

THE TROGON NEWS

HUACHUCA AUDUBON SOCIETY
Post Office Box 63, Sierra Vista, Arizona 85636
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President's Message

Welcome to 2006 - and let's all hope for a good year. But just hoping won't make it happen. It takes many of us WORKING together to make it a good year. So make this YOUR year to get involved in something. That would be my new year's wish for Huachuca Audubon.

As I write this, drilling in ANWR was removed from the Defense Spending Bill, so our troops will be funded and ANWR is safe for another few weeks or months. As I wrote what seemed like my 50th e-mail on this topic and prepared for yet another phone call, it doesn't seem possible that this country could seriously contemplate destroying such a delicate and important wild place. But I also wouldn't have thought this country would ever have a debate about whether or not we condoned torture. I'm afraid that ANWR will appear next year on some other bill, as Senator Stevens has vowed to do so. To me, this would be like Sen. McCain or Sen. Kyl proposing to use the Grand Canyon as the world's biggest landfill, so the state could receive the income!

Didn't we get some nice coverage about the Christmas Bird Count? Ted Mouras, assisted by Robert Weissler, has taken on the coordination of this important event in a very impressive fashion. Some terrific birders participate in this - as well as some intermediate birders like me - and I am so grateful for them. I know they work hard (as well as enjoy it) and keep our species count high. Ted will report later on the results but it was looking pretty good again for our overall tally.

Welcome to New HAS Members!

We would like to extend a warm welcome to our newest HAS members: W. C. Dean, Will Troyer and Dolores Marchese of Sierra Vista, Jacqueline Drake of St. David, Patricia P. Guarrera of Pearce, William R. Gerrero of Bisbee, Lee J. Hall and Kari Zipf of Huachuca City, Lola Jones of Safford, and Marian D. Mead of Pueblo, Colorado.

Local Programs and Events

Jan 12th – 15th, 2006 Wings Over Willcox. See below for details.

Jan 24th, Tuesday, HAS Meeting, 7:00 p.m, Oscar Yrun Community Center on Tacoma Street. We'll start off 2006 with a virtual visit to Thailand, courtesy of Brian Prescott. It's a country we've never seen photos of before (as far as we can recollect), so join us for what promises to be an interesting evening.

Field Trips

Jan 8th, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. FSPR bird walk. Meet at San Pedro River Inn.

Jan 11th, Wednesday, 8:00 a.m. FSPR bird walk. Meet at San Pedro House.

Jan 15th, HAS' Annual Sulphur Springs Valley Safari. Car pools. Limited to 14 participants. Reservations, which are required, after January 4th, to Rick Romea, 520-803-1160, or e-mail: rickorcindy@hotmail.com. Optional restaurant lunch in Elfrida. Dress warmly, be prepared for inclement weather.

Jan 28th, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. FSPR bird walk. Meet at San Pedro House.

Jan 8th, 15th, 22nd, and 29th, Sunday's, 8:00 a.m. Sierra Vista Environmental Operations Park bird walks. Tours will be limited to 20 participants plus 2 docents.

February 9th, Thursday, HAS trip to Whitewater Draw. Details later.



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 13th 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.

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.

RCCBC Results

Preliminary results from Ted Mouras: We recorded 154 species and had 60 participants. Not many really rare birds.....ruddy ground-dove, Wilson's warbler, blue grosbeak, cinnamon teal, solitary sandpiper, Eurasian collared dove.....we just seemed to record all the ones that we should and a few that we hope for.....green kingfisher, Louisiana water thrush, winter wren, painted redstart, olive warbler, black-tailed gnatcatcher, prairie falcon and such. We did miss some that we expected.....barn owl and brown-headed cowbird come to mind. There were large numbers of sparrows this year and many more birds in the canyons than is usual.....probably due to the two wet winters and the abundant grass seed, and acorns, sumac, and madrone crop. All in all a really lovely day of great birding. I'll have more later.

Patagonia Lake State Park, Dec 2005

“Good birds”, cooperative birds, good company, fine weather, and great hosts. What more could a birding trip ask for? Well! How about better attendance?

Instead of lurking in the dark recesses of the reeds and cattails, Soras, Common snipe, Marsh wrens, Common moorhens and a Swamp sparrow were strolling casually along the lakeshore for minutes at a time. Even a Northern beardless tyrannulet was sighted and identified by one of the groups on shore. From the boat, posing Great blue and Black-crowned night herons watched us as we floated past. Coots, Pied-billed and Eared grebes, Common mergansers and other ducks sat on and dove under the water we traversed in warm sunny weather.

Including birds seen on the road and at a short stop at Patton’s back yard (including a late season Blue grosbeak) at least 67 species were seen by at least one of the 12 people attending. I owe special thanks to Dieter Kamm for the use of his fine new scope and bird finding, to “Admiral” Ron Hummel for helping with the arrangements, boat driving and bird spotting and to the Park staff for their help.

-Sandy Kunzer



Great Blue Heron



Red Eye Coot



Curve-billed Thrasher

-Photos courtesy of Betsy and Sandy Kunzer

Rare Wild-Hatched Condor Chick Takes Flight

For only the fifth time in 20 years, a wild-hatched California condor is taking flight on its own. Last week, an endangered condor chick, which hatched at the Vermilion Cliffs National Monument in Arizona this spring, successfully fledged and took its first flight toward independence. "The chick was active and anxious all day last Wednesday, flapping its wings and hopping around its nest cave area," says Vince Frary, a biologist with The Peregrine Fund who watched the bird fledge. "That afternoon, the chick's mother landed at the cave and fed the chick. She stayed for a few minutes and flew away, but the chick got very excited. In just seconds, it hopped onto a narrow ledge just above the nest cave and tried to hop a short distance farther, before it realized it had gone too far and made a futile attempt to hop back. Instead, the chick began gliding down directly below the cave in a less-than-graceful fashion. The 'flight' was only somewhat controlled, and the bird experienced a difficult landing about 50 yards below and just north of the nest cave." The fledging of this young condor marks only the fourth time a wild-hatched California condor has flown on its own in Arizona since the birds' reintroduction by the Arizona Game and Fish Department and other partner agencies in this state in 1996. The fledging also marks another significant milestone in the Condor Recovery Program that's working to bring the birds back from the brink of extinction. A second chick hatched in the wild this spring is also active and likely to fledge in Grand Canyon National Park any day.

-Reprinted from AZGFD Wildlife News, Dec 7

2nd Sunday Bird Walk - 11 December 2005

With the Ramsey Canyon Christmas Bird Count (CBC) but a week away, nine birders enjoyed a variety of winter visitors, residents, and rare birds that hopefully will be found on count day (by the time this article appears, the count will have taken place on Sunday, December 18 and we'll know if these terrific birds were included in the count). The weather was cold, but slightly less so than normal being above freezing when we embarked on the walk.

One would think that the raptors stole the show with appearances by Peregrine Falcon and Merlin among others, but upon returning to the Inn we encountered a trio of Ruddy Ground-Doves. Michael Marsden, the proprietor of the Inn, knew of their presence prior to the walk, so we anticipated having this great opportunity. What I found interesting and compelling about the ID of these birds is that tail length, according to Michael who pointed out this feature in the Sibley Guide, is also a reliable means of distinguishing Ruddy and Common Ground-Dove, along with the rows of spots, bill color, and the lack of "scalloped" appearance of the Common Ground-Dove. The length of the tail of the birds observed was indeed intermediate between the short tail of the Common Ground-Dove and the long tail of the Inca Dove.

Observations of Lazuli Bunting are not uncommon here near the northern limit of their winter range, so we were not surprised to see them on the walk. Three American Goldfinch were also present. An Orange-crowned Warbler along with the many Yellow-rumped Warblers would likewise be a good bird for the CBC. Green-tailed Towhees were numerous throughout the walk as were Lincoln Sparrows, along with an abundance of other winter sparrows like White-crowned, Vesper, and Brewer's. A couple Great Horned Owls and a Great Blue Heron were seen well along the river, while a Barn Owl peered down at us from high in a cottonwood at the Inn. A Common Yellowthroat near the river was also a good find in winter. The usual array of Curve-billed Thrasher, Canyon and Abert's Towhees, Black and Say's Phoebes, and Pyrrhuloxia were also observed several times, as were Gila and Ladder-backed Woodpeckers. A female Vermilion Flycatcher was seen once again, so it almost certain to spend the winter here.

Topping off a fine day of birding, a colorful, male Northern Cardinal perched conspicuously by the trail, while a Belted Kingfisher called from the pond. And a couple Eurasian Collared-Doves were seen along Cana St north of Hwy 92 about a mile west of Palominas as I returned home from the walk. Oh, did I mention the covey of Montezuma Quail crossing Hwy 92 near Mountain View?

The next 2nd Sunday Bird Walk is scheduled to depart from the San Pedro River Inn at 8:00 a.m. on Sunday, January 8, 2006. Once again, birders of all levels of experience are welcome to join us!

-Robert Weissler



Spring in Mexico with Huachuca Audubon

Join the Huachuca Audubon Society this spring as we visit Sonora and Chihuahua at one of the most enjoyable and bird-rich times of year.

Sonora, April 29 - May 4, 2006

After two outstanding trips in 2005, the HAS will be returning to Sonora, Mexico, in 2006 for what should be an exciting and bird-filled trip. Breeding birds and migrants should be abundant as we travel along the lush Rio Sonora, through Sonoran Desert and tropical deciduous forest, and into the pines and oaks of the northern Sierra Madre. Among the 180 species encountered in 2005 were green kingfisher, gray hawk, Sinaloa, happy, and spotted wrens, streak-backed and black-vented orioles, brown-backed solitaire, blue mockingbird, orange-billed and russet nightingale thrushes, rufous-backed and white-throated robins, black-throated magpie jay, elegant quail, rusty and five-striped sparrows, white-tipped dove, white-striped woodcreeper, gray-crowned woodpecker, slate-throated redstart, tufted flycatcher, rufous-capped brushfinch, crescent-chested warbler, and mountain trogon. Flowering plants, butterflies, reptiles, and a tremendous diversity of habitats will also be enjoyed.

Chihuahua, May 23-26, 2006

Semi-desert grassland, Chihuahuan desert scrub, oak woodland and mixed conifer forest make up the varied habitats we'll visit on this journey in northwest Mexico. In the vast pine forests and drier foothills we'll likely encounter Madrean species including elegant and mountain trogons, crescent-chested warbler, slate-throated redstart, brown-backed solitaire, Mexican chickadee, buff-breasted flycatcher, white-striped woodcreeper, russet nightingale thrush, and the stars of the show, thick-billed parrots. We'll also look for eared quetzal and striped sparrow and explore the general ecology of the plants and animals of the area. On our way into and out of the Sierra Madre, we'll stop at the excellent museum at the Paquime ruins to learn about the rich human history of the region and also the charming town of Mata Ortiz, made famous by local artist Juan Quezada who, inspired by the pottery of the Paquime people, resurrected the art which has flourished in his home town.

For more information and detailed itineraries, please contact Mark Pretti at (520) 803-6889, mpnaturetours@earthlink.net or www.markprettinatortours.com.

eBird 2.0 Sees Increase in Submissions

Since the release of eBird 2.0 (www.ebird.org <<http://www.ebird.org>>) in September, the number of checklists submitted has continued to grow. In November, submissions totaled nearly 16,000 - the first time the total has been above 15,000!

eBird 2.0, a project of The Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Audubon, is an updated version of the powerful Internet-based program currently used by thousands of birders. eBird is a free, user-friendly way for birders across North America to record, archive, and share their observations at any hour of the day. It is also an important tool for conservation, providing researchers with a comprehensive picture of the abundance and distribution of birds.

The Great Backyard Bird Count Returns for its Ninth Season February 17-20, 2006

New York, NY & Ithaca, NY, December 2, 2005 - The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), a joint project of Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, returns for its ninth season February 17-20, 2006. Bird enthusiasts of all ages can share their love of birds with a friend, a child, a scout troop, a class, or a co-worker - opening new eyes to the joy of birding and the fun of creating a unique snapshot of winter bird abundance and distribution across the continent.

“The level of energy created each February by Great Backyard Bird counters is phenomenal,” said Dr. Paul Green, director of Citizen Science for Audubon. “What always amazes me are the new discoveries made by people across North America. Some bird watchers even send digital photos to back up their reports. Last year participants sent in more than 1,000 photos and many are now part of the GBBC web site gallery.”

Everyone can participate, from beginning bird watchers to seasoned experts. During the count, bird watchers can tally up birds for as little as 15 minutes, or for as long as they like, keeping track of the highest number of each bird species they see together at one time. People are encouraged to report birds from public lands and local parks, as well as from their own backyards. Participants enter their numbers online at www.birdsource.org/gbbc <<http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc>> and can explore sightings maps, lists, and charts as the count progresses.

For more information contact the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at cornellbirds@cornell.edu <<mailto:cornellbirds@cornell.edu>> or (800) 843-2473 if in the United States; (607) 254-2473 if calling internationally; or contact Audubon at citizenscience@audubon.org <<mailto:citizenscience@audubon.org>>; (215) 355-9588 Ext. 16.

Shop Arizona Game and Fish

2006 Arizona Wildlife Calendar - Did you know that bears follow their noses in the wild, or that Arizona is home to badgers which, though small in stature, are so bold they don't back down to anything? These are some of the fun facts you will find in the Arizona Game and Fish Department's 2006 Wildlife Calendar. Purchase your 2006 Wildlife Calendar for \$10 while supplies last. They can be purchased with a credit card over the phone by calling (602) 942-3000 or at any Arizona Game and Fish Department office around the state. You can also visit the department's Web site at azgfd.gov to print and mail in an order form.

Arizona Breeding Bird Atlas - This book is special for birders, educators and biologists because it contains more comprehensive and current information than any Arizona bird reference book published in the past. It also has more maps and serves as an easy reference guide for those who want to learn more about the range and natural history of different bird species in Arizona. The book contains more than 300 color photos, 280 maps and costs \$45.

Arizona Wildlife Viewing Guide - Written by John Carr, this book tours 90 premier wildlife-viewing areas with detailed descriptions of each site and its wildlife, maps and access information, helpful viewing tips, and more than 40 color photographs. It contains 95 pages and runs \$8.95.

Arizona's Wildlife Water Maps -A best seller, this field guide to Arizona Game and Fish Department water catchments, springs, seeps, potholes and habitat enclosures has maps for more than 700 sites statewide and costs \$35.

Audubon's Role in the Search Efforts for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker

In April, conservationists worldwide celebrated the rediscovery of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker. This winter, Audubon will be an active participant in the upcoming search efforts for the bird.

Audubon will be well represented on all federal Recovery Team Groups, which were formed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and its partners to craft a plan for the conservation of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker. Greg Butcher, National Audubon Society's Director of Bird Conservation, is a member of the Executive Committee, whose responsibilities include being the final arbiters of creating policy to control access to an area if there are sightings of the bird, reviewing the status of the recovery, and discussing any "big picture" policy issues. Additional Audubon staff on the Recovery Team Groups include Ken Smith, State Director of Audubon Arkansas, who is on the Corridor of Hope Conservation Team; Dan Scheiman, Director of Bird Conservation for Audubon Arkansas, who is a member of the Biology Working Group; Bruce Reid, Deputy State Director of Audubon Mississippi, who is on the Habitat Management and Conservation Working Group; and Ellen Fennell, Audubon Arkansas' Director of Development, and Madge Lindsay, Executive Director of Audubon Mississippi, who are members of the Communications Working Group.

Audubon Arkansas has teamed up with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to be a part of the search itself in the Big Woods region of Arkansas. Cornell is leading the search in the Big Woods from November 2005 to April 2006, where two groups of volunteers will be searching in the Cache River and the White River National Wildlife Refuges for two week blocks. To help with the efforts, Audubon Arkansas has hired a Volunteer Coordinator, an integral part of the search team, who will train and supervise volunteer researchers to use equipment, learn how to use and collect data, and understand data entry protocols.

Additionally, Audubon Arkansas has funding which will go towards their Ivory-billed Woodpecker recovery work, and the organization has submitted a proposal to the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission to obtain some of the state funding for the recovery efforts. Audubon Arkansas is also partnering with five private landowners to restore at least 3,500 acres in the Big Woods, and will be submitting a proposal on the landowners' behalf to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for a private land stewardship grant. In addition, as a member of the Big Woods Conservation Partnership - started by the Nature Conservancy after news of the rediscovery was announced - Audubon Arkansas will work with many other conservation organizations to preserve the habitat of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, the Cache River-Lower White Rivers region. The region, which is also home to a variety of other species of birds, is designated as an Important Bird Area (IBA). -Reprinted from: Audubon Newswire, Volume 3, Number 19, Friday, October 28, 2005

For additional reading on the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker, see the Cornell Lab of Ornithology website: <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/ivory/>

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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.

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