



Who is this →
important person?
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Open Space Alliance Newsletter, September 2024

What's Happening in Space (ABQ Open Space) in Sept. & Oct.?

There are too many wonderful events happening every two months in city and county Open Space to list in each issue of a short newsletter. So here are some highlights of coming attractions, and details are available on the [City's Open Space Division events website](#) and on [Bernalillo County's Open Space webpage](#).

There are guided hikes in the Bosque and in the foothills, introductory courses on photographing wildlife, yoga classes at the Open Space Visitor Center, guided hikes in various places in the morning and early evening, rock-climbing classes, a family nature club walks in the Elena Gallegos Grant open space and learning about volunteering. Locations include the Bosque, the fields near the Open Space Visitor center on the West Side, the Tijeras Bio-zone. Wow!

A few extra-special events to highlight these two months:

Outdoor Field School: Performing Pedology (ages 11-14):

Sept. 7 from 9 AM to 12 PM. Middle school-aged youth join two Open Space educators for in-depth learning about the natural world around them through fun, hands-on science outdoors using real scientific field equipment. Pedology is the study of soil.

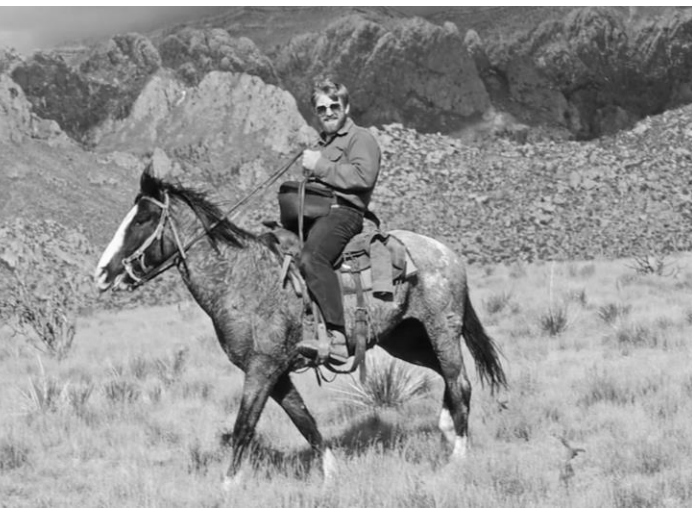
A Free Sunset Concert with Albuquerque's Kubatana Marimba Southwest: Oct. 5 from 6 to 8 PM. Join us at the Open Space Visitor Center on the back patio with your coolers and lawn chairs for a night of music entertainment.

Dia Del Rio: Oct. 19 from 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM: Cleanup and restoration in the Bosque near Tingley Beach.

Tincturing with Local Medicinal Plants for Cold and Flu Season: Oct. 19 from 12 to 3 PM. Join Dara Saville of Albuquerque Herbalism for this class on preparing for cold and flu season with common medicinal plants of our area.

OSA Mission: OSA will enhance the experiences of all users of Albuquerque Open Space lands by providing financial support for Open Space programs; by advocating for sustainability and expansion of Open Space programs; and by encouraging increased public involvement with and use of Open Space lands.

Albuquerque's Open Space Division Celebrates Its 40th Anniversary, as Does Rex Funk



Albuquerque's first OSD director, Rex Funk, riding in open space

"I am glad I shall never be young without wild country to be young in. Of what avail are forty freedoms without a blank spot on the map?" Aldo Leopold

Aldo Leopold, author of *Sand County Almanac*, is one of the heroes of the Open Space story in Albuquerque in the first decades of the 20th century. Rex Funk is a much more recent but at least equally important hero of the last half-century's effort to save open space areas in the Albuquerque area. As we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Open Space Division (OSD) of Albuquerque's Parks and Recreation Department, Rex was willing to talk recently about what led to the founding of OSD with him as superintendent in 1984.

Asked to identify heroes of the movement that make Albuquerque the American city with the most park and open space, Rex mentioned Leopold, but also city officials such as Mayor Harry Kinney and Councilors Pat Baca, Bob White, Alan Reed, Vince Griego, and Nadyne Bicknell, as well as Albuquerque's Parks and Recreation Department directors, past and present.

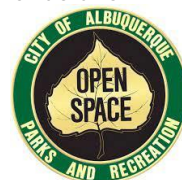
Matt Schmader, who was OSD superintendent for many of the years between Funk and current OSD superintendent Colleen Langan-McRoberts, co-authored a book with Rex Funk, [Albuquerque's Open Space Story](#). It and a wonderfully-photographed history of our own "Blank Space" are both available on the city's web site at <https://www.cabq.gov/parksandrecreation/open-space/about-open-space>, along with a short summary of the division's illustrious history.

Fifteen years before becoming OSD's first superintendent, Rex Funk arrived in Albuquerque in 1969 to teach science at West Mesa High School. A lover of the outdoors, he quickly became an open space advocate working with the Bosque Society to establish a nature center and preserve along the Rio Grande in Albuquerque. He was instrumental in bringing the Bosque Society and three other advocating for open space preservation, Save the Volcanoes, Save Our Sandias, and Save the Arroyos, together to form the Open Space Task Force.

With prodding from the Open Space Task Force and support from Mayor Kinney, the city began to acquire land, with the help of city council and state legislature and federal agencies. Beginning with the area around Albuquerque's petroglyphs and with a twenty-mile corridor that became the Rio Grande State Park, Albuquerque's open space has continued to grow ever since.

"I came to Albuquerque from Los Angeles," Rex Funk told me, "and experienced sixty-mile drives from the city to any open space. We had a chance here, with lots of land available" – our very own blank space. Rex served as OSD superintendent for 15 years, before retiring to spend time with another of his many interests, woodworking. "I do wood-turning, marquetry, sculpture, and some furniture making," Rex told me after I had discovered his fine work on the [Corrales Society of Artists' website](#). We are altogether fortunate to enjoy his talents here in the metro area.

There will be a 40th anniversary celebration September 24 at the Open Space Visitor Center. If interested, call OSVC at 505-768-4950 for details.



Jeannie Allen, OSA Member, Heads the Friends of Candelaria Nature Preserve, an OSA Committee



Jeannie Allen photo by Kathy .Chilton.

leads the volunteer group, Friends of Candelaria Nature Preserve, a committee of the Open Space Alliance, through which she and her committee are restoring land near the Rio Grande Nature Center to a more natural state after many years as a farm, again bringing together city government and contractors in the effort – the Candelaria Nature Reserve is currently open for guided tours on the last Friday of each month from 10-12, leaving from the brand-new observation platform just west of the west end of Arbor Road. north of Candelaria and Rio Grande. Unlike much of Albuquerque’s wonderful Open Space, the Candelaria Nature Reserve is fenced, allowing “Nature study and recreation while disturbing wildlife as little as possible.”

While Jeannie Allen became an OSA board member in 2023, she says that her love of nature has always been fundamental to her life and career choices. She and her brother, the late, beloved Kip Allen, purchased 33 forested acres southeast of Angel Fire in 1972, when her connections to now-cherished New Mexico landscapes began.

Between then and now, Jeannie worked for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration for 20 years and for the National Geographic Society for 15 years, both in the Washington, D.C. area. In both positions, she says, “my specialty was interpreting scientific research for the purpose of educating teachers and students, putting science into usable formats for classrooms and parks.” She also cites her experience linking conservationists and city government and contractors.

Having moved to New Mexico, she is retired and

Jeannie loves to hike, to ramble in the woods and to “discover stuff and to be surprised,” often with her partner, poet and musicologist Bill Nevins. For example, she notes the Reserve’s Swainson’s hawks which make the hard-to-believe annual journey from here to Argentina and back and badgers and bobcats, the presence of which, she says, indicates an abundance of prey on the Reserve. She is known for her nature photographs, including photos of the sandhill cranes in her back yard

Less able to accompany her at this point on her walks around Albuquerque’s Open Space are her two cherished sons, Dr. Zev Gurman, who is in his last year as an emergency medicine trainee at UNM Hospital, and Moses Gurman, who does computer design in California.



Other OSA board members include Robin Abrett, Kent Swanson, Lance Chilton, Steve Glass and Bill Pentler.



BUZZING BEASTS

By Richard Shackley
and Steve Shackley



If you have spent time patrolling the Foothills trails, exploring the Petroglyphs, strolling around the Volcanoes, hiking the East Mountains, or just working in your garden, you have probably heard a “buzzing” sound in the leaf litter, under a Juniper tree, or in an outcrop of rocks. The sound could have been the rustling of leaves in the wind, or the singing of **Western Diamondback Rattlesnake** the cricket-like Cicada. But it could also have been the buzzing sound from the ultra-fast shaking tail of a Rattler, or Rattlesnake.

Snakes have been slithering around for over 160 million years, but the Rattlesnake is a more recent critter to emerge on the snake family tree, having first rattled its tail some 4 million years ago. There are about 36 known species of Rattlesnakes with between 65 and 70 subspecies, and are found only in the Americas. From the southern tip of Argentina to southern Canada, and from the Eastern Seaboard to the California Channel Islands, but the Rattlesnake is most common in the Southwestern United States and Northern Mexico.

In New Mexico, there are 7 to 9 species of Rattlesnakes but only 4 have been found in Bernalillo County and Albuquerque. The Western Diamondback Rattlesnake (*Crotalus atrox*, pictured above) can be found throughout the greater Albuquerque area (and throughout most of New Mexico); the Prairie or Western Rattlesnake (*Crotalus viridis viridis*) found mostly on the West Mesa (widespread throughout the Midwest); the Northern Black-Tailed Rattlesnake (*Crotalus molossus molossus*), preferring higher elevations in and around coniferous forests; and the less common Desert (Western) Massasagua (*Sistrurus catanatus edwardsii*), rare today due to habitat loss in grasslands and wetter environments.

Rattlesnakes are peculiar not only for their rattle (made of Keratin, like your fingernails), but they are in a group of just a few reptiles that give “live birth”. Rattlesnake are ambush predators and like all pit vipers, they have two organs that can sense infra-red radiation, and a set of heat-sensing "pits" below their eyes that help them locate their prey. Their tongues collect scent molecules helping to guide the snake’s blindingly fast strike. But don’t fret, they aren’t people hunters! People do get bitten by Rattlesnakes but fatalities are rare, and with proper and immediate medical attention, full recovery can be expected. If you come across a Rattlesnake, don’t be too alarmed. They won’t chase you, they won’t hypnotize you, and they usually won’t bite you unless you are careless enough to stick your hands or feet in places in which you can’t see, or foolish enough to try and catch them. Just be careful when scrambling through the outback and if you come across a Buzzing Beast, give it a wide berth, watch your step, and respect the awesome critter you have encountered.

We want you!... to join us and/or to donate toward our work.

Please see how to support our efforts at openspacealliance.org. And you’re always welcome at our meetings.

