

THE PINE CONE

Official Newsletter of the Albuquerque Wildlife Federation



Albuquerque
WILDLIFE
Federation

conservationists since 1914

June 2026

Save the whales, butterflies, and prairie chickens

“For one species to mourn the death of another is a new thing under the sun.”

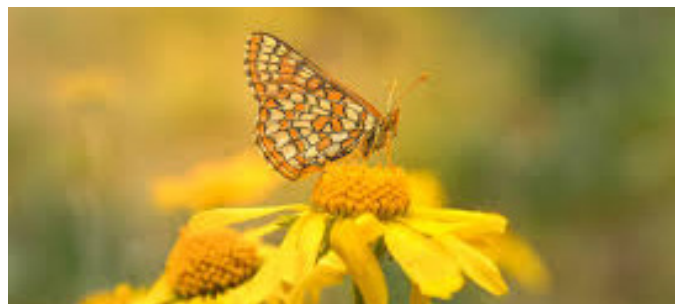
– Aldo Leopold, On a Monument to the Pigeon

Leopold wrote those words after the last passenger pigeon, Martha, died alone in captivity at the Cincinnati Zoo in 1914.

In early May, the last known Sacramento Mountains checkerspot caterpillar died at the ABQ BioPark. This subspecies of butterfly, which is found only in the Sacramento Mountains of southeastern New Mexico, was last seen in the wild in 2022.

That year, four butterflies were collected for captive breeding at the BioPark. They successfully produced 160 caterpillars, but almost all of them died before metamorphosing into butterflies. Because there was never a male and female butterfly alive at the same time, the ones that did metamorphose died without producing another generation. The final caterpillar never emerged from hibernation this spring.

There may still be a handful of Sacramento Mountains checkerspots alive in the wild; researchers will search again this summer, and efforts have been made to plant more New Mexico beardtongue (*Penstemon neomexicanus*), the only host plant for the butterfly in its egg and larval stages. However, as climate change alters growing seasons and spawns megafires, the butterfly’s long-term prospects for survival are slim.



Many other species are also perched on the precipice of extinction, and current federal policy is not in their favor.

In February, the Trump administration stripped endangered species protections from the lesser prairie chicken, whose population have shrunk from millions to around 26,000 after 90% of its habitat was lost to extractive development.

Then in March, the Trump administration convened the “God Squad” for the first time in 30 years. This federal committee has the power to carve out exemptions from the Endangered Species Act (ESA), allowing activities to proceed without regard for their impact on vulnerable species. After just 15 minutes of discussion, the God Squad voted to exempt oil and gas companies in the Gulf of Mexico from complying with the ESA – likely consigning to extinction the Rice’s Whale, which lives only in the Gulf and whose population has been reduced to around 51 individuals.

Yet as long as these species still survive, it is too soon to mourn; instead, we should use these threats to galvanize us into action.

The year that Martha died, Leopold founded AWF with the clarion call to “remember the buffalo” and do better by other species. The efforts his generation launched made an enormous difference in how we protect wild

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JUNE 11, 2026 MEETING: Effectiveness of Post-Fire Restoration Structures

Date: Thursday, June 11, 2026, 7:30 p.m.

Location: Albuquerque Friends Meeting House
1600 5th Street Northwest

Topic: Effectiveness of Post-Fire Restoration Structures

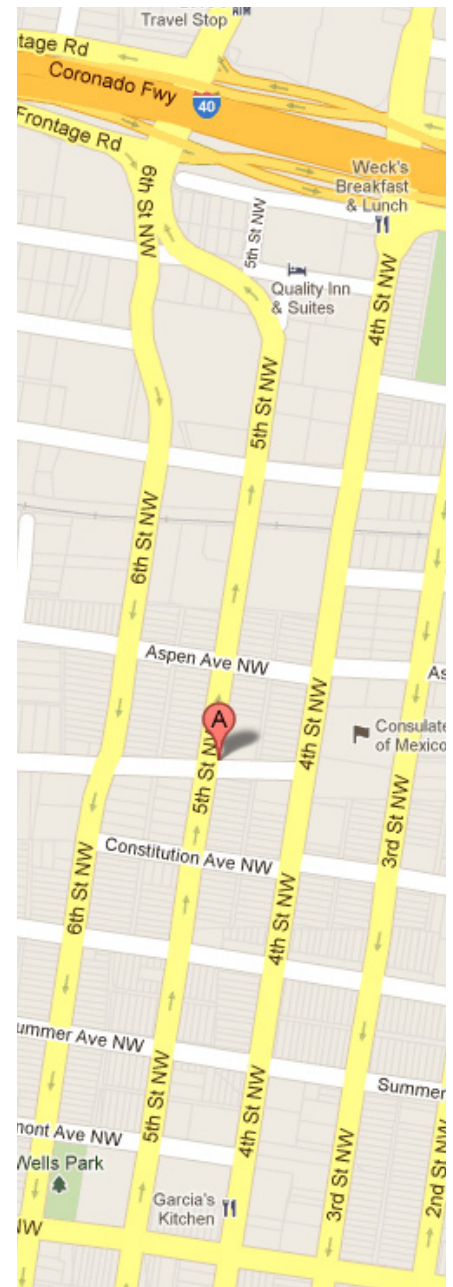
In the wake of the 2022 Calf Canyon/Hermit's Peak wildfire, watershed restoration structures made from site-sourced natural materials such as logs and stones were installed throughout the Santa Fe National Forest to help mitigate post-fire erosion impacts. This month's speaker, Tomas Gonzales, helped build some of these structures in the summer of 2024 and then began monitoring them for an undergraduate research project during the next semester. He is still continuing to measure their effectiveness at fulfilling their intended functions of erosion control within the ephemeral drainages where they are placed. With over a year of monitoring data, Tomas has collected some valuable insights into how structure placement and design impacts their effectiveness, and he has documented some potential long-term positive and negative effects on the ecosystem. Tomas will share these insights during this month's presentation so that we can better understand an exciting adaptive management practice being used in the field today.

Speaker Bio: Tomas Gonzales

Tomas Gonzales is an undergraduate forestry student at New Mexico Highlands University, specializing in watershed resilience, ecological restoration, and land-water interactions in New Mexico. He has presented his research at multiple ecology talks and conferences over the past two years, most recently at the Society of Wetland Scientists, which was held in Denver in May 2026.

Directions to the Meeting

The Albuquerque Friends Meeting House is located at the corner of 5th and Bellamah. From I-40, take the 6th street exit, then South to Bellamah.



JUNE 19-21, 2026 SERVICE PROJECT: Rito Cafe

LOCATION: Rito Cafe in the Jemez Mountains

THE PROJECT: Join AWF for a project along the Rito Cafe on the west side of the Jemez Mountains. For this project, we will be partnering with Rio Grande Return to build Beaver Dam Analog structures that will slow down the water flowing through this system, holding it on the landscape longer so that it can sink in and sustain more vegetation.

SCHEDULE: Friday, June 19 – Sunday, June 21

Volunteers do not need to be present for the entire weekend to participate. You are welcome to join us just for the main work day Saturday, or camp for just one of the two nights.

GEAR: Bring everything you need for a weekend of camping and restoration work, including work gloves, hat, long sleeves, long pants, sturdy boots, and sunscreen. **We recommend bringing a change of shoes, and waterproof boots or boots you don't mind getting wet, as we will be working in and around the flowing creek.** Rain gear, layers, warm clothes for the evenings and plenty of water are essential.

FOOD: AWF will provide breakfast burritos and coffee/tea on Saturday morning and bison or veggie burgers on Saturday evening. Please bring a dish to share for the Saturday potluck dinner, along with your own lunches, Friday dinner, Sunday breakfast, and lots of water!

TO SIGN UP: Email Abe at abe@riograndereturn.org
Directions and further details will be sent to you once you sign up.



2026 RESTORATION PROJECTS CALENDAR

- March 7.....Valle de Oro Wildlife Refuge
- March 21.....Rio Puerco, Cuba
- April 10-12.....Wolf Creek, Ft. Union Ranch
- April 18.....Cedro Creek, Tijeras
- May 15-17.....Red Canyon Reserve, San Mateo Mtns
- May 29-31.....Shush'Kin Fen, Zuni Mountains
- June 19-21.....Rito Cafe, Jemez Mountains
- July 10-12.....Polvadera Creek, Jemez Mountains
- August 14-16.....Manuelitas Creek, near Las Vegas
- September 4-6.....Limestone Canyon, San Mateo Mtns
- October 2-4.....Cebolla Canyon, El Malpais
- October 23-25.....Rio Embudo, Dixon
- November 7.....Cedro Creek, Tijeras

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RECAP OF MAY 15-17, 2026 PROJECT: RED CANYON RESERVE



In mid-May, AWF partnered with the Quivira Coalition to continue the restoration work at Red Canyon Reserve, a 320-acre tract of land in the eastern foothills of the San Mateo Mountains. This land was gifted to Quivira in 2002 with the hope that it would be used as a wildlife refuge, research station, and demonstration ranch to showcase best practices for arid land management. AWF has assisted with the restoration efforts since 2004.

This year, first-time and longtime volunteers built several rock structures in the lush riparian oasis of Red Canyon itself, as well as on the drier uplands, with the goal of retaining more water on the landscape and improving ecosystem health. Steve Carson and Cullen Hallmark, core members of the Red Canyon Reserve management team, directed the work and also led the annual bullseye vegetation monitoring. Meanwhile, Quivira Education & Outreach Project Manager Nina Katz managed the camp kitchen with an assist from Scial.

The weather was hot and windy, but the views from camp were spectacular and the volunteers remained in high spirits, participating in a biochar soil amendment activity with Dr. Eva Stricker on Saturday afternoon and a cactus hike with Cari Powell of the New Mexico Cactus + Succulent Society on Sunday morning before heading home.



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creatures, saving many species that would otherwise have been lost. And despite recent setbacks, conservationists are far from giving up.

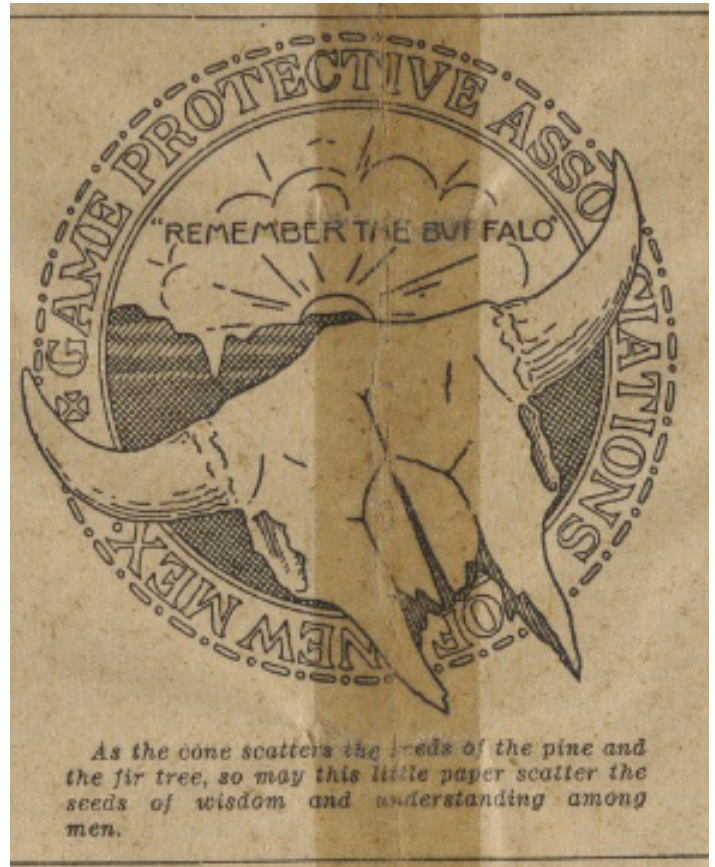
On Earth Day this year, the U.S. House of Representatives withdrew legislation that would have significantly weakened the ESA. The decision not to proceed with the bill came after strong public pushback and organized opposition from conservation groups.

Meanwhile New Mexico is forging ahead with its own state-level efforts to protect species. The Department of Wildlife is currently in the midst of its biennial review of state-listed threatened and endangered species. Until July 6, members of the public can submit comments about whether protections should be increased or decreased for any of the 59 species listed as threatened or the 55 species listed as endangered. ([More info here.](#))

Every species that is hanging on gives us an opportunity. We will not be able to save all of them, but every one we can save matters, as the more diversity we preserve, the more options there are for life to adapt to a changing world.

So remember the buffalo and the butterfly, the prairie chicken and the whale, and continue to raise your voice on their behalf so that more species will survive to seed the future.

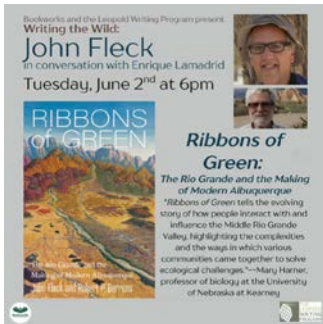
Kristina G. Fisher
AWF Secretary



Header image from a 1916 edition of the Pine Cone.



UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST



The Rio Grande and the Making of Modern Albuquerque

TUESDAY, JUNE 2, 6:00 p.m.

Bookworks, 4022 Rio Grande Blvd NW, Albuquerque, NM 87107

LEOPOLD WRITING PROGRAM

In *Ribbons of Green*, John Fleck and Robert P. Berrens seek to understand twenty-first-century Albuquerque's relationship with the Rio Grande by exploring the social and ecological interactions that describe how this high-desert city developed astride a capricious river.

Native Seed for Restoration in Southwest Forests and Rangeland

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3, 7:00 p.m., UNM Continuing Education building, 1634 University Blvd NE

NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF NEW MEXICO

Mia Brann and Clay Meredith, ecologists with the Institute for Applied Ecology in Santa Fe, will explain the work of the Southwest Seed Partnership in developing ecologically appropriate seed sources. Following ground-disturbing fuels reduction treatments, seeding with native understory species can deter establishment of invasive plants, increase species diversity, and establish fuel breaks. [More info here.](#)

The Jemez Mountains: A Cultural and Natural History

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10, 5:00 p.m., REI Santa Fe, 500 Market St. Ste. 100, Santa Fe, NM 87501

NEW MEXICO WILD

Tom Swetnam will share stories from his book, *The Jemez Mountains: A Cultural and Natural History*, a rich tapestry of natural history, forest ecology, and the human histories woven into this beloved landscape. New Mexico Wild will discuss how this history connects to current policy, including the federal administration's push to rescind the Roadless Rule, and what's at stake for the Jemez and beyond if those protections are lost. RSVP required: <https://nmwild.org/event/tom-swetnam-book-talk-and-conservation-discussion-at-rei/>

New Mexico Working Lands Summit: Learning Resilience and Collaboration from Acequias

JUNE 11-12, 2026

QUIVIRA COALITION

Acequias, communally-managed gravity-fed irrigation systems found across New Mexico and southern Colorado, have nourished our working lands and communities for centuries. At this conference, farmers, ranchers, community members, and conservationists will share about cooperative decision-making when it comes to managing waterways, fields, and forests. To register: <https://quiviracoalition.org/events/2026-new-mexico-summit/>

Survey Riparian Birds in the Isleta Reach

MAY, JUNE, JULY

AUDUBON NEW MEXICO

Come bird with us! We're seeking birders who can volunteer three mornings in May, June, and July to survey birds in the Isleta Reach along the Rio Grande in New Mexico. Land and water managers use the data to inform how the bosque is managed to support wildlife.

More info at: <https://www.audubon.org/southwest/news/bird-surveys-isleta-reach>

Sign up at: <https://www.mobilize.us/audubon-southwest/event/911920/>

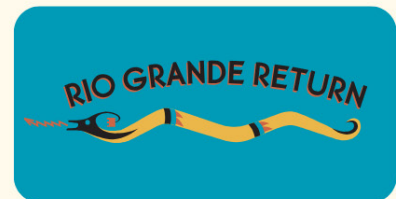
Send your event information to: abqwildlifefederation@gmail.com!



Volunteer Stream Restoration Day

**Rio de Las Vacas
Santa Fe National Forest
June 10, 2026**

Curious about beaver habitat restoration? Join Rio Grande Return to build post-assisted log structures (PALS).



How You Can Participate

- **Volunteer**
Spend a day building PALS with us. No prior experience is needed, just your enthusiasm and willingness to make a difference.
- **Learn**
Rio Grande Return is creating wildlife habitat along Rio de Las Vacas by planting more willows and installing beaver dam analogs (BDA)s, PALS and large woody debris structures. Learn about the role of beaver mimicry in improving water quality, storing water, expanding wetlands and creating habitat for other wildlife.
- **What to Bring**
Lunch, water, warm work gloves, warm clothing (layers), shoes that can get wet, hat/sunscreen.

Event Date

Wednesday
June 10, 2026
9:30am - 3pm

Location

Near Hwy 126
and FS Rd 20
(30 minutes from
Cuba, NM)

RSVP by email before the
prior Monday to:

Karen Menetrey
karen@riograndereturn.org
505-603-1328

JOIN US!

Become a Member of the Albuquerque Wildlife Federation

The Albuquerque Wildlife Federation is an all-volunteer organization founded by Aldo Leopold in 1914 and dedicated to protecting and restoring New Mexico's wildlife and habitat.

Our work is only possible thanks to the generous support of our members.

If you like the work we do, we hope you will help keep this legacy going by becoming a member or renewing your membership.



AWF MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Albuquerque Wildlife Federation | P.O. Box 20225 | Albuquerque, NM 87154

Yes, I'd like to join AWF! This is a gift membership from: _____

name(s): _____

address: _____

city, state, zip: _____

phone: _____ email: _____

- Student _____ \$10
- Individual _____ \$25
- Family _____ \$35
- Sustaining _____ \$50-99
- Patron _____ \$100
- Lifetime _____ \$500 (*one-time payment*)

Dues: \$ _____

Extra Contribution: \$ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \$ _____