

THE TROGON NEWS

HUACHUCA AUDUBON SOCIETY
Post Office Box 63, Sierra Vista, Arizona 85636
Volume XXXII Number 3, March 2004



President's Message

Lots of activities coming up as we head into spring. HAS will have a booth at the Master Gardener's conference March 12 & 13 - want to volunteer for a few hours? Call Tricia please! Our March membership meeting will be both interesting and entertaining, as Judd Klement with NAS will talk to us about sea turtles and his work with them.

Then just a few days later, Audubon chapter leaders from around the state will come for a state meeting. The meeting will be held at the Audubon Research Ranch in Elgin on Saturday, March 27. Not only is the meeting open but we would welcome your attendance. It's a great chance to meet folks from around the state and hear about their activities and ideas. Plus, your local board could use some help! Help! Because the Research Ranch is too isolated to order in some lunch or dinner, we need to feed our visitors. We usually do this through a potluck effort. We have some really good cooks out there, as I know from other potlucks. Can you help on this? Help! Call Tricia.

Our conservation committee is getting educated and involved in the San Pedro water issues (no small task!) and our field trip committee continues to put together a variety of interesting offerings. We're pretty lucky to be in this area for birding and to have dedicated volunteers working to preserve it for future birding!

Local Programs and Events

Mar 23rd - HAS meeting, 7:00 p.m., Mona Bishop Room, Sierra Vista Public Library. "From Hawksbills to Senate Bills". Judd Klement, Regional Grassroots Coordinator for Audubon's Public Policy office in Washington, D.C. will explain how a marine biologist working on sea turtles came to work for Audubon. Come see and hear how sea turtles, like the Hawksbill, nest, and learn about Judd's adventures working the beaches at night. He then will tell us how his travels led him to Audubon and inform us about what Audubon is doing for conservation on a policy level and how important everyone is to the legislative process.

Field Trips



Mar 10th, Wednesday, 8:00 a.m. FSPR bird walk. Meet at San Pedro House.

Mar 14th, Sunday, 8:00 a.m. FSPR bird walk. Meet at San Pedro River Inn.

Mar 19th, Friday, 7:00 a.m. HAS birding trip to Amerind Foundation and Willcox Ponds. See article below for more information.

Mar 27th, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. FSPR bird walk. Meet at San Pedro House.

Mar 7th, 14th, 21st, 28th, Sunday's, 8:00 a.m. EOP bird walks.

Apr 3rd, Saturday, 8:00-12:00, FSPR bird walk. Meet at Holy Trinity Monastery in St. David. Five mile hike on Monastery grounds and along San Pedro River. Bring water and snacks and be prepared to walk in water.

March Birding Trip to Amerind Foundation and Willcox Ponds

Let's meet at Sierra Vista City Hall parking lot along Coronado Blvd. at 7:00 a.m. on Friday March 19 to carpool to Willcox Ponds to check out the spring migration of shore and water birds. Bring along your scope, if you have one, to check out the sandpipers and ducks, maybe even a Phalarope or Dowitcher. We then plan to travel to the Amerind Foundation for lunch (bring your own picnic lunch). Alan Blixt, one of their volunteers, is arranging for a reduced entrance fee of \$3 to view the museum if people are interested, a bird list for everyone and then a bird walk in the lovely Dragoon Mountains. We should be back to Sierra Vista by 3:00-4:00 p.m. If you have any questions please call Harry Bergtholdt, 459-4627, email at he4berg@cox.net.

Annual Spring Gould's Turkey Count

According to John Millican, field agent with the Arizona Game and Fish Department, there are 150 to 200 Gould's wild turkeys residing in the Huachuca Mountains. But don't take his word for it. Count them for yourself!

On April 17 and 18, the Arizona Game and Fish Department, the National Wild Turkey Federation, the USDA Forest Service and Fort Huachuca wildlife office will hold the annual spring turkey count in the Huachuca Mountains. Volunteers are needed to help with this project which will cover 44 standardized routes. Learn about the rarest wild turkey in North America while helping determine the approximate number of turkeys in the Huachuca Mountains. Camps will be located south of Highway 83 along FS Road 48 and in Lower Garden Canyon on Fort Huachuca. Contact John at (520) 803-7535 to sign up or for more information.

HAS Returns to Sonora

After a several year hiatus, the Huachuca Audubon Society will be returning to Sonora, Mexico this spring - April 22-26 - 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 and through Sonoran Desert and tropical deciduous forest into the pines and oaks of the northern Sierra Madre. The trip will be limited to 8 participants. The all-inclusive cost from Sierra Vista is \$600, which includes a \$50 tax-deductible donation to HAS. For a detailed itinerary or to register, contact Mark Pretti at 803-6889 or mpnaturetours@earthlink.net.

Institute of Desert Ecology

Now in its 34th year! This program of field study is offered April 22-25 at Catalina State Park, with expert instructors in geology, ornithology, botany, herpetology, entomology. If interested, check further with Tucson Audubon at 520 628-1730, www.tucsonaudubon.org/education, or jessieshinn@qwest.net.



Sky Island Alliance Spring 2004 Training Workshop

Sky Island Alliance, in conjunction with the Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership and the Bureau of Land Management, is seeking dedicated “grassroots naturalists” who can commit to an exciting conservation program on a long-term basis. After completing a training workshop, which will be held on April 16, 17, 18, and May 22 & 23, volunteers will adopt transects in our expanding project area – the Cienega Creek Corridor in southeast Arizona. Efforts will be concentrated in the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area. Volunteers will monitor the presence of large mammals, such as mountain lion, black bear, jaguar, and Mexican gray wolf between the mountain ranges of the Sky Island region and will collect data by conducting “track surveys” where they search for and document signs left by wildlife. For more information, contact Janice Przybyl, Wildlife Monitoring Program Coordinator, janice@skyislandalliance.org or call 520-624-7080 x203. Application deadline is March 17, so please reply ASAP.

Arnie's Famous Annual Sulphur Springs Valley Birding Safari

Saturday, January 17, 2003. It was cold and wet. And it got colder and wetter. But eventually the rain slacked off, and gradually the skies cleared. And this became one of the very best of the always great trips with Arnie. Forty-one species were sighted, including: Red-tailed hawks...many; Sandhill cranes...thousands, in the cornfields, flying up, in flight and kettling against a white cloud (31,000+ reported to be in the area); THE WHITE CRANE...two sightings; Bald eagles...sitting on the ground, soaring; Ferruginous hawks...flying low and flying high, sitting on the ground; Harris's hawks...family of three; Killdeer...several, on the ground with a Ferruginous hawk; Loggerhead shrikes...several sightings; Snow geese...flying with Sandhill cranes; Prairie falcon...atop a telephone pole, feeding on a fresh kill, with a Loggerhead shrike just a few inches below, waiting for a crumb to drop; Northern pintails...two, in flight, low and close.

-Marian Legg

Grassland Sparrows Up Close And Personal

The opportunity to participate in an effort to capture grassland sparrows for study was too good to pass up. On Saturday, January 17, I joined a group of roughly 30 volunteers of various backgrounds and interests in flushing sparrows into mist nets for a research project on grassland sparrows being conducted by Dr. Janet Ruth, a U.S. Geological Survey research ecologist.

There were 26 sparrows captured on six plots at the Davis Pasture located on the BLM Las Cienegas National Conservation Area (NCA) near Sonoita. The majority of the captures, an amazing 14 individuals!, were Baird's Sparrows, along with nine Grasshopper Sparrows, two Savannah Sparrows, and one Vesper Sparrow. Three of the birds were re-captures already possessing a band on the leg. Some sparrows had a tail feather plucked for DNA tests to yield clues to their breeding site. Measurements were confined to bill length along the culmen from base to tip. Each member of the group had the opportunity to release a bird after it was banded, yours truly included.

The opportunity to study the plumage and behavior of these sparrows closely was a real treat! Both Baird's and Grasshopper Sparrows are notoriously difficult to observe in the field from any distance because of their proclivity for remaining on the ground in the cover of grass. The yellow of the leading edge of the wing near the "shoulder" on a Grasshopper Sparrow is noticeable in the hand, albeit not depicted in field guides because it is difficult to see in the field. The "necklace" of streaks on the upper breast of the Baird's Sparrow made them easy to distinguish from the Grasshopper Sparrows in the hand. This is a field mark also discernible in the field.

I look forward to my next opportunity to join the group. The Winter 2004 mist netting schedule continues with two dates in March, Wednesday, the 10th at Audubon Research Ranch and Saturday, the 13th at Davis Pasture.

If you are interested in participating on one of these dates, please contact Dr. Janet Ruth preferably by e-mail at janet_ruth@usgs.gov or by phone in Albuquerque at 505-346-2870 (work) or 505-890-4083 (home) or at the Audubon Research Ranch at 520-455-4658. She can put you on her list and provide meeting times and locations including directions.

-Robert Weissler

Winged Migration DVD Now Available

The critically acclaimed movie, *Winged Migration*, is now available on DVD at San Pedro House Books and Gifts. Witness as five film crews follow a rich variety of bird migrations through 40 countries and each of the seven continents. With teams totaling more than 450 people, 17 pilots and cinematographers used airplanes, gliders, helicopters and balloons to fly alongside, above, below and in front of their subjects. The result is a film of staggering beauty. Open your eyes to the wonders of the natural world as you fly along with the world's most gorgeous birds through areas as remote as the Arctic and the Amazon and as populated as Paris and New York City. See why USA Today found it to be "one of the most beautiful films to come out this year". The San Pedro House Bookstore is located at 9800 Highway 90 and is open everyday from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

2nd Sunday Bird Walk – 8 February 2004

A group of nine participants joined the 2nd Sunday Bird Walk on a calm, clear, and crisp day. The highlights were a Prairie Falcon flying over the river, a Great Horned Owl on a day roost in willows by the river, and White-winged Dove. The owl, perched 10 feet off the ground, was untroubled by our presence a mere 25 yards away on the main trail.

Among other birds, Yellow-rumped Warbler, White-breasted Nuthatch, Lesser Goldfinch, Song Sparrow, Bewick's Wren, Black Phoebe, Ladder-backed and Gila Woodpecker were seen along the river, while Pyrrhuloxias, flocks of Red-winged Blackbirds, Canyon Towhees, and White-crowned Sparrows were encountered at the Inn itself, plus an American Coot on the pond. Vesper Sparrows, Loggerhead Shrike, Eastern Meadowlarks, and a Say's Phoebe were seen in grasslands along the trail leading to the river. As I drove out from the Inn, I saw three Black-throated Sparrows along the fence. All in all, a very pleasant day of birding was enjoyed by our group.

The next 2nd Sunday Bird Walk is scheduled to depart from the San Pedro River Inn at 8:00 a.m. on March 14, 2004.

-Robert Weissler

News from SABO – Southeastern Arizona Bird Observatory

SABO's regular weekly activities will begin March 30 with River Walks every Tuesday, Mule Mountain Owl Prowls every Wednesday, and Canyon Walks every Thursday through the end of May. We'll also be offering Tanager Treks in Miller Canyon on April 9, April 30, May 7, May 14 and May 28, and Sonora Day Trips on March 26, April 23, and May 21.

We're also looking for volunteers for the busy spring-summer season. Possibilities include hosting visitors and maintaining the feeders at the field station, assisting with passerine and hummingbird banding (field work and/or data entry and management), and assisting with Fiesta field trips and weekly walks.

A couple of farther-flung opportunities that may interest HAS members are short tours to Madera, Chihuahua, home of one of the largest remaining flocks of Thick-billed Parrots, and a fall tour of Belize and Tikal. The Madera dates are June 5 - 9, 2004 and August 8 - 11, 2004 (follows Southwest Wings). The main Belize trip is October 31 -November 12, with an extension to Ambergris Caye November 12 - 15.

See <http://www.sabo.org/> for more information.

Dictionary of Birds of the U.S.

Timber Press has published a dictionary of American bird names by Joel Holloway, M.D. Both scientific and common names are traced back to their original language, such as Greek or Old English. The book also has 25 pen-and-ink drawings by George M. Sutton. An autographed copy can be obtained for \$19.95 plus \$4.50 shipping and handling from Dr. Holloway at 2500 McGee Drive, Suite 148, Norman, OK 73072.

Conservation Corner

The Upper San Pedro Partnership has been mandated to report to Congress annually on progress towards solving water deficits in the San Pedro subwatershed. Reducing the water deficit is essential in maintaining both the flow of the San Pedro River and the river's riparian habitat so valuable to bird and animal life. The USPP has hired the Board of Reclamation (a federal agency that in the past primarily built dams) to evaluate plans to import water from other parts of the Valley. Such a plan would move water from one place in the San Pedro watershed (Benson, Tombstone, Bisbee) to another (Sierra Vista). By mitigating its water deficit, Sierra Vista can strengthen its position that the area is capable of absorbing new population growth without detriment to the river. Capacity for growth is a key point in Sierra Vista's lobbying in the upcoming Base Realignment and Closure. Twenty-five per cent of military installations in the United States are to be closed in 2005. For Fort Huachuca to remain competitive, it must be capable of taking on new assignments and an increased work force.

While water importation may be beneficial to Sierra Vista, it would add little if anything to the life of the river and its rich bird and animal life. Importing water could ultimately damage the river by creating a false sense of an adequate water supply. Water importation ignores the demand side of the deficit, which needs to be addressed through increased attention to and enforcement of conservation measures. Importing water from another location in the watershed could disrupt the flow of the river farther downstream. Importing water could have a negative impact on the donor communities. For example, the Benson community, which is currently evaluating the impact of a proposed 5,000 home development on real estate that has no water available for pumping, could be harmed by removal of water from the Benson area to Sierra Vista.

The Upper San Pedro Partnership does not currently provide time for public input in its planning meetings. While the public is free to attend meetings, they are not permitted to express their views. The HAS Conservation Committee is asking for your help and support in urging members of the USPP to provide a formal mechanism for public input. Public input is necessary especially at this time of important decision making about importation of water. You can contact the Chairman of the Partnership Advisory Commission, Bob Strain, at bstrain@ci.sierra-vista.az.us. You can write to him at Sierra Vista City Hall, 1011 N. Coronado Dr, Sierra Vista, 85635. You can also send a call for action by the USPP to the Sierra Vista Herald. The On Your Mind column, which prints brief comments, does not require a signature. You can phone, 458-0332, or email your comments to svhoym@c212.com. The mailing address for the paper is 102 Fab Avenue, Sierra Vista, AZ 85635. Strongly urge the USPP to provide a formal mechanism for public input on the important issue of water importation. Public figures do respond to concerns expressed by constituents in the newspaper and in letters.

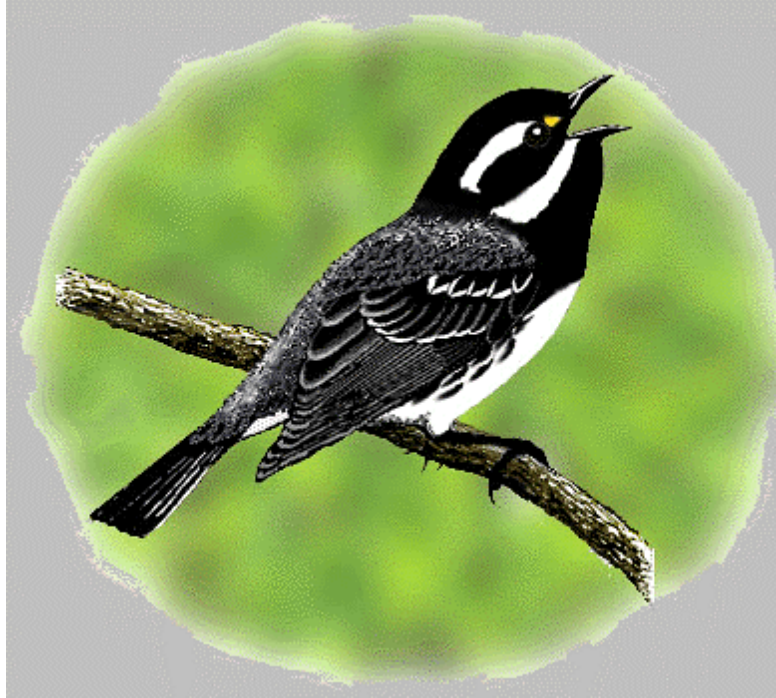
If you have questions, call me at 458-6030 or email me at drsondra@cox.net.

-Sondra Gardner, Conservation Committee Chair

Life on the Wing

Outdoors people, bird watchers, falcon, hawk & owl enthusiasts will love the stories that are accompanied by 25 stunning full-color plates and over 75 photographs that illustrate the sheer beauty and power of birds of prey in "Life on the Wing". This beautiful collector's book is illustrated by G.E. Lodge, D.M. Reid-Henry, G.D. Hayes and other outstanding artists. Go to www.flyhawks.com for more information.

FIESTA DE LAS AVES



International Migration Celebration May 2-8, 2004

Join us May 2-8, 2004 for the fourth annual **Fiesta de las Aves** ("Festival of the Birds") **International Migration Celebration**. The festival will include a variety of activities for birders and other wildlife enthusiasts. The 2004 festival will be a traveling affair, with activities taking place at a series of outstanding birding locations in Cochise and Santa Cruz counties, including the Huachuca and Chiricahua Mountains, San Pedro River, and Patagonia, and across the border in northern Sonora. This festival format will encourage broader participation from visitors, residents, volunteers, businesses, and organizations, reduce the cost of most field trips, and spread the economic benefits of birding tourism to more communities. Fiesta de las Aves will be one of many events nationwide in celebration of the 12th annual **International Migratory Bird Day**, May 8, 2004.

Schedule and registration form for Fiesta de las Aves International Migration Celebration is available at <http://www.sabo.org/fdla/fdlaindx.htm>

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<triciag@outb.com>
Vice President, Bob Luce 459-2404
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Membership, Ginny Bealer 378-6341
<vbealer@mindspring.com>
Publicity, Heather Guest 378-0667
Trogon Editor, Renell Stewart 378-6318
<stewartr3@mindspring.com>
Circulation, Mark Pretti 803-6889
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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.) Friends of Huachuca Audubon - Individual \$10, Household \$15.

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