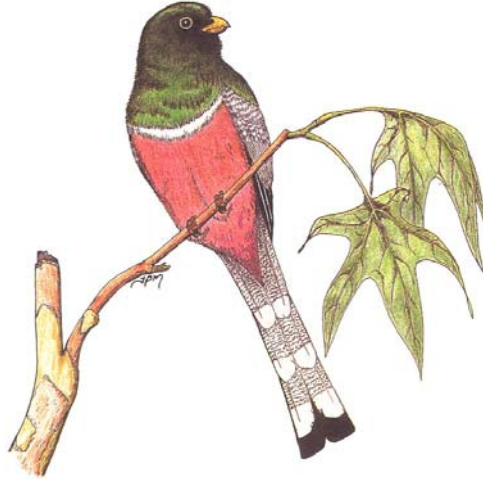


# THE TROGON NEWS

HUACHUCA AUDUBON SOCIETY  
Post Office Box 63, Sierra Vista, Arizona 85636  
Volume XXXII Number 6, June 2004



## President's Message

### HAS - WHO ARE WE AND WHY ARE WE?

In other words, what's our mission? We have a mission statement, laid out in our membership brochure, but not usually reproduced in the newsletter. Would you like to help define it, refine it, or rework it? The morning of June 12, the board of directors for HAS is planning a workshop. (See page 2 for details.) You, the members, are encouraged/ invited/ solicited to attend as well. Your participation would be a most welcome addition.

As far as I can tell, most Audubon chapters seem to be a blend of interests - education, field trips, entertainment, activism. One interest may dominate others, depending on the passion of the volunteer member who takes it on. The work of chapters is driven by the people who get involved.

The stimulus for this particular discussion is an invitation to add HAS's name to a lawsuit to list the Yellow-billed Cuckoo as threatened. The board is thoroughly divided over the merits of such an action, for a variety of reasons. A good location for information about the bird is <http://charlesvanriper.com/ybcu/default.htm>

Huachuca Audubon Society was founded over 30 years ago when some local bird lovers and watchers got upset over trees with nests being chopped down to create a picnic area (my apologies to our founders for not being more correctly specific). They came together, took action, and stopped the tree cutting.

The question for our time is "What action(s) will we take to save the San Pedro River, with its incredibly special and threatened habitat for so many birds?" What are we willing to say, what are we willing to do, what are we willing to put our name to? I'll bet YOU have an opinion on this. Join what is sure to be a lively discussion on June 12 (and our picnic and annual membership meeting in the afternoon). Help guide our chapter's future and the area's future, for the humans, for the birds, for the Earth.

## Local Programs and Events

**June 12<sup>th</sup>** - HAS membership workshop and annual picnic potluck. Workshop will commence at 8:00 a.m. at Gray Hawk Nature Center. Picnic activities will kick off at 3:00 p.m. Please bring a dish to share and your own utensils. Non-alcoholic beverages will be provided. Early evening will be a great time for a bird walk to the river! Directions to Gray Hawk Nature Center: From Highway 90 Bypass, take Charleston Road. After 6 miles, turn right onto Escapule Road. At 1.5 miles, turn left onto Gray Hawk Lane. You'll come to the Nature Center gate in ½ mile. See you there!



## Field Trips

**June 7<sup>th</sup>**, Monday, 7:00 a.m. HAS birding trip to Huachuca Mountains, Reef Campground and Comfort Spring. Meet at the Perimeter Trail parking lot in lower Carr Canyon to carpool. Some hiking involved in looking for the higher elevation warblers and flycatchers. Call Leader - Mike Guest 378-0667 with any questions.

**June 9<sup>th</sup>**, Wednesday, 8:00 a.m. FSPR bird walk. Meet at San Pedro House.

**June 13<sup>th</sup>**, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. FSPR bird walk. Meet at San Pedro River Inn.

**June 26<sup>th</sup>**, Saturday, 7:30 a.m. FSPR bird walk. Meet at San Pedro House.

**June 6<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>**, Sunday's, 8:00 a.m. Sierra Vista Environmental Operations Park bird walks.



## Future HAS Outings

The Outings Committee (Mike Guest, Nancy Aley, Harry Bergtholdt, Sandy Kunzer) has prepared the following monthly outings for the remainder of 2004. Further details will be published as available on our Web site [www.huachuca-audubon.org](http://www.huachuca-audubon.org), and in the Fall editions of the Trogon News. If you have ideas for new venues or different times of year for old ones, please contact anyone on the committee.

**July 7<sup>th</sup>**, Scheelite and Sawmill Canyons. 7:00 a.m. at parking lot of former Bashas, corner of Fry Boulevard and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Limited to 12 participants. Leader: Mike Guest

**August 28<sup>th</sup>**, SABO by Bisbee. Hummingbird Identification and viewing. 7:00 a.m. City Hall. Limited to 12 participants. (See page 6 for more info.) Leader: Sandy Kunzer

**September 9<sup>th</sup>**, Friday, Sierra Vista EOP. 7:00 a.m. at viewing platform. Let's check out the migrating shorebirds along with the resident birds. Bring your scope, binoculars, bird book, bug spray, water and sharp eyes and we will look for passing sandpipers, avocets, stilts and dowitchers. Limit of 14 participants. Leaders: Harry Bergtholdt (459-4627, [he4berg@cox.net](mailto:he4berg@cox.net)) and Nancy Aley.

**October 9<sup>th</sup>**, (date to be confirmed) Villa Verde, Sonora. Leader: Sandy Kunzer

**November 6<sup>th</sup>**, Whitewater Draw. 8:30 a.m. City Hall. Leader: Nancy Aley

**December** (date to be determined) Patagonia Lake State Park. Limited to 18 participants. Leader: Mike Guest

### **Great White Mountain Audubon Campout 2004**

The annual White Mountain Audubon Chapter's high-country campout has been scheduled for the weekend of June 18-20. We will be camping at Burnt Mill Springs near Green's Peak. Audubon members and friends from around the state are welcome to the White Mountains for some high-elevation birding, cooler weather, and camaraderie. Our schedule for the weekend will be as follows: Friday is arrival day; come anytime after noon to set up camp. A short welcome and orientation will be provided Friday evening. Saturday morning, a van has been reserved for our fieldtrip to Mt. Baldy and the Little Colorado River headwaters. We'll return to camp for lunch and an afternoon wildflower and butterfly walk around the campsite. Saturday evening, Michael Ingraldi from AZ Game and Fish will give a presentation on bats. Sunday morning's field trip will be a birding walk around the Burnt Mill Springs area, with the camp breaking up that afternoon. Some birds we hope to see are Three-toed Woodpecker, Williamson's and Red-naped Sapsuckers, Gray Jay, Clark's Nutcracker, Western and Mountain Bluebird, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and Red-breasted Nuthatch. We always find nests of several cavity-nesting species, and we enjoy watching and hearing—from a respectable distance of course—the actions of both adult and young.

The fee for the weekend is \$20 per vehicle. Pre-registration is recommended. Upon receipt of your registration, we'll send you a map and further information. If there is a forest closure due to wildfire risk, the Campout will be cancelled, and your money refunded. This is a primitive camping site! Port-a-pots will be provided, but there is no water on site. Both RV and tent sites are available. Plan to bring your own food. Campfires may be restricted, so plan on cooking with propane. Please plan to leave your pets at home.

Volunteers are needed for this event! We're looking for campground hosts, and people to help check-in, and clean up crews.

If you have any questions, please contact Jimmy or Lorraine at (928) 337-2466 or [moonrise@wmonline.com](mailto:moonrise@wmonline.com). We hope you can join us, it will be a great time!

Registration form

### **Southwest Wings Festival**

The Southwest Wings Birding & Nature Festival is August 4-8 in Bisbee. Many old favorites trips and talks are happening again. But a couple of new trips and new talks will occur as well. Owl trips are back, thanks to Wezil Walraven.

And this year's theme is "Desert Waters". One of the speakers is Robert Glennon, author of "Water Follies: Groundwater Pumping and the Fate of America's Fresh Waters". The San Pedro River is one of the stories/chapters in his book. Here's a quote from the book jacket, "These poignant and sometimes perverse tales tell of human foibles including greed, stubbornness, and, especially, the unlimited human capacity to ignore reality." Don't miss this provocative talk on Saturday, August 7, at 10 a.m. in Bisbee! Check out the website at <http://www.swwings.org/>

## **CONSERVATION, SENSE AND NONSENSE MEETING WITH THE UPPER SAN PEDRO PARTNERSHIP**

Recently, I had the privilege of hosting a very informative community meeting for the Upper San Pedro Partnership. The presentation covered the goals and strategies of the USPP, which must report to Congress by the end of this year on progress towards eliminating Sierra Vista sub-watershed's water deficit by the year 2011. The presentation also covered USPP's water saving projects in 2004 as well as legal and scientific impediments to making greater progress towards reductions in the water deficits.

### **THE SENSE**

The goals of the USPP are to meet the water needs of the folks living in the area and to maintain an adequate supply of water to the San Pedro River, home to two endangered species, the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher and the water umbel. Water comes into the underground aquifer primarily from rain and snow that falls on the Huachuca Mountains. Water leaves the area through river flow, plant transpiration, evaporation, and ground water pumping for human use.

The USPP hopes to reduce the estimated water deficit of 5,600 acre feet a year through reducing current water use; preventing future use (through creation of a master development plan, building code changes, and voluntary conservation easements); recharge (primarily through projects such as the Environmental Operations Park); and augmentation. Currently, augmentation focuses on importing water from one location to another, for example from mines in Bisbee and Tombstone, from agricultural irrigation rights north of Benson that have been purchased by the Nature Conservancy, and from the Central Arizona Project which distributes water from the Colorado River.

USPP projects for 2004 have emphasized expanding retrofit projects, that is, replacing older plumbing with newer, low-flow technology; increasing public participation in water issues; increasing the Water Wise Program in the schools; developing model ordinances for site development in Cochise County; proposing conservation-wise water rates; and increasing the amount of sewage treated for recharge to the aquifer. The hope is that the federally mandated sustainable water yield will be achieved by 2011.

### **THE NONSENSE**

Any plan to eliminate the water deficit is subject to unexpected, perhaps quirky, factors. For example, the county cannot stop development even if there is no water available for the homes to be built. The sole requirement of the developer in this circumstance is to tell the first purchaser that there is no water available for his/her home. There is no requirement that a developer specify to the purchaser in any way, the adequacy of the water supply. This peculiar legal constraint on the county in regulating development led to the question by one of the participants of whether the USPP report to Congress would include a statement of this fact.

Water companies are currently legally constrained from charging increased rates for excessive water use. Presently, water companies charge for operating and maintenance expenses and to assure a reasonable profit to their investors. They do not charge for the water itself. Neither increased charges for excessive water use nor a tier system such as that used in California is currently allowed.

The USPP has some difficulties of its own that impede progress on the water issue. The goal is to achieve sustainable water yield by 2011. However, the Advisory Committee of the USPP has yet to

accept the Technical Committee's definition of sustainable yield. This seems to suggest that there is no agreement within the USPP about where they are going and what the end point should be. The working definition seems to be that all loss of water from underground storage must be completely replaced by recharge.

This, of course, leads to another problem within the USPP. There does not seem to be agreement as to the amount of loss that is currently occurring annually. Although most seem to agree that the water level is dropping, figures of the annual overdraft range from 2,000 acre feet to 11,000 acre feet. One participant suggested that the discrepancy in this, and in other studies, could be due to inaccuracies in measurement techniques.

A final, rather glaring, problem is the absence of a benchmark for water level in the sub-watershed. There are, again, discrepancies in the reported current water table levels. This could be due to inaccuracies in measurement, including the particular point at which the level is measured. However, without some idea of what the water level is, it will be impossible to assess in the future what progress has been made on mitigating water problems.

### COMMON SENSE

Participants offered some interesting and unusual, possibly tongue-in-cheek solutions, to the water problem. Why not require new housing to have gutters and cisterns to capture and store monsoon rainwater? This would reduce pumping of the aquifer. Why not pass local legislation to set constraints in development codes that would be consistent with available water resources and reduction of the overdraft? Another participant pointed out the difficulty with local control is that water resources do not respect political boundaries and we need to take, at least, a regional approach. If we are going to import water, why not pump it directly into the San Pedro River? Another participant pointed out that, unless the water is free of significant impurities, such a plan could lead to a death of the river's animal and plant life. And lastly, if the river needs water so badly and the cottonwoods along the river are drinking a lot of the available supply, why not cut them down?

-Sondra Gardner, Chair, Conservation Committee

### National Audubon Policy Chapter Survey Results

Last fall, National Audubon conducted a 2004 Issue Priorities survey among its many Audubon chapters. This input will be used to enable National to better utilize their resources and ensure they are engaged on the issues deemed highest priority by the Chapters. Here's the results:

- 1) Public Lands Protection
- 2) Bird Conservation
- 1) Endangered Species Act
- 2) Wetlands & Estuary Protection
- 3) Clean Water Act



### **Volunteer Opportunities with Sky Island Alliance**

Sky Island Alliance, an organization dedicated to the preservation and restoration of native biological diversity in the sky islands of the southwestern United States and northwestern Mexico, needs volunteers for the following upcoming events:

**June 4th - 6th.** Road Closure and Restoration Project on Las Cienegas National Conservation Area. Get your hands dirty and play a direct role in improving the ecological health of your public lands!

**June 11th - 13th.** Riparian Inventory and Monitoring Weekend. San Rafael Valley. Join the Sky Island Alliance's Riparian Inventory/Monitoring Program in a project to assess the San Rafael Valley as a site for the conservation and management of our sensitive riparian fauna.

**June 24th - 28th.** Pinaleno Mountains Roads Monitoring. Escape the heat! Celebrate freedom! Hike under the full moon! Climb to the top of the loftiest of the lofty!

**July 15th - 18th.** Peloncillo Mountains Snake Research Project. If you are interested in volunteering please contact Trevor. There will be follow-up opportunities for this research project through the summer and early fall.

**July 24th - 25th.** Riparian Inventory and Monitoring Training Program. If you are interested in volunteering to assess riparian areas and look for riparian animals please contact Trevor.

**August 13th - 15th.** Riparian Inventory and Monitoring Weekend. San Rafael Valley.

**August 20th - 22nd.** Peloncillo Mountains Roads Inventory. The Peloncillos are the only Sky Island mountain range that stretches from Mexico to the Gila River! We will be doing a variety of work both in the mountains and down in the valley.

Please contact the Sky Island Alliance office at 520.624.7080 or [trevor@skyislandalliance.org](mailto:trevor@skyislandalliance.org) if you are interested in attending any of the following events. More information on Sky Island Alliance is available at <http://www.skyislandalliance.org/>.

### **Attention Hummingbird Aficionados!**

Our local experts, Sheri Williamson and Tom Wood of the Southeastern Arizona Bird Observatory (SABO) have agreed to host a select group of up to 12 participants from HAS on the morning of Saturday, 28 August. For the nominal fee of \$7, we will be treated to a personal presentation on the natural history and identification of these fascinating organisms. Tips on identifying females will play a prominent part. An array of feeders outside the viewing windows at SABO's new headquarters north of Bisbee should attract a plethora of identification opportunities. Meet at the Sierra Vista City Hall west side parking lot at 7:00 a.m. to carpool since parking space at SABO is limited. Call Sandy Kunzer today at 803-8490 to reserve your place.

## 2nd Sunday Bird Walk – 9 May 2004

A group of close to twenty participants joined the 2nd Sunday Bird Walk on a warm, sunny day. The highlights of this particular outing were an adult male Indigo Bunting and an immature Gray Hawk. Indigo Bunting is a rare, but regular visitor in the western half of the country, particularly during migration. Naturally, it was a thrill to the local birders in our group. By contrast, it is the usual bunting for the visitors from the east who joined the walk on this occasion. What impressed everyone in the group was the Gray Hawk that flew overhead as we walked along the San Pedro River. There is a nest nearby across the river on the west side apparently -- we heard the call of that hawk numerous times from that general direction, although we did not have a direct view of the nest.

The summer breeding birds have arrived in force, so we saw and heard several pairs of Summer Tanagers, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Western Wood Pewee. A beautiful adult male Blue Grosbeak was perched over the river not far from the Indigo Bunting, so the contrast between these similar colored birds was obvious. A Townsend's Warbler and a Lucy's Warbler were picked out of the more numerous Wilson's Warblers. And a migrating Western Tanager put in an appearance or two along the river. The sight of the languid flight of two Great Blue Herons was rewarding, as was that of a Swainson's Hawk nearby.

Vermilion Flycatchers seemed to be everywhere! Green-tailed, Canyon, and Abert's Towhees were all present. Some lingering winter birds included a lone Northern Harrier and a single Vesper Sparrow. A Gambel's Quail on a telephone line was an odd site. And, of course, the usual resident birds were found, including White-breasted Nuthatch, Lesser Goldfinch, Song Sparrow, Bewick's Wren, Black Phoebe, Ladder-backed and Gila Woodpecker.

The next 2nd Sunday Bird Walk is scheduled to depart from the San Pedro River Inn at 8:00 a.m. on June 13, 2004.

-Robert Weissler



The Trogon News will go on hiatus until the September issue. Hope you all have a **COOL** summer!  
(Photo courtesy of Melanie and Ted Mouras)

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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.