

# 2024 Monte Vista Crane Festival

## Event Schedule

**Fri, Mar 08, 2024**

7:00 AM

### **Bus Tour: Morning Crane Tour**

🕒 7:00 AM - 9:00 AM, Mar 8

📍 Ski Hi West Entrance

Expert-led bus tour to Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge to learn all about Sandhill Cranes. You will meet the bus at the West Entrance of the Ski Hi Complex. Bring warm clothes and water. Restrooms are available at two stops.

9:00 AM

### **Craft & Nature Fair**

🕒 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM, Mar 8

📍 Ski Hi Exhibit Area

Stop by the newly renovated Ski Hi Complex in Monte Vista to enjoy local works of art, handcrafted jewelry, fiber wares, photography, carvings, fine baked goods, and so much more at the Nature Art and Craft Fair.

This event is FREE and provides fun for all ages!



10:00 AM

### **Bus Tour: Blanca Wetlands**

🕒 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM, Mar 8

📍 Ski Hi West Entrance

**BLM Blanca Wetlands: Tour the Blanca Wildlife Habitat Area located southwest of the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve.**

Blanca Wetlands is closed to the public from Feb 15 to July 15 to protect nesting waterfowl, shorebirds, and other wildlife, so this is a special access tour. The tour hosts will guide you to the accessible ponds for wildlife viewing. We will spend approximately two hours at the wetlands with return travel to the Ski Hi Complex around 2:00 p.m. Restrooms will be available on site. Be sure to bring water, hiking boots, a lunch or snacks, and personal items such as binoculars and camera. Dress for late winter/early spring conditions. For more information please see the website at: <https://www.blm.gov/visit/blanca-wetlands>.

The wetlands are about a 45 minute to one hour drive from Monte Vista. The wetlands cover almost 10,000 acres and contain about two hundred shallow basins holding wet meadows, salt flats, marshes and freshwater ponds. Wetland vegetation in the playas includes soft stem bulrush, cattail, alkaline bulrush, spike rush, sago pondweed, longleaf pondweed and watermilfoil. About 1,200 acres are watered each year, while other parts are deliberately allowed to dry up.

Blanca Wetlands is managed by the San Luis Valley BLM Field Office, located in Monte Vista. The wetlands are one of the most important areas for birds in Colorado because they provide habitat for migrating waterfowl, water birds and shorebirds. It hosts thirteen threatened, endangered and sensitive species. The snowy plover and white-faced ibis have been documented as nesting here during the breeding season. Examples of other Species of Management Priority include American bittern, American avocet, common yellowthroat, eared grebe, and Forster's tern. Although sandhill cranes may be spotted at Blanca Wetlands during the tour, they are considered uncommon and observing more than a few here is a rarity. Shorebirds such as gulls, sandpipers and waterbirds such as pelicans and snowy egret occur here during summer, as well as 158 other species. The wetlands are also a duck breeding concentration area, with mallards by far the most common, but also good numbers of pintail and green-winged teal. The wetlands are important for conserving amphibians in the San Luis Valley. There is a healthy population of Great Plains toads as well as the plains spadefoot toad, western chorus frog, leopard frog and tiger salamander. There are several species of bats that utilize the wetlands. The least chipmunk is common in the greasewood parks that adjoin the wetlands and the Ord's kangaroo rat lives in the sand dunes. Muskrats and coyotes are present, and mule deer and elk are often seen in the wetland area.

During the Crane Festival Tour the most common species encountered will likely include various species of waterfowl, winter raptors such as rough-legged and red-tailed hawks, and resident songbirds. Keep your eyes out for wintering bald eagles, resident golden eagles, an early killdeer or red-winged blackbirds, and perhaps a prairie falcon on the wing. We may also see mule deer or elk, coyotes, or other small mammals. Look for their tracks while hiking.

**Art Exhibit: Making the Invisible Visible**

🕒 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM, Mar 8

📍 Ski Hi Room 3

Making the Invisible Visible - Enjoy artist Jocelyn Catterson's work addressing the natural resource issue of ground water recharge in the San Luis Valley.

10:30 AM

**Drive Yourself Tour: Home Lake Guided Birding**

🕒 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM, Mar 8

📍 Monte Vista Middle School

**Special Tour: Home Lake State Wildlife Area Guided Birding Tour**

Home Lake Guided Birding Tour: Join local ornithologist and author John Rawinski for a guided birding tour around Home Lake, a local hot spot for waterfowl, shorebirds and bald eagles.

John will share his extensive knowledge of local birds and where to find them. This tour is suitable for beginner to advanced birders and will involve walking for less than a mile, on level ground.

Meet at the Monte Vista Middle School Parking lot opposite Home Lake at 10:30 a.m., bring binoculars and dress for the weather! Spotting scopes, provided by Friends of the San Luis Valley National Wildlife Refuges, may be available for closer viewing on the lake.

Home Lake is a 64 acre State Wildlife Area (SWA) managed by the Colorado Parks and Wildlife. A hunting/fishing license or SWA pass is not required to access this property.

Home Lake is located approximately 1 ½ miles east of the Ski Hi Complex on Sherman Avenue. We will meet our tour host on-site and spend 1 ½ hours birding the lake and immediate vicinity. Be sure to bring water, hiking boots, a lunch or snacks, and personal items such as binoculars and camera. Dress in layers for late winter/early spring conditions.

Additional information and maps regarding Home Lake SWA can be found at the following links:

<https://cpw.state.co.us/swa/Home%20Lake%20SWA>

11:00 AM

### Drive Yourself Tour: Trinchera Ranch Conservation Tour + Lunch

🕒 11:00 AM - 2:30 PM, Mar 8

📍 Trinchera Ranch

#### Trinchera Ranch Conservation Tour and Lunch

Join staff of the Trinchera Ranch for a half-day tour and lunch and learn about the Ranch's conservation work including adaptive forestry, rangeland, riparian, stream, wildlife and fisheries management and be inspired to be part of the change. Staff will do a conservation overview at the lodge and participants will enjoy a chef prepared lunch and then spend about 2 hours exploring the conservation work. The tour of conservation work will be in 4WD Trinchera Ranch vehicles and depend on weather and road conditions. Wear sturdy walking shoes, dress for late winter/early spring conditions and bring water and binoculars.

**Drive personal vehicle to Trinchera Ranch (located 1 hour 10 minutes from Monte Vista, just East of Fort Garland, CO). Meet at 11:00. Directions will be provided upon registration.**

#### Trinchera Ranch

With more than 172,000 acres in Southern Colorado's rugged Sangre de Cristo Mountains, Trinchera Ranch stewards large, undeveloped landscapes for wildlife habitat and the enjoyment of future generations. Our managers specialize in forestry and ecology as we seek new ways to manage lands affected by a variety of everchanging ecological conditions. We employ a variety of best management practices that help us adaptively work to offset disturbance and promote long-term sustainable landscapes. We work to manage each ecological steppe that is present on the Ranch to ensure quality outcomes for the wildlife they support.

Trinchera partners with local, regional, and national conservation groups and researchers to offer educational opportunities to students of all ages. From educational tours of the ranch, to providing enriching field experiences for interns, we seek to inspire and train the next generation of scientists to protect western landscapes. Our Conservation goals support a conservation ethos, that provides access to a living classroom, where conservations of all levels feel inspired.

1:00 PM

### Speaker + Bus Tour: Crane Basics

🕒 1:00 PM - 3:30 PM, Mar 8

📍 Ski Hi Conference Room 4

*This tour will begin with a classroom presentation in Ski Hi Conference Room 4, then you will board a bus to watch cranes at the Refuge. (Classroom 1 to 1:30, bus ride to Refuge return to Ski Hi by 3:30PM.)*

When watching a group of Sandhill Cranes did you ever wish you knew more about these elegant birds, what they're doing and why? Our Crane Basics workshop is your opportunity to learn more about crane biology and behavior. You will gain insights into crane migration, family life, body language, and vocalizations through our photographs and captivating video which we will then take into the field for practice. It's the knowledge that will significantly enhance your crane-watching experience!

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#### 👤 Speaker



**Erv Nichols and Sandra Noll**

2:00 PM

### Artist Talk: Jocelyn Catterson - Making the Invisible Visible

🕒 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM, Mar 8

📍 Ski Hi Room 3

Hear artist Jocelyn Catterson discuss her artwork "Making the Invisible Visible," addressing the natural resource issue of ground water recharge in the San Luis Valley.

4:00 PM

### Bus Tour: Evening Crane Tour

🕒 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM, Mar 8

📍 Ski Hi West Entrance

Expert-led bus tour to Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge to learn all about Sandhill Cranes. Bring warm clothes and water. Restrooms are available at two stops.

Sat, Mar 09, 2024

7:00 AM

### Bus Tour: Morning Crane Tour

🕒 7:00 AM - 9:00 AM, Mar 9

📍 Ski Hi West Entrance

Expert-led bus tour to Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge to learn all about Sandhill Cranes. You will meet the bus at the West Entrance of the Ski Hi Complex. Bring warm clothes and water. Restrooms are available at two stops.

9:00 AM

### Speaker + Bus Tour: Spring Creek Archaeology Site

🕒 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM, Mar 9

📍 Ski Hi Conference Room 4

Trip leader: Jen Kolsie, Archaeologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

We will visit the Spring Creek Site, located on the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge (weather permitting). This site is usually closed to the public and contains hundreds of cultural artifacts going back more than 10,000 years. Artifacts that span from the Paleoindians (the first well-documented humans in North America), all the way to a historic homestead on the site have been discovered. Bones of extinct Pleistocene Megafauna (the Ice Age giants) such as Mammoths, Camels, Horses, and Bison have also been found. Before heading into the field a short lecture on the site will be given in a small conference room at Ski Hi.

#### 🗣️ Speaker



**Jen Kolise**

USFWS Regional Historic Preservation Officer, Mountain-Prairie Region

### Craft & Nature Fair Day 2

🕒 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM, Mar 9

📍 Ski Hi Exhibit Area

Stop by the newly renovated Ski Hi Complex in Monte Vista to enjoy local works of art, handcrafted jewelry, fiber wares, photography, carvings, fine baked goods, and so much more at the Nature Art and Craft Fair.

This event is FREE and provides fun for all ages!



10:00 AM

### Bus Tour: Raptor Tour

🕒 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM, Mar 9

📍 Ski Hi West Entrance

Experts from Hawks Aloft will lead a bus tour to view and learn about local raptors. You might see a red-tailed hawk on a power pole, a northern harrier gliding across the field, or a rough-legged hawk hunting. You may also see bald eagles, peregrine falcons, prairie falcons, rough-legged hawks, and kestrels in the winter. There will be the opportunity to stop and view raptors through spotting scopes. Bring your binoculars, and snacks, and dress warmly for spring weather.

### Bus Tour: Penitente Canyon

🕒 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM, Mar 9

📍 Ski Hi West Entrance

## BLM Penitente Canyon Recreation Area

Explore the rock walls and pinnacles of Penitente Canyon Recreation Area, which is managed by the San Luis Valley Field Office, located in Monte Vista. Penitente Canyon harbors nearly 300 world-class climbing routes that test the abilities and endurance of technical rock climbers some of whom may be present during our visit. The rocks in Penitente Canyon are remnants of up to 18 volcanic eruptions that took place in the San Juan Volcanic Field between 20 and 30 million years ago. The largest of these eruptions spewed 1,000 cubic miles of ash 27.8 million years ago, creating a huge underground chamber. Rocks overlying the chamber collapsed to create the La Garita Caldera.

There is an extensive trail system at Penitente that offers excellent hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding. The trails wander through juniper, pinion, and ponderosa pine forest where resident wildlife species associated with these woodland habitat types may be present for viewing during our tour. Keep your eyes open for unique species such as canyon wrens and prairie falcons. The expansive view of the San Luis Valley and Sangre de Cristo range to the east is sure to be awe-inspiring. For an extended stay, a developed campground and primitive camping are both available.

Penitente Canyon has a unique history as a spiritual haven for a Spanish religious group long ago. In the more recent past, the "Virgin de Guadalupe" was painted onto one of the canyon walls. In addition, the [Old Spanish National Historic Trail](#), formerly a 19th century Mexican trade route, passes by this area. Pictographs made by Ute, Jicarilla Apache, and Puebloans are visible in the area.

We will arrive at the parking lot at the end of Road 5201 around 10:45 to 11:00 a.m. and spend around 3 hours there. Restrooms will be available on site. Be sure to bring water, hiking boots, a lunch or snacks, and personal items such as binoculars and camera. Dress for late winter/early spring conditions. For more information please see the website at: <https://www.blm.gov/visit/penitente-canyon>.

### **Art Exhibit: Making the Invisible Visible (Saturday)**

🕒 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM, Mar 9

📍 Ski Hi Room 3

Making the Invisible Visible - Enjoy artist Jocelyn Catterson's work addressing the natural resource issue of ground water recharge in the San Luis Valley.

10:30 AM

### **Artist Talk: Jocelyn Catterson - Making the Invisible Visible (Sat. AM)**

🕒 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM, Mar 9

📍 Ski Hi Room 3

Hear artist Jocelyn Catterson discuss her artwork "Making the Invisible Visible," addressing the natural resource issue of ground water recharge in the San Luis Valley.

11:00 AM

### **Keynote and All Talk Series Ticket**

🕒 11:00 AM - 7:00 PM, Mar 9

📍 Banquet Room/Conference Room 1

This ticket gives you access to all of Saturday's expert speakers including the evening keynote address.

- **11 AM - Conservation efforts for the Rio Grande sucker and Rio Grande chub on the Baca Refuge - Cole Brittain**
- **1 PM - Water and Waterfowl in Colorado: Lessons Learned from South to North - Casey Setash**
- **3 PM - Lesser Prairie Chicken Recovery Efforts in Colorado - Jonathan Reitz**
- **7 PM - Lessons from Indigenous Lifeways and Our Feathered Relatives - Aimee Roberson**

### **Speaker: Cole Brittain, Rio Grande Sucker and Chub at Baca NWR**

🕒 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM, Mar 9

📍 Banquet Room/Conference Room 1

The Baca Refuge has two imperiled native fish species, the Rio Grande sucker and Rio Grande chub, that are native to the Rio Grande drainage. The population of Rio Grande suckers is only one of two aboriginal populations left in the entire state of Colorado. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has worked to protect and expand the current population with help from local partners such as Colorado Parks & Wildlife and the Great Sand Dunes National Park. Together, great strides have been made to keep these species on the landscape and ensure their future in the San Luis Valley.



#### Speaker



#### Cole Brittain

Fisheries biologist for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Gunnison, Colorado

1:00 PM

#### Speaker: Casey Setash, Water & Waterfowl in Colorado

🕒 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM, Mar 9

📍 Banquet Room/Conference Room 1

Water is an increasingly limited resource in Colorado and the primary resource necessary to conserve waterbirds across the arid West. From flood-irrigated hay meadows to wetland impoundments, different water applications create different types of waterfowl habitat of variable quality and scale up to impact waterfowl distributions and population status. Join Casey Setash to hear results from research spanning the San Luis Valley and North Park, Colorado about why water is so vital and how wildlife managers can most effectively use limited resources to sustain waterfowl populations in the state.



#### Speaker



#### Casey Setash

Avian researcher for Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Fort Collins, CO

#### Speaker + Bus Tour: Crane Basics (Saturday)

🕒 1:00 PM - 3:30 PM, Mar 9

📍 Ski Hi Conference Room 4

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2:30 PM

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🕒 2:30 PM - 3:30 PM, Mar 9

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3:00 PM

**Speaker: Jonathan Reitz, Lesser Prairie Chicken Recovery in Colorado**

🕒 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM, Mar 9

📍 Banquet Room/Conference Room 1

The lesser prairie-chicken is an icon of Colorado's southeastern prairies. Due to a long list of environmental and anthropogenic factors, they nearly become extirpated in extreme southeast Colorado and southwestern Kansas, in an area that was considered one of the species' core areas. In an effort to recover the species on and around the Comanche and Cimarron National Grasslands, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Kansas Wildlife Parks and Tourism, and Kansas State University partnered up and embarked on an unprecedented project for lesser prairie-chickens. Over the course of four years, a small army of biologists, wildlife technicians, and graduate students caught and translocated over 400 lesser-prairie chickens to the US Forest Service Grasslands. First and foremost, project partners wanted to take a significant step towards recovering this dwindling population on the sandsage prairie. But, another major goal was to determine if trapping and transplanting could even work and if it can be a viable "tool" that should be included in the "lesser prairie-chicken conservation tool box". In many ways, this challenging project was the first of its kind. Biologists had no idea whether or not the bird's own instincts and behaviors would get in the way of success.



🗣️ Speaker



**Jonathan Reitz**

Wildlife Biologist Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Lamar, Colorado

4:00 PM

**Bus Tour: Evening Crane Tour (Saturday)**

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7:00 PM

**Keynote: Aimee Roberson, Lesson from Indigenous Lifeways and Values**

🕒 7:00 PM - 10:00 PM, Mar 9

📍 Banquet Room/Conference Room 1

In this time of crises — climate change, ecocide, declining biodiversity, social inequity and injustice — many of us are wondering how we can make a difference. Sharing compelling stories from her life, career, and culture, Aimee Roberson will discuss how these things are interconnected and why she believes that an understanding of Indigenous lifeways and values can help us envision and create a better future for all of us — birds and people alike.



#### Speaker



**Aimee Roberson**

Director of the Southwest Region for American Bird Conservancy

## Sun, Mar 10, 2024

8:00 AM

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🕒 8:00 AM - 10:00 AM, Mar 10

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10:30 AM

### **Bus Tour: Raptor Tour (Sunday)**

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