

# THE TROGON NEWS

HUACHUCA AUDUBON SOCIETY  
Post Office Box 63, Sierra Vista, Arizona 85636  
Volume XXXII Number 4, April 2004



## President's Message

Hard to believe that it's barely officially spring with the summer-like heat we had for a while there! I hear the birds are starting to get thick down on the river, although I haven't managed to get there myself. Got to make the time, right? I did see a male Vermilion Flycatcher not far from my backyard, along Garden Canyon Wash. Kind of hard not to smile when you see those beauties.

This year is going to be fairly pivotal for the future of this area and water for the river. Some good people are very involved in the work - and a few more would be really really helpful. It might be as small an effort as a couple of letters. Surely you could find time for that?!! We're also coming up on elections for the Huachuca Audubon Board of Directors. We have a nice mix of experience and new ideas, I think, and new folks and new ideas are always a plus. If you get approached and asked, please consider giving some time to keep the work going!

## Local Programs and Events

**April 27<sup>th</sup>** - HAS meeting, 7:00 p.m., Mona Bishop Room, Sierra Vista Public Library. In January of this year, Ted and Melanie Mouras traveled to Argentina, visited the Subantarctic Islands made famous by Ernest Shackleton, and set foot on the Antarctic Peninsula. At this month's meeting, they will give us a photo presentation of their trip.

## Field Trips

**Apr 3<sup>rd</sup>**, Saturday, 8:00-12:00, FSPR bird hike. Meet at Holy Trinity Monastery in St. David. Five mile hike on Monastery grounds and along San Pedro River. Bring water and snacks and be prepared to walk in water.

**Apr 10<sup>th</sup>**, Saturday, 7:00 a.m. HAS birding trip to French Joe Canyon. See article below for more information.

**Apr 11<sup>th</sup>**, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. FSPR bird walk. Meet at San Pedro River Inn.

**Apr 14<sup>th</sup>**, Wednesday, 8:00 a.m. FSPR bird walk. Meet at San Pedro House.

**Apr 24<sup>th</sup>**, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. FSPR bird walk. Meet at San Pedro House.

**Apr 4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>**, Sunday's, 8:00 a.m. EOP bird walks.

**May 1<sup>st</sup>**, Saturday, 7:00 a.m. HAS birding trip to San Bernardino National Wildlife Refuge. See article below for more information.



### **April Field Trip**

April 10, Saturday--French Joe Canyon will be the destination for our field trip this month, where we will look for the Rufous-capped warblers, as well as many migrants and nesters in this beautiful riparian area. Oak, ash, walnut, and cottonwood welcome those of us who make the drive up the 3 miles of rough, rutted and rocky unmaintained road across the desert grassland, 25 miles north of Sierra Vista (west side of Highway 90 near mp 299). We will meet at the Sierra Vista City Hall parking lot along Coronado Blvd. at 7:00 a.m. to carpool as high clearance vehicles will be required, and parking is limited at the trailhead. A hike of approximately 2 miles will be enjoyed as we watch for hawks, hummingbirds, woodpeckers, jays, vireos, thrashers, warblers, tanagers, sparrows, orioles, and who knows what else? Bring plenty of water and snacks/lunch as we may find enough birds to keep us busy until lunch time. Also plan to wear sturdy hiking boots (rocky, uphill trail), and bring your sun screen and sun hat. We should be back to City Hall no later than 2 p.m. depending on the birds and your enthusiasm. If you have any questions please call Nancy Aley, 803-7689 or email [nancyaley@msn.com](mailto:nancyaley@msn.com).

### **Bird Trip! Fish Trip!**

San Bernardino National Wildlife Refuge on May 1st. Leave from the Sierra Vista City Hall at 7:00 a.m. to carpool almost to New Mexico for a visit to our own SBNWR, an oasis in our high-desert grassland/Chihuahuan Scrub that supports both birds and fish. We will have an opportunity to observe both since we will be taken to a below-water viewing area to see native fish at eye level instead of looking down on them as we usually do. Fishing gear is prohibited, but bring lunch, water, good shoes and other clothing appropriate for you for the weather. High clearance vehicles are not needed for the drive there but will be more appropriate for travel on the NWR. The last 15 or so miles before the Refuge are unpaved and can be "wash-boarded". The Refuge is adjacent to the John Slaughter Ranch which will not be visited on the "official" trip. If there are those who would like to visit the ranch later in the day, please try to arrange to carpool together from the start. No reservations are necessary. For any additional information, please call Sandy Kunzer, 803-8490.

### **2nd Sunday Bird Walk – 14 March 2004**

Early migrant birds greeted our group of nine participants during the most recent bird walk along the river that embarked from the San Pedro River Inn. Numerous Vermilion Flycatchers were conspicuous and a most welcome sight to add a splash of color to the walk. The group was also treated to not one, but two female Hooded Mergansers. While one of them had spent the entire winter there, the other arrived only the week prior. And to top our good fortune, the White-throated Sparrow, an occasional vagrant from the east, was refound by the cabins.

Other interesting birds seen during the walk included Black-throated Sparrow along the entrance road, Green-tailed Towhee near the tule pond, and many Pyrrhuloxias. We spent some time distinguishing Western from Eastern (Lillian's) Meadowlarks. High in the cottonwoods along the river, Lazuli Buntings could be seen near a Great Horned Owl. Red-naped Sapsucker, Red-shafted Flicker and Gila and Ladder-backed Woodpeckers were all seen and heard too. Audubon's Warblers are molting into their gorgeous breeding plumage. Bewick's Wren and White-breasted Nuthatch gleaned from branches and trunks nearby. The sound of "Who cooks for you" announced the presence of White-winged Doves. Naturally, Mourning Doves were encountered, but the call of Common Ground-Doves generated excitement, but they were only heard, not seen as they eluded the collective gaze of the group. The next 2nd Sunday Bird Walk is scheduled to depart from the San Pedro River Inn at 8:00 a.m. on April 11, 2004. Please join us for the height of spring migration!

-Robert Weissler

### **2004 Ramsey Canyon Christmas Bird Count**

The 2004 Ramsey Canyon Christmas Bird Count (RCCBC) will be held on Sunday, 26 Dec, this year, so please mark your calendars. This year I'll be assisted by Robert Weissler as our secondary compiler, so feel free to contact either of us. You'll also have the ability to perform "on-line" registration this year although you'll still need to contact Robert (803-0794) or me (803-0221) in order to work out the details of where you will bird and when and where we will meet for breakfast and dinner. The details on this year's RCCBC will be provided starting in September.

-Ted Mouras

### **HAS February Grassland Trip**

Following Horace Greeley's advice to "Go West", a group of early rising sparrow chasers headed west into the Sonoita valley to match identification skills against the individual and species variations of those infamous "Little Brown Jobs". In response to our new publicity chairwoman's excellent efforts, the initial group was later joined at Whetstone and again at Los Cienagas by Snowbird visitors (no they are not on the species list). While never overwhelmed with bird numbers at any one time, the stock tank near the entrance and the Cottonwoods lining Cienaga Creek near the headquarters were reasonably productive but yielded only 5 fairly obvious species of LBJs (list below). In addition, the weather was a pleasant change from the last Society trip to the area that I attended. As hunger encroached, the group headed for National Audubon's Appleton-Whittell Research Ranch south of Elgin. There we were welcomed by Linda Kennedy and Bill Branan and ate our picnic lunches while receiving an excellent orientation on the goals and accomplishments of the Ranch. After lunch on our way home we stopped at an area on the Ranch that will be developed and set aside for visiting birders. If you have not visited the Ranch, I urge you to call ahead at 520-455-5522 to see this unique portion of Audubon's conservation efforts.

-Sandy Kunzer

### **CONSERVATION! IT'S FOR THE BIRDS!!** **HOW ARE COWS AND BIRDS RELATED?**

Cows and birds often share the same environments. An introduced species, cattle may significantly alter the often fragile southwestern environments that migrating and resident birds need for survival. Currently, 257 million acres of public land are leased, as required by federal law, to ranchers for commercial grazing. The Taylor Grazing Act, passed 70 years ago in 1934, now collides with current thinking about habitat and species preservation. Today, grazing is frequently regarded as detrimental to preservation of birds and their habitats.

New legislation, HR 3324, proposes government compensation to ranchers who voluntarily retire current grazing leases. One hundred sixty-five ranchers in Arizona support passage of the two bills introduced to Congress which would allow the government to pay permittees \$175 per animal unit month (AUM). For example, if a rancher grazed 300 cow/calf pairs an average of five months a year over the past ten years on leased land, the rancher would receive \$262,500 for retiring his/her permit. Public land managers could continue to contract for grazing if grazing would benefit the ecosystems of the land, *e.g.* grazing might be advantageous in certain circumstances to reduce fire hazards.

Research shows that there are numerous advantages to the proposed legislation. In addition to the obvious advantages of ecological restoration of public lands, the legislation provides an avenue to re-capitalize the rural American West and provide financial freedom for leaseholders. There will also be savings to taxpayers in the proposed system of five dollars saved for every dollar spent. The proposed legislation will reduce or eliminate costly litigation to resolve conflicts between the Taylor Act and more recent land management legislation, *e.g.* Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, *etc.*

Two web sites provide more detailed information on the proposed legislation: [www.permitbuyout.net](http://www.permitbuyout.net) and [www.publiclandsranching.org](http://www.publiclandsranching.org). Share your opinion on HR 3324 with your congressmen:

Sen. Jon Kyl, 730 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-4521  
[kyl.senate.gov/con\\_form.htm](http://kyl.senate.gov/con_form.htm)

Sen. John McCain, 241 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510,  
(202) 224-2235, [john\\_mccain@mccain.senate.gov](mailto:john_mccain@mccain.senate.gov)

Rep. Jim Kolbe, Arizona's 8<sup>th</sup> Congressional District, 2266 Rayburn HOB,  
Washington DC 20515-0308, (202) 225-2542

-Sondra Gardner, Conservation Committee Chair

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### MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

New Member - \$20, two years \$30, basic rate - \$35, senior citizen or student rate - \$15, non-subscribing rate (membership without magazine) - \$20. Please contact the treasurer if you are interested in this option. Make check to National Audubon. Send to Huachuca Audubon Society, PO Box 63, Sierra Vista, AZ 85636. For membership changes and status call 1-800-274-4201. Trogon News subscription only - \$10 USA, International - \$15 (Make check to Huachuca Audubon Society.) Friends of Huachuca Audubon - Individual \$10, Household \$15.

Please notify the Membership Chairman if you stop your mail and again when you restart it.