

THE TROGON NEWS

HUACHUCA AUDUBON SOCIETY
Post Office Box 63, Sierra Vista, Arizona 85636
Volume XXXIII Number 7, September 2005



President's Message

Welcome back to the start of a new year of events and activities. Or maybe just welcome, if you're new to the chapter and the area! Our very first activity is the state-wide celebration being held in Sierra Vista September 9-11. Audubon chapter birders and activists from all over the state will be here for a mix of education and fun, so I hope some HAS folks will come and meet them. I know I'll be there!

We'll start up our monthly meetings on September 27, with a virtual visit to Africa with Karen and Jim Horton. October will feature the Kunzers and Sonoran birding. For November, Mark Pretti will share stories and slides of Belize - sure to be a blockbuster. A lot of armchair traveling ahead. And mark Sunday, December 11, on your calendar for our annual holiday party. We'll hold it at the Research Ranch in Elgin and have more details later.

Thanks to Ginny Bealer, Brian Prescott, Edna St. Clair, Alan Blixt, and Elaine Moore for putting in a few hours at the HAS table at the Southwest Wings Birding Festival. It was a chance to visit with some people, hand out some literature, and even sell two of our organic T-shirts! Friday at the festival was covered by Mike Quigley from Sky Island Alliance. I told him he could use part of the HAS table to put out information on the effort to get a wilderness designation for Tumacacori Highlands.

With the new school year started up, HAS is looking for sponsors to help us put Audubon Adventures into more school classrooms. This popular educational program puts materials into teacher's hands and teachers sign up year after year. We always like to add new teachers or new schools, so if you know of someone who might be interested (grades 3-6), let Sandy Anderson know. She's our education chair.

And as you start thinking ahead to year end and tax time, don't forget you can make a tax-deductible donation to HAS, to support any of our activities or specifically Audubon Adventures. Only \$42 will put a year's worth of information about our natural world into a teacher's hands!

Welcome to New HAS Members!

We would like to extend a warm welcome to our newest HAS members: Robert and Sondra Inman of Evergreen, Colorado, Mary L. Ehlers of Benson, Keith Frair of Ft. Huachuca, Lt. Herman Zaph-Kent of Willcox, Clara Redd of Sierra Vista, Christine Rhodes of Bisbee, and Billie Wyst of Hereford.

Local Programs and Events

Sep 9th – 11th, Audubon Celebration in Arizona, see page 7 for more details.

Sep 27th, Tuesday, HAS Meeting, 7:00 p.m., Sierra Vista Police Department community meeting room, 911 N. Coronado. AFRICA! Virtually. In October of 2004, Karen & Jim Horton spent a month in independent travel in Southern Africa, primarily Namibia. The wildlife was spectacular. They saw 43 species of mammals and some 257 species of birds, most of them lifers, and were able to photograph many of them close up. Join us as we enjoy Africa through their words and photos.

Field Trips

Sep 11th, Sunday, 7:00 a.m. FSPR bird walk. Meet at San Pedro River Inn.

Sep 14th, Wednesday, 7:00 a.m. FSPR bird walk. Meet at San Pedro House.

Sep 17th, Saturday, 7:00 a.m. Friends of the Huachuca Mountains bird walk. Meet at Carr House parking lot.

Sep 24th, Saturday. SEABA field trip to Arivaca Cienega in Buenos Aires NWR. Join Elaine Halbedel at the Cienega which should be very rich with butterflies and flowers after our abundant monsoons. Various Crescent species and Gulf (and occasionally Mexican) Fritillaries are always very abundant at this season. Walking will be about 1.5 miles on boardwalks and groomed trails. Most is handicapped accessible. Lunch will be at shaded picnic tables following the tour. The birding should also be great with Yellow-billed Cuckoos and possibly Black-bellied Whistling Ducks perched in the trees. Meet at 9 a.m. at the Buenos Aires NWR parking lot just east of the center of Arivaca, along Arivaca Road. Bring lunch, close-focus binoculars, water, hats, sunscreen, and walking shoes. Be aware that although we will be staying on the trails, there may be chiggers and mosquitoes. More info at 520/742-0071 (Tucson) or 520/803-9700 (Sierra Vista) or <http://www.naba.org/chapters/nabasa/home.html>

Sep 24th, Saturday, 7:00 a.m. FSPR bird walk. Meet at San Pedro House.

Sep 4th, 11th, 18th, and 25th, Sunday's, 7:00 a.m. Sierra Vista Environmental Operations Park bird walks. Tours will be limited to 20 participants plus 2 docents.



Crepuscular Critters and More-The Outcome!

At about 6:30 pm on May 23rd, an enthusiastic group of curious people met local elite naturalist Mark Pretti at Ramsey Canyon Preserve for an early evening adventure in nature. On this beautiful summer evening we were lucky to hear and see organisms and behaviors denied to those who retreat to electric lighting as dusk approaches. Whiskered Screech and Elf owls and their feeding behaviors were highlights along with Mark's commentaries.

Thanks to Mark and to Ramsey Canyon for allowing us the use of their parking lot. The Outings Committee will seriously consider running this trip again in 2006 if Mark is willing.

-Sandy Kunzer

Panama: Above the Canopy

August 2005

For most people, Panama is most closely associated with the canal, but not far behind are its neotropical birds and other wildlife. My wife and I joined a one-week tour to Panama operated by Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). We stayed at the Canopy Tower, a once abandoned radar installation turned ecolodge, in Soberania National Park near the section of the canal known as Culebra Cut. We enjoyed the comfort of the Blue Cotinga room complete with hammocks (Blue Cotinga was seen from Achiote Road, if not from the tower!). The Canopy Tower is located less than 30 miles from the airport outside Panama City and sits virtually on the continental divide. A wide variety of habitats was close by, some an easy day trip from the tower and others just a morning or evening walk away. Not to mention the tower itself where Keel-billed Toucan, Collared Aracari, and Blue Dacnis were at eye level!

Our leaders were Tony Nunnery, an American living in the Tandayapa Valley near Quito, Ecuador, and Jose Soto, the local Panamanian guide with the Canopy Tower. Ironically, Jose had just attended the ABA Convention in Tucson just the week prior to our departure. Both of them were enthusiastic in sharing the flora and fauna of the canal zone with us.

Near the ground-floor tower entrance was a number of nectar feeders where colorful White-necked Jacobins, White-vented Plumeleeters, and Snowy-bellied, Violet-bellied and Blue-chested Hummingbirds darted in and out. On the roof of the tower, we spied Chestnut-mandibled and Keel-billed Toucans, Red-fronted and Mealy (Amazon) Parrots, and Short-tailed and Zone-tailed Hawk, among the diverse avifauna. Walks on the tower entrance road yielded Broad-billed and Rufous Motmot, White-whiskered Puffbird, and one of the toughest birds to see, the Pheasant Cuckoo.

Trogons were prominent with White-tailed, Black-tailed, Slaty-tailed, Violaceous, and Black-throated Trogons along the Achiote, Pipeline, and Plantation Roads. Ammo Dump Pond provided incredible views of White-throated Crake, normally a very difficult bird to see. An army ant swarm along Plantation Road provided the best antbirds of the trip. The ant-following birds included the Ocellated, Bicolored, White-bellied, and Spotted Antbirds. They were accompanied by Gray-headed Tanager and Cocoa Woodcreeper with Black-chested Jay overhead. One of my favorite antbirds was also common throughout, namely the Barred Antshrike with its excited, tittering trill that always makes me laugh. Crimson-crested Woodpecker, a spectacular, large Campephilus woodpecker like the Pale-billed, was seen a number of times. Plain Xenops was the lone member of the ovenbird family that we saw, but an interesting bird indeed with its up-turned bill and arboreal feeding habits. On Achiote Road, I was trying to capture a photo of a flock of Chestnut-headed Oropendola when a Purple-throated Fruitcrow turned up in the shot! Near Cerro Azul in the low mountains northeast of Panama City, we found a canopy flock of Tangara tanagers, including Bay-headed, Golden-hooded, and Rufous-winged Tanager. The nearby Audubon Center had feeders at which we enjoyed Bronze-tailed Plumeleeter, Violet-crowned Woodnymph, and Saffire-throated and Rufous-tailed Hummingbird. At Metropolitan Park, we added Lance-tailed Manakin, Rufous-breasted Wren, Blue-crowned Motmot, Southern Bentbill, and Brown-capped Tyrannulet among many other birds. And there are way too many birds to list them all here!

Besides the diverse birds, we saw many primates cavorting in the trees, including Black-mantled Howler and White-faced Capuchin Monkeys, and Geoffrey's Tamarin. Both Three-toed and Two-toed Sloth, White-nosed Coatimundi, Agouti, Northern Tamandua (Collared Anteater), Fish Bat, Spectacled Caiman, and Green Iguana were seen as well.

Of course, the Panama Canal was interesting in itself. We crossed the Gatun Locks near Colon in order to reach Achiote Road and the north shore of Gatun Lake. The lake feeds the locks on both sides with the millions of gallons of water needed to raise and lower the level in each of the locks. There happened to be a Fork-tailed Flycatcher and Tropical Mockingbird sitting on the fence as we waited to cross the locks! We enjoyed the Visitor Center and Museum at the Miraflores Locks, then watched with Magnificent Frigatebirds soaring overhead as several container ships, oil tankers, and other vessels - even a submarine - passed through the locks!

We have posted photos from this trip at <http://aves.org/panama05>. [Note: Most of the wildlife photos were taken with a Panasonic Lumix FZ3 with 12x optical zoom.]

Good birding,

-Robert Weissler



Photos courtesy of Robert, starting at left: White-tailed Trogon, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer, Black-breasted Puffbird, Purple-throated Fruitcrow, Collared Aracari, Keel-billed Toucan

2005 Ramsey Canyon Christmas Bird Count

The 2005 Ramsey Canyon Christmas Bird Count (RCCBC) will be held on Sunday 18 Dec, so please mark your calendars. This year I'll again be assisted by Robert Weissler as our secondary compiler, so feel free to contact either of us although the focus of Robert's efforts will be on the "feeder watchers" and on arranging the breakfast and compilation dinner. You should also have the ability to perform "on-line" registration this year at the website www.audubon.org/bird/CBC although you'll still need to contact Robert (803-0794) or me (803-0221) in order to work out the details of where you will bird and when and where we will meet for breakfast and dinner. The details on this year's RCCBC will be provided starting in late September/early October.

Ted Mouras, Compiler, RCCBC, mourast@saic.com; Robert Weissler, 2ndry Compiler, RCCBC, weissler@aves.org

Congratulations!

One of our truly topnotch birders, Erika Wilson, has just been elected as a Board member to the prestigious American Birding Association! Erika who is a comparatively recent transplant to Sierra Vista is already leading outings for the Tucson Audubon Society and HAS, and is now a welcome addition to our Outings Committee.

Future Field Trips

Due to members' travel plans the next Outings Committee meeting will be too late for us to publish our future monthly trips in this edition of the TN. They will appear on the Events page of our web site huachuca-audubon.org around August 29th, and in future issues of the TN. We are sure you will find them interesting, enjoyable, and productive.

Ecuador 2006

If you enjoyed Harry Bergtholdt's article on birding in Ecuador in the Trogon News May issue, and wish you had been there, Alicia and Dieter Kamm will be running a two week trip to Ecuador's Amazon rain forest, the cloud forests of the eastern and western slopes of the Andes, and the paramo in the Andes again in February 2006. Contact them at (520) 452-8811, or aliciakamm@hotmail.com for an itinerary.

EOP Closure

Due to recent acts of vandalism at the Bird Viewing stand located at the Sierra Vista Environmental Park access will only be available during normal operating hours 0700 to 1530 Monday through Friday. The gate off of Highway 90 will be locked at all other times effective immediately.

Important New Book for Bird Watchers Available After a Decade in the Making

After more than a decade of work and help from hundreds of volunteers across the state, a must-have reference book for Arizona bird watchers is finally available. Forty-six million Americans are birders, and the new "Arizona Breeding Bird Atlas," sponsored by the Arizona Game and Fish Department, offers a first book of its kind about this state. "The creation of this book has been a labor of love," says Troy Corman, one of the book's editors and a bird biologist for the Arizona Game and Fish Department for 15 years. "We've been wanting to make a reference like this available for a very long time."

Cathryn Wise-Gervais, a former Game and Fish bird biologist, is Corman's co-editor. It's the first book focusing on all of Arizona's hundreds of breeding bird species. The creative process for the new book began in 1993, when Corman started asking Audubon Societies across the state for help with the research. Both Corman and Wise-Gervais wrote articles and made presentations at bird club meetings, where they asked for volunteers to go out and help gather data. Hundreds of people answered the call, carrying out bird survey missions in 10-square-mile blocks in more than 1,800 areas of the state. The volunteers looked high and low in a variety of habitats, from deserts to mountains.

"The Arizona Breeding Bird Atlas" was published by the University of New Mexico Press with assistance from the Arizona Game and Fish Department. The 656-page high-quality hardcover book costs \$45. It can be purchased at any Arizona Game and Fish Department office, through the department's Web site at azgfd.gov, at amazon.com, at various bookstores in Arizona, and through some Arizona Audubon Societies.

Complete story available at: http://www.azgfd.gov/artman/publish/article_364.shtml

-Reprinted from 17 Aug 05 AZG&F Wildlife News

San Pedro River Spring & Summer IBA Surveys

Dedicated HAS volunteers have been conducting seasonal bird surveys for the San Pedro River Important Bird Area since May 2004. Survey data gathered through May 2005 for Arizona Important Bird Areas, including our San Pedro data, will be available online later this year from the Tucson Audubon web site at <http://www.tucsonaudubon.org/azibaprogram>. A summary of our winter survey appeared in the April '05 issue of *Trogon News* (see p. 7). Below is a summary of the latest spring and summer San Pedro IBA surveys.

Eight faithful HAS volunteers met at the San Pedro House a half-hour after dawn to conduct the spring surveys on April 4 and May 13. Splitting into two teams, one team covers a 1,000-meter stretch of the river while the other circumvents Kingfisher Pond. Since temperatures were mild for the April 4 survey, 58 degrees, several of us regrettably wore shorts for the May 13 survey, which had a minimum temperature of 37 degrees on the river that morning!

The April 4 surveys tallied 28 species/134 individuals for the pond and 30 species/189 individuals for the river transect. Combining the pond and river surveys, a total of 38 species and 323 individuals were recorded. Most notable pond sightings were a Nashville Warbler and 25 Pine Siskins. Some of the other sightings around and/or on the pond included Lucy's, Yellow, Yellow-rumped Warblers, and Common Yellowthroat; Song, Lincoln's, and White-crowned Sparrows; Green-tailed and Abert's Towhees; Mourning and White-winged Doves; Red-winged Blackbirds; Northern Rough-winged Swallows; and Vermillion Flycatchers, among others. Twenty-one species were shared in common between the pond and river surveys, including the always a-thrill-to-see Gray Hawk. The river survey included 10 species not seen on the pond survey: White-breasted Nuthatch; Canyon Towhee; Cassin's Kingbird; Black Phoebe; Bell's Vireo; Vesper, Brewer's and Chipping Sparrows; and, most notably, Dusky Flycatcher and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher.

The frigid May 13 spring count increased in total species to 46 but decreased in number of individuals to 285 from the 38 species/323 individuals reported on the April 4 count. Additional species since the first spring count included Willets (16); American Coot; Great-tailed Grackle (2); Verdin; Common Raven; Black-chinned and Broad-tailed Hummingbirds; Swainson's Hawk; Ash-throated Flycatchers; Spotted Towhee; Loggerhead Shrike; Western Wood-Pewee (2); Warbling Vireo; Barn Swallow (3); Common Ground-Dove; and Bullock's Oriole.

The July 20 summer count produced a total of 38 species/249 individuals for the combined pond/river surveys. Twenty species appeared on both surveys. An additional six species were reported only on the pond survey: Great Blue Heron (2); Great Egret (2); Mexican Mallard (4); Ladder-backed Woodpecker; Northern Rough-winged Swallow (11); and Red-winged Blackbird (3). Another twelve species were reported only on the river survey: Gray and Swainson's Hawks; Western Wood-Pewee, Ash-throated and Brown-crested Flycatchers; Gilded Woodpecker; Bell's Vireo; Chihuahuan Raven; Canyon Towhee; Lucy's Warbler; White-breasted Nuthatch; and, most notably, Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

Our HAS San Pedro IBA teams are now gearing up for the fall surveys scheduled for September 12. If you are interested in becoming part of an IBA team, Audubon Arizona is holding an all-day IBA training workshop at the Audubon Research Ranch in Elgin, Arizona, on Friday, September 9. For information and/or registration, contact Scott Wilbor, Arizona IBA Survey Coordinator, by phone (520-628-1730) or e-mail (swilbor@quest.net). Tucson Audubon would like to establish IBA teams to begin surveys in the Huachuca Mountains, recently officially recognized as one of Arizona's twenty-six Important Bird Areas.

—Elaine Moore, Co-Chair, HAS Conservation Committee

Audubon Celebration

You are invited --- let's flock together!

Sept. 9-11 2005

Windemere Hotel, Sierra Vista, AZ

Co-sponsored by *Arizona Audubon Council* and *Audubon Arizona*

The Council and State Office invite you to join with friends old and new for a weekend of fun -- including guest speakers, workshops, setting state issue priorities, and, of course, great birding.

Join us for a weekend of opportunity to include the following:

Friday evening kick-off speaker Brock Evans, president of the Endangered Species Coalition in Washington, D.C. and a former National Audubon Society Government Relations VP.

Saturday banquet speaker Kenn Kaufman, well known ornithologist, author, tour leader, and birder extraordinaire.

Leadership training for Chapter leaders, such as fund raising, planning and implementing an education program, attracting new members, etc.

Discussion of state issues and setting of annual state priorities.

A variety of Sunday field trips in one of Arizona's premier birding areas.

Further details and registration information are available by going to the Audubon Arizona website: <http://az.audubon.org/News.html> or by calling the State Office in Phoenix (602-468-6470) to request the information be mailed to you. Early registration is encouraged as some events will be limited.

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MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

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. Send all checks to Huachuca Audubon Society, PO Box 63, Sierra Vista, AZ 85636.