We are all here because we love this place. People’s livelihoods, passions and emotions are intimately linked to the wetland habitats that comprise less than two percent of the desert landscape. The Rocky Mountain crane population that winters here has evolved over time to exploit these wetlands. The mystery of their migration, their longevity and behavior evoke a primal response in their human observers and they have truly become the icon for the vision and purpose of the Refuge.

Twenty-five years ago the Refuge looked much different. Whooping cranes were part of the wintering crane population but salt cedar was rampant. The Refuge was a hard place to manage and its role for water birds was not well understood.

It took the combined vision and dedication of Biologist John Taylor, Manager Phil Norton and the field crew to begin the transformation to the Refuge that exists today. John Taylor’s vision was to restore the habitat, to create a place for regional and global research and cooperation, and to understand the Bosque’s place in the larger landscape. Phil Norton saw the Refuge as a place for people and sought to build a community of support among the many stakeholders in the Bosque. With cooperation from the community he created not only the event that has become the Festival of the Cranes, but began the outreach for volunteers, which ultimately was manifest in the creation of the Friends. The field crew, with their deep understanding of the wetland landscape improvised, innovated and partnered to create and build a new water delivery system…the first and most critical step in habitat restoration.

Bosque del Apache in 2012 has a growing private lands program and invasive species strike team. In partnership with Tribes, State agencies and private landowners we are building a better understanding of the role of the Rio Grande and ways to use our equipment and skills to restore the floodplain environment. Our vision is to be a worldwide focal point and leader in southwest ecosystem research and management. By providing a nurturing and positive environment for
Vradenburg, continued

student research across all disciplines we hope to educate and mentor the next generation of professional land managers. Though water is paramount, as we continue to learn and develop this critical wetland, our success depends in large part in our ability to maintain a dedicated, well informed and passionate work force.

In a period of changing climate, Bosque del Apache’s future will be shaped by many factors. For example, will we have enough water to sustain the same habitats we now have? What will future wet and drought cycles look like? What will be the timing, amount and type of precipitation? As plant communities shift, what will be the impact on dependent wildlife communities? How will urban encroachment, agriculture and other demands on the water supply affect us? How will all of this impact our Public Use policy? How do we balance the needs of wildlife with the important goal of providing the visitor experience at the Refuge?

…and finally,

The Important Stuff!
• We all have a passion for wildlife and wild places
• Remember we all got here on different paths
• We Are:
  – Sportsmen
  – Photographers
  – Hikers, bikers
  – Birdwatchers
  – Or other wildlife enthusiasts
• Focus on the why we are here, not on how we got here…..
• Together we can ensure wildlife and wild places endure

FROM THE EDITOR

I remember that when I was in grade school, back in the dark ages, we were taught about classical culture and the gods that populated Greek mythology. The god Janus, the guardian of gates and portals for whom our month of January is named, was depicted with two heads, one looking forward, the other back. I don’t suppose Greek mythology is still on the curriculum for most schools but I suspect that in January many folks will stop to look back on, hopefully, the accomplishments of 2012, while making plans for the year to come.

For the Friends of Bosque del Apache, the past year has been successful in many ways. We focused in on our organizational infrastructure and ‘outer structure’, if I can coin a phrase, and while things like an upgrade in Internet access and the Festival registration system would not be generally visible to the membership, visitors to the Bosque this fall could see our refurbished work space, thriving cactus garden, and first stages of landscape rehabilitation around the Visitor Center. So, this issue of Bosque Watch will provide you a look back at our late fall events - by far the busiest part of our year - and a glimpse of things to come. While we have yet to install a reliable crystal ball at the Friends House, the Friends Board has collectively gazed into the future and agreed that this year the focus will be on expanding our funding sources to better support our mission of education and support to the Refuge. Fund raising is perhaps the most difficult thing any non-profit is faced with, particularly in a period of economic down turn when there are many worthy causes out there, all needing money and support. As we get started we are faced with the proverbial chicken (crane?) and egg question….do you raise money, then figure out what to do with it, or, set goals and then figure out how to fund them? Well, we started that conversation at the Board meeting this past December and more or less agreed that what we wanted was a bigger and better chicken. Within the existing tenets of our charter, this could mean the enhancement of existing programs or looking for new ways to support the Refuge and/or expand our educational outreach.

In February the Board will meet again to discuss what this chicken should look like, and then, what kinds and amounts of additional funding are required to hatch this bird. My question to you dear readers is “What is your vision for the Friends in the next year, two years, ten years?” When you look into the future of your organization, what do you see? What do you want to see? Let us know. We’re at friends@sdc.org or bosquewatch@sdc.org.

Happy New Year.
Lise Spargo
Friends Board Member and Editor, Bosque Watch
WELCOME…

This month Bosque del Apache NWR and the Friends welcome the new Refuge Manager, Kevin Cobble.

Kevin is no stranger to New Mexico or Bosque del Apache. Las Cruces is Kevin’s home town and he earned his degree in wildlife science from New Mexico State in 1978. Kevin comes to us from the San Andres National Wildlife Refuge southeast of Las Cruces, a position he took up in 1999. He has been a visitor to the Bosque since childhood and some of you may have seen him walking around during Festival as one of the many Fish and Wildlife officers from the region that come to help out each year with this event.

As manager of San Andres Kevin has worked to protect the endangered desert bighorn sheep, but if you look up the San Andres NWR website you will find descriptions of research projects to include control of invasive species, the effects of prescribed burning, and, oh yes, a picture of a mountain lion sporting a radio collar. Sound familiar?

Kevin’s wife Crystal teaches science to sixth graders at the Mesa Middle School in Las Cruces and he has two grown daughters, Kacy and Sara. In a recent interview, Kevin noted that the Bosque, with its high visitation rate, will be a different environment for him than San Andres which is not open to the public….but from our optic, given his past experience here in the Middle Rio Grande, it seems that just like the bighorn sheep, he has just expanded his range a bit. We welcome Kevin and his family as new members of the Bosque’s extended family of staff and Friends and look forward to working with him.

Martha Hatch Award Winner Announced

This year the Martha Hatch Volunteer of the Year Award winner was Cheryl Learn. Anyone who has worked with the Friends will know Cheryl as a founder and long term supporter of our work at the Refuge. Cheryl has worked just about every Festival of the Cranes for 19 years as a speaker and nature walk leader, and this year was no exception. She has served on the Friends Board twice (before her recent re-election), attended countless work days, participated in educational events, led tours, and toiled in the Desert Arboretum.

In recent years her main focus has been raising money for the Emerson Learn Bus Scholarship Endowment which has grown to more than $28,000.00. To say that Cheryl is a model volunteer is faint praise. She sets the bar for all of us and it was with the greatest of pleasure that the Friends could give to her the Martha Hatch Award for 2012.
Friends Executive Director
Leigh Ann Vradenburg talks about
INSPIRED GIVING

Schedule A, Line 16. That’s where most people will be recording their charitable donations come April 15th, and if you are like me, you’ll sort through receipts and bank statements promising that you’ll do more in the coming year. With two small children I strive to lead by example, giving of my time and funds to worthy causes. I hope to instill a sense of altruism in them, fearing that in this age of electronic attachment disorder they will lose sight of contributing to the greater good. As Executive Director of the Friends, during the last seven years I have seen upwards of $100,000 generously contributed by committed Friends and refuge supporters, but in 2012 I saw three notable acts of charitable giving that I want to share.

In November I received a card in which I found three checks. The handwritten card indicated that these were donations for the “beautiful and wonderful animals” and there were plenty of hearts and exclamation points leading me to believe the author to be in elementary school. The checks were written to the Friends in acknowledgement of the girl’s birthday, and while the amount given is not important, I will say that it would be a lot of money for a child to pass along. I thank her for giving me hope in the next generation, and I thank her parents for encouraging her.

Inspired giving is also what I would call the donations we have received in the last year from a lady in Albuquerque. Every month or two I received a donation with a lovely handwritten letter describing how the donor had read something in the Bosque Watch or seen something on television that had inspired her to make another donation. Although she is elderly and can no longer make trips to the Bosque, she stays connected to the refuge and remembers the special times she had here. I have acknowledged her generosity by sending her letters with more updates and pictures, and I would say that I have developed quite a pen pal through a common love of the wildlife here. I wish only that I could take the Refuge to her or bring her here one more time to show her how we are putting her contributions to good use. She has shown me how Bosque del Apache can influence how you see the world even years after you have seen the refuge, and for that I thank her.

During the year I saw many changes taking place around me as the Friends offices, which looked more like a storage building back in 2005, were transformed into a professional, safe, comfortable, clean, and organized space. This was no small task, but it was largely accomplished through the blood, sweat, checkbook, and maybe a few tears of one individual. I cannot convey the difference it has made for the Friends staff, and if you were able to stop in during Festival, you can appreciate how the “Friends House” is now representative of one of the most successful Friends groups in the nation. As I sat writing a donation acknowledgement letter in December, I was humbled by receipts totaling more than $12,000, knowing that manhours would have doubled that contribution. “What can one person do?” Well, this person upgraded, updated, and elevated the Friends headquarters, and that will have a lasting impact on the staff, refuge, and Friends – and for that I thank her, personally and professionally.

In the wake of a busy and successful Festival, business quieted down a bit around the holidays and the end of the year. I wrote dozens of thank you letters for donations and notifications of gift memberships. As I put 2012 to bed, I looked forward to the promise of 2013. Our membership has shown me that despite tough economic times, their commitment to the Friends and the refuge has been steadfast. I know that Bosque del Apache will remain a place for the birds and a place for the people when my children and grandchildren are grown. No tax deduction can ever account for your invaluable passion and support. Thank you.
The Board met last on 15 December 2012. Here are the highlights.

STATE OF THE FRIENDS
- The newly reformatted HABITAT! for 2013 is now available in the Visitor Center. The format is geared toward visit planning and should require only minor changes each year.
- Executive Director Leigh Ann Vradenburg continues to tweak our website. Online sales have been good. She has periodically provided the Refuge with Facebook posts to promote Friends programs and events.
- The Friends will be completing the elk research project challenge cost share agreement in the next few months.
- Over the counter sales in the Visitor Center Nature Store were slow in October, due in part to the installation of the new exhibits which closed parts of the visitor center. In November, with the arrival of the birds and with more Festival events in the Visitor Center and on the Refuge this year, we were able to generate more sales which brought our bottom line up $4,443.51 from last year. We have closed out FY2012 with an inventory review that was 100% clean. The financial statements are available and we have filed our 990.

FESTIVAL REPORT
- Festival moved to profitability with record sales as more participants registered for activities. Participants increased their average spending while overall Festival attendance remained the same or slightly decreased. Bookstore sales were up 8% with 3% more traffic than previous years.
- The newly added “EXPO” tent was very popular. The eight commercial booth spaces were completely sold out.
- The 123 Sign-up software was upgraded prior to Festival and 80% of all registrant’s successfully navigated their online sign up process without our help.
- The Festival dinner and Social at the new Bodega Restaurant venue were very successful; there was a 60% increase in people signed up for the dinner on Thursday night.

EDUCATION
- Environmental Educator Andrea Brophy had a great fall term working in the classroom and on the Refuge with students from San Antonio Elementary School. Students came to the prescribed burn during Festival and got to see firsthand how the refuge uses fire as a management tool.
- Andrea is preparing a survey for all K-5 teachers within the school district to assess how the Refuge and Friends can better serve our local teachers.
- The Junior Ranger booklet for the Refuge which includes activities kids can do to earn a ranger badge is done and feedback so far is hugely positive.
- Andrea has been working with the Natural History Museum in ABQ to help them start a teen group in Socorro, focusing on key environmental issues particularly regarding water.

Longing for the Bosque but stuck at your desk? You can have this magnificent view by going to http://camera.friendsofthebosque.org/

This time of year you’ll see the bald eagles come and go. In the summer, the camera has a view of the hummingbird feeders.

The camera was a gift of the friends of Harvey Furgatch, donated in his honor so others can enjoy the Bosque from virtually anywhere.
Annual Meeting and Volunteer Day

On October 20, 2012, the Friends annual meeting was held at Bosque del Apache. For those of you who attended, Acting Manager Aaron Mize and Supervisory Biologist John Vradenburg provided a fascinating and detailed account of what’s happening on the Refuge from the installation of new exhibits at the Visitor Center to plans for creating artificial rattlesnake dens! There was, as stipulated, the election of new Officers to the Board, and as a result we welcomed new members Sonja Mendoza and Ann Adams. Sonja is our new Secretary and Ann, a member at large. We welcomed back Jerry Goffe and Cheryl Learn, long time supporters and members of the Friends who are also returning to the Board as members at large. Over lunch, Friends educator Andrea Brophy provided an overview of the Friends education program…and then the real fun began. Our volunteer afternoon included activities for kids and adults, though at times it was not clear who was doing what. Here in pictures are some of the highlights.
Fun for adults!
What Winter Brings

Winter is the peak season for birds and birders at the Bosque. In the last edition, we talked about our most popular visitors, cranes and snow geese. This month we’re focusing our attention on the largest group of avian visitors we have during the winter, the ducks.

Cranes and snow geese are spectacular, a joy to watch and photograph, but you will also find opportunities for some great pictures of ducks, which are great subjects for photographers of all skill levels. Ducks are colorful and active and best of all, can make for appealing images, even using cameras with shorter lenses.

In the past several weeks, we’ve seen a lot of dabbling ducks: mallards, pintails, northern shoveler. Less common dabbling ducks now at the Bosque are gadwalls, American widgeons, as well as green-winged and blue-winged teal. In their midst, there are quite a few diving ducks: ruddy ducks, bufflehead ducks, ringed-necked ducks, and canvasbacks. Ducks we’re anticipating in the next month or so include common and hooded mergansers and the stunning cinnamon teals.

Also, don’t forget the great photo opportunities that hawks, eagles, coots, and pied-bill grebes can bring. While you rush from ponds to fields seeking flocks of cranes and geese, take time to enjoy the spectacle of our other migratory visitors and permanent residents.

Please send your comments and questions to:
bosquebirds@gmail.com

Ingrid and Kumar

Call for Entries
for 2014 Festival of the Cranes
Cover Art
Deadline: May 31, 2013
Enter your digital photographs and/or artwork suitable for use on Festival merchandise (t-shirts and mugs) and brochure cover.
Email entries to friends@sdc.org
Workshop Offerings - 2013

This year, the Friends of the Bosque will again be sponsoring a variety of workshops for visitors to the Refuge. These workshops fill quickly so here’s a preview of some of what will be offered this year. We will provide additional information in *Bosque Watch* or on our website at [http://friendsofthebosque.org/educationalevents.html](http://friendsofthebosque.org/educationalevents.html) as it becomes available.

**Wildlife Photography**
Saturday, January 26, 6:15 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., at the Bosque del Apache NWR.
(9:00, breakfast, 12:00, lunch)

Photographer and naturalist **Jerry Goffe** will provide an overview on wildlife and nature photography followed by a hands-on experience on the Refuge. Techniques and tips will be utilized while photographing the Sandhill Cranes, Geese, landscape and other animals of the refuge. Canon will be supplying some photo gear for people to use. We’ll also have a Canon 13 X 19 inch color printer so everyone can take home a print or two of their images created during the workshop. Bring your camera, instruction manual, media (memory) cards or film (what’s film?), tripod, lunch, water and proper clothing (layers).

Meet at unit 3 (Crane pond) at 6:15am for Fly-out and early morning photo opportunities prior to class.

Please call 575-835-1828 for reservations. This workshop is limit to 20 participants and reservations are required.

**Exploring the Night Sky—For Beginners**
Saturday, April 13, 7:00 p.m.

April is Global Astronomy Month. Join **Amy Estelle** and amateur astronomers in hands-on activities to help visitors of all ages identify spring constellations, distinguish planets from stars, and observe galaxies beyond the Milky Way. Visitors will make a star chart and play Astro Jeopardy.

Meet at Visitors Center, Bosque del Apache NWR.

Reservations required. Please call 575-835-1828. This workshop is limited to 30 participants, 8 years of age and above.

**Seasons of Stars—A Celebration of the Night Sky**
Saturday, September 21, 7:00 p.m.

On the eve of the Autumnal Equinox, join **Amy Estelle** and amateur astronomers in a celebration of New Mexico’s dark skies. As the Milky Way arches overhead, visitors will discover how Earth and Sky are linked in a cultural tapestry with examples and stories from across the world to New Mexico.

Meet at the Visitors Center, Bosque del Apache NWR.

Reservations required. Please call 575-835-1828. This workshop is limited to 30 participants, 8 years of age and above.
The Friends of the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge is a registered 501 (C) (3) nonprofit corporation incorporated in New Mexico. The Friends promotes appreciation and conservation of wildlife and habitat through environmental education and natural history experiences at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

OFFICERS

President: Lise Spargo
lisespargo@aol.com

Vice President: Matthew Mitchell
riobirdsmitch@gmail.com

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lanshark@sdc.org

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kitty@truffulatree.org

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pcwhite@ix.netcom.com

DIRECTORS-AT-LARGE

Ann Davidson Adams
ann.d.adams@comcast.net

Jill Buckley
jill.buckley@prc.nmt.edu

Kumar Golap
kgolap@gmail.com

Jerry Goffe
jigoffe20@comcast.net

Ann Hodges
annlhod@gmail.com

John Larson
jclarson@yahoo.com

Cheryl Learn
clearn@unm.edu

FRIENDS STAFF

Executive Director

Leigh Ann Vradenburg
575/838-2120
friends@sdc.org

Nature Store Manager
Shirleen Greenwood
natsstore@sdc.org

Environmental Educator
Andrea Harris Brophy
friendsee@sdc.org

Festival Coordinator
Michael Hanauer
festival@sdc.org

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SPEAK UP!

Government decisions determine the fate of the Bosque del Apache. You can help by letting key decision makers know how you feel about the Refuge and other natural resource issues.

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The White House, Washington D.C. 202/456-1111 President@WhiteHouse.gov

Hon. Ken Salazar
Secretary of the Interior
18th & C Streets NW, Rm. 6151
Washington D.C. 20240  202/208-7351

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US Senate, Washington D.C. 20510
202/224-5521
website: heinrich.senate.gov

Hon. Tom Udall
US Senate, Washington D.C. 20510
202/224-6621
website: tomudall.senate.gov

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House of Representatives
Washington D.C. 20515  202/225-6316
website: lujangrisham.house.gov

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House of Representatives
Washington D.C. 20515  202/225-6190
website: lujan.house.gov

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House of Representatives
Washington D.C. 20515  202/225-2365
website: pearce.house.gov

NEW MEXICO REPRESENTATIVES

The White House, Washington D.C. 202/456-1111
President@WhiteHouse.gov

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

Hon. Michelle Lujan Grisham
House of Representatives
Washington D.C. 20515  202/225-6316
website: lujangrisham.house.gov

Hon. Ben Ray Lujan, Jr.
House of Representatives
Washington D.C. 20515  202/225-6190
website: lujan.house.gov

Hon. Steve Pearce
House of Representatives
Washington D.C. 20515  202/225-2365
website: pearce.house.gov

Hon. Tom Udall
US Senate, Washington D.C. 20510
202/224-6621
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Hon. Ken Salazar
Secretary of the Interior
18th & C Streets NW, Rm. 6151
Washington D.C. 20240  202/208-7351

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US Senate, Washington D.C. 20510
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