

Shorts



Blue Peaks annual Open House, Forum is March 21

ALAMOSA — Blue Peaks Developmental Services will be hosting its Annual Open House and Public Forum on Tuesday, March 21, from 1 to 3 p.m. at its Day Services Programming Center, 330 State Ave., Alamosa.

“We would like to invite the public to come and join us for some great conversation and insight into the programs we offer and the people that we serve,” organizers stated.

Proud Military Parents and Supporters meeting monthly

MONTE VISTA — Proud Military Parents and Supporters meets on the first Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at Nino’s Restaurant in Monte Vista. The meeting is open to the public.

The group supports young Valley military personnel by doing Send-Off Ceremonies when they leave for boot camp and sending care packages during the holiday season.

Delayed federal directive drives county deadline

BY PATRICK SHEA
SAGUACHE — Representing Senator Michael Bennet during a Saguache County Commissioners working meeting on Feb. 28, Erin Minks notified the board of a March 10 deadline to make requests for “potential projects that you might want to submit.”

Grant cycles and funding opportunities come and go, but Minks realized that giving notice eight working days from a deadline is not reasonable.

“No. It’s not a good time. This is

a quick turnaround process,” Minks explained, noting that they opened the electronic portal in mid-February. Minks mentioned a webinar on the request process through Senator John Hickenlooper’s office a few hours later in the day.

“We’re teaming up on most of these” initiatives, Minks explained. “The two senate offices are the ones submitting requests.” Minks said she was not aware if congressional representatives were submitting earmark requests.

Minks suggested housing projects, as

well as initiatives in the “ag and food space.” She also emphasized projects that already have momentum with engineering drawings and completed studies. Although the North 90 project in Center did not come up, it meets the criteria for accessing federal funds (as well as some state funds, Minks clarified).

Although “jail” echoed from the board table at the first mention of the request process, Minks suggested more “shovel-ready” projects instead (as well as calling it a “justice center” and

cooperating with other jurisdictions).

Commissioner Tom McCracken asked about constructing an evacuation route south of Crestone and the Baca Grande Property Owners Association area. Minks mentioned other funding possibilities through the Colorado Department of Transportation for that project. Minks also suggested other funding avenues to diversify options.

“It’s kind of a gamble when you apply through us.” Minks stated. “You don’t know if you will get funding until
Please see DEADLINE on Page 7A

Staff Appreciation Week concludes at Center Schools

BY PATRICK SHEA

CENTER — After students enjoyed special presentations on Feb. 23, the Recruitment and Retention Team at Center Schools pampered staff on Feb. 24 to polish off Staff Appreciation Week.

Following breakfast at 8 o’clock, staff had time to catch up with each other, with planning for parent-teacher conferences, and without students on campus. Players jumped into Pickleball games in the gym while others received chair massages. Some sought both. Some decided to visit the chiropractor on-site.

The cafeteria featured catered lunch from the Colorado Grille from Del Norte, and staff enjoyed massages and nail pampering in the decorated

Please see STAFF on Page 7A

Topping off Staff Appreciation Week for Center Schools employees, more than a dozen men and women took advantage of free haircuts from Edgar Borunda (left) and Horacio Naranjo (also known as ‘Stretch’ of Stretch’s Cuts Barbershop in Monte Vista).



Photo by Patrick Shea

Frees awarded ‘Emergency Manager of the Year’ for SLV



CONTRIBUTED

SAGUACHE — The Saguache County Board of Commissioners, on behalf of the Colorado Emergency Management Association (CEMA), recently presented David Frees with the 2022 “Emergency Manager of the Year Award” for the San Luis Valley region. This award and acknowledgment are important as support came from all of his peers and others that have worked with Frees.

Frees has served as the Saguache County Office of Emergency Management’s Deputy Director since 2020. In that time, Frees drastically improved the emergency

David Frees (left) accepts the ‘Emergency Manager of the Year Award’ from Saguache County Board Chair, Tom McCracken, presented on behalf of the Colorado Emergency Management Association.

Courtesy photo

management program for Saguache County and helped coordinate one of the most robust emergency management programs in the region, officials stated.

The Colorado Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management’s Field Manager, David Osborn, said, “Mr. Frees is a team player and robust community advocate. Saguache County was the new host for the Live Nation Multi-day Music Festival which included Headline Music Performers. This event was the single largest pre-planned incident ever experienced within the six-county San Luis Valley Region. Because of Mr. Frees’ intimate involvement in the planning and operational response to this event, we enjoyed excellent situational awareness that contributed significantly to the lessons learned and accomplishments. We would like to thank Mr. Frees
Please see FREES on Page 2A

SLV REC CEO Loren Howard retires

CONTRIBUTED

MONTE VISTA — “Did I do the right thing?” Going home at the end of the day, I ask myself that question. ‘Did I do the right thing for our cooperative, the employees and 90 percent of our members?’ If I can answer yes to that question, then I sleep well at night,” Loren Howard stated when commenting on his 11 years as CEO of San Luis Valley Rural Electric Cooperative (REC). Howard retires in March, and Eric Eriksen will take over all duties as Chief Executive Officer on March 13. Howard will stay on board to the end of March to help foster a smooth transition for Eriksen and REC employees.

Coming to REC from Holland Board of Public Works (Holland, Mich.) in November 2011, Howard was looking forward to having “many new professional challenges and opportunities.” He had previously served 22 years in the United States Coast Guard and worked at Packaging Corporation of America, Century Boat Company, and Colorado Department of Transportation. He earned a bachelor’s in Mechanical Engineering and a master’s in Business Administration in his many academic pursuits. He is also a registered professional engineer in Colorado.

Howard has seen many industry changes since starting in the business

more than 40 years ago. The technical (back-end) of the electric system is completely different, due to wholesale deregulation and the creation of regional transmission organizations (RTO) and independent system operators (ISO). In addition, “renewable energy is transforming the industry; wind and solar are changing where power is from,” he stated.

On a more local level, Howard does not see huge changes coming for the electric cooperative.

“We’re the wires to your house; we’re the end-user provider. I don’t see the fundamentals of our business changing even with solar on your house and someday the implementation of

microgrids. No technology will change the wires and poles to your house. I do think demand will change, but the basics will not.”

Throughout Howard’s history of being at REC, one of the accomplishments he is most proud of is summed up in one word: Ciello. His pride for REC’s broadband division is very evident in the way he talks of it. “I’ve been around broadband since 1993. When REC’s Board of Directors wanted to bring it to the Valley, I said, ‘ok, let’s go.’ We brought in someone to do a feasibility study—marketing, engineering and financials, and everything looked okay. Then we did a second round of market and financial studies, and we went for
Please see RETIRE on Page 7A



Ortega Middle School targeted by hoax active shooter call

By PRISCILLA WAGGONER

ALAMOSA — For the second time in the school year, Alamosa School District was the target of an anonymous caller saying that there was an armed individual on the grounds of one of the schools. The call was received at 8:24 a.m. on Wednesday morning, less than an hour after schools had started in the district. According to the Alamosa Police Department (APD), the caller stated someone “was walking into Ortega Middle School with an AR style rifle.”

Other schools in the district were put “on security hold,” which meant all entrances were locked.

Alamosa Police Chief Ken Anderson says that law enforcement was on school grounds in less than a minute, something that Amy Ortega, principal of Ortega Middle School, confirmed.

“We got the call from dispatch that we needed to lock down,” she says. “Normally, it would be us calling for an emergency, so that was kind of a cue that this might be a hoax, but we still take all these situations very seriously.”

The school immediately went into lockdown, Ortega says, and “our kids were great. We had some substitutes working and the kids actually led the way. They knew what to do and where to go and they told the sub to turn off the lights. They were very calm. Sadly, it’s a way of life now. We know what to do, which is good. But it makes you question this world we’re living in right now.”

Despite it being “personally scary,” Ortega says that administrative staff and the security monitor were immediately in the hallways, checking doors to make sure they’re locked, that all teachers got the notice and that there were no students in the bathrooms.

“The police were here in less than a minute,” Ortega says, “and there were probably 20 of them that came into the school. Officers with Alamosa Police Department, the sheriff’s department, Colorado State Patrol, Colorado Parks and Wildlife — every agency that was in the area had somebody at our school and they were just great. I can’t say enough good things about them.”

Ortega also talked about activating their “red bag system,” an investment the school district recently made to facilitate effective communication in a crisis.

As Ortega describes it, the “red bag” system was activated by the team located nearby, allowing teachers — including substitutes — to log in and be reminded of what they are to do.

The log in process also allows teachers to communicate back with the team where, via a dashboard, both the team and administration can see which teachers and students are located where and how many people are in each location.

Due to information, they had obtained from the incident earlier in the year, APD was able to quickly assess the situation and determine it was a hoax.

“They told us ‘the grounds were clear’ and we were able to lift the lockdown,” Ortega says.

Administrative staff were then accompanied by police officers as they walked through the building, checking in on each classroom.

“We wanted to answer any questions the kids had and to reassure them, if we needed to. But the kids were very calm. They just really wanted to know why we went into lockdown,” Ortega said.

Via a separate communication process, parents had been notified of the lockdown almost immediately. Ortega says that “a few kids had parents who came and picked them up from school,” but it was only a few. “We totally understand parents picking up their kids. But so, few kids being picked up tells me that the parents have confidence in our system and feel their kids are safe at school.”

She also says that, as of Thursday, there was no noticeable increase in the number of students who did not come to school.

When asked about the overall impact on students, Ortega says that a lot of her students have had trauma in their lives before and awareness of that guides many of the decisions made by the district to help kids feel safe and valued and cared for at school as part of the “I Love You Guys” protocol — a safety program designed to equip and train schools to handle a variety of crises.

She also has three counselors on staff available to speak with anyone who might feel the need.

“The kids were scared. I know that. Their heart rate picks up, just like it does with all of us. But it helps for them to know what to do and to understand why they’re doing what they’re doing,” Ortega said.

And the teachers? “You can’t work in this field anymore without this being on your mind. But what parents need to know is that our teachers put themselves between the kids and that classroom door. The minute they hear someone — and they may not be sure who it is — the kids are hidden and the first person you see is the teacher. It’s them saying, ‘if someone comes in here, they have to get through me to get to the kids,’” Ortega said.

As far as her own stress level she says, “It’s very stressful. It is. But we feel very safe in our partnership with the police. That’s reassuring, and I really can’t praise them enough. I know that they’re coming, and we just need to get into lockdown and wait for them to get here.”

When asked about follow-up on the caller, APD Chief Anderson says, “The call came into the administrative line at the Colorado State Patrol, which isn’t a recorded line. But we have the phone number, and we’re working with local, state, and federal agencies to pin down that spoofed line.”

According to the Federal Communications Commission, a “spoofed line” or “spoofing” is when a caller deliberately falsifies the information transmitted to a caller ID display as a means of disguising their identity. Spoofing makes it appear that an incoming call is coming from a local number when it can be from another part of the country or another part of the world.

Ten other school districts across the state reported similar calls on Wednesday, including Aspen, Boulder, Brighten, Cañon City, Carbondale, Durango, Englewood, Estes Park, Glenwood Springs, and Gilpin, prompting lockdowns in some districts and evacuations in others. But, according to ASD Assistant Superintendent Luis Murillo, “We are the only district in Colorado who has had to handle it twice.”

OBITUARY

Ronnie W. Zumwalt Sr.

Ron was born to his parents Charles Alexander and Mildred Pearl Zumwalt on Nov. 28, 1945, in Silver City, N.M. Joining his brother Charles Ervin and sister Betty Bell. Ron grew up in Silver City, graduating from high school there.

In 1966 he moved to Kingman, Ariz., and went to work for Duval Corporation at the Mineral Park Mine. Ron was proud to be a miner and worked hard to ensure the safety of the employees in his charge. He had a distinguished career as a Safety Manager for Battle Mountain Gold Company in Nevada and Colorado.

In 1968 Ron met and married the love of his life Dehelia Sue Judson, Dee Zumwalt. In 1969 their only child, a son Ron Jr., was born. Ron’s job in mining took them to Battle Mountain, Nev., and eventually Fort Garland, Colo., where they retired in the San Luis Valley. Dad said he fell in love with the Valley the first time he saw it just like Mom.

Ron and Dee spent 54 years together traveling the west looking for antiques and other treasures that sparked their interest. They shared a love that few will ever know.



Ron passed away at home surrounded by his loving family on Feb. 22, 2023.

Ron was preceded in death by his parents and brother and sister.

He is survived by his loving wife and soulmate of 54 years Dee of Monte Vista, Colo.; his son Ron Jr. and his wife Tonya of Tucson, Ariz.; two grandsons Cedric of Forest Grove, Ore., and Trevor of Tucson, Ariz.; he is also survived by two nephews and two nieces.

Per Ron’s wishes there will be no memorial service. To express condolences, please visit www.rogersfunerals.com.

Rogers Family Mortuary in Monte Vista is in care of the arrangements.

FREES

Continued from Page 1A

for his professionalism, leadership, and strong emergency management support.”

Last year, Frees was also awarded the Colorado state-wide “Mike Gelski Award for Outstanding Volunteer Achievement” by CEMA.

Frees joined the Villa Grove-Bonanza Volunteer Fire Department in 2009 and currently serves as Captain and Department Training Officer. Frees has been a Team Leader and Technical Rope Rescue Technician with the Saguache County Search and Rescue Team since 2015. He has also been an Emergency Medical Technician, with the Northern Saguache County Ambulance District, since 2016. Frees graduated cum laude from Regis University of Denver with a bachelor’s in Biology/Chemistry.

He also holds a master’s in Zoology; Lake and Stream Ecology from Arizona State University.

When Frees is not in a helicopter, an ambulance, or a firetruck, you can find him tending to the land at Thirsty Peak Ranch.

Frees’ contributions to his community and the field of emergency management have become a model for preparedness, response, and recovery efforts throughout Saguache County and the entire San Luis Valley region, officials stated.

Babysitter arrested in death of 23-month-old child in Conejos County

STAFF REPORT

CONEJOS COUNTY — A babysitter, identified as Denise Cordova, 47, was arrested on Friday, Feb. 24, by the Conejos County Sheriff’s Office in connection with the death of a 23-month-old child.

According to a Friday late-night press release from the Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI), the child was transported to a local hospital on Tuesday, Jan. 31, with life-threatening injuries. The child died.

The Conejos County Sheriff’s

Office launched an investigation with assistance from CBI. That investigation revealed that the child was in Cordova’s care at the time of the incident.

Due to the ongoing nature of the investigation, no additional information is available at this time.

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OPINION & EDITORIAL

Scama-a-rama

Well, this week marks about 4 weeks since Miss Trixie left me and let me tell you one thing, I am getting darned tired of my own cooking to say the least. Now to all of you out there that smiled to yourself upon hearing this news and had always wondered how that sweet innocent flower of a woman had put up with Ol' Dutch this long, she did not run off forever but is taking care of her father who fell ill. I hated to have to bring that spoiler to all of you who had long expected such a breakup between a long time liberal and a staunch conservative, but I think she is stuck with me come hell or high water now.

Her absence and the cold and rainy weather having occurred all at the same time coupled with the television remote failing has caused Ol' Dutch to spend even more time perusing the pages of the internet. And let me tell you one thing, there are more scams than ever going on out there for the unsuspecting and innocent. Not one of you out there cannot relate to having one of your accounts compromised if for no other reason than being friends with someone who was careless with their own information out on the web.

Once some scammer gets their information then everyone, they had ever known in this, and past lives is suddenly subject to untold numbers of offers and other activities from someplace in deep dark Africa or India.

Just this past week Ol' Dutch got the sweetest note from a pretty girl after I had posted on a Christian site. I should have known better than to respond as there were some tell-tale markers that even I should have caught. The first being that I looked like a nice guy and the second that I was handsome and fun loving. Now while I have been accused of being nice once in a while and especially during hunting season, I never considered myself to be much of a looker to which all of you can probably say, Amen.

But regardless I soon was in a conversation with a nurse from Minnesota that is currently in school in Ghana. Now for those of you that do not know exactly where Ghana is, it is over there on the big bump of the African continent between Kenya and Liberia. Now I have no doubt that there are some nice people in those places over there, but there seems to be an inordinate amount of them involved in trying to get lonely old people to send them money. It must work a good share of the time as they keep trying new scams almost daily to lure us into a sense of trust with them.



Trout Republic
by Kevin Kirkpatrick

Now Ol' Dutch was not born yesterday and pretty much figured out from the get-go that Anna from Ghana was most likely a 53-year-old fat bald guy on a computer pretending to be my friend. But to be honest with you, I don't need more friends now as the ones I have were hard enough to find and fool into being such.

I do find it interesting all the scams out there and not a day goes by that I do not get at least 10 emails that are just leaders for scams. You know the kind. They start out with a vague mention of something you were looking at online or promise a free meal at Arby's or Chick Fil A. My sister falls for these all the time on Facebook and one of many will mention that Joe Smoe won a new camper, but he is only 17 and cannot be awarded the prize. And all you have to do is like the page and you can have the camper. Or boat, or car, or house or you name it.

What I find is probably the funniest of all is that normally cautious people will answer such rubbish then next week send out a mass mailing stating that their accounts have been compromised and not to accept any friend requests from them. Seriously?

So far-knock on wood- Ol' Dutch has not been hacked personally but I am sure with the advanced techniques employed by these scam artists, everyone will sooner or later.

My advice to you today is to change your passwords often and wear a disguise with a beard and glasses which will look a tad strange on my lady friends but may just do the trick and fool those old scammers good.

Kevin Kirkpatrick and his Yorkie, Cooper, fish, hunt, ATV, or hike daily. His email is Kevin@TroutRepublic.com. Additional news can be found at www.troutrepublic.com or on Twitter at TroutRepublic.



LETTER

More information on Saguache Road cuts

Editor,

This letter is in response to the article titled "US Highway 285 Road Cut Questions Answered." The article includes two nice photos, but unfortunately, there is a fair amount of misinformation.

By the late 1860s, the "old Del Norte Road" led in a fairly straight northeasterly direction from Del Norte to Milton (an early town about a mile southeast of Saguache) passing through La Garita along the way. After reaching Milton, the road turned north and then west reaching Saguache on the east end. This was the main route between Del Norte and Saguache for at least 50 years. Even after the "Gunbarrel" was constructed in the early 1900s and mostly finished by 1919, it stopped three and a half miles south of Saguache. Travelers going to Saguache from the south still had to utilize the old road for those last few miles into town. For many decades, travelers did "go around on flat ground" instead of going over, or

through, the hills.

Many townspeople decided after several years of use of the "new" Gunbarrel (Highway 15 at that time, not Highway 285) that they wanted a straight route from the Gunbarrel directly into town. By then Milton had long been an abandoned ghost town. The blasting of the hills began in October 1931 and the project was completed in 1932, leaving the roller coaster road cuts. The rolling hills remained until 1968 (not 1954) when the road cuts were widened and leveled.

The article statement that this new road gave "a straight shot to the junction of US 285 and Colorado Highway 114 without going through the streets of Saguache" sounds like the new highway bypassed Saguache altogether. The new road followed 8th Street north and south and then turned onto Gunnison Avenue (east-west). This does not avoid going through the town's streets but divides it in half, east to west.

No matter where a highway route might be put near Saguache, whether through the cuts or around on another path, there are deer and other wildlife moving through the entire area and crossing the roads. Currently, deer wander into town and surrounding fields from all directions. And if the highway were to go around the hills rather than through the present cuts, there would be a blind corner where drivers could not see oncoming traffic. The current route is the safest.

I am certain that the Saguache townspeople who originally promoted the road cuts would never have dreamed that over 90 years later, anyone would be confused and would question or "criticize" their decision. History matters and knowledge of it is important. Often the history of a location and existing conditions affect the decisions made. There are many similar road cuts on highways throughout Colorado. Take a look.

*Bill Hazard
Saguache*

LETTERS POLICY

Letters are welcome and encouraged. They should be fewer than 300 words, unless arranged beforehand with the editor, and they are subject to editing for length and clarity.

All letters must be signed by the author and include a phone number and address where the author can be reached (these are not for

publication). Letters forwarded from other organizations or sent to staff and not for print must be designated as such. Letters over 300 words and without contact information will be returned to the sender or discarded.

We will accept one letter per person, per subject, per four issues. We reserve the right to reject letters for reasons we

believe are appropriate. Please send letters to Letter to the Editor c/o Valley Publishing, PO Box 607, Monte Vista, CO 81144 or e-mail to bwilliams@valleypublishinginc.com (Attention: Letter to the Editor). Deadline for letters is 5 p.m. Friday.

Political letters may be limited due to space constraints.

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SPORTS

San Luis Valley basketball results

By **KEN HAMRICK**

SAN LUIS VALLEY — Several teams in the San Luis Valley were in district tournament action on Saturday at venues across the area.

Class 3A Intermountain District Tournament

LA JARA — Both Centauri High School basketball teams won their respective Class 3A Intermountain District championship games Saturday at the CHS gym.

The Falcon boys team defeated Bayfield 56-37 in its championship game. Leading Centauri in scoring was Chaz Holman with 14 points, followed by Troy Sowards with 10.

The Lady Falcons were victorious over Ignacio by a score of 46-30. Centauri led 12-2 after the first quarter and they extended the lead to 29-12 at halftime.

The Lady Bobcats pulled to within 37-22 after the third quarter, but Centauri outscored Ignacio in the fourth quarter 9-8. Abbey Smith led the Lady Falcons with 24 points, followed by Amaya Garcia with 11.

In the third-place games, the Ignacio

boys were victorious over Montezuma-Cortez 49-37, and the Crested Butte girls defeated Montezuma-Cortez 45-19.

Class 2A District 1 Tournament

DEL NORTE — The Sanford High School boys basketball team, and the Del Norte girls basketball team were victorious in their respective Class 2A District 1 Tournament games Saturday at the Del Norte gym.

The Sanford boys defeated Monte Vista by a score of 45-36. The Pirates took a 9-5 lead after the first quarter, but the Mustangs took a 20-12 advantage at halftime. Sanford increased the lead to 30-21 after the third quarter, and both teams scored 15 points in the fourth quarter.

Individual statistics were unavailable for either team.

The Del Norte girls defeated Sanford 32-25. The Lady Mustangs led 13-7 after the first period, but the Lady Tigers cut the lead to 15-13 at halftime. The lead was reduced to 22-21 after the third period, and Del Norte outscored Sanford in the fourth quarter 11-3.

Like the boys game, individual statistics were unavailable.



Photos courtesy Centauri Booster Club

The Centauri High School basketball teams won their respective Class 3A Intermountain District Tournament on Saturday at the CHS gym. The boys team (top) defeated Bayfield 56-37, and the girls (bottom) defeated Ignacio 46-30.

Class 1A District 6 Tournament

DEL NORTE — Sangre de Cristo and Sierra Grande met each other in

the Class 1A District 6 Tournament championship games Saturday at the Del Norte gym.

Sierra Grande won the boys championship by a score of 66-34. The Panthers led 20-14 after the first quarter, 42-21 at halftime, and 58-29 after the third quarter.

Four Panthers scored in double figures. Brian Ontiveros led the way with 27 points, followed by Manuel Miranda with 11, and Tyler Kester and Jady Martinez both with 10.

Kaiden Smit led the Thunderbirds with 16 points.

Sangre de Cristo won the girls championship 54-41. The Lady Thunderbirds led 11-4 after the first quarter, 27-15 at halftime, and 44-23 after the third quarter. The Lady Panthers attempted a comeback as they outscored Sangre 18-10 but could come no closer.

Mariana Loya was Sierra Grande's top scorer with 23 points. Individual statistics for Sangre were unavailable.



San Luis Valley Scoreboard Basketball 2022-2023

BOYS Class 1A

Sangre de Cristo 57	Creede 43
Moffat 71	Antonito 41
Sierra Grande 48	Moffat 44
Sangre de Cristo 45	Centennial 35
Championship--Sierra Grande 66	Sangre de Cristo 34

Class 2A

Monte Vista 55	Cotopaxi 45
Sanford 52	Sargent 14
Del Norte 69	Center 38
Monte Vista 43	Custer County 41
Sanford 65	Del Norte 43
Championship--Sanford 45	Monte Vista 36

Class 3A

Centauri 81	Ignacio 26
Centauri 56	Bayfield 37
Class 4A State Tournament	
Alamosa 56	Basalt 37
Alamosa 64	Peak to Peak 48

GIRLS Class 1A

Creede 55	Lake City 25
Centennial 68	Antonito 38
Sierra Grande 61	Moffat 26
Sangre de Cristo 75	Creede 20
Sierra Grande 54	Centennial 34
Championship--Sangre de Cristo 54	Sierra Grande 41

Class 2A

Del Norte 46	Cotopaxi 23
Sanford 48	Custer County 17
Center 26	Sargent 15
Monte Vista 41	Trinidad 26
Sanford 60	Center 25
Del Norte 34	Monte Vista 28
Championship--Del Norte 32	Sanford 25

Class 3A

Centauri 69	Montezuma-Cortez 18
Championship--Centauri 46	Ignacio 30
Class 4A State Tournament	
Severence 46	Alamosa 41

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Migrating sandhill cranes arrive in San Luis Valley

40th year of viewing festival planned in Monte Vista

CONTRIBUTED
MONTE VISTA — As the Monte Vista Crane Festival prepares for its 40th year, Colorado Parks and Wildlife staff and volunteers will be assisting visitors to the event as it returns to a full in-person format.

The highlight of the three-day festival, to be held this year from March 10-12, is the spectacle of more than 20,000 greater sandhill cranes making their annual spring migration and stopping over in Southern Colorado as they transition from winter habitat to breeding range in the north.

“This is one of the great wildlife migrations in the country that people can actually get out and see,” said CPW Education and Volunteer Coordinator Catherine Brons. “The Monte Vista Crane Festival is an exciting event that CPW and our wonderful volunteers take pride in being a part of, and we love this chance to reunite with some

volunteers who have assisted with this for decades.”

Those interested in attending official event sites to see the sandhill cranes and other bird species can reserve tickets at <https://mvcranefest.org>. CPW staff and volunteers will support outdoor scope sites and be on hand to help answer questions.

CPW will also host a booth at the Outcalt Event and Conference at SLV Ski Hi Complex in Monte Vista throughout the event to provide additional information and learning opportunities.

Attendees may also attend a talk from 1-2 p.m. Saturday, March 11, regarding elk on the San Luis Valley refuge complex. The \$5 presentation will be led by Doug Ouren, the Elk Distribution and Dispersal Coordinator for CPW’s Habitat Partnership Program. Tickets for speaker events at the Monte Vista Crane Festival are available online.

“We are thrilled to see this event return to full in-person activities and are looking forward to engaging with the public to provide educational opportunities along with all of the festival’s partners,” Brons said.

Cranes are migratory birds, and



Courtesy photos

The Monte Vista Crane Festival prepares for its 40th year. The highlight of the three-day festival, to be held this year from March 10-12, is the spectacle of more than 20,000 greater sandhill cranes making their annual spring migration and stopping over in Southern Colorado as they transition from winter habitat to breeding range in the north.

the Rocky Mountain population of greater sandhill cranes is estimated at roughly 20,000. Much of the population spends its winter in nesting grounds south in New Mexico, Arizona and Mexico and will migrate north in the spring to summer breeding grounds in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming.

Cranes are among the oldest living species on the planet, with fossil records dating back 9 million years. The birds that migrate through Colorado are the largest of the North American sandhill crane subspecies standing 4-feet tall with a wingspan of up to 7 feet and weighing in at 11 pounds. Besides their imposing size, the birds issue a continuous and distinctive call.

The Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge sees thousands of sandhill cranes each day during this time of year. The Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge will be open one hour before sunrise and one hour after sunrise for crane viewing. Cranes may also be viewed at the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge southeast of Alamosa and at CPW’s Rio Grande, Higel and Russell Lakes State Wildlife Areas. CPW asks the public to please observe the seasonal closures at the State Wildlife Areas.

Cranes are most active at dusk and dawn when they move from nighttime roosting areas to fields where they feed. People attending the crane festival’s viewing sites

may also see eagles, owls, turkeys and a variety of other raptors and waterfowl.

Birdwatchers should be cautious when parking, getting out of vehicles and walking along roads. View birds from a distance with binoculars and spotting scopes and observe trail signs and closure notices.

Those who attend the Monte Vista Crane Festival are encouraged to dress warmly with winter temperatures and wind always expected.

For more information on the Monte Vista Crane Festival, go to <https://mvcranefest.org/festival/>; or www.fws.gov/refuge/Monte_Vista. For more information on State Wildlife Areas in the San Luis Valley, go to: <https://cpw.state.co.us/placestogo>.



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Body of Antonito resident Gray recovered from an avalanche

STAFF REPORT

LA MANGA — Conejos County Sheriff Garth Crowther confirmed the body of Kevin Gray was recovered at 11:30 a.m. on Monday, Feb. 27, from the avalanche that occurred near La Manga Pass on Saturday, Feb. 25.

About 80 people, comprised of professional search and rescue teams and local residents had been searching for Antonito resident Gray, 45, a snowmobiler buried in the avalanche.

In a press release, the Conejos County Sheriff's Office stated, "We

send our deepest condolences to the Gray family and their friends during this difficult time.

"Special thanks go out to the search and rescue teams out of Alamosa County, Mineral County, Rio Grande County, the Colorado State Search and Rescue Team, Forest Service, Wolf Creek Dog Teams, Classic Air, Emergency Management Services, and to all of the community members who dedicated their time to help with the search and rescue mission."

Regarding those efforts, Crowther

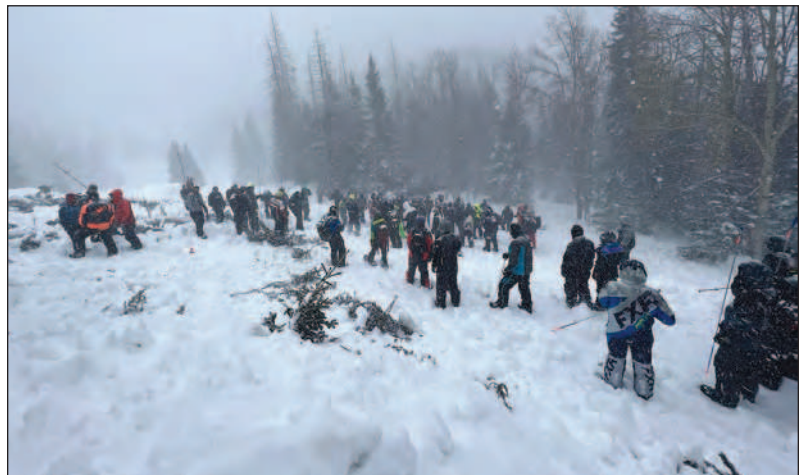
told the Valley Courier, "There is no better place than Costilla County and the San Luis Valley; we had all these people out on the mountain searching."

According to the Colorado Avalanche Information Center, the avalanche happened at an elevation of 10,600 feet on a 35-degree southeast-facing slope. This winter, there have been seven avalanche-related fatalities in Colorado, including three this weekend in the southwest.

On Feb. 25, at approximately 2:30 p.m., the Conejos County Sheriff's Office received an S.O.S notification of an avalanche with people buried. Using coordinates from the S.O.S signal, the location was determined to be near the Red Lake Trail on Cumbres Pass. Sheriff's office personnel responded to the area and set up a command post on Colorado Highway 17.

A medical helicopter was stationed at the command post. Sheriff's office personnel responded to the scene using a snowcat and search and rescue members on snowmobiles.

Information gathered at the command post determined there was a group of people in the back country snowmobiling when the avalanche occurred. Gray was buried by the avalanche and was unable to escape. Probing and rescue attempts by responders were performed until after dark but were unsuccessful in finding



Courtesy photos

In this Facebook photo, search, and rescuers probe the avalanche for Kevin Gray of Antonito who died in the Feb. 25 avalanche near La Manga Pass.



The avalanche that occurred on Feb. 25 was at an elevation of 10,600 feet and is located near La Manga Pass in the San Juan Mountains. Photo courtesy Colorado Avalanche Information Center.

the missing snowmobiler.

The sheriff's office, search and rescue members, family, and volunteers returned to the scene Sunday morning. A massive effort by rescuers along with search dogs and avalanche specialists were deployed to the area to assist. The search continued into the afternoon until blizzard conditions stopped the operation.

Efforts continued Monday, Feb. 27, until the body was found.

"The Conejos County Sheriff's Office would like to thank the community for the outpouring of support that has been received since Saturday. The time and resources the community donated made a tremendous difference during the long

days of the search. From the food and drinks donated to those searching, the equipment provided to help with the search, and all of the time donated, this would not have been possible without the generosity of the community," according to the sheriff's office press release.

Each year there are between six and 12 avalanche fatalities in Colorado. Also, on Feb. 25, two backcountry skiers died near Vallecito Reservoir in La Plata County.

Sheriff Crowther said there is a significant snowstorm predicted for the mountains in the next several days, and he advised those heading to the outdoors "be careful" and to buy and wear an avalanche beacon.

SAGUACHE COUNTY SHERIFF'S REPORT

SAGUACHE COUNTY — The following information was provided by the Saguache County Sheriff's Office for the period between Feb. 21 and Feb. 25, 2023.

Sheriff staff monitored a controlled burn in Villa Grove, crashes near Hooper and north of La Garita, loose livestock east of Moffat, and an animal problem in Center. They also conducted a search and rescue operation west of Saguache.

Staff did not report issuing traffic citations, although deputies made 23

traffic stops and responded to two separate car crashes. They also reported no welfare checks. Two alarms, agency and motorist assistance, ambulance rides from Saguache and Moffat, and civil disputes in Crestone required attention.

In addition to patrolling Saguache four times, deputies responded to threatening behavior in Villa Grove, suspicious activity in Saguache, and a traffic complaint in Crestone. They also filed one REDDI report (Report Every Drunk Driver Immediately).

ARRESTS

• A 42-year-old Hooper woman was arrested and held on \$1,000 bail for failing to appear in Saguache County Court.

• A 67-year-old Center man was arrested and held on \$1,000 bail for failing twice to appear in Saguache County Court.

• A 43-year-old Crestone man was arrested and held on \$63,500 bail for 10 charges (five in Alamosa and Chaffee Counties and five in Saguache County).

Discover How to Be Joy-filled Every Day

Back in the 1970s, I used to bowl on Friday nights. I remember one night when I wasn't doing very well and I heard the Lord speak to my heart, "Ask Me to help you bowl." I immediately thought, "I can't ask You to help me bowl!" But I went ahead and prayed, "Okay, Lord, please help me bowl better." And He did!

I remember this experience so clearly because it was a great eye-opener that made me realize God cares about every part of our lives, and He wants to be involved in everything we do.

John 10:10 (AMP) says, "The thief comes only in order to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance [to the full, till it overflows]." Jesus died so we can have life—not just a barely-get-by, "I'm hanging on till Jesus comes back" existence.

God wants each of us to have a deep, intimate, personal relationship with Him so we can enjoy our everyday lives and learn how to "do life" with Him. This means we do every single thing in our daily life with and for God. And when we realize we are just as close to Him at home doing laundry or at the grocery store as we are at church or during our time in prayer, then we are serving Him in everything we do.

It's All About Balance

The first several years I was in ministry, I didn't enjoy it. I worked too much and was too concerned about what others thought about me. I had a tendency to be this way because growing up, it seemed that the more I worked and the more I accomplished, the happier people were with me. Over time I became a first-rate workaholic.

It took me awhile to realize that "all work and no play" is not healthy, and

God wants me to have a life I could enjoy. This meant I had to learn how to balance my priorities so that my relationship with God is always first, and then everything else follows. This includes my relationships with family and friends, along with work and taking time to relax.

It's not wrong to work hard, and I like to work. But if I don't make time to rest and just have fun, it won't take long for me to get out of balance and lose my joy.

Turn the Ordinary into the Extraordinary

So much of life can become a mundane routine that we only really enjoy it when we do something out of the ordinary, like go on vacation, go to a special event or do something exciting, like shop for a new dress. And many people have a "working for the weekend" mentality. But this type of enjoyment is based on emotional excitement, not the joy God gives.

The joy of the Lord is much greater than simply feeling happy. It brings peace and contentment to your soul, even when your circumstances are difficult and it doesn't make any sense. Nehemiah 8:10 says, "The joy of the Lord is your strength."

This kind of joy makes the Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday routine enjoyable. And since most of life is Monday through Friday, we need to enjoy it!

The World Can't Give It to You

In John 15:11 (NIV), Jesus says, "I have told you this so that your joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." The Amplified Bible, Classic Edition translation says "that your joy and gladness may be of full measure and complete and overflowing." In the ten verses leading



up to this one, Jesus is talking about abiding in Him, because that's the key to living with His joy.

Abiding means "to live, dwell and remain in"; it's not just visiting once a week at church. It's having a personal relationship with Christ, being one with Him and doing life together. The truth is apart from Jesus, we can do nothing of real value, but with Him, we can bear much good fruit (John 15:5).

God wants to abide with you every day, all throughout the day. He doesn't just want you to seek Him when you go to church or when you're desperate. His desire is to have a personal relationship with you, so you can experience His presence in everything you do. That's when your everyday life is truly enjoyable!

For more on this topic, order Joyce's four-teaching resource *The Gift of Everyday Joy*. You can also contact us to receive our free magazine, *Enjoying Everyday Life*, by calling (800) 727-9673 or visiting www.joycemeyer.org.

Joyce Meyer is a New York Times bestselling author and founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries, Inc. She has authored more than 140 books, including BATTLEFIELD OF THE MIND and LOVING PEOPLE WHO ARE HARD TO LOVE (FaithWords). She hosts the Enjoying Everyday Life radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide. For more information, visit www.joycemeyer.org.

Please note: The views and opinions expressed throughout this publication and/or website are those of the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Joyce Meyer Ministries.

ATTENTION GRADUATING HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

The Saguache County Board of County Commissioners are accepting scholarship applications for graduating seniors who will be graduating high school in 2023. Commissioners will be awarding graduating seniors' college scholarships that will be paid through the Marijuana Excise Tax funds. Scholarships may be used at a trade school, college or university but you must reside in Saguache County to apply and possibly receive scholarship funds. Applications are due by April 14, 2023 and are available through our website at www.saguachecounty.colorado.gov to download the application or by contacting Wendi Maez at 719-655-2231 or by email at wmaez@saguachecounty-co.gov.

No. 1662 published in the Center Post Dispatch, Thursday, February 9, 16, 23, March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 and April 6, 2023.

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DEADLINE

Congress functions enough to pass a budget.”

Noting the tight deadline, Minks said, “We didn’t pick this time.” The Senate Appropriations Committee directed members to get projects within the next two weeks.

Minks thanked the commissioners for coming to the 2023 Farm Bill listening sessions.

“You guys provided really valuable feedback,” Minks said. “We’re building the Farm Bill now.”

Throughout March they are meeting and introducing “marker bills,” Minks added. One proposal, according to Minks, addressed concerns expressed by Saguache County ranchers during the listening sessions.

Under current law, ranchers with permits on fire-damaged land are not eligible for compensation from the Farm Service Agency for lost forage. The proposed addition would provide coverage for affected public lands permittees. Although the existing farm bill remains in effect until New Year’s Eve, March is the month for ironing out details in the 2023 version.

At the state capital in Denver, another

Continued from Page 1A — legislative effort might also help San Luis Valley farmers and ranchers. Introduced into the Senate and assigned to the Agriculture and Natural Resources group on Feb. 23, HB23-1011 is called the “Consumer Right to Repair Agricultural Equipment” bill. If it passes, farmers can begin repairing their own equipment starting Jan. 1, 2024.

Currently, many owners are restricted by manufacturer agreements. According to HP23-1011, manufacturers would be required to provide the parts, embedded software, firmware, tools, and documentation for diagnosing, maintaining, and repairing equipment. Like the wheelchair repair legislation that passed during the 2022 session, this law empowers owners to manage their own equipment.

Failure to provide necessary resources, according to the bill, is a deceptive trade practice. In addition, the bill precludes contractual arrangements that allow manufacturers to avoid providing repair resources. Also, owners are forbidden from modifying equipment beyond safety or emissions standards, and manufacturers are not obligated to reveal trade secrets.

STAFF

Continued from Page 1A —

library. In the Information Technology Office, men and women received complimentary haircuts from Horacio Naranjo (also known as “Stretch”) and Edgar Borunda from Stretch’s Cuts Barbershop in Monte Vista. Naranjo said this is his third year providing free cuts at Center Schools.

Licensed in 2018 after eight years cutting hair, Naranjo has more than a dozen years in the trade. With Borunda helping handle customers at the new location in Monte Vista, Stretch’s Barbershop attracts regular customers. Naranjo said he is looking to expand.

In the meantime, the young

entrepreneur tries to return to his community. That is why Naranjo and Borunda worked for free outside the Network Operations Center deep inside the IT Office at Center Schools.

Financially, every bit helps. School employees, like students, can always use a break. Before the start of the 2022–2023 school year, for example, Stretch opened his doors to provide free service for students. In total, 61 kids with new hairdos strutted into school on their first day.

After Staff Appreciation Week, more than a dozen Center Schools staff members returned on Monday with new hairdos too.

RETIRE

Continued from Page 1A —

it,” Howard said. “I would like to think I’ve changed people’s lives here [by bringing fiber broadband Internet to unserved and underserved areas].” He would not have changed a thing along the way. “We didn’t wait for grant money. If we did, we’d never be where we are today. We just went and did it.”

“In the future, maybe grants will help build out fiber in other areas that are difficult to justify financially, but we did what we needed to do to get the job done at the time, and I’m proud of that,” Howard said. “I hope 20 years from now, maybe someone will think, ‘I remember Loren Howard; he brought fiber to the Valley.’”

“My best memory of working at REC ... every day. There have only been two days since I’ve been here that I didn’t want to come to work. I’ve loved every other day of the last 11 years,” he commented.

Creede Hargraves, REC Board Director commented, “I have only had the pleasure of working with Loren for a short time; but the first thing that struck me in both meeting him and working with him was his high degree of professionalism. I have seen a great deal of respect afforded him, from both other board members and the staff of SLVREC. He has shown a real desire for service of the coop and the communities that are served by it. His service and experience will be missed.”

So, what is next for Howard... “I’m retiring,” he laughed. “I’ve never been good at having fun when I know there’s work to do. Can I just play all the time? I struggle with that concept.” As a new Monte Vista City Councilor, Howard will be able to keep himself somewhat busy. “I’ve thought about being on City Council before, but never could commit the time. With my impending demise here at REC, the time is right,” Howard

commented.

Howard also plans to travel with his wife Karen; they are looking forward to a future trip to Scotland. “As of right now, Karen is excited for me to be home more, but we’ll see how that goes. Sometimes you realize you might not want what you asked for,” he laughed.

In addition, his two children have been asking him for years: “when are you going to retire and come visit us more?” That is in his plans too—visiting his daughter Rebecca and her husband James in Denver and his son Micah and his wife Kendra in Washington D.C., as well as his eight grandchildren.

Additionally, he will find more time for his hobbies: rebuilding jeeps, amateur radio, hiking, and rock climbing, and he might even try to finish getting his private pilot license. The San Luis Valley has been the perfect home for Howard and his wife. “Anywhere above tree line is literally my heaven on earth. When we moved here in 2011, we were 228 miles away from my son and his family and 228 miles from my daughter and her family. It’s the perfect place to be,” Howard said.

According to REC Board Director Carol Lee Dugan, “Loren has been an energizer for the entire SLVREC Board. He encourages every board member to think out of the box productively. It has been exciting to see SLVREC’s progression under his leadership.”

“I am enormously grateful for being a part of REC. I love working for the members and customers of REC and Ciello. The employees here are the best I have ever had a chance to work with. It’s a great organization with few struggles; this makes it hard to walk away. My heart will always be with REC and Ciello, and I’ve told the board and the employees several times, ‘if you ever need me for any reason, I’ll be there,’” Howard concluded.



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Winter from Home

So often we say, “get out on the forest,” “go explore,” “I took this great trip last weekend,” “check out this peak or trail,” and so on, but it is winter, cold, and snowy. Maybe you just do not want to go outside to face the blowing wind and biting temperatures. Winter is a great time to bundle up and make memories of playing in the snow or taking the quietest hike as everything gets dampened by falling snow. But it is also a good time to curl up in front of the wood stove with a hot cup of tea and enjoy a book.

Our public lands offer much more than just areas to recreate on. They make a great playground or place to relax for many people throughout the seasons, but they also have value in their scenic beauty. From the comfort of your home, you can watch the temperature outside rise from negatives to reach only the teens by mid-day. You can still enjoy the National Forest just by sitting by the woodstove as it radiates heat from logs cut last summer in the forest. It was hot work then - cutting, hauling, and splitting. Now it again provides warmth, this time for a more relaxing activity like reading, knitting, or watching television.

Through a window the mountains look beautiful after fresh snow, crisp white lines split by black cliffs all silhouetted against the clear blue sky. They are easy on the eyes from a couch, wrapped in a blanket with a good book. Others may post pictures and brag about the endless powder they skied or rode on their sleds. But for some it is not just the cold, but the ever-present danger of avalanches which is enough to keep you cozy in your home.

Perhaps, you live near the forest so you can enjoy the sight of the sun setting on the Sangre de Cristo Range, turning the snowy peaks red, orange, and pink in the evening. The changing light on mountain peaks, or the view through the forest of trees dusted with snow out a window is preferred by many to a city skyline full of blinking lights, or the roofs of houses in suburban sprawl.

A few days after a storm and once the plow drivers catch up to mother nature, the highways that wind through the forest make a spectacular drive. Forested

Land Water and People

By Hanna Fake

canyons with trees laden with snow, mountains with white caps, and wind-swept mesas with cornices of snow hanging off their edges can be seen across the forest. The landscape is covered in a pristine white blanket with deep drifts and banks everywhere. Animal tracks cross the drifts, but a heated car is much more pleasant than post-holing through feet of snow to check them out.

Driving from the San Luis Valley up to Wolf Creek Pass, you can watch the snow accumulate. There is a little in the valley and the grasses and shrubs still show through. On the south facing slopes the snow disappears quickly. As you begin to climb in elevation the blanket of snow becomes smoother and thicker. The snowbanks along the sides of the road grow as you pass through South Fork. Once you leave town, the trees become laden, and the forest becomes a winter wonderland. The parking areas are full of snowmobilers and skiers as you head up the pass. When outdoor winter recreation is not your cup of tea, you are glad you do not have to back a large trailer into a small parking lot in the snow or dig your car back out to the road through a snowbank on a snowy day.

Watching the light change on the mountains, the snow pile up and melt off the trees, and the temperature rise and fall but never get above freezing from the comfort of your warm home is still a great way to spend the winter and enjoy the forest. Public lands are valued for their scenic vistas, habitat, resources, and recreational opportunities. So do not forget when you are looking out to the mountains, marveling at their beauty in the snow, you are enjoying your National Forest.

Hannah Fake is the San Juan Mountains Association Visitor Information Coordinator on the Rio Grande National Forest. She loves to get out and play in the snow, but also likes to read a good book by the woodstove.



Photo by John Livingston/CPW

Birds such as the white-faced ibis utilize the Russell Lakes State Wildlife Area during nesting season. Colorado Parks and Wildlife closes this State Wildlife Area to the public from Feb. 15 through July 15 to protect such birds.

Closures now in place to support nesting water birds across Valley

CONTRIBUTED

MONTE VISTA — Colorado Parks and Wildlife enacts seasonal closures across various State Wildlife Areas (SWAs) during specific times of the year that are critical for wildlife. To protect water birds during the nesting season, CPW implements such closures at several SWAs across the San Luis Valley.

Higel, Playa Blanca, Rio Grande, Russell Lakes and Sego Springs SWAs are closed to all public access Feb. 15 through July 15. Additionally, the wetlands portion of San Luis Lakes SWA is closed to

the public on the same dates.

“These properties serve as important areas for many species, including the federally endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, different species of waterfowl, Sandhill Cranes, herons, etc.,” said CPW District Wildlife Manager Tyler Cerny.

CPW staff does conduct regular work in these areas to manage weeds, water movement and various other projects, so it is possible that the public will see staff on site during these times of closure.

The closures add to two other

closures at SWAs currently in place in the San Luis Valley:

Hot Creek SWA is closed to motor vehicles from Jan. 1 through April 30.

La Jara SWA, the property is closed to motor vehicles Jan. 1 until the last Thursday before Memorial Day. This year, that is May 26.

The purpose of those closures is to protect big-game animal winter range during the months elk and deer are most vulnerable.

For more information on seasonal closures, call the Monte Vista office at 719-587-6900.

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Courtesy photo

Ten members of the Mineral County Search and Rescue organization met on Sunday, Feb. 19, at the Continental parking lot near North Creek Falls for snowmobile training.

Mineral County SAR conducts snowmobile training for its team

CONTRIBUTED
MINERAL COUNTY — Ten members of the Mineral County Search and Rescue organization met on Sunday, Feb. 19, at the Continental parking lot near North Creek Falls for snowmobile training. During the winter months, rescues in locations accessible only by snowmobile are a regular occurrence, and it is essential that rescuing personnel be familiar with the equipment and functions that are unique to these types of events, organizers stated.

The training included a review of essential cold weather attire necessary to protect personnel, equipment necessary to conduct searches for avalanche victims, other health and safety equipment that may be required to prepare for medical or trauma emergencies, familiarization with the operation of the SAR-owned snowmobiles, and, perhaps most importantly, demonstration and practice of extricating snowmobiles that may have become stuck in deep, off-trail snow.

MC Search and Rescue support is available to residents and visitors to Mineral County year-round. In addition to trained snowmobile rescue teams, specialized teams are trained in ATV incidents, avalanche searches, equine searches, high-angle ropes incidents, swift water rescues, and, of course, the usual ground-pounder search events.

Assistance is available 24 hours a day by calling 911 to the Colorado State Patrol Dispatch Center in Alamosa.

SdCAA hosting annual Congreso de Acequias March 11

CONTRIBUTED

SAN LUIS — The Sangre de Cristo Acequia Association (SdCAA) recently announced it is hosting the 11th annual Congreso de Acequias on Saturday, March 11, at Centennial School in San Luis.

Congreso is a gathering of acequias and community members from across the San Luis Valley and beyond.

“We gather to honor our culture, share knowledge, and plan for our future. We celebrate the people who keep our acequias flowing and the deep connection to land, family, and community,” SdCAA officials stated.

This community event will include workshops relevant to acequia users and flood irrigators, as well as food, music, door prizes, and the

bendición de las aguas. Workshop topics include talks on how to preserve and improve the health of your soil, opportunities to enhance acequia infrastructure and wildlife habitat, and how to legally protect your water rights.

Congreso is free and open to all. Registration opens at 8:15 a.m. along with coffee and pastries, and the main event will run from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

This event is possible due to donations from the Costilla County Conservancy District, the Trinchera-Blanca Foundation, the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, the Rio Grande Basin Roundtable, and the Colorado Water Conservation Board.

For more information, contact the SdCAA at sangredecristoacequia@gmail.com, 719-298-6731 or visit the website at www.coloradoacequias.com.



Rio Grande Hospital recognized as Top 100 Critical Access Hospital for 2023

CONTRIBUTED
DEL NORTE — Rio Grande Hospital announced Wednesday, Feb. 15, that it was recognized as a 2023 Top 100 Critical Access Hospital. Compiled by the Chartis Center for Rural Health, this annual recognition program honors outstanding performance among the nation’s rural hospitals based on the results of the Chartis Rural Hospital Performance INDEX.

Arlene Harms, Chief Executive Officer of Rio Grande Hospital, stated, “This is a great honor for us, considering the last two challenging years with the pandemic. It speaks to our staff’s resilience and commitment to the organization and community. We have an amazing group of people at Rio Grande Hospital.

“This award is significant because it is based on many factors, such as market status and strategic planning to improve population health, quality improvement and programming, and financial and operational assessments,” she added.

Now in its 13th year, the INDEX has established itself as the industry’s most comprehensive and objective assessment of rural hospital performance. Leveraging publicly



available data, the INDEX is trusted by rural hospitals, health systems with rural affiliates, hospital associations, and state offices of rural health across the country to measure and monitor performance across a variety of areas impacting hospital operations and finance.

“Across the nation, top 100 rural providers continue to serve as a source of inspiration for hospital leadership teams and staff working diligently every day to improve the delivery of care within their local communities,” said Michael Topchik, National leader for the Chartis Center for Rural Health. “The list of award winners in each category is as geographically diverse as we’ve seen in some time, which is wonderful to see. We’re thrilled to be able to honor the outstanding efforts of these top-performing rural hospitals.”

Center Kiwanis 67th annual Pancake Supper



Photos by Sandra Marquez

People again supported the Kiwanis Club of Center’s President’s Day Pancake Supper on Monday, Feb. 20, at the Center School Cafeteria. This was the 67th year of the supper that serves as a fundraiser for the local Kiwanis Club.



Spring fishing forecast for western Valley

BY LYNSIE FERRELL

SAN LUIS VALLEY — The western end of the San Luis Valley is predicted to be at normal levels for precipitation and the spring fishing forecast looks on track as warmer weather approaches.

According to Colorado Parks and Wildlife Aquatic Biologist Estevan Vigil, though it is still a tad early to tell, fishing for the western end of the Valley is looking good in coming months.

“So far, it depends on where you look in the Valley as far as snow-pack goes, but the western end is

looking average for snow fall with more in the forecast,” said Vigil. “We can for now, expect average fishing as we move into warmer weather.”

Even with the positive forecast for fishing along the gold medal waters of the Rio Grande, Vigil cautions that it will come down to temperatures and rainfall like it did in the summer of 2022.

“At the beginning of the season last year it looked grim. We had dry hot days and that makes the fish less active. The rain we received later in the summer was a game-changer and things really picked up as water temperatures lowered and the levels began to rise. We ended up having a great season well into fall and the hope is that it will happen again this year,” said Vigil.

One of the biggest changes to anticipate this year will be that Rio Hondo Reservoir dam repairs may be finished, and it is anticipated to begin refilling by fall. This favorite reservoir located north of Creede has been sorely missed by anglers.

“The reservoir is still drained but we really hope the repairs will be finished this year and we can begin refilling by fall and have it restocked in 2024. There will be some changes to fish management once it is back in service but details for that are still underway,” Vigil said.

Starting in April, CPW will begin their annual stocking schedule with Beaver Creek Reservoir just outside of South Fork. The reservoir will once again be stocked with small Kokanee Salmon at the beginning of the season. The fish are put in small and allowed to grow which makes for an excellent catch in the fall. This reservoir is also stocked with Brown Trout and Rainbow Trout every two weeks until September.

Big Meadows Reservoir located just up Highway 160 toward Wolf Creek Pass will be filled with naturally producing Brook Trout as it is every year. Anglers love fishing in this reservoir due to the easy access to shore fishing and the boat ramp allows boaters easy access to the water. The lake is stocked with natural brown trout that are fun to catch.

Shaw Creek is another small lake that local and visiting anglers like to fish in throughout the spring and summer season. This lake will be home to Cutbow Trout which are a highbred species made from Rainbow and Cutthroat Trout.

A little further south of Rio Hondo is the Road Canyon Reservoir, one of the busiest fishing locations around Creede. According to Vigil, the reservoir provides optimal fishing early in the summer before weeds over run the lake. In April CPW stocks Road Canyon with 3-inch Brook Trout, 3-inch Rainbow Trout and 10-inch Rainbows again in June.

“Road Canyon is a really great place to go fishing and people do really like the easy access and the area,” Vigil said.

Continental Reservoir is another fishing destination near Creede where anglers can begin to catch early season Brook Trout, Splake

and Cutbow Trout. All species in Continental are put in small and allowed to grow so later in the summer season is the prime time to catch larger fish.


Rio Grande Reservoir is still

recovering from dam repair that was completed in recent years. The lake is still filling with spring runoff and CPW is currently working to re-establish the fishery. This year the reservoir will be stocked with


Rainbow and Splake in June and July. The fish go in at 10-inches and are allowed to grow.

Directions to all locations in this article can be found at <https://cpw.state.co.us/fishing>.







ATTENTION HOUSEHOLDS WHO RECEIVE SNAP



After February 2023, your SNAP benefits will decrease due to recent congressional action, as the temporary increase to SNAP benefits is ending. February 2023 will be the last month that temporary increased SNAP benefits (emergency allotments) will be paid. For more information, visit cdhs.colorado.gov/snap-ea-ending

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Conour

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We would like to express our deepest gratitude and appreciation to all those who have contributed to the success of the Upper Rio Grande Animal Society by contributions, donations, volunteering and general support at Conour Animal Shelter.

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Found on 2/21 in Center at 2nd and Willis



Found on 2/22 in Monte Vista on the 700 block of Jefferson



Found on 2/23 in Del Norte on 5th Street







Found together on 2/23 in Center at Sunset park and Garcia Street

Please note we are on a first come first serve basis.

All breeds & ages of animals are a “best guess” and are not guaranteed to be accurate. Adoption fee includes: neuter/spay, vaccinations, de-worming and micro-chipping.

This ad space donated by Valley Publishing Inc.

Antonito's Madrid continues to wait for kidney

Community holding a fundraiser on March 11

BY DIANE DREKMANN

ANTONITO — Waldo Madrid needs a kidney and is asking for the public's help in finding a match. Madrid was born and raised in San Rafael, a small village outside of Antonito, and currently lives with his partner of 26 years, Linda DeHerrera, in Lobatos, northeast of Antonito.

In May 2020, Madrid discovered his kidneys were failing. In June 2020, at UC Health in Aurora, he was put on the kidney transplant list. He is looking for a healthy donor with O-positive blood. Until a donor is found, Madrid goes to the DaVita Dialysis Center in Alamosa three times a week.

Madrid worked for Conejos County for 38 years, mainly as a road grader, and misses his job. Despite tragedies in his life, losing two of his children Christopher and Andrea, Madrid has

a full life with daughters Amanda and Ashley and three grandchildren, Lionel, Abigail, and Manuel.

Once Madrid receives a kidney, he will still need financial assistance for the eight-week recovery following the transplant surgery.

Friends of Madrid have rallied together to help. Rick Vigil, of Antonito, has a company called Down To Earth Media, which records the oral history of the San Luis Valley.

He is selling a DVD about Madrid's plight called, "La Placita de San Rafael," for \$25 with \$10 of each sale going to the Waldo Madrid Kidney Warrior Fund. To view the trailer, go to <http://downtoearthmedia.org>. The DVD was made possible through the support of Our Lady of the Guadalupe Catholic Church, the Knights of Columbus, and the Colorado Society of Hispanic Genealogy.

The community of Antonito is holding a fundraiser for Madrid on March 11 at the Antonito Water Park — hamburger, chips, and soda for \$10.

To find out more about how to help Madrid, go Waldo Madrid Kidney Warrior on Facebook or email Madrid at waldo.madrid.kidneywarrior@gmail.com.

Fly the Coop 5K Run, Walk is March 11

MONTE VISTA — Join us for the first annual Fly the Coop 5K Run and Walk March 11 at 10 a.m. This race is scheduled to provide a fun, new event for the Crane Festival. All proceeds will go to Monte Vista Community Ambulance Service.

This race is for runners and walkers of all abilities, ages, and sizes. The event will begin at Ski Hi Park. There are numerous age divisions and the top three racers

in each age group for both the run and the walk will receive ribbons. The top-three finishers of each race will receive medals. All entrants will receive a T-shirt and snacks after the race.

For more information email Deb Haverfield at runnerangunner@gmail.com, or contact the Monte Vista Chamber. Pre-registration cost (before March 1) is \$25. Race day registration will be at 9 a.m. with the cost of \$30.

San Luis Valley Soul Players is hosting Community Conversation series

CONTRIBUTED COSTILLA COUNTY — Residents from all backgrounds are invited to participate in a series of community conversations.

The San Luis Soul Players of the Valley is hosting a Community Conversation series for the Rural Action Project, a partnership between Colorado State University and communities across the state designed to help rural communities thrive.

Community meetings will take place between 5:30 and 8 p.m. on Feb. 21 and 28, and March 7 at the Costilla County Conservancy District building. During the meetings, residents from Costilla County will have a chance to learn about ways to build robust rural communities and an opportunity to share their experiences and ideas for creating a healthy community. By the end, residents will work together to develop and implement a local project to improve community.

"Civic building is one the best

investments communities can make to support long-term resilience for a thriving community," said

Patti Schmitt, Community Development Director for the Office of Engagement and Extension at Colorado State University. "We have to invest in processes that bring community members together, help to create new and strengthen existing relationships, and build towards the vision we have for our local areas."

During these conversations, community members will get to know one another and design a project for Costilla County. The Rural Action Project will honor local experiences and stakeholders and build on the things unique and special to the community. Everyone is invited. Translation, interpretation, childcare, and food will be provided.

Register by calling or emailing Carol Gurule by Feb. 20, at carol.gurule@colostate.edu or 970-491-5699 or 719-852-7381.



Dumb Friends League of SLV receives donations



Courtesy photo

San Luis Valley Health employees donate supplies to local animal shelters during February's cold weather. When housekeeping heard about the drive, they had bags of sheets and blankets to donate that could no longer be used by SLVH. Donations from the Rural Health Clinics will get delivered to the Conour Shelter in Monte Vista. Tara Southard, SLVH Events Committee and promoter of the drive, said, "Wow, so many items got donated, this surpassed my expectations." Front row, left to right: Shaundi Caton, Crystal Wilson and Katie Holman from the DFL, and Dawn Krebs, SLVH. Back row, left to right: Southard, Sean Clutts, Esperanza Poole, Regan Hawthorn and John Tighe, SLVH.

Puzzle Sponsored by MDS Waste & Recycle



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CLUES ACROSS

1. Clip a small piece
5. Enter forcibly
11. Southwestern Native American tribe
12. Helps you smell better
16. Sun or solar disk
17. Low frequency
18. Former Houston football player
19. Federal crime
24. Home to Boston (abbr.)
25. Approval
26. Those who fight an establishment (abbr.)
27. ___ student, learns healing
28. Indian groomer of horses
29. Line where two pieces meet
30. One might be brief
31. Type of sword
33. Knife for fruits or vegetables
34. Stinkhorns
38. Stroke
39. Industrial process for producing ammonia
40. Sir ___ Newton
43. Wild goat
44. Muslim ruler
45. Scottish ancestor
49. Hat
50. Horse mackerel
51. Alcoholic accompaniment
53. Tech department
54. Manifesting approval
56. Upper bract of grass
58. Of I
59. Large wading bird
60. Military prisons

Solution to last week's puzzle

8	4	5	3	9	1	7	2	6
2	7	3	6	4	8	9	1	5
9	6	1	5	7	2	4	3	8
6	8	2	7	3	4	1	5	9
4	5	9	1	2	6	3	8	7
3	1	7	9	8	5	6	4	2
7	9	4	2	5	3	8	6	1
1	2	8	4	6	9	5	7	3
5	3	6	8	1	7	2	9	4

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9	10					
11					12						13	14	15		
16					17				18						
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25							26					27			
28							29					30			
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34	35	36	37						38						
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43						44						45	46	47	48
49					50				51	52					
53				54					55						
56		57						58				59			
60						61	62					63			
						64						65			

63. Famed American cartoonist
64. Rise
65. Greek God of war and courage

CLUES DOWN

1. Sewing needles
2. Functionary
3. Induces vomiting
4. The finger farthest from the thumb
5. Not moving
6. Sports official
7. Water purification process (abbr.)
8. University of Dayton
9. Indo-Malaysian evergreens
10. High schoolers' math course
13. Yankovic is a weird one
14. Adversaries
15. Merchandisers
20. Radioactive metal (abbr.)
21. Atomic #52
22. The back
23. One-time computer giant
27. Female of a horse
29. Football's big game (abbr.)
30. Vehicle
31. Single Lens Reflex
32. It's becoming more prevalent
33. Political action committee
34. Makes lightbulbs
35. Natural home of an animal
36. In bed
37. Superman villain
38. The Golden State
40. One who leads prayers in a mosque
41. They accompany a leader
42. Atomic #18
44. Electronic countermeasures
45. The appearance of something
46. Connecting line on a map
47. Deep red color
48. Secret affairs
50. Drenches
51. Contains music
52. Expression of surprise
54. Intestinal pouches
55. Where birds are born
57. ___ and behold
61. Cools your home
62. The First State

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08 WORK WANTED
09 EMPLOYMENT SERVICES
FOR RENT
10 APARTMENTS
11 ROOMS
12 HOUSES
13 MOBILE HOMES
14 BUSINESS PROPERTY
15 WANTED TO RENT
16 VACATION
REAL ESTATE
17 REAL ESTATE
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07 Help Wanted

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www.wolfcreekski.com. Email to wolfcreekski@wolfcreekski.com or mail to P.O. Box 2800, Pagosa Springs, CO 81147. (3-29)

Center Consolidated School District is accepting applications for the position of full-time year-round Custodial Position for the 2022-2023 School Year. School Year Hours are 1:00 P.M. to 10:00 P.M. Summer Hours are from 7:00 A.M. to 4 P. M. Qualifications; High School Diploma or GED, or, such alternative as the Board of Education may find appropriate and acceptable. Benefits include health insurance, paid vacation. Must be able to pass a background check. Applications can be found on the District Website <https://www.center.k12.co.us/page/employment-opportunities> Non Certified Application or contact the District Office at (719) 754-3442. Application Deadline: Until Position is Filled. EOE (3-1)

The Creede School District is hiring Special Events CDL Bus Drivers. Primary duties are to drive students, staff and chaperones to school events. Position pay is \$18.00 per

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San Juan Nordic Club's ski trails

By SUE FOSTER

SANLUIS VALLEY — Have you ever thought about what goes into making those beautifully groomed ski tracks on the trail that take you into the quiet and solitude of the San Luis Valley's backcountry? The mission of the San Juan Nordic Club (SJNC) is to provide groomed and ungroomed winter trails for non-motorized use by people of all ages and abilities; and to provide winter recreation, education and community-building experiences. Mark Seaton, a long-time groomer and past president of the SJNC, and Laura Conchelos, current president of the club, recently shed some light on what goes into making those beautifully groomed ski tracks.

First, a snow dance or two is needed to bring about a nice snowstorm that dumps 6 inches or more of fresh snow. Then the real work begins. A cadre of five to eight groomers, all volunteers, graciously give of their time, energy, skills, knowledge and resources to prepare the newly snow-covered trails for cross-country skiing, both classic and skate skiing, and snowshoeing. Usually, the groomers work in pairs, for greater safety and efficiency. Two sites currently are groomed by the SJNC, depending on snow conditions, which include Big Meadows on Wolf Creek Pass and Rock Creek, southwest of Monte Vista — a total of 8 miles. The SJNC also grooms the Bishop's Rock area and provides walking and ski/snowshoe trails on the Monte Vista Golf Course, as snow conditions allow.

Grooming a trail takes a half day to a full day for the groomers to complete. The SJNC membership dues and donations pay for gas, mechanical servicing, personal vehicle mileage and repairs of the snowmobiles and grooming implements. The SJNC is a nonprofit and functions solely on membership dues, annual fundraising, monetary donations and tons of in-kind donations of time, effort and use of personal vehicles.

There are four major steps to turning a snowfall into smooth, skiable trails. These steps include:

- **Pre-Season Preparation:** The trails are cleared of windfallen trees, and vegetation is trimmed using loppers and brush saws by hand and motorized trimmers.
- **Packing:** The snow is packed down to remove the air from the snow to get a dense base along the trail. A snowmobile may be used alone initially and then a large roller or "groomer," a device attached to the

back of the snowmobile, is used to put pressure on the snow to pack it. This step may be done a day or two before step four to allow the snow to "set."

- **Leveling:** This step is done as part of the grooming process to spread the snow out evenly. The smoother and more level the trail, the better the skiing will be! This is often done by hand shoveling and occasionally a member's snowcat is used.

- **Tracksetting:** The groomer device also holds an implement called a "tracksetter," which is used to make parallel tracks or grooves using weighted moulds for classic skiing. It is best if the new tracks are allowed a couple of hours to "set up" before they are skied on.

The SJNC owns three snowmobiles and groomers and two trailers with which to transport the equipment. Several volunteer groomers donate space in their barns or machine sheds to house and store this heavy equipment.

The take-home messages are:

- The trails are for everybody.
- Please note the signs along the way that indicate the "designated" area for track skiers, skate skiers who should use the area in the middle of the trail between the two sets of tracks and snowshoers who are directed to the packed trail, outside (on the opposite side) of the tracks.
- Dog owners are asked to please pick up dog doo-doo along the trail. It makes for a mess on skis, the grooming equipment and the trail.
- The trails are free to all users!

This opportunity for outdoor, healthy, fun-filled adventure is available only through donations, club fundraising through its annual Ski/Gear Swap in early December and volunteer community members who are willing to give of their time and resources.

The San Juan Nordic Club is one of three Nordic ski clubs in the Valley. There is also the South Fork Nordic Club which grooms just west of South Fork and the Upper Rio Grande Nordic Club which grooms at various sites near Creede. For more information on the San Juan Nordic

Club, visit <https://sjnordic.wordpress.com/> where you can submit your membership form online and then receive timely electronic grooming reports.

Sue Foster is a member of the Conejos Writers Circle that was featured in the Valley Courier on Feb. 7.



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Creede Arts Council announces return of Variety Show

CREEDE — After a 3-year hiatus due to COVID-19, the Creede Arts Council recently announced the return of the Variety Show. If you sing, dance, act, perform magic, juggle, all the above, then the Creede Arts Council is looking for you to perform at the 28th Annual Variety Show, April 1 at the Ruth Theatre.

Auditions for the show will be from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. on March 13 and from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. on March 14 at the Creede Community Church.

All types of acts are encouraged to audition. Acts must be performance ready and appropriate for a wide range of audience, including families.

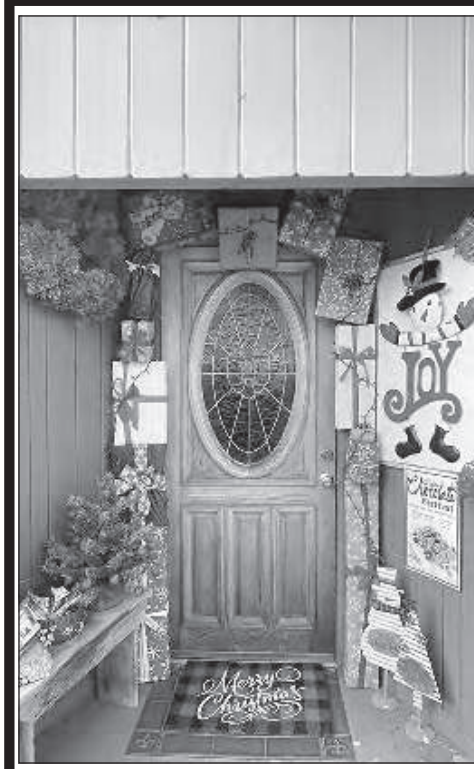
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SLV Ag Fest is a success for students

BY MARIE MCCOLM

MONTE VISTA — The second annual San Luis Valley Ag Fest was held on Feb. 14 and 15 at the Outcalt Event and Conference at SLV at Ski Hi Complex in Monte Vista. Students from all over the Valley attended the event.

Coordinator and 4-H Youth Development Specialist for the San Luis Valley, Morgan Young, said that the event was once again a success.

“For the last 2 years our results have shown that we continually meet our objectives,” Young said. “We advertised this opportunity through the school districts in the valley. We had such a great response from Alamosa, Sangre, Crestone, Mountain Valley, Moffat, Bill Metz, Creede, South Conejos, Sanford, Sierra Grande, and Centennial. Unfortunately, due to weather conditions we couldn’t hold the third day’s event that was originally scheduled with Alamosa and Crestone, but we did have the fest for two days. Working around what is good for the school districts keeps this partnership strong.”

Young said the idea for the event came from an Ag Fest that she attended and helped with in Chaffee County.

“I was a Family Consumer Science/4-H Youth Development agent in Chaffee when they asked me to help. The Ag Fest there was a collaboration between six counties,” she said.

The Ag Fest is a field trip-type event for the students, which takes place over a full day. Students and teachers are brought to the Ski Hi Event Center. The instructors at the center greet the students and hold a small presentation, outlining the day and giving the students a pretest on some of the things that they already know.

Following the test, students remain in their respective classroom groups and travel to different locations in the center, for interactive engagement sessions. Each location has a different scientific lesson associated with it.

Some subjects covered are engineering and mathematics, aspects of agriculture, agricultural products, careers and science technology, and other aspects of agriculture. The stations are labeled, soils, beef, dairy, wind energy, pollinators, water — in cooperation with the Rio Grande Watershed Education Initiative — fiber, embryology, and potatoes — in cooperation with the Colorado Potato Administration Committee.

Students and their teachers are at each station for 20-25 minutes. The time limit helps keep students focused and aids instructors in staying lively with their information, as instructors will give the same presentation about 7-8 times over the day.

There is a break for everyone to have lunch. Once all the stations have been visited for the day, the students are then brought to a table and given a test on all the content they learned during the day. After the test, students then leave with their classrooms and return to their respective schools.

Young stated that she feels that every station has succeeded both years and gave some insight on the success.

“Twenty minutes to teach kids about an agricultural subject is not a lot, but every station has been successful both years,” she said. “We ask the kids at the end what their favorite session was, and each station gets numerous votes. This shows us that students are really engaging with

our activities and staff. The lessons align with common core standards for fifth- and sixth-graders. Usually something we are talking about relates back to something inside of the classroom for them.”

Young said that although the adults

are not formerly evaluated like the students, the adults always make comments to show that they learned something new about agriculture. Young said by giving the children the same test when they arrive and leave, that it also tests the children’s

knowledge to see what they have learned, and where there also might need to be adjustments made, as the children are also asked if any of the stations or subjects were confusing or hard.

“This allows us to make adjustments

for future years,” Young said.

To learn more about how you can get involved in these types of events visit www.4-h.org or www.colorado4h.org, or call the Colorado State University San Luis Valley Extension Area Office at 719-852-7381.

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situated in the bottoms of the old Culebra River Drainage. The soil is sandy and loamy and has been used for vegetable crop production in the past w/o the use of pesticides or herbicides. It is watered by the San Acacia acequia with an early decree for 1.62 CFS. There is a domestic house well permit number 284703. The property also has a holding pond for irrigation water. The owner is installing a new side roll sprinkler, which will irrigate up to 80+ acres M/L. The new side roll irrigation system will be installed before closing and will increase production. There are several outbuildings useful for storage and/or animals. The farm is located in Costilla County, Colorado just north of the New Mexico state line. It is about one hour to Taos. The Rio Grande River is about 12 miles away. Red River Ski area and Rio Grande del Norte National Monument are near Questa, New Mexico about 40 minutes away. The Sand Dunes National Park is about 45 minutes north. **\$600,000** MLS #797313
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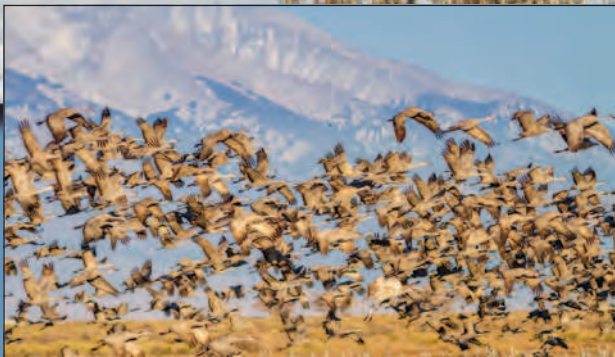
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40th Annual Monte Vista Crane Festival

Friday - Sunday
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Monte Vista Crane Festival to celebrate 40th anniversary with film premiere, special talks, tours

MONTE VISTA — March in the San Luis Valley brings frequent snowfall, strong winds, and the annual return of the area's oldest visitors — Sandhill cranes. Although cranes have been migrating through the Valley's wetlands for centuries, this year marks the 40th anniversary of the event dedicated to showcasing the majesty of the cranes and their habitat — the Monte Vista Crane Festival.

Launched as a small, local event in 1983, the Monte Vista Crane Festival is now one of the biggest tourist attractions of the year for the sleepy town located 15 miles west of Alamosa in Southern Colorado. Today, crane watchers come from far and wide to take in the spectacle of 20,000 or so Greater Sandhill Cranes and a few thousand Lesser Sandhills gathering, loafing, feeding, and interacting with each other in pristine wetlands framed by the towering, snowcapped peaks of the Sangre de Cristo range.

To celebrate 40 years of community and cranes, "Wings Over Water" will be shown at the Vali 3 Theater in Downtown Monte Vista. "Wings Over Water" tells the story of the epic journeys of three amazing bird families — the Sandhill Crane, the Yellow Warbler and the Mallard Duck — with extraordinary footage of their fascinating behaviors. This exclusive engagement is free and sponsored by Ducks Unlimited. Showtimes are Friday, March 10, at 7 p.m., Saturday, March 11, at noon, and Sunday,

March 12, at 5 p.m.

"While I still get just as excited each spring when I first hear, then see the cranes, this year's festival is extra special," said Monte Vista Crane Festival organizer and Friends of the San Luis Valley National Wildlife Refuges President, Deb Callahan. "Thanks to Colorado Tourism, the success of 40 years of putting on this festival has been immortalized in the video project by Christi Bode. Otherwise, the roots of the festival are the same as year one — celebrating these amazing birds and using that platform to heighten awareness of how our beloved cranes fit into a larger picture of land and water conservation and sustaining the critical biodiversity that makes the San Luis Valley so remarkable."

The March festival will also feature special crane tours and talks from wildlife experts, including a keynote address by George Archibald, co-founder of the International Crane Foundation. There will also be an arts and crafts fair, and plenty of opportunities for bird enthusiasts to spend time enjoying the thousands of cranes, waterfowl, numerous wintering bald eagles and other raptors that flock to the open waters and abundant food of the San Luis Valley on their way north from their wintering grounds at the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico.

For more information about tours, speakers, and other special events, visit mvcranefest.org.



George Archibald, co-founder of the International Crane Foundation, will be providing the keynote address for the Monte Vista Crane Festival.

Courtesy photo

Monte Vista Crane Festival Schedule

Friday, March 10

9 a.m.-5 p.m. — Craft and Nature Fair — Free
 5:30 a.m.-7 p.m. — Photography Workshop — \$150
 7-9 a.m. — Sunrise Crane Tour — \$10
 10 a.m.-2 p.m. — Special Tour Blanca Wetlands — \$20
 10:30 a.m.-12 p.m. — Special Tour Home Lake Birding — \$5
 10:30 a.m.-2 p.m. — Special Tour Trinchera Tour and Lunch — \$55
 1:30-2:30 p.m. — On Site Training Crane Basics — \$15
 4-6 p.m. — Sunset Crane Tour — \$10
 7 p.m. — ‘Wings Over Water’ movie at Vali 3 — Free

Saturday, March 11

9 a.m.-5 p.m. — Craft and Nature Fair — Free
 6-10 a.m. — Birders’ Breakfast
 7-9 a.m. — Sunrise Crane Tour — \$10
 10 a.m.-12 p.m. — Fly the Coop 5k Run/Walk — \$25
 10 a.m.-1 p.m. — Special Raptor Tour — \$20
 10 a.m.-1 p.m. — Special Tour BLM Elephant Rocks — \$20
 10 a.m.-1 p.m. — Special Tour

Homelake Birding — \$5
 Noon — ‘Wings Over Water’ movie at Vali 3 — Free
 1:30-2:30 p.m. — On-Site Training Crane Basics — \$15
 4-6 p.m. — Sunset Crane Tour — \$10
 Talks are \$5 at the door per talk or \$20 for Keynote and all talks
 11 a.m.-12 p.m. — Talk: Habitat Selection and movement patterns of Cranes — \$5
 1-2 p.m. — Talk: Elk on the SLV Refuge Complex: What’s going on out there. — \$5
 3-4 p.m. — Talk: The Secret Lives of Nesting Sandhill Cranes — \$5
 7-10 p.m. — Film Premier and Keynote Address: George Archibald – Lessons learned from 50 years of Crane conservation — \$10

Sunday, March 12

9 a.m.-12 p.m. — Craft and Nature Fair — Free
 5:30 a.m.-7 p.m. — Photography Workshop — \$150
 8-10 a.m. — Sunrise Crane Tour — \$10
 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. — Special Raptor Tour — \$20
 5 p.m. — ‘Wings Over Water’ movie at Vali 3 — Free

More happenings



Fly The Coop 5K

New for this year’s Monte Vista Crane Festival is a 5k Run/Walk for all ages and all abilities. The run will start at 10 a.m. on Saturday, March 11, from the Outcalt Event and Conference at SLV Ski Hi Complex in Monte Vista. Registration fee is \$25, and each participant will receive a long-sleeved T-shirt. Medals for top finishers and ribbons for age group winners. Proceeds will benefit the Monte Vista Community Ambulance. For more information, visit <https://mvcranefest.org/>.



In Light of Nature Photography Workshops

Award-winning nature photographer Ed MacKerrow will be

offering three, one-day workshops each day of the festival designed for beginning and intermediate photographers. These workshops are limited to 10 participants per day and may sell out. For more information, visit <https://mvcranefest.org/>.



‘Wings Over Water’ at Vali 3

“Wings Over Water” will be shown at the Vali 3 Theater for the 40th Anniversary of the Monte Vista Crane Festival. “Wings Over Water” tells the story of the epic journeys of three amazing bird families — the Sandhill Crane, the Yellow Warbler and the Mallard Duck — with extraordinary footage of their fascinating behaviors. This exclusive engagement is free and sponsored by Ducks Unlimited. Showtimes are Friday, March 10, at 7 p.m., Saturday, March 11, at noon, and Sunday, March 12, at 5 p.m.



Hawks Aloft Returns

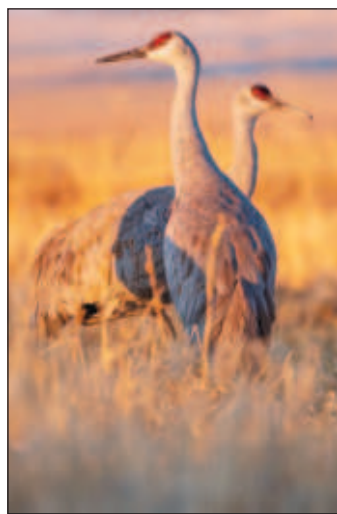
After a forced hiatus from recent crane festivals due to COVID restrictions, Hawks Aloft will once again be bringing their Avian Ambassadors to this year’s Crane, Craft and Nature Fair at the Outcalt Event and Conference at SLV Ski Hi Complex in Monte Vista.

Hawks Aloft is non-profit organization based in Albuquerque, N.M., that works to conserve indigenous wild birds and their habitats through avian research, conservation education, raptor rescue, and cooperation with other organizations.

This year, Hawks aloft plans to bring a total of 13 birds to their booth at the Craft and Nature Fair: two Swainson’s hawks, two Red-tail hawks, two Western Screech-Owls, two American Kestrels, one Turkey Vulture, one Prairie Falcon, one Mexican Spotted Owl, and one Great Horned Owl.

Hawks Aloft will also be leading bus tours on Saturday and Sunday to find and see raptors in the area.

Birds of a feather...



Courtesy photos

New venues, new lineup of speakers for the 40th Annual Monte Vista Crane Festival

After several years of holding online and hybrid festivals during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Monte Vista Crane Festival is returning to in-person events — just in time for the 40th Anniversary celebration this March 10-12.

With a newly remodeled and expanded Outcalt Event and Conference at SLV Ski-Hi Complex serving as the primary venue, the Crane Fest committee has scheduled a fabulous lineup of speakers on a wide range of topics, from nesting behaviors of cranes to migration patterns of elk in the SLV. Here is a sneak peek at this year's speakers, and their topics. Tickets to all talks can be purchased at the door or online at <https://mvcranefest.org/>.

TALKS

Erin Gelling

The Secret Lives of Nesting Sandhill Cranes

3 p.m. Saturday, March 11

Sandhill cranes are secretive when nesting, but with current technology cranes can be seen on and around their nests without being disturbed. For the past two years, two Sandhill crane pairs were observed nesting in the Yampa Valley via a livestream camera. Video captured predator attacks, the parents changing places



Rachel Vanausdall

on the nest, unison calling, eggs hatching, and chicks in and near the nest. Discover crane nesting biology

as seen through video captured from the Colorado Crane Conservation Coalition's Crane Nest Camera.

About the Speaker:

Gelling is the Program Director for Colorado Crane Conservation Coalition. She received her master's in Rangeland Ecology from the University of Wyoming working with one of her favorite birds, Greater sage-grouse. She has a strong background in avian ecology, botany, and environmental education having worked for non-profits, government, and universities. For over 14 years, she has worked with a variety of birds, including plovers, sparrows, shorebirds, sage-grouse, and her other favorite bird, Sandhill Cranes, across the United States.

Rachel Vanausdall

Habitat Selection and Movement Patterns of the Rocky Mountain Population of Greater Sandhill Cranes in the San Luis Valley

11 a.m. Saturday, March 11

The San Luis Valley is a critical stopover area for the Rocky Mountain Population of sandhill cranes,

but surface water is becoming increasingly limited in the region. We are seeking to understand how sandhill cranes use the San Luis Valley during the spring and the fall, including the habitat characteristics that influence their movement patterns. This information will help inform potential management practices on both public and private land for sandhill cranes.

About the Speaker:

Vanausdall is a doctoral candidate at Colorado State University and has been studying the stopover ecology of Sandhill cranes in the San Luis Valley for the past nearly three years. She obtained her master's from Iowa State University in 2018 and her bachelor's from Purdue University in 2014, both in Wildlife Ecology. Her main interest as an ecologist is in avian migration, particularly as it relates to waterbirds.

Doug Ouren

Elk on the SLV Refuge Complex: What's Going on Out There?

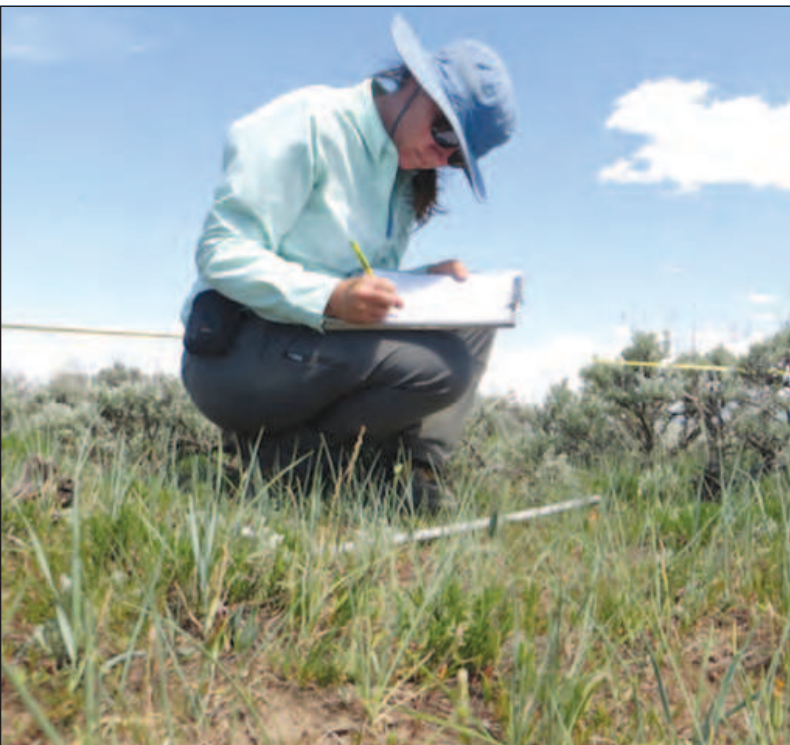
1 p.m. Saturday, March 11

This presentation is an exploration of elk distribution and dispersal challenges in the San Luis Valley. Elk are a species that like to travel in

large groups which in turn can cause damage to agricultural interests and or ecologically sensitive areas. Elk movements have been significantly affected by forest disturbances, including drought and beetle kill — reducing available habitat and increasing potential for conflicts.

About the Speaker:

Ouren is currently the Elk Distribution and Dispersal Coordinator for the Habitat Partnership Program of Colorado Parks and Wildlife. He did his undergraduate work at Adams State University; received a master's at Colorado State University focusing on utilization of geospatial technologies and did doctoral work at Montana State University and Colorado State University focusing on wildlife ecology. He worked with the federal government for the past 31 years, retiring in 2021. His research focus was on the application of global positioning systems (GPS) collars and remote sensing technologies to address questions related to sustainable wildlife habitat conservation on various animal species — including grizzly bears, elk and Gunnison sage-grouse.



Erin Gelling



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Swoop of the Cranes is again coming to town

By MARIE MCCOLM

MONTE VISTA — The Swoop of the Cranes is again headed for Monte Vista. For the past 3 years, the Monte Vista Chamber of Commerce has worked with many local artists on this community art project.

Local businesses can sponsor a 5-foot steel blank Sandhill Crane. The crane is then painted and transformed by artists. Monte Vista is then decorated during the Crane Festival in March, with all these painted cranes, as each one is attached to a downtown light pole.

The Crane is on display through the spring and summer months and into the fall. In the fall, an auction is held, and the artist or sponsor can either buy back their crane for \$100 before the auction or can be auctioned off to the highest bidder. The

money is used within the community for beautification development such as planting trees, or flowers, and other landscaping or storefront improvements.

The project's purpose is also to draw attention to the town. Many tourists travel through town during the spring, summer and fall months. For 40 years, the town has hosted the Crane Festival in celebration of when the Sandhill Cranes visit the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge during their spring migration.

The crane project was created in 2020 by then Board member of the Chamber of Commerce and former President of the OptiMystics Citizen's Action Network, Ken Hamko. Hamko believed that during the festival, the project would draw attention

to the town by inviting tourists to walk through and enjoy the cranes and spend money in town.

The Monte Vista Chamber of Commerce's goal for the Swoop of the Cranes was to set out 50 to 60 completed cranes this year. Fifty cranes have been sponsored. The deadline for sponsorship was Feb. 18.

There is currently a map online and a crane and artist list as well. The Monte Vista Chamber of Commerce is also taking votes for the public's favorite crane at www.montevista-chamber.org.

The MV Chamber of Commerce is requesting that anyone who did not get to sponsor a Crane this year, keep the project in mind for next year. For more information on the project, contact the Monte Vista Chamber of Commerce at 719-852-2731.

The Monte Vista Coop is a proud Sponsor of the Crane Festival
 719-852-5181
MVCOOP.COM

About Sandhill Cranes

Migratory Stopover for Sandhill Cranes

Approximately 23,000 to 27,000 Sandhill Cranes migrate biannually through Colorado's San Luis Valley. The length of their stay depends on habitat conditions along the migratory route. The Rocky Mountain population of Greater Sandhill Cranes spend more time in the SLV than at their wintering and breeding grounds. In the fall, cranes typically arrive in mid-September and leave by early November. In spring, cranes typically arrive mid-February and leave by early April.

Best Crane Viewing Sites

Food availability is a large factor in the distribution of cranes in the SLV. During migration, cranes feed primarily on small grains such as barley and wheat, but they will also supplement their diet with roots, seeds, invertebrates and small vertebrates found in wetlands. Grain fields on the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge are mowed in the spring to provide food for birds when it is more limited on private lands.

Feeding

Cranes are habitual and predictable. They feed in agricultural fields from sunrise to mid-morning and again in the late afternoon to sunset. In spring, most cranes forage on the Monte Vista NWR. The refuge farm fields can be viewed from: Wildlife viewing pullouts south of the Monte Vista NWR Office and County Road 8S County roads 2E and 7S

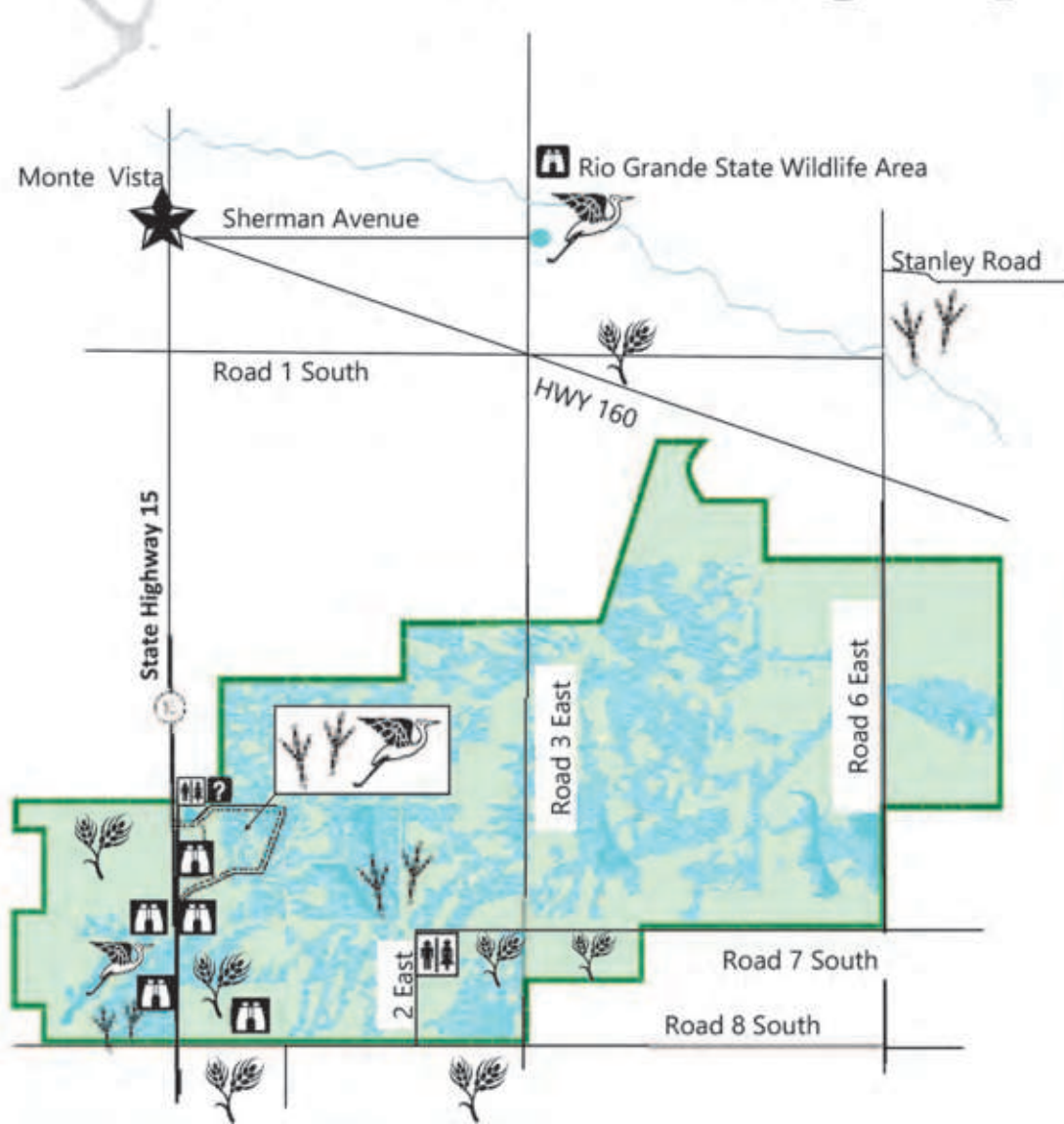
Loafing

During midday (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.) cranes can be found in wet meadows and other uplands on and near the refuge, where they loaf and occasionally feed on roots, tubers, invertebrates and other food. Cranes will loaf in a variety of habitat types and do not always use areas with water. Good places to watch loafing on the refuge are: All the pullouts on the west side of Hwy. 15; County roads 2E, 7S and 3E.

Roosting

In the evenings and through the night, cranes use shallow open water to roost. Most roost sites are closed

Sandhill Crane Viewing Map



Feeding Areas:
Refuge farm fields and private grain fields near the refuge, sunrise to 10 a.m. 4 p.m. to sunset.

Loafing Areas:
Wet meadows and a variety of other habitats 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Roost Sites:
Places to view cranes entering and leaving the roosts.

Wildlife Viewing Areas

Rest Rooms

Information
We hope you enjoy viewing cranes in the San Luis Valley. Please remember-crane roosts are closed to the public to protect the birds.

to the public. However, you can still see cranes fly in and out of roosts at sunset and sunrise. Food locations to view cranes at roost sites on the Monte Vista NWR are:

- Wildlife viewing areas on 8S and Hwy 15
- The area near the intersection of county roads 7S and 2E
- The refuge auto-tour drive. This route is only open from sunrise to sunset due to the risk of disturbing roosting cranes from public activity, which exposes the birds to a variety of hazards.

Subspecies

Three subspecies of Sandhill Cranes visit the SLV: Greater, Lesser and Canadian. The sub-species look

refuge.

Activities during the Monte Vista Crane Festival include interpreter-led bus tours to view the cranes as well as field trips to local sites to view and learn about raptors.

For the 40th Anniversary of the Monte Vista Crane Festival, the Monte Vista Chamber of Commerce will hold the Crane, Craft and Home Expo on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday at the new Outcalt Event and Conference Center at SLV Ski-Hi Complex.

For more information, visit online <https://mvcranefest.org/>

FAQs

Why is there a charge for the tours? Our most significant expense for the festival is transportation costs. While the local school district supports the festival, we still have to pay fuel costs and bus driver salaries. So if you go on a tour, we ask you to pay a small fee. If you can also donate to support the festival, that would be wonderful. You can donate on our website.

Do I have to do a tour to see the cranes? No, you don't have to do a

very similar and can be difficult to differentiate. The Greater is larger and lighter gray than the Lesser and Canadian.

In the fall of 1999, the Rocky Mountain population of Greater Sandhill Cranes was estimated to be 18,000 to 21,000 birds. Ninety-five percent of these birds use the SLV in the spring and fall before moving on to their breeding and wintering grounds.

Most of the Rocky Mountain population breeds in the greater Yellowstone area, including Grays Lake NWR in Idaho. Most winter in the Rio Grande Valley at the Bosque del Apache NWR near Socorro, New Mexico or farther south. Only about 3,000 to 5,000 Lesser and Canadian

tour. You are welcome to drive yourself around, all the usual access to the refuge is available this weekend. Crane viewing guides are available at the Kiosk at the entrance to the tour loop on the refuge or online at <https://mvcranefest.org/>.

Information is also available at the Ski-Hi Complex festival information booth. It will be open Friday 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m.-5 p.m., and Sunday from 9 a.m.-noon.

Does my child need a ticket? Children 5 and under do not need a ticket.

Waitlist? Sorry, we don't have waitlists. You are welcome to come and stand in the "Standby" line, and if there are cancellations, you might get on the tour. Please have appropriate cash. The line forms on a first-come, first-served basis.

Is there an entrance fee for the Craft and Nature Fair? No, it is free.

Are dogs allowed? No dogs (except qualified service dogs) are allowed on the bus tours, at speaker events, or at the Craft and Nature Fair.

Sandhill Cranes migrate through the SLV.

Natural History

Cranes live from 20 to 30 years and breed at about 2 to 5 years old. They mate for life, and pair-bonds are formed and reinforced with a "dancing" behavior (hopping and flapping their wings), which can be seen in the spring.

Sandhill Cranes build large ground nests primarily in wet meadow

habitat and both sexes incubate the eggs. Sandhill Cranes lay two eggs, but only one chick typically leaves the nest. In the fall, crane family groups — two adults and one juvenile — leave the breeding grounds. The juvenile stays with the parents through the summer, fall and winter and will accompany the parents in the northward migration. In route, breeding adults begin renewing pair binds and the juvenile leaves (or is forced out) the family group.

40th Annual Monte Vista Crane Festival

The Migration Experience of a Lifetime

March 10-12, 2023

MONTÉ VISTA — Every year, like clockwork, nearly 20,000 Sandhill cranes descend on Colorado's scenic San Luis Valley for a six-week stopover to rest and refuel before continuing their northward spring migration. The town of Monte Vista and the Friends of the San Luis Valley Refuges, host the festival.

The highlight of the festival is the opportunity for close-up viewing of thousands of cranes at the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge as they prance and display for each other, lift off en masse in the mornings, and return to their roosting spots at sunset.

In addition to the cranes, many Canada Geese and ducks visit the wetlands of this high-altitude desert framed by 14,000-foot snow-covered mountain peaks. Photographic possibilities are endless when these avian visitors fill the skies over the wildlife

We love the Crane Fest! Happy 40th!

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