

# ELDORADO VISTAS

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March 2010

## IN THIS ISSUE

ECIA News.....	2-3
In the Community.....	4-5
VOP .....	6
Teen Center .....	6
Birds .....	7
Roads .....	7

Monthly Newsletter of the Eldorado Community Improvement Association

1 La Hacienda Loop, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87508 ▼ (505) 466-4248 ▼ [www.eldoradocommunity.org](http://www.eldoradocommunity.org)

## ECIA's Board of Directors

**"I**f you want something done, ask a busy person" is a maxim not usually found in management textbooks, but it is one that every leader of an agency dependent on volunteers quickly learns. It is a very true statement in the case of the ECIA's Board of Directors. Contrary to what may be popular opinion, a majority of board members have full-time, paying jobs but make room in their schedules to serve our community. With respect to members who are retired, it is not surprising to discover that most of them are heavily engaged in still other volunteer pursuits in the community.

ECIA Board members perform a variety of tasks in their work for us. In addition to attending two Board meetings a month, they each have assignments to act as liaison with one or more of the Association's standing committees, make site visits on covenant compliance issues, and respond to calls of inquiry or complaint from members. These tasks require that they read and understand a pre-meeting packet of information that is seldom described as spare and lean.

Many of us who have lived elsewhere may well have thought of homeowner dues as something to be endured and not something that conferred the immediate benefits of useful and well-run amenities. A story told by **Fred Raznick**, a local realtor who has for years given much of his time and talent to the work of the ECIA, is worth repeating. One of his clients was looking at homes for sale in Eldorado and had been given a list of its many Association-supported programs and amenities. "Can you show me another community in the area that has the same kind and number of amenities?" he asked. Fred's answer: "No, I can't, but let me know if you find one."

The ECIA's amenities are unique in number and quality. The Association's General Manager, hired by the Board, ensures that the following amenities are regularly maintained and improved: Hike-bike trail system (15 paved miles); wilderness preserve (4,000 acres and 20 miles of trails); Community Center (six meeting rooms); outdoor events area (just west of the Community Center, including a ramada and covered porch);

dog park; swimming pool; tennis courts; stable; greenbelts (1,000 acres laced with trails); soccer field; baseball field; and two well-equipped playgrounds.

Although not required to do so by the Association's by-laws, the Board makes an ongoing effort to represent the needs of our residents to local and state governments. Two years ago, the Board's efforts resulted in road improvements in our community. The Board also works with the County Planning Commission to ensure that our concerns are addressed and our needs are met.

The ECIA Board is made up of a varied group of people:

**Ed Benrock**, ECIA President, is a retired CEO of a major security and locksmith company in southern California. Ed has also served as a board member of city planning commissions in California and New Mexico and was vice-president of the board of the Los Angeles County Maritime Museum.

**Mary Ann Caldwell**, an attorney by profession, is a human resources manager for the New Mexico Department of Transportation.

**Ed Moreno** is a facilitator, consultant and associate with a nonprofit public policy conflict resolution company.

**Todd Handy** has a budgetary and financial consulting company.

**Pat Lavengood**, retired, has a generation of experience as a corporate procurement officer.

**Lisa Robles** is a medical doctor and practices in Santa Fe.

By any accounting, we have a diverse and distinguished group looking out for us on the ECIA Board. Service may be its own reward, but its members, nevertheless, deserve our thanks. Attend a Board meeting, even if you don't have a burning issue to bring to their attention. What you will learn will help when you do have a concern and feel that our Association ought to be doing something about it.

—Frank Schober

*ECIA Board  
Meeting,  
Community  
Center, Thurs.,  
March 18,  
7 pm. Public  
is invited.*

## Responsible Dog Ownership in Eldorado

*Share your  
comments  
with us!*

*For policy and  
deadline, see  
below*

### Editorial Policy

*Vistas* invites opinions, ideas, stories, photos, and art from the community at large. Please include contact numbers for fact checking purposes. The newsletter will not publish unsigned letters or material deemed inflammatory. Material will be printed at the discretion of the editors. Letters over 150 words will be edited for fit. Community announcements are welcome; accompanying photos are welcome, too. **DEADLINE:** Newsletter deadline is the 3rd day of each month. Submissions can be dropped off or mailed to the ECIA office or emailed to [ECIADiAna@aol.com](mailto:ECIADiAna@aol.com). Please include "Attn: Vistas" in your message.

### Mission Statement

The mission of *Vistas*, the monthly newsletter of the ECIA, is to inform the Eldorado community about issues before the ECIA Board and the membership at large. By so doing, the publication seeks to foster increased neighborhood pride and community participation in the decision making process.

**I**N RESPONSE TO CONCERNS OF Eldorado residents who felt the community needed better animal control, the ECIA Board of Directors adopted the Responsible Dog Ownership Policy in August 2007. This policy was developed to follow the existing Santa Fe County Animal Control Ordinance while also providing guidelines for dog owners throughout Eldorado's various property settings. The settings covered under the dog policy include all private lands, the greenbelts, all bike paths, the community preserve, the parks, sports fields, and the Eldorado Community Center. These policies are available at the Eldorado Offices as well as on the Eldorado website at [eldoradocommunity.org](http://eldoradocommunity.org).

Even with a detailed Responsible Dog Ownership Policy, violations are still common, accounting for 47 covenant violations in 2009 alone. Dogs barking excessively or being allowed to roam freely outside of the property are two of the most common. A major contributing factor to the many dog policy violations is simple lack of awareness of the policies. In many cases, homeowners fail to inform their renters and house-sitters of our policies and that they too must follow these policies at all times.

Residents can make a big difference in this area in 2010 by observing these dog ownership policies and just remembering some good neighbor dog ownership practices, such as:

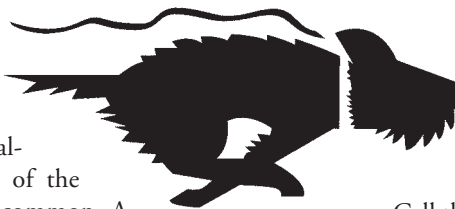
- ▼ Bring in your dog if he/she is barking and bothering your neighbors.

- ▼ Never allow your dog to trespass on private property, or run at large off your property.
- ▼ Always restrain pets from harassing wildlife.
- ▼ Always leash your dog in high use areas such as the bike paths, roads, athletic fields and parks, and anywhere a leash sign is posted.
- ▼ Yield the right of way to other people, including bicyclists and joggers by standing aside and holding dogs under control.
- ▼ Pick up after your dogs and properly dispose of pet waste.

If anyone does encounter a roaming or barking dog, please notify the owner and explain the Eldorado dog policy to them. If the dog owner will not comply, note when and where the violation occurred and call the Santa Fe County Animal Control Division at 428-3720 weekdays from 9 am to 5 pm. Call the sheriff on weekends and after hours at 428-3720. As well, please report all infractions to the ECIA office at 466-4248. The Covenant Compliance Representative, Mark Young, will work with the dog owners to enforce the covenants and hopefully prevent future violations from the offending dog(s).

If you have any questions about the dog policy or enforcement process, please call Mark Young at the ECIA at 466-4248.

*—Mark Young, Covenant Compliance Representative*



## Help Update ECIA's Records

**S**ADLY, ALONG WITH ECIA'S RECENT financial irregularities, some information necessary for the conduct of the Association's business has been lost. The ECIA office staff has devoted much effort to reconstructing and verifying the names and addresses of Association members and of the people who should be receiving the *Vistas*. However, some errors may remain, and we would appreciate your help in correcting any that you find.

If your neighbor is receiving the *Vistas* and you are not, or if you are receiving an issue but under the wrong name, please let us know. Despite the availability of current and back issues on the web at <http://www.eldoradocommunity.org>, we want all residents and owners to have their own printed copy.

Likewise, we want to be sure that all Association members receive an invoice for their \$300 annual assessment. Regrettably, all members owe the assessment whether they receive an invoice or not! If you have not yet received an invoice for 2010, please make certain that we have your current home or business address.

We would also like to have your email address, if you are willing to share it. We do not give out this information to others, but would use it only to reach you quickly if an urgent issue arises.

You may update us by email at [ecommunity@aol.com](mailto:ecommunity@aol.com), or by calling the office at 466-4248.

*—Dan Drobnis*

## From the President's Desk

**T**HE LAST FEW MONTHS HAVE BEEN trying, to say the least, and I have lost some sleep over what has transpired since the ECIA discovered its funds had been embezzled. At this point I would like to thank the Finance Committee under the leadership of **Dan Drobnis** for stepping up big time and putting together a comprehensive change in the financial procedures of the Association. In fact, this committee has come up with 21 suggested changes for handling our funds, which the Board has approved; many of these were implemented quickly. The Finance Committee's report on their recommendations has been available at the ECIA Office in the Community Center. Again I want to thank not only Dan but **Gisela Knight, Todd Handy, Jean Stokes, Pat Bell, Nolan Zisman, and Bob Gaines** (I apologize if I missed anyone). Our community is very fortunate to have volunteers of this professional quality.

I would also like to thank the many residents who emailed and phoned with expressions of support. I

truly appreciate their input. Being the Board President in a community of our size (approximately 7,000 residents) is very time consuming. In fact, there is not a day that I am not talking to the committee chairs, Board directors, and the Association staff about different problems and issues that come up; and, of course, our residents also contact me with their concerns, to which I respond by telephone or email. I have really tried to facilitate communication between the residents of Eldorado, the ECIA Board, and the committees, and I will continue to do so.

I want to thank **Sandy MacGregor** for his service to the community. His wisdom was an asset to the Board. Many thanks, Sandy; your resignation was taken with deep regret.

I am hoping that 2010 will be a better year for the Association. I want to move forward on a positive note this year as your President and, as my good friend and Committee Chair **Frank Schober** has said, "Trust but verify."

*Ed Benrock, ECIA President*

## Run for the Board: Four Positions Open

**A**N UNUSUAL CONFLUENCE OF expiring terms and one unfilled vacancy means that four of the seven positions on the ECIA Board of Directors are available to be filled in the 2010 election cycle. The three expiring terms are currently filled by **Ed Benrock, Mary Ann Caldwell, and Pat Lavengood**. The vacancy arises from the resignation of **Sandy MacGregor** because of business commitments.

Good candidates in the past have often come from active members of the ECIA's nine committees. However, long-time, and even new, Association members have also found service on the Board to be rewarding and illuminating.

Because of the large number of potential vacancies, the usual deadline for filing a nominating petition has been extended a few days to March 12, 2010. To run for the Board, a candidate must:

- ▼ File a petition containing the candidate's name and the signatures of at least 25 owners of property, each of whom must be a Member in Good Standing with the Association, by March 12, 2010. These petitions are available at the ECIA office.

- ▼ Provide a resume and position statement to the ECIA office by March 12, 2010. Samples of previous resumes/statements are available at the ECIA office to provide guidance and ideas.

The Election Committee will validate each candidate's petition by March 19, 2010. Election packets and the notice of the Annual Meeting of the Members will be mailed to each Member in

Good Standing by early April 2010. Ballots must be received by mail at the ECIA office no later than May 1 to be considered valid.

The Election Committee will count ballots and announce the results at the Annual Meeting of the Association Members on Monday, May 3, at 7 pm.

If you have any questions regarding the election procedure, please contact the ECIA office during regular business hours at 466-4248.

*-Dan Drobnis*



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**Todd Handy**  
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**COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS**

**Finance: Dan Drobnis**  
**Architecture: Bill Schwent**  
**Conservation: John Parker & E.J. Evangelos**  
**Stable: Bonita Mamp**  
**Election: Open position**  
**Roads: Nolan Zisman**  
**Information: Frank Schober**  
**Neighborhood Watch: Larry Eccard & Marilyn Walker**  
**Facilities & Grounds: Fred Raznick**

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204-2945  
**Fire and Rescue**  
466-1204  
eldoradofirerescue.org  
**County All Purpose**  
820-CNTY (2689)





Petroglyph from Pueblo Blanca in the Galisteo Basin.



### Galisteo Basin Archaeology

The ECIA Conservation Committee is excited to announce a free evening presentation by our very own local archeologist, **Dr. Eric Blinman**, entitled "Galisteo Basin Archaeology: If You Think Development is a Threat Now, You Should Have Seen It Then." Dr. Blinman, Director of the New Mexico Office of Archaeological Studies, has been involved in archaeology in the western United States since 1967, focusing on ancestral Puebloan archaeology since 1979. His undergraduate training was at UC Berkeley, and his graduate degrees in anthropology are from Washington State University.

The talk will be at the ECIA Community Center at 7 pm on March 23. The talk is free and refreshments will be served. If anyone has any questions, please call the ECIA at 466-4248.

### Book Signing for Local Author

Archaeologist and historian (and Eldorado resident) **Duane Roller** has just completed his tenth book, a biography of Cleopatra (*Cleopatra: A Biography*), published by Oxford University Press. Although written with scholarly integrity, the book is meant to be accessible to nonspecialists. A book signing will be held at Collected Works on March 9.

### El Dorado School Community Garden's 2nd Year

On a recent cold, crisp Saturday, the El Dorado School Community Garden had its first meeting for the 2010 growing season. Key projects for this year include expansion of the communal plot to include a corn and pumpkin patch, addition of 14 more beds for co-op gardeners, and a drip watering system.

The year-old garden, an organic growing and learning environment on 1.5 acres, is a partnership between Eldorado residents and the El Dorado Community School, along with several other volunteer organizations.

If the idea of getting your hands in the dirt, growing your own organic veggies and working with others in a beautiful garden sanctuary calls to you, then please join us. Annual membership is \$30 per person, with an additional \$30 per plot or communal garden participation. Children under 18 are free. Contact **Marilynn Jacobs** at 466-6707 or via email at [eldogarden@comcast.net](mailto:eldogarden@comcast.net).

### Greening Eldorado: Town Hall Meeting

The Eldorado People's Cooperatives, the El Dorado Community School Green Team, the Earth Works Institute, and the ECIA Conservation Committee are co-sponsoring a "town hall" to bring together Eldorado residents in an open conversation and networking session, dedicated to ad-



ressing questions about our energy, food, education and local business future.

*When:* March 20, from 1–4 pm

*Where:* Mike's Music Exchange (the new performance space in La Tienda behind the Home Planet Cafe)

*What:* Town Hall Meeting to share ideas and concerns about how to make Eldorado more green and sustainable; and a chance to connect with groups and projects already moving us in that direction.

For more information, visit the calendar at [mikesmusicexchange.com](http://mikesmusicexchange.com) or send email to [dana@earthworksinstitute.org](mailto:dana@earthworksinstitute.org).

### Galisteo Stone Sculpture Workshop

Sculptor **Edward Fleming** is holding a sculpture workshop on March 17–23 at his Galisteo studio. The focus will be on realistic figure carving in stone. Visualization techniques, human anatomy, stone selection and characteristics, tools, and traditional and contemporary techniques will be covered. The class will be limited to six students. For more information, contact [efa@cybermesa.com](mailto:efa@cybermesa.com). View Edward Fleming's sculpture at [www.StoneHand.org](http://www.StoneHand.org).



### March Events at the Library

Vista Grande Public Library will be hosting an Author Talk, Thursday, March 11 at 7 pm at the library (author to be announced). Admission is free. Check the Library website, [www.vglibrary.org](http://www.vglibrary.org), for information updates. Family Movie Night will be held Friday, March 12, at 7 pm, screening *Chronicles of Narnia, Part 2, Prince Caspian*. Admission is free.



## ASTRONOMY CORNER

March 2010

### Space Exploration

Liquid water was confirmed recently on Saturn's moon, Enceladus. Negatively charged ions and even hydrocarbons were with the liquid water, around such features as waterfalls here on earth.

The VISTA (Visible and Infrared Survey Telescope for Astronomy, not this newsletter) telescope in Paranal, Chile, revealed new secrets about the Orion nebula recently. The Orion nebula is a gigantic stellar nursery in the constellation Orion. Four major stars, called the "Trapezium," ionize a large gaseous region beneath Orion's belt. Many new areas of star birth can be seen in the telescope, often marked by collisions between different gaseous regions and dust clouds.

—David Goodrich

**Protect Our Night Skies:** Small lights left carelessly on may spoil the views of our night sky.

### ENERGY-SAVING TIP OF THE MONTH JUST ONE THING!

#### Appliances

Keep your freezer filled to capacity. The more air that's displaced, the less energy is needed to maintain a freezing temperature. If you don't want to store that much food, you can put large bags of sugar in the freezer compartment. Water in plastic bottles or jugs works fine, too.

# March Events

*Left out? Help us compile a comprehensive events listing.*

Email [info@eldoradocommunity.org](mailto:info@eldoradocommunity.org) with your meeting/event information, or bring it to the ECIA office by the 8th of the month for publication in the following month's *Vistas*. Please include "Attn: Vistas" and be sure to indicate:



#### 1. Type of Event

#### 2. Location

#### 3. Date & Time

#### 4. A Resource Person

(one who can answer questions both about the event and the sponsoring organization) and his/her telephone number.

Photographs (digital or snapshots) are encouraged!

*Note: All meetings are at the Community Center, unless otherwise noted.*

LR=Living Room, F=Foyer, CFR=Conference Room, CR=Class Room, RR=Railroad, K=Kitchen

### MARCH SPECIAL EVENTS

ERA TGIF	Fri., March 19, 5-7 pm	LR
Archaeology Talk	Tues., March 23, 7-9 pm	RR

### COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Facilities & Grounds	Tues., March 2, 4-6 pm	Fred Raznick	466-2305	CFR
Conservation Committee	Tues., March 2, 7-9 pm	John Parker	466-7513	LR
Finance Committee	Wed., March 10, 9:30 am	Dan Drobnis	466-4781	CFR
Architectural Committee	Wed., March 10, 7-9 pm	Bill Schwent	466-7708	Foyer
Board Work Study	Mon., March 15, 7-9 pm	ECIA	466-4248	CFR
ECIA Board	Thurs., March 18, 7-9 pm	ECIA	466-4248	CR
Information Committee	Tues., March 23, 7-9 pm	Frank Schober	310-8593	CFR
Stable Committee	Wed., March 24, 7-9 pm	Bonnie Mamp	466-4271	Annex
Architectural Committee	Wed., March 24, 7-9 pm	Bill Schwent	466-7708	Foyer

### MONTHLY MEETINGS

EAW&SD*	1st & 3rd Thurs, 7-9 pm		231-7885	RR
La Canada Wireless	2nd & 4th Mon., 7-9 pm	lcwireless.org		
Search & Rescue	2nd Thurs, 7 pm	Dave Burdett	466-9765	CR
Library Book Group	2nd Saturday 9-10:30	Joan LaMarque	466-6000	CFR
Library Book Group	3rd Mon., 7-9 pm	Pam Henline	466-4781	VGPL
Conservation Com Hike	3rd Sat. of month	Eleanor Gossen	466-1949	
Roadrunner RV	3rd Tues. of month	Bill Bodle	466-3011	
Fire Cub Scout Pack 414	4th Tues., 7-9 pm	John Kielling	466-4232	Sm Gym
EACA Meeting	Last Thurs. of month		466-6245	Fire
MOMS Club	Wed., March 17, 3 pm	Jackie Camborde	466-0094	CR

### WEEKLY MEETINGS

AA	Tues., 5:30-6:50 pm			CFR
AA	Wed., 10:30-11:30 am			CFR/CR
AA	Thurs. 5:30-6:30 pm (Women Only)			CFR
AA	Fri., 6-7 pm			CFR
AA	Sat., 10:45-11:45 am			CFR
AA	Sun., 5:15-6:15 pm			CFR
AI-Anon	Thurs., 6:45-7:45			CFR/LR
Boy Scout Troop 414	Wed., 7-9 pm	Fritz Denny	466-4070	RR,CR,LR
Bridge	1st & 3rd Mon, 1-4:30 pm	Kate Kaulbach	466-1465	LR
Bridge	1st & 3rd Fri., 1-4:30 pm			LR
Bridge	2nd & 4th Fri., 1-4:30 pm	Pat Lavengood	466-9765	LR
Bridge	Wed., 9-noon	Nancy Rost	466-2832	LR
Community Church**	Sun., 9:30 & 11 am	David McPherson	466-2495	CC
Community Band	Thurs., 6:30-8:30 pm	Joel Hopko	466-8412	New gym
Eldorado Hikers	Tues., 8:30 am	Terry Gibbs	466-6914	
Fire & Rescue Training	Wed., 7-9 pm	Fire Station Office	466-1204	Station
Fire & Rescue Work Duty	Sat., Call for time	Fire Station Office	466-1204	Station
Life Drawing (EACA)	Mondays, 10 am-noon	Sande Anderson	466-4688	RR
Knitting Club	Tues., 10 am-noon	Joyce Hanmer	466-3018	LR
Senior Lunch***	Mon.-Fri., 12-1 pm	Senior Center	466-1039	
Square Dancing	Fri., 6-9 pm	Richard Robinson	466-7319	RR

\*Eldorado Area Water and Sanitation District \*\*For other religious/spiritual services, go to <http://santafe.areaconnect.com/churches.htm> \*\*\*Reservations Required

VISIT OUR WEBSITE: [www.eldoradocommunity.org](http://www.eldoradocommunity.org)

## Volunteer Observation Patrol

**ELDORADO NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH** is launching a Volunteer Observation Patrol (VOP) in order to prevent residential burglaries by having a visible presence in our neighborhoods.

Volunteers are now being actively recruited to work in two-person teams in two-hour shifts. You may sign up as an individual and be paired up with a partner. Most of the burglaries occur between 8 am and noon, so that is when we need the most volunteers.

Santa Fe County is larger than the state of Rhode Island; law enforcement needs active resident support and has acknowledged how important Neighborhood Watch efforts are in keeping neighborhoods safe for residents. There are between four and eight patrol cars at any given time in the county.

This is a pilot program in conjunction with the New Mexico State Police. If it proves successful, it will be rolled out in other areas in the state.

There is a short application and training program, and magnetic signs for your vehicle will be provided. Volunteers do not actively try to stop criminal activity but only act as eyes and ears for law enforcement by calling 911 and describing the activity they observe.

Larry Eccard and wife Linda are part of the Eldorado VOP effort.



### VOP OBJECTIVES

- ▼ To increase cooperation between residents, the security patrol, and law enforcement.
- ▼ To assist law enforcement and the security patrol through observation and reporting.
- ▼ To provide a visible presence on the streets as a deterrent to criminal activity.
- ▼ To increase crime awareness among residents.
- ▼ To educate residents on crime prevention and observational skills.
- ▼ To unite residents in a dedicated purpose.
- ▼ To assist in providing a safe, secure environment for all community residents.

Applications are available via email—contact **Marilyn Walker** at [lightwalker2@comcast.net](mailto:lightwalker2@comcast.net).

### FEBRUARY CRIME STATISTICS

Theft: 1; Larceny: 1; Assault: 1 (Source: [www.crimereports.com](http://www.crimereports.com)).

If you see suspicious activity, call the non-emergency phone number: 428-3720. You may remain anonymous. Please put this number in your phone for handy reference.

### NEXT NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH MEETING:

Monday, May 10, at 7 pm at the Eldorado Community Center.

**TIP OF THE MONTH:** If it snows while you're out of town, get a neighbor to create car and foot tracks into the house. Virgin drifts in the driveway are a dead giveaway there is no one home. For information on how to join Neighborhood Watch, email **Marilyn Walker** at [lightwalker2@comcast.net](mailto:lightwalker2@comcast.net).

—Lisa Smith, [lisasmithsantafe@gmail.com](mailto:lisasmithsantafe@gmail.com)

## Teens Raise Roof & Funds for Teen Center

**OVER 30 TEENS SHOWED UP TO** “Kick It” at the first fundraiser for the Eldorado Teen Center at Mike’s Music Exchange. The Center sends thanks to Mike for donating his amazing performance space and to **Dr. Lisa Robles** for being the first dance sponsor, which helped offset the cost of their very hip, professional musician dj, **Pete Williams**. The chaperoning adults didn’t recognize most of the music, which of course means it was the right stuff! Dancing works up a hunger, so thanks also go to Gene’s Sandwich Shop which stayed open late and offered \$1 off coupons.

An exit poll showed huge interest in regular monthly dances, so the word is, “Dance on!” Following another teen dance in late February at Mike’s Music Exchange, the Center has also scheduled an

adult dance, to raise funds, so save the date for:

**“OLDIES” DANCE: APRIL 3, 7–10 PM**, at Mike’s Music Exchange.

**TEEN ACTIVITIES AT LA TIENDA:** While the Board members of the Teen Center are working to raise sufficient funds to officially open the doors to the Teen Center at La Tienda (tentatively set for May 2010), already there are teen activities afoot. Check out the “Teen Calendar” at [www.latiendaeldorado.com](http://www.latiendaeldorado.com), including “Free Teen Fridays,” 7–9 pm in Suite 101.

**JUMP ON BOARD!** Residents are invited to participate in developing teen programs, sponsoring a dance or event, or sharing ideas and energy to help grow the Teen Center. Call Sandy for more information: 466-6702.



# House Sparrow

**THE HOUSE SPARROW (HS)**, often called English Sparrow, was introduced (from England and Germany) into the United States in Brooklyn, New York, in 1850, and by 1910 had spread to California. They are found everywhere in the U.S. and are now the most ubiquitous avian species in the world.

There are slight variations in size and color, but these invaders are easy to recognize. They are 6.25 inches long (putting them in the middle of the pack of sparrow sizes) with a wingspan of 9.5 inches. The bill is thick, for seed eating. The male has a black bill during breeding season, which becomes yellowish during other times of the year. His chest is gray with a black streak from bill to center of the chest (black mostly around the bill during non-breeding). The back and wings are chestnut brown (or a paler gray-brown during non-breeding). There is one white wing bar. Females lack the black and are uniformly gray-brown, lighter on the belly, and with a light stripe through the eye. Their song is mostly a series of chirps. They are non-migratory.

The HS builds nests in trees and cavities, especially around fields and human habitation. Males court with spread wings and drooped tail. Pairs are monogamous, usually for life. Male or female may select the nest site. Four to six eggs are laid, which hatch in 10 to 13 days. The helpless young are able to fledge in 14 to 17 days. Several broods (2 to 3) may be produced each year. Diet includes spiders, insects, blossoms, grass, and forb seeds.

Birds usually stay within a mile of where they were hatched.

The HS is a plucky bird, usually found in small groups in the summer and larger flocks in the winter. Unfortunately, they are aggressive and will displace bluebirds and swallows, destroying nests, eggs, and hatchlings.

Their number decreased after the automobile replaced horse travel, presumably because the supply of grain to be found around horses and in horse droppings declined. They have also declined due to the use of pesticides and monoculture crops.

I am a bluebird and native bird fan and thus do not want HSs around. They appeared at my seed feeders about four years ago. I was using a mixed seed which had many small pieces. I immediately switched to black oil sunflower seed only, and the HSs were gone in about four to six weeks. However, I now see quail less frequently at my feeder. But I have been blessed with bluebird babies every year!

As a non-native bird, the HS is one of two birds whose nests can be legally destroyed and which can be killed as vermin. The other is the Starling. They are not protected by the Migratory Bird Act.

—Pam Henline



Photo: Mindaugas Urbonas, from the Lithuanian Wikipedia

## At the Crossroads

**LAST YEAR, 2009, WAS INTERESTING** for our roads. Late fall saw the last of the \$280,000 Legislature-provided funds spent on applying new base course to over nine miles of our worst dirt roads. Unfortunately, we lost the last \$15,000 of the allocation in a state call-back of unencumbered capital funds, which the county did not encumber before the deadline. As a result, there were ten small stretches of other Eldorado dirt roads that did not receive base course “patching.” Most of these roads will be at the top of our priority list going forward.

During the winter months of 2008–2009, we were lulled into a false belief that our worst dirt roads were as bad as they were going to get, as they had held up pretty well for much of the year. The “problem” was that we had lighter than normal amounts of snowfall, and the storms were spread out far enough to allow these roads to dry quickly and remain fairly firm. As winter turned into summer, even though we

had a very wet monsoon season, the roads were dry enough to quickly suck up the rainwater and remain generally firm. This was especially true of the roads that had received new base course in the past four years.

Toward the end of the rainy season and into the end of 2009, however, we began to notice more muddy conditions on some of our more heavily traveled dirt roads, and roads that had previously been rated as “OK” are now joining the list of “bad condition” roads. Possible reasons: continual grading, speeding, lack of appropriate drainage for runoff and snowmelt, and high traffic volumes. As we get further into 2010, this column will bring readers more discussion about what we might be able to do about it.



—Nolan Zisman



*"Kick It" Dance at Teen Center, La Tienda*

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Sheriff 428-3720  
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Teens at Teen Center Dance, and DJ Pete Williams. (See p. 6 for details.)