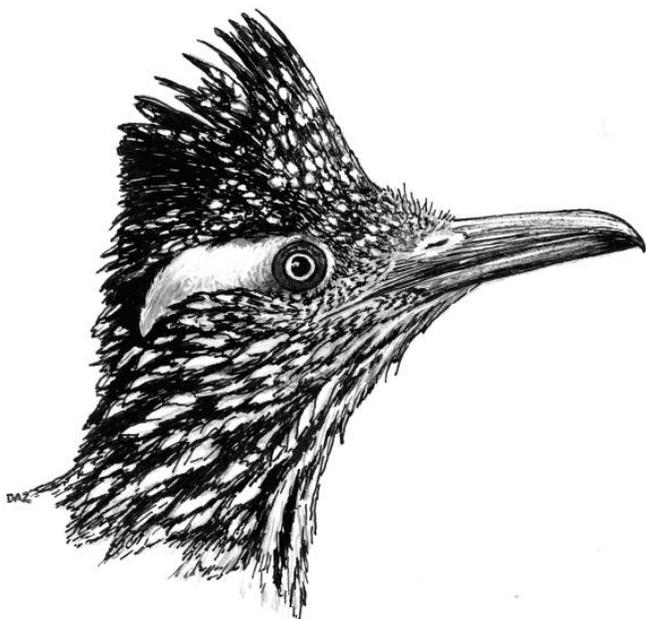


# NMOS BULLETIN



New Mexico  
Ornithological  
Society

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# **THE NEW MEXICO ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY, INC.**

Post Office Box 3068, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87190-3068  
www.nmbirds.org

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## RESULTS OF AN ELF OWL (*MICROTHENE WHITNEYI*) SURVEY IN DARK CANYON, GUADALUPE MOUNTAINS, EDDY COUNTY, NEW MEXICO

Andrew B. Johnson

Museum of Southwestern Biology, Division of Birds

Department of Biology, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM 87131

On the night of 14 May 2007, Robert W. Dickerman and I conducted a survey for Elf Owls in Dark Canyon as part of our investigations of this owl's taxonomic status in the southeastern part of New Mexico and adjacent Texas (see Dickerman and Johnson 2013; Dickerman et al. 2010). It has been my experience that these owls do not respond consistently every night to playback. Although this survey is from only one night, they responded vigorously to playback, and I think that it is likely that most males along this stretch of canyon responded. Therefore, I feel that these results are a useful measure of the population in that stretch of canyon. This record is already reported in the NMOS Field Notes Database, but the details of habitat, survey method, and distance surveyed have never been published.

We conducted the survey along 2.8 km of Forest Road 69 in Dark Canyon. This canyon sits roughly in the center of the Guadalupe Mountains 9.2 km south of Queen, New Mexico. The center of this survey route is at 32.111244° N, 104.738789° W, elevation 1840 m. Habitat in the canyon varies from very dry south-facing canyon walls of yucca (*Yucca*), sotol (*Dasylirion*), beargrass (*Nolina*), agave (*Agave*), and grasses (Poaceae) to juniper (*Juniperus*) forest. The canyon bottom along the road tends to be wetter and supports an open forest of piñon (*Pinus edulis*)–juniper, gray oak (*Quercus grisea*), chinquapin oak (*Quercus muehlenbergii*), ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*), scattered Texas madrone (*Arbutus xalapensis*), and grass in the herbaceous layer. The terrain is very rocky and cliffs are abundant.

The survey route covered a linear distance of 2 km (GPS points in Table 1). The survey consisted of driving along the road and stopping approximately every 0.32 km to play a tape recording of Elf Owl song for approximately 2 minutes and then listening for a vocal response from any owls nearby. I noted the side of the road from which each owl responded and made an effort to not double-count individuals. GPS coordinates were recorded at each point along the road from where Elf Owls responded (Table 1). We made no effort to quantify the distance of owls from the road, but I estimate 300 m was the maximum distance that I was able to detect them. The survey lasted from 2120–2310 hrs. It began to rain at 2300 hrs., but I did not record any other weather conditions.

We recorded 8 Elf Owls along this 2 km stretch of Dark Canyon (Table 1). Based on my estimate of maximum distance detection, the density of Elf Owls in Dark Canyon in 2007 was roughly 6.6 owl pairs per km<sup>2</sup>. This assumes each owl that responded was a male and that each male was paired. This is within the range of published densities for similar evergreen woodland and riparian forest habitats (summarized in Henry and

Gehlbach 1999). The width of the canyon and habitat therein is quite variable, but the estimate assumes its average width is twice the detection radius, 0.6 km.

Elf Owls were first reported from the Guadalupe Mountains in McKittrick Canyon in Texas in 1968 (La Val 1969) and were discovered in the New Mexico side of the Guadalupe Mountains in Dark Canyon in 1997 by Steve West (NMOS Field Notes Database). They are known from other localities in the Guadalupe Mountains, including up to eight in Last Chance Canyon (NMOS Field Notes Database) and from other localities in the desert west of Carlsbad at lower elevations (eBird.org). Surveys of other canyons in the region will likely expand the known range of this species in southeastern New Mexico.

Table 1. GPS coordinates in Dark Canyon from where Elf Owls were detected 14 May 2007.

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Latitude N	Longitude W	Elevation (m)	Notes
32°06.4372'	104°44.8970'	1855	2 elf owls calling (1 each side of road)
32°06.5399'	104°44.8021'	1857	1 elf owl calling north side of road
32°06.5482'	104°44.7544'	1856	1 elf owl calling south side of road
32°06.5696'	104°44.4984'	1848	1 elf owl calling north side of road
32°06.6411'	104°44.3745'	1851	1 elf owl calling north side of road
32°06.7042'	104°44.2513'	1842	1 elf owl calling south side of road
32°06.7567'	104°43.6736'	1808	1 elf owl calling north side of road

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### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

These data would not be available but for the dedication and generosity of Robert W. Dickerman (deceased 2015). He could have rightfully been included as a coauthor, but all of the speculation in this note is mine, and I would not want him to bear any of that responsibility. Matthew Baumann and an anonymous reviewer provided helpful comments on a previous version of this manuscript.

### **LITERATURE CITED**

- Dickerman, R. W., and A. B. Johnson. 2013. Notes on the Elf Owls of Trans-Pecos Texas and adjacent Coahuila and New Mexico. *Bulletin of the Texas Ornithological Society* 45:1–5.
- Dickerman, R. W., A. B. Johnson and J. D. Ligon 2010. Elf Owl. pp 565–577 *in* *Raptors of New Mexico*, J. L. Cartron, ed. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque NM.

Henry, S. G. and F. R. Gehlbach. 1999. Elf Owl (*Micrathene whitneyi*), The Birds of North America (P. G. Rodewald, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Retrieved from the Birds of North America: <https://birdsna.org/Species-Account/bna/species/elfowl> DOI: 10.2173/bna.413.

La Val, R. K. 1969. Records of birds from McKittrick Canyon. Bulletin of the Texas Ornithological Society 3:24.  
NMOS Field Notes Database ([www.nmbirds.org/?page\\_id=1016](http://www.nmbirds.org/?page_id=1016) and links therein; accessed 27 March 2017).

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### REVIEWERS FOR VOLUME 39

The New Mexico Ornithological Society and the Editor of the *NMOS Bulletin* thank the following individuals who served as reviewers for manuscripts that appeared in Volume 45 of the *Bulletin*:

Dave Kreuper, Sandy Williams, and Matt Brooks.

\* \* \*

### NMOS RESEARCH GRANTS

NMOS offers two research grants each year to help support research on New Mexico birds. The **Ryan Beaulieu Research Grant** for \$1000 is presented in memory of Ryan Beaulieu. Following the wishes of Ryan's family, this grant will support research projects that do not involve the collection of birds. For more information about Ryan Beaulieu and his bird research interests, see the *Audubon* magazine article, *Band of Brothers* about Ryan and his friends Raymond VanBuskirk and Michael Hilchey and their Rosy-Finch project. The **NMOS Research Grant** is also available for \$1000.

The criteria for both grants are:

- The grant money must be spent while conducting research on birds in New Mexico;
- The recipient must either present a paper based on the research at an annual NMOS Meeting or submit an article based on the research to the NMOS Bulletin; and
- Preference will be given to student applicants.

A short research proposal (2 pages maximum) must be submitted describing the nature of the project and how the allocated funds are to be spent (e.g., on gas, tape

recording, specific equipment, etc.). Each proposal should state clearly whether the project does or does not involve collection of birds. Each proposal should include two letters of reference, one of which should be from a graduate advisor if the applicant is a graduate student. References should comment on the applicant's commitment to New Mexico ornithology and ability to design and carry out creative, independent research. All proposals will be evaluated together and up to two proposals will be awarded grants. The Ryan Beaulieu Research Grant will fund a project that does not involve the collection of birds; the NMOS research grant is open to all projects that meet the criteria above.

Please submit your electronic proposal with "NMOS Grant" in the subject line to: Matt Baumann, mbaumann22@gmail.com.

**The deadline for 2018 Research Grant proposals is 1 March 2018.** All applications will be acknowledged within a week of proposal receipt. If no acknowledgement is received, it is the applicant's responsibility to follow up with their submission to ensure consideration. Grant awards will be announced at the NMOS Annual Meeting (24 March 2018, Albuquerque).

\* \* \*

**NEW MEXICO ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
56TH ANNUAL MEETING  
24 March 2018**

Courtyard Albuquerque, Marriot  
5151 Journal Center Blvd NE, Albuquerque, New Mexico  
505-823-1919; <https://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/abqcy-courtyard-albuquerque/>

The New Mexico Ornithological Society (NMOS) will hold its 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting on Saturday, 24 March 2018, at the Courtyard Albuquerque by Marriot, located off of Journal Center Blvd., in the northeast heights of Albuquerque. This meeting will include an NMOS business meeting, an NMOS general science session, and an evening banquet with keynote banquet speaker Jennifer Owen-White. Registration is required for all events.

Out-of-town participants are encouraged to stay onsite at the Courtyard Marriot; directions are available on the hotel website (see above).

There will be a registration fee (\$20 – \$30 for early registration; \$25 – \$40 for on-site registration) for the Annual Meeting to cover meeting expenses (program/abstract booklet and refreshments at the breaks). The abstract for presentations at the NMOS

General Science Session will be distributed at the meeting and will be published in the *NMOS Bulletin*.

The NMOS banquet will also be held at the Courtyard Albuquerque by Marriot; the keynote banquet speaker will be Jennifer Owen-White. Jennifer will speak about urban refuges and their role in bird conservation. The banquet will be a buffet dinner. The price is \$20 – \$40 (note that this includes tax and gratuity) and banquet reservations are available with pre-registration only. Payment for registration and the banquet are to be made through NMOS using the registration form below. New to this year, payment may also be made through PayPal via the NMOS Website; however, registration form is still required.

NMOS will offer an organized field trip available (no-charge) on Saturday prior to the business meeting (meeting starts ~9–9:30am) and another on Sunday after the Annual Meeting. Stay tuned for field trip details.

To register electronically, please save a copy of the Word version of the registration form (located on the NMOS website) to your computer and fill out the form. Email the form to Megan Ruehmann ([megan.ruehmann@gmail.com](mailto:megan.ruehmann@gmail.com)) OR print a hard copy and mail with payment according to instructions below.

\* \* \*

**NMOS ANNUAL MEETING  
REGISTRATION FORM**

March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
Courtyard Marriott  
5151 Journal Center Blvd, Albuquerque NM

**EARLY REGISTRATION and BANQUET FEES (payable to NMOS) ARE DUE BY MARCH 15!** Early registration fees and banquet reservations are only available if registration and payment are received by March 15; after this date registration will only be available at the door for an additional \$5.

# of Meeting Early Registrations @ \$35 \_\_\_\_\_  
# of Student Meeting Early Registrations @ \$20 \_\_\_\_\_  
# of Reservations for Saturday Banquet @ \$40 \_\_\_\_\_  
# of Reservations for Student Saturday Banquet @\$20\_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL AMOUNT PAID \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE SELECT YOUR PAYMENT METHOD:

Website (nmbirds.org) \_\_\_\_\_ Check \_\_\_\_\_

NAME(S): \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Providing your email address will enable us to contact you to confirm registration or with last-minute information (e.g., emergency meeting cancellation, information about field trips, etc.). All registrations will be acknowledged by email within a week of receipt. If no acknowledgement is received, it is your responsibility to follow up with Megan to ensure registration.

Email or mail Registration Form and/or Payment to:

**megan.ruehmann@gmail.com**

Megan Ruehmann

609 N Cooper St.

Silver City, NM 88061

**Note:** if making your payment through the NMOS website (nmbirds.org), we still request a registration form emailed or mailed to Megan. This will ensure we know names and categories of payments.

## **NMOS WEBSITE AND MEMBERSHIP UPDATES**

The NMOS website has been revised and we hope that all of you have had a chance to visit the website and see the new format ([www.nmbirds.org](http://www.nmbirds.org)). Nancy Hetrick, our webmaster, and the website team have worked hard to revise the site. Perhaps the most exciting news about the website is that you can now pay your dues via PayPal!

Speaking of dues, it is that time of year to renew your membership. You are all important parts of the network that serves to promote understanding and interest in the bird life of New Mexico. Whether you are someone who has previously shared and contributed to our state's collective understanding of the distribution and status of birds in the New Mexico, or if you are an active follower of this information for conservation or other purposes, you can be a vital contributor to this network. Please renew your membership and continue the commitment.

If you are on Facebook, please LIKE and FOLLOW the NMOS Facebook page. The NM Rare Bird Alerts are posted there as well as on the website.

\* \* \*

## **MEMBERSHIP DUES REMINDER**

Please take the opportunity now to pay your 2018 NMOS membership dues. To pay for membership, please download the membership form from our website ([www.nmbirds.org](http://www.nmbirds.org)), fill out, and mail to the following address, providing a check made out to "NMOS". New to 2018, you may also pay membership dues through our website using the PayPal Service. Save a stamp and pay online! Thank you!

New Mexico Ornithological Society  
P.O. Box 3068  
Albuquerque, NM 87190-3068

# NEW MEXICO ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

— *Founded 1962* —

The New Mexico Ornithological Society was organized to gather and disseminate accurate information concerning the bird life of New Mexico; to promote interest in and appreciation of the value of birds, both aesthetic and economic, to further effective conservation of the state's avifauna; to facilitate opportunity for acquaintance and fellowship among those interested in birds and nature; and to issue publications as a means of furthering these ends.

Membership and Subscriptions: Membership in the New Mexico Ornithological Society is open to anyone with an interest in birds. Memberships are for a calendar year and annual dues are payable 1 January. Dues are: Regular Membership \$20; Family \$30; Student \$10; Supporting \$50; Life \$500. Address for the New Mexico Ornithological Society: Post Office Box 3068, Albuquerque, NM 87190-3068.

## NMOS BULLETIN

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The *Bulletin* is published quarterly; subscription is by membership in NMOS. The *Bulletin* serves two primary purposes: (1) to publish articles of scientific merit concerning the distribution, abundance, status, behavior, and ecology of the avifauna of New Mexico and its contiguous regions; and (2) to publish news and announcements deemed of interest to the New Mexico ornithological community.

NMOS members are encouraged to submit articles and news. Articles received are subject to review and editing. Published articles are noted in major abstracting services. Please submit articles in double-spaced electronic format, such as a Microsoft Word document, by e-mail to the Editor (see inside front cover). Refer to recent issues of the *Bulletin* for examples of style. News items may be submitted to the Editor by way of e-mail.

**[www.nmbirds.org](http://www.nmbirds.org)**

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