

During the official visits to Chapters, completed before the COVID restrictions halted them, WGM Pamela address to the Chapters included some information on the diversity that is New Mexico. She emphasized the demographics and items of social/economical interest of the area in which the Chapter was located. She then asked the Chapters how they might become more involved in their communities by “Coming Together”. For my article I thought it might be interesting to look at the state’s diversity regarding its natural resources, specifically its wildlife.

New Mexico has a rich wildlife heritage. This richness is partly a result of the several different biogeographic regions found here. They include the Rocky Mountains, Great Plains, Great Basin, and the Chihuahuan Desert. There are even portions of the Sierra Madrean and Sonoran Desert components in the SW corner of the state. We also have elevations in the state ranging from 13,000 feet at the summit of Wheeler Peak near Taos down to 2,841 feet on the Pecos River near the Texas border. New Mexico is also unique in that it has six of the seven life zones identified for the western states in the 1890’s by Clinton Hart Merriam. The Merriam Life Zones, determined by their elevation and vegetational types, influence the plants and animals which live there and, in our case, add to the diversity of wildlife in our state. This and more detailed information can be found in the Project Wild literature found on the NM Department of Game and Fish website (www.wildlife.state.nm.us).

As a small sample of our state’s diversity, the Biota Information System of New Mexico (BISON-M) (www.bison-m.org), a data base of research conducted on individual species, shows that work has been identified on 275 mammal species, 592 avian species, and 157 reptile species within our state. I always wonder what the numbers are for smaller wildlife such as insects, spiders, etc.

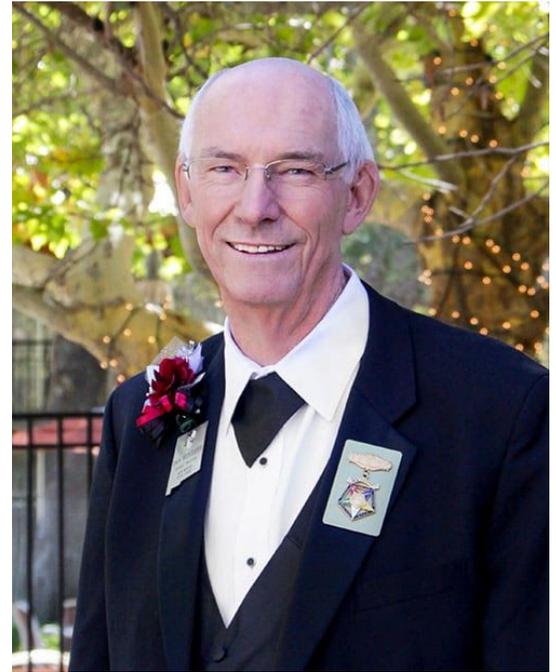
Most people recognize and see the major big game, small game and waterfowl species that are hunted in our state but that is an exceedingly small component of our wildlife heritage. As we get back to traveling and visiting Chapters put down your smart phone and other electronics and search the countryside and see what wildlife species and/or habitat you might identify.

An important life lesson given by one of my wildlife professors on all our field trips was that “Sight is a human faculty but *seeing* is an art.” He also extended that to hearing what surrounded us with “Hearing is a human faculty but *listening* is an art.” These two faculties are extremely important in wildlife management in determining what management practices will most benefit a wildlife species. These two traits, I believe, are even more important in how we interact and treat each other as humans. So, honing your observation and listening skills by searching for the diversity that is New Mexico may also help you hone your interpersonal skills with people around you.

Now for some fun. Can you answer the following questions? (Answers are at the end of the article.)

1. Which of the following deer species might you find in New Mexico?
 - a. Rocky Mountain Mule Deer
 - b. Desert Mule Deer
 - c. Texas Whitetail
 - d. Sandhill Whitetail
 - e. Couse Whitetail

2. There are five species of wild turkey in the US. Which are in NM?
 - a. Gould’s
 - b. Rio Grande
 - c. Ocellated
 - d. Eastern
 - e. Merriam’s



3. Two exotic mammals (Oryx and Persian Ibex) were introduced into NM and are now huntable by permits issued by Game and Fish.
 - a. Which two OES Chapters are nearest the habitat occupied by Oryx?
 - b. Which OES Chapter is nearest the habitat occupied by Persian Ibex?

4. What wild sheep are found in NM?
 - a. Rocky Mountain Big Horn
 - b. Dall Sheep
 - c. Desert Bighorn
 - d. Mountain Goat
 - e. Stone Sheep

5. What OES Chapter is near the largest concentration of Sandhill Crane during the winter months?

ANSWERS:

1. All deer listed are native to NM. Northern portion of state has Rocky Mountain Mule deer; Mid and southern portion Desert Mule deer; Texas Whitetail on far SE side of state; Coues Whitetail in very SW corner of state and Sandhill Whitetail, which is now thought to be extant, was found in the Mescalero Sands area east of Roswell.

2. Gould's in very SW corner, Rio Grande in mid-Rio Grande valley (introduced) and in Canadian River area near Roy, Merriam's is major species and found in most mountain ranges. Ocellated is found in Florida; Eastern is east Texas to east coast. If you arrive early for a visit to Queen Esther Chapter No. 1 you might take a short drive out the York Canyon road at SW end of Raton and see some Merriam's Turkey.

3. Oryx populations are on White Sands Missile Range, so Tularosa Basin No. 72 and Alamo No. 11 are closest. Persian Ibex are found in the Florida Mountains south of Deming, so Ruth No. 6 is nearest. Ibex and Oryx were introduced by G&F in the early 1970's with the release stock being raised at the Department's facility at Red Rock northwest of Lordsburg. For extra credit what wildlife biologist conducted the post release study of the ibex on the Florida's? Also, next time you are at Jessamine Chapter No. 45 notice the small statute of an ibex in the NE corner of the Chapter room.

4. Rocky Mountain and Desert Bighorn Sheep. Rocky Mountain can be found in the San Francisco River area near Glenwood and Silver City, the Pecos Wilderness and the Mt. Wheeler area near Taos. Desert Bighorn are in San Andres Mountains, La Drone Mountain area and in desert mountain ranges in the far SW corner of the state.

5. Magdalen No. 9. Sandhill Crane are in the middle Rio Grande Valley during the early to mid-winter months, moving into Mexico in later winter. There are three sizes of Sandhill crane – Greater, Intermediate and Lesser. Greater and Intermediate are in the Rio Grande Valley and Lesser may be found at times in the Pecos River area near Roswell. Greater Sandhill nest in the Rocky Mountain region and Lesser Sandhill nest in Alaska and Siberia. Crane are long lived and the oldest know Sandhill crane survived 37 years.