

RIO BOSQUE NEWS

A newsletter reporting on events at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park

Center for Environmental Resource Management
The University of Texas at El Paso



No. 65

July 2018

THE WILD SIDE

The birds at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park have provided many surprises lately. After almost 2 years with no new species detected at the park, we added **Short-eared Owl** on 31 March and **Gray Catbird** on 27 June. Next, after a winter and spring with long absences, only sporadic sightings and no evidence of nesting, **White-tailed Kites** reappeared with a vengeance in June, with up to 10 birds (4 adult, 6 immature) present late in the month and 2 nests initiated. Finally, on 20 June, 2 **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** were calling to one another in riparian habitat along the old river channel at the park. They were still present at the end of the month. Western populations of this species are federally listed as Threatened. Cuckoos have now been detected at Rio Bosque in 4 of the past 5 summers, but this is the first time in the wetland-project era that more than one individual has been present. The common denominator in all these happenings? Habitat. The native habitats developing at Rio Bosque are what made these surprises possible. What will be next? 🦉



This Short-eared Owl on 31 March represented the 245th bird species found at Rio Bosque.
Photo: Randy Hesford.

VOLUNTEER VIGOR

Thanks to the hard work and enthusiasm of employees from El Paso Electric Company on 22 April and the El Paso Zoo on 15 May, the most daunting

of the accumulations of windblown tumbleweeds in the park's old river channel disappeared this spring. Great work from two great volunteer teams!

Congratulations are also due the volunteers who planted cottonwood and willow poles along the old river channel in January and February. The success rate of their plantings was an impressive 97% (15 out of 15 on coyote willows, 11 of 11 on Goodding willows, and 5 of 6 on Rio Grande cottonwoods). With such capable volunteers, we're already looking forward to next winter's plantings! 🦉

Friends of the Rio Bosque Membership Application

Name:	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Life Member \$1,000
Address:	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Wetlands Society \$500-\$999
	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Restoration Patron \$250-\$499
	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Cottonwood Commando \$75-\$249
E-mail:	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Bosque Booster \$50
	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Family \$20
	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$15
	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Student or <input type="checkbox"/> Senior (62+) \$10
	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Bosque Buddy (12 and under) \$6

Please make checks payable to *Friends of the Rio Bosque* and mail to: Friends of the Rio Bosque, CERM-UTEP, 500 W. University Ave., El Paso, TX 79968-0684.



Next Meetings

Thurs., July 26
Thurs., Aug 23
Thurs., Sep 27
6 - 7 p.m.
(note the time change)
206 Kelly Hall
UTEP
Info: 915-747-8663

THINKING LIKE A RIVER

The main water channel at Rio Bosque traces the alignment of a former bend of the Rio Grande cut off when the river was channelized in the 1930s. But today's rebuilt channel is a very different water course than the historic Rio Grande. Before dams and channelization, flooding associated with spring snowmelt played a key role in shaping river-valley ecosystems, including cottonwood-willow forests. The flooding scoured and opened areas. As flood waters receded, they exposed moist soils favorable for seed germination and establishment of these trees. Our challenge today is to find ways to mimic, on at least a limited basis, some of these processes that once shaped native river-valley ecosystems.

Last year, Rio Bosque received Rio Grande Project irrigation water for the first time, delivered from the Riverside Canal. At the point where this sediment-laden water discharged into the park's old river channel, a sediment delta began to develop, as might happen at an arroyo discharging to a river. Under low-flow conditions, mudflats emerged, with the water in the channel cutting a winding path through them. This spring, using a combination of water delivered from the adjacent Roberto Bustamante Wastewater Treatment Plant and irrigation water, we flooded these mudflats, then allowed the water to recede gradually and the mudflats to re-emerge. The result? A nursery area thick with seedling Goodding willows! We left some in place but transplanted many others to sites elsewhere along the old river channel. ✂



Center for Environmental
Resource Management
The University of Texas at El Paso
500 West University Ave.
El Paso, TX 79968-0684

Return Service Requested

RIO BOSQUE CALENDAR

Join us at Rio Bosque for a free walking tour or to help with habitat management or park maintenance. Coming up:

JULY			AUGUST			SEPTEMBER		
7 (Sat.)	Birding Tour	7 a.m.	12 (Sun.)	Introductory Tour	8 a.m.	8 (Sat.)	Birding Tour	8 a.m.
21 (Sat.)	Workday	8 a.m.	18 (Sat.)	Workday	8 a.m.	15 (Sat.)	Workday	8 a.m.
22 (Sun.)	Introductory Tour	8 a.m.	25 (Sat.)	Birding Tour	8 a.m.	16 (Sun.)	Introductory Tour	8 a.m.

Meeting place for all activities is a bridge crossing the Riverside Canal. 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.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

www.riobosque.org

John Sproul 915-747-8663 jsproul@utep.edu

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