



NEWSLETTER

Pajarito Environmental Education Center

P. O. Box 547, Los Alamos, NM 87544; www.pecnm.org

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Summer 2004

President's Message

Michele Altherr

I stood by my car door scanning the ground intently. A thrashing and rustling noise had caught my attention. I searched for a squirrel, but was surprised instead to come across a bird kicking up duff as it danced around in a circle. He was a Rufous-sided Towhee (now given the drab name Spotted Towhee). I thought he looked rather classy with his white belly, distinctive rufous sides, and white spots on his black back and wings. His clamorous solo dance, known as the "Towhee Shuffle," is actually the scratching up of a buggy meal. In my guide book he is characterized as a sloppy rummaging bird who prefers unkempt gardens. Since he seemed perfectly happy in my garden, I wasn't quite sure what to think.

I looked across the scarred landscape of my post-remodel yard. There was a pile of broken-up concrete, another of sand, and another of old deck lumber. Thanks to the habits of construction workers, nails had become a new soil amendment. Weeds such as lambs quarters, cheat grass, and dandelions were coming up everywhere. I began to imagine reusing some of the construction debris and thereby removing it from the waste stream. I decided I could stack the concrete pieces into a retaining wall and use the sand and lumber for my paths and steps. Thus, I slowly began the healing of my small patch of earth.

When Memorial Day arrived, I called Pajarito Greenhouse to see if they were open. Dave Fox answered the phone. Although he was still officially closed, he invited me to

come over while he watered. Neighborliness is a perk of small town living. As I entered the greenhouse, the first plants to greet me were the showy annuals: petunias, marigolds, and pansies. For a moment I reveled in the riot of color, but I soon moved on and cut to the back where I found the perennials. Under the morning sun, Dave welcomed me with a smile as exuberant as the growth of the new plants in his greenhouse. It was nice to see him. Dave has been a generous member of PEEC over the years, and he told me that PEEC and the Concert Association were the charities he cared about most. Soon we were talking about gardening and the growing public interest in native perennials. The drought seemed to have prompted more homeowners to adopt a water-wise ethic when choosing plants. It wasn't long until we were discussing the beautiful penstemons and their ever-evolving varieties. Penstemons are members of the figwort family, Scrophulariaceae, with close to 300 species. Their flowers are tubular and end in

CALENDAR OF PEEC EVENTS

- July 3-4**, Bird identification class at VCNP, contact Stephen Fettig (662-6785)
- July 12**, PEEC board meeting 6:30 p.m., home of Michele Altherr, 1900 Camino Redondo
- July 15**, Elk/Cerro Grande Fire research volunteer meeting, Unitarian Church, 6-7 p.m.
- August 28**, VCNP hike to Cerro del Abrigo
- August 23, 30**, Wildflowers of Jemez classes
- Sept./Oct.**, Bird-banding with Ruby Muñoz, Thursdays and Fridays
- Oct. 2-3**, Hawk-watching field trip to Manzanos Mountains

five lobes, usually two at the top and three at the bottom. Its common name is beardtongue, which is suggestive of the penstemon's enlarged brush-like fifth stamen. Dave sent me off with a Parry's Penstemon, a favorite of his, and several other perennials. As I exited, I passed a stream of gardeners arriving. I wondered if he would ever get his watering done.

This summer, I've spent a lot of time pushing, prodding, and moving boulders in my garden. Sometimes I use a crowbar and pry the rocks loose and roll them to where I want them. Other times the rock is so big that I call for help from my teenage son. Occasionally, I get the "you're nuts for trying to move that one" look. In the process, I've started to recognize that being president of PEEC is akin to moving the boulders in my garden. I pry loose helpful information, get things rolling, and seek out others in an effort to build a network of relationships in support of an eventual center. And yes, I do get the "nice idea, but it'll never happen" look. As president, I feel that the establishment of a self-sustaining and successful environmental education center rests on our ability to build the community's social capacity--the extent to which community members can work together effectively. Communities with high social capacity develop and sustain strong relationships, solve problems, make group decisions, and collaborate effectively to identify goals and get work done.

With this in mind, the board of directors has set an informal goal of talking to 500 people and asking them to fill out a brief six-question survey. So far we have gathered 100 surveys, which were mostly the result of participating in the Chamberfest with the volunteer help of Jane Sherwood, Lonna Evans, Janie Enter, Dick Opsahl, Hedy Dunn, and Randy Ryti. We are now looking for 16 PEEC member volunteers who are each willing to gather input from 25 people, by asking their co-workers and neighbors, attending a club meeting, standing out front of a store, or going door to door. Will you help us move some boulders? If so, please contact Randy Ryti (rryti@mac.com) or Michele Altherr (maltherr@cybermesa.com) for materials.

This past quarter, the board has networked with the parks and recreation department, utilities board, county administration, and county council. We are hoping in the next

quarter to expand the conversation to include the schools and UNMLA. I appreciate those of you who responded to the PEEC-alert and wrote to the county council in support of a center. Since there is a forthcoming county council election, we will be asking the candidates to submit a position statement on a center for PEEC's fall newsletter. As many of you know, the hoped-for cleanup of the decommissioned Pueblo Wastewater Treatment Plant has once again fallen through. However, its demolition has been decoupled from the stalled construction of the new Los Alamos Waste Treatment Plant, which could be a positive step toward the eventual cleanup of this blighted landscape. A recent innovative suggestion was for PEEC to bid on restoring the natural landscape after demolition. Additionally, it has been suggested that PEEC attempt to lease the LAPS Orange Street Annex as the location for an initial center. Upon following up on this with the assistant superintendent of schools, I found out that the building is in need of major repair work before it can be leased. Great ideas keep surfacing as we continue to include more people in the conversation.

As you read this newsletter, I think you will be very impressed by the scope of the programs that your board of directors has organized: bird banding with a visiting intern from Panamá, elk studies, wildflower courses, hawk watch campouts, and butterfly hikes. PEEC is increasingly being asked to collaborate. The truth is that there are more opportunities than we currently have the volunteer time to accept and accomplish. This won't be the case when Los Alamos has a center with a professional staff that serves as a point of contact and collaboration for the many wonderful opportunities in environmental education on the Pajarito Plateau. A nice idea that WILL happen!

PEEC Writers Wanted

The PEEC membership is rich in knowledge and experience. We welcome articles from members--observations, information, questions, ideas. Please send your submissions to Becky Shankland (shankland@cybermesa.com). The next issue deadline will be August 30.

Panamá Intern Here in September and October

Thanks to a Park Flight Grant funded by the National Park Foundation with support from American Airlines, the successful partnership between PEEC and Bandelier will continue with an intern from Panamá who will conduct a variety of educational programs for children and adults in September and October.

Ruby Muñoz is a bird researcher from Panamá who is skilled in bird-banding. For her visit, PEEC is planning numerous events that will be listed in our September newsletter. These will include talks about neotropical migratory birds and conservation work in Panamá and bird banding two mornings a week (probably Thursdays and Fridays) with schoolchildren and adults. We will be seeking PEEC volunteers to help with these activities.

PEEC is planning a members' field trip with Ruby Muñoz and Stephen Fettig for hawk-watching in the Manzano Mountains the weekend of October 2-3, with an optional continuation for a day of banding songbirds.

Meet Ruby Zambrano Muñoz

Ruby's credentials are as long as her name. Ruby Edith Zambrano Muñoz will be an International Volunteer at Bandelier National Monument this fall through the National Park Foundation's Park Flight Program. She comes to us from Panamá where she earned a degree in biology at the University of Panamá. Her thesis, titled "Colonization, Distribution, and Reproductive Cycle of *Marsilea L.* (Pteridophyta) in Panamá" may make you wonder why this botanist is involved in birding. Pteridophytes include ferns, club mosses, and horsetails. Because of the dependency of birds on plants for nesting material, shelter, and food, the study of plant life is a good foundation for an avian specialist whose education, research projects, publications, conference presentations, and teaching have focused on bird populations and the habitat they need for survival.

Ruby has worked on a project monitoring winter survival of birds that migrate to Panamá. She banded neotropical birds that winter south of the United States and breed here in the summer, such as our colorful Western tanager. So Ruby will be mist-netting

and banding some of the same species of birds she has seen in Panamá.

Besides banding songbirds, Ruby will be assisting with interpretive programs for school groups and adult visitors on the problems faced by our migrating birds and what needs to be done to insure their survival. She comes well prepared to do this, for she has taught bird watching courses for the Audubon Society of Panamá and bird observation to park rangers, as well as assisting in a workshop devoted to the conservation of the endangered Harpy eagle.

[article by Yvonne Keller based on Ruby Munoz's Spanish resume]

Wheeler Peak Bird and Butterfly Hike

PEEC is sponsoring a high-country bird and butterfly hike on Sunday, July 25, to Wheeler Peak. Butterfly expert Dustin Vanoverbeke and ornithologist Stephen Fettig will lead the hike.

Participants will need to leave Los Alamos at 4 a.m. in order to be on the trail by 6-6:30 a.m. and be able to return before the afternoon rains. If bird and butterfly observation slows the pace, we may not reach the top; the purpose is to see high-altitude species.

The group is limited to 10 participants. Please contact Stephen Fettig (662-6785, osprey@cybermesa.com) to register.

VCNP Hike August 28

PEEC members are welcome on a hike sponsored by the Sierra Club up Cerro del Abrigo in the Valles Caldera National Preserve on Saturday, August 28. Dick and Judy Opsahl will lead the hike. Participants will be bussed to the start of the hike, which starts at 8 a.m.

This hike has amazing views of the major valles: Grande, Jaramillo, Toledo, San Antonio. You'll get information on the history and geology of the preserve. The hike is seven miles, moderate difficulty, with a 700-foot elevation gain. The fee is \$8 and advance reservations are required by August 23. To reserve, call the Opsahls at 662-9404.



Janie Enter and Randy Ryti run the PEEC table at Chamberfest while Janet Gerwin (left) registers voters for the League of Women Voters. (photo by Richard Opsahl)

PEEC Board Elections

The annual board of directors elections will be held in the fall. We are seeking individuals to join the board as membership chair or member-at-large. Board meetings are held on the first Monday of the month from 6:30 to 8:30. Please contact Michele Altherr (maltherr@cybermesa.com or 661-4237) if you would like to be on the slate.

Job Description--Membership Director

Purpose: The Membership Director is responsible for maintaining the membership records of the Center and for developing and implementing a membership strategy to recruit and retain members.

Duties and Responsibilities:

1. Attend all meetings of the Board of Directors.
2. Report regularly to the President about activities and accomplishments.
3. Report at monthly Board meetings on current membership statistics such as paid, delinquent and complimentary.
4. Maintain a current membership database that records name, address, phone number, volunteer expertise, date of payment, how much was paid and e-mail address if available.
5. Keep membership materials current,

stocked and available for use by Board members.

6. Maintain stock of membership materials at several sites within the community.
7. Provide for a table, volunteers and membership materials at Center functions.
8. Conduct a membership drive at least once a year.
9. Send out semi-annual renewal reminders.
10. Check post office box and send membership checks to Treasurer.
11. Provide alphabetical listings and/or membership labels when needed – such as for newsletter mailing.
12. Report on the state of membership at the annual membership meeting.

Job Description--Member-at-Large

Purpose: Members-at-large assist Board officers and committee chairpersons in their duties, take on special projects and in general work in support the Center's mission and goals.

Duties and Responsibilities:

1. Attend all meetings of the Board of Directors.
2. Report regularly to the President about activities and accomplishments
3. Take on tasks in support of the work of the Center's committees.
4. Attend community meetings and events on the Center's behalf.

5. Assist in volunteer coordination, program implementation, grant writing, Building Fund drive and any other areas that assistance is requested.
6. Assist in the Center's collaborations with

other organizations.

7. Increase community awareness of the Center's mission and goals.



Randy Ryti, PEEC vice-president, and Tim Glasco from the county look at the vandalized Pueblo Wastewater Treatment Plant building at the Olive Street site where PEEC would like to create an environmental education center. Several groups toured the site on Earth Day. (photo by Michele Altherr)

Summer Elk Program Volunteer Opportunity

PEEC is sponsoring a volunteer program for its members with James Biggs of LANL. He is conducting a vegetation sampling project to determine the effects of large ungulates on plant communities in the Cerro Grande Fire burn area. Volunteers will help measure plant "patch" structure and collect elk and deer pellets in preselected plots. Hikes to study sites range from short and easy to long and strenuous. Study sites will depend on volunteers' abilities. The sampling period runs from July 19 to August 13.

Interested members need to come to the Ungulate/Cerro Grande Fire meeting on Thursday, July 15, at 6 p.m. at the Unitarian Church. James will discuss his project in full and will provide information for those members who are ready to sign up for a day (or days) of sampling. Please contact Diana

McPherson (672-9408, Mermaid@rt66.com) to sign up for the July 15 meeting. Members must attend this meeting in order to participate.

Thanks to New and Renewing Members!

Michael & Michele Altherr, Arellano Family, Betsy Barnett, Elizabeth & George Best, James & Carolyn Bossert, Justine Broadhurst & Russell Scott, Mike Brown, James Bunch, Katherine Campbell, Julie Collins & Peter Roberts, Yvonne & Norm Delamater, Skip & Hedy Dunn, Janie Enter, Bonnie Farman, Hilde Fitzgerald, Dave & Donna Gemeinhart, Jeffrey & Cheryl Heikoop, Sue Hofmann, John & Emmy Hopson, Linda & Robert Hull, Israelevitz Family, Gordon & Elizabeth Keating, Chick and Yvonne Keller, Mel & Allison Leon, Doris Lodwig, Tracy McFarland, Sarah Meyer, Paul Rich, John &

Mary Rowley, Tom & Becky Shankland, Barham & Marilyn Smith, Carroll Thomas, Ruby & Leaf Turner, Robert & Ann Wells.

Wildflower Class Underway

The first class of "Wildflowers of the Jemez Mountains," taught by flower experts Terry Foxx and Dorothy Hoard enrolled 24 people with 12 turned away. We hope to repeat this class next summer.

Meanwhile, you can still enroll in "Flowers of Late Summer and Early Fall," two sessions from 5 to 7 p.m. (August 23, 30). The cost is \$25, PEEC members \$20. For information and to register, call Terry Foxx at 672-9056.



Wildflowers Galore on Walk in Jemez

On Saturday, June 12, Chick Keller led a PEEC-sponsored wildflower hike in the Jemez Mountains. The walk went up a hidden side canyon near Las Conchas Campground. Some 16 people, varying in age from young to old, went along.

The highlight was a search for a colony of fairy slipper orchids (*Calypso bulbosa*) and red columbine (*Aquilegia elegantula*). We found both, but the orchids had passed their prime. The group found some 30-40 species of plants including yellow monkeyflower, blue veronica, pink prairie avens, wallflower, waterleaf, chiming bells, golden draba, candytuft, chickweed, starflower (*Stellaria longipes*), corn lily, false solomonseal,

buttercup, clematis, cinquefoil, and many others. It was a fine day and we took time to relax with snacks in the shade, just enjoying the stream and the forest and meadow.

Chick discussed the best wildflower identification books (most available at local bookstores such as Otowi Station) and people tried them out as we walked along. Chick pointed out that naming plants seems to make them magically appear where they were not noticed before. It was exciting seeing the many plants already in bloom.

PEEC plans to offer similar walks as the summer season progresses (Chick led another one on June 19 in Pajarito Canyon). They will be announced as PEEC-alerts via e-mail.

Web Highlights

Diana McPherson suggests this excellent Web site for people interested in environmental education:

<http://www.planetpals.com/thinkgreen.html>

PEEC Survey Needs Help

The PEEC board of directors has developed an informal survey to assess community interest in the proposed environmental education center. We have polled people at Earth Day events and Chamberfest. So far the surveys have shown a lot of support for the center (84 of 91 surveys were in favor). Eighty of 91 surveys supported the idea of transforming the Pueblo Waste-water Treatment Plant into a home for PEEC.

The survey is provided on the following page and we can use your help to attain our goal of 500 completed surveys. Please take a moment to complete the survey and ask friends and neighbors if they could help us get a measure of community interest in the proposed environmental education center. Please contact Randy Ryti (rryti@mac.com) for information and survey materials.

Pajarito Environmental Education Center

"Connecting people with the natural world at our back door"

Survey in Brief

PEEC is a grassroots community volunteer organization that seeks to provide opportunities for residents and visitors to discover the rich natural and cultural history of the Jemez Mountains region and to foster informed stewardship of the Region's resources. We carry out our mission through experiential programs, community events, newsletters, PEEC-Alerts (electronic updates of natural occurrences), and collaborations. Funding is obtained through membership dues, grants and eventually public private partnerships. Additionally, we are working towards the establishment of an environmental education center.

Please take a few moments to give us your thoughts on establishing a center in Los Alamos. Viewing our brochure or web site (www.peecn.org) will provide further information. Your response is important in our effort to obtain 500 surveys from citizens. Thank you.

1. Circle your age range: A.) under 18 B.) 19-30 years C.) 30-50 years D.) over 50 years

2. Do you support establishing an environmental education center in Los Alamos? YES NO

3. Do you think transforming the site of the decommissioned Pueblo Waste Treatment Plant off Olive/Orange Street into a restored natural landscape with an environmental education center is worth pursuing? YES NO

4. Why?

5. What community uses might there be for a center? What features/facilities should the center have?

6. What possible problems do you foresee in establishing a center? Any solutions?

MEMBERSHIP

If your mailing label says "DUES DUE," it's time to renew your membership. Canvas grocery bags with the PEEC logo are given to new or renewing members at the \$50 level. Return this form and a check to PEEC, P. O. Box 547, Los Alamos, NM 87544. To give to the Building Fund, make your check to PEEC Building Fund. Membership is 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 |

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