

THE TROGON NEWS

HUACHUCA AUDUBON SOCIETY
Post Office Box 63, Sierra Vista, Arizona 85636
Volume XXXI Number 8, October 2003



President's Message

We seem to be headed to cooler weather and all the holidays that start coming on so quickly. That also means bird counts! The first one I know of is the Thanksgiving Day count that a number of people around here participated in last year. I hope you'll do so again this year; I'll have copies of the count form to share. Then the Christmas Count, being coordinated again this year by Ted Mouras. We're so lucky that Ted has taken this on, following the footsteps of good dedicated birders. Then there will be several after the first of the year, starting in February.

I'm looking forward to our October program, to hear from one of our newest members and take a trip up north. We're in our usual location for October but we do not have the library for November. I'm still trying to arrange for a showing of "Winged Migration" in a theater to be

our November meeting but don't have anything confirmed yet. In December, we're planning our normal first Tuesday program meeting, then will have a party on Sunday the 14th. So save the date for a fun potluck in the afternoon.

And it gives me a great deal of satisfaction to be able to invite you to a dedication ceremony on October 18. There will be an unveiling of a plaque at Scheelite Canyon honoring "Smitty", whom many of you knew. The time is not set yet, and just in case some glitch occurs, you probably should stay in touch anyway. But please reserve time on your calendars for Saturday morning, October 18, to gather at Scheelite Canyon and remember Smitty.

Local Programs and Events

Oct 7th 7:00 p.m., Mona Bishop Room in the Sierra Vista Public Library. HAS program - Join Tony Battiste who recently moved here from Calif. as he recounts his birding/photography odyssey along the Dempster Highway in NW Canada last spring. The Dempster Highway is a 450+ mile long gravel road that stretches from near Dawson in the Yukon, to and beyond the Arctic Circle, terminating in the town of Inuvik in the Northwest Territory. Tony chronicles his month long adventure with vivid slides of the flora, fauna, and the indigenous Inuluivit people of this remote region of North America. See loons, grebes, shorebirds, ducks and jaegers in breeding plumage. This program may inspire a northward journey of your own!

Field Trips



Oct 4th 7:00 a.m. Carr House Bird Walk.

Oct 8th 8:00 a.m. FSPR Bird Walk. Meet at San Pedro House.

Oct 11th 7:00 a.m. HAS Bird Walk. Meet at the Sierra Vista City Hall parking lot to car pool to the St. David Monastery where we will explore the many trails along ponds, fields, cottonwoods, desert, and the San Pedro River. Call Nancy Aley at 803-7689 for more info.

Oct 12th 8:00 a.m. FSPR Bird Walk. Meet at San Pedro River Inn.

Oct 18th 7:00 a.m. Carr House Bird Walk.

Oct 25th 8:00 a.m. FSPR Bird Walk. Meet at San Pedro House.

Oct 5th, 12th, 19th, & 26th 8:00 a.m. EOP Bird Walks.

Dec 12th (Date to be confirmed.) HAS Field Trip to Patagonia Lake State Park. See November Trogon News for more details.

Field Trip to Bosque del Apache

HAS is planning on visiting Bosque del Apache one week before the Festival of the Cranes. We will car pool and drive from Sierra Vista, Friday, November 14 and bird during the afternoon prior to checking into the motel in Socorro for three nights. We'll bird all day Saturday and Sunday and return back to Sierra Vista on Monday, November 17. We have booked 7 double rooms for 3 nights at a discounted rate. Let's fill them up with local birders and have a good time. Harry Bergtholdt, 459-4627 will be the trip leader. However, he will be traveling and birding (of course) until the end of October, so please call Mike Guest, 378-0667 for reservations or questions until October 27.

EOP Open For Public Bird Walks

A dozen participants gathered at Sierra Vista's Environmental Operations Park (EOP) on Sunday, September 7, at 8:00 a.m. to take advantage of our first weekly opportunity to explore the inner roads and ponds that are a unique desert shorebird and waterfowl habitat. Beginning at the public viewing area where we could barely see a few ducks in the shallow treatment ponds to the south, we soon were through the locked gate and on the road overlooking that same pond where we quickly identified dozens of feathered visitors. Highlights included a STILT SANDPIPER, LESSER and GREATER YELLOWLEGS, a female WOOD DUCK, several RUDDY DUCK, WILSON'S PHALAROPE, WESTERN and LESSER SANDPIPER, and a BAIRD'S SANDPIPER. Overhead a PEREGRINE FALCON surprised us with an appearance and dove toward the pond, scattering waterfowl and shorebirds in all directions!

Celebrating the beginning of the fall migration, we spent more than two hours in the sun (don't forget your sunscreen and insect repellent in the future), carefully searching Sierra Vista's wetlands. Additional sightings included good views of a SORA running across a wet basin, flushed from hiding by a NORTHERN HARRIER; a calling MARSH WREN and several COMMON YELLOWTHROAT in the cattails; and three beautiful WHITE-FACED IBIS. Total bird identification was 44 species, thanks to the teamwork of all the participants.

We are grateful to the City for providing the training to a dozen or so volunteer docents from Friends of the San Pedro River (FSPR), Huachuca Audubon Society (HAS), and the Southeast Arizona Bird Observatory (SABO). Thus two docents will be present at the EOP every Sunday at 8:00 a.m. to unlock the gate and guide visitors through this wildlife habitat on a first come, first served basis (as we are limited to 7 participants per docent). Although tour admission is free, donations are accepted by FSPR, HAS, and SABO. Special groups of 4 or more wishing a tour on days other than Sunday morning may contact SABO at 432-1388. Volunteers wishing to train as docents may contact Mike Guest (HAS) at 378-0667 or Dutch Nagle (FSPR) at 378-7229.

-Nancy Aley

The Raffle: Good News, Bad News and Request for Help!

The best news is that we have sold our first ticket before any advertising has been published! Electronic ads will have been started as you read this and a print advertising blitz will start with the October or November issues. All available and affordable North American birding oriented publications will carry ads from then until Christmas. Birding World published in Britain and covering most of Western Europe will also be carrying our ads. With the help of the whole committee and the expert computer wrangling of Betsy Kunzer, these ads were developed and electronically transmitted, in time to meet very short deadlines with exacting electronic-file requirements.

The bad news is that each publication wanted money but the good news is that we are still well under our revised and reduced budget. In addition to advertising, we have also incurred legal costs. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Christopher Hitchcock, esq., P.L.C. of Bisbee for excellent advice to keep us operating within the law. We may not have appreciated his advice but we are grateful for his time and efforts to keep us legal. We should probably list his total bill of \$12.24 under very good news.

Help! Don't forget to watch the website and to remind friends and family, throughout the world to do the same. The more hits we get on www.has.hypermart.net the more potential ticket buyers we will reach and the more tickets we will sell! In addition if you subscribe to, or know of, publications in Africa, Asia or Southeast Asia, please send contact information to Sandy Kunzer or Mike Guest so we can also advertise in those potentially lucrative areas.

Conservation Corner A Time For Thanks Giving

Last week, the Upper San Pedro Partnership, a consortium of key organizations in the upper San Pedro watershed, pledged to take steps to save the San Pedro River. Send your words of thanks and of support for follow-up action steps to this pledge to Sierra Vista Council member and mayor pro tem Bob Strain who is chair of the USPP. Bob Strain's email address is bstrain@ci.sierra-vista.az.us. Thanks are also due to Bob Strain in last week's city council meeting for stating that developers should pay for the full cost of park development fees. Unless developers pay the full cost for the impact of development on all infrastructure required to provide public services to new housing, it is likely that uncontrolled growth in Sierra Vista with its attendant increased ground water pumping will continue to deplete the San Pedro River.

There is still time to send a letter to Senator John McCain, member of the Senate/House conference committee which will address the Renzi rider appended to the defense-spending bill. The Renzi rider would exempt Fort Huachuca from meeting groundwater conservation measures designed to protect the San Pedro River. The House passed the legislation with the Renzi rider. The Senate did not. Senator McCain has said he does not agree with the language of the House passed version of the bill including the Renzi rider. He stated he is working on legislation that will protect the river and will acknowledge that the life of the river is the responsibility of the base and the civilian community. Send your thanks to Senator McCain for his position on this issue through the Take Action program of the national Audubon website, www.audubon.org.

-Sondra Gardner

Friends of Huachuca Audubon Society

Due to National Audubon severely reducing the monies refunded to our chapter, like many other chapters we have to reduce costs and find additional sources of income, in order to continue with our educational programs. First we are asking all recipients of the Trogon News to accept it via e-mail, thus reducing the number of copies we must pay to have printed and mailed. If you are not already signed up for electronic delivery, please do so. Secondly we have introduced Friends of HAS which can be in addition to your usual NAS dues or can replace them (Friends members will not receive the Audubon Magazine unless they also pay NAS dues). Dues are \$10 yearly for Individuals and \$15 yearly for Household memberships. Anyone joining before the end of October will count as a Charter member. We encourage you to contact Mike Guest or Phil Tucker to sign on.

**State of Arizona's Wildlife -
Agency Responsibilities, Advocate
Responsibilities, & Opportunities for Action**

Please join us for this fun and informative workshop on Saturday, October 25, 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. Location will be the ASU Downtown Center. In the morning, representatives from Game and Fish, US Fish and Wildlife, Bureau of Land Management and citizen activists will share information on the state of Arizona's wildlife, what they are doing, and what you can do to help. In the afternoon, we will grab our sack lunches and head out into the field where there will be a hands-on opportunity to help out with a wildlife service project. We will be assisting Game and Fish with the construction of burrows for burrowing owls. There is a nominal charge for the workshop of \$10 per person to help cover the cost of lunch and materials, although this can be waived. For more information or to sign up for the workshop, please contact Sandy Bahr at (602) 253-8633 or grand.canyon.chapter@sierraclub.org.

2nd Sunday Bird Walk – Sep 14, 2003

The migration was in full swing as participants in the most recent 2nd Sunday bird walk embarked from the parking area of the San Pedro River Inn. One of the highlights of the walk was an Osprey heading south along the river. Among other migrants, we encountered both Plumbeous and Warbling Vireo, and Nashville, Yellow, and Orange-crowned Warblers. The Orange-crown was interesting for having an all gray head like an eastern celata, but the rest being yellow-green as in the expected western lutescens form (see the latest Winging It for a description of a similar visitor to Washington State). We also saw early winter visitors like Green-tailed Towhee, and Vesper and Brewer's Sparrow. But there were still summer visitors in evidence like Summer Tanager, Blue Grosbeak, and Vermilion Flycatcher, plus residents like Gila Woodpecker. Something for every season!

The walk took place at our new venue of the San Pedro River Inn. Once again, note that the 2nd Sunday bird walk will meet at the San Pedro River Inn for the foreseeable future. The next 2nd Sunday bird walk is scheduled for 8am on Sunday, October 12.

Please join us for this regularly scheduled bird walk along the river on the 2nd Sunday of each month throughout the year.

Good birding!

-Robert Weissler

Re-Establishment of Black-Tailed Prairie Dog

Black-tailed prairie dogs occupied an estimated 100 million acres of grassland across North America in the early 1900s. Since then, the distribution and numbers of this species have been reduced by at least 95% across its range. Reduction resulted from intensive control programs using poisons, conversion of habitat to croplands, urbanization, and to some extent, plague. The black-tailed prairie dog inhabited desert grasslands in southeastern Arizona, but was extirpated from the state around 1960.

In February 2000 the USFWS announced that listing of the species was warranted but precluded by higher listing priorities, and placed the species on its candidate list. However, the USFWS may ultimately be compelled to list the black-tailed prairie dog as threatened under the ESA unless the states within the historic range of the species show significant conservation progress.

The AGFD will hold public meetings to discuss the 12-step process for evaluating possible black-tailed prairie dog re-establishment in southeastern Arizona. Some of the meetings will be held as follows:

October 15 Douglas. From 7:00 pm to 10:00 pm. Cochise College Auditorium, 4190 West State Highway 90.

October 21 Benson. From 7:00 pm to 10:00 pm. Benson Public Library Annex Meeting Room, 300 South Huachuca Street.

October 28 Sonoita. From 7:00 pm to 10:00 pm. Santa Cruz County Fair and Rodeo Association Building at the Sonoita Fairgrounds, 3142 South Highway 83.

October 29 Sierra Vista. From 7:00 pm to 10:00 pm. Buena Performing Arts Center at Buena High School, 5225 Buena School Boulevard.

Department biologists will give a 30-minute presentation on where the Department is in the process of evaluating black-tailed prairie dog re-establishment. We also will address concerns that have surfaced at past meetings. We will then open the floor to questions and comments to ensure that all matters are heard.

**California Condor Nestling
In Grand Canyon National Park**

Biologists from Grand Canyon National Park and The Peregrine Fund confirmed the existence of the first California Condor nestling in Arizona in decades, perhaps centuries. The sighting was confirmed in August during an arduous 24-mile hike in 100 degree heat to observe the nest. The biologists observed the feathered chick at the edge of the nest cave near the top of a 400 foot cliff in the Salt Creek drainage. The chick appeared to be very healthy and is estimated to be 18-26 weeks of age.

"It was amazing!" stated Sophie Osborn, Field Manager for The Peregrine Fund. "The chick was right on the edge of the nest cave sitting on a rock preening and looking around," continued Osborn. "The setting so timeless, remote, and magnificent that I wondered how it could be the only one of its kind in such a vast tremendous place." finished Osborn.

"This is truly what wildlife reintroductions are all about - natural reproduction in the wild. This is wildlife history in the making and we are confident it is just the first in a long line of Arizona-hatched condors soaring across our skies," stated Arizona Game and Fish Director Duane Shroufe. "This is the end result for which everyone has been working for so diligently, finished Shroufe.

"It was great to see such a healthy, energetic chick. It was alert and active. After the female fed it, it bounced around the cave like a little rabbit. It was indescribable to see the first condor chick in Arizona in more than 100 years in a setting like the Grand Canyon," stated Chad Olson, Raptor Technician for the National Park Service.

Regular updates from the field on all of the California Condor activities in the Southwest are provided on the Notes from the Field section of The Peregrine Fund's web site (www.peregrinefund.org).

The following article appeared in the Mesilla Valley (NM) Audubon Society newsletter. It is by far the most understandable explanation of the changes in dues structure that I have seen. Then it explains what some chapters (HAS included) are doing with creating a "Friends" membership. And finally it mentions the Take Back Audubon movement. If you have questions after reading this article, please contact a board member and we'll do our best to come up with answers.

-Tricia

Crisis in the Boardroom: MVAS Faces Financial Challenge
By Tim Lawton, MVAS Board Member

The political winds in the National Audubon Society have shifted, and as a result, our chapter, the Mesilla Valley Audubon Society (MVAS), faces a new financial challenge. The problem is of sufficient severity that it threatens the continued existence of MVAS. The essence of the problem is that the National Audubon Society (National) has changed the formula for the amount of each member's annual dues that is returned to the chapter. National formerly returned \$5.50 of each member's dues to the chapter for the purpose of partially financing chapter activities such as field trips, conservation initiatives, chapter meetings, newsletters, and community education. Over the last few years, the dues share, or amount of money returned to the chapters by National, has dropped dramatically. By the new formula, the amount of dues returned is initially higher if a new member of MVAS is recruited through the chapter. A new member is considered to be a chapter recruit only if he uses the membership form provided in our chapter newsletter. In any event, and this is the clincher, after two years a member is absorbed into national roles and thereafter contributes NO dues share whatsoever to the chapter. Ironically, our longest-term and most active members therefore contribute no money to the chapter through their dues! This situation is by no means restricted to this chapter. It is affecting all chapters across the country and has hit larger chapters, such as Portland and Denver, harder and earlier. The problem lies in a fundamental change in the way that National regards its relationship with the chapters. The National Audubon Society has historically been somewhat unique among conservation organizations in that it has operated through local organizations called chapters. The chapters have operated somewhat autonomously, determining through negotiation with state offices and National the types of conservation and educational activities they will undertake. National in turn has asked that each chapter hold a certain number of field trips and meetings each year. Now National is moving toward a more centralized, top-down style of management. In this format, members are essentially relegated to the status of donors through the dues they pay and money they bequeath to the organization. In addition, National is more actively determining what kinds of activities take place in chapter regions. For example, it has mandated that there will be a certain number of regional Audubon Nature Centers in place by 2020. Without really realizing it, I have always preferred the chapter style of management. It provides a social setting in which to interact with people who have similar interests. This interaction takes place on birding trips, bird counts, monthly meetings, and occasional dinner events. Over the 40-odd years that I have been a member of the National Audubon Society, chapter activities in various parts of the country influenced my interests as a youngster and got me through some hard personal times during the sometimes stormy ride toward middle age. Who will lead bird trips if the chapter disappears for lack of funding? Who will pay for the printing and mailing of the newsletter? Who will run the monthly meetings? The short answer is that chapter activities and

products will likely disappear. They might be replaced by a nature center and affiliated activities operated by National or the State office in Santa Fe. Such a center would have definite benefits for the community, but it is hard to imagine that facilities operated from a larger bureaucracy will be highly responsive to the wishes of current chapter members. What can we do? There are a couple of potential solutions to the impending financial crisis in the chapter. Some members of the board have become chapter-only members, paying their dues directly to the chapter (using the newsletter form) each year. These members no longer receive Audubon magazine, but all of their dues money goes directly to the chapter. The second solution is to donate directly to the chapter each year. If you want to remain a member of National, but also provide financial support for our local chapter, you could renew with National when they send you a renewal notice, and also send a donation directly to MVAS at the same time to support our local activities. There is also a longer-term solution taking shape. A nationwide movement called Take Back Audubon (TBA) has arisen in some of the chapters. This movement has the objective of electing a National Board of Directors sympathetic to the needs of the chapters and supportive of a chapter-driven national organization. This will be done using proxy votes given to the chapters each year to elect the new board. The TBA group intends to use those proxy votes to elect a Board of Directors with an interest in preserving the National-Chapter relationship more or less as it has existed in the past. This solution appears to be the one that will ensure the future health of the chapters and will hopefully create a better relationship with National than currently exists. If you are interested in the TBA agenda, log on to its website: www.smbas.org/tba. The board of directors of MVAS has endorsed TBA and we hope to use our chapter's proxy votes at the next Annual Meeting of the National Audubon Society in December to vote for reform resolutions and to elect National board members who support reform. MVAS is one of the most active chapters in the state. We support the largest number of Audubon Adventures educational classrooms in New Mexico, run monthly field trips and meetings, and we support and initiate local conservation programs that we feel are in the membership's and community's interests. We have come to take for granted the autonomy we enjoy and exercise in our decisions as a chapter. That autonomy and the very existence of the chapter are now on the line, and we, as members of the chapter, need to make our wishes for the future of the National Audubon Society known through our voices and our votes.

FIREWISE Workshop October 16
Are You Firewise? Free Day-Long Workshop

Before the sun sets over another Emory oak, mark your calendar for Thursday, October 16, 2003. That's the date of the Arizona Firewise Communities 2003 workshop at the Tucson Convention Center, 260 South Church Street, Tucson, AZ. The primary audience is all community members within a two-hour radius of Tucson, as well as others who don't mind traveling further. Discover what you can do for your home and community to make them better able to survive a wildfire. There will be workshops, non-profit organization booths, vendors, giveaway items, literature, and much, much more. Further details and registration forms are available at: <http://cals.arizona.edu/extension/firewise> and at www.firewise.org

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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.