

# Welcome



## Hoo Are You?

with Raymond VanBuskirk

G24040301

April 19-21, 2024

Greetings owling workshop-goers,

I'm looking forward to our time together at Ghost Ranch. Below is some information that I believe will be useful for you to feel prepared for the upcoming owling experience.

With that being said one of the most important aspects of enjoying this trip is to be prepared with proper clothing. Spring mornings in the southern Rocky Mountains can be chilly with nighttime lows dipping near freezing, while afternoon temperatures can climb to the mid 50s and 60s (F) on average, but potentially much higher. The NM sun is extreme, therefore sunburn is a constant concern, even in the cold, and especially at higher elevations. While clear skies and sunshine are very likely, more than once I've been snowed on during May in northern NM. The takeaway is that layering will be essential to your comfort, especially after dark. I typically start layering with a breathable base layer, this could function well as a stand-alone layer later in the day as it warms up. I follow that with a warm insulating layer such as a sweater, fleece or vest. As your outermost layer, consider a waterproof or at least water resistant layer just in case we receive precipitation, this outer layer also functions to cut the spring winds. Long underwear is optional, but make sure you have sturdy pants. I typically wear jeans but many people prefer breathable hiking/outdoor pants. Light gloves, a beanie, and a hat to prevent sun overexposure are all useful. In addition to these clothing items you should be sure to bring sturdy walking shoes or hiking boots. We will spend a lot of time on our feet, occasionally on dirt hiking trails, and uneven surfaces. Much of the time we'll be on very manageable trails or roads. Some people find it useful to bring lightweight walking poles with hand straps (so you can use your binoculars without dropping your sticks) but I wouldn't consider this to be a requirement, most walks will be slow and easy.

Dress is considered casual throughout, including meals (which are buffet style). If you have any additional questions regarding clothing please reach out to Ghost Ranch staff.

I will be carrying a spotting scope for getting up close looks at owls and other birds, this will be available for the whole group to enjoy. Everyone should bring their own pair of binoculars. If you are uncertain about how to properly adjust your binoculars for best viewing I can discuss this on the first day of our workshop.

Many people carry cameras these days, please feel free to bring those along, just don't forget your chargers and SD cards. Yes, we do stand a reasonable chance of photographing owls, even after dark.

In an effort to reduce single-use plastic waste we ask that you bring a reusable water bottle for our outings. We will be able to refill them on the ranch and during field trips. It's very easy to get dehydrated in the desert, especially at elevation. This is considered an essential gear item. In addition to staying hydrated, wearing (and reapplying) sunscreen can reduce the risk of sun-related issues so please don't forget your sunscreen, this will not be an issue after dark.

Please bring a small flashlight or headlight for navigating walking paths after dark during our owling excursions, if you do not have one we will provide you with one but will need it back at the conclusion of the workshop.

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We will provide you with a notebook for jotting down notes, thoughts, questions, changes to schedule, sketching birds, etc. Please bring your own pens or pencils.

A small day pack is helpful to carry all of your gear.

We will be fed three delicious meals a day, but outside of breakfast, lunch, and dinner you should be prepared with whatever your favorite snacks are to enjoy in the field. Nuts, dried fruit, and granola bars are all easy, packable trail snacks.

If you find that you still have questions about our schedule or what to bring please don't hesitate to reach out to the Ghost Ranch staff who should be able to answer any of your questions or relay any questions they can't answer to me directly.

On the first evening of the workshop we'll have a group discussion that will include more details about our daily schedule/programs and will include some discussions about group birding behavior and workshop expectations and goals.

Cheer and good birding,

Raymond L. VanBuskirk  
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