



NEWSLETTER

Pajarito Environmental Education Center

PO Box 547, Los Alamos, NM 87544 3540 Orange St.
www.PajaritoEEC.org (505) 662-0460
Volume 5, Number 1 Winter 2006

President's Message

by Randy Ryti

The mission of PEEC is "Connecting People with the Natural World at Our Backdoor." PEEC made wonderful progress in 2005 in working towards this mission. We offered over sixty programs--or more than one per week. Our center opened on Earth Day 2005, and we attracted more than 500 participants to our weeklong series of Earth Day events. Since June 2005 we have logged more than 1000 guest registrations to the center. Our virtual center on the World Wide Web enjoys even more use; we have hundreds of visitors to PajaritoEEC.org each month.

The success of PEEC has been through its people and the connections they make with the community. Our center is entirely staffed by volunteers and is now open 20 hours per week. The volunteers on the PEEC Board of Directors manage committees to run the center and develop programs, often presenting programs themselves. The Board is assisted by a single part-time paid administrative assistant.

While PEEC is primarily a volunteer, grass-roots community organization, we have also started to raise funds to pay instructors for key programs. For example, early-childhood education programs are being funded by a grant from the New Mexico Community Foundation. Such grant monies let PEEC connect to diverse and underrepresented northern New Mexico communities and also let us help to supplement the incomes of well-qualified educators.

With the opening of the center and its associated costs, PEEC's expenses greatly increased in 2005. By offering more programs

and paying for more of the expenses associated with the center, we expect our expenses to grow again in 2006. We have obtained funds from a variety of sources, including individual, corporate, and foundation support.

Since you are reading this column, PEEC has made a connection with you. If you are one of our community financial supporters, we truly appreciate your help.

We hope you have taken the time to visit the center and enjoy our hands-on exhibits. If you have not been to PEEC since Earth Day, you have missed many new displays and our live animals--including our star attraction, Elf the turtle. We are confident that your family and friends will enjoy making or renewing their PEEC connection.

Earth Day 2006

"Wonders of the Earth and Sky"

PEEC's Earth Day Festival on Saturday, April 22, will feature the Green Chili Jam Band, a five-time national award-winning band that sets the imagination of children and parents on a high-spirited adventure in song and story. The free concert is made possible
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CALENDAR OF PEEC EVENTS

February 3, Fly-Tying workshop I, 5-6:30pm,
pre-register!

February 4, Los Alamos Science Fair

February 6, Kinnikinnick Club, 4:15-5:15pm

February 6, Board meeting, 6:30-8:30pm

February 10, Fly-Tying workshop II, 5-6:30pm, *pre-register!*

February 1, Craig Allen, "Climate and Forest Die-back" talk, 7pm
 February 16, LASE Network talk, Ed Mazria on Green Building, 7pm
 February 18, Animal Tracking workshop, 10 am-12 noon, *pre-register!*
 February 20, NO Kinnikinnick Club (holiday)
 February 22, Getting Down to the Nitty Gritty: Fun with Dirt and Rocks, for ages 4-8, 1-2:30pm, *pre-register!*
 February 22, Jo Ferdinand and Laura Swartz, Santa Fe Raptor Center, "Adventures in Bird Rescue and Rehabilitation," 7pm
 March 4, Family Festival (at Community Building), 10am-2pm
 March 6, Kinnikinnick Club, 4:15-5:15pm
 March 6, Board meeting, 6:30-8:30pm
 March 8, Chick Keller, "Climate Change Made Simple," 7pm
 March 9, High Altitude Vegetable Gardening workshop I, 7-9pm, *pre-register!*
 March 16, LASE Network meeting, 7pm
 March 20, Kinnikinnick Club, 4:15-5:15pm
 March 23, High Altitude Vegetable Gardening workshop II, 7-9pm, *pre-register!*
 April 3, NO Kinnikinnick Club (vacation)
 April 13, Water Harvesting forum, 7pm
 April 15-23, Earth Week events all week
 April 17, Kinnikinnick Club, 4:15-5:15pm
 April 22, Green Chili Jam Band children's concert at PEEC's Earth Day festival

Earth Day, continued from page 1

by financial support from Los Alamos National Bank and Bandelier National Monument. Many other groups, including the County and LANL, are planning booths to showcase many earth-friendly projects.

Our 2006 theme is "Wonders of the Earth and Sky." In addition to the Saturday festival centered at PEEC, we plan a whole week of activities--walks, talks, hikes, films, exhibits. In past years we've sponsored historic trail hikes, archaeology talks, nature walks, alternative-energy exhibits, trash pick-ups, recycling information, and a multitude of other activities. We invite anyone interested to get in touch with us (Peter O'Rourke, 663-0524, cfddor@comcast.net; or Becky Shankland, shankland@cybermesa.com, 672-9106). We'll help you schedule an event for an appropriate time and we'll advertise it in our Earth Day publicity.

For further information, see the PEEC Web site: PajaritoEEC.org and click on Earth Day.

Creature Feature

White-Crowned Sparrow

by Kelly Gallagher

In winter at your backyard bird feeder, you may have noticed a distinct bird that is absent the rest of the year--the white-crowned sparrow, *Zonotrichia leucophrys*.

The most distinctive feature of this relatively large (6"-7") sparrow, as reflected in its name, is the striped crown. Its grey head is crowned with conspicuous black and white stripes. Below the supercilium (the stripe over the eye) is a thin black stripe. The nape and underparts are gray, paler at the throat and belly. The back is brown streaked with black. The rump and long, slightly notched tail are brown. The wings are brown with two prominent white wing bars. The legs are yellowish.

Four of the five subspecies of white-crowned sparrows are migratory. The sedentary race lives in a narrow band along the California coast. The most widespread race, breeding in n. Canada and wintering in the eastern US, is the least studied of all the races.



White-crowned sparrow by Kalen Malueg, courtesy of the New Mexico Breeding Bird Atlas Project, Inc.

In our region, one can find two subspecies of white-crowned sparrows. In the "mountain" forms (*Zonotrichia leucophrys oriantha*), the white supercilium extends just to the eye, the lores (the region between the eye and bill on the side of a bird's head) are dark and the bills are pink to dark reddish pink. The mountain white-crowned sparrow breeds in high meadows in the Rocky Mountains and winters

primarily in Mexico.

In the "Gambel's" subspecies (*Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*), the supercilium extends all the way to the bill, the lores are pale and the bills are orange. Gambel's white-crowned sparrows breed in Alaska and northern Canada (as far south as southern British Columbia), whereas mountain white-crowned sparrows breed only as far north as southern Alberta.

Due to its abundance and wide distribution, the white-crowned sparrow is one of the best-studied birds in North America and has taught us a great deal about bird song. The white-crowned sparrow song is composed of one or more "pure tone" whistles followed by more complex sounds consisting of frequency sweeps, buzzy vibrato elements, and trills-- "poor-wet-wetter-chee-zee."

During the first two or three months of its life, a young male white-crowned sparrow learns the basics of the song he will sing as an adult. He does not learn directly from his father, but rather from the song environment of his natal neighborhood. Because male white-crowned sparrows learn the songs they grew up with and do not travel far from where they were raised, song dialects frequently form. Males on the edge of two dialects may be bilingual and able to sing both dialects! And, unschooled young birds sing nonsensical songs--if a young bird never hears an adult song to imitate, he sings the strangest sounds!

While many sparrows travel in mixed flocks, the white-crowned is more of a loner, preferring to travel individually or in small groups with others of its kind. Some seem to return to the same wintering range each year, commonly foraging in flocks with juncos. Loud scuffling in the bushes often signals the presence of this spirited bird. Using both of its rather large feet, it vigorously scratches among the leaf litter in search of food. The preferred food is grass and weed seed, so allow an area of your garden to go a bit wild and do not cut back seed heads. Seeds on a low platform feeder may tempt this ground feeder to make a migratory stopover--perhaps in your backyard!

Membership Report

In December PEEC held a membership drive to gain new members and encourage former members to re-join. Happily, we now have 221 memberships, most of which are couples or families. Many members rejoined at a higher level. Thanks to all!

PEEC Winter Workshops

Winter workshops at PEEC are waiting for kids and adults who want to get ready for spring and summer. Pre-register by calling PEEC at 662-0460, dropping by the center (3540 Orange St.), downloading a class registration form from the Web site (www.PajaritoEEC.org), or e-mailing center@PajaritoEEC.org.

Cost of one class is \$8 for PEEC members or \$10 for non-members. Each additional family member is \$5. If you pre-register for two classes, the cost is \$15 total.

Friday, February 3, Fly-Tying workshop I: *Tying Nymphs, 80% of a Trout's Diet*, 5-6:30 pm. Instructor: Bill Orr, a local teacher and co-author of *Fly Patterns of Northern New Mexico*. Open to all ages; materials provided.

Friday, February 10, Fly-Tying workshop II: *Tying Streamers for the Carnivores*, 5-6:30 pm. Instructor: Bill Orr. Open to all ages; materials provided.

Saturday, February 18, Basic Animal Tracking workshop, 10 am-12 noon. Instructors: Timothy Lord and Martine Harvey. Open to ages 12 and up. Learn the basics of tracking animals in the wild: how to recognize types of animals by the shape and size of the track, find direction of travel, and increase your skills as a tracker.

Wednesday, February 22, Getting Down to the Nitty Gritty: Fun with Dirt and Rocks, 1-2:30 pm. Instructors: Jennifer Moss and Margaret Blewett. Open to 4- to 8-year-olds.

High-Altitude Vegetable Gardening
Vegetable gardening at 7200 feet elevation, with its short growing season between the last spring frost and the first winter frost, can be challenging. Learn the tricks of growing vegetables locally from instructor Natali Steinberg, a long-time high-altitude gardener, in a two-part workshop:

Thursday, March 9, Soil preparation, seed starting, watering, and cool weather vegetables, 7-9 pm.

Thursday, March 23, Warm weather vegetables, berries, insect and disease control, 7-9 pm.

Nature Odyssey Welcomes Kids for Summer Programs

Are you looking for a summer enrichment opportunity for your child? This summer's Nature Odyssey program is designed to introduce students in late elementary and middle school to the various kinds of riparian areas in the Jemez Mountains. Students will go out into the field each day and use nets and water sampling techniques to study these systems.

There are two age groups: students entering 4th–6th grades and students entering 7th–8th grades. Class size is limited to 12 students per age group. Each day's session runs from 9am to 2pm. The first session is June 5–9, and the second session is June 12–14. Each session will introduce new topics. Sign up for one or both. Call Bob Dryja 661-9602 or Michele Altherr 661-4237.



Kids investigate water creatures and water quality last summer in the Valles Caldera National Preserve.

(photo by Michele Altherr)

Attention, Teachers!

Would you like to have a live raptor visit your classroom? The Santa Fe Raptor Center will give a free presentation using non-releasable birds of prey to school classes, scouting groups, church groups, libraries, and other community service organizations.

Raptor programs can range from 45 minutes to one hour or longer if needed.

Two or more raptors can be brought to each program, allowing close-up encounters with these beautiful wild birds. Each program is tailored to your group's age and interests.

Contact the Raptor Center's program coordinator, Laura Swartz, at 662-7597 to discuss and/or schedule a program.

News from the Center

The **volunteer hours at PEEC have been adding up! During a seven-month period 76 volunteers worked a total of 1434 hours at the center. So it was with much gratitude that we held our second annual volunteer appreciation party this past December at the festively decorated home of Chick and Yvonne Keller. It was a great time to catch up with each other while enjoying wonderful food.

We would like to welcome **new staff volunteer, Dorothy Hoard. She will be opening the center from noon to 4pm on Fridays. Dorothy is a Los Alamos Living Treasure and has an intimate knowledge of the ecology of the Jemez Mountains. You name it and she knows about it: butterflies, wild-flowers, petroglyphs, and more. So stop by and see her on Fridays.

We are also saying goodbye to our administrative assistant, **Jessie Ross, as she will soon be busy with her first child. We wish her and her husband much happiness as this new chapter in their lives unfolds.

We welcome **Samantha Stutz, a high school student working with the herbarium.

Thanks to **Don and Judy Machen and **Dorothy Hoard** for their generous gifts toward the **herbarium microscope**. Is anyone else interested in supporting this effort?

PEEC would like to thank the following organizations for their generous support: **New Mexico Community Foundation, Los Alamos National Laboratory Foundation, and McCune Foundation. We also thank the **Los Alamos Commerce and Development Corporation** for a MainStreet grant for Earth Day 2006.

Have You Bought Your Green Power?

You can contribute to the environment by buying "LA Green." Call 662-8333 or go to the Utilities Department on the County Web site(lac-nm.us)and have \$1.80 or more added to your utility bill to support buying green power. It will show up on your utility bill--and you'll know you've done the right thing!

Winter Wednesday Series **Forest Die-Back; Bird Rescue; Climate Change**

Three more Winter Wednesday talks are coming up. All take place at PEEC (3540 Orange Street) at 7pm.

February 15, Craig Allen, "Climate and Forest Die-back, Fire, and Erosion in Mountain Landscapes of the Southwest"

Are you wondering why Los Alamos pinons and ponderosas are dying? Craig Allen's talk will explain how vegetation has changed in the Jemez Mountains over the past century. His recent papers have been nationally quoted because of his remarkable observations about climate warming, tree dieoff, insect outbreaks, and fire.

Craig Allen is a well-known research ecologist working for the USGS based in Bandelier National Monument. He studies the landscape of the Southwest by looking at fire history, drought, and climate change.

February 22, Jo Ferdinand and Laura Swartz, "Adventures in Bird Rescue and Rehabilitation"

Four educational raptors will join Jo Ferdinand and Laura Swartz to help answer questions about these beautiful birds.

Jo, who has been rehabbing orphaned and injured songbirds in her home for 15 years, will share some of her serious, curious, and funny rehab and rescue stories.

March 8, Chick Keller, "Climate Change Made Simple"

The last century has seen the earth warm up quite noticeably and that warming has continued. But many say there's nothing to worry about and that there actually hasn't been all that much warming anyway. What's a person to think?

There are so many issues involved with global warming that it's very hard to get a reasonable understanding of what's going on and what's important. While it is true that there is a tremendous amount involved, there are really only four questions that need answering:

1. Is the warming real? (How well do we know what the earth's temperature is and

whether it's changing?)

2. Is the warming out of the ordinary? (Haven't we seen just as much warming in the past?)

3. Can we understand what's causing the warming? (Maybe it's not humans after all?)

4. What might we expect will happen as the earth warms? (Maybe it won't be all that bad?)

This talk will attempt to answer these questions with the hope that, once you have the answers to them, you will be able to decide whether most of the other stuff you read in the papers is important and relevant or not.

Chick Keller, retired astrophysicist and past director of the Institute of Geophysics and Planetary Physics, is a PEEC board member and botanist.

Visit PEEC and Take a Hike

Bring your visitors to PEEC to learn about the Pajarito Plateau before picking up a trail map and hiking one of several nice trails from PEEC. New additions to PEEC include an exhibit on the skulls of local mammals, a very personable red-eared slider turtle, and \$200 in new library books for children. Visit us during our expanded hours: T-F noon to 4pm and Saturday 9-1.

Calling All Birders!

Jo Ferdinand, the volunteer songbird coordinator for the Santa Fe Raptor Center, is in the process of recruiting people to become volunteer home rehabbers for baby songbirds this summer. Rehabbing baby songbirds is quite easy but involves feeding these little ones every two hours from sunup to sundown. She will be teaching a class in early April. If you would like to become a songbird rehabber for the Santa Fe Raptor Center, please contact Jo at 662-7418.

News from LASE Network by Gale Zander Barlow

Ed Mazria, leading proponent of solving global climate change through green building design, will speak at PEEC on Thursday, February 16, at 7pm after socializing at 6:30. Mazria proposes a radical solution: require all new buildings to cut the use of fossil fuels in their construction and operation by at least 50% in the next five years.

In January Mazria and friends launched a new Web site promoting the idea of fundamen-

tal design changes: www.architecture2030.

LASE Network is investigating insulating the PEEC building and setting up a display to compare compact fluorescent and incandescent light bulbs.

New at the PEEC Gift Shop

Besides our collection of books, Audubon birds, t-shirts, and greeting cards, we have a variety of new hands-on Usborne Kits: Young Naturalist, Paper Flower Making, Bug Collecting, and Drawing Animals. We also have animal magnets and stretchy animals.

Paid Positions for Educators

PEEC is looking for experienced and creative part-time teachers who enjoy developing and implementing educational programs. The hours are flexible and you can determine how often you would like to work. Programs may be designed for days or weekends, school groups or open sign-up classes.

Childhood connections forge lifelong ties to nature. Therefore your programs should connect children with the natural world out their back door. Possible content areas might include rocks, volcanoes, dinosaurs, animals, flowers, and insects. PEEC has a marvelous facility and may already have some of the equipment that you need or can obtain it. We also have several live amphibians and reptiles to use for educational purposes.

There are two levels of pay. Certified teachers who plan their own lesson receive \$30/hour. If PEEC plans the lesson or the instructor has limited teaching experience, the pay rate is \$15/hour. We welcome either level of teacher.

Please contact Michele Altherr for a simple program proposal form to fill out. Michele, who is also a teacher and PEEC board member, will work to support you in any way that you need. Please feel welcome to contact her with ideas or questions: 663-2323 (day), 661-4237 (evening), or e-mail her at maltherr@cybermesa.com.

Family Festival Held March 4

PEEC will have a booth at the Family Strengths Network's second Family Festival, Saturday, March 4, from 10 to 2.

Our booth will feature a hands-on exhibit "Bird Beaks--Are They Tools?" PEEC volunteers are Diane Noveroske, Kelly Shea, Emily Powell, and Becky Shankland. Stop by for the fun, with or without kids--and test your knowledge of how bird beaks function.

PEEC Committees at Work

With the PEEC facility hours and programs increasing, the PEEC Board has established the following committees. PEEC members interested in helping on any of these are welcome to get in touch with the chairs (marked with an asterisk) to volunteer ideas or assistance. We always appreciate volunteers or substitutes for center open hours.

Business Development: *Randy Ryti, Robert Gibson, Rubina Khan, Dick Opsahl, Randy Bohachek, Dave Fox

Programs: *Michele Altherr, Bob Dryja, Becky Shankland, Kelly Shea, Selvi Viswanathan

Earth Day: *Peter O'Rourke, Michele Altherr, Becky Shankland

Facilities: *Chick Keller, Dick Opsahl, Peter O'Rourke, Robert Gibson

Publicity (newsletter, Web site, marketing, brochures): *Michele Altherr, Rubina Khan, Kelly Gallagher, Hedy Dunn, Becky Shankland

Fund-Raising (grants, Altherr Teacher Fund): *Bob Dryja, *Kelly Gallagher, Randy Ryti, Michele Altherr, Kelly Shea

Membership: *Becky Shankland, Kelly Shea, Kelly Gallagher, Selvi Viswanathan, Randy Ryti

Volunteer Staff for Center Open Hours:

Chick Keller, Diane Noveroske, Natali Steinberg, Dorothy Hoard, Gale Zander Barlow, Emily Powell

Administrative Assistant and Gift Shop

Manager: Diane Noveroske

Herbarium Curator: Chick Keller

Librarian: Jean McClary

Become a PEEC Member--Annual Membership

Basic Memberships

Living Lightly \$20

General \$35

Both levels receive the PEEC Newsletter, PEEC Alerts, plus 10% discount on classes and programs.

Kinnikinnick Club \$10

Kids under 12 join the club and receive a nature journal, magnifying glass, and invitations to Kinnikinnick Club events. What is Kinnikinnick? It is an evergreen ground cover also called Bearberry.

Non-profit Organization Sponsor \$50

Newsletter and PEEC Alerts for 3 organization members.

Become part of the PEEC meadow by joining at a higher level.

Penstemon \$60

Ensure a greater appreciation of our land graced by the beardtongues by becoming a penstemon donor.

Basic membership benefits plus t-shirt or canvas shopping bag

Sunflower \$100

Bask in the sunlight of having given to the success of the PEEC when you become a Sunflower donor.

Above benefits plus additional t-shirt or canvas shopping bag

Wild Iris \$250

Cast many hues of happiness among children learning from nature when you become a Wild Iris donor, named for Iris, the Greek goddess of the rainbow.

Above benefits plus David Muench landscape photo book

Skyrocket Gilia \$500

Soar among the stars of community leaders by becoming a Skyrocket Gilia donor.

We will contact you to determine how to recognize this generous level of donation.

Wood Lily \$1,000

Wood Lily Donors are rare and remarkable like this beautiful, endangered plant.

We will contact you to determine how to recognize this generous level of donation.

Send the form below with your check to PEEC, PO Box 547, Los Alamos, NM 87544

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

- Please contact me about volunteering.
- Living Lightly
- General
- Kinnikinnick Club (under 12)
- Non-profit Organization Sponsor
- Penstemon Donor
- Sunflower Donor
- Wild Iris Donor
- Skyrocket Gilia Donor
- Wood Lily Donor

Besides the rewards of contributing to an effort you believe in, member benefits include interpretive hikes, electronic updates of local natural occurrences and events, and a quarterly newsletter. PEEC is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. Contributions are tax-deductible.

PEEC (Pajarito Environmental Education Center)
P. O. Box 547
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