

# new mexico

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**big fall  
color issue!**

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# new mexico

Magazine

Cover: Cottonwoods line the Rio Grande with yellow torches, near Otowi Bridge, east of Los Alamos, in this photograph by David Donoho.

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### COMING SOON—

*It's going to be the most beautiful, joyous Christmas issue we've had yet—with everything that makes Christmas a very special time in New Mexico. There'll be people, food, arts, scenery and cross-country skiing. And lots more.*

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The peaceable kingdom of

# The Bosque del Apache

By Tony Hillerman

Photos by Gary R. Zahm



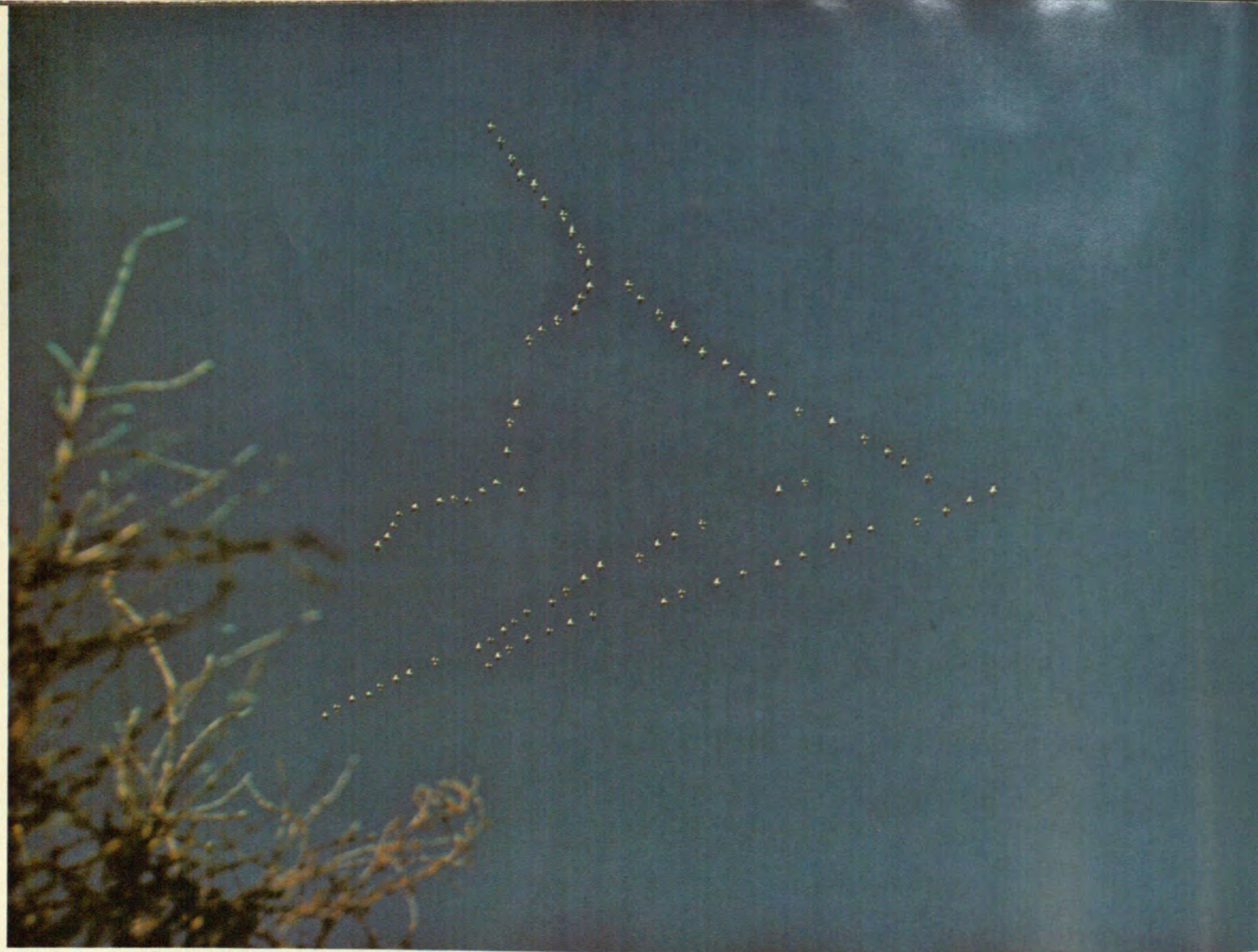
## Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge

- The headquarters, established in 1936, is seven miles south of San Antonio on old US 85. Free maps of a 15-mile autotour and of nature trails are available there, as are bird and wildlife checklists. It is open from dawn to dark.
- The refuge extends up to 10 miles wide a dozen miles down the Rio Grande. It includes all of the 1845 Bosque del Apache land grant, the Chupadera and Indian Wells Wilderness areas west of the river (the two are split by I-25) and the Little San Pasqual Wilderness east of the Rio Grande. Total acreage is 57,191, including 13,000 acres of well-watered bottomland.
- Administration is by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

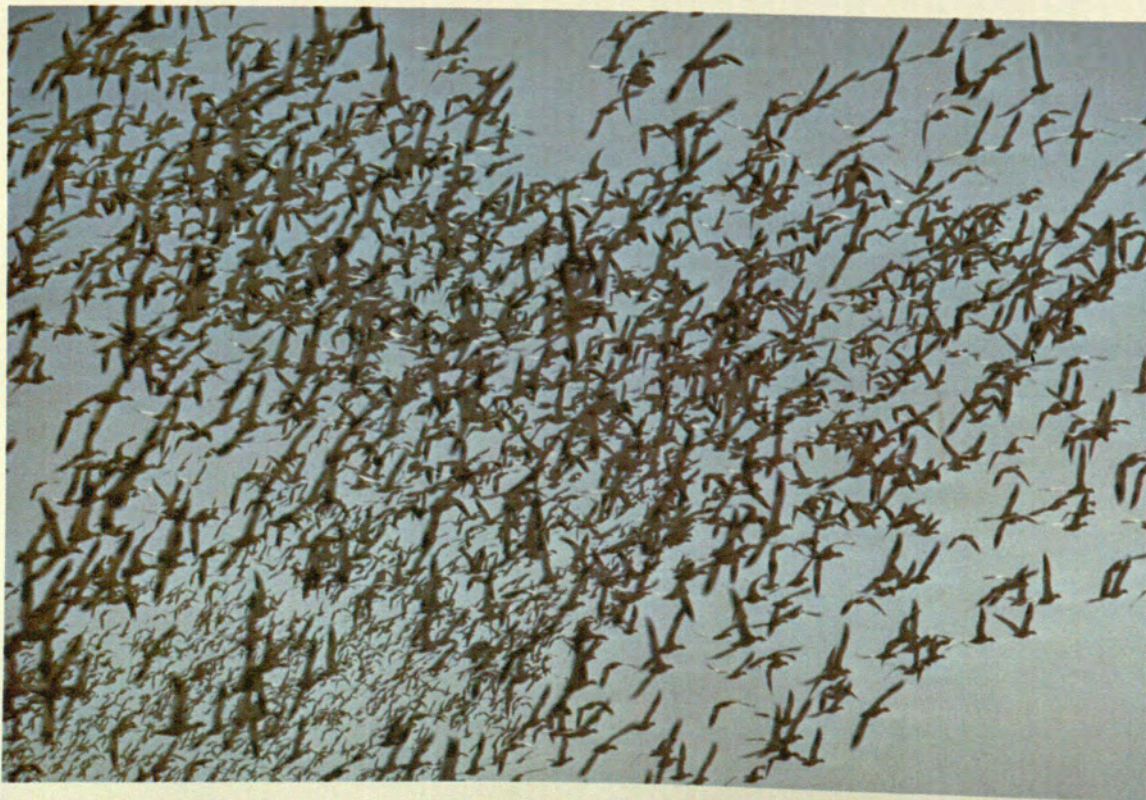
- Some 1,500 acres of irrigated bottomlands are cultivated by Socorro County farmers under an arrangement whereby a portion of the wheat, corn, sorghum and millet is left to be harvested by birds and 800 acres of alfalfa (a favorite food of greater sandhill cranes) are provided.

- The Bosque animal population is a virtual index of mammals of New Mexico and includes the mule deer, beaver, badger, coyote, racoon, muskrat, porcupine, skunk and assorted rodents. Pronghorn herds visit from the Jornada del Muerto, and occasional tracks disclose the passage of a mountain lion or black bear.





1



2

(Previous page) The setting sun silhouettes geese above the Bosque del Apache. A pair of Canada geese glide through the quiet waters.

(1) Snow geese create a pictograph against the blue New Mexico sky. (2) Geese etch the sky in an abstract formation. (3) Mallards rise from a ditch in a spray of wings and water. (4) Sandhill cranes and snow geese hold a convention in the marshes. (5) Mallards take to the skies above stubble corn.



3



4



5

Seven miles south of the village of San Antonio, the shoulders of old US 85 are losing their battle against the grass. Albuquerque-to-El Paso traffic has deserted the old river road in favor of the high speed lanes of I-25, which skirts through the Coyote Hills above. There is virtually no local traffic.

This is the very end of the Middle Rio Grande Irrigation District. It is the beginning of the San Marcial marshes and the hostile country which the Spanish colonists called Dead Man's Route. In this one stretch, the hospitable Rio Grande seemed always to resist man and his civilization. The Piro Indians tried, but their fortified pueblo of Qualacu has long since vanished. The Spanish managed to leave only their names on the map — Contadero, Don Pedro, San Pasqual.

Later settlers had no better fortune. San Marcial is gone, twice erased by floods. Clyde died under the silt of still another flood. Even for uncrowded New Mexico, this is singularly empty country.

Westward the lonely Magdalena Mountains rise, and beyond them the Plains of San Agustín. Here, the nearest dot on the map is Horse Springs, 65 miles away. Forty miles eastward across the barren Sierra Oscura is Trinity Site, picked for its ultimate isolation to detonate the first atomic device.

Between the cracking pavement and the river, groves of cottonwood, tamarisk, Russian olive, box elder and willow shade the grassland — the woodlands which gave this piece of the river the name "Bosque del Apache." But like those who founded Qualacu, Don Pedro and Clyde, the Apaches are long since gone. Park on the grassy shoulder early on a November morning, stand beside your car and look around you. This section of the planet appears totally devoid of life.

In fact, it swarms with it. You are in the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge. Listen. There is a murmur — a medley of sounds. From the well-named hills behind you comes the distant bark of a coyote, from the trees along the river the conversation of a thousand birds.





Sunset and sandhill cranes.

The best season for the Bosque is winter, and the most flamboyant of the winter visitors are the snow geese. They have summered on the shores of the Arctic Ocean and moved south from the lengthening polar night. They stopped to feed at the marshes of Squaw Creek Refuge in Missouri or at Tule Lake in the Klamath Basin. By October, they come in great V-shaped flocks, flying at 15,000 to 16,000 feet, where men die without oxygen, and make the 700-mile leap from Bear River, Utah in a single night.

Usually you can see them take to the sky over the Bosque four times a day. About sunrise, they rise off the marsh ponds in a sudden roar of wings, mass in the sky in a wheeling maelstrom of feathers, then move upriver to feed in the Bosque's grainfields. Before noon, they return, 8,000 shapes sweeping past the blue-gray backdrop of the Coyote Hills, to rest again on the open water. The pattern repeats in the afternoon with the roosting flight made against the garish Magdalena Mountains sunsets.

If the snow goose attracts the casual eye, the greater sandhill crane and the Mexican duck draw the specialists.

As much as 80 per cent of the world's population of the greater sandhill crane winter here or upstream at Bernardo. Some 10,000 of these great birds can be seen standing three feet tall in the Bosque's alfalfa fields or soaring over the cottonwoods on seven-foot wings. Once they were almost extinct and in 1942 no more than 300 were counted here. Now their numbers

grow and the Bosque is their home until summer sends them northward to their nesting grounds in the Montana-Idaho-Wyoming corner.

The Mexican duck — one of the rarest birds of the hemisphere — lives here year-around as nature decides whether it will continue to exist. It draws ornithologists and amateur bird watchers from around the world.

By the onset of winter, the refuge bird population may have soared to half a million.

The barren trees fill with noisy flights of redwings (up to 150,000). Some 50,000 water birds will be using its ponds and draining ditches — virtually every known breed of continental duck, all of the puddle ducks, every diving duck except a few Eastern types.

The egrets, gulls, herons and rails pay a visit, and a cross-section of geese — ranging from the big and noisy Canada goose (the hunter's prize) to the rare white Ross. There are grebes and pelicans, cormorants and sometimes even bitterns, ibises and whistling swans.

A stroll down the footpaths is like the El Dorado of the duck hunter. Pintails, teal and mallards — canvasbacks, ring-necks and ruddy ducks flush in hurried flight from the ditches, coveys of Gambel's quail walk, single file, through the smartweed, ring-necked pheasants explode in startled flight across the pathway, doves are everywhere, and overhead, the predator birds patrol the sky.

It was something like this, you think, when the Apaches gave this place its name.

# Cochiti Lake, New Mexico ...A life style you've earned



Artist's conception of typical living room.

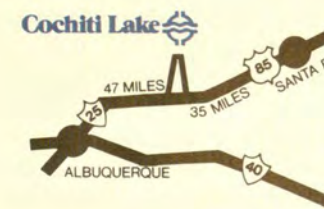
Does it seem that life gets more hectic day after day, that streets and roads are getting a little more crowded, that there are pushing, shoving crowds wherever you go? Have you ever thought there must be some way out of all that? There is. It's Cochiti Lake...and the good life. ■ The good life! A manner of living that enables you and your world to exist in perfect harmony and enjoyment, no matter what your age, a knowledge of trust in yourself, your future, and the people you are dealing with. ■ The trust begins with men and women who have planned and built Cochiti Lake. Since Cochiti Lake was first conceived, facilities are a reality. Development is far ahead of schedule. People all over New Mexico know that Cochiti Lake is a good place to live, to play and grow. The residents of Cochiti Lake know it, too; all take full advantage of the great new swimming pool and



recreation center, the equestrian center and bridle trails, the sun and clean clear air that is so much a part of their homes. ■ At Cochiti Lake the joys of living are simple joys... and the rewards of living are great rewards... spacious, beautiful homes that fit into the living landscape, recreation facilities that cater to every wish and mood, faith in the future bringing with it all the excitement and benefits that have been promised by a company that fulfills its commitments. ■ Cochiti Lake is a planned community... and the plan is for freedom... for enjoyment... for the good life away from worry about the future. ■ If you, like so many people, are looking for a better life today and a stake in tomorrow, we urge you to consider Cochiti Lake. Consider letting Cochiti Lake provide you and your family with that good life now and for your future. Here, as nowhere else, is a place to make a new beginning.



A nominal charge is made for the use of certain recreation facilities while other facilities are provided at no charge. Complete details will be supplied on request.



Distances indicated are from the locations mentioned to the approximate geographical center of Cochiti Lake. Each purchaser should check the exact location of the property being offered him in relation to the approximate geographical center of Cochiti Lake.

## Cochiti Lake New Mexico; The Pleasant Surprise!

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Obtain HUD property report from developer and read it before signing anything. HUD neither approves the merits of the offering nor the value of the property as an investment, if any. This subleasehold offering terminates in the year 2068.