

# THE TROGON NEWS

HUACHUCA AUDUBON SOCIETY  
Post Office Box 63, Sierra Vista, Arizona 85636  
Volume XXIX Number 10, September 2007



## President's Message

Hello. We can look back at another successful quarter. There was a good number of participants at our June potluck/meeting where a full slate of officers was elected, and a variety of local issues discussed. Our recycling program for printer cartridges and cell phones continues to expand with donations from the Amerind Foundation and even a small outpost in Colorado (thanks Alan).

After an absence of several years we manned a table at the Southwest Wings Birding Festival when it returned to Sierra Vista. Thanks to the loan of artifacts from Mark Pretti we offered a Budding Naturalists Quiz for youngsters, with prizes; plus, in partnership with the Nature Conservancy's Ramsey Canyon Preserve we provided 15 birdhouse kits for youngsters to put together at a Saturday session.

Kerrie Kirkpatrick has developed an interesting series of meetings for our 2007/8 season, the first of which will be on September 18th in the Cochise College Library building (see inside for details). Our annual Holiday Party Potluck will again be held at the Audubon Research Ranch by Elgin, courtesy of the Director, Linda Kennedy, who with Chris will challenge us with a "Grasslands Quiz" This will be on Sunday, December 16th, watch our web site for further information.

OK, so its not all good news. First, our evening meetings at Cochise College will, starting this fall, cost us \$50 per session (past meetings were free of charge). Second, despite the demanding requirements for us to obtain the necessary permits, from both Arizona and Federal agencies, for the collection and possession of bird and mammal artifacts, we are still pursuing our bird/mammal trunk project and visits to schools. Stay tuned for further updates...!

Regards, Mike

***Shop at our Marketplace and raise money for Huachuca Audubon!***

Help raise funds for the Huachuca Audubon Society by shopping at our online [Marketplace](#). Just click on the shopping bag banner on the left side of the Huachuca Audubon Society home page ([www.huachuca-audubon.org](http://www.huachuca-audubon.org)) and raise money for us! Please remember that ONLY purchases made online at participating merchants accessed by clicking on our website Marketplace banner first will raise money for us. Otherwise, the merchants will **not** be able to return a portion of the purchase cost to Huachuca Audubon.

**Welcome to New HAS Members!**

We would like to extend a warm welcome to our newest HAS (and Friends of HAS) members: Carol Foss, Jerry Lombardo of Benson; (new to NAS) Cinda Combs, Evelyn Maldonado, Carol Park, Patricia Raymond, Elizabeth Taylor, and Debra Wright of Bisbee; Ginny Marr of Chandler; William Cooley, Douglas; Ross Romero (Whispers Ranch B&B) Elgin; Amy Zelena at Ft. Huachuca; Terry Chambers, Janet M. Whitmore of Naco; William Burkhardt, Casa de San Pedro B&B, Glorial Moore, Sky Island Lodge of Hereford; Terry Alleman, Maxine Chalin, Lori Kovash, Robert Hazlett, Sandi Hersh, Arlene Hollenback, Sidney Frye, Carol N. Ney, Richard and Jennifer Larson, Todd & Catherine Newall, Anna Ponzio, Murl Rindahl, Marcelle Toczko, David & Brenda Witham of Sierra Vista; and Patty & Jim Walmann of St. David; Philip Makley, Gladys Perotti of Tombstone; Peter Collins of Vail; Daniel & Charla Fischer of Willcox.

**Committee News**

The chairpersons for the chapter committees are as follows: Conservation: Verna Berry; Education: Ginny Bealer; Programs: Kerrie Kirkpatrick; Membership: Ginny Bealer; and Outings: Rick Romea. Please contact the relevant chairperson if you would like to find out more information about the activities of a particular committee.

**HAS Vacancies**

New members in particular may be interested in getting involved with our organization.

We continue to seek an Editor for the Trogon News. Currently, due to a full time job and his other commitments, Robert Weissler can accommodate only quarterly issues. We would prefer to return to our customary monthly publication schedule if an interested person steps forward.

Help and guidance is readily available for any of these positions. If you have any thought about joining us, please discuss with Mike Guest or any other officer listed on the back cover of this newsletter.

## Local Programs and Events

Check the web site (<http://www.huachuca-audubon.org>) for the latest updates to the schedule of events. HAS monthly meetings are in the Horace Steele Conference Room at Cochise College.

**Sep. 14-16. Audubon Celebration 2007** in Tempe.

**Sep. 18<sup>th</sup>**, Tuesday, 7:00 pm. HAS Monthly Meeting, **Lee Basnar on the Alaskan Bush.**

**Oct. 16<sup>th</sup>**, Tuesday, 7:00 pm. HAS Monthly Meeting, **Linda Feltner on Wildlife Art.**

**Oct. 20<sup>th</sup>**, Saturday. **Arizona Field Ornithologists (AZFO) State Meeting.**

**Nov. 20<sup>th</sup>**, Tuesday, 7:00 pm. HAS Monthly Meeting, **Mark Pretti on El Triunfo Biosphere Reserve.**

**Dec. 16<sup>th</sup>**, noon Sunday. **HAS Holiday Potluck Social.**

This event will take place this year once again at the [Audubon Research Ranch](#) at 366 Research Ranch Road south of Elgin. Check out the [map and directions](#) to the ranch. Contact Linda Kennedy for additional information at [sacaton@theriver.com](mailto:sacaton@theriver.com).

## Upcoming Field Trips

**Sep. 9<sup>th</sup>**, Sunday, 7:00 am. **FSPR bird walk.** Meet at San Pedro River Inn.

**Sep. 12<sup>th</sup>**, Wednesday, 7:00 am. **FSPR bird walk.** Meet at San Pedro House.

**Sep 13<sup>th</sup>**, Thursday, 7:00 am. **HAS field trip to Huachuca Canyon.** See below for meeting place.

**Sep. 22<sup>nd</sup>**, Saturday, 7:00 am. **FSPR bird walk.** Meet at San Pedro House.

**Oct. 10<sup>th</sup>**, Wednesday, 8:00 am. **FSPR bird walk.** Meet at San Pedro House.

**Oct. 14<sup>th</sup>**, Sunday, 8:00 am. **FSPR bird walk.** Meet at San Pedro River Inn.

**Oct. 19<sup>th</sup>**, Friday, 7:00 am. **HAS Field Trip to Benson Ponds, Willcox & St. David**

**Oct. 27<sup>th</sup>**, Saturday, 8:00 am. **FSPR bird walk.** Meet at San Pedro House.

**Nov. 11<sup>th</sup>**, Sunday, 8:00 am. **FSPR bird walk.** Meet at San Pedro River Inn.

**Nov. 14<sup>th</sup>**, Wednesday, 8:00 am. **FSPR bird walk.** Meet at San Pedro House.

**Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>**, Thursday, 7:30am. **HAS Field Trip to Whitewater Draw.**

**Nov. 24<sup>th</sup>**, Saturday, 8:00 am. **FSPR bird walk.** Meet at San Pedro House.

**Dec. 9<sup>th</sup>**, Sunday, 7:00 am. **HAS Field Trip to Patagonia Lake.**

And here is advance notice of local CBCs:

**Dec 29<sup>th</sup>**, Saturday. **Ramsey Canyon Christmas Bird Count.** Contact Ted Mouras for details (e-mail to [tedmouras@mindspring.com](mailto:tedmouras@mindspring.com)).

**Jan. 5<sup>th</sup>**, Saturday. 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual **Appleton-Whittell Christmas Bird Count.** Contact Robert Weissler for details (e-mail to [weissler@aves.org](mailto:weissler@aves.org)).

Note: Due to the high price of gas, car pool passengers are expected to provide adequate compensation to their driver, about 8 cents per mile.

## Weekly events

Every Sunday at 7am during summer months (8:00am October through March). **Bird Walk at Sierra Vista Environmental Operations Park.** Limited to 20 participants with two docents.

## Monthly events

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday at 7am Apr-Sep, 8am Oct-Mar. **Bird Walk at San Pedro River Inn.**  
2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday at 7am Apr-Sep, 8am Oct-Mar. **Bird Walk at San Pedro House.**  
3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday at 5:30pm May-Oct. **Evening Natural History Walk at San Pedro House.**  
4<sup>th</sup> Saturday at 7am Apr-Sep, 8am Oct-Mar. **Bird Walk at San Pedro House.**

## Huachuca Audubon Society 2007 Field Trips

The HAS Outings Committee has planned many interesting outings for the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 2007 and into 2008.

### **Huachuca Canyon**

**Date: September 13<sup>th</sup>**

**Leader: TBD**

2-3 hour walk up Huachuca Canyon, on Fort Huachuca. Uphill rocky trail.

Meet: Leave from City hall at 7 am. Carpool suggested.

Bring: Sturdy shoes, water, snacks. Picture ID required. Auto registration and proof of insurance may be required by drivers to access the Fort.

Contact: TBD

### **Benson Ponds, Wilcox & St. David**

**Date: October 19<sup>th</sup>**

**Leader: Erika Wilson**

Meet: Carpool and leave from City hall at 7 am.

A  $\frac{3}{4}$  day trip checking various large and small ponds for shorebirds, early waterfowl, and raptors along the I-10 corridor. Some easy walking at St. David for fall migrants.

Bring: water, hat, snacks, and sack lunch. Telescopes and short wave handsets helpful.

Contact: Erika Wilson (520-234-4359 or [terika88@cox.net](mailto:terika88@cox.net)).

### **Whitewater Draw**

**Date: November 15<sup>th</sup>**

**Leader: Mike Guest**

Meet: Carpool and leave from City hall at 7:30 am.

Sandhill Cranes for sure, probably a mix of waterfowl and shorebirds, and hopefully some raptors and an eagle or two.

Bring: Warm clothes, water, a snack and a scope if available.

Contact: Mike Guest: 520-378-0667,

### **Patagonia Lake State Park**

**Leader: Mike Guest**

**Date: December 9<sup>th</sup>**

Meet: Carpool and leave from City Hall 7:00 am prompt.

Our 6<sup>th</sup> annual combined boat-n-hike birding trip. Limited to 18 people. Advance sign-up is essential.

Fee for park entry - \$8, boat ride \$3, plus carpool donation.

Bring: Warm windproof clothing – boat ride can be very chilly, boots advisable, and lunch, usually return mid-afternoon.

Contact: Mike Guest: 520-378-0667

**Raptor Day****Date: January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008****Leader: Rick Romea**

Meet: Carpool and leave from City hall at 7:30 am.

We will drive the back roads in the Sulfur Springs Valley, looking for and studying as many raptors as we can. Also we'll try for several non-raptor specialties such as Bendire's Thrasher and Mountain Plover.

Bring: warm clothes, lunch, scope (if you have one)

Contact: Rick Romea: 520-803-1160, [rickorcindy@hotmail.com](mailto:rickorcindy@hotmail.com)**Arizona Field Ornithologists (AZFO) State Meeting**

Saturday, October 20, 2007

The Arizona Field Ornithologists (AZFO) will hold its first state membership meeting. It will be held at the Southeast Regional Library in Gilbert, Arizona just southeast of Phoenix. This site is next to the Gilbert Water Ranch, well known as a rich birding spot. Opportunities for birding before and after the meeting and on Sunday morning will be organized. Maybe the Streak-backed Oriole will return for its third year!!

The meeting will offer an opportunity to discuss reports on AZFO activities and hear three or four presentations from different parts of Arizona on bird distribution and recent research projects. Dues-paid members will be able to elect officers and the board of directors and approve the by-laws. New people who are not yet members are urged to come, join, and invite others. For those who sign up as new members at this meeting, their dues will be paid through 2008. (All dues and contributions to AZFO, which is officially a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization, are tax-deductible.)

Updates on the program and schedule will be available on the AZFO website: [azfo.org](http://azfo.org).

If you are interested in attending or helping to work on this gathering, please contact meeting coordinator Keith Kamper at: [keith\\_kamper@adventurebirding.com](mailto:keith_kamper@adventurebirding.com)).

**Reminder: Trogon News is now a quarterly newsletter**

With the advent of the web, we have an effective means for reaching our membership in a more timely fashion. As a result, we have moved the schedule of events front and center on the home page of our web site (<http://www.huachuca-audubon.org/>) where it can be updated on a moment's notice. We will continue to offer the newsletter as a vehicle to highlight stories on recent field trips, programs, and other activities of Huachuca Audubon, albeit quarterly instead of monthly.

## **Wings Over Willcox (WOW) Birding Festival**

Jan. 17-20, 2008

WINGS OVER WILLCOX (WOW) combines adventure, entertainment and education to provide a fun-filled weekend of birding pleasure for the novice, expert or curious. Birding tours seek sandhill cranes, hawks and owls, sparrows, Southwest and montane specialties. Other tours include geology, history, ghost towns, working ranch, mining, botany, photography, archeology, anthropology and irrigated farming. Free seminars focus on birds, bats, reptiles, insects, mammals and asteroids.

The 14th Annual WINGS OVER WILLCOX, January 17-20, 2008, offers birding and nature enthusiasts the opportunity to visit some of the best birding attractions in southeastern Arizona and participate in exciting natural history tours and seminars. The Magic Circle of Cochise, which begins and ends in Willcox, draws nearly 500 species of birds to the area and is home to a great variety of plant and animal life. A complete list of activities, as well as local lodging and restaurants, can be found at the festival website: [www.wingsoverwillcox.com](http://www.wingsoverwillcox.com).

"Early Bird" registration deadline is December 31st. Call the Willcox Chamber of Commerce & Agriculture for status of tour availability at (520) 384-2272 or (800) 200-2272.

## **Conservation News**

### **BOWIE POWER PLANT**

The Bowie Power Station (Bowie) is a 600 megawatt power facility planned for southeastern Arizona near the community of Bowie, in Cochise County. The big question is why. The builders claim it is being developed to meet the growing demand for electricity, to support the growing population growth in the Southwest. Maybe it would be better to try to limit both growth and energy use. Read the excerpts on the Conservation Page of the HAS web site.

### **FROM CONGRESSWOMAN GIFFORD'S OFFICE:**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords' first solar energy bill cleared a significant hurdle this afternoon, earning strong bipartisan support at a hearing of the House Energy and Environment Subcommittee. Giffords' Solar Energy Research and Advancement Act of 2007 is aimed at reducing global warming and increasing America's use of renewable energy by harnessing the power of the sun. Backing from the subcommittee paves the way for the legislation to be considered next week by the House Science and Technology Committee.

### **SUPPORT THE TUMACACORI HIGHLANDS LEGISLATION**

Congressman Raul Grijalva has introduced the Tumacacori Highlands Wilderness Act of 2007 (H.R. 3287) into the United States House of Representatives!

The bill will permanently protect approximately 85,000 acres of rolling hills, rugged canyons, and rare species habitat as federal wilderness on the Coronado National Forest. The area is just an hour's drive south from approximately 1 million people in metropolitan Tucson. The area lies north of the Mexican border, west of I-19, from the Pajarita Wilderness Area north to Tubac. Click on the link below for the Friends of the Tumacacori Highlands' map.

Pat & Verna Berry, Conservation Chair

## **Summer 2007 HAS Field Trip Reports**

### **Hummingbirds, August 2007**

Five HAS members and an out-of-state guest had a fine morning looking at hummingbirds, led by Rick Romea and Erika Wilson, on 14 August 2007. The final tally was 30 species, with nine species of hummingbird. Considering the generally low numbers of hummingbirds this year, we were pleased that the diversity was still high. Our guest was particularly pleased with the trip, as she garnered several life hummingbirds.

Our first “parking lot” bird was a rare dark morph Swainson’s Hawk, perched on a nearby utility pole. After admiring this elegant raptor, our group carpooled in three vehicles, with our first stop at Mary Jo Ballator’s Ash Canyon B&B. As always, Mary Jo’s lovely native plantings and numerous feeders attracted a wide variety of birds. Seated in comfortable chairs, we enjoyed the fine weather, the many flowers in bloom, and the hummers (Broad-billed, Black-chinned, Anna’s, and Rufous) zipping in and out of the mesquites and oaks, disputing the rights to the various feeders. Other birds of interest seen here were a Virginia’s Warbler, a female Ladder-backed Woodpecker, and close views of Black-headed Grosbeak.

Our next stop was at Beatty’s in Miller Canyon. The upper “controlled access site” had a mere dozen feeders, but also plenty of flowers in bloom to attract the hummingbirds. Comfortably shaded under the awning, we had really close views of Broad-billed, Black-chinned, Anna’s, and Broad-tailed Hummingbirds. The differences in both shape and shade of red in the Anna’s and Broad-tailed gorgets were noted, with golden glints coming off the male Anna’s and pink flashes from the male Broad-taileds. A little shy, but seen several times each, were Magnificent, White-eared, and Violet-crowned Hummingbirds. One White-eared male exhibited a particularly well marked plumage. A single glimpse of a female Blue-throated Hummingbird rounded out our tally at Beatty’s feeders.

Our final stop was in Ramsey Canyon, where the feeders at the Inn were observed from the public road. We had more satisfying looks at several Blue-throated Hummingbirds, although the Berylline Hummingbird failed to show. Also present were the usual trio of Broad-billed, Black-chinned, and Anna’s Hummingbirds. A female Western Tanager was spotted, and we heard, but never saw, Painted Redstart.

Report by Erika Wilson.

### **Carr Canyon, June 7, 2007**

Despite strong winds most of the morning, twelve HAS members and an out-of-state guest had a fine morning exploring Carr Canyon, led by Mick Guest, on 07 June 2007. The final tally was 36 species, which we all felt was remarkable considering the winds. Our guest was particularly pleased with the trip, as he garnered two life birds—Greater Pewee and Buff-breasted Flycatcher at the Reef Townsite campground in the late morning.

Our group carpooled in three high-clearance vehicles, which made the bumpy, twisty climb up the Reef Road relatively easy for the riders, thanks to our three intrepid drivers (Mel Emeigh, Teresa Miranda, and Joe Woodley). Our first stop at the Reef Townsite campground was brief due to howling winds, so we moved on to Ramsey Vista campground. Our way was blocked by a newly downed pine

tree Lying athwart the road. In a fine group effort, the tree trunk was broken in two and the upper half pulled off the road, allowing us to reach our goal. It was just as windy at Ramsey Vista, but hiking down toward Comfort Spring we were sheltered from the full force of the wind.

The birding throughout the morning was fairly slow, with long gaps between birds, but we found a Red-faced Warbler foraging close to the trail; saw a couple of distant, flying Band-tailed Pigeons; watched two Steller's Jays near the dry spring, and listened to a calling Cordilleran Flycatcher during our hike to and from Comfort Spring. Back at the vehicles it was decided that each group would pursue birds independently on the way back down. Additions to the list from these separate groups included Arizona Woodpecker, Greater Pewee, Buff-breasted Flycatcher, Dusky-capped Flycatcher, and Hermit Thrush. The warbler count rose to four species with the addition of Black-throated Gray, Grace's, and Painted Redstart. Both Hepatic and Western Tanagers were seen, and a Yellow-eyed Junco was in full song in a pine. Most tantalizing was a female bunting seen briefly, but thought to be an Indigo Bunting.

Report by: Erika Wilson

## 2nd Sunday Bird Walk



**San Pedro River Inn, July 8, 2007**

With the summer monsoon season getting underway, bird activity along the San Pedro River was particularly high. A Peregrine Falcon chasing potential competitors as well as prey provided one of the highlights of this outing. A pair of Yellow-billed Cuckoos provided yet another. Meanwhile, a nest box full of young Barn Owls is a treat in almost any season. While we did not hear or see Gray Hawk, unusual in that they have been present reliably in this area for months, we did enjoy Swainson's Hawk soaring overhead.

The usual assortment of colorful breeding birds were conspicuous along the river, including numerous Vermilion Flycatchers, Summer Tanagers, Blue Grosbeaks, Yellow-breasted Chats, and Yellow Warblers. A pair of Brown-crested Flycatchers were both heard and seen well among the cottonwoods of the gallery forest, while Ash-throated Flycatchers were seen more toward the forest edge. Cassin's and Western Kingbirds were active throughout. The haunting call of Common Ground-Doves penetrated the riparian forest, while the drumming of Red-shafted Flickers, as well as that of Gila and Ladder-backed Woodpeckers provided the percussion section for this pastoral symphony. Loggerhead Shrike, Song Sparrows, Abert's Towhees, and Black Phoebes were also present in good numbers. The precocial young of Gambel's Quail and of Mexican Mallards dutifully trailed behind the parents.

During the walk, some of the participants recounted their sighting of Lawrence's Goldfinches, an unusual bird for this area in Summer. As it is, this species is virtually at its eastern limit here -- but normally in winter! Yet, as if to confirm their record of this bird, I found a couple at the thistle feeder in my backyard during the week following.

The next 2nd Sunday Bird Walk is scheduled to depart from the San Pedro River Inn at 7:00 a.m. on Sunday, Sept 9, 2007. Once again, birders of all levels of experience are welcome to join us!

Report by: Robert Weissler

### **Audubon Adventures: An Opportunity to Participate in Environmental Education**

If you've ever wanted to share your appreciation for the natural environment with youngsters by stimulating their curiosity and discovery of nature, here's your chance. Audubon Adventures is a nationally acclaimed environmental education program of informational brochures, posters, activities and action tips geared for grades 3 - 6.

Teachers who receive the kit get a guide, resource manual and a one-year subscription to Audubon Magazine. Each classroom kit contains materials for 32 students, at a cost of \$45, which includes shipping.

Subject matter and activities in the kits are in alignment with national science and language arts standards. Millions of school children have participated in this program since its inception in 1984.

Following are just two among the many accolades the program has received from teachers. These and other information about Audubon Adventures are posted at the website: [www.audubon.org/educate/aa/](http://www.audubon.org/educate/aa/).

"I have been using the Audubon Adventures educational materials for many years and have always found them to be well designed and appropriate to the educational needs of my students. Young minds always seem to be eager to learn all they can about nature. Audubon Adventures can motivate even the most reluctant learners. "

-Susan Campbell, Fourth Grade, Webutuck Elementary, New York.

"Audubon Adventures reading materials and lesson plans help students understand and respect the natural world around them. We are matching the kit materials with our sixth grade science curriculum. "

-Pasadena Unified School District K-12, Program Specialist, Pasadena, CA

Huachuca Audubon has a list of local teachers who have used Audubon Adventures in the past, and would like to continue to do so, plus several others who would like to receive a package. If you would like to donate a kit to any of these teachers, please send your check to our treasurer, Phil Tucker, HAS, P.O. Box 63, Sierra Vista, AZ 85636-0063. Your donation to Huachuca Audubon for this kit is tax deductible.

If you would like a particular teacher in our area to receive a kit, please include the following information with your payment: a. school name and mailing address, b. teacher's full name and c. grade taught.

Please address any other questions regarding this education outreach project to Sally Rosen at [azcatsally@aol.com](mailto:azcatsally@aol.com).

## **Alan Blixt's Summer Bird Walks, Hikes, and Bird Banding**

I went down to San Pedro House at 6 AM 8/29/2007 for birdbanding but that had been cancelled. I hooked up with Dave Beaudette and two ladies from Bisbee and, in the next 4 1/2 hours we recorded 61 species of birds! We walked Del Valle Rd, down Garden wash to Black Phoebe Pond, across to Green Kingfisher Pond, and back across the grasslands. We found many summer breeding birds that have not yet left including Bullock's Oriole, Summer and Western Tanagers, Yellow Warbler, Vermilion Flycatchers, Tropical and Cassin's Kingbirds, and Gray Hawk. We also recorded many newly arriving species such as Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Brewer's and Lark Sparrows, Lark Buntings, Belted Kingfisher, and Crissal Thrasher. We found Wilson's Warblers in migration along with flocks of Black-headed Grosbeaks, Western Kingbirds, and Lazuli Buntings. We enjoyed the songs of the monsoon breeding birds: Blue Grosbeak, Cassin's Sparrow, and Botteri's Sparrow. Green Heron, a pair of Great Blue Herons, a flock of Red-winged Blackbirds, White-breasted Nuthatches, and Bewick's Wrens were also seen. We found a Regal Horned Lizard as well! Great birding on the San Pedro River!!

On August 26th Bryan Prescott and Alan Blixt led a bird walk at the Environmental Operations Park at 7 AM. What a day! We saw five raptor species including a Cooper's Hawk, a couple of Swainson's Hawks, a pair of Red-tailed Hawks, an American Kestrel, and watched a Peregrine Falcon take a Green-winged Teal out of mid-air. There were lots of shore birds in evidence as well. We saw Baird's, Western, Spotted and Least Sandpipers. Amongst a flock of about 20 Wilson's Phalaropes we spotted a Red-necked Phalarope. Also seen were a Lesser Yellowlegs, many Killdeer and a large flock of White-faced Ibis. Every Sunday we walk the wetlands, join us!

On August 25th Mike Guest led a bird walk from San Pedro House at 7 AM. We walked the grassland along Del Valle Rd and enjoyed some grassland songbirds such as Blue Grosbeak, Cassin's Sparrow, and Botteri's Sparrow. At 7:30 Alan Blixt reversed course and returned to San Pedro House to join Sandy Kunzer for an 8 AM interpretive walk. We were joined by several local folks from Bisbee and Sierra Vista. We enjoyed seeing lots of birds, flowers, caterpillars, lizards, and really enjoyed watching a grassland Box Turtle. It was a beautiful morning for a walk on the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area. Come take a walk with us.

On August 18th at 8 AM a group of twelve, led by Chris Long, took off on a three hour hike to Millville and to visit a couple of petroglyph sites. We were serenaded by a beautiful Blue Grosbeak male as we began the hike. We talked about native and non-native invasive grasses, found some interesting caterpillars, and enjoyed the lovely Desert Marigolds in full bloom. Chris shared her knowledge of the Gird family, the Gird Mill, and the history of Millville and Charleston, the ghost town across the river. We saw blooming Wild Zinnia and the Jatropa ready to bloom. We talked about the rock art of the "archaic" people or the "ancient ones." We also walked to the San Pedro River and enjoyed hearing the calls of a pair of Yellow Warblers. What a great day!

On Wednesday the 15th of August Heidi Schubert and Alan Blixt led an evening interpretive walk from San Pedro House at 5:30 PM. What a beautiful evening. As we left San Pedro House to walk the grasslands the sun was in the west and the blue sky was filled with puffy white clouds. The atmosphere on the evening walks is very different from the morning walks. We found large numbers of Western Kingbirds so it appears their migration has begun. We were treated to several good looks at Vermilion Flycatchers. We also enjoyed hearing the beautiful song of many Blue Grosbeaks and watched them displaying from a variety of perches. The group of thirteen people from Canada and many places in the U.S. remarked on the lush and green scenery. We certainly live in a beautiful and changing place. The

third Wednesday of each month May through October there is an evening interpretive walk from San Pedro House at 5:30 PM.

On Sunday August 12th Pat and Verna Berry and Alan Blixt led a bird walk at the Environmental Operations Park and found 39 species of birds. We really enjoyed seeing a male Ruddy Duck in breeding plumage, a Sora, and a Virginia Rail. The Peregrin Falcon was found roosting on a telephone pole and we saw White-faced Ibis and Swainson's Hawk. Every Sunday all year there are guided walks at the EOP. Come take a walk with us.

On Wednesday August 8th Dave Beaudette and Alan Blixt walked the grassland with three others and found 49 species of birds. We left San Pedro House at 7 AM and walked Del Valle Rd through the calling and singing Cassin's Sparrows, Botteri's Sparrows, Black-throated Sparrows, and Blue Grosbeaks. We saw Red-tailed and Swainson's Hawks and heard a couple of Gray Hawks calling. We also saw Lucy's Warblers, Verdin, Lark and Chipping Sparrows, and three species of Kingbirds - Cassin's, Western, and Tropical. It was too muddy to get to the river but we had a great time on the grasslands. Guided bird walks leave the San Pedro House the second Wednesday of each month at 7 AM in the summer and 8 AM in the winter. Go to [sanpedroriver.org](http://sanpedroriver.org) to find information on walks, hikes, and other activities.

You will find additional accounts of summer birding from Alan on the Trip Reports page of the HAS web site.

## **Audubon Celebration 2007**

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

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

**Sept. 14<sup>th</sup> -16<sup>th</sup> 2007**

**Fiesta Inn Resort, Tempe AZ**

***Join with friends old and new for a weekend of fun and opportunity to include the following:***

**John Flicker**, President and CEO of the National Audubon Society.

**Jerry Jackson**, renowned ornithologist, author, and popular writer for *Birdwatcher's Digest*.

**César Mazier**, President of César Mazier Landscaping & Consulting and past director of horticulture for the Desert Botanical Garden.

**Homer Hansen**, chairman of the annual "Wings Over Willcox" birdwatching festival and sparrow expert.

**Jim Burns**, wildlife photographer and writer of "Bird Is a Verb," a bimonthly birding column for the *Arizona Republic*.

**Betsy Loyless**, Senior Vice-President for Policy in Audubon's Washington office.

**David L. Pearson**, Research Professor at Arizona State College and author and co-author of books in the Ecotravellers' Wildlife Guide series.

**Rose Ann Rowlett**, of Field Guides- professionally guided bird-watching trips to 100 destinations worldwide.

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

**Important Bird Area** training on Friday.

**A variety of Sunday field trips** such as Rio Salado, Gilbert Riparian Preserve, Tres Rios, Boyce Thompson Arboretum and more...

**Silent Auction, Raffle**, more fun...and, of course, **great birding!!!**

**Conference Registration is \$85 per person** (includes box lunch, banquet dinner, attendance for all Saturday workshops and Sunday field trips ~ Friday workshops extra). For further details and to request a registration packet, call **Donna** at **602-468-6470** or email [egret@cox.net](mailto:egret@cox.net). Early registration is encouraged as some events will be limited.

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## Birding in Paradise - The El Triunfo Biosphere Reserve

After having traveled in most of west Mexico's states, I had my eyes on a trip to El Triunfo in southern Chiapas for several years. In addition to stories of the area's pristine nature and the attractiveness of a place reached only by foot, it was the only place in Mexico where I could still see many new bird species (I was hoping for about 40), including some of the most range-restricted on Earth. After my friend David Tomb took the lead in organizing a trip, we joined four other friends in Tuxtla Gutierrez in April of 2007 for what would turn out to be one of the greatest wilderness adventures any of us had ever experienced.

The 300,000-acre El Triunfo Biosphere Reserve is located in the southern part of the state in the Sierra Madre de Chiapas where it spans an altitudinal range of roughly 1200 to 8000 feet and separates the warm, humid coastal lowlands from the drier interior. El Triunfo contains a great variety of habitats which include humid tropical evergreen forest, mountain rainforest, tropical deciduous forest, evergreen cloud scrub, pine-oak forest, and perhaps the crown jewel of them all, evergreen cloud forest. El Triunfo's cloud forest hosts one of the most diverse arrays of tree species in North and Central America. Amidst the often mist-enshrouded mountains are giant tree ferns, sweet-gum, towering Mexican alder, wild fuchsia, oaks, wild avocado, and mulberry trees, most of which are dripping with epiphytic mosses, bromeliads, orchids, ferns, Clusia, arums, and cacti.

The approximately 2000 species of plants found within the reserve are the background for tremendous faunal diversity. In addition to 70 species of reptiles and amphibians known from the area, over 100 species of mammals (most of which are bats) and about 400 species of birds have been recorded. Several of the birds are either very range restricted (horned guan, azure-rumped tanager, blue-throated motmot, black-capped swallow, rufous sabrewing, and blue-tailed hummingbird) or are generally rare throughout their range (resplendent quetzal and Prevost's ground sparrow). Jaguar, Baird's tapir, red brocket deer, Central American spider monkey, and hundreds of species of colorful butterflies also make El Triunfo home.



The establishment of El Triunfo as a biosphere reserve began with studies in the 1940s by one of Mexico's premier ornithologists, Miguel Alvarez del Toro. The seeds of conservation were planted in the early 1970s when the natural History Institute of Chiapas began to study the area, and in 1990 the Mexican government formally established the reserve. Unfortunately at the time, the park was a classic "paper park" with inadequate funding and management. Recognizing the area's biodiversity value and its connection to many rural communities, various foreign conservation groups provided financial assistance and partnered with Mexican agencies to establish subsequent funding, staff, and management plans. In 1993 El Triunfo was included in the international MAB-UNESCO Program for Biosphere Reserves, and today a staff of about 50 works with local communities on education and sustainable economic activities such as ecotourism, organic shade-grown coffee, and the development of palm and cycad nurseries.

We felt fortunate to be among the few tourists (about 200) that visit the area each year and were simply blown away by the beauty, richness, intactness, and incredible birding that El Triunfo offers. Our April journey began, as many to the area do, in Tuxtla Gutierrez where we spent a half-day visiting the dramatic national park at Sumidero Canyon. Here the Rio Grijalva cuts through a massive

limestone dome, creating a spectacular 3000-ft. deep canyon. The tropical deciduous forest of the park felt like home for me as it was reminiscent of that of much of west Mexico with gumbo limbo, Erythrina, Ceiba, Cochlospermum, guaje, and Combretum vine being common. As we exited the van at our first stop, white-throated magpie-jays greeted us with their raucous calls. A russet-crowned motmot posed for unobstructed pictures in the mostly leafless forest while white-lored gnatcatchers and banded wrens worked the thick vegetation. At various stops along the road, we found boat-billed and Nutting's flycatchers, buff-bellied hummingbird, the southern race of streak-backed oriole, and olive sparrow, while thicket tinamous and highland guans called from the surrounding forest. We heard and searched for the diminutive, thicket-dwelling belted flycatcher, but couldn't lay eyes on this little treasure. Interesting pockets of greener semideciduous forest harbored unexpected (at least to me) species - including spot-breasted wren, northern bentbill, lesser greenlet, and eye-ringed flatbill - that I was used to seeing in lowland evergreen forest.

From Sumidero, we headed south to the town of Jaltenango, our take-off point for the El Triunfo trailhead. On the way we encountered a northward-traveling flock of several hundred Swainson's hawks. At first we just saw dozens of hawks flying low over a ridge. When we stopped for a closer look, we discovered that the hawks had happened upon a partially cleared area that was swarming with grasshoppers. As they swooped low to the ground, they would flush dozens of the large insects, one of which would usually end up in the talon of a bird. This was also the point at which we heard our first pheasant cuckoo, a bird we would hear over much of the trip but, like most people, never see. Just outside Jaltenango, we made our final stop of the day at the Rio Acatengo, an area rich with birds. In addition to the Amazon and green kingfishers along the river, we found fork-tailed flycatcher, plain wren, painted bunting, bank-nesting russet-crowned motmots, yellow-winged and blue-gray tanagers, and the Fuertes race of orchard oriole.



From Jaltenango, the heart of the adventure began with a three-hour back-of-the-truck ride through habitat that went from fairly cut over to largely intact. The birding, in tandem with the habitat, just got better and better, and we had a hard time going more than a mile without signaling to our driver to stop yet again so we could watch birds. While fairly widespread birds such as black-headed saltator, clay-colored robin, and rufous-browed peppershrike were common at the start, we quickly transitioned into more interesting and intact habitat where we found azure-crowned hummingbird, white-winged tanager, orange-billed nightingale thrush, green parakeet, collared aracari (hanging out in pine trees of all places), chestnut-collared swift, gray-collared becard, and my first life bird of the trip, blue-headed vireo. Eventually we arrived at Finca Prusia, an old but still active coffee hacienda established by Germans in the late 1800s. Here we had lunch and then started the 8-mile uphill walk to the high camp at El Triunfo. Within minutes we all felt as though we had stepped through the looking-glass and entered an enchanted wonderland of spectacular forest. For the next six hours, we gawked at enormous trees, searched the canopy for emerald toucanets, caught good views of emerald-chinned hummingbirds and brown-capped vireos, were teased by fleeting glimpses of blue-crowned chlorophonias, listened to the calls of collared trogons and black robins, and enjoyed the quiet power of a landscape that, except for the trail, showed no obvious signs of humans having ever been there. Within about a mile of the camp, we heard the low-pitched, almost subliminal calls of horned guans, one of the oddest and most beautiful cracids in the Americas. Though they were right above us, it took a while to locate them in the dense canopy. Eventually we did find them and enjoyed great views of a bird that was hands-down a huge trip highlight.

With our hunger and fatigue momentarily erased by the guan sighting, we entered the camp clearing where we were welcomed by a parade of color and song from the many yellow grosbeaks, gray silky-flycatchers, flame-colored tanagers, and mountain robins flying around. Knowing that we'd spend every waking moment in this wilderness paradise over the next few days had us beaming, but it turned out that there was even more magic in store. The local Mexicans in charge of logistics (which are difficult to say the least) simply outdid themselves and impressed us to no end with their graciousness, smiling service, delicious food, and camaraderie on the adventure. Our first dinner of hot soup, heaping plates of pasta, steamed veggies, and wonderfully sweet fruit was a sample of the many good eats to come.

We spent the next two days seeing, enjoying, and learning about some great birds and natural history while savoring the ambiance of this vast tract of intact and unique forest. Here at the highest point of the journey, we were treated to a suite of birds that we were unlikely to encounter again once we began our descent. Along the trails we found the gorgeous spotted nightingale-thrush, its more subdued cousin, ruddy-capped nightingale-thrush, the diminutive rufous-browed wren, furtive but noisy black-throated jays, stunning unicolored jays in perfect late-morning light, pairs of yellow-throated and chestnut-capped brush-finches, a singing hooded grosbeak, nest-building paltry tyrannulets, skulky gray-breasted wood-wrens, active spectacled foliage-gleaners, and a nice mix of hummingbirds, including green-throated mountain-gem, violet sabrewing, green violet-ear, and wine-throated hummingbird (one of the smallest in the world). Of course, one of the other top trip highlights were the resplendent quetzals. We had arrived during the nesting season, and though we saw quite a few beautiful females and heard many males calling in the mornings, adult males were not so easy to find. After much searching and hoping, we were finally rewarded with two males (of the northernmost and longest-tailed race) at a fruiting tree. Many have called this species the most beautiful bird in the world, and though that's an impossible call for me to make (because there are just so many show-stopping birds out there), I can now see why.

With a memorable sense of satisfaction, we left the high camp and started our three-day descent to the lowlands of the Pacific coast. The relatively easy five-mile walk to Canada Honda would take us out of the cloud forest, through a narrow band of pines and cypress, and finally into tropical evergreen forest at the cozy streamside camp. As we gradually emerged from the thick cloud forest, we were treated to the first of countless vistas of sharp ridges and deep valleys, all covered with lush forest. One of the birds we encountered not far down the trail was the "must see" blue-throated motmot. At first sight, and compared to other species of motmots, the blue-throated may seem a somewhat subdued bird. But with patience, some luck, and the right viewing geometry, the bird becomes spectacular when the throat lights up. In the pines we saw our only Grace's warblers of the trip as well as hepatic tanagers which were also limited to the pines. As we got closer to Canada Honda, we had great eye-level views of a bird I'd wanted to see for a long time, the green shrike-vireo. While this canopy specialist is usually seen from a tower, in our case we were lucky to be on a hillside trail that put us at eye level with the downslope treetops where the bird was perched in great light. At the camp, a few large fig trees were magnets for azure-rumped tanagers, a highly range restricted and beautiful bird that we'd find to be common here and at a few spots further down the trail. Also in the camp were white-eared ground sparrows and a bird that had serenaded us, as if in welcome, upon our approach to the camp, the rufous-and-white wren. Like many of its relatives in the genus *Thyrothorus*, the rufous-and-white, too, has a loud, rich, and sweet song, in this case one that we'd hear for a few days before dropping out of its preferred habitat. Around Canada Honda, we found territorial rufous sabrewings, a noisy pair of tawny-throated leaf-tossers, a ruddy foliage-gleaner (the only one of the trip), and close-up, eye-level views of pairs of blue-crowned chlorophonias and elegant euphonias. These latter two birds provide justification for why I just can't pick a "most beautiful bird in the world" - yes, they're small, but, man, what colors.

From Canada Honda, we continued on to El Limonal, another beautifully situated camp smack in the middle of a long-tailed manakin lek. Our encounters with these amazing little birds started with fleeting glimpses of both males and females, followed by great views of calling males right in the camp, and culminating with a videoed observation of a pair of males in full display for a female. Except for the long, hair-like central tail feathers, I was struck by the similarity of these birds in look, portions of the display vocalizations, and display behavior to those of the blue-backed manakin of Amazonia. In addition to blue-tailed hummingbirds, in and around the camp were three species of motmot. Tody motmots were almost common outside our tents, turquoise-broweds weren't far behind, and of course there were blue-crowneds. From here to our last camp at Paval, the birding, amazingly, got even richer. The trail seemed to be lined with fan-tailed warblers while the trees were almost dripping with migrating Tennessee warblers and yellow-green vireos. King vultures, great black-hawk, and a pair of white hawks soared overhead, collared and violaceous trogons sat still on their perches, and mixed flocks with black-faced grosbeaks, sulphur-bellied flycatchers, and Blackburnian warblers passed by. At the camp, it was "speed birding" as spot-breasted orioles, tropical pewee, rufous-breasted spinetail, and a nice mix of psittacines (orange-fronted parakeet, mealy parrot, and yellow-naped parrots) were among the many birds seen. Another of my "most wanted" life birds on the trip, and one that nests in the eastern U.S. where I've never been, was Eastern kingbird. Several huge flocks of these birds were seen at Paval on their northward migration. On our final walk, and just before being picked up by the truck, we found striped cuckoo and several other new trip birds, but the highlight was our last species, literally, while "on the trail", a pair of Prevost's ground sparrows. One of the rarer species endemic to southern Mexico and northern Central America, these odd and beautiful little birds became a perfect avian exclamation point at the end of the most amazing birding hike any of us had ever done.

After a lunch in Mapastepec, we headed to Tapachula where we'd end our trip at a hotel with, fortunately, some decent habitat that provided homes for many birds, some of which were among those that illustrate so well the unique evolutionary history and biogeography of the region. Almost as soon as we exited the van, we heard the raucous and unmistakable calls of giant wrens, which turned out to be rather tame around the hotel. Known only from a narrow strip of coastal Chiapas, these birds interestingly come right up against the borders of neighboring Oaxaca and Guatemala, but, as though they're aware of the geopolitical borders, don't cross over into either place. Also around the hotel were white-bellied chachalacas, one of the four species of chachalacas whose ranges fit together without overlapping, like pieces of a puzzle of lowland tropical Mexico. A day roosting Pacific screech owl right on the grounds was a bonus as were the many orange-chinned parakeets perched nicely in the palms. But for me, probably the highlight of Tapachula, particularly since I've never been to Hawk Mountain, Cape May, Veracruz, or other "river of raptor" sites, was the stream of tens of thousands of turkey vultures heading north directly over the hotel for several hours. Amidst the vultures were a handful of diminutive, especially at that altitude, Swainson's and broad-winged hawks. Thinking about the evolution of the birds and their migratory behaviors in concert with the location of the continents, the oceans, the weather and seasons, and the local topography made for a spectacle I'll never forget.

The El Triunfo experience was unlike anything I've done in the world of birds and natural history. The combination of superb hospitality and logistics in the "middle of nowhere", the vast tract of unaltered forest, the fascinating biogeography, and the abundance of show-stopping birds created an adventure that I hope to relive many times in the future.

-Mark Pretti

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