

# For All Birds of a Feather

SAVE THE DATE - Join Us on Zoom July 16 for our next FCNP Speaker Series



CANDELARIA NATURE PRESERVE

JUN 25, 2026

## **Upcoming FCNP Zoom Speaker Series Introduces Steve Cox, Wildlife Biologist/Ecologist**

Thursday, July 16, 5pm MT. Join the Zoom Meeting with this [Link](#)

Steve Cox is a retired wildlife Biologist/Ecologist that spent over 40 years conducting presence/absence surveys. He is the President of the non-profit organization Rio Grande Bird Research, Inc. Over the last 41 years he and volunteers have been monitoring the diversity and abundance of birds in the middle Rio Grande Valley. Much of this research involves bird banding conducted primarily at the Rio Grande Nature Center State Park. Steve's consistent finger on the pulse of the migratory and resident bird populations at the Preserve, within the context of the Rio Grande Valley, will no doubt expand our perspectives on birds and the environment.



Hairy Woodpecker (*Leuconotopicus villosus*) photo taken June 3, 2026 by Sara Griffith at Candelaria Nature Preserve. She notes the young is being fed. eBird additional information, [here](#).

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## Bird Boxes for Bluebirds Come to CNP

Many of our declining bird species are cavity nesters, meaning these birds nest in holes within trees; these holes penetrate the bark into the softer parts of the tree. A suitable site for a cavity nester can develop in a tree through natural decay or damage that allows microorganisms to enter and hollow out a site in the tree. Additionally, the Woodpecker and Northern Flicker excavate cavities for their own nests that can be utilized by other cavity nesting birds. There is fierce competition for

these tree cavities which makes placing out bird boxes, *aka* bird houses, essential for cavity nesting birds in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV).

I had a conversation with Patty Phillips in May of this year, who was instrumental in developing the bird box program to install and monitor bird boxes designed for the preferences of the Western and Eastern Bluebirds. The Western Bluebird is considered a resident of Albuquerque while the Eastern Bluebird is an occasional breeder in the RGV. Patty noted the Western Bluebird has shown a declining population in the Albuquerque area, so they built 6 boxes adding to the already 2 existing boxes within CNP. Patty cleaned out the existing boxes and found the box near Field 1E on a post situated between elms was thick with 4 old nests and a small blue egg. Patty and others began monitoring and maintaining the bird boxes in March of 2026 and they visit the boxes each Monday.





The picture above shows Claude Vallieres and Patty Phillips in April monitoring one of the boxes. Early in May they found nesting material in this box from an Ash-throated Flycatcher.

While they have an established bird box program at the Rio Grande Nature Center, Patty would like to see the effort expand to the north to

places like Los Poblanos. If you are interested in helping with this effort, please contact Patty at [email](#).

Without the relatively recent establishment of the elms (post 1949) that line the ditches within CNP and the elm grove referred to as the Bosquecito, we wouldn't see the birds we do now. They eat the buds and the trees provide valuable shade in the afternoon. The bird boxes are placed within the shade of trees and painted white to further deflect the sun's heat.

There's much those of us living the the RGV can do to support the resident and migrating birds. Patty suggests providing a clean water source, bird food block, native plants, and keep the cats indoors. If you want a bird box in your own yard, placement matters, and be patient!

To further explore the birds at CNP, devoted birders provide their sightings and pictures on eBird. The following link takes you to the bird observations for CNP on eBird (see [Candelaria Nature Preserve](#)).



Photos from eBird. Left: Western Bluebird by Merri R (March 2026). Right: Eastern Bluebird by Sara Griffith (June 2026).

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