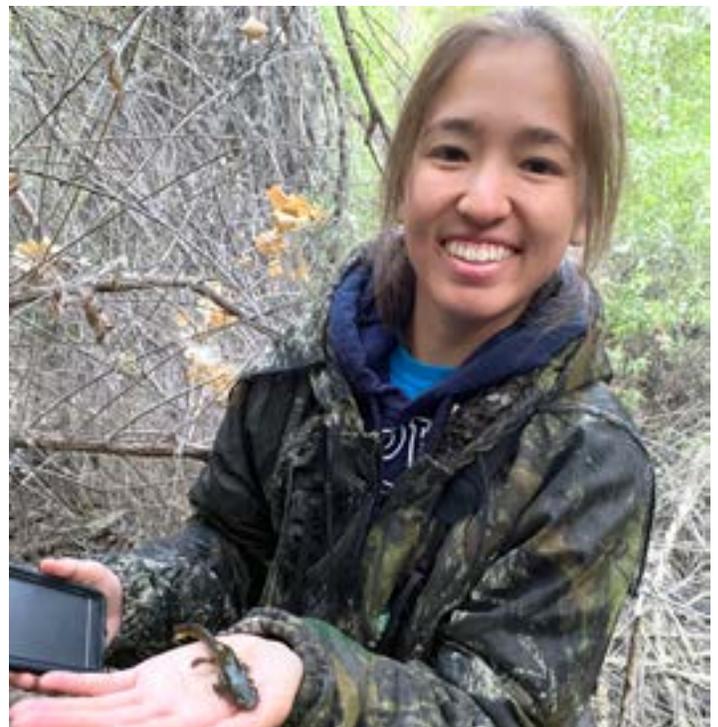
*Intern for Biology, Laurel Trout*

assisting with herbicide spraying, invasive species removal, such as the American bullfrog, and setting up camera traps to survey the New Mexico meadow jumping mouse. I am so excited to work here because of the field experience, beautiful area, and amazing staff! Everyone at Bosque is amazing, and I am so grateful and thrilled for the opportunity to work here and gain

super valuable skills and experience. I would like to thank the Friends of the Bosque for funding the internships and the Bosque: without you, we wouldn't be here.

## MARISSA MYERS

I am one of the biology interns who is working at Bosque del Apache this summer. I am from Clover, South Carolina, and attend Clemson University. I am currently a senior and intend on graduating in December 2022. I will earn a bachelor of science degree in wildlife and fisheries biology with a minor in animal and veterinary science. In my free time, I enjoy hiking, traveling, and playing with my German shepherd named Zeke. I also love playing sports and watching Clemson football games.



*Intern for Biology, Marissa Myers with Tiger Salamander*

During my time at Bosque del Apache NWR, I am conducting surveys on the southwestern willow flycatcher and the yellow-billed cuckoo. Aside from the surveys, I assist the bio team with the New Mexico meadow jumping mouse study, bullfrog removal, the river realignment project, and anything else they need support on. Overall, I have been extremely excited to get my hands dirty and to gain valuable experience and knowledge while at Bosque del Apache. I would like to thank the amazing staff and volunteers for being so welcoming, and the Friends group for providing me with this amazing opportunity!

## MCKENZIE HAGENBUCH

Howdy partner! I traveled from my hometown of The Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania, to be a biology intern at Bosque del Apache NWR for the Summer 2022 season. I am a rising senior at the State University of New York (SUNY), College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse. I am majoring in environmental studies with a focus in wildlife science, and I'm doing a double minor in communications and recreation resource and in protected area management. This summer, I am joining other biology interns in intimately studying both the southwestern willow flycatcher and the yellow-billed cuckoo, two endangered bird species. Upon graduation, I hope to attend graduate school with aspirations of becoming a wildlife biologist and working for the US Fish & Wildlife Service's refuge system. I am thrilled to diversify my skill set and field experience through this incredible opportunity at Bosque del Apache!



*Intern for Biology, McKenzie Hagenbuch*

## Lane Lopez , Civilian Climate Corps Fellow

We are excited to welcome back an old friend - Lane Lopez! He is now serving an eighteen-month stint as one of the six Civilian Climate Corps Fellows across the US with US Fish & Wildlife (more about that later). You may remember that Lane first came to Bosque del



*Lane Lopez, duck banding*

Apache from New Mexico State University (NMSU) as a summer biology intern in 2019, and then again in 2020. In his second internship, Lane assumed the role of Field Lead, leading and training others in the standard operating procedures and field techniques for surveying the southwestern willow flycatcher, yellow-billed cuckoo, and New Mexico meadow jumping mouse; for applying herbicide treatments; and for doing maintenance tasks across the refuge. At that time, Lane asserted that having the opportunity to conduct and direct mission critical tasks across the refuge provided him with experience that would benefit him throughout his career in wildlife conservation. Now let's fast forward to 2022.

Lane completed his bachelor of science degree at NMSU in fish, wildlife, and conservation ecology in December 2021. Then, he joined Bosque del Apache staff for eighteen months

starting in late January 2022 in his new role. This year, the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) started employing a team of Civilian Climate Corps (CCC) Fellows with complementary skill sets in order to further develop and refine their climate adaptation planning framework in areas around the country. As a CCC Fellow, Lane is conducting climate vulnerability assessments for refuge “resources of concern,” especially the endangered species (New Mexico meadow jumping mouse, yellow-billed cuckoos, southwest willow flycatcher, and silvery minnow) that the refuge is protecting. The CCC Fellow program “utilizes existing plans, data on climate change and other stressors, ecological transformation, and a structured decision-making process to inform how refuges will address climate change.” To do his work, Lane is looking at historical and predictive models and reports about climate change in our region, including the work of Dr. Fred Phillips, who was the keynote speaker at the Friends Annual Meeting in February 2022. In his role, Lane meets regularly with five other CCC Fellows around the United States to share issues, problems, and resources. He also works closely with the US Geological Survey, who is conducting water surveys on the refuge, and he is connecting to the scientific



*Lane Lopez, Sandhill Crane banding*

community that is studying issues related to climate change. Lane says that he is very excited about his new position: it will broaden his knowledge significantly, grow his network, and make him a better overall conservationist. For more information about the new CCC Fellow program, go to: <https://manoproject.org/events/u-s-fish-wildlife-service-civilian-climate-corp-ccc-fellow>

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## Claire Revekant, Field Wildlife Biologist

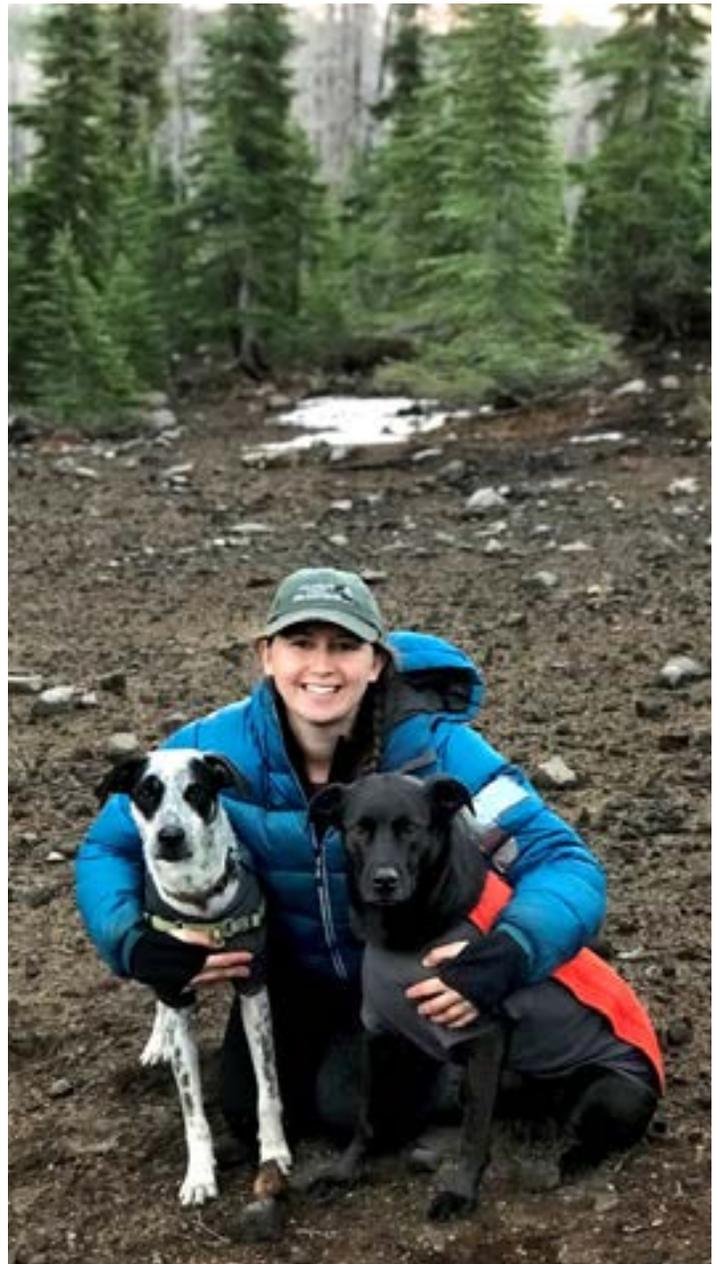
In November 2021, Bosque del Apache gained a talented, young field wildlife biologist in Claire Revekant. Though new to us, Claire is quite seasoned, contributing to wildlife through a decade of internships and assignments across the US in both state and national parks and with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Before joining the Bosque del Apache staff, Claire had never set foot in New Mexico and had not had an assignment in the southwestern US. Bosque del Apache is about as different a place from where she started as Claire could imagine.

Claire grew up in Rochester, New York, loving the outdoors and birds from a very young age. She credits her nature-loving mother for lighting that spark in her and her three siblings. When Claire was merely six, she was already involved in raptor research and banding. In her youth, she did some wildlife rehabilitation work, cleaning cages and doing enrichment training with raptors. From an early age, her ultimate goal was to become an ornithologist. When she was a teenager, her dad passed. Her mom and family had always been attracted to the natural world, and now they found it especially healing as they dealt with their loss. They often ventured to the Adirondacks to camp, hike, and climb in the high peaks region. For three years during high school, Claire volunteered on national trail work crews with the Student Conservation Association (SCA)

in the National Parks system. She worked in three different locations: Big South Fork National Park in Tennessee, Glacier National Park in Montana, and Lake Clark National Park and Preserve in Alaska.

In 2014, Claire completed a bachelor of science degree in wildlife science at the State University of New York, College of Environmental Science and Forestry. During her undergraduate studies, she built experience in numerous internships. In summer 2012, she started as an intern with the Career Discovery Internship Program at Parker River National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in Newburyport, Massachusetts. In this position, she mist-netted and monitored saltmarsh sparrows, worked closely with an entomologist in bee and dragonfly collection, participated in the USFWS region-wide Saltmarsh Integrity Program, and tracked bats to their roost sites. In 2013, she spent her summer at Monomoy NWR on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, where she monitored the productivity of piping plovers, common terns, and roseate terns. When she graduated in 2014, she returned to Monomoy NWR as a seasonal USFWS employee to monitor the productivity of American oystercatchers.

Though Claire aspired to complete a master's degree, she wanted to build more field experience first. The winter of 2014, she took a position with the New York Department of Environmental Conservation, trapping American marten and monitoring their occupancy. She then returned to Monomoy NWR for a full year as the lead biological science technician. She not only did field work, but also gained credentials as a wildland firefighter, boat operator, and grant writer. In 2016, she took a seasonal position with the National Park Service at Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. At Yellowstone, she monitored raptor productivity, conducted point counts for songbirds in recently burned areas, and suppressed and released willow sites. After her seasonal position ended, Claire ventured to Ventura, California, for a four-month position with the Great Basin Institute, trapping and tracking California condors.



*Claire Revekant with her dogs Gus and Bridger*

In the fall of 2017, Claire became a graduate research assistant at Oregon State University in Corvallis. During her graduate studies, she participated in the USFWS Directorate Fellowship Program (DFP) at the Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex: she monitored streaked horned lark productivity and wrote a protocol on how to do so. She wrote her thesis on comparing raven density between sage-grouse Core and Non-Core conservation policy areas and comparing raven densities to human features on the landscape. She graduated with a master of science degree in rangeland ecology and

management, and a minor in statistics. Then, Claire saw a job posting at Bosque del Apache NWR, and it was exactly what she was looking for. She was not familiar with New Mexico, but she is very curious and finds beauty wherever she goes.

Claire finds Bosque del Apache complex and beautiful, and her new position has been challenging and enticing. She's had a steep learning curve because of the unique ecosystems of the desert southwest and the departure of senior biologist Jeff Sanchez, who is now manager of the Sevilleta NWR. Claire had a short mentoring period and is now doing some senior biologist paperwork until Jeff's replacement is found. Despite all the challenges, Claire says she is grateful and excited to be here: she has wanted to be a biologist with USFWS since she was introduced to the service in 2012. She wants people to know that Bosque del Apache is about so much more than sandhill cranes: the refuge attracts wonderful birds and wildlife year-round and is a major stopover for many

amazing bird species, from sandhill cranes and waterfowl, to shorebirds, to passerines. She says the staff who work here are some of the most dedicated and hard-working individuals she has worked with.

Claire is also excited about being a mentor to our latest crop of biology interns (who are also featured in this issue). She was in their position not so long ago, and she wants to give back. She finds mentoring new interns rewarding, and she wants to build a great network of relationships, just as she remains friends with the people who mentored her.

How perfect that a young girl who grew up in New York loving birds and wanting to be an ornithologist has grown into an amazing and talented young biologist working at Bosque del Apache, the "Crown Jewel," according to the Audubon Society, of New Mexico's Important Bird Areas and one of the most spectacular National Wildlife Refuges in North America. May Claire continue to be intrigued and mentor the next generation to share her passion for the natural world.



*Ed Sprigg hiking in his native Alabama at Mobile-Tensaw Delta, in front of the largest bald cypress in the state*

## Getting to Know Ed Sprigg Strike Team and PUPS Lead

I recently had the opportunity to sit down with Ed Sprigg and learn about the jobs he does here at Bosque del Apache, as well as on seven other New Mexico wildlife refuges. Ed has been stationed at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge since 2016, reporting to the Regional Office in Albuquerque, NM. I've seen Ed around since I started my position with Friends, and I never really understood exactly how he fit in; now I do, and I wanted to share that with you! Ed has been the New Mexico Invasive Species Strike Team Lead since 2019, and he is also the acting Regional PUPS (Pesticide Use Proposal System) lead.

Recently, after the departure of our senior supervisory biologist, Jeff Sanchez, Ed also served a sixty-day stint in that position. How did Ed build skills to do all these jobs? Let's

take a look at his education and career history, which is a testament to Ed's flexibility and adaptability!

Ed grew up in Birmingham, Alabama, and started college at Warren Wilson College. In 2011, he moved to Tennessee Tech to complete a bachelor of science degree in wildlife and fisheries science. Unfortunately, when Ed graduated, the job market for paid positions in his field was very poor. So, he took positions in industrial construction in Georgia and Alabama while he continued his job search in his field. While holding down those jobs, he also volunteered at the Alabama Wildlife Center doing avian rehabilitation. During this time, Ed took a three-month trip to Iceland, where he applied and was accepted into a master's program in coastal and marine management, but the cost of living in Iceland was prohibitive, so he decided not to attend school there. After two years in construction, he moved to Denver, Colorado, site unseen and with no job. Within three days, he had a job in nuisance wildlife removal with a private company, where he trapped and released snakes, squirrels, rabbits, and the like. After two years removing nuisance wildlife, Ed took a position at Smith Environmental Engineering, where he did invasive species management and bird management. While he enjoyed his work, he didn't enjoy the long commute in Denver traffic and soon applied for his first job in the federal government. Ed worked ten months as a seasonal employee in the US Forest Service in Camino, California. In this job he grew trees and helped with genetics programs to prevent arboreal disease. Next was a four-month seasonal job at Eldorado National Forest in Georgetown, California, doing goshawk surveys.

In 2016, Ed came to Bosque del Apache for a four-year term, fulltime position as a strike team biotech with US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). He was the acting strike team lead in 2018-2019 and became the permanent, fulltime lead in April 2019. As mentioned before, Ed serves eight NM refuges (Bosque del Apache, Bitter Lake, Las Vegas, Maxwell, Rio Mora,

San Andres, Sevilleta, and Valle de Oro). The mission of the Strike Team is to aid refuges in managing invasive species and to create plans for early detection and rapid response. They employ integrated management techniques – both chemical and mechanical – to manage invasive plants on refuges. Before they act, they go through a scientific process whereby all pesticides are reviewed by multiple toxicology experts, considering any effects on animal species and native habitat, the depth of the water table, and so forth. At times, plans must go all the way to national headquarters to be approved.

Ed says that he has thoroughly enjoyed being stationed at Bosque del Apache for the past few years because of the good management and support. He loves the flexibility of his job and the opportunities to work at all NM refuges, go to national meetings in many other states, and help other strike teams. During his time here, he also completed a master of science degree (December 2021) online from Montana State University in land resources and environmental science. Looking forward, Ed aspires to take leadership positions where he can use his experience, skills, and knowledge to make even more of a beneficial impact in USFWS.



*Ed Sprigg relaxing with girlfriend Kalissa*

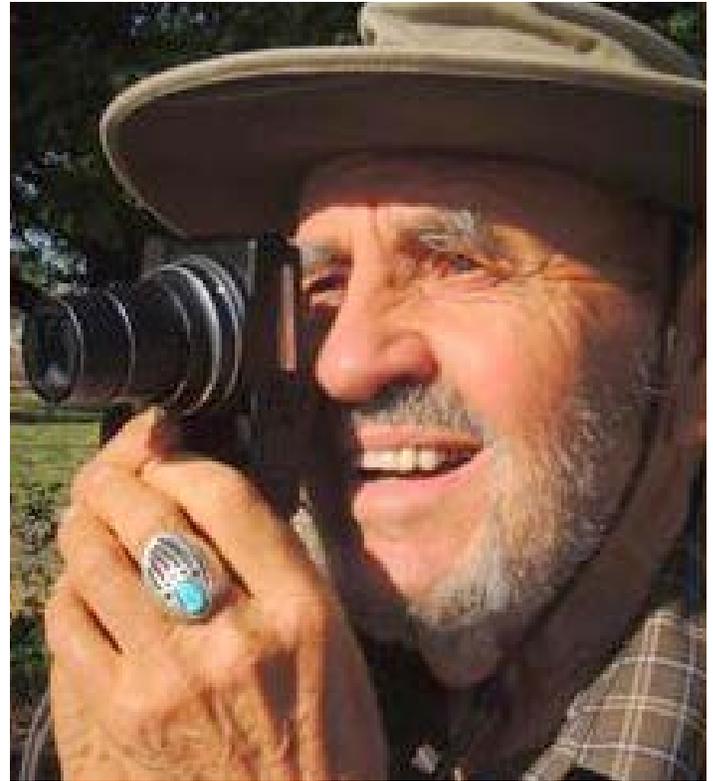
# Founding Friends Leave a Legacy

In the past eight months, Friends of Bosque del Apache has lost three founding members. While we miss them all, the legacies they left will far outlive their long and productive lives. With their efforts, they greatly helped our organization, the refuge, New Mexico children, and so many who value Bosque del Apache and educating everyone about its importance and unique beauty. We honor our nearly three-decade history by sharing a bit about three founding Friends who made a difference: John Bertrand, Cheryl Learn, and Barbara Dubois.

## JOHN BERTRAND



A founding father of Friends of Bosque del Apache, John died in April 2022; he was ninety-six. He grew up in Idaho and spent much of his career doing public relations work in California at Bank of America, Hughes Aircraft Credit Union, and finally Hearst Newspaper. He greatly loved the outdoors - hiking in the Sierras, riding his bike, and travelling in the US and abroad. In 1993, John came to New Mexico to volunteer at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge. He was searching for something to give his retirement years purpose, and he found it in volunteering. He volunteered not just at Bosque del Apache,



but also at Ghost Ranch, the Cibola National Forest, and at the Alaska Maritime Refuge. In 2008, he was awarded “Volunteer of the Year” by the National Wildlife Refuge Association and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. While at Bosque del Apache, John accepted then refuge manager Phil Norton’s challenge to help form the Friends of Bosque del Apache, which was officially incorporated in November 1993. For many years, John served as the editor of the Friends newsletter and volunteered in many Friends and refuge activities. John had an eye for the smallest details, not only in his writing but in his photographs – he found beauty even in thorny subjects. Even in the past ten years, John attended as many Friends and refuge events as he could, walking the trails with his large hiking sticks, and sharing his questions or concerns at events in his booming and deep voice. Everyone knew John’s voice and wonderful laugh. Into his late nineties, John was a model of living a full life; it seemed nothing would slow him down. He was our friend and a great friend to Bosque del Apache until the very end. He left a great legacy, and we miss him.

## DR. CHERYL LEARN



Our friend Cheryl D. Learn, Ph.D., died at age eighty in November 2021, and her family held a celebration of her life on June 4, 2022. Cheryl had a remarkable career in nursing, and in 2010 earned the Legends in Nursing Award. Aside from being one of the first women in the state of New Mexico to earn a Ph.D. in nursing, and teaching countless students over the years, she was a great friend to our beautiful refuge. Cheryl Learn and her husband Emerson first visited and became passionate about Bosque del Apache in 1993. Emerson and Cheryl lived near Bosque del Apache for several years in their retirement, and they spent time hiking,

enjoying birds, and volunteering. They soon became very involved in Friends of Bosque del Apache, with Emerson serving as President of the Board for five years, starting in 1995, and Cheryl serving for several years on the Friends Board of Directors as a Member at Large. Due to her many contributions, Cheryl was honored with the Martha Hatch Volunteer of the Year Award. The Friends had established a bus scholarship fund in 1996, and after Emerson's death, Cheryl worked with the Friends to establish the Emerson Learn Bus Scholarship Fund in 2008. Through this project, started in Emerson's memory, the Friends created a fund to provide stipends for New Mexico school children to visit the refuge. For ten years after the inception of this fund, Cheryl spearheaded silent auctions at the yearly Festival of the Cranes dinner, and she personally contributed to the original fund, while also encouraging others to contribute. Toward the end of Cheryl's life, her three children (George, Deborah, and Rachel) asked that the fund honor both Cheryl and Emerson and be used not only for bus scholarships but also for K-12 Environmental Education (EE) projects. The nearly \$50,000 fund will now serve many New Mexico school children and is a wonderful legacy to both Cheryl and Emerson Learn. Friends is very grateful for the Learn family's generosity and friendship.



*Cheryl and Emerson Learn enjoying the outdoors*

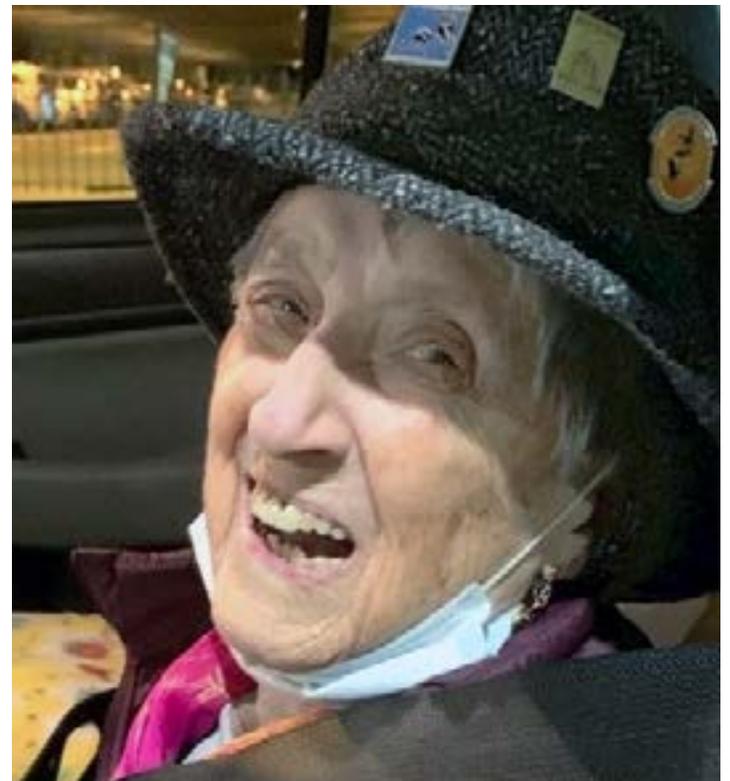
## BARBARA DUBOIS



Long-time Friends member and loyal monthly donor, Barbara DuBois died in November 2021 at age 95. Barbara supported Friends through monthly donations for many years, well before the recent formal inception of our monthly OASIS program, making her one of the founding members of the OASIS



community. Originally from New York, Barbara moved to New Mexico with her late husband, and she fell in love with the blue sky and with Bosque del Apache. She spent eighteen years teaching college English, most recently at New Mexico Tech in Socorro. She volunteered for many years at Bosque del Apache, as well as at many other local organizations, such as Socorro's Historical Society and the Friends of the Library. Her extensive volunteer efforts at the refuge resulted in her being recognized with the Martha Hatch Volunteer of the Year award in 2009. Even when Barbara could no longer get around well, she continued to visit the refuge and attend our events. As recently as last fall, she offered a testimonial (now on Friends



website) to encourage others to join the OASIS program, saying, "Bosque del Apache is a peaceful place for us, as well as for our beloved birds. It has endured for many years, as proof of our devotion as stewards of this natural marvel. As a monthly contributor, I am a steward for this refuge, but also for the Friends, who do so much to ensure that this place thrives." We thank Barbara for her many contributions throughout the years and miss her.

*Please visit our website to learn more about the OASIS, a sustaining community of hope.*

[friendsofbosquedelapache.org/oasis/](http://friendsofbosquedelapache.org/oasis/)

# Beauty of Bosque del Apache Helps Cut Through Dark Times

By Don Boyd for *The Santa Fe New Mexican* June, 2022

*“I got saved by poetry and I got saved by the beauty of the world.” — poet Mary Oliver*



*Pano of Flight Deck with smoke moving horizontally: the smoke from the Black Fire is damped down by early morning humidity at the refuge*

When I was a kid growing up, I was baseball crazy. I felt a profound sadness when summer departed, for it meant the end of my baseball-playing season.

Now, my playing days are long over and the season that brings on that same sadness is, ironically, summer, as that’s the signal for the end of the spring bird migration and the overwintering snow geese, sandhill cranes and ducks at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge.

The snow geese and sandhill cranes are nearly all gone by the middle to end of February. On the heels of the disappearing geese and cranes are the migrating shore and wading birds and the flycatchers (vermilion, ashthroated, southwestern willow) and warblers (common yellow-throat, yellow-rumped, lucy’s and yellow) to name a few. I love the avocets in their spring birding plumage, black-necked stilts, phalaropes, killdeer and dowitchers, who by early June will also have made their way north.

Complicating things for me and the birds late this year, too, was the smoke — first from the Bear Trap Fire and two weeks later the Black Fire, the second-largest wildfire in New Mexico history. The mostly cloudless sky was a muddy, translucent brown since the smoke first appeared May 1.

The complications for me were both visual — as muddied skies don’t make for good landscape photographs — and, perhaps even more importantly, they were emotional.

I watched the male and female vermilion flycatchers tend their nest with three offspring every day for a week. And I wondered how their chicks might be affected by smoke thick enough to be felt in my throat.

Vermilions sometimes raise two broods, where the female leaves the feeding of the well-established first brood to the male and starts a second brood elsewhere. Having seen both parents on the last day the nest was attended, I doubt that it happened with this pair. I wondered, too, if this was a result of the smoke. Though the fires were never a direct threat to the refuge, the smoke from fires close enough to color the sky was a threat to the sensitive respiratory systems of birds.

My growing fondness and intimacy with the birds has made more palpable one of the personal lessons from my Year of Refuge — the deeper we care and love, the more likely we are to also experience suffering, sadness, disappointment and grief.

I have learned in my relationship with my amazing wife, Deb, about the courage it takes to love deeply, fiercely and the costs in the coins of fear, suffering and sadness that can accompany it. Now I care, too, about the birds, plants and other animals of the refuge.

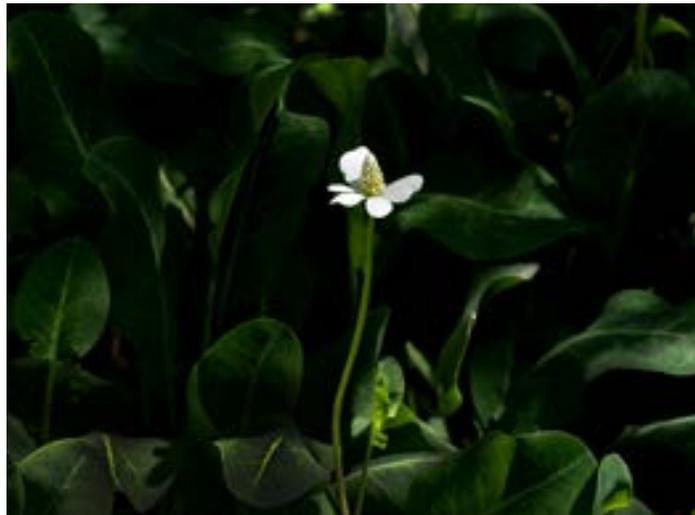
The fires and smoke, the prolonged drought and heat and the cost to keep the refuge alive in a time of challenging budget constraints all attack my

still-forming questions about the future for these living things. Given the additional circumstances of the world that seem to force their attention on us — COVID-19, the war in Ukraine, global climate change, civil unrest — at times I wonder if I have the right to enjoy the beauty the refuge offers.



*Vermilion flycatchers: these male and female vermilion flycatchers attend to their nest only days before the chicks fledged*

I said it this way in my March blog post: The terror and ugliness of the war in Ukraine “contrasted so sharply and so personally with what I had experienced on the refuge this day, that it made



*Yerba mansa: this sun-seeking yerba mansa blossom grew its stalk longer to reach the filtered light*

me wonder if I had a right to be happy seeing butterflies and vermilion feathered birds flitting about among cottonwoods with fresh, mint-colored leaves all smelling so much of spring. Is it only the schizophrenic who can juggle, unintegrated, beauty and ugliness? Or are we

approaching a time when, from a growth of consciousness, the luminous in us will dissolve the darkness?”

I would add now: Is it the pain and suffering accompanying our love and caring that might also motivate us to act before it is too late? Caring, in the face of so many challenges, can be overwhelming at times. Still, I continue each day to look for the visual poetry of the refuge and feel, as Mary Oliver did, that the beauty of the world saves me.

Now halfway into the year, one of the new tools I have added to my photography tool bag is a smartphone app that tells me what birds I am hearing. I use Merlin at the refuge and on walks in my neighborhood, and I am loving learning the variety of birds that I never knew existed. Their voices expand my awareness of a larger bird world. The app is free and can be found at [merlin.allaboutbirds.org](https://www.merlin.allaboutbirds.org).

I will update you on the Year of Refuge in The Santa Fe New Mexican in about three months. In the interim, I invite you to view more images from the year on my website, [donboyd.com/collections/168474](https://donboyd.com/collections/168474), and follow my postings on the website blog and at [facebook.com/DonBoydPhotography](https://facebook.com/DonBoydPhotography).

If you would like to sign up for my blog and the occasional newsletter, you can also do so on my website. I do not share information from my website with third parties. Please feel free to share your observations and ask questions. I will do my best to answer them.



*Moon over tree: this full moon finally rises above the clouds to the east*

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*Photo by Don Boyd*