

# THE TROGON NEWS

HUACHUCA AUDUBON SOCIETY  
Post Office Box 63, Sierra Vista, Arizona 85636  
Volume XXXIII Number 10, December 2005



## President's Message

Hope you all had a nice Thanksgiving and that many of you participated in the bird count for Professor John Hewston at Humboldt State University. Mark Pretti's talk on Belize just 2 days before Thanksgiving had a nice turnout of visitors and newcomers. Maybe we'll have some new faces at our holiday party on December 11!

Our holiday party potluck will be at Audubon's Appleton-Whittell Research Ranch in Elgin. Please bring a potluck dish to share that would feed at least 8 and please bring your own plates and silverware. We'll have a selection of beverages. Please do not arrive at the ranch before 12:30 pm, as there will be another group finishing up. Let's plan to eat at 1:30, and then socialize as long as we want. If you have a nametag, please wear it, as we do hope that new people will come. This is a great chance to meet fellow enthusiastic birders and see the beautiful grasslands at the Research Ranch.

I hope everyone's holiday season will be happy, not too stressful, and full of good birds and birding. Let's keep our fingers crossed and binoculars cleaned for a high number of species on the Christmas Bird Count; we have a reputation to uphold!

## Welcome to New HAS Members!

We would like to extend a warm welcome to our newest HAS members: Anita Bear and Joe Hogan of Bisbee, Laurie Giangregorio of Hereford, Robert Golding of Douglas, Dwayne Head, Elizabeth M. Townsend and Ken Keenan of Sierra Vista, Clara M. Hill of Willcox, Jim Lewis of Huachuca City, and Elaine Miles of Safford.

### Local Programs and Events

**Dec 11<sup>th</sup>**, Sunday, HAS Holiday Party, Audubon's Appleton-Whittell Research Ranch in Elgin, 1:00 p.m. until ???. Please bring a potluck dish to serve at least 8 and your own plates and silverware. Beverages will be provided.

**Dec 18<sup>th</sup>**, Sunday, Ramsey Canyon Christmas Bird Count. See below for more info.

### Field Trips

**Dec 10<sup>th</sup>**, Saturday, HAS field trip to Patagonia Lake State Park. Fourth Annual Birding by Boat and Land. Leave from Sierra Vista City Hall parking lot at 7:00 a.m. prompt. Small fee for boat ride, in addition to Park entrance fee. Limited to 18 participants. Reservations are essential, you must contact the Leader: Sandy Kunzer, 803-8490. sbkunzer@theriver.com Note: Due to the high price of gas, car pool passengers are expected to provide adequate compensation to their driver, about 8 cents per mile.



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

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

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

**Dec 4<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>**, Sunday's, 8:00 a.m. Sierra Vista Environmental Operations Park bird walks. Tours will be limited to 20 participants plus 2 docents.

### 2006 Field Trips

The HAS Outings Committee, Mike Guest (Chair), Sandy Kunzer, Rick Romea, and Erika Wilson have planned a variety of venues for the first half of 2006. January 15<sup>th</sup> will be our annual Sulphur Springs Valley Safari. Limited to 14 participants. Reserve **after January 4<sup>th</sup>** with Rick Romea, 520-803-1160 or e-mail: [rickorcindy@hotmail.com](mailto:rickorcindy@hotmail.com). Other field trips, details later, will be February - Whitewater Draw, March - Saturday EOP, April - French Joe Canyon, May - Gray Hawk Ranch, and June - Huachuca Mountains, campgrounds and Comfort Spring.

New this year commencing in March will be monthly events at Mary Jo's Ash Canyon B&B and early morning bird walks at Ramsey Canyon Preserve.

### October 27<sup>th</sup> Field Trip Report

Dieter Kamm led a party of eleven, including two visiting birders from Switzerland, on our excursion to St. David's Monastery and Cienega. Due to seemingly endless mesquite thickets, access to the Cienega was limited to a single narrow causeway which disappeared into a swamp, without ever revealing the presence of more than a few half-seen lbj's. Returning to the parking lot along the railroad tracks we fared better, with excellent extended views of five sparrow species, which allowed Dieter to expound upon the intricacies of sparrow identification.

Afternoon birding at the Monastery was proving to be a little more productive, until the group succumbed to the increasing heat after accumulating just 25 different species.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday Bird Walk  
13 November 2005**

Thirteen participants enjoyed a cool, crisp morning along the San Pedro River. Winter sparrows have arrived in numbers with plenty of White-crowned, Vesper, Chipping, Brewer's, and Lincoln's Sparrows seen. A few Lark Buntings were also in evidence, along with Eastern Meadowlarks. Curve-billed Thrasher, Green-tailed, Canyon and Abert's Towhees, Black and Say's Phoebes, and Pyrrhuloxia were also observed several times, as were Gila and Ladder-backed Woodpeckers.

Common Yellowthroat was present at the pond at the left of the blind again along with numerous Red-winged Blackbirds and Mourning Doves. A pair of flickers, namely a Gilded and a Red-shafted, were seen at the edge of the pond to the right of the blind. A Belted Kingfisher perched on the telephone line over the pond.

The river was quiet on this day producing just the occasional chip sounds of Yellow-rumped Warbler. However, we did spy a Great Horned Owl doing its best imitation of a bump on a log up in a cottonwood. And a brief glimpse of a small wren suggested a possible Winter Wren, a good bird if it stayed around for the Ramsey Canyon Christmas Bird Count. A female Vermilion Flycatcher appears to be overwintering along the river too. A Loggerhead Shrike or two were observed on our return from the river.

The next 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday Bird Walk is scheduled to depart from the San Pedro River Inn at 8:00 a.m. on Sunday, December 11, 2005. Once again, birders of all levels of experience are welcome to join us!

-Robert Weissler

**HAS Field Trip: November 14, 2005, Report**

Six HAS members and a visiting birder from Massachusetts enjoyed a cool tramp up and down upper Huachuca Canyon. We were in shade as we walked up the canyon and we had very few birds, but just when the sun touched the canyon floor and water was seeping down the creek, the birds appeared. Our out-of-state birder saw his life Rufous-crowned Sparrow among the Chipping Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos that formed the majority of the birds coming to drink and bathe. Also dropping in were several Hermit Thrushes, American Robins, and numerous Ruby-crowned Kinglets. Then a Yellow-eyed Junco was spotted by a few before it retreated into the shrubbery, followed by a few Pine Siskins and Bridled Titmice.

As we started back down the canyon a Hutton's Vireo gave everyone good views, a small flock of Bushtits moved through and we saw two each of Red-naped Sapsucker and Arizona Woodpecker, as well as Northern Flickers and Mexican Jays. Just before the parking lot we found a lovely Painted Redstart and a lucky few saw a male Townsend's Warbler. On the way out of the canyon we picked up Acorn Woodpecker, Say's Phoebe, and a Cassin's Kingbird. Our total list was 26 species, but the beauty of the canyon and the good company made up for the lack of birds.

### **Reminder: Ramsey Canyon Christmas Bird Count**

A couple reminders regarding the Ramsey Canyon Christmas Bird Count (RCCBC) to be held on Sunday, December 18....

If you have not already indicated your interest in participating in the Ramsey Canyon Christmas Bird Count (RCCBC) on Sunday, December 18, please contact Ted Mouras via email at [mourast@saic.com](mailto:mourast@saic.com) (phone: 803-0221) or Robert Weissler via email at [weissler@aves.org](mailto:weissler@aves.org) (phone: 803-0794).

Likewise, if you plan to participate, but have not yet indicated whether you will attend the breakfast and/or the dinner, please contact Ted or Robert as indicated above.

Note: the deadline for sending the check (\$16/person) for the count-tally dinner is Friday, December 2. Checks should be made payable to Robert Weissler and sent to:

Robert Weissler  
Re: RCCBC Dinner  
P.O. Box 1105  
Hereford, AZ 85615

We look forward to seeing those of you who plan to participate on December 18. Details on the breakfast and dinner can be found in the November Trogon News on page 7 or by e-mailing Ted or Robert.

-Ted Mouras and Robert Weissler

### **Coronado National Memorial Holiday Open House**

Coronado National Memorial will host a Holiday Open House on Saturday, December 10, 2005 at the park visitor center from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Flint Knapper, Luther Rivera, will demonstrate the technique of sculpting ancient arrowhead designs and display his collection of artifacts. All sales items in the bookstore will be discounted 15% off regular price. Snacks and refreshments will be provided to the public. There is no admission charge for this event. For more information, contact the park at (520) 366-5515 ext.23.

### **Go Hawk Stalking with SABO! Weekends through February**

The season for raptors, cranes and sparrows is here again, and the Southeastern Arizona Bird Observatory will once again offer minibus tours of the Sulphur Springs Valley beginning November 25 and continuing most weekends through the end of February. This year, SABO will extend its member discount to members of Huachuca Audubon Society: \$55 for all-day Saturday "Hawk Stalks" (including a restaurant lunch), \$35 for Sunday morning tours. For reservations or more information, contact SABO at [sabo@sabo.org](mailto:sabo@sabo.org) or 520-432-1388.

### **Birding By Ear**

I think that I shall never see  
That Birdie in the mesquite tree.

An LBJ deep in the shade  
With no coloration to give me aid.

It trills and chirps its lovely song  
But what the heck is it? I'll know ere long.

For now from Rick's new helpful class  
I hope to learn that song at last.

(Heather Guest with apologies to Joyce Kilmer)

In a series of four classes, Rick Romea has attempted to unravel some of the mystery of birding by ear. With the aid of computerized calls, Rick has helped us tell the difference between chirps, twits, whits, and burrs, all of which can be quite confusing until one hears some sort of pattern emerging.

Following the indoor classes, Rick plans to hold a couple of bird walks in the Spring to help us identify bird calls in the field.

Rick has generously donated all of the class fees, **\$246!**, to HAS's education outreach fund. Thank you Rick Romea, and thank you Brooke Gebow for allowing the use of the Nature Conservancy Ramsey Canyon Preserve facilities.

Note: if you were unfortunate and missed this great class, Rick has had so much fun he is already preparing for a successor - watch this newsletter!

### **"Sparrow-phobics Anonymous" Workshop January 16-17, 2005**

Are you terrified at the thought of sorting through all those "little brown jobs"? Let fellow sufferers guide you through the basics of sparrow identification with a little classroom study and plenty of practice on the real thing. This two-day mini-workshop will be held immediately following the Wings Over Willcox Sandhill Crane Celebration. Monday morning classroom sessions will be held in Bisbee; Monday afternoon and Tuesday field trips will visit prime sparrow locations in the San Pedro and Sulphur Springs valleys. The cost of the 2-day workshop is \$155 for members of SABO or Huachuca Audubon, \$175.00 for nonmembers; the Monday workshop and afternoon field trip are \$85.00 for members of SABO or Huachuca Audubon, \$95.00 for nonmembers. Field trip transportation from Bisbee and lunches are included. For reservations or more information, contact SABO at [sabo@sabo.org](mailto:sabo@sabo.org) or 520-432-1388.

**Ecuador: Hummingbirds, Tanagers, and More**  
**March 25 - April 9, 2006**

Join the Southeastern Arizona Bird Observatory and High Lonesome BirdTours for an adventure in the "Hummingbird Capital of the World"! SABO naturalist Sheri Williamson, along with Ecuadorian naturalist and birder Juan Carlos Calvachi, will be your guides to the stunning landscapes and wildlife of the Amazon rainforests and Andes Mountains. For itinerary, please visit <http://www.sabo.org/ecuador.htm> or contact SABO at [sabo@sabo.org](mailto:sabo@sabo.org) or 520-432-1388.

**Bald Eagle Closure Areas Go into Effect**

At this time every year, wildlife officials ask for your help in protecting Arizona's bald eagles by honoring the closure of 15 eagle breeding areas in different parts of the state, some near popular recreation areas. Our state currently has 39 breeding pairs of bald eagles, and the Arizona Game and Fish Department and other land and wildlife management agencies close the breeding areas for part of the year, starting in December, in an effort to protect the birds' breeding attempts.

"We want to give these birds every chance to thrive," says James Driscoll, head of the Arizona Game and Fish Department Bald Eagle Management Program. "Human activity near active bald eagle nests can cause a breeding pair to leave its eggs uncovered, leading to a failed breeding attempt. It can take only 30 minutes for a breeding attempt to fail."

The bald eagle was federally listed as an endangered species in 1978. The birds have now recovered enough to be considered a "threatened species." Part of the reason for the comeback in our state is the Arizona Bald Eagle Nestwatch Program, which contracts with volunteers to monitor breeding areas, educate the public about breeding area closures and identify situations where intervention might be needed to save an eagle's life.

In December, Arizona bald eagles begin rebuilding nests in preparation for laying eggs. During this time, land and wildlife management agencies enact the seasonal breeding area closures on Tonto Creek, the Salt River, the Verde River, the San Carlos River, Lower Lake Mary, Lynx Lake, Luna Lake, Lake Pleasant, Roosevelt Lake and Talkalai Lake. Bald eagles nest, forage and roost at the rivers and lakes that have become some of Arizona's most popular recreation spots, and this time of year, that can be difficult for the birds. However, Driscoll says, "With the public's help and cooperation, we can all take responsibility for ensuring that Arizona bald eagles breed successfully."

For further information on the closure areas and tips for visiting eagle areas, please go to: [http://www.azgfd.gov/artman/publish/article\\_426.shtml](http://www.azgfd.gov/artman/publish/article_426.shtml)

-Reprinted from November 22 AZ Game and Fish Wildlife News

### **Teaming with Wildlife**

Teaming with Wildlife is a coalition of more than 3,000 organizations working to prevent wildlife from becoming endangered by supporting increased state and federal funding for wildlife conservation. The National Audubon Society has supported Teaming with Wildlife as a member of its Steering Committee for more than a decade, and over 200 Audubon chapters have joined the coalition.

Teaming with Wildlife is conducting an on-line survey of wildlife conservation activists like you to determine the messages most likely to inspire action in support of wildlife action plans, recently completed by every state to proactively conserve wildlife before they become rarer and more costly to protect. As a wildlife viewing enthusiast, your input is particularly important, and we hope you'll take 15 minutes to respond to a brief survey by December 12 at

<http://www.cciwebresearch.com/scripts/qcweb.dll?starhtml&orion&fmaa170&>

(all responses are completely anonymous and your privacy is assured).

### **Plan Now to Attend 2006 Wings Over Willcox**

January 12-15, 2006, is just a few short months away, so mark your calendars and plan to visit Willcox, Arizona, for the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Wings Over Willcox Birding and Nature Festival. This exciting weekend of birding and natural history tours and seminars is sure to be fun for the whole family. A complete list of activities, as well as local lodging and restaurants, can be found at the festival website: [www.wingsoverwillcox.com](http://www.wingsoverwillcox.com).

The keynote speaker at the Saturday night banquet will be wildlife biologist Roderick C. Drewien. For more than 35 years, Drewien has studied the movements, life histories, and conservation challenges facing cranes in western North America. He will share his extensive knowledge of the cranes' annual cycles from their breeding grounds, through their spring and fall migration stopovers, to their wintering areas.

### **Galveston Birding Festival**

Check out Upper Texas Coastal birding at its best at the Galveston Birding Festival. FeatherFest 2006 will be held March 30 – April 2. For more information, go to: [www.galvestonfeatherfest.com](http://www.galvestonfeatherfest.com)

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 458-0542  
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@cox.net>  
Historian, Vacant  
Hospitality, Heather Guest  
Director, Sandy Kunzer 803-8490  
Director, Sandy Anderson 458-0542  
Director, Alan Blixt 515-9458  
Director, Robert Weissler 803-0794  
Director, Mark Pretti 803-6889  
AZ Audubon Council Rep.  
Tricia Gerrodette 378-4937  
Webmaster, Mike Guest 378-0667

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**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](http://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.