

GUAJALOTES, ZOPILOTES, Y PAISANOS

NEWSLETTER OF THE HILLSBORO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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NON-PROFIT STATUS

The Hillsboro Historical Society now has non-profit status, which allows us to accept donations of money and real estate and allows donors to claim tax deductions. We have formed a Board of Directors made up of local residents interested in preserving and displaying the history of Hillsboro and its surroundings.

PURCHASE OF THE SIERRA COUNTY COURTHOUSE AND JAIL PROPERTY

On November 11, 2008, our board voted to pursue purchase of the Sierra County Courthouse and Jail property from Dr. James Sullivan. A current appraisal places the value of this property at \$96,000. In previous negotiations, Dr. Sullivan stated that he would like to retain the small family building on the property for future personal use. This building resides on two of the six platted lots on the courthouse property. Adjusting our offer to leave ownership of these two lots with Dr. Sullivan lead us to offer \$65,000 for the remainder of the property. We hope to raise immediately a down payment of \$25,000 and to use annual fundraising effort to make payments. Our contract will be written to allow us to make full payment for the property at any time, with no penalty, and we would like to pay the property off as soon as possible.

An alternative offer of the full \$96,000 will also be presented to Dr. Sullivan, again with a \$25,000 down payment. This is our preferred offer, if Dr. Sullivan is willing to sell the entire holding.

We will be contacting all who pledged to help with the courthouse and jail purchase.

ORAL HISTORIES

An important activity of our organization is maintaining an archive of oral histories by pioneers of the Hillsboro area. We have an interview of Fred "Stretch" Luna regarding his grandmother, Romy Luna Bird. Recently, R. D. Brinkley, an ancestor of Tom Ross, who owned the Ladder Ranch, interviewed Donald Graham and Art Evans during a 5 1/2 hour trip across the ranch. Donald is from an old ranching family in the Kingston area; Art was the manager of Ladder Ranch for many years. Both have a detailed knowledge of the history of ranching and early families in the Hillsboro/Kingston area. Nicole Trushell of Kingston has agreed to transcribe the interview and has expressed interest in helping with other interviews.

Mr. Brinkley has also sent us a written interview of Emmitt Faulkner that he made last March. This interview is especially valuable, because Emmitt has since passed away. We need to capture the knowledge and memories of all of the old timers as soon as possible. So much passes with them (us?).

March 2, 2008

From notes of Emmitt Faulkner interview, by Ron Brinkley. I asked Emmitt if I could record the conversation, but Emmitt quietly said no: "Up to now, I can go anywhere I want."

Emmitt Faulkner

Emmitt Faulkner was born on November 4, 1932 in his uncle's house in Caballo, New Mexico, a town that is now submerged under Caballo Lake, just south of Hot Springs, now named Truth or Consequences. Emmitt has 2 brothers, one of them a twin, Emory, and 2 sisters, one of them who has died.

Emmitt's grandfather had come out west from Tennessee; the census shows Faulkners as early as 1850 in Texas. Emmitt's father Ira was born in Texas. As a baby Ira moved with the family to Carlsbad, New Mexico, then on to Magdalena. Ira soon patented land near Winston, put cattle on it, and fell into cowboying in the area.

Ira soon got a job on the Crews Ranch near the Ladder Ranch and met his wife Martha, Emmitt's mother, near Hatch; she was also from a ranch.

Emmitt and Emory were born while their parents worked on the Crews Ranch, though the couple went down to Ira's brother's in Caballo to have the baby. When Emmitt was old enough, he went to school in Hillsboro, then rode the bus to Hot Springs for high school.

The family continued to live and work on the Crews Ranch until old man Crews sold the ranch to the Ladder Ranch, owned by Sam Lard. It was 1934 and Emmitt was 2 years old. At the sale the Faulkner family moved to Hillsboro. Ira bought a garage there to work on cars, the "Model A Garage". It was a pretty good business for years. They sold the garage in 1949 when Emmitt was 17 years old. Ira went back to cowboying. Emmitt and his brothers would work on nearby ranches on weekends occasionally, doing general ranch work.

A couple of years after Ira Faulkner sold the garage, they sold their house in Hillsboro, too, and went back to working on the Ladder Ranch. Ira cowboied Ladder and worked for Bob Lard about 1951-52. There weren't many Lards around anymore. Work went day to day, the ups and downs evened themselves out. They raised their own hay. There were three to four different camps on the Ladders; it was so big--give or take 400 sections--one guy couldn't do it all.

OTHER HISTORIC PROPERTIES IN HILLSBORO

The downtown area of Hillsboro is blessed with an unusual array of historic houses and commercial buildings, most of which have been well maintained or sensitively restored. As an ongoing feature of this newsletter, we'd like to present one of these houses in each issue. We start here with what has been called the "Murphy" house, located on Elenora Street. The name Murphy has been applied to the house, because presumably Sheriff Murphy once lived there. We do not know for sure if he ever owned it, nor do we know how long he might have resided in the house. In fact, at least two members of our board, themselves old-timers, question the name for the house. As with so many historical structures, the facts are difficult to acquire. We welcome information from anyone who knows of these things.

A LITTLE "NATURAL" HISTORY

I believe that citizens of a small town like Hillsboro should contribute their knowledge and talents to help make it an interesting place to live. Having worked as a wildlife biologist in the southwestern United States for some 50 years, my contribution might be in helping folks see and understand their natural surroundings and their history. I'd like to offer occasional writings about our wild creatures and wild landscapes. Don't expect tirades regarding endangered species and threatened landscapes. I may have opinions on some of these issues, but my purpose here is to encourage simple enjoyment of our unique natural surroundings. Note that I'm calling myself a naturalist, not a biologist. Biology is a profession, which implies work. I once worked as a biologist, but I'm at a stage in life where work is something I try to avoid. I want to take time I never had when gainfully employed to see, reflect, and enjoy the natural scene, within its historical context, without the responsibility of study plans, long technical reports, or "management" recommendations.

Doves and Pigeons of Hillsboro

Because of an incident that happened while Patty and I were moving to Hillsboro from Arizona, I'll offer a Hillsboro *Natural* History of our wild doves and pigeons. On one of our many moving trips (14 to be exact), we arrived one January night - after storm. Our old suburban, pulling a very wide load, crunched half-foot frozen snow from Deming to Hillsboro. We were in four wheel drive after turning at Nutt, mainly to stay on the road. And sometimes we weren't quite sure we were on the road anyway.

The next morning, I stepped out on the front porch at dawn. The date was January 4, 2001. Our thermometer registered four degrees. Snow was six inches deep. The first sound to reach my ears was the familiar "who cooks for you" of a white-winged dove---a creature I'd studied for Arizona Game and Fish Department during the 1950s. Actually, I'd grown up hunting whitewings each September in the farmlands and desert southwest of Phoenix. I thought I knew a

lot about whitewings. One thing I thought I knew was that they always migrated to Mexico and beyond by the middle of September. By October 1, you'd be hard-pressed to find a white-winged dove in Arizona, and certainly none would be trying to breed.

So a whitewing calling in midwinter got my attention and sent me to my library to see what was different about New Mexico. I found some surprising things. Whitewings summer along nearly all of Arizona's desert rivers and throughout the Sonoran desert, well into the northern half of the state. But J. Stokley Ligon, a biologist who wandered all over New Mexico from 1907 to 1961 wrote:

"The white-winged doves occur only in the extreme southwestern corner of the State—in the Gila River Valley as far up as Cliff and thence southward to the Mexican boundary. I have found them to be most abundant in the Cloverdale section of Hidalgo County, where they nest. These birds seem to confine their distribution in New Mexico largely to the stream courses and canyons along which grow the spreading Arizona Sycamores."

This quote comes from Ligon's *WildLife of New Mexico—its conservation and management*. It was published in 1927. It's not an easy book to find these days and might cost you a C-note in good condition. According to Ligon, whitewings didn't visit Hillsboro area back then.

By 1961, when Ligon's *Birds of New Mexico* was published, he noted that the bird summered from the south Rio Grande Valley west to Arizona and north to Glenwood, Cliff, Silver City, and San Lorenzo and was seen in Las Cruces and on the east side of the Guadalupe Mountains near the Texas line. He calls the bird migratory.

The whitewing now ranges well up the Rio Grande valley and is fairly common around Albuquerque. Patty and I saw one a few years ago at Hubbell Trading Post on the Navajo Reservation, and it has recently been seen in Farmington. It has thus expanded its range northward during the past 70 years, at some point arriving in Hillsboro.

The tendency of whitewings to winter here is to me surprising. All of the early writers called it migratory and considered New Mexico to be summer range only. Many of the whitewings hatched around Hillsboro still migrate and by mid-August every year, flocks of 10-50 young of the year can be seen staging for their southward trip. Only a small proportion of the total summer population stays for the winter. Interestingly, the young birds migrate ahead of the adults, apparently unguided, on their first trip to winter range.

For those who haven't noticed, Hillsboro has five-- rarely six--wild Columbids --the collective term for pigeons and doves, as they all belong to the family Columbidae. For a small village like Hillsboro, such diversity is amazing. In addition to the whitewing, mourning doves are abundant, although these tend to hang out in the desert shrubs and mesquites around town more than in the large trees in town. Mourning doves, too, are migratory, and banding studies over the years indicate that those summering here probably go south in the winter, to be replaced by migrants who summer further north and consider

southern New Mexico winter range. And a few mourning doves, like whitewings, are probably non-migratory and stay yearlong.

Another native Columbidae is the diminutive Inca Dove. This dove is perhaps a little smaller than a robin. Its feathers have buff tips that make it look as if it had fish scales. Its call is familiar around Hillsboro—a two note, descending, coo-coo, repeated over and over. It can often be seen on the ground seeking seeds and small gravel.

The fourth native Columbidae that occurs sporadically in town is the band-tailed pigeon. This is a larger bird, almost as big as a domestic pigeon. It nests in the conifer forests up on the Black Range and visits Hillsboro in flocks, especially when mulberries are ripe. These flocks fly from the mountain down into town during daylight, feed, then fly back to the mountain to roost.

A little native dove that occasionally shows up here is the Mexican ground dove. I've seen only one since we moved here. It's about the same size as the Inca dove and similar in color, but it has a stubby tail. Its call is more of a guttural growl than a coo.

The final wild dove that has arrived in Hillsboro only during the past decade is the Collared Dove. This one looks like a pale version of the whitewing, or perhaps the bandtail, but it lacks the whitewing's diagnostic wing crescents. Its call is an ongoing rhythmic ca-coooo-coo repeated many times. Its tone varies little but ends with a downward emphasis, which makes the bird sound depressed. This is an exotic from Eurasia that entered the U. S. in the Caribbean and has rapidly expanded its range. It appears to be associated with non-native pines in urbanized areas and rarely settles outside of towns. I don't remember seeing one until our second or third year in Hillsboro. It now rivals the whitewings in numbers.

So, to summarize, Hillsboro commonly has five native and one exotic columbidae. These are:

White-winged dove. Gray-brown. Adults have purple on back of head and neck. White wing crescents. Repeated "who cooks for you" call.

Mourning dove. Fairly uniformly brown with black spots on back. Little other color. No wing marks. Call a elongated cooo (with rising inflection, coooo, coo, coo, coo (declining inflection). Inca Dove. Smaller than either whitewing or mourning dove. Ruddy brown with "scales" over entire body. Call "coo-coo" repeated many times over. Sounds like "no hope."

Band-tailed pigeon. Larger than the whitewings. Blue-gray color with a dark band across the end of tail feathers. A narrow black crescent around back of head. Call seldom heard in town but fairly common in the forests above town. It is a guttural growl much like that made by a domestic pigeon.

Mexican ground dove. Seldom seen. Same size as Inca dove, but with a very stubby tail.

Eurasian collared dove. Now common in Hillsboro. Intermediate in size to whitewing and band-tailed pigeon. Usually paler in color than

either, although varies considerable in coloration. It has a black collar around the back of its neck, as opposed to the bandtail, which has a white collar.

A point of interest to me is the lack of domestic pigeons, a species that becomes a nuisance in most urban areas. You have to wonder why they haven't found us. Maybe the field is just too crowded for pigeon-like birds for the "rock dove" to make it. Let us hope so.

And finally, to return to our historical theme, Hillsboro now has two wild doves that were scarce or absent 75 years ago: the native whitewing and the newly-arrived collared dove. So things change in nature over time, just as they do in human history.

REQUEST FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

I'd like to make this newsletter a quarterly, published apace with our regular board meetings. If anyone has stories to tell, history of houses or mines, anything appropriate that they might contribute, please send or email them to me at:

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Our next regular meeting will be February 9, 2009. 6PM. Hillsboro Community Center.

AND IN CASE ANYONE IS WONDERING

My suggested title for this newsletter in part acknowledges our town's association with Percha Creek. *Percha* interprets to English as "perch or roost," purportedly deriving from turkey (*guajalotes*) roosts that occur along the creek. Perhaps historically there were more than now. Of course, Hillsboro and Kingston both have their own summer turkey vulture (*zopilotes*) roosts. *Paisanos* are countrymen, a term that applies to us all who live here. For a small town, we are extremely diverse in roots, religion, and politics, yet we remain countrymen, working and helping each other—without formal town government. I hope that a newsletter such as this one might help us sustain that bond. *Paisanos* is also a name applied to roadrunners.