

# • RGNC BIRD NOTES • Focusing on May 2013

*Information about bird walks and birds at the Rio Grande Nature Center plus whatever strikes Lefty's fancy*

Note from John "Lefty" Arnold ([wanderingtattlerja@yahoo.com](mailto:wanderingtattlerja@yahoo.com); 505-514-9398): Please note that any mistakes you find here are mine.

## Including the never-before-seen black-throated green warbler

*May 2013 bird walks record a stunning 111 species!*

A black-throated green warbler, a species that has never before been recorded at the Rio Grande Nature Center, is the highlight of the 111 species of birds that were recorded during the eight bird walks in the month of May. That 111-species figure is amazing, as the previous most-recorded number of species was the 86 birds that were sighted during September 2012.

May 2013 bird walk recordings brought an additional 18 species of birds to the year-to-date list, bringing the total number of bird species recorded during the 42 walks of 2013 to 143.

And to make another comparison (*Lefty loves his comparisons!*), the January-through-April total number of species was 106!

Here are the 19 species of birds that were added to the year 2013 bird walk total:

- |                       |                                  |                      |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Snow Goose         | 10. Hammond's Flycatcher         | 18. Brewer's Sparrow |
| 2. Cattle Egret       | 11. Northern Waterthrush         | 19. Lark Sparrow     |
| 3. Black-necked Stilt | 12. Black-and-white Warbler      |                      |
| 4. Solitary Sandpiper | 13. Virginia's Warbler           |                      |
| 5. Willet             | 14. American Redstart            |                      |
| 6. Lesser Yellowlegs  | 15. Palm Warbler                 |                      |
| 7. Black Tern         | 16. Black-throated Green Warbler |                      |
| 8. Forster's Tern     | (new to the checklist)           |                      |
| 9. Willow Flycatcher  |                                  |                      |
|                       | 17. Chipping Sparrow             |                      |

## Herbfest brings hordes of people and cars, but the nesting killdeer is unfazed

The Nature Center's annual Herbfest always brings scores of curious folks whose numbers sometimes challenge the Nature Center's parking lot. This year's festival on May 11 and 12 had a bit of added drama as volunteer staff helping with the crush of traffic began to guide cars into the dirt parking lot on the eastern edge of the Center.



Photo by and courtesy of Greg Gilbert

But wait! What's that? A female killdeer decided that the bare and gravelly parking lot was an ideal spot for a nest, and laid her eggs (normal clutch size is four) just about in the middle of what during Herbfest was a rapidly filling area.

Volunteers to the rescue with cones, stakes, and yellow CAUTION tape. Regular bird walk participant Greg Gilbert recorded this tenacious bird as she sat seemingly unfazed on her nest, as you can see in his wonderful photograph.

The result? A couple of weeks later, a young killdeer was seen on the berm on the north side of that lot, and it could very well be a bird from that amid-the-traffic nest!

Young killdeer, by the way, are ready to explore their world soon after hatching. Here's what David Allen Sibley's *The Sibley Guide to Bird Life & Behavior* says about young killdeer (and many other species of birds):

*The newborn chicks of many waterbirds... are precocial in that they have open eyes, downy feathers, and are capable of independent movement within a few hours of hatching. Altricial chicks, which include most songbirds, such as the gray catbird... hatch blind, naked, and virtually helpless.*