

RIO BOSQUE NEWS

A newsletter reporting on events at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park

Center for Environmental Resource Management
University of Texas at El Paso



No. 18

January 2006

WET...

Rio Bosque Wetlands Park most reliably receives water in fall and winter. As a result, these tend to be the peak seasons for wildlife use. Last fall, water deliveries began October 26, and they continue at this writing. As always, we thank El Paso County Water Improvement District No. 1 and El Paso Water Utilities for cooperating to make this water available.

In late December, with the park manager out of town on vacation, water in the wetland cells got a little **too** high. It washed out part of the road on the west edge of Wetland Cell 1 and began draining to the Riverside Drain. Fortunately, our partners came to the rescue. The Border Patrol alertly notified the Roberto Bustamante Wastewater Treatment Plant, and personnel from the Plant plugged the leak with dirt fill until we could return the cell to a safer water level. Sincere thanks go to the Border Patrol and the Bustamante Plant for their invaluable help. ✂

...AND WILD

Conditions at the Park have been great for waterfowl this fall and winter. By mid-November, we were seeing up to 2,000 dabbling ducks, and numbers kept rising. Since early December, 3,000-5,000 ducks have been present, with American Wigeon



Dawn at Rio Bosque, Jan. 7, 2006

and Northern Pintail the most common species. The biggest surprise came November 10-11, when a male **Eurasian Wigeon** visited. It was seen again in early January. As its name implies, this is a bird not often found in far west Texas. It was a first for the Park and represented the 7th documented record of this species for El Paso County.

The water also attracted 2 noteworthy landbirds. **Vermilion Flycatchers** are southwestern birds most often found near water. They nest along the river in Hudspeth County and tend to disperse more widely in the river valley in winter.

This year, we were fortunate to have a 1st-year male Vermilion Flycatcher over-



FRIENDS OF THE

Friends of the Rio Bosque Membership Application

Name:	_____	_____ Bosque Buddy (12 and under)	\$4
	_____	_____ Student	\$8
Address:	_____	_____ Senior (62+)	\$8
	_____	_____ Individual	\$10
	_____	_____ Family	\$15
	_____	_____ Bosque Booster	\$50
	_____	_____ Cottonwood Commando	\$75-\$249
E-mail:	_____	_____ Restoration Patron	\$250-\$499
	_____	_____ Wetlands Society	\$500+

Please make checks payable to *Friends of the Rio Bosque* and mail to: Maria Trunk, Treasurer, Friends of the Rio Bosque, 1100 Kelly Way, El Paso, TX 79902.

Next Meetings

Thurs., Jan 26
Thurs., Feb 23
Thurs., Mar 23
6:30 - 7:30 p.m.
411 Burges Hall
UTEP
Info: 915-545-5214

wintering along the edge of one of the Park's wetland cells.

The other surprising visitors were 4 **Rusty Blackbirds** on December 11. These birds nest in bogs in northern boreal forests. They winter mainly in southern U.S. swamps and are of conservation concern due to significant long-term population declines. Unlike most blackbirds, Rusty Blackbirds are ecological specialists. They are restricted to wooded wetlands and feed mainly on invertebrates. El Paso is well outside their normal range. The birds at Rio Bosque in December were another first for the Park and represented just the 9th county record.

Birds didn't provide all the recent wildlife highlights: On September 27, we had our first **tarantula** sighting at the Park. ✂

WE'RE WIRED!

The long, slow process of making the Rio Bosque visitor center fully operational continues. In October, the electrical system was installed, and work on the water system is expected to start soon. If you've been waiting anxiously for the restrooms to become functional, the day is drawing near! ✂

FRIENDS OF THE RIO BOSQUE

January is when annual dues are due for the Friends of the Rio Bosque. If you are a member, you'll soon receive a renewal notice. If you are not, now is a great time to join (see front). The Friends are the heart of the Rio Bosque project. From education programs, to outreach, to ecosystem management, to faunal monitoring, to fundraising, to advocacy, their

contributions were vital to the success of the project in 2005. They deserve your support. ✂

FOR MORE INFORMATION

<http://www.riobosque.org>

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Want to help us save postage and paper by receiving this newsletter only via e-mail? Let John know.

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RIO BOSQUE CALENDAR

Join us at the Park for a free walking tour or to help with habitat management and Park maintenance. Coming up:

JANUARY

Sat., Jan 7	Bird Tour	3 p.m.
Sun., Jan 15	Introductory Tour	3 p.m.
Sat., Jan 21	Community Workday	9 a.m.

FEBRUARY

Sat., Feb 11	Bird Tour	9 a.m.
Sat., Feb 18	Community Workday	9 a.m.
Sun., Feb 19	Introductory Tour	3 p.m.

MARCH

Sun., Mar 5	Bird Tour	3 p.m.
Sat., Mar 18	Community Workday	9 a.m.
Sat., Mar 25	Introductory Tour	9 a.m.

The meeting place for all of these activities is a bridge crossing Riverside Canal. To get there from I-10, take Americas Ave. (Loop 375) to Pan American Dr., turn left onto Pan American and travel 1.5 miles to the bridge. Please be prompt.

