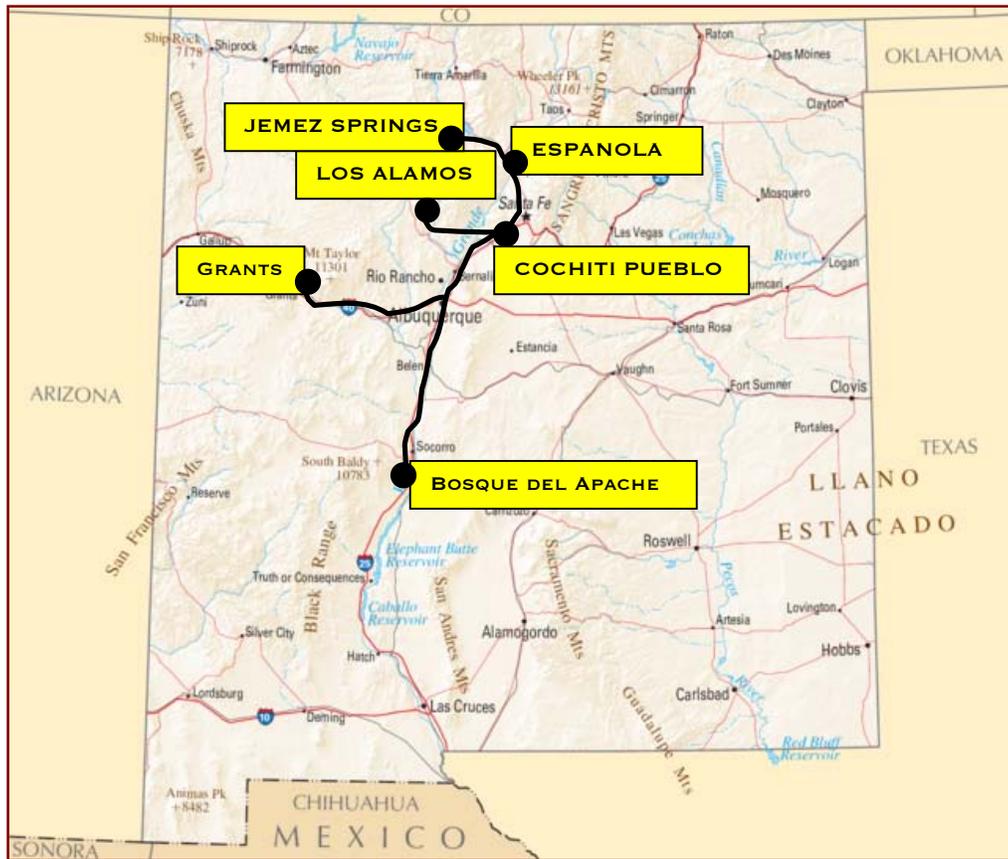


# Amelia's Journal - New Mexico



WIKIPEDIA COMMONS

## BOSQUE DEL APACHE, NEW MEXICO

This morning we got up early to head to the airport. I love getting on airplanes! We flew to Albuquerque, New Mexico. I spent most of the flight listening to music on my headphones and looking out the window into a cloudless southwestern sky. After we landed, we rented a car and drove to our first location for filming, Bosque del Apache.



Bosque del Apache is a large wetlands area that's a protected national wildlife refuge. Tens of thousands of birds and waterfowl migrate here every year during the winter. As it was now at the end of winter, we were hoping to find Sandhill Cranes or Snow Geese before they left for the year. My mom and dad were disappointed to learn that the last Sandhill Cranes had left just 2 days before! We decided to drive around the area to look for Snow Geese. As I looked out my window, I spotted the first live bald



eagle I've ever seen! It was perched on a dead branch in the middle of the water where it had a great view to scout for food.

A little further on, I also saw the first skunk I've ever seen. I stuck my head out of the car window, while my dad carefully filmed it. My mom told me a story of how she had been sprayed by a skunk when she was my age. She was given a bath in tomato juice to help take away the smell. She said it didn't really

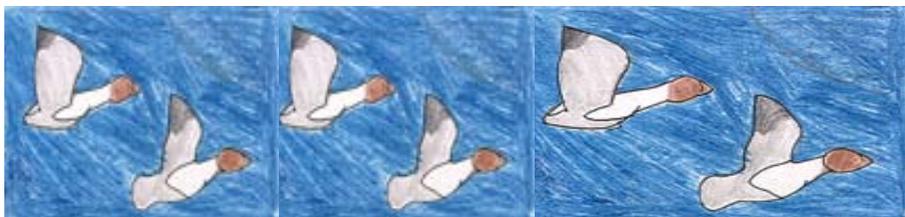
help, it just made her smell like skunk AND tomato juice. I made sure to keep a safe distance!



We finally came to a large open field filled with thousands of Snow Geese. They were very noisy, honking and chattering amongst themselves when, all of a sudden, they all took off in flight. Imagine the sound of thousands of huge wings beating at the same time. As they took to the sky, it looked like a snowstorm of white birds! What an amazing sight.

While my mom and dad were busy filming during our second day at Bosque del Apache, I decided to learn more about Snow Geese. I found out they could fly here all the way from the Arctic! They migrate south to spend the winter in warmer areas around coastal marshes, bays, wet grasslands, and fields.

That's pretty smart because these birds are vegetarians; they eat grasses and grains that are easily found in these habitats. At the end of winter, Snow Geese fly back north to their breeding grounds on the Arctic tundra completing an annual migration of more than 5,000 miles!



Snow geese can fly up to 50 miles per hour and are sometimes seen traveling in a "U" formation. Flying in this formation helps conserve energy because each bird is flying a little above the bird in front of him, which reduces wind resistance (it can't be easy to fly with the wind hitting your face). The birds take turns being in front, and they go to the back of the formation when they get tired. This way the geese can fly for a long time without stopping to rest. The other benefit to this system is that it's easy to keep track of every bird in the group so that no one gets lost or left behind. Fighter pilots often use this formation for the same reason.

Snow Geese mate for life and will produce 2 - 6 eggs each year in a shallow ground nest. Their babies, called "chicks", can swim and eat by themselves when they're only 24 hours old! Although they're pretty independent, chicks remain with their families through their first winter. These are some interesting birds!

## GRANTS, NEW MEXICO

Today we visited Bandera Volcano and Ice Cave. The volcano erupted 10,000 years ago, spewing lava straight up in the air. When the lava fell back down, it went straight back into the main vent, creating a giant hole that's 1,200 ft. across and 800 ft. deep. The ice cave was formed about 3,400 years ago. No one knows why it formed, but there's still ice there today!



## JEMEZ SPRINGS, NEW MEXICO

We spent 2 days in the Santa Fe National Forest in the Jemez Mountains so my dad could tape a fishing segment for our show. There was still a lot of deep snow in the forest, so I spent most of my time playing and getting cold and wet!



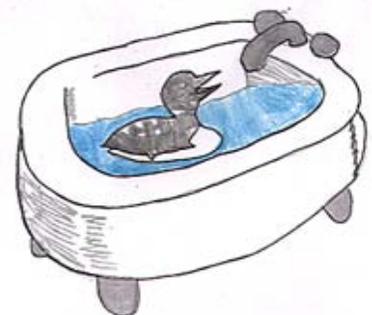
I was working on a project for school called "Globe at Night" while we were traveling. During March, people all over the world would be looking up at night sky to see how many stars they could see. It's a cool program and a way to track light pollution around the globe. I was amazed at how many more stars I could see in the Jemez Mountains than I could see in the city! Anyone can participate in Globe at Night. Check out their website at: <http://www.globe.gov/GaN>



## ESPANOLA, NEW MEXICO

Today was awesome! We filmed at The Wildlife Center, a place where sick and injured wild animals are taken to make them better. This type of work is called "wildlife rehabilitation". Dr. Kathleen Ramsay is a veterinarian who founded the Center. During the tour she gave us, I saw a loon practice swimming in a bathtub, and I got to help feed 3 whippoorwills.

The Wildlife Center also had a huge turkey vulture and owls. I love owls! Did you know that an owl can hear almost 10 times better than humans? A barn owl can hear a mouse up to 100 ft. away!



## LOS ALAMOS, NEW MEXICO

Today we filmed at Bandelier National Monument. About 900 years ago, Ancestral Pueblo people came together and began to build amazing communities here. They stayed until the 1500's before moving to new pueblos along the Rio Grande River.

We toured some of the archaeological areas with Cecilia Shields, a Park Ranger from the nearby Picurus Pueblo. She spoke of the people who once lived here with great respect, and she shared her belief that their spirits still remain in the birds, the flowers and the wildlife that's found here. This is a very sacred Native American place but, I couldn't believe the number of kids I saw climbing in areas where it's not allowed and the number of parents who let them! I learned that one of the sites, Cave Kiva, must be replastered regularly to remove graffiti. That's so sad!

**Please treat our cultural heritage with respect!**

## COCHITI PUEBLO



The past 2 days we've been filming at Kasha-Katuwe (Kasha Ka-two-way) Tent Rocks National Monument. Volcanic eruptions, wind and weather have carved an amazing landscape here. There are rocks that look like tents, or teepees, and slot canyon areas where you can walk on narrow trails between towering cliffs.

"Kasha-Katuwe" means white cliffs in the language of the nearby Pueblo de Cochiti. A government agency called the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Pueblo de Cochiti became partners to protect this incredible place. We spent long days hiking the same trails over and over again, but I really didn't mind. This was a great place to explore! In the afternoon we actually saw a rainbow around the sun. I've never seen that before!

After we finished filming at Kasha-Katuwe, we spent time with members of the Cochiti Pueblo. These are some of the modern day descendants (or family members) of the people of Bandelier! Everyone was kind and very patient as they shared different parts of their culture with us. We found we had a lot in common with the people we met, especially our respect for nature and the environment.

The Cochiti Pueblo is famous for making drums. We interviewed Steven Herrera, a traditional drum maker, who showed us some of the drums he is working on. This man is a master of what he does. I couldn't believe how much he knew about all the parts of making a drum, from finding the right trees, to properly preparing the wood, to drying animal skins, to putting the final drum together!



In the 1960's, Helen Cordova, a member of the Pueblo, created a clay figure of a grandfather covered with children as he told stories. These became known as "storyteller" figures, which also became famous. Today, there are many who continue this tradition. We interviewed Ada Suina, a wonderful sculptor who showed us how she creates storyteller figures. She let me try working with some clay as she showed my parents how she works. Guess what she was working on? A large storyteller figure of a man with a drum (the famous Cochiti drum) for Bandelier National Monument!

Filming is normally not allowed here and we were careful only to use cameras when given the proper permission. I'm glad we were able to document some of these aspects of modern Pueblo life to share with others some of the wonderful things we learned.

We were also allowed to film a version of the Buffalo Dance, performed by some of the kids of the Pueblo. I hope they all grow up to realize what a very special culture they have!

Tomorrow we'll be heading back home to Nevada. While I'm looking forward to seeing my cat, Rajah, and my bunny, Marshmallow, I'll miss the land and the people I met in New Mexico. New Mexico's nickname is "The Land of Enchantment". Now I know why!

'Til next time,

Amelia

