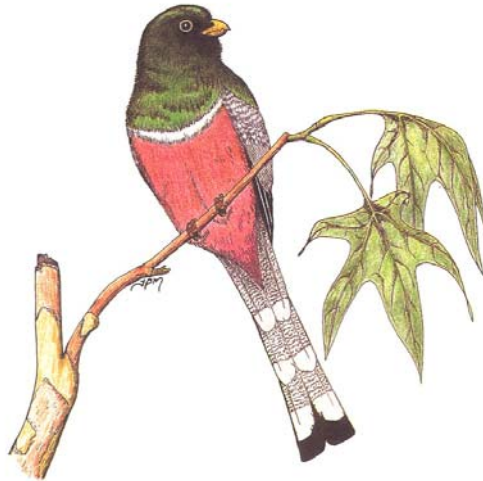


THE TROGON NEWS

HUACHUCA AUDUBON SOCIETY
Post Office Box 63, Sierra Vista, Arizona 85636
Volume XXXIII Number 4, April 2005



President's Message

Don't forget Earth Day is April 22. Think about personal steps you have taken or could take to lighten your personal footprint on the Earth. For example, compact fluorescents are a simple step to take and their use really reduces carbon dioxide emissions compared to standard light bulbs. Have you done this?

April is also Water Awareness Month and WaterWise has put together a number of offerings. There's something for everyone. Be sure to attend one of the events and learn something new.

There are plenty of bird outings and activities as well, thanks to our active volunteers. And many thanks to Mark Pretti for running not one, but two, fund-raising birding trips to Sonora!!

Before you know it, our annual meeting and picnic will be upon us in June. Have ideas about what HAS should be doing or saying? Consider volunteering for a board position or committee chair!

Welcome to New HAS Members!

We would like to extend a warm welcome to our newest HAS members: Osker Bluth, Maria Denogean, Augustina Lopez, Allyn Lowenstein, Judy Lutgring, Kathleen Meyer, William Morris, Rebecca Orozco, Michael Pestes, Barbara Ryal, Barbara Stratton, Dale Truitt, Nancy Vlassis and Joseph Walton.

Local Programs and Events

Apr 19th, Tuesday, SEABA meeting, 7:00 p.m., Tucson Botanical Gardens, 2150 N. Alvernon Way, Education Room. Guest speakers are Cory Martin and Doug Larson from the Botany Department at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, who will speak on Butterfly Gardening. Free. For more information, please call 520/742-0071 or see our website at www.naba.org/chapters/nabasa/home.html.

Apr 26th, Tuesday, HAS meeting, 7:00 p.m., Sierra Vista Police Department community meeting room, 911 N. Coronado. Join us for a virtual visit to Costa Rica with John Marvin. Come for information and socialization!

Field Trips

Apr 10th, Sunday, 7:30 a.m. FSPR bird walk. Meet at San Pedro River Inn.

Apr 13th, Wednesday, 7:30 a.m. FSPR bird walk. Meet at San Pedro House.

Apr 18th, Monday, 7:30 a.m. HAS bird walk to EOP. See below for details.

Apr 23rd, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. FSPR bird walk. Meet at San Pedro House.

Apr 30th, Wednesday, 9:00 a.m. SEABA butterfly walk to Garden Canyon in the Huachuca Mountains, on Ft. Huachuca in Sierra Vista. Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the Target parking lot at the NE corner of SR 90 and 92 in Sierra Vista. Bring your driver's license, auto registration, and proof of insurance to allow access to Ft. Huachuca property. Dress for the field; wear sturdy shoes & hat, bring water, close-focus binoculars, sunscreen and lunch. \$5.00 donation requested.

Apr 3rd, 10th, 17th, and 24th, Sunday's, 7:00 a.m. Sierra Vista Environmental Operations Park bird walks.



You Asked For It: You Got It!

During my recent request for: "Where would you like to go?" several replies asked: "Can we go to the Environmental Operations Park (EOP) (Sierra Vista Sewage ponds) on a weekday?" We listen and here is your chance. On Monday, 18 April at 7:30 a.m., we will do just that. Come prepared for a few hours in the sun, a walk of about a mile on almost level ground and good birds of the marsh and we hope, shore varieties. Michael Marsden, the shorebird Guru of the area will join us. The Sunday walks on 27 Feb and 6 Mar had 51 and 39 species respectively. There is no limit to the number who may attend but all must stay with a trained EOP docent while within the fence. I recommend that coffee intake be restricted that morning since there are no bushes and the only PortaLet is out side the fence. For additional information call Sandy Kunzer at 803-8490.

SABO's Hummingbird Project

This spring the Southeastern Arizona Bird Observatory, in cooperation with the Arizona Game and Fish Department, will begin a statewide survey of hummingbird migration and distribution. Modeled on the Texas Hummingbird Roundup, the survey will enlist the help of feeder-watchers across the state to record the arrival, species diversity, numbers, and departure of hummingbirds in an effort to learn more about the migration timing and distribution of these tiny wonders. SABO is in the process of developing both online and print forms for survey participants, but in the meantime informal reports of spring arrivals and nesting from across the state may be reported to sabo@sabo.org.

HAS Trip to Patagonia

On March 12, a beautiful warm spring day, fourteen of us traveled to Patagonia to check out spring migration. Original plans included a visit to Bog Hole but no water was in the pond so we birded along Harshaw Creek Road, Nature Conservancy's Patagonia Preserve and at the Paton's home.

Scanning the tops of new budding cottonwood trees makes for difficult identification and stiff necks! Views of Cassin's Vireo and Northern Beardless-tyrannulet were two of the rewards. A four wren day was nice and included: Bewick's, Canyon, Rock and House Wrens. Highlight at the Preserve may have been the Cedar Waxwings. Highlights at Paton's yard were three species of hummingbirds and scope views of a female Purple Finch, which was spotted by another group. It was a good challenge for those of us who bird in Arizona and not in California or the East.

What could make for a better day? Beautiful weather, landscape, birds and people!

Thanks to Teresa Miranda for her good ear, eye and enthusiasm.

-Harry Bergtholdt

2nd Sunday Bird Walk –March 13, 2005

The chill of winter gave way to the warmth of spring as the 2nd Sunday bird walk embarked from the San Pedro River Inn. The first Yellow Warblers had already arrived and could be heard from high in the cottonwoods along the river. The welcome sight of nearly ubiquitous Vermilion Flycatchers was so natural it seemed they never left for the winter. And Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warblers were molting out of their modest winter plumage into their bold breeding plumage. As has occurred on almost every walk, a Great Horned Owl was seen well perched in a cottonwood. Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk (including a distant dark-morph bird), and Kestrel were other raptors seen. Also, Barn Owls are once again using the nest box in a cottonwood on the premises of the inn

The possible sighting of a very early Warbling Vireo generated a concerted search. By contrast, Lucy's Warblers have yet to arrive, but they should appear soon since they are among the earliest warblers to migrate to their breeding haunts along and near the river. While Scott's Orioles had started to arrive in surrounding areas, the three common oriole species were not yet seen along the river, but they soon will. Likewise, kingbirds could return almost any day now.

Meanwhile, a Belted Kingfisher patrolled the ponds, while towhees and Curve-billed Thrashers sang with gusto. Chipping Sparrows were still numerous along the river. Say's and Black Phoebe, several flickers, and Gila and Ladder-backed Woodpeckers were seen most everywhere, while some winter visitors like Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Vesper, Lincoln's, and White-crowned Sparrows were still around prior to migrating out. A male Northern Cardinal added a fine punctuation mark to the birds seen on the walk!

The next 2nd Sunday Bird Walk is scheduled to depart from the San Pedro River Inn a half hour earlier at 7:30 a.m. on Sunday, April 10, 2005. Once again, birders of all levels of experience are welcome to join us!

-Robert Weissler

Aravaipa Ecosystem Planning Continues

The BLM Safford Field Office, Arizona Game and Fish Department, and The Nature Conservancy are partnering to develop a management plan for the Aravaipa Ecosystem. It will include the BLM's Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness, TNC's Aravaipa Canyon Preserve, three BLM Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (Turkey Creek Riparian ACEC, Desert Grasslands Research Natural Area (RNA), and Table Mountain RNA), and other surrounding BLM lands. Seven workgroups were formed at a March 5 public meeting in Willcox. These are Riparian/Water Quality, Transportation/Access, Uplands Habitats/Grazing/Fire, Recreation, Special Management Areas (Wilderness and ACECs), Cultural Resources/Socioeconomics, and Wildlife/T&E Species. These workgroups will continue to meet and correspond throughout the planning process. Results of the March 5 meeting will be posted on the BLM's website (www.az.blm.gov). To sign up to participate in a workgroup or be added to the mailing list, contact Marlo Draper at 928-348-4426 or Marlo_Draper@blm.gov.

-Diane Drobka, BLM Safford Field Office

Waste-to-Energy, Plasma Arc Conversion

Some of you may have noticed my name spread across the front and editorial pages of our local newspaper recently. If so, please remember: "Never believe what you hear and only half of what you see". If not, then you may want to start looking because we may have a new, local environmental issue looming. A California start-up company, Global Energy Resources (GER), has come to Cochise County with an intriguing proposal for an alternative to our current landfill procedures. Without direct monetary cost to the County, they would build a high-tech waste-to-energy plant at the current landfill site and purportedly derive their profits from sale of the energy and other by products. While their proposed process fit the EPA definition of incineration, that is arguable based on the physics involved. Would there be emissions? Certainly. Would those emissions be toxic at levels that could or would affect human health? Possibly but that is one of the things yet to be determined. Would the process use significant amounts of our scarce water? We don't know yet.

What did the committee (Landfill Alternatives Committee, Chair, Lee Basnar) of which I am a member, actually recommend to the County? We said that we could find no significant downside to signing a NON-BINDING Letter of Intent with GER so that more information could be obtained. The only commitment would be of staff time. If the process did not appear to fit our local needs then the County could walk away without penalty. In addition, even at this early stage, we recommended that the County require that continuous, real time, emissions-monitoring equipment be specified and that early definition of water use be required before any design/build contract even be considered.

If you have thoughts or information that you think should be considered, please contact me or attend the Supervisor's study session at 1400, 12 April, at the County complex in Bisbee.

Stay tuned for the next chapters.

-Sandy Kunzer

July ABA Convention in Tucson

For complete information about the upcoming ABA convention in Tucson this July, please check out: <http://www.americanbirding.org/mtgs/conventions/2005tucson/index.html>.

Eagle Nest Watcher Program

While you are tucked comfortably in your bed at night, 18 people are sleeping in tents so they can wake up at the crack of dawn to help protect our state's bald eagles. The [Arizona Bald Eagle Nestwatch Program](#) has saved the lives of 44 eagle nestlings since it began as a weekend volunteer effort by the U.S. Forest Service and Maricopa Audubon Society in 1978. Now 19 agencies are involved with the program to monitor bald eagle breeding areas under heavy pressure from human recreational activities.

The nest watchers protect the eagles while they're nesting and raising young. They also help educate the public, so people don't disrupt the breeding process. This year's nest watchers began their four-month tour of duty on Feb. 4. They will watch nine breeding areas, collecting data about the eagles' behavior and notifying rescuers of any life-threatening situations for the birds.

-Reprinted from AZGFD Wildlife News, 7 Mar 05

Become a Citizen Scientist and Help House Finches!

Ithaca, NY, March 8, 2005 - Coast to coast, House Finches have become afflicted with a debilitating form of conjunctivitis. Two projects through Cornell's Laboratory of Ornithology, Audubon's partner in the Great Backyard Bird Count, offer budding Citizen Scientists the opportunity to take part in tracking and understanding this disease. Neither requires any experience and both are offered free of charge.

Citizen Scientists participating in the "House Finch Disease Survey" help monitor the spread and prevalence of the disease. Participants observe their feeders and submit data on the presence or absence of healthy and/or diseased birds in their particular location. Data can be submitted either on paper or online. The only equipment you need to participate is a feeder and the ability to observe your feeder visitors. Sign up at <http://birds.cornell.edu/hofisignup/signup.html> and you'll receive a kit with instructions and information in the mail.

Citizen Scientists participating in the "House Finch Nest Survey" are helping to determine if differences in breeding biology are the cause of seasonal and geographic variation in disease prevalence. Participants locate and monitor House Finch nests around their homes and neighborhoods and keep detailed nest records (nest cards provided). Sign up at www.birds.cornell.edu/hofisignup/nestsignup.html and we'll send you an information packet to teach you how to safely observe House Finch nests.

Questions welcomed at housefinch@cornell.edu or visit the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology at <http://birds.cornell.edu/>.

Oak Flat Campground and Resolution Copper Company Land Exchange Proposal

Some may remember when congressional land exchanges created what we now know as the San Pedro National Riparian Area, Las Cienegas Natural Area and the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge in southeastern Arizona. Each exchange entailed the transfer of valuable and beautiful lands elsewhere in the state to private or Arizona state ownership. Some of those lands are today being planned for new homes. Others remain as open spaces but are not universally accessible to the public.

Resolution Copper Company, a subsidiary of Rio Tinto, a multinational corporation based in London, England, has assembled an exchange package that includes highly valuable private lands on the lower San Pedro River and adjacent to the Audubon's Appleton-Whittell Research Ranch near Elgin. WestLand Resources, Inc., a reputable environmental consulting firm based in Tucson, Arizona prepared an ecological overview of the Federal parcel that includes Oak Flat campground and the offered private parcels. Wetlands and floodplains that include one of the last remaining large mesquite bosques in Arizona comprise over 3,000 of the offered 4,525 acres. The US Forest Service lands are primarily a visually beautiful landscape dominated by boulders interior chaparral, and Emory oak uplands with about 2 acres of the 3,025 acres classified as wetlands that are livestock ponds. The lower elevations of the parcel are uplands division Sonoran desert scrub. Apache Leap is included in the proposal, but would be protected as a part of the congressional exchange language. Devils Canyon and other tributaries and canyons to Queen and Pinto Creeks are outside of the exchange boundary.

The planned mine does not include an open pit or surface excavation as the ore body is located 7,000 feet below the surface and the entry for the mine will be from adjacent private lands. The technique that will be used is called block caving. It is unknown at this time if mining this very deep ore deposit is economical. Initial activities will be exploratory in nature and actual mining is not anticipated to begin for another 15 or more years, and that is contingent upon feasibility. Although the proposed mining activity will be deep underground there is a potential for subsidence of the surface lands. The subsurface mineral ownership is currently held by Resolution Copper Company.

Active raptor nests on the federal lands that include Oak Flat Campground have been documented for Cooper's hawk, peregrine falcon, and zone-tailed hawk. Canyon wren, Gambel's quail, phainopepla, black phoebe, Great blue heron and Mexican jay have all been observed on the site. The endangered Arizona hedgehog cactus occurs, and another federally endangered species, the lesser long-nosed bat, has the potential of occurring on these federal lands.

Audubon's Appleton-Whittell Research Ranch is well known to Arizona birders and is a premier desert grasslands site interspersed with Madrean Evergreen Oak Woodlands. The greatest threat to this ecosystem is sub-division of lands into ranchettes. Acquisition of adjacent private parcels that many visitors assume are a part of the Research Ranch would solidify the long-term integrity of this grasslands "living laboratory". More than 550 species of plants, 40 species of grasshoppers and 100 species of butterflies and moths have been identified on the sanctuary. Cassin's sparrow, Botteri's sparrow, and Grasshopper sparrow all breed on this site and Baird's sparrow winter, representing four of the six species of birds considered Priority by Arizona Partners in Flight for desert grasslands. Other grasslands species of special conservation concern and that are on the Audubon WatchList for Arizona includes Montezuma quail, black-chinned sparrow, Brewer's sparrow (wintering), and Sprague's pipit (fall migrant). Sage, vesper, and savannah sparrows, burrowing owl, eastern bluebird and meadowlark and horned lark all occur here.

The San Pedro River parcel totals 3,200 acres and includes approximately 3 river miles of mesquite bosque, considered one of the rarest of Arizona riparian habitats. The uplands are the Upland Subdivision of Sonoran Desertscrub. Bird species include Gambel's quail, hooded oriole, phainopepla, mourning dove, curve-billed thrasher, red-tailed hawk, vermilion flycatcher, and Wilson's warbler. The exchange proposal would give the BLM management authority for these lands.

The Audubon Arizona Board and Science Committee carefully reviewed and considered the proposal and they support the proposed exchange because of the ecological values and the long-term protection that will be gained for important avian habitats in Arizona, particularly the lower San Pedro River mesquite bosque and Audubon's Appleton-Whittell Research Ranch. Authorization of the exchange by Congress is the only process that can include the San Pedro and Research Ranch because the US Forest Service cannot consider acquiring lands outside of current USFS administrative border, which is the case for both parcels. Resolution Copper Company has approached Audubon and the conservation community with a proposal that warrants our thoughtful consideration.

-Tice Supplee, Audubon Arizona, Director of Bird Conservation

San Pedro River 2005 Winter IBA Survey

Nine enthusiastic birders of various skill levels met at the San Pedro House shortly after dawn on a chilly forty degree morning January 24 to conduct the first San Pedro River IBA Survey of 2005. Beginning this year, Important Bird Area Surveys across Arizona are employing several changes to help standardize data collection so that the avian data can be added to a statewide geo-database. The data collected will help plan future conservation efforts for the IBAs. For our San Pedro River IBA Surveys, the two major changes from last year are: 1) we now record ALL encounters of ALL birds, both seen and heard, rather than limiting records to 34 "focus birds," and 2) we record any observed breeding behavior.

Our survey group split into two teams to simultaneously traverse two established transects: 1) a 1000-meter riparian transect along the river from the north side of the highway 92 bridge to trail marker #8, and 2) Green Kingfisher Pond transect running 675 meters around the pond. These transects will also be used for the spring (two each), summer (one), and fall (two each) surveys. For each transect, a recorder lists the number of individuals by species for each observation as well as any additional habitat and/or breeding behavior information. Weather conditions, including wind speed at midpoint through the transect, are also recorded. Additionally, one person takes digital pictures of the beginning, middle and end points of each transect.

One hour of survey time for each transect resulted with a cumulative total for both transects of 114 individuals representing 24 species. The most individuals were represented by Mexican Mallards (18), Lesser Goldfinches (16), Mourning Doves (10), and Gila Woodpeckers and House Finches at eight each. The rarest winter birds seen were the Common Yellowthroat and Spotted Towhee, one each. One each was also observed of our uncommon winter visitors the Belted Kingfisher, Green-winged Teal, Bridled Titmouse and Yellow-rumped Warbler.

Our IBA teams are getting primed for the spring surveys in April and May. The data collected will help in planning future conservation efforts for the San Pedro National Riparian Conservation Area and its Globally Important Bird Area. For additional information about Arizona's existing and potential IBAs, go to the Arizona IBA web site at www.tucsonaudubon.org/azibaprogram.

-Elaine Moore, Co-Chair, HAS Conservation Committee

Mail Correspondence to:
HUACHUCA AUDUBON SOCIETY
P.O. Box 63
Sierra Vista, AZ 85636

HUACHUCA AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

President, Tricia Gerrodette 378-4937
<triciag@outb.com>
Vice President, Bob Luce 459-2404
Secretary, Mike Guest 378-0667
Treasurer, Phil Tucker 803-8440
Field Trips, Mike Guest 378-0667
Programs, Tricia Gerrodette 378-4937
Conservation, Conrad & Elaine Moore
803-7646
Education, Sandy Anderson 458-0542
Membership, Ginny Bealer 378-6341
<vbealer@mindspring.com>
Publicity, Heather Guest 378-0667
Trogon Editor, Renell Stewart 378-6318
<stewartr3@mindspring.com>
Historian, Vacant
Hospitality, Eloise Bergtholdt, Heather Guest
Director, Sandy Kunzer 803-8490
Director, Sandy Anderson 458-0542
Director, Kate Scott
Director, Alan Blixt 515-9458
Director, Robert Weissler
AZ Audubon Council Rep.
Tricia Gerrodette 378-4937
Webmaster, Mike Guest 378-0667

Huac Aud Soc
B03
7XCH

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

National Audubon Society - New Member - \$20, two years - \$30, renewals - \$35, Seniors - \$15. Membership includes subscription to *Audubon Magazine*. Make check payable to National Audubon Society. For NAS membership changes and status call 1-800-274-4201.

Friends of Huachuca Audubon Society - Individual - \$10 annually, Household - \$15 annually. Provides no affiliation to National Audubon. Make check payable to Huachuca Audubon Society.

The *Trogon News* newsletter is provided to all members via the HAS web site - www.huachuca-audubon.org. Mailed copies or monthly email notification is available upon special request to HAS editor and/or secretary. Send all checks to Huachuca Audubon Society, PO Box 63, Sierra Vista, AZ 85636.