



Monte Vista Chamber of Commerce Newsletter March 2024

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The Beginnings of the Monte Vista Crane Festival



It might surprise you to know that sandhill cranes weren't the original stars of Monte Vista's first crane festival back in 1984. Whooping cranes were.

Whooping cranes, it turns out, were on the brink of extinction from



hunting and habitat loss. In 1941, there were only a couple of dozen left in the wild. So scientists began placing whooping crane eggs in sandhill nests as part of a foster program aimed at establishing a population outside of the eastern states. When the whooper chicks hatched, the foster parents raised the chicks as their own. Sandhill cranes migrating through the San Luis Valley were used in the program in hopes that the shorter migration route—from southern New Mexico, through the Valley, to nesting grounds around Yellowstone—would improve the whooping crane’s chances for population growth.

The Monte Vista event was originally called the Whooping Crane Festival because of a few dozen foster whoopers spotted as the sandhill cranes migrated through the Valley. Bigger and lighter in color, the whooping cranes were easy for bird lovers to spot. But over the years, the Valley’s small whooping crane population petered out because of drought, mortality and failed breeding. The only pseudo success was a possible hybrid sandhill-whooping crane spotted a couple of years in the early 1990’s. By the year 2000, only two whooping cranes passed through the Valley. The only remnant of these days was a unique sculpture fashioned from farm tools standing in front of the Monte Vista Safeway named “Cooper the Whooper.”

The first crane festival was a small event that attracted mostly locals. Over the years, festival activities have included square dances, bluegrass festivals, pancake breakfasts, baked potato dinners, quilt raffles, juried art contests and music performances by artists such as Michael Martin Murphey. Keynote speakers have included big names like wildlife photographer and nature writer John Fielder and former Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell.

Nowadays, thousands of bird lovers flock to Monte Vista in mid-March for the three-day festival filled with tours, lectures, live-bird exhibits, photography classes and an arts and crafts show. But the biggest draws remain the scenic San Luis Valley, hospitality of Valley residents and the tens of thousands of sandhill cranes and other unique wildlife.

Business of the Month:





BEST WESTERN MOVIE MANOR

Phone: (719) 852-5921 : [Visit Website](#)

Address: 2830 US Highway 160 W - Monte Vista, CO

Since July 1st, 1955, guests have enjoyed one of the world's most distinctive lodging experiences at the Best Western Movie Manor. It has been in operation for over 65 years. With sound piped into rooms, guests can watch new movies from the comfort of their room. Guests can also take advantage of the drive-in style viewing on two different movies on each screens. The on-site concession stand and highly recommended on-site restaurant. The Drive-in is open seasonally from April to September, with a rotating list of new movies throughout the season.

MONTE VISTA CRANE FESTIVAL



MARCH 8 - 10, 2024

[MVCRANEFEST.ORG](https://mvcranefest.org)

A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT BY:



For more info visit our website



The Craft and Nature Fair

41st Annual Monte Vista Crane Festival

March 8, 9, 10th
2024

Get ready to be thrilled! This weekend is packed with crafty, homey, and garden-y vendors. You'll also get to soak up some nature, check out some wildlife info booths, and catch a live bird rescue demo! Don't miss out!

For more information or to sign up as a vendor, please check out the Chamber website at montevistachamber.org or call 719-852-2731

Questions or seeking information? - Click the buttons on the right-hand side to view more information about Monte Vista as well as various local events in

Monte Vista Chamber of Commerce
Facebook

Monte Vista Chamber of
Commerce

The next Monte Vista Chamber board meeting Thursday, March 28th at 7 AM.

Member Updates



We hope you decide to move messages from the Monte Vista Chamber to your Primary tab from the Promotions tab. By doing so, all future emails from us should be delivered to the Primary tab. Thanks!

**CHECK OUT
MEMBERSHIP
BENEFITS HERE!**

New Members:

- None this month

Renewing Members:

- Royal Electric
- Wanda Hawman

Do you have an event in the San Luis Valley that you would like to add to our website? Please click the button below to fill out an Event Submission Form with as much information as possible. We will add the event to the Monte Vista Chamber of Commerce website as soon as possible and will contact you if we have any further questions about the event.

Thank you!

Event Submission Form