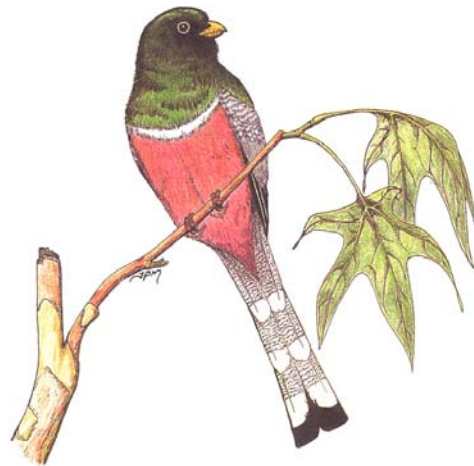


THE TROGON NEWS

HUACHUCA AUDUBON SOCIETY
Post Office Box 63, Sierra Vista, Arizona 85636
Volume XXXI Number 10, December 2003



President's Message

The holiday season is in full swing and we'll offer 2 get-togethers in December. Our regular membership meeting is on first Tuesday, featuring Salton Sea and Bill Radke, and the second offering is our holiday party potluck. Hope to see many of you at one or both! Don't forget to participate in the Christmas Bird Count, even if only from your backyard. We need to uphold our well-deserved reputation as the "birdiest" inland county!!

Although I never managed to coordinate having the film "Winged Migration" as an Audubon fundraiser with a grand opening, I do hope most of you have managed to see it. We were lucky enough to have it come to Cochise County at the Uptown Theatre and I really hope it did well.

There's a full report elsewhere in the Trogon News on the ultimate outcome of the Renzi amendment. Fortunately, it looks nothing like Rep. Renzi first proposed, which was horrid. The staff in Sen. McCain's office worked very hard to come up with a pretty good compromise. The one ESA protection that was removed was the layer that requires federal actions to be considered as part of the whole picture of what is happening in an area. So while all the fort's impact on water must be considered, it can now be considered in isolation from other impacts. So it certainly isn't totally good news for the riparian area but neither is it immediately disastrous.

Local Programs and Events

Dec 2nd 7:00 p.m., Mona Bishop Room in the Sierra Vista Public Library. Bill Radke will be the speaker at the December HAS meeting. Currently the Refuge Manager at San Bernardino and Leslie Canyon NWRs, Bill worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as the Wildlife Biologist at Sonny Bono Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge in southern California between 1990-1993. The Salton Sea is often mentioned as being "created by accident" when the Colorado River flooded through an irrigation headgate in 1905. However, various events have alternately filled (and later dried up) this huge lake basin with water and fish over the eons. Birds (and more recently people) have been quick to take advantage of the productive habitats created by these inland wetlands. Come learn about the Salton Sea and find out why this is such a wonderful place for birds and birders. You can plan to head there in February for the Salton Sea Birding Festival.

Field Trips

Dec 10th 8:30 a.m. FSPR bird walk. Meet at San Pedro House.
Dec 11th HAS field trip to Patagonia Lake State Park. See article below.
Dec 14th 8:30 a.m. FSPR bird walk. Meet at San Pedro River Inn.
Dec 27th 8:30 a.m. FSPR bird walk. Meet at San Pedro House.
Dec 7th, 14th, 21st, and 28th 8:00 a.m. EOP bird walks.



Patagonia Lake State Park Birding/Boat Trip

There's still space available (as of print time) on the HAS trip to Patagonia Lake State Park on Thursday 11 December 2003. The trip includes a boat trip on the lake, masterfully captained and expertly guided by Ron Hummel. Please also bring about \$15 in small bills to pay for gas (if you do not drive), Park entry fee and boat fee. Since the boat will comfortably carry only 9 people plus our experienced guide, the trip will be limited to a total of 18 people. The first group of 9 will embark at 0830 while the other group of 9 will bird from the shore. The two groups will switch at about 1030. Meet at the Sierra Vista City Hall at 0700 to carpool to the State Park. Bring warm clothing, lunch, water, binoculars and your enthusiasm. Reservations, on a first-come-first-served basis, can be made with Sandy Kunzer, 803-8490, the answering machine at that number or at sbkunzer@theriver.com.

Party! Party!

Sunday, December 14, will be our annual holiday party potluck. We're able to have it in the Mona Bishop Room at the library this year, starting at 2 pm. Bring a favorite dish to share; HAS will supply beverages. **Please** be sure to bring your own plates, utensils, and cups!! This is a chance for the folks who live farther away to get to town during daylight hours and gives everybody a chance to visit. Let's get together and chat, enjoy food and friendship, swap bird tales.

Update on Friends of the HAS

Friends of Huachuca Audubon Society - I'm pleased to report this project is off to a fine start with six Individual and thirteen Household memberships paid to-date. Of these, only three members require a hard copy of the Trogon News, thus allowing us to cut back on the number of printed and (snail) mailed copies and save money. Also these memberships are almost equal to the total cost of six sets of Audubon Adventures which will be distributed to local schools. Please consider joining our numbers at a cost of \$10 Individual and \$15 Household for one year. - Mike Guest

Ramsey Canyon Christmas Bird Count (RCCBC)

This year's count will be held on Saturday, Dec 27th and perhaps will even top last years 151 species. We have 14 count areas within our circle, so there should be something for everyone and as always feeder watchers remain an important part of the count. There's also an option to rise early to listen and look for owls!

Participants will meet for breakfast at 6:30 a.m. at the Lone Star Café, located at the intersection of Hwy 92 and Hereford Road, where checklists and maps and such will be handed out. Once again the Audubon Society will cover the tab for breakfast. Dinner and the count tally will be at 5:30 p.m. at the Quality Inn (formerly the Thunder Mountain Inn) just south of the intersection of Fry Blvd and Hwy 90/92. We have a separate room reserved for us (the Canyon Room) so we will not be interfering with other diners.

The fee, for participants 19 years and older, remains \$5.00, check payable to the National Audubon Society. This can be paid at the breakfast or dinner.

Please contact Ted Mouras via email THEODORE.P.MOURAS@saic.com or at 803-0221 if you are interested in participating and if you have a preference as to where you would like to "count". If you wish to watch your feeders, please let him know where your feeders are located. Ted will also coordinate arrangements for the breakfast and dinner.

Remember HAS at Tax Time!

December 30 isn't that far away. Help yourself and HAS by making a year-end tax-deductible contribution to HAS. You can request that your donation be earmarked according to your wishes – perhaps for Audubon Adventures, or general administrative expenses.

Fort Huachuca and the ESA

Thanks to the efforts of Audubon members and friends in this area, this state, and around the country, the Fort Huachuca Preservation Amendment bears very little resemblance to the Renzi amendment passed by the House in May. The Department of Defense is still responsible to mitigate for water use on AND off post for all the people who are here because of the presence of Fort Huachuca.

It's impossible for the fort to regulate water use by military personnel who live off post or all the defense contractors who live in the community. But they are still responsible for the effects of that water use. That's where the fort is dependent on the communities (cities and county) to help out with water reduction efforts. And all the folks who are here with absolutely NO connection to Fort Huachuca have lots of water impact too. The communities have to completely take the lead in water reduction efforts for all the non-fort people.

One very good thing came out of this months-long battle over the application of the Endangered Species Act in this area. There is a requirement embedded in the legislation for an annual report to Congress on progress toward balancing the water budget in the Sierra Vista Subwatershed. The work that must be done to get to that report will be very helpful in informing all residents of the challenge we face. Will our elected leaders truly lead us in meeting that challenge?

SABO Offerings

The Southeastern Arizona Bird Observatory (SABO) in Bisbee is once again offering weekend tours of the Sulphur Springs Valley in their comfortable birding bus. The Saturday "Hawk Stalk" is an all-day tour covering much of the lower Sulphur Springs Valley in search of raptors, including Ferruginous Hawk, Golden and Bald eagles, Harris' Hawk, Prairie Falcon, Merlin and Red-tails of every imaginable color morph. The tours also often find Scaled Quail, Lark Buntings, Bendire's Thrasher and other southeastern Arizona birds. The itinerary includes a stop at Whitewater Draw Wildlife area for the morning Sandhill Crane flight and lunch at a restaurant in Elfrida. The cost is \$45 for members of SABO, \$55 for non-members; this winter Huachuca Audubon members are eligible for the member discount. Hawk Stalks are scheduled for November 29, December 8, 20 and 27, January 3 and 10, and February 7, 21 and 28.

Sunday's Crane Tours are short half-day trips from Bisbee to observe cranes feeding in farm fields and returning to their roost at Whitewater Draw. These tours leave Bisbee at 9 a.m. and return around 12:30 p.m. Cost is \$25 for SABO and Tucson Audubon members and \$30 for non-members. Crane tours are scheduled for November 30, December 9, 21 and 28, January 4 and 11, and February 1, 8, 22 and 29.

Following the success of last years "Celebrity Hawk Stalk" with Pete Dunne, SABO has scheduled two "Celebrity Hawk & Sparrow Stalks" this winter with Ken Kaufmann, author of Kingbird Highway, Lives of North American Birds, A Field Guide to Advanced Birding, and the Focus Guide series. Ken has graciously agreed to help us search for celebrity hawks as well as those hard to identify little brown sparrows he loves so much. This special tour is January 31 and the cost is \$100. For those with a special interest in sparrows, SABO is offering a unique 3-day workshop for Sparrow-phobics December 13-15. The workshop will address those confusing winter sparrows with both classroom presentations and field trips to the San Pedro and Sulphur Springs Valley.

Call SABO at (520) 432-1388 or visit the website at www.sabo.org for more information or to reserve a spot on any of these tours.

Wings Over Willcox – January 15-18, 2004

The keynote speaker for the 11th annual Wings Over Willcox Sandhill Crane Celebration will be Dr. James D. Rising, internationally recognized expert on grassland sparrows and New World orioles. Dr. Rising has coauthored (with David Beadle) two books, A Guide to the Identification and Natural History of the Sparrows of the United States and Canada (1996) and Sparrows of the United States and Canada: The Photographic Guide (2002). He will speak at the Saturday night banquet and sign copies of his books. Banquet seating is limited; advance registration is required. Complete information and forms for Wings Over Willcox can found online at www.wingsoverwillcox.com or by calling 1-800-200-2272.

Everglades Birdfest – January 17-19, 2004

Everglades BirdFest is a 3-day birding and ecology festival in Everglades National Park, including naturalist guided birdwatching in Main and Shark Valley sections of the park. Included is luxury coach transportation to sites and trails, 2 nights lodging at Flamingo Lodge, 7 meals, full use of park facilities, exhibitors, evening seminars on birdlife, wildlife, habitats, comparative ecology, natural history, and conservation and restoration of the Everglades. Optional boating, canoeing, kayaking, biking, fishing, back-country hiking are available. Contact: Broward County Audubon Society, PO Box 9644, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33310 954-776-5585, <http://www.browardaudubon.org/birdfest>



Come to Where the Birds Are!

Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival, January 16-19, 2004

Migrate to one of the country's pre-eminent birding spots and join the Morro Coast Audubon Society (MCAS) for the 8th Annual Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival. Morro Bay, an important stop on the Pacific Flyway is recognized worldwide for its diversity of both resident and wintering birds with over 200 species identified during past Festivals. This event is sponsored by MCAS and gives you the chance to join local and national birding experts on a variety of field trips and workshops.

The Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival limits field trip group sizes to maximize spotting and identification opportunities. The Festival also offers workshops aimed at sharpening your birding skills, as well as evening programs with outstanding speakers.

Please note that the Morro Bay State Park campground will be closed during this year's festival; however, the area offers a number of other nearby campgrounds, such as Montana de Oro State Park and Atascadero State Beach.

For more information about the Festival, check out our website at <http://www.morro-bay.net/birds/>, where you can request that your name be added to the mailing list for our 2004 brochure, due out in October. Registration deadline is December 31, 2003 and early signups are encouraged as the most popular events fill up quickly.

Help Needed!

Can you spare a few hours a month? We think a publicity person for HAS could help boost interest and attendance at our walks and meetings. Can you step forward to help? Please contact Tricia at 378-4937 or email triciag@outb.com.



HAS members at the Smitty Memorial Unveiling - photo by Jim Horton

San Diego Bird Festival – February 4-8, 2004

The eighth annual San Diego Bird Festival spotlights the natural diversity of the region with birding trips to the Anza-Borrego Desert, Cuyamaca Mountains, San Elijo Lagoon home of the California Gnatcatcher, San Diego Bay, Coronado Islands and San Felipe in Baja California. More than 480 species of birds have been seen in San Diego County, a bird haven along the Pacific Flyway and home to many exciting winter birds.

The Festival highlights include: Friday night mixer with Adrian Binns' talk on Origin of Bird Names, Saturday night dinner with Kenn Kaufman and a variety of classes pertaining to birds, bees, butterflies and the technology of digiscoping, plus 16 birding trips. For younger birders there will be the ever-popular Salt Marsh School House and a Sunday morning bird and bike trip along the bay.

Space, as usual, is limited so register early on line at: www.sandiegonaturefestivals.org If you wish to receive a brochure e-mail: registration@sandiegonaturefestivals.org and list your name and address. See you at Marina Village on Mission Bay in February. Come and enjoy fantastic birding and a chance to visit with friends from across the USA and beyond.

Upper Skagit Bald Eagle Festival – February 7-8, 2004

The theme for the 17th annual Upper Skagit Bald Eagle Festival held February 7 and 8, 2004 in Concrete, Rockport, Marblemount and Newhalem is "Freedom's Journey, Return to the River." Featured will be conservation displays, speakers, arts and crafts booths, a planetarium, a Volkswalk, Freedom, a flight impaired eagle from Sarvey Wildlife along with other raptors, a salmon story telling tent with a costume parade, a Native American Music Evening on Saturday featuring Robert "Tree" Cody, salmon BBQ, bus tours, a raffle, and more. Don't miss the eagle viewing sites along the Skagit River. Check web site <http://www.skagiteagle.org/> for more info. Contact Upper Skagit Bald Eagle Festival, P.O. Box 571, Concrete, WA 98237, 360-853-7283.

Salton Sea International Bird Festival – February 13-16, 2004

Mark your calendars for the 7th Annual Salton Sea Festival in Southeastern California's Desert Birding Paradise. There have been over 400 recorded species on this Pacific Flyway. The festival will include a variety of tours – core, specialty, target and boating, sunset – seminars and workshops. Sunday evening's banquet will feature Guy McCaskie and Phil Unit, coauthors (along with Michael Patten) of "Birds of the Salton Sea, Status, Biogeography and Ecology" which is the definitive text on the bird life of the Salton Sea and the Imperial Valley. For more information, check the web site at <http://www.newriverwetlands.com/saltonsea.html>.

A Celebration of Whooping Cranes and Other Birds – February 27-29, 2004

Get your binoculars and checklists ready. Wintering migratory birds in amazing quantities and array flock into the wetlands and onto the Texas shorelines of Mustang Island in Port Aransas, Texas. Nestled along the Gulf of Mexico, Port Aransas is home to a variety of year-round feathered friends and thousands of migratory birds. As part of *The Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail* and located in the central fly-way, this island ranks among the "best sites to bird in Texas". Visitors to this festival will enjoy birding tours both by land and by sea as well as numerous seminars from world renowned speakers, including presentations by the International Crane Foundation. For more information, see web site: <http://www.portaransas.org/cranes.asp>.

House Finch Disease Survey



Photo by Phil Musta

The House Finch Disease Survey is an unprecedented opportunity for you to help researchers track the spread of an infectious disease in a wildlife population. The survey is easy to do: participants record the visits of House Finches and American Goldfinches at their feeders and the occurrence of diseased birds, and then send their data to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. In doing so, they help scientists document the occurrence and spread of mycoplasmal conjunctivitis in the United States and Canada. Birds with avian conjunctivitis often have red, swollen, watery, or crusty eyes; in extreme cases the eyes are so swollen or crusted over that the birds are virtually blind.



Photo by Phil Musta

Will mycoplasmal conjunctivitis spread through the western House Finch Population as rapidly as it did in the East? We need your help to answer this question. For us to study the prevalence and geographic range of mycoplasmal conjunctivitis, we need to know where it occurs as well as where it does NOT occur. Your participation is thus essential even if you never observe diseased birds. Otherwise, our estimates of disease prevalence will be biased by positive sightings.

Participants in this free survey receive instructions, data forms, and a one-year subscription to *Birdscope*, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's newsletter. For more information, see web site: <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/hofi/index.html>. Or contact: House Finch Disease Survey, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, NY 14850; email housefinch@cornell.edu

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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.)

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