



# NEWSLETTER

## Pajarito Environmental Education Center

P. O. Box 547, Los Alamos, NM 87544; [www.peecn.org](http://www.peecn.org)

Volume 2, Number 3

Summer 2003

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## President's Message

Michael G. Smith

*There is a place  
between thinking and feeling*

*Where we do not rest easily for long,  
which is why when we pray  
we often ask to change*

*our relationship to fear--  
for it's fear that says, in the midst of this  
abundance  
enough is not enough and will never be  
enough.*

--Charles Weld, from *Creations Groan*,  
Nimrod International Journal, Vol. 46, No 2.

The time since our last newsletter has been quite active. We want to make our PEEC-alerts more frequent, especially in view of the response to our last one (many of you wrote us about seeing the flower display in Los Alamos Canyon). We have inaugurated a monthly hike/activity usually on the first Saturday of the month. And of course we had a tremendously successful and activity-filled Earth Day. This issue will feature these and other activities.

The news on the environmental front is cause for concern for all of us. Most solutions require a mixture of knowledge and wisdom since often saving the environment comes at a cost to human needs.

Three issues come to mind. Two made

headlines in New Mexico, and the third I found on the internet.

The Rio Grande is dying. That sufficient water may not be provided to support a small species of fish, the last of its family, is an alarm call that the problem will go beyond the fish and impact farmers and others as well.

Governor Bill Richardson and Albuquerque Mayor Martin Chavez are trying to solve this problem and seem to be favoring the human needs at the expense of the river. Undoubtedly New Mexico needs a better economy. The problem is complicated by rapid population growth. More resources are required and people become further distanced from the world that sustains them. The answer to how much growth is enough is elusive. One wonders if the recent Bosque fires are not additional results of too little water in the Rio--expensive side effects not

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### CALENDAR OF PEEC EVENTS

*Saturday, July 12:* butterfly hike with Dorothy Hoard. Meet at Sullivan Field parking lot at 10 a.m.

*Saturday, August 2:* fire recovery walk with Chris Judson. Meet at Ponderosa Campground parking lot at 6 p.m.

*Saturday, September 6:* bark beetle and forest ecology hike with Tom Jervis.

*Saturday, October 4:* PEECnic at N. Mesa Picnic Grounds, 11-2

*Tuesday, October 14:* Craig Martin will talk on Valles Caldera history, the subject of his new book. Fuller Lodge, 7:30 p.m., co-sponsored with the LA Historical Society

usually included in the cost-benefit calculations.

A road through Petroglyph National Monument is back in the headlines. Again we are asking what the proper balance between historic preservation and development should be. Positively, the Albuquerque City Council decided to put the issue, as a bond, to the public. Negatively, it is bundled with other bonds.

On a more global scale, deforestation of the Amazon has increased for, of all things, soybean farms. These have replaced clearing of the forest for cattle. It seems we don't get to stop deforestation, only select how it will happen. Many of us had no idea that our use of soy (thought to be environmentally friendly) was subsidizing the destruction of a rain forest and all the unique species that depend on it.

What is the task for PEEC and its members? Obviously, the dissemination of accurate environmental knowledge. The best way to protect the local environment is to intimately know where you live. As an outgrowth of our Earth Day activities PEEC is organizing outings and seminars with knowledgeable people. The current newsletter describes scheduled events. PEEC encourages members to participate. It is PEEC's goal not so much to take stands on these issues as to educate ourselves about their details, pros and cons, and what might be the least damaging strategies to take.

An educated Los Alamos community can contribute to this ongoing discussion from a broad knowledge base. Please get out, learn, and take action.

## ***Time to Renew Membership!***

**Look at your mailing label to see if your PEEC dues are paid up or if you need to re-join for this year.** We were gratified by the response to our membership drive last year, but renewals are coming in slowly. Your support as well as funding make PEEC the growing organization that it is.

You can help us recruit new members by giving the membership form in this newsletter to friends. Also, let's hear from you on what you like or would like to see improved in our activities. The PEEC Board is currently

looking at how to be more useful to our community and would appreciate suggestions.



# ***Bird Poetry Contest Winners***

The winners have been selected in a PEEC-sponsored bird poetry contest. Congratulations to these poets:

### Grades 1-3

1st place: Sharifa Lookman, "Hummingbirds"

### Grades 4-6

1st place: Lynn Barlow, "Nesting"

2nd place: Sam Pearson, "The Mating Call"

3rd place: Calvin Green, "Hawk Being Attacked by Ravens"

4th place: T. J. Kohlrust, "Marsh Hawk"

5th place: Marlina Greene, "The Tundra Swan"

6th place: Christopher Ussery, "Fast and Furious: Peregrine Falcon"

### Grades 7-9

1st place: Samantha Stutz, "Spring Rites"

The poetry contest was part of a migratory bird awareness project. PEEC partnered with Hawks Aloft and five national parks to provide teaching and field trips. All submissions will be printed in an anthology and each poet will receive a free copy.

Thanks to Beth West, Ronnie Moss, and Becky Shankland for helping to choose the winning entries and to Colleen Olinger for helping with the publication process.

# Butterfly Hike with Dorothy Hoard July 12

PEEC will sponsor a butterfly hike led by Dorothy Hoard on July 12. Meet at 10 a.m. at the track parking lot across Diamond Drive from the high school gym. We can then car-pool for the 10-minute drive to Canon de Valle along State Road 501 (West Jemez Road) or possibly Pajarito Road if it is better.

The canyon has a good collection of wild flowers and therefore a nice assortment of butterflies. We can expect to see Weidemeyer's Admirals, mylitta crescents, golden skippers, dwarf sulphurs, and a few swallowtails, mostly two-tailed, plus an assortment of blues. There may be some painted ladies, mourning cloaks, California sisters, and silver-spotted skippers left.

Butterflies are very weather-dependent and only fly in sunshine, but both Valle and

Pajarito are nice canyons, so people should enjoy the walk even if it is overcast.

For a checklist of local butterflies, see [www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/1999/insect/bandel.htm](http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/1999/insect/bandel.htm).

## ***EARTH DAY 2003***

Earth Day 2003 was a day of hiking, photographing, painting and being painted, petting and patting, storytelling, making seed balls, looking at hybrid cars, and cleaning up bits and pieces of Los Alamos. In fact, there were so many activities that Earth Day became Earth Week. PEEC added a new event, a downtown fair that livened up Central Avenue .

We hope to spread the fun and learning out next year by organizing many of these activities as monthly events so that we won't force people to choose between snakes and puppet shows. A huge thank-you to all participants!



Kids meet snakes on Earth Day 2003

photo by Gary Warren

# **PEEC Bandelier Bird Hike**

Chick Keller, PEEC board member

To inaugurate PEEC's monthly (usually first Saturday) hike/activity program, we met for a bird walk at Bandelier on June 7 at 7:30 a.m. There were 28 of us.

We visited two different locations--the area around Juniper Campground (dry ponderosa/pinon/juniper mesa top) and Frijoles creek near the Visitors' Center (moist riparian, deciduous tree and low shrub habitat). People really enjoyed searching out the birds.

We saw and heard about 30 species. Perhaps the most notable was the uncommon scarlet red Hepatic Tanager (mesa top). But woodpeckers using nesting cavities were a treat also. I was happy that we had a range in ages. In fact, it was the young man who first saw the tanager.

Down by the creek we found the nest of a warbling vireo with the bird sitting on it, as well as a pygmy nuthatch flying in and out of a tree cavity. There was quite a variety of kinds of birds from ravens to hummingbirds--warblers, flycatchers, towhees, grosbeaks, jays, goldfinches, sparrows, woodpeckers, thrushes, etc. Since we saw some of the birds over and over, people were given a chance to learn to identify them both by sight and song and were getting pretty good at doing it.

We hope to have another bird hike in the fall to see some of the migrating species.

## **The Scoop on West Nile Virus**

Michele Altherr, PEEC vice-president

[Because of the recent controversies over how to deal with West Nile virus, we are providing basic information based on the CDC website at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) and the New Mexico Department of Health at [www.health.state.nm](http://www.health.state.nm)]

West Nile virus is a mosquito-borne

disease. Currently 14 of the 176 species of mosquitos in North America are known to be infected by the virus, with the Culex species predominating. Mosquitos acquire the disease by feeding on infected birds and then transmit the disease to its subsequent hosts, be they other birds, animals, or humans. Over 130 bird species have been documented as having been infected with the virus, among them Corvids, Orioles, Robins, Warbling Vireos, Turkey Vultures, and Bald Eagles. It is the mortality of Corvids (crows and jays) that has become the sentinel hallmark of WN virus in the US. Almost all dead birds are found singly and not as part of a mass die-off. Interestingly, not all infected birds die.

Humans can also become infected with the virus as a result of the bite of an infected mosquito. The majority of people who are infected with WN virus are only mildly affected and show either no signs of illness or mild flu-like symptoms. In rare cases the virus multiplies into the central nervous system and results in an inflammation of the spinal cord (meningitis) or the brain (encephalitis). These cases sometimes result in death, with the majority being people over 50 years old. While in 2002 there were 4,156 reported human cases of WN virus encephalitis that resulted in 284 deaths, there have been zero human cases reported so far for 2003 (as of 7/2/03). Up-to-date maps of WN virus monitoring categories can be found at <http://westnilemaps.usgs.gov>.

The Culex mosquito species feeds primarily at dusk and dawn. During feeding time the mosquito is attracted to humans by skin odors and exhaled carbon dioxide from breathing. Therefore, at these times of day it is recommended to take preventive measures such as wearing long sleeves and pants. Also, spraying the chemical repellent N,N-diethyl-m-toulamide, DEET, on top of clothing (not under) is recommended. The chemical does not work by killing the mosquito, but rather by making it difficult for the mosquito to locate a person by odor detection. The percent of DEET in a repellent gives varying lengths of protection with 4.75% DEET providing 1 1/2 hours of protection and 20% DEET providing four hours of protection. Similarly, many mosquito traps lure the insect with carbon dioxide. Besides attracting mosquitos, these

traps also kill measurable numbers. Mosquito trap information is at:  
[www.mosquito.org/MosqInfo/Traps.html](http://www.mosquito.org/MosqInfo/Traps.html).

Source reduction of breeding areas is the most effective means of eliminating mosquitos and reducing a person's risk of contracting WN virus. Pockets of standing water found in something as small as a bottle cap or as large as an unfinished building foundation can serve as mosquito breeding areas. Common sources of standing water and thus potential mosquito breeding habitats around home include Jacuzzi covers, clogged rain gutters, pet water dishes, flower pots, and birdbaths. These should be drained and cleaned several times a week. Another preventive measure is to use well-repaired screens on all open windows and doors.

Water management methods play an important role in mosquito control. "Impoundment management" is a technique developed to minimally flood mosquito marshes periodically during the summer. "Open marsh water management" is a method of connecting mosquito breeding areas to deep water through shallow (less than three feet deep) ditches. Mosquito broods are further controlled by allowing larvivorous fish access



## ***Annual PEECnic October 4***

PEEC members will have a chance to share food, ideas, and elections at the second annual PEECNic on Saturday, October 4, at the North Mesa picnic grounds from 11 to 2. A nominating committee would like to hear from anyone interested in being a board member. If interested, send an e-mail to Jody Benson <[bensonj@lanl.gov](mailto:bensonj@lanl.gov)>.

to mosquito-producing depressions. Draining occurs before the adult mosquito can emerge.

Several biological controls have been tested but are not widely used. The most commonly known control is *Gambusia*, a minnow-size predacious fish that feeds on mosquito larva. Other biocontrol agents are the predacious mosquito *Toxorhynchite*, the parasitic nematode *Romanomermis*, the fungus *Lagenidium giganteum*, and predacious copepods.

Chemical treatments of larvicides and adulticides by air or ground are less permanent than source reduction methods and are usually used only as a last resort. Larvicides act to control mosquito populations by killing the immature stages at their breeding site and before they disperse as adults. Adulticides are the least effective control technique as the chemical must drift through the habitat while the mosquito is flying through. As with all pesticide use, rapidly evolving resistance causes chemicals to lose their effectiveness.

With a grant from the CDC, New Mexico has set up surveillance sites around the state. The department of public health is testing selected birds only from counties where the virus has not been found. Residents who observe a freshly dead crow, raven, or jay can contact the Office of Epidemiology at 1-800-879-3421 or the Los Alamos Public Health Office. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention has set up a WN virus hotline for anyone with questions, 1-888-246-2675.

## **Craig Martin Speaks on Valles Caldera October 14**

PEEC will join the Historical Society in sponsoring an exciting event--author Craig Martin discussing his new book on the history of the Valles Caldera. Mark your calendar now for Fuller Lodge, October 14, 7:30 p.m.

# **FAMILY PUZZLE CORNER: BEAUTIFUL BUTTERFLIES**

## **Across**

2. Change in the form of a butterfly during its normal growth
3. Resemblance to another species or natural object
5. The shedding of the caterpillar's skin
6. A mummy-like resting stage in the development of a butterfly
9. To rest in the sun to raise body temperature
10. A rounded eye-like marking found on the wings

## **Down**

1. A scientist who specializes in the study of butterflies
4. Appearance that blends into natural surroundings, resulting in concealment
7. Another word for the worm-like larval stage of a butterfly
8. To move from one region to another seasonally

**Answers appear after the membership form.**

## Native Plant Society Meets in Los Alamos

The state annual meeting of the Native Plant Society with the theme "Recovery and Restoration" is being held in Los Alamos August 7-10. It will be an all-star event--many of the speakers are our local favorites, Craig Martin, Terry Foxx, Dorothy Hoard, Chick Keller, Craig Allen, Steve Fettig, and Tom Jervis. The keynote speaker is Gary Ziehe, of the Valles Caldera National Preserve.

For information call Chick Keller at 662-7915; or e-mail [alfonso@cybermesa.com](mailto:alfonso@cybermesa.com).

## PEEC and Los Alamos County Need Your Votes

Recently you received a mailing from Los Alamos County asking you to prioritize possible actions that the County could take as it implements the new citizen-written Comprehensive Plan. You'll find the nature center as one possible action among many other worthy projects.

If you've lost your copy or need another for others in your household, go to the County Web site and vote on line: [www.lac-nm.us](http://www.lac-nm.us).

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## MEMBERSHIP

If your mailing label says "DUES DUE," it's time to renew your PEEC membership. Please ask a friend or neighbor to join too! Canvas grocery bags with the PEEC logo will be given to new or renewing members at the \$50 level.

Membership valid for one year; PEEC is a 501 (c) 3 tax-deductible organization.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership levels (make checks payable to PEEC):

- |  |        |
|--|--------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual/Family   | \$20   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend              | \$50   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor          | \$100  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Additional Donation | \$____ |

### Check the ways you could be involved:

- |                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| ____ Develop programs            | ____ Support one-time events (Earth Day, talks) |
| ____ Lead educational activities | ____ Help with membership                       |
| ____ Help with site selection    | ____ Raise funds/write grant                    |
| ____ Give a guest lecture        | ____ Edit newsletter                            |

Would you like to offer any special interests and skills? (Use other side.)

Please return this form and a check to PEEC, P.O. Box 547, Los Alamos NM 87544

Answers to butterfly puzzle:

2. metamorphosis
3. mimicry
5. molt
6. pupa
9. bask

10. eyespot
1. lepidopterist
4. camouflage
7. caterpillar
8. migrate

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