

THE TROGON NEWS

HUACHUCA AUDUBON SOCIETY
Post Office Box 63, Sierra Vista, Arizona 85636
Volume XXIX Number 11, December 2007



President's Message

Hello. This has been a great quarter for seeing birds. Plain-capped Starthroat in Tucson; Eared Quetzal in Madera Canyon; Ruby-throated Hummingbird in Patagonia; Sabine Gull; Hooded Merganser; and Crested Caracara in the Sulphur Springs Valley; to name a few. So, where are the birders? September, Huachuca Canyon – four of us; October, Benson, Willcox and St. David ponds – five of us; November, Whitewater Draw – four of us! All good birding days, each with great birds, but so poorly attended. Why? I'd like to hear from you.

This quarter's interesting meetings have been well attended for fine presentations by Lee Basnar, Linda Feltner, and Mark Pretti; plus the collection box has each time yielded half, or more, of the room cost! Thank you all for contributing. We'd much rather spend our funds on educational projects. Plans for our Holiday Party Potluck are well in hand and people are beginning to sign up.

We have finally given up on trying obtaining the required permits for real artifacts for our planned Bird/Mammal trunk, bureaucracy at its best, instead we have applied for a substantial grant from Arizona Audubon to enable us to purchase artificial artifacts, for which no permit is required. Hopefully we'll be able to offer school visits next spring.

Regards, Mike

Committee News

The chairpersons for the chapter committees are as follows: Conservation: Verna Berry; Education: Ginny Bealer; Programs: Kerrie Kirkpatrick; Membership: Ginny Bealer; and Outings: Rick Romea. Please contact the relevant chairperson if you would like to find out more information about the activities of a particular committee.

Shop at our Marketplace for the Holidays! And raise money for Huachuca Audubon!!

Help raise funds for the Huachuca Audubon Society by shopping at our online [Marketplace](#). Just click on the shopping bag banner on the left side of the Huachuca Audubon Society home page (www.huachuca-audubon.org) and raise money for us! Please remember that ONLY purchases made online at participating merchants accessed by clicking on our website Marketplace banner first will raise money for us. Otherwise, the merchants will **not** be able to return a portion of the purchase cost to Huachuca Audubon.

Welcome to New HAS Members!

We would like to welcome our newest HAS (and Friends of HAS) members: Debbie Switzer, Janet Trumbule, Loretta Williams of Benson; Michael Turisk of Bisbee; Mckinney Barnes of Bowie; Barbara Schmidt of Cochise; Jeanne Harmon, Sammy Juarez of Douglas; Mr. & Mrs. James Childress of Durango, CO; Floyd & Elizabeth Jackson, Vicki Kreyling of Elfrida; Richard Crane, Billie Housley, Eileen Langholff, Celia Pierce, Katherine Zellerbach, Branimir Zdunich, Liz & Pete Sockness of Hereford; Sylvia Fisher, Gail Griffin, Jim Lewis of Huachuca City; Fay Sais of Pearce; Donald Wadsworth of Portal; & Mary Adamczyk, Lois Koppel, Veronica Webb of Sierra Vista.

HAS Vacancies

New members in particular may be interested in getting involved with our organization. We continue to seek an Editor for the Trogon News. Currently, due to a full time job and his other commitments, Robert Weissler can accommodate only quarterly issues. We would prefer to return to our customary monthly publication schedule if an interested person steps forward.

Help and guidance is readily available for any volunteer position of interest. If you wish to join us, please discuss with Mike Guest or any other officer listed on the back cover of this newsletter.

Local Programs and Events

Check the web site (<http://www.huachuca-audubon.org>) for the latest updates to the schedule of events. HAS monthly meetings are in the Horace Steele Conference Room at Cochise College.

Dec. 16th, noon Sunday. HAS Holiday Potluck Social.

This event will take place this year once again at the [Audubon Research Ranch](#) at 366 Research Ranch Road south of Elgin. Contact Linda Kennedy for additional information at sacaton@theriver.com.

In 2008:

Jan. 15th, Tuesday, 7:00 pm. HAS Monthly Meeting, **Chris Hass presents Coatis in the Huachucas.**

Jan. 17-20. Wings Over Willcox (WOW) birding festival. See article below for details.

Feb. 19th, Tuesday, 7:00 pm. HAS Monthly Meeting, **Ken & Karen Horton on Uganda.**

Mar. 18th, Tuesday, 7:00 pm. HAS Monthly Meeting, **Cecile Lumer on Cochise Native Plants.**

Apr. 15th, Tuesday, 7:00 pm. HAS Monthly Meeting, **Betsy & Sandy Kunzer on Iceland.**

May. 20th, Tuesday, 7:00 pm. HAS... **Gordon Lewis describes the Burrowing Owl Reintroduction.**

Upcoming Field Trips



- Dec. 9th**, Sunday, 7:00 am. **HAS Field Trip to Patagonia Lake.**
Dec. 12th, Wednesday, 8:00 am. **FSPR bird walk.** Meet at San Pedro House.
Dec. 22nd, Saturday, 8:00 am. **FSPR bird walk.** Meet at San Pedro House.

And consider participating in one of our local CBCs:

- Dec. 15th**, Saturday. **Nogales Christmas Bird Count.** Contact Michael Bissontz (520-577-8778)
Dec. 17th, Saturday. **Elfrida Christmas Bird Count.** Contact Tom Wood (520-432-1388)
Dec. 21st, Saturday. **Saint David Christmas Bird Count.** Contact Tom Wood (520-432-1388)
Dec. 22nd, Saturday. **Patagonia Christmas Bird Count.** Contact Abbie Zeltzer (520-394-2921)
Dec. 29th, Saturday. **Ramsey Canyon Christmas Bird Count.** Contact Ted Mouras for details (email to tedmouras@mindspring.com).
Dec. 29th, Saturday. **Portal Christmas Bird Count.** Contact Larry Gates (520-558-1020)
Jan. 5th, Saturday. **2nd Annual Appleton-Whittell Christmas Bird Count.** Contact Robert Weissler for details (email to weissler@aves.org).

- Jan. 18th**, Thursday, 8:00 am. **HAS field trip: Raptor Day.** See below for meeting place.
Jan. 9th, Wednesday, 8:00 am. **FSPR bird walk.** Meet at San Pedro House.
Jan. 26th, Saturday, 8:00 am. **FSPR bird walk.** Meet at San Pedro House.
Feb. 13th, Wednesday, 8:00 am. **FSPR bird walk.** Meet at San Pedro House.
Feb. 23rd, Saturday, 8:00 am. **FSPR bird walk.** Meet at San Pedro House.
Mar. 12th, Wednesday, 8:00 am. **FSPR bird walk.** Meet at San Pedro House.
Mar. 22nd, Saturday, 8:00 am. **FSPR bird walk.** Meet at San Pedro House.

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.

Weekly events

Every Sunday at 8 am October through March (7 am during summer months). **Bird Walk at Sierra Vista Environmental Operations Park.** Limited to 20 participants with two docents.

Monthly events

- 2nd Wednesday at 8am Oct-Mar, 7am Apr-Sep. **Bird Walk at San Pedro House.**
4th Saturday at 8am Oct-Mar, 7am Apr-Sep. **Bird Walk at San Pedro House.**

Reminder: Trogon News is a quarterly newsletter

With the advent of the web, we have an effective means for reaching our membership in a more timely fashion. As a result, we have moved the schedule of events front and center on the home page of our web site (<http://www.huachuca-audubon.org/>) where it can be updated on a moment's notice. We continue to offer the newsletter as a vehicle to highlight stories on recent field trips, programs, and other activities of Huachuca Audubon, albeit quarterly instead of monthly.

Reminder: Ramsey Canyon Christmas Bird Count (Info on Meals)

This year the Ramsey Canyon Christmas Bird Count (RCCBC) will be held on Saturday, December 29, 2007. We will meet for breakfast at 6:30am at the Lone Star Cafe (see map link at <http://www.huachuca-audubon.org/CBC/RCCBC.php>) located at the intersection of Highway 92 and Hereford Road. During breakfast, participants will receive checklists, maps, and other information. The Huachuca Audubon Society will cover the tab for breakfast. We need a rough idea of how many folks will be joining us for breakfast, so please contact us by phone or e-mail address listed below if you plan to attend.

Dinner and the count tally will be held at La Casita (465 E Fry Blvd, again see map link at <http://www.huachuca-audubon.org/CBC/RCCBC.php>) on the north side of Fry Blvd west of 7th Street (across the street from Caffe Ole). Dinner service will commence at 5:30pm.

Dinner is the "Holiday Special" menu of baked ham, roast turkey, house salad, potatoes, dinner rolls, vegetables, stuffing, and yams. The dinner costs \$17 per person (including tax, gratuity, and use of the banquet room) and includes your choice of iced tea, lemonade, or coffee. Beverages from the bar cost extra. We have reserved the banquet facilities (note that the entrance is at the rear of La Casita from the parking lot), so we need to pay for the dinner in advance.

Please let us know by phone or e-mail if you plan to join us for dinner and who will be joining you. You can contact Ted via email at tedmouras@mindspring.com (phone: 803-0221) or Robert via email at weissler@aves.org (phone: 803-0794) with the names of members of your party. In addition, we will need payment for the dinner by check in advance.

If you wish to join us for dinner, please send your check (**payable to Robert Weissler**) by Friday, December 14, 2005 to the address below and list each person included in your check (at \$17/person):

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

Please forward this email to whomever you feel might be interested in joining us. We look forward to a terrific dinner to cap a satisfying day of counting birds in the field or at home!

Ted Mouras and Robert Weissler

Appleton-Whittell Christmas Bird Count (CBC)

The 2nd annual Appleton-Whittell Christmas Bird Count (AWCBC) centered southeast of Elgin will be held on Saturday January 5th, 2008, so please mark your calendars. Complete details are available on the Huachuca Audubon web site at <http://www.huachuca-audubon.org/CBC/AWCBC.php>.

Robert Weissler (weissler@aves.org) is the primary point of contact for this CBC and is organizing groups covering the Audubon Research Ranch, Elgin, the Babocomari Ranch, West Canelo, and other areas in the Sonoita Valley and on Fort Huachuca.

Huachuca Audubon Society 2008 Field Trips

The HAS Outings Committee has planned many interesting outings for the 1st half of 2008. But there is one last field trip in 2007, the annual boat ride on Patagonia Lake.

Patagonia Lake State Park

Leader: Mike Guest

Date: December 9th, 2007

Meet: Carpool and leave from City Hall 7:00 am prompt.

Our 6th annual combined boat-n-hike birding trip. Limited to 18 people. Advance sign-up is essential.

Fee for park entry - \$8, boat ride \$3, plus carpool donation.

Bring: Warm windproof clothing – boat ride can be very chilly, boots advisable, and lunch, usually return mid-afternoon.

Contact: Mike Guest: 520-378-0667

Raptor Day

Date: January 18th, 2008

Leader: Rick Romea

Meet: Carpool and leave from City hall at 7:30 am.

We will drive the back roads in the Sulfur Springs Valley, looking for and studying as many raptors as we can. Also we'll try for several non-raptor specialties such as Bendire's Thrasher and Mountain Plover.

Bring: warm clothes, lunch, scope (if you have one)

Contact: Rick Romea: 520-803-1160, rickorcindy@hotmail.com

Wings Over Willcox (WOW) Birding Festival

Jan. 17-20, 2008

WINGS OVER WILLCOX (WOW) combines adventure, entertainment and education to provide a fun-filled weekend of birding pleasure for the novice, expert or curious. Birding tours seek sandhill cranes, hawks and owls, sparrows, Southwest and montane specialties. Other tours include geology, history, ghost towns, working ranch, mining, botany, photography, archeology, anthropology and irrigated farming. Free seminars focus on birds, bats, reptiles, insects, mammals and asteroids.

The 14th Annual WINGS OVER WILLCOX, January 17-20, 2008, offers birding and nature enthusiasts the opportunity to visit some of the best birding attractions in southeastern Arizona and participate in exciting natural history tours and seminars. The Magic Circle of Cochise, which begins and ends in Willcox, draws nearly 500 species of birds to the area and is home to a great variety of plant and animal life. A complete list of activities, as well as local lodging and restaurants, can be found at the festival website: www.wingsoverwillcox.com.

"Early Bird" registration deadline is December 31st. Call the Willcox Chamber of Commerce & Agriculture for status of tour availability at (520) 384-2272 or (800) 200-2272.

Conservation News

Why the Research Ranch isn't supporting the "Proposed Fish Barrier and Stock Pond Treatments in the O'Donnell Creek Watershed"

Background: The Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) is judicially mandated to build "fish barriers" (aka Dams) to mitigate for having allowed non-native (exotic) fish to enter native waterways. The proposed projects are detailed at <http://www.usbr.gov/lc/phoenix/>, and describe two construction scenarios, both sited within the boundaries of the Research Ranch. The preferred alternative is construction of additional dams to augment two existing dams that were built in the 1950s to water livestock. These dams are on land owned by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The only other proposed alternative is to construct a single dam on property owned by The Nature Conservancy. There are numerous information gaps in the scoping document that make it difficult for concerned citizens to determine the value of this project and to offer informed comments as part of the public review process.

Such as:

- No "No Action" alternative is presented.
- There is no discussion of the level of protection that these proposed dams would give to populations of native fish. There have been observations of non-native fish breaching dams newly constructed by BOR in at least one other site, but this is not mentioned in the project description.
- If the dams that are already in O'Donnell prevented migration from downstream (as stated in the project description), then where did the non-natives in the Canelo Cienega come from? This proposal does not address migration from upstream sufficiently.
- O'Donnell is not a perennial stream below the proposed sites and in fact, becomes a wide canyon supporting sacaton grassland, rather than a defined stream channel. There is no evidence presented that fish can/will swim/walk through several miles of sacaton.
- Any construction – dam, diversion, road – will alter the riparian ecosystem (biology, hydrology, and geology) at the construction site, downstream and upstream both at the time of construction and into the future. The uplands near the riparian areas will also be impacted via trails, roads, staging areas. These impacts are not addressed sufficiently.
- The additional dams will provide more habitat for other non-native invasives such as crayfish and bullfrogs that are known to prey on native fish. The disturbance associated with construction will provide many avenues for expansion of non-native, invasive plants. These aspects are not addressed in the scoping document.
- There are many other alternatives to protect native fish that have not received consideration.
- There is no mention of the unique situation and value of the Research Ranch. The project areas have not been grazed by domestic livestock or used for recreation for more than 30 years. The described projects will affect ongoing research, impact future research and greatly degrade the value of the site as a reference area.

Linda Kennedy, Ph.D., Director
Appleton-Whittell Research Ranch of the National Audubon Society
HC 1 Box 44; Elgin, AZ 85611 lkennedy@audubon.org

Conservation News (cont.)

What can you do? Contact BOR and BLM, express your concerns and urge BLM to honor its contractual commitments to research under the Cooperative Agreement between BLM and Audubon, and in the Las Cienegas Resource Management Plan/Record of Decision.

Elaine Zielinski, BLM State Director
One North Central Avenue, Suite 800
Phoenix, AZ 85004-4427

Elaine_Zielinski@blm.gov

Mr. John McGlothlen, BOR
6150 W. Thunderbird Rd.,
Glendale, AZ 85306

jwmcglothlen@lc.usbr.gov

Final 2nd Sunday Bird Walk



San Pedro River Inn, November 11, 2007

After five years or so, the 2nd Sunday Bird Walk from the San Pedro River Inn will be discontinued as a regular monthly event. Undoubtedly the fine birding in the area will bring occasional field trips, but the regular walk had run its course and, for a variety of reasons, it is time for a change.

The walk originally started from the old Hereford Bridge parking lot on the east side of the river (a lot which has been replaced by a new lot on the west side). When the old bridge there collapsed after a cement truck rumbled over it by mistake, the walk was redirected to the San Pedro River Inn, whose grounds offer terrific birding, never mind the rich habitat along the river itself and in the intervening fields. Starting from the inn, the walk counted among its participants many out-of-town birders who stayed at the inn or nearby at the Casa de San Pedro B&B Inn. Their enthusiasm for discovering the birds of the area stimulated those of us who have birded along the river for years.

The final 2nd Sunday Bird Walk departed from the San Pedro River Inn at 8:00 a.m. on Sunday, November 11, 2007. At the ponds, three Ring-necked Ducks, including a colorful, adult male, were enjoying the peaceful surroundings. In the weedy growth between the ponds, Northern Cardinal and Pyrrhuloxia were busy feeding. A Great Blue Heron was seen at the far end of the larger pond doing its best imitation of a bittern. Both javalina and coyote were seen in the immediate vicinity.

As we walked to the river, the seep produced a vocal, but otherwise stealthy Marsh Wren, and nearby several Lark Buntings. Along the trail, winter sparrows were numerous, including White-crowned, Vesper, Lincoln's, and Song, accompanied by Abert's and Canyon Towhees. Meanwhile, down by the river a young Great Horned Owl watched us from a limb over the river about twenty feet away. We almost did not notice the owl since it was silent and stationary. Nearby, a Gilded Flicker was seen well, in addition to the many Red-Shafted, not to mention Gila and Ladder-backed Woodpecker. Gadwalls and Mexican Mallards were spied as they swam along the river. As if to demonstrate that they are year-round breeders, a couple Barn Owls peered out of the nest box in a cottonwood tree on the grounds of the inn. An overwintering Vermilion Flycatcher rounded out the birds encountered on the walk, a fine conclusion indeed!

--Robert Weissler

Audubon Adventures: An Opportunity to Participate in Environmental Education

If you've ever wanted to share your appreciation for the natural environment with youngsters by stimulating their curiosity and discovery of nature, here's your chance. Audubon Adventures is a nationally acclaimed environmental education program of informational brochures, posters, activities and action tips geared for grades 3 - 6.

Teachers who receive the kit get a guide, resource manual and a one-year subscription to Audubon Magazine. Each classroom kit contains materials for 32 students, at a cost of \$45, which includes shipping.

Subject matter and activities in the kits are in alignment with national science and language arts standards. Millions of school children have participated in this program since its inception in 1984.

Following are just two among the many accolades the program has received from teachers. These and other information about Audubon Adventures are posted at the website: www.audubon.org/educate/aa/.

"I have been using the Audubon Adventures educational materials for many years and have always found them to be well designed and appropriate to the educational needs of my students. Young minds always seem to be eager to learn all they can about nature. Audubon Adventures can motivate even the most reluctant learners. "

-Susan Campbell, Fourth Grade, Webutuck Elementary, New York.

"Audubon Adventures reading materials and lesson plans help students understand and respect the natural world around them. We are matching the kit materials with our sixth grade science curriculum. "

-Pasadena Unified School District K-12, Program Specialist, Pasadena, CA

Huachuca Audubon has a list of local teachers who have used Audubon Adventures in the past, and would like to continue to do so, plus several others who would like to receive a package. If you would like to donate a kit to any of these teachers, please send your check to our treasurer, Phil Tucker, HAS, P.O. Box 63, Sierra Vista, AZ 85636-0063. Your donation to Huachuca Audubon for this kit is tax deductible.

If you would like a particular teacher in our area to receive a kit, please include the following information with your payment: a. school name and mailing address, b. teacher's full name and c. grade taught.

Please address any other questions regarding this education outreach project to Sally Rosen at azcatsally@aol.com.

Alan Blixt's Fall Bird Walks, Hikes, and Bird Banding

Sunday September 23rd started out with wind and clouds but turned into a wonderful walk at the Environmental Operation Park. We saw an early arriving Northern Harrier and our Peregrine Falcon flew for us a couple of times. Two Great Egrets, five White-faced Ibis, and numerous shorebirds were found. We totaled 48 species of birds in about three hours. Every Sunday we enjoy walks at the EOP starting at 8 AM in October.

On Saturday September 22nd a group of seven enjoyed an interpretive walk from San Pedro House at 8 AM. We recorded 39 species of birds and had a great time. The Black-chinned and Anna's Hummingbird's were a delight. We encountered a Loggerhead Shrike and an American Kestrel in a territorial dispute. We also saw a large mixed flock of blackbirds, numbering in the hundreds, feeding on grasshoppers in the grasslands. At Green Kingfisher Pond we discovered three turtles sunning themselves and two Green Herons chasing around the pond. A Painted Redstart surprised us on the river. And we got great looks at a Great-horned Owl in the Oxbow. Every Saturday we walk the river. Thanks to the leaders Ginny Bealer and Alan Blixt.

On Wednesday September 19th a group of eight left the San Pedro House at 5:30 PM for a sunset walk on the river. We birded the grasslands and enjoyed watching Cassin's and Western Kingbirds. We got some great views of vermilion Flycatchers and Blue Grosbeak as well. As we were walking we almost stepped on a Gopher Snake! At Green Kingfisher Pond we saw a large flock of Tropical Kingbirds, a Green Heron and a pair of Lesser Nighthawks. On the way back to San Pedro House we were serenaded by a Great-horned Owl, watched three Lesser Nighthawks feeding on insects, and wondered at a beautiful sunset. Third Wednesday evening walks happen the third Wednesday of each month May through October at 5:30 PM at San Pedro House. Alan Blixt, Sandy Kunzer, Teresa Miranda, and Brian Prescott were docents for the walk.

On Wednesday September 12th a large group showed up for our second Wednesday bird walk from San Pedro House at 7 AM. We recorded 47 species as we walked Del Valle road to Garden Wash to Green Kingfisher Pond and back across the grasslands. We saw a number of species shortly after leaving San Pedro House including Northern Cardinal, Pine Siskin, Lazuli Bunting, MacGillivray's Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Cassin's Vireo, Western Wood Pewee, and Lark Sparrow. The grasslands are rich with birds this time of year. We saw a lot of Green-tailed Towhees and really enjoyed the breeding Blue Grosbeaks. There were a lot of Brewers and Black-throated Sparrows and we saw Bullock's Orioles and Western Tanagers. We found a Green Heron at Black Phoebe Pond, a Gray Hawk over Gargen Wash, and a Belted Kingfisher and Tropical Kingbird at Gree Kingfisher Pond. The 2nd Wednesday of each month bird walk is free and open to everyone.

On Saturday September 8th Sandy Kunzer and Jane Chambers led an interpretive walk from San Pedro House at 8 AM. We had a small group and had a great time identifying 38 species of birds. We also saw a Western Diamondback rattlesnake and many species of butterflies including the smallest butterfly in the world, the Western Pygmy butterfly. We saw lots of Western Kingbirds in migration as well as Cassin's and Tropical Kingbirds. The Spotted Sandpiper was still at Green Kingfisher Pond. We saw the Spotted Sandpiper, as well as seven Snowy Egrets the day before while walking an IBA transect. The Blue Grosbeaks were singing and displaying on the grasslands and were absolutely beautiful. We were also treated to a great look at a Great Horned Owl in the Oxbow. These walks are offered every Saturday all year. Come take a walk with us.

A Tale of Two Borderlands: Southwestern Canada and Northwestern Mexico

Two journeys outside the United States, one to our neighbor to the north, the other to our southern neighbor, provided an interesting, if unintentional, contrast in flora and fauna. In late July, my wife Liza and I flew to Calgary to begin a two-part vacation. The first was a back-country hiking trip to a remote lodge in the Esplanade Range of eastern British Columbia (with an E-ticket helicopter ride in and out). The second part was a relaxing stay on Salt Spring Island near Vancouver for seafood, local wine and cheese, and nature walks in coastal island parks.



With a VERY late arrival in Calgary, we headed straight to the Delta Hotel virtually inside the airport. And with a baggage claim delay of an hour, we arrived in our hotel room after midnight, so a little extra expense was worth it! The next day we headed west through Banff National Park to Golden, British Columbia. Banff and Lake Louise were inundated with tourists in the peak season of summer, but Yoho National Park to the west was somewhat less crowded and equally beautiful. Golden is an emerging skiing and hang gliding sport center located at the confluence of the mighty Columbia and scenic Kicking Horse Rivers. The town itself sports a marvelous wooden bridge over the Kicking Horse River, while upstream the Trans-Canada Highway crosses Kicking Horse Canyon on a breathtaking new bridge called the Park Bridge - quite an engineering feat! The bridge opened to traffic less than a month after our visit.

The next day our backcountry experience began as we left the staging area for the 10-minute helicopter ride to Sentry Mountain Lodge, a lone cabin perched in a high valley surrounded by cirque lakes. The isolation of the setting immediately became apparent from the air. While bird diversity at tree-line is limited, we were blessed with many encounters with White-tailed Ptarmigan, a bird of remote alpine habitats. Our fellow hikers included a couple from Calgary who winter in Mesa, Arizona (small world!) and another couple from Peachland, BC near Okanagan Lake. With our able guides, we were treated to a first-class alpine experience. With a view of the Columbia Icefield in the distance, the lodge is oriented toward powder hounds who descend on the Esplanade for its fine heli-skiing, but it served equally well as a hiking destination. After the crowds of Banff and Lake Louise, it was a relief to have peace and quiet with a small group of like-minded companions. Apart from fiercely gusting winds up on the cornice of Crenelation Ridge, the weather was sunny and mild. After hiking most of the day, the comforts of the lodge were all the more welcome.



All too soon, our invigorating, yet relaxing stay was over and we returned to civilization. On the way back to Calgary, we stopped at Emerald Lake in Yoho National Park. Gray Jays attended the picnic area as expected, while Black-billed Magpies were conspicuous at the visitor center on the main highway. To top off our brief stay in Alberta, our hiking companions, the Sargents, kindly invited us to dinner at their home in Calgary. Well, we could have ended our trip on that high note, but we would fly to Vancouver the next day to continue our vacation.

After enjoying an afternoon sampling a tiny portion of the vast array of local deli meats and cheeses, a pint of microbrew, fresh fish, fruits and vegetables at the Granville Market in downtown Vancouver, we headed across the Georgia Strait to Salt Spring Island. While the outbound journey yielded few birds, the return afforded a wonderful array of Bald Eagles, Pigeon Guillemots, White-winged Scoters, and even a pod of Orcas! Ganges Harbour, a small, but bustling town with a charming yacht harbor, would be our home base while on the island. Two local wineries, Garry Oak and Salt Spring Vinyards, lie adjacent to one another on the warm, south-facing slope of Mount Maxwell. A visit to nearby Mount Maxwell State Park on the montaintop provided a chance encounter with a couple Sooty (Blue) Grouse (*Dendragapus obscurus*), normally a difficult bird to find.



While the coast of British Columbia is best known for its towering temperate rainforest, the most interesting tree for me was the Pacific Madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*) with its peeling salmon-colored bark. It occupies a habitat located at sea-level, while a very similar tree, the Texas Madrone (*Arbutus xalapensis*), can be found in the montane forests high in the Sierra Madre of northwestern Mexico. As long as we are talking about Mexico, let's switch gears from the pacific northwest to the Sonoran coast....

Over the Labor Day weekend, we headed south across our southern border for a long weekend in San Carlos, Sonora. With the summer monsoon, the landscape all along Mexican Highway 15 was a green carpet – I guess it would be an oxymoron to call it a “lush” desert, but you get the idea. The landscape of San Carlos itself was dotted with imposing Cardón and other columnar cactus set against the lime-colored background. The chicken mole at the Paradisa Resort was once again rich and complex, but perhaps the best “dish” on the menu was the sight of Blue-footed Boobies circling over the bay in front of the resort to plunge-dive for fish in the Gulf of California.



Naturally, frigatebirds were keeping a close eye out for a free meal at the expense of the boobies. Of course, patience was required to enjoy this spectacle

by the beach since our optics immediately fogged upon leaving the cool, dry, air-conditioned room to be embraced by 100% humidity! At least, the breeze along the immediate coast kept humidity from being oppressive. However, a short hike in Nacapule Canyon did not offer even the slightest breeze, so it required some measure of dedication to drink in the isolated thorn forest, palms, and fig trees in the canyon. At this season, the busera, ocotillo, and other plants were dressed in leaves, quite a contrast from the dry season flowers on leaf-less branches to be seen in April. A visit to nearby Estero Soldato yielded two very cooperative American Oystercatchers. Finally, an evening meal outdoors was graced with a dramatic sunset set against the silhouette of Tetakawi Peak – a suitable way to end a holiday weekend.



-Robert Weissler



WALDEN: The Ballad of Thoreau
An Opportunity to Share Your Passion For the Environment

This two act, one set, four character play is designed for use by high schools, colleges, community theaters and home schools. The play script and all the production materials are provided free. Walden can be performed at any time, but we encourage you to consider it as an Earth Day 2008 event.



Thoreau is America's original "tree hugger" and forefather of our environmental movement. Yet, the generation in schools right now haven't a clue about Thoreau. He was a gentle naturalist, earth lover, author, pencil maker ... and is the most quoted American writer in history. Yet, when he passed, he was more well known for having helped market the pencil than for a single word he wrote with it.

Why is Thoreau and this play relevant to students in 2008?

“In an age of global warming, bio-fuels, hybrid cars and oil wars,” says play author Michael Johnathon from his farmhouse home in Kentucky, “the play can introduce students to Thoreau as well as environmental concerns in their own home towns at a time when, frankly, they need it.”

How can my school and my students participate?

Two ways:

By **PERFORMING** the play as a community/school event. This will involve young folks, teachers, actors, musicians and more. It is a great hometown project!

By **STREAMING** the online version of the Walden play in the classroom and using the provided lesson plans to engage students in a discussion about Thoreau, the earth and our place in it.

The use and performance of this original stage play is free to any school wishing to participate. It can be as small as a classroom (the two acts are 35 minutes long each) or in front of hundreds in the school theater or auditorium. Educator's can simply download all the scripts, music and promotion materials from this website ... put on a show and have a great time!

How do I start?

You need to get a **PASSWORD** to download the materials. Simply email us with you name and school or theater information and we will send it to you: producer@waldenplay.com.

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

HUACHUCA AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

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