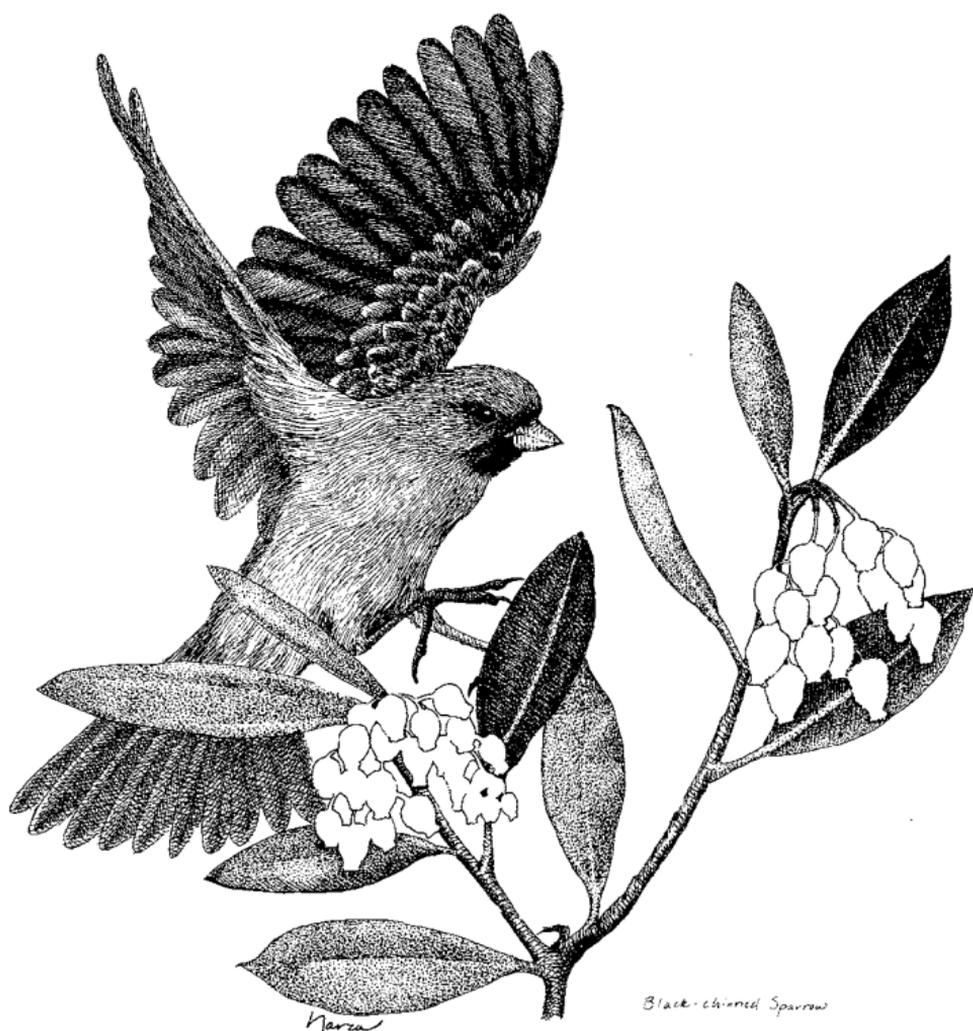


Birds of the Sandia and Manzano Mountains

Including the Manzanitas and Gallinas Mountains

Sandia and Mountainair
Ranger Districts, Cibola
National Forest



United States
Department of
Agriculture

PREPARED BY
Forest
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Southwestern
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Introduction

This revision (2001 and 2006) of the Sandia Ranger District bird checklist now includes the Manzano Mountains as well as the Gallinas Mountains west of Corona, NM—the latter two comprising the Mountainair Ranger District. Although the two districts are separated by as many as 100 aerial miles and their combined acreage totals almost 370,000 acres, habitats and bird composition are essentially similar throughout but with one major difference: only the Sandia massif, towering a mile above the surrounding plain at 10,678 feet, has a Spruce/Fir life zone that generally flourishes only above 10,000 feet. Manzano Peak (10,098 feet) in the Manzanos barely exceeds that limit, while Gallinas Peak (8,637 feet) in the Gallinas Mountains falls far short.

While the checklist will “work” quite well in the Manzanos, it is still geared most precisely to the Sandias, with respect to “abundance” and the “breeding habitat” designations. The reasons for this Sandia bias rest on the greater volume of data available from this popular mountain, as well as the great volume of visitors it attracts (about 2,000,000 a year). The total number of birds on the list has grown to 261 species, 8 more than appeared in the 2001 edition.

The following recommendations are given as starting points for exploring the several habitat types on the Sandia Ranger District. A district map and perhaps a copy of the “New Mexico Bird Finding Guide” will help to pinpoint these and many other sites rewarding to the birdwatcher.

- **Desert Scrub:** Embudito Canyon and Three-Gun Canyon
- **Piñon/Juniper:** Otero Canyon and Piedra Lisa Trail
- **Ponderosa Pine:** Cienega Canyon and Armijo Canyon.
- **Mixed Conifer:** Capulin Spring and Tree Spring Trail.
- **Spruce/Fir:** 10-K Trail North and various Crest trails.

Accessible facilities are found along Sandia Crest Road (NM 536) and include paved trails at Doc Long, Balsam Glade (to Madera Canyon Overlook), and onto the Crest Observation Deck.



Cover drawing of Black-chinned Sparrow by Narca Moore-Craig.

Using the Checklist

The columns following the name of each species are intended to help with identification.

The **first three** columns indicate the status of the species by season:

Summer: Birds present during this season only are primarily the neotropical birds, which spend the summer here but return to Mexico, Central America and South America during our winter. An asterisk (*) in this column indicates that breeding is either confirmed or highly probable.

Winter: These birds, such as the Oregon Junco, are present only in the winter and will return to more northerly breeding areas in the spring.

Transients: This column denotes spring and fall migrants, i.e., birds enroute to another destination. It also includes wanderers and vagrants in summer or winter. *Note: Species present in both summer and winter are permanent residents.*

Within each of the three columns you will find an alpha code that designates the relative abundance for each species as follows:

- C = Common:** Easy to find in suitable habitat at the right time of year.
- F = Fairly common:** Moderately easy to find, but less predictable than "Common."
- U = Uncommon:** May find such species with a little luck or extra effort.
- R = Rare:** Hard to find because distribution is very sparse or local.
- O = Occasional:** Not present every year and may be absent for several years.
- X = Accidental:** A windfall, encountered at intervals exceeding 10 years.

The remaining columns describe the habitat(s) where one is most likely to encounter each species. Habitat designations are very approximate but do reflect an elevational gradient that moves from the lower foothills (desert scrub or rocky slopes) around 5,600 feet to Sandia Crest (Spruce/Fir dominated by Corkbark Fir and Engelman Spruce) at 10,678 feet. The last two columns—Cliffs/Open Sky and Open Water/Riparian—are not tied to elevation. For breeding birds (*) the key refers to habitat occupied during the nesting season only.

	Summer	Winter	Transient	Residential/Developed	Desert Scrub/Rocky Slopes	Juniper Savannah	Piñon/Juniper Woodland	Ponderosa/Oak Forest	Mixed Conifer	Spruce/Fir	Cliffs/Open Sky	Open Water/Riparian
Loons												
___ Pacific Loon			X									•
Grebes												
___ Pied-billed Grebe			O									•
___ Eared Grebe			O									•
Pelicans												
___ Brown Pelican			X									
Bitterns and Herons												
___ Great Blue Heron			O									•
___ Green Heron			O									•
___ Black-crowned Night Heron			O									•
New World Vultures												
___ Turkey Vulture	*F		C	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Geese and Ducks												
___ Snow Goose			X								•	
___ Wood Duck			X									•
___ Gadwall			O									•
___ American Wigeon			O									•
___ Mallard			R									•
___ Blue-winged Teal			O									•
___ Cinnamon Teal			O									•
___ Northern Shoveler			O									•
___ Green-winged Teal			R									•
___ Redhead			X									•
___ Ring-necked Duck			R									•
___ Ruddy Duck			X									•
Hawks and Eagles												
___ Osprey			R								•	•
___ White-tailed Kite			X								•	
___ Mississippi Kite			X								•	
___ Bald Eagle			R								•	
___ Northern Harrier		R	U		•						•	

	Summer	Winter	Transient	Residential/Developed	Desert Scrub/Rocky Slopes	Juniper Savannah	Piñon/Juniper Woodland	Ponderosa/Oak Forest	Mixed Conifer	Spruce/Fir	Cliffs/Open Sky	Open Water/Riparian
Pigeons and Doves												
___ Rock Dove	*F	F	F	•								
___ Band-tailed Pigeon	*F	O	F				•	•	•	•		
___ Eurasian Collared-Dove	R	R	R	•								
___ White-winged Dove	*U	R	R	•	•	•	•	•				
___ Mourning Dove	*C	R	C	•	•	•	•	•				
Cuckoos and Roadrunners												
___ Yellow-billed Cuckoo				O								•
___ Greater Roadrunner	*U	U	U	•	•	•	•					
Barn Owls												
___ Barn Owl				O	•	•	•					
Typical Owls												
___ Flammulated Owl	*F		F					•	•	•		
___ Western Screech Owl	*R	R	R	•	•	•	•					
___ Great Horned Owl	*U	U	U	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
___ Northern Pygmy Owl	*R	R	R				•	•	•			
___ Burrowing Owl	*R	O	R		•							
___ Spotted Owl	O	O	O					•	•	•	•	
___ Long-eared Owl	*O	R	R	•	•	•	•	•				•
___ Short-eared Owl				O	•							
___ Northern Saw-whet Owl	*U	U	U						•	•		
Goatsuckers												
___ Common Nighthawk	*U		F		•	•	•	•	•			
___ Common Poorwill	*F		F		•	•	•	•	•			
___ Whip-poor-will	*R		R				•	•	•			
Swifts												
___ Black Swift				X								•
___ White-throated Swift	*C		C									•
Hummingbirds												
___ Broad-billed Hummingbird			X	•								
___ White-eared Hummingbird			X		•	•	•	•				
___ Magnificent Hummingbird			O				•	•	•			

	Summer	Winter	Transient	Residential/Developed	Desert Scrub/Rocky Slopes	Juniper Savannah	Piñon/Juniper Woodland	Ponderosa/Oak Forest	Mixed Conifer	Spruce/Fir	Cliffs/Open Sky	Open Water/Riparian
___ Black-chinned Hummingbird	*F		F	•	•	•	•					
___ Anna's Hummingbird	O		O	•	•	•						
___ Calliope Hummingbird	U		U	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
___ Broad-tailed Hummingbird	*C		C				•	•	•	•		
___ Rufous Hummingbird	C		C	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
Kingfishers												
___ Belted Kingfisher				R								•
Woodpeckers												
___ Lewis' Woodpecker		O	R	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
___ Red-headed Woodpecker			X	•								•
___ Acorn Woodpecker		O	O				•	•				
___ Yellow-bellied Sapsucker		O	O				•	•	•			
___ Red-naped Sapsucker	*F	R	F					•	•	•		•
___ Red-breasted Sapsucker			X				•	•	•			
___ Williamson's Sapsucker	*F	R	F						•	•		
___ Ladder-backed Woodpecker	*U	U	U		•	•	•					
___ Downy Woodpecker	*U	U	U				•	•	•	•		•
___ Hairy Woodpecker	*F	F	F				•	•	•	•		
___ Three-toed Woodpecker	*O	O	O								•	
___ Northern Flicker												
___ Red-shafted form	*C	C	C				•	•	•	•		•
___ Yellow-shafted form			R	•	•	•	•	•				•
Tyrant Flycatchers												
___ Olive-sided Flycatcher	*R		U						•	•		
___ Western Wood-Pewee	*F		F					•	•			•
___ Willow Flycatcher			X									•
___ Hammond's Flycatcher			U			•	•	•	•	•		•
___ Dusky Flycatcher	*U		F						•	•		
___ Gray Flycatcher	*U		F			•	•					
___ Cordilleran Flycatcher	*F		U				•	•	•			•
___ Black Phoebe	*O		O									•
___ Eastern Phoebe			X									•
___ Say's Phoebe	*F	R	F	•	•	•	•	•				
___ Vermillion Flycatcher			X	•	•	•						•
___ Ash-throated Flycatcher	*F		U			•	•	•				
___ Cassin's Kingbird	*F		F			•	•	•				

	Summer	Winter	Transient	Residential/Developed	Desert Scrub/Rocky Slopes	Juniper Savannah	Piñon/Juniper Woodland	Ponderosa/Oak Forest	Mixed Conifer	Spruce/Fir	Cliffs/Open Sky	Open Water/Riparian
Chickadees and Titmice												
___ Black-capped Chickadee			O				•	•	•	•		•
___ Mountain Chickadee	*C	C	C				•	•	•	•		
___ Juniper Titmouse	*F	F	F			•	•					
Bushtits												
___ Bushtit	*F	C	C		•	•	•	•				
Nuthatches												
___ Red-breasted Nuthatch	*C	C	C				•	•	•	•		
___ White-breasted Nuthatch	*F	F	F				•	•	•	•		
___ Pygmy Nuthatch	*F	F	F					•				
Creepers												
___ Brown Creeper	*F	F	F					•	•	•		
Wrens												
___ Cactus Wren		O	O	•	•							
___ Rock Wren	*U	O	F		•						•	
___ Canyon Wren	*F	F	F		•						•	
___ Carolina Wren			O									•
___ Bewick's Wren	*F	F	F		•	•	•					
___ House Wren	*C		C					•	•	•		
___ Winter Wren		O	R									•
Dippers												
___ American Dipper		O	O									•
Kinglets												
___ Golden-crowned Kinglet	*U	U	U						•	•		
___ Ruby-crowned Kinglet	*C	R	C						•	•		
Gnatcatchers												
___ Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	*U		F		•	•	•					
Thrushes												
___ Eastern Bluebird		O	O			•	•					

	Summer	Winter	Transient	Residential/Developed	Desert Scrub/Rocky Slopes	Juniper Savannah	Pinon/Juniper Woodland	Ponderosa/Oak Forest	Mixed Conifer	Spruce/Fir	Cliffs/Open Sky	Open Water/Riparian
___ Chestnut-sided Warbler			O	•	•	•	•	•				
___ Magnolia Warbler			X	•	•	•	•	•				
___ Black-throated Blue Warbler			O	•	•	•	•	•				
___ Yellow-rumped Warbler												
___ Audubon's form	*C	O	C					•	•	•		
___ Myrtle form			R	•	•	•	•					
___ Black-throated Gray Warbler	*F		F				•					
___ Townsend's Warbler (Fall)			F	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
___ Hermit Warbler			X	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•
___ Grace's Warbler	*F		U					•				
___ Palm Warbler			O		•	•	•					
___ Cerulean Warbler			X				•	•				•
___ Black and White Warbler			O	•	•	•	•	•				
___ American Redstart			O	•	•	•	•	•				
___ Worm-eating Warbler			O	•	•	•	•	•				
___ Ovenbird			O	•	•	•	•	•				
___ Northern Waterthrush			R									•
___ Louisiana Waterthrush			X									•
___ MacGillivray's Warbler	*F		F						•	•		•
___ Common Yellowthroat			O									•
___ Hooded Warbler			O	•	•	•	•	•				•
___ Wilson's Warbler			F	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•
___ Red-faced Warbler	*O		O					•	•			•
___ Painted Redstart			O									•
___ Yellow-breasted Chat	*R		O									•
Tanagers												
___ Hepatic Tanager	*U		U				•	•				
___ Summer Tanager			X									•
___ Scarlet Tanager			X									•
___ Western Tanager	*F		F					•	•	•		•
Towhees and Sparrows												
___ Green-tailed Towhee	*F	O	F						•	•		
___ Spotted Towhee	*C	F	C			•	•	•	•	•		
___ Canyon Towhee	*C	C	C	•	•	•	•					
___ Cassin's Sparrow	O		O		•	•						
___ Rufous-crowned Sparrow	*U	U	U		•							
___ Chipping Sparrow	*F	O	C				•	•	•			
___ Clay-colored Sparrow			R		•	•	•					

	Summer	Winter	Transient	Residential/Developed	Desert Scrub/Rocky Slopes	Juniper Savannah	Piñon/Juniper Woodland	Ponderosa/Oak Forest	Mixed Conifer	Spruce/Fir	Cliffs/Open Sky	Open Water/Riparian
___ Brewer's Sparrow		O	F		•	•	•					
___ Black-chinned Sparrow	*F	O	F		•							
___ Vesper Sparrow	*R		F			•	•					
___ Lark Sparrow	*U		U		•	•						
___ Black-throated Sparrow	*F	R	U		•	•						
___ Sage Sparrow			R		•	•						
___ Lark Bunting			O		•	•						
___ Savannah Sparrow			X		•	•						
___ Fox Sparrow		R	R		•	•	•					
___ Song Sparrow		O	R		•	•						•
___ Lincoln's Sparrow			R		•	•						•
___ White-throated Sparrow		O	R	•	•	•	•					
___ Harris's Sparrow		O	O	•	•	•	•					
___ White-crowned Sparrow		F	F	•	•	•	•					
___ Golden-crowned Sparrow		R	R	•	•	•	•					
___ Dark-eyed Junco												
___ Gray-headed form	*C	C	C				•	•	•	•		
___ Oregon forms		C	C	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•
___ Slate-colored form		U	U	•	•	•	•	•				
___ White-winged form			O	•	•	•	•	•				
___ Chestnut-collared Longspur			X		•	•						
Grosbeaks and Buntings												
___ Pyrrhuloxia			O	•	•	•						
___ Rose-breasted Grosbeak			R	•	•	•	•	•				
___ Black-headed Grosbeak	*C		C			•	•	•	•	•		•
___ Blue Grosbeak	*R		U				•					•
___ Lazuli Bunting	*O		R									•
___ Indigo Bunting	*O		R									•
___ Dickcissel			X		•	•	•					
Blackbirds and Orioles												
___ Red-winged Blackbird			R									•
___ Eastern Meadowlark	*U		R			•						
___ Western Meadowlark	*F	U	F		•	•						
___ Yellow-headed Blackbird			X									•
___ Brewer's Blackbird	*R		U									•
___ Common Grackle			O									•
___ Great-tailed Grackle			O									•
___ Brown-headed Cowbird	*F		U	•	•	•	•	•	•			

	Summer	Winter	Transient	Residential/Developed	Desert Scrub/Rocky Slopes	Juniper Savannah	Piñon/Juniper Woodland	Ponderosa/Oak Forest	Mixed Conifer	Spruce/Fir	Cliffs/Open Sky	Open Water/Riparian
___ Bullock's Oriole	*U	U	•									•
___ Baltimore Oriole		X	•									•
___ Scott's Oriole	*U	U			•	•						
Finches												
___ Gray-crowned Rosy Finch		U	U							•	•	
___ Hepburn's form		R	R							•	•	
___ Black Rosy Finch		C	C							•	•	
___ Brown-capped Rosy Finch		F	F							•	•	
___ Pine Grosbeak		R	R					•	•	•		
___ Purple Finch			X	•								•
___ Cassin's Finch	*O	F	F						•	•		
___ House Finch	*C	C	C	•	•	•	•					
___ Red Crossbill	*F	F	F				•	•	•	•		
___ White-winged Crossbill		X	X							•		
___ Pine Siskin	*C	C	C					•	•	•		
___ Lesser Goldfinch	*F	O	F				•	•				•
___ American Goldfinch		R	F				•	•				•
___ Evening Grosbeak	*R	U	F					•	•			
Old World Sparrows												
___ House Sparrow	*C	C	C	•								

This list, now comprising 261 species, is the result of extensive and intensive field work (including breeding bird surveys) done during the past 33 years by Hart R. Schwarz, neotropical bird specialist for the Cibola National Forest. Hart has seen and verified virtually all the birds on the list and continues to update the breeding and seasonal status of these birds.

Special Characteristics of the Mountains South of the Sandias

The Manzanita Mountains: When observed from Albuquerque's West Mesa, the Manzanitas appear as a low bridge connecting the much higher Sandias to the north and the Manzanos to the south. Together all three parts form a continuous chain of fault-block uplift about 65 miles in length. The Manzanitas, though topping out at only 8,000 feet, feature a rugged, canyon-laced terrain covered primarily with pinyon and juniper, but also with pockets of ponderosa at higher elevations and in drainages. The first 10 miles of the Manzanitas south from Tijeras are part of the Sandia Ranger District, while the southern end falls within the Isleta Indian Reservation. To complicate things even more, much of the western section of the Manzanitas on National Forest System land is designated as a "Military Withdrawal" for research purposes and is, therefore, inaccessible to the general public.

Bird distribution across pinyon/juniper habitat in the Sandias and the Manzanitas shows some striking differences between them, as the examples below illustrate:

- **Wild Turkey:** Turkey numbers fluctuate considerably, but have been augmented from time to time by re-introductions, the most recent of which involved 22 Merriam's Turkeys released in the Sandias in February 2004. Long before 2004, turkeys had been extirpated in the Sandias, while still present in the Manzanos and, to some extent, in the Manzanitas.
- **Gray Flycatcher:** While only a single breeding location exists from the Sandias, this little "empid" finds the Manzanita pinyon/juniper woodlands ideal for nesting, especially in Otero Canyon.
- **Gray Vireo:** This state "endangered" species sporadically inhabits the Bernalillo Watershed in the Sandias, but is common on the Military Withdrawal in the western foothills of the Manzanitas.
- **Black-throated Gray Warbler:** Considerably more common in the mature pinyon/juniper woodlands in the Manzanitas than in the Sandias; it is, in fact, the most common species on the Otero Canyon BBS.
- **Vesper Sparrow:** Only migrates through the Sandias, especially in the fall, but nests sparingly in the dry mountain meadows on the way to Cedro Peak, as well as in the Manzano Mountains.

The Manzano Mountains: Two tall peaks, Guadalupe and Mosca, mark the northern boundary of the Manzano high country, which follows a straight line south for 25 miles to State Highway 60. These mountains are very similar to the Sandias but lack the spruce/fir belt that characterizes the latter's summit. Still, no high-elevation birds seem to be missing here, except the Rosy Finches in winter and perhaps the Three-toed Woodpecker. What the Manzanos are lacking in terms of spruce/fir, however, they compensate for with a habitat niche not seen in the Sandias—a deciduous woodland understory of big-tooth maple spread across the northern

end of the mountain. These trees are especially attractive to the Downy Woodpecker who is near the southern limit of his range here. Three sites in and near the Manzanos offer an excellent introduction to the birds of this area and are described below.

- **Tajique Canyon, Fourth of July Campground and the Crimson Maple/Spring Loop Nature Trail:** Seven breeding warblers occur in this wonderful canyon, a density of warbler species not likely to be found elsewhere in the Cibola. The soulful singing of the Hermit Thrush is another experience that awaits visitors in Tajique.
- **Capilla Peak:** Visitors are always welcome at the hawk lookout site where up to 18 kinds of raptors can be observed in fall migration. The meadows and wooded areas around Capilla Peak (9,200 ft.) also attract an amazing variety of terrestrial fall migrants (mid-August to mid-October), including many Lewis's Woodpeckers and even (once) an exhausted Yellow-headed Blackbird.
- **Quarai:** Part of Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument, this idyllic, spring-fed cottonwood oasis lies only 4 miles from the forest boundary just outside the village of Punta de Agua. It has nesting Phainopeplas, Yellow-breasted Chats and Blue Grosbeaks in summer, as well as some birds that aren't included on this list at all, such as Virginia Rail, Marsh Wren, Bendire's Thrasher, and Kentucky Warbler.

The Gallinas Mountains: Although dry and somewhat remote, this singular little mountain just west of Corona, NM offers excellent birding and a remarkable mixed conifer forest of Douglas-fir and limber pine on the scree-strewn, north-facing slope of Gallinas Peak. A good introduction to the local birds is from Forest Road 99, which enters Red Cloud Canyon in the southeast, skirts Lackey Point at 8,000 feet, and then exits the range in the southwestern sector, via Pajaro Canyon. Although a devastating, human-caused fire charred much of Red Cloud Canyon, including the campground, in April 2001, pockets of forest remain, creating islands of habitat that are sometimes packed with birds or have unusual bird combinations. Lower Pajaro, on the other hand, was unaffected by the fire and still offers an incomparable, savannah-like landscape with piñon and juniper.

- **A Note about Chihuahuan Ravens:** They sometimes occur together with Common Ravens along the western boundary of the Gallinas (FR 161), but their status here is not fully known. The Chihuahuan, basically a grassland species, does not occur in the forested Sandias or the Manzanos proper except, perhaps, far out on the eastern plains or along State Road 47 between Belen and State Road 60, where they nest on telephone poles.

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