

THE QUARTERLY NEWS MAGAZINE OF TUCSON AUDUBON SOCIETY | TUCSONAUDUBON.ORG

Vermilion

FLY CATCHER

April–June 2014 | Volume 59, Number 2



Resilience

Where to Find Wood-Warblers • Bird Stop-over Habitat Patches • A Wilson's Warbler's Journey

Nest Boxes for Urban Birds • What's in a Name: Burrowing Owl



Tucson Audubon Society is dedicated to improving the quality of the environment by providing environmental leadership, information, and programs for education, conservation, and recreation. Tucson Audubon is a non-profit volunteer organization of people with a common interest in birding and natural history. Tucson Audubon maintains offices, a library, and nature shops in Tucson, the proceeds of which benefit all of its programs.

Tucson Audubon Society
300 E. University Blvd. #120, Tucson, AZ 85705
629-0510 (voice) or 623-3476 (fax)

All phone numbers are area code 520 unless otherwise stated.

tucsonaudubon.org

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300 E University Blvd #120 ext 7015
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Agua Caliente Park, 12325 E Roger Rd 760-7881
Hours: Thu–Sat 10 AM–1:30 PM. Please call to confirm hours.
The shop opens earlier and closes later during certain months.

Vermilion Flycatcher is published quarterly. For address changes or subscription problems call 629-0510, or write to Membership Coordinator at the address above. Submissions are due 1st of the month, one month before issue date. Send submissions as Microsoft Word or RTF documents, or plain text files, to Matt Griffiths at mgriffiths@tucsonaudubon.org.
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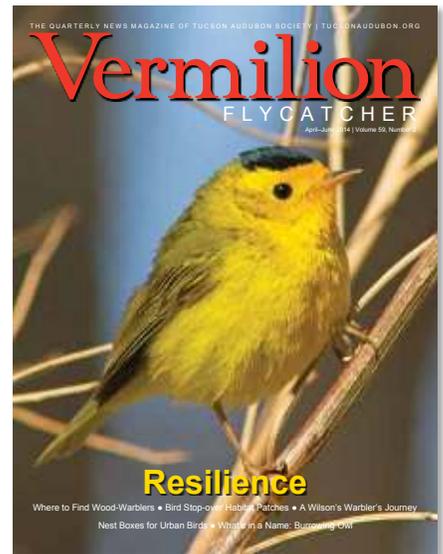
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FRONT COVER: Wilson's Warbler by Lois Manowitz.

Lois is retired and now an avid bird photographer. More of her work is at www.flickr.com/photos/loismanow.

To have your photograph considered for use in the *Vermilion Flycatcher*, please contact Matt Griffiths at mgriffiths@tucsonaudubon.org.

Be a Tool for Nature

Try your hand at conservation with the tools of the trade

Matt Clark, Restoration Specialist



MIGUEL ANGEL DE LA CUEVA

The “conservation toolbox” is a helpful metaphor for those of us who wish to better understand and contribute to conservation. Our toolbox has four interrelated compartments: science, education and outreach, policy and advocacy, and stewardship.

Science—Scientific inquiry is fundamental, from field observations to hypothesis testing to the development of theories and real world applications. Science enables us to understand the natural history of plants and animals as well as the complexities of ecosystems and sociological dimensions. It also allows us to identify trends, and to pinpoint how we can intervene to improve nature's bottom line.

Education and Outreach—The transfer of knowledge is key for the future of conservation. Educating ourselves and others about science, issues, and solutions to tackle daunting conservation challenges is vital. We must undertake community outreach to expand the conservation community and to create opportunities for citizens to meaningfully engage with their time, talents, and resources.

Policy and Advocacy—The laws and policies that govern the management of our lands, wildlife, and our collective use of resources are major

drivers in conservation. However, these laws and policies are not set in stone. They can be improved. Understanding how to engage in the public processes that shape laws is essential. Contacting and educating decision makers, attending meetings, and writing essays and letters to the editor are examples of ways to influence public opinion, lawmaking, and the outcomes of public processes.

Stewardship—Stewardship requires that we take care of lands, waters and wildlife populations of conservation concern by monitoring their status and trends, and by managing them within an adaptive framework so that we can stay on track to meet our conservation goals. Examples include designating protected areas, identifying priority conservation lands, establishing conservation easements, and undertaking ecological restoration projects.

You need not be a trained scientist or policy wonk to be a conservationist! In fact, I bet one of the skills you already have is a valuable tool you can wield to make a significant contribution to conservation. It is your willingness to give of yourself to the cause, and to learn how and when to use the tools of the trade, that makes one a successful conservationist.

COMMENTARY

PAUL GREEN | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Just One Tree



Throughout this issue of the *Vermilion Flycatcher*, we are using the Wilson's Warbler as an allegory for our world's once-robust natural systems, now under threat. In 1972, James Lovelock authored the Gaia Hypothesis, which proposes that living things influence certain aspects of the non-living world, e.g. temperature and atmosphere. We now know that the way we live our lives is indeed affecting the lives of all organisms because of changes we are bringing to our planet's systems.

As we enter spring, we are reminded of the interconnectedness of life as migrants pass through Arizona from southern winter homelands to more northerly breeding ones. Recent research suggests that migrating songbirds have southern evolutionary origins. In other words, they are southern species coming north to breed rather than northern species going south to winter.

It seems likely that shortly after humans crossed the Bering land bridge into North America around 18,000 years ago, and the glaciers began their northward retreat, songbirds began to evolve their regular annual migratory habits to exploit these new productive northern habitats.

Apart from the Pacific coast, today's breeding range of Wilson's Warbler was almost completely glacier-covered 18,000 years ago. The retreat of the glaciers gave the bird populations of southern sedentary species the opportunity to colonize areas of high seasonality, and super abundant food supplies, in the northern temperate zone.

Most songbirds achieve the journey between their winter home and their northern breeding grounds in a series of hops, punctuated with periods of rest and feeding; hence the oft-heard appeal to planners and others to ensure the survival of migratory stopover sites. We know that migration is the time of peak mortality for migrating warblers so maintaining stopover sites can have a huge influence on bird populations.

Many of our Important Bird Areas provide such habitats, and each of us can help protect existent sites and

provide new refueling stations. Research summarized by Charles van Riper on page 16 indicates that flowering velvet (and more regionally, honey) mesquites are the most important feeding plants for migrating warblers in our region. Even a single tree can provide enough food for a bird to refuel for the next stage of its journey.

van Riper notes that throughout the southwest, the decline of riparian habitat and loss of native cottonwood-willow gallery forests, and adjacent mesquite bosques, has often been accompanied by the addition of planted urban vegetation and the invasion of non-native tamarisk.

Among his most important messages are: let's protect and enhance small patches of diverse native habitat as migratory stopover sites, especially the habitat of our streamsides. This is a message we need to get across to landowners, planners, and political administrators.

I recently sat in a meeting at which a San Pedro ranch owner stated that mesquite require more water than alfalfa—the rancher was proud of their program of mesquite removal. More disturbing still, there is a bill before the Arizona Legislature (SB1478, see p 23) that provides funds for mesquite removal and prohibits use of funds for planting mesquite, a native species that provides preferred habitat for wildlife. The bill should be encouraging habitat restoration, and be limited to removal of non-native invasive plants such as buffelgrass and tamarisk. **Please write to your legislator and encourage them to amend this bill—see tucsonaudubon.org/act-now/ advocate for contact details.**

As you will read on page 20, developers in northwest Tucson finally agreed, after discussions with Tucson Audubon and the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection, to honor Pima County's Conservation Lands System guidelines with a combination of on- and off-site mitigation, resulting in an 80 percent set-aside for the four parcels they plan to develop. Though the County Administrator, a traffic engineer, had

L to R: Wilson's Warbler; mesquite trees at Simpson Farm, a restoration site managed by Tucson Audubon.

voiced the opinion that three of the four could be developed because they were of little value to wildlife because of their size, we know that just one flowering mesquite tree can provide sustenance to a warbler on its northward journey. The mitigation strategies agreed to by conservation advocates and the developer, and unanimously supported by the Board of Supervisors, offer development accompanied by protected open space buffers which will provide better prospects for birds regionally than the original underlying zoning.

Another message that comes through from Charles van Riper's work is that the natural vegetation that we create and nurture in our backyards and in our parks is of critical importance to migratory songbirds. Such habitat creation is a focus of Tucson Audubon's work.

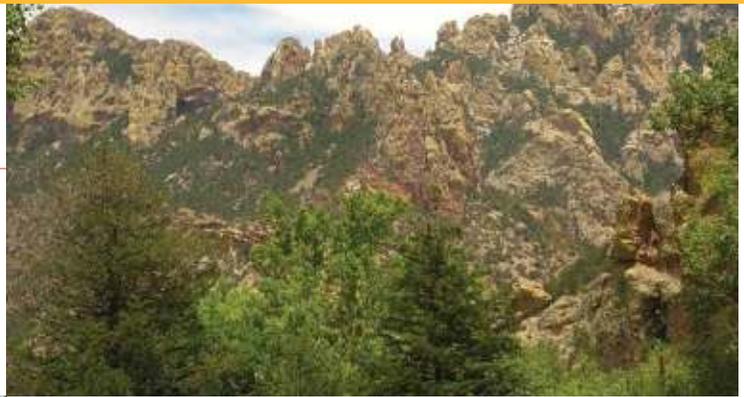
As Matt Clark says on page 2, we have a number of tools at our disposal. One is science and another is outreach. The gift of Paton's Birder Haven from the American Bird Conservancy, together with generous gifts from our members, give us an opportunity to reach out and share with people new to birding what we learn through science. We can help them understand that the brilliant jewels they see at the Paton's feeders are sustained by natural habitats beyond the garden. It is important that we preserve the link between birding and conservation.

Meanwhile, David Sibley, one of North America's most accomplished birding ambassadors, whose *Guide to the Birds of North America* has sold 700,000 copies since 2000, will be here to speak with you in person at our Mason Center on April 7th (see page 7). David donated an original painting of the signature species at the Patons' property, Violet-crowned Hummingbird, to raise funds for the purchase of the property. Bonnie Moon and her husband bought the painting and plan to give it a home at her parents' when we have completed the renovations there. Read more about this on page 8. ■

TUCSON AUDUBON EVENTS AND CLASSES

Spring into Birding with Tucson Audubon

Please visit our website for more details and to register:
tucsonaudubon.org/education



MATT GRIFFITHS

ELIZABETH LAWRENCE



One Day Workshops: Spring 2014

Playback 101: Smart Field Use of Audio Tools

Digital devices such as smartphones, with an expanding variety of birding apps, have given us easy access to libraries of bird sounds. But does everyone know how to use these tools effectively and responsibly? In this workshop we will spend time in the classroom and outdoors, exploring the use of recorded bird sounds in the field. We will address such questions as: What purposes can sound broadcast and playback serve for birders? When is it appropriate to use these tools? What are some techniques for using bird recordings? No prior experience with this topic required. Limited to 12 participants. Instructor: Scott Olmstead, *Tropical Birding* guide.

Date and Time: Saturday, April 12, 2014; 8:00 AM–11:00 AM

Location: Tucson Audubon's Mason Center; 3835 N. Hardy Rd. (SW corner of Thornydale and Hardy)
Cost: \$25

eBird is for eVeryone!

You've probably been hearing a lot about eBird, the online birding tool that is changing the face of modern birding. Did you know you can keep track of your personal bird records online and share them with the birding community, all the while contributing to science and conservation efforts? Jennie will introduce you to eBird, give you tips on how to make your entries as useful as possible, show you what it can do for you as a birder, and teach you how to get started. The workshop will also provide tips for more seasoned eBird users such as how to farm the data to obtain specific information about a state, county, or a rare bird report. So please join us for a look at this remarkable tool, and get empowered to make your observations count! All levels of eBird users welcome. Limited to 50 participants.

Instructor: Jennie MacFarland,
Tucson Audubon Important Bird Areas
Program Coordinator

Date: Saturday, April 19, 2014

Time and Location:

Optional Pre-workshop Bird Walk:
7:30–8:30 AM, Reid Park

Above: Chiricahua Mountains in
Southeastern Arizona

Workshop: 9:00 AM–12:00 PM,
Pima Community College Downtown
Campus, Amethyst Room, 1255 N.
Stone Ave., Tucson
Cost: \$35

Specialty Workshops: 2014

Intended as stand-alone classes, these workshops are a great opportunity to focus on a specific group of birds and brush up on your identification skills. Instruction will focus on distinguishing amongst similar species, identification techniques, and vocalizations. Cost is \$110 for members, \$145 for non-members.

Spring / Fall Programming

See our website for more detailed descriptions of the workshop. Taught by Homer Hansen.

Birding by Ear: April 17 & 19, 2014

Warblers: August 21 & 23, 2014

Flycatchers: September 4 & 6, 2014



MURIEL NEDDERMEYER

Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, a Sky Islands
specialty bird

Bird Communities of the Sky Islands Field Workshop

**Tucson Bird & Wildlife
Festival Pre-Trip**
August 10–12, 2014

Led by expert birders and naturalists, Rick Taylor and John Yerger, this three-day birding workshop will take you on a field-oriented exploration of the ecological factors shaping the distribution and population dynamics of avian communities in Southeastern Arizona. Most of your time will be spent in the Chiricahua Mountains, the largest and most biologically diverse of the so-called "Sky Islands." Join us for a chance to see all of Southeast Arizona's most sought-after specialty birds and explore the major life zones of the region. This is an all-inclusive workshop and, in part, a fundraiser for Tucson Audubon. The fee includes expert instruction, transportation to and from Tucson (234 miles roundtrip), all meals, and double occupancy dorm room accommodations for two nights. Deadline for registration is July 1, 2014. Workshop limited to 14 participants.

Date and Time: August 10–12, 2014

Location: Southwestern Research Station, Portal, AZ

Cost: \$495/person.

**Register online today! Visit
tucsonaudubon.org/education
Contact for all education
activities: B ete Jones at
bjones@tucsonaudubon.org,
520-629-0510 x7012**

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON OUR SUITE OF EDUCATION CLASSES AND TO REGISTER ONLINE, PLEASE VISIT
TUCSONAUDUBON.ORG/EDUCATION

April is spring migration, April is **Birdathon**

What will your Big Day be?

For 24 hours, go out and see as many birds as you can. Or, make it a non-competitive Big Day focused on raising funds and awareness for birds and bird habitats.

Birdathon can be whatever you make it. So make it personal. If watching the birds in your backyard has led to your love of birds, make it your Birdathon! If you're drawn to programs like the Important Bird Areas program, nest boxes for urban birds, or habitat restoration, make it your Birdathon! Use Birdathon as a vehicle to share your love for southeast Arizona and raise support for the birds and habitats that make this such a special place.

Expert-led outings

Professional guides, birding hotspots, migrating specialties, an unforgettable big day. Suggested fundraising effort \$200 per trip.

Sunday, April 6. Birds of Fray

Join Richard Fray on his birthday! We'll hit Patagonia, Rio Rico, Madera Canyon, and Sweetwater Wetlands on a laid-back attempt to spot 100 species.

Saturday, April 26. Scott's Orioles

Tour the Sky Islands with Scott Olmstead to look for new birds in each life zone of the Catalinas. The group will start at Agua Caliente and head up Mount Lemmon, aiming for 75-100 species.

Sunday, April 27. The Wrenegades

The Wrenegades will hit all the hotspots in this dawn-to-dusk Big Day. The reigning Most Species Seen champions will seek to beat their record from last year of 152 species.

Prizes make it more fun!

Win a pair of binoculars, a hot air balloon ride, a resort hotel stay, or some birding gear. Prizes for most species seen, most donors, most funds raised, and more.

Birdathon 2014 Limited-Edition T-Shirt: Raise at least \$50 and it's yours!

Birdathoners are birders, citizen scientists, social fundraisers, *you!* This April, go birding for the birds!

Thanks to our sponsor



GREATER ROADRUNNER, DAVID TOMB



BETE JONES



WESTERN TANAGER, JOHN HOFFMAN



COMMON YELLOWTHROAT, LOIS MANOWITZ



RED-FACED WARBLER, JOAN GELLATLY



LUCY'S WARBLER, LOIS MANOWITZ



YELLOW WARBLER, LOIS MANOWITZ



PYRRHULOXIA, DORIS EVANS

April 1–30. Birdathon (see left)

April 5. Living with Nature lecture (Green Valley) *Celebrating the Ornaments of Life* with Theodore H. Fleming (see p 6)

April 5–26. Birding by Habitat course

April 6. Birds of Fray Birdathon expert-led outing (see left)

April 7. Book signing by David Sibley at Mason Center (see p 7)

April 9. AZ Gives Day

April 12. Playback 101: Smart Field Use of Audio Tools workshop (see p 4)

April 14. Living with Nature lecture (Tucson) *Martha's Flight into the Future: The Story—and Surprising Lessons—of the Last Passenger Pigeon* with Christopher Cokinos (see p 6)

April 17 & 19. Birding by Ear workshop (see p 4)

April 19: eBird is for eEveryone! workshop (see p 4)

April 26. Scott's Orioles Birdathon expert-led outing (see left)

April 27. The Wrenegades Birdathon expert-led outing (see left)

May 3. San Pedro River Festival (see p 22)

May 10. Birdathon Birdy BBQ after party at Mason Center (see left)

May 12. Living with Nature lecture (Tucson) *Tracking Seasonal Patterns in the Sonoran Desert* with LoriAnne Barnett (see p 6)

August 10–12. Bird Communities of the Sky Islands field workshop (see p 4)

August 13–17. Fourth Annual Tucson Bird & Wildlife Festival

August 21 & 23. Warblers workshop (see p 4)

September 4 & 6. Flycatchers workshop (see p 4)

tucsonaudubon.org/birdathon

Tucson Audubon's Living with Nature Lecture Series

TUCSON Living with Nature Lecture Series and Member Meetings

VENUE: Pima Community College Downtown Campus, Amethyst Room. Located on campus at 1255 N. Stone Ave. The program begins at **7 PM, SECOND MONDAY** of each month **October through May.**

April 14 • Tucson

Martha's Flight into the Future: The Story—and Surprising Lessons—of the Last Passenger Pigeon with *Christopher Cokinos, Associate Professor of English; Affiliated Faculty, Institute of the Environment University of Arizona*

How can a species go from being the most abundant land bird on the planet to having just one individual left alive at the Cincinnati Zoo in the course of just over a century? 2014 is the centennial of the death of Martha, the world's last passenger pigeon. In this talk, naturalist and author Christopher Cokinos will tell the story of the species, its last confirmed wild individual (a bird named Buttons) and, of course, the story of Martha. In looking at the transformation of attitudes toward



IWM SPECIMEN OF PASSENGER PIGEON, MATT GRIFFITHS

this and other endangered wildlife, Cokinos will vivify the development of the 20th century conservation ethic and discuss the need for environmental memory, even as he concedes memory alone is not enough to guide our actions in a time of fast-moving environmental change. Though passenger pigeons fly only in our minds, their passage can help us frame our choices for the future. The International Wildlife Museum will have their specimen of a passenger pigeon on hand for viewing.

May 12 • Tucson

Tracking Seasonal Patterns in the Sonoran Desert with *LoriAnne Barnett, Education Coordinator, USA National Phenology Network* Southeast Arizona experiences unique changes throughout the seasons. What are your favorite seasonal hallmarks: hummingbirds at your backyard feeder in winter, Mexican free-tailed bats emerging from bridges on summer evenings, Monsoon wildflowers? Have you noticed how these events change with local weather and annual climate? Join us for a conversation about observing birds, insects, plants, and other animals in the Sonoran Desert and Sky Islands throughout our changing seasons. Learn how to keep track of your observations in the ecosystem to better understand how a changing climate may be affecting some of your favorite species.

GREEN VALLEY Living with Nature Lecture Series NEW VENUE!! All lectures will be held at the Green Valley Recreation's Desert Hills Social Center, 2980 S. Camino Del Sol. Lectures are scheduled on the **FIRST SATURDAY**

of the month, at **10 AM** from **November to April.**

April 5 • Green Valley

Celebrating the Ornaments of Life with *Theodore H. Fleming, Professor Emeritus of Biology, University of Miami*

The average kilometer of tropical rainforest is teeming with life; it contains thousands of species of plants and animals. As Ted Fleming's new book, "The Ornaments of Life" reveals, many of the most colorful and eye-catching rainforest inhabitants—toucans, monkeys, leaf-nosed bats, and hummingbirds, to name a few—are an important component of the infrastructure that supports life in the forest. Join Ted as he illustrates the striking beauty of these "ornaments" of the rainforest through breathtaking slides. He will highlight the importance of these animals in the tropical ecosystem, shed light on how the relationship between these plants and animals evolved, and discuss the current conservation status of these essential species. ■

Spring Will be a-Bustling with Birds Arizona Important Bird Areas News

Jennie MacFarland, IBA Program Biologist

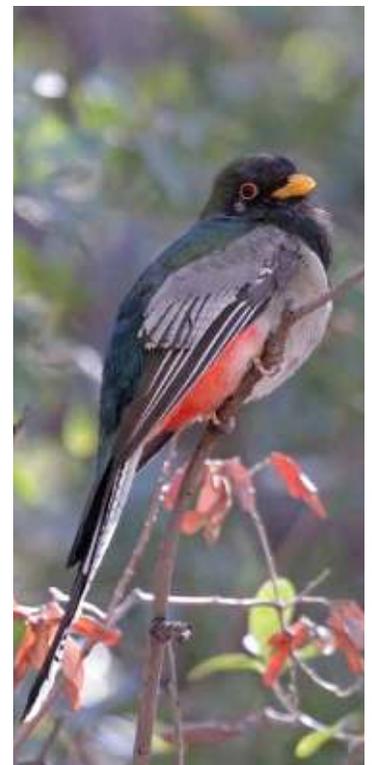
Spring is a busy time for our birds and therefore a very busy time for those who count them. This season in particular, the Arizona Important Bird Areas volunteer survey crew will be journeying to some wonderful places and looking for great birds. This survey season will be more geographically diverse than usual, with many different opportunities, some of which are open to all birders even if they haven't undergone the IBA survey training. These are a great opportunity to see what volunteering for this program is like and decide if you want to become more involved. The surveys where all birders are

welcome are indicated on the online survey schedule.

West of Wikieup is a parcel of BLM land that we are currently proposing as the new Joshua Tree IBA, and this spring we will be repeating last year's very successful survey for Bendire's Thrashers. This is a breathtaking area with a fascinating overlap of Mohave and Sonoran Desert and a great mix of birds. There will also be several species-specific surveys such as a search for Elf Owls in the habitats around Tucson and Elegant Trogons in the Sky Islands of southeast Arizona. Our intensive surveying of the Lower San Pedro will continue

this year with migration surveys, nocturnal surveys and Yellow-billed Cuckoo call-back surveys. We will also again be partnering with the Tohono O'odham Nation this spring and conduct breeding bird surveys in their excellent desert habitat. This is an extremely unusual opportunity to explore and bird this land, which is normally inaccessible. All of these great surveys will be happening this spring and early summer.

For survey dates, to sign up for announcements, or to join our e-newsletter please visit www.aziba.org.



ELEGANT TROGON, MURIEL NEDDERMEYER

TUCSON AUDUBON NEWS ROUNDUP

Tucson is For the Birds

Tucson Bird Count has its 14th Annual Spring Count

The Tucson Bird Count (TBC) originated in 2001 as a University of Arizona graduate student project to determine where in Tucson individual bird species could be found. For going on 14 years, birders in Tucson have volunteered their time and skill to document what birds occur on each of over 800 point counts throughout the Tucson Valley and Saguaro National Park east and west. The annual spring count will occur again April 15–May 15 on whichever morning each volunteer chooses. We need more birders to help with this count, so if you would like to sign up for a route please visit www.tucsonbirds.org.

The larger idea behind the Tucson Bird Count is to determine how Tucson residents can better share their space with native birds. Known

as Reconciliation Ecology, the concept of making your yard, neighborhood, and city more attractive to birds is something that many bird lovers have been doing for a long time. For over a decade, the TBC has added science to the discussion by documenting where in urban Tucson individual bird species find suitable habitat. This will allow concrete suggestions for urban habitat enhancements that will make Tucson a better place for native birds. As urban space envelops more and more natural habitat, we need to better share this space with native birds and other wildlife. For information on how to invite birds into your yard, please visit www.tucsonbirds.org. Human habitat can double as native bird habitat.



KENDALL KROESEN

Books and Binocs Binocular Raffle Winner

Elgin Thwing, an 18-year-old student and new birder, won a pair of Eagle Optics binoculars in the recent Tucson Audubon raffle at the Tucson Festival of Books. Participants visited both Tucson Audubon tents for a chance to win this great prize. Congratulations, Elgin and happy birding!



SARA PIKE

Come Meet David Sibley in Tucson on April 7

On March 11, David Sibley released the Second Edition of *The Sibley Guide to Birds*, first published in 2000, which has since sold 700,000 copies. The updated version includes larger pictures and more than 600 new images, with 111 rare species added and revisions to about half of the book's 7,000 bird paintings. See Rick Wright's review of the new guide on page 27.

Tucson Audubon members are invited to come and meet David Sibley between 1 PM and 3 PM at Tucson Audubon's Mason Center at 3835 W Hardy Road, Tucson AZ 85742. We ask that if you plan to come to send an RSVP email to Paul Green at pgreen@tucsonaudubon.org,



RICHARD PASLEY

indicating whether you would like to purchase a copy of the book for signing by David.

Tucson Audubon's eNews Delivered to Your Inbox

Did you know that Tucson Audubon offers a range of specialized email updates on various topics, such as Volunteer News, Green City News, Conservation Alerts, IBA News and Nest Boxes for Urban Birds, as well as a regular Weekly Update?

To subscribe to any of these, go to tucsonaudubon.org and click on the "Sign-up for Newsletters" button on the home page. Or you can call Kara at 520-209-1802 and she will take your details.

Tucson Audubon Board Elections 2014

Tucson Audubon will hold its Annual Members' Meeting on Monday April 14th at 7.00 PM in the Amethyst Room at the Pima Community College, Downtown Campus, 1255 North Stone Ave., Tucson, AZ 85709 (NW corner of Stone and Speedway).

The Slate of Candidates for Election to the Tucson Audubon Board is as follows.

For re-election to a 2nd three-year term—class of 2017

Gavin Bieber
Richard Carlson
Jennie Duberstein
Debra Finch
Bob Hernbrode
John Kennedy
Ruth Russell
Claire Zucker

For election to their first three-year term—class of 2017

Edward Curley
Jesus Garcia
Kathy Jacobs

For more information about our board members please visit: tucsonaudubon.org/who-we-are/board.html



YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO, ANDY REAGO & CHRISSEY MCCLARREN / CCL

A Grand Opportunity

Paul Green, Executive Director

Southeast Arizona has a great tradition of homeowners opening up their yards to birders. The George Walker House B&B in Paradise, Beatty's Miller Canyon Guest Ranch Apiary & Orchard Co., Mary Jo's Ash Canyon B&B, the Chuparosa Inn, and Madera Kubo in Madera Canyon are just a few. And birders give generously to the "sugar fund jar" to pass on their good fortune. Of course, there is a danger that when the homeowner moves on: the birding site may disappear, as happened with the Spoffords' house in the Chiricahuas.

Paton's Birder Haven in Patagonia was built slowly after Wally and Marion Paton moved to Patagonia in 1973 when Wally moved here to operate a lost-wax process foundry in Mexico. It wasn't long after moving to 477 Pennsylvania Avenue that their backyard started to attract birders. "Wally noticed these people and asked, 'What are you doing standing out there on the road?'" He invited them over, and that's how it all got started," Marion Paton told the *Weekly Bulletin/Nogales International* in 2006.

Wally and Marion put up a tent and set out benches, bird books, and a chalkboard for people to record their sightings. The next

30 years were dedicated to feeding and attracting birds to their backyard and warmly welcoming birders. After Wally passed away in 2001 and Marion in 2009, the birding community had an incredible legacy to save: its most reliable site for Violet-crowned Hummingbird.

In 2009, Tucson Audubon hatched a plan to raise funds nationally to purchase the property. We had discussions with an independent third party who, had they purchased the property, would have required Tucson

Audubon to borrow money to buy it from him, which we were unable to do. Tucson Audubon board member Richard Fray offered to take on the process himself, but his best efforts did not succeed. Maricopa Audubon also made efforts to purchase the property.

The successful effort began with 104 year-old Ann Cullen Smith. All birders should read about how she started the ball rolling (www.ventbird.com/news/2013/08/27/ventflash-163). Victor Emanuel followed through and the result was an offer from George Fenwick, President of the American Bird Conservancy (ABC) in the spring of 2013: would Tucson Audubon accept a gift of the Paton property if ABC bought it?

Our answer was a conditional yes, assuming we could be assured of funds for extensive work needed on the house, to improve the site for birds, to enhance the birding experience for visitors, and for the additional staff time we would need to manage these processes. However, Tucson Audubon did immediately join with ABC and Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT) to fundraise for the purchase of the property since we wanted to ensure that the property was kept available for the community.

While the Paton property was clearly a great outreach opportunity for Tucson Audubon, the question of whether we would be able to accept it was difficult. The costs, liabilities, and income opportunities were uncertain. One thing was certain: we needed a guarantee of funds to assess and implement repairs and maintenance, and to employ additional staff to manage the site without depleting income for existing program work.

On two occasions, three generous Tucson Audubon supporters enabled us to continue forward and huge credit goes to them. Without their help at critical times during the fundraising process we would not be where we are today.

In September 2013 I met with Birds & Business Alliance members Dorothy Fitch and John Munier, who own Arizona Birder Casitas (azbirdercasitas.com). They pledged a year-end gift that gave us some security in moving ahead. Without that gift Tucson Audubon would have been forced to step away, at that point, from an agreement with ABC to accept the property.

Come early December, however, a detailed analysis of the financial risks associated with the property left the Tucson Audubon Board of Directors unconvinced that we had sufficient funds to accept the gift of the property even with the generous pledge

from John and Dorothy. The repairs needed to the house alone were substantial, the development and future maintenance of the property had significant costs, and there were a great number of other unknowns. The risks to Tucson Audubon were too great.

Then, one Thursday morning in late December, there was a call from Tucson Audubon's Secretary Ruth Russell, telling me that a long-term supporter of her Birdathon, Marcia Grand, would like to make sure that the arrangement with ABC went ahead, whatever it would take, in memory of her recently passed husband, Tucson attorney Richard

Tucson Audubon Donor Spotlight: Dorothy Fitch and John Munier

In 2009, we moved to the Tucson area from New Hampshire, where we were active in the NH Audubon Society and banded birds in both New Hampshire and Maine. Before moving to Arizona, we visited here to bird every other year for about 10 years and fell in love with the area.

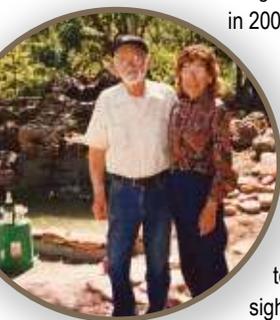
After attending a Tucson Audubon Society (TAS) field trip early on, the leader kindly offered to take us birding again. What a significant day that turned out to be. Among other places, she introduced us to Paton's, where we were mesmerized by all the hummingbirds and other interesting species the habitat attracted. We could sit there for hours, talking with other birders, sharing information, and learning new things, while waiting for the next fascinating species to appear. Every time we returned to Tucson, we made a point of visiting Paton's. Now, whenever we have visitors, we take them there. There is always something special to see there, whether it is birds, butterflies, or lizards.

When we learned last fall that the future of Paton's was at stake, we were dismayed. What would happen

if Paton's were to somehow vanish? How could the area lose such an important birding site? What was going to happen? Was there anything we could do to help?

Then the American Birding Conservancy began to raise funds to purchase the property and turn it over to Tucson Audubon. We had never heard of the ABC, but knew that TAS was the right organization to own and manage the property. We made a donation to the ABC, and their fundraising appeared to be going well. But we learnt that an additional sum of money targeted for repairs and maintenance was needed for the sale to go through. We asked, "Can we help with that?" John's Minimum Required Distribution from an IRA provided the means. We avoided having to pay taxes by having it sent directly to Tucson Audubon.

We are thrilled that Tucson Audubon will be the permanent caretaker of this significant site. Whether it stays a quiet, unassuming spot to watch wildlife or becomes a more formal TAS center remains to be seen. We can't wait to see what happens.



ty



Birder seating area (above) and Violet-crowned Hummingbird perched (top) and on a feeder at the Paton's (left).

KENDALL KROESEN

Grand. After the Christmas and New Year break, we met with Marcia Grand, and we then knew we were home and dry: Tucson Audubon could confidently take on the ownership of the Paton property.

Consequent upon Marcia's gift, Tucson Audubon signed an agreement with ABC to accept the gift of the property. On February 19, 2014, ABC purchased the property with funds raised by ABC, Victor Emanuel, and Tucson Audubon from more than 1000 members of the birding community. Then, on February 26, ownership passed to Tucson Audubon. We thank ABC and VENT for their initiative in raising the funds for the purchase, and for picking Tucson Audubon as the first choice to receive the gift of the property.

Work at Tucson Audubon's Paton Center for Hummingbirds will progress on a number of fronts. First, we will make improvements in the backyard to enhance the birding experience. We will improve the seating, the shade canopy, signage, and the sightings whiteboard, and we'll put in some pavers for when it rains. Also on the list of urgent projects are some repairs to the interior of the house.

At the same time we will be developing a master plan for longer-term improvements and maintenance

to the grounds, including the landscape, water source, accessibility, parking, and several measures to make the property more ecologically sustainable. The casita and outdoor sheds will be evaluated and decisions will be made about their future.

While we work to develop the site into a regional center for environmental education and a demonstration of sustainability, the top priority will always be maintaining open access for birders to enjoy Violet-crowned Hummingbirds and all the other species that can be seen there (212 species reported on eBird; 351 for the greater Patagonia area). We need your input on things we need to change, and things that should stay the same. Please send your comments to patons@tucsonaudubon.org. We also welcome the energy and enthusiasm of volunteers.

As we go to press, ABC has indicated that additional funds for site repair, development, and maintenance will be passed to Tucson Audubon. Major donors will receive recognition in various ways on-site in Patagonia. We will carry acknowledgements and regular updates in future issues of the *Vermilion Flycatcher*.

Tucson Audubon continues to raise funds for future development and maintenance of the site. Please contact Paul Green at 520-209-1801 or pgreen@tucsonaudubon.org to discuss your gift. Thank you.

Tucson Audubon Donor Spotlight: Marcia Grand

Marcia and Richard Grand have lived in the same house in Tucson since 1964. It is festooned with bird feeders of all kinds. A seat in the brightly decorated kitchen affords magnificent close views of Lesser Goldfinches,

Costa's Hummingbird, and even a Harris's Hawk. This seat was always Richard's first choice when it was time to relax.

Richard, nationally recognized for his success as a plaintiff's

trial lawyer, passed away in April 2013 in San Francisco. The joy that Paton's Birder Haven brings to thousands of birders each year under Tucson Audubon's management will be his heritage.

Richard grew up in New York City, and after graduating New York University in 1951 he came to Tucson seeking warm winters and a law degree. In order to earn enough money to support himself and pay for his tuition he needed to find work that would offer him enough flexibility to go to law school and also have employment. He found the perfect place at KTKT as a disc jockey in the evening and a radio time salesman with his own flexible hours during the day. He felt it was important to work and to always do good work. He carried that work ethic into the courtroom where he could protect his clients and bring justice to them.

"I was brought up during the Depression," Richard has said. "We were taught to work and were expected to work... I don't play golf and I don't play tennis." But he did watch birds.

He also did not like to waste time. He always felt time was the most valuable, precious, commodity we have. He met Marcia in July of 1951, and they eloped to Nogales, Arizona in January of 1952 just 6 months after they met. He has referred to their enduring relationship as his "prize accomplishment."

Richard graduated from law school in 1958. After working for

a brief stint in the Pima County Attorney's Office he set off on his own and proceeded to transform himself into a master practitioner of the trial lawyer's art. Over a law career spanning five decades, he won verdicts in excess of \$1 million in more than 100 cases and at one time held the record for the largest single jury verdict in the U.S.

The potential for effecting positive social change was for Richard a powerful motivating force, as well as a source of tremendous personal satisfaction. Being a trial lawyer, Richard once quipped, "kind of a Robin Hood thing. All I do really is redistribute money."

Outside of the courtroom, Marcia and Richard have given generously to numerous philanthropic organizations. Their love of vivid colors is evident, in the bright yellow kitchen in their Tucson home and his tendency to jot notes with purple felt-tipped pens or sport a bright red watchband, and his love of hummingbirds.

Richard derived great satisfaction going to plays, movies and watching birds. Simple pursuits—eating hot dogs on the Fourth of July, a show at Centennial Hall, strolling along a beach, a borscht-belt joke or going on a road trip to Sonoita, Arizona—always brought him pleasure.

Richard has said that he will not cheat death of vengeful oblivion, but perhaps we can delay its triumph over memory. When Marcia read about our need for funds to secure Paton's, she saw a real opportunity to commemorate Richard's life and his love of birds. The future of this hummingbird haven as a Tucson Audubon center, visited by 30,000 people each year, was secured by Marcia's pledge in December 2013.

There was a phrase from the poem "John Brown's Body" by Stephen Vincent Binet that Richard kept close to his heart: "Endless Acres of Afternoons" captured the essence of his longing for peace and tranquility. Marcia is hoping he will find his "Endless Acres of Afternoons" in the hummingbird garden of the Paton's Birder Haven.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Harold & Paula Ables, Dick & Brenda Adams, Peggy & James Alexander, Kathrena Ashley, Dorothy Bailey, Lesley Bailey, Geraldine Ballard, Roberta & James Barg, Katharine Barrington, Barbara Bartell, Mary Ellen Beaurain, Carol Becker, Brooke Bedrick, Adriana Begaye, Sylvia Bencomo & Tony Zabicki, Jeffrey Bergfield, Elizabeth Biss, Rob Boone, Sharon & Mark Boranyak, Fred Brenner, Sheila K. Brewer, Janet Brown, Karen S. Brown, Paula Brown, Richard D. Brown, Mary Brumfield, David & Patty Burks, Barbara Byrd, Jean Calhoun, Armando Z. Carrillo, Katherine Carson, Heather Cassidy, Stephen Castor, Chris & Mike Clothier, Damiana Cohen, Michael

Cohen, Polly Connelly, Jane Corley, Deborah & David Cowan, David Curry & Donna Friedman, Linda Crouse, Elizabeth Dane, Abby Darrah, Lois Davis, Barbara Dickison, Marcia Dietrich, Laura Dorrell, Cynthia Dunbar, Florence & Michael Dungan, John & Cynthia Edwards, Lee & Spencer Elliott, Pamela J. Emerson, Roz Faber & Richard Brown, Lisa Fail, Joanne Finch, H. Barney & Lynne Firestone, Anne Franklin Lauren Fix, Jenny Forbes & Dick Lazeres, Patricia Francis, Joan Galloway, Kathleen Gans, Nancy & Thomas Gates, Kathleen Geran, Barbara Gilkerson, Kim Girard, Brett Goble, Ellen Golden, Grace & Julius Gordon, Aaron Graham, Randall Gray, Don Grotegut, James L. Grizzell, James E. Harris, Luz Harvey, Barbara Hawke, Gregory W. Hawkins, Phil Hedrick, Sharon Held, Gary Hill, Will High, Ronald & Kathleen Innes, Stephen Janick, Patricia & David Jeter, Janet & Larry Jones, Mary Jo Jones, Nancy Melissa Key, Joanne Kimura, Jerry Kovacs, Marcia Klotz, Patricia Knutson, Susan Kovitz, Kelly Krechmer, Mary Sue & Richard Larsen, Deborah Lucas, Carella Manndeville, Dave Manning, Janet

Marcus, Susan Masters, Ruth Mathews, Stephanie McFadden, Florence & Joseph McGinn, Andre McNulty, Fredrica Mills, Cindy Mitchell, Judith More, Denise Moreno, Dr. J. Michael Morgen, Jan Moss, Shirley F. Murphy, Joyce & Mike Nave, Pat & Jim Neel, Susan Neuman, Brenda Newman, Dennis Newman, Gloria Oswald, Neal Phelps, Aaron Pie, Greg Powell, Dave Privol, Kay Ransdell, Barbara Retzlaff, Paul Richards, Peggy Roberson, Teresa & Guy Scharf, Anne Schneider & Ron Frank, Jeff Schoonmaker, Alan Schroder, Martha Schultz, Diane Seaton, Pam Shanahan, Janet Slack, Allison Singer, Skip & Linda Small, Pauline F Smith, Susan Snedaker, Carol Soderberg & Tim Johnson, Khrista & Jeremy Sohn, Dr. Robert Steller, Estelle Stern, Katherine Stewart, Diane Stinson, Don Swann, Carol & James Swiggett, Cathy Thwing, Jan & Charlie Turner, Monty & Karen Turner, Toni Urbaitis, David & Carol Vleck, Henry Voderberg, Karen Wadman, Lois Warner, Don Weede, Maurice Weinrobe & Trudy Ernst, Kathy West, Ruth Wojcik & Barbara Lancaster, Craig M. Woods, Gene Zonge



BURROWING OWL, DORIS EVANS



BROAD-BILLED HUMMINGBIRD, ALAN D. WILSON/NATURESPICSONLINE.COM

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

Gifts in Honor/Memory:

- In Honor of Andrew & Bev Robertson from Yijing Robertson*
- In Memory of Charles Engelbracht from Raytheon Missile Systems and Michael Werner*
- In Memory of Ed Caldwell from Charles Coston*
- In Memory of Jinny Balantine from Elizabeth Woodin*
- In Honor of Jo Falls from Ben Johnson*
- In Honor of Nancy Lyons from Clifford Lyons*
- In Honor of Sandy & Karl Elers from Loren H. Smith*
- In Honor of Alice & Bill Roe from Suzie & Todd Horst*

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- Albertsons
- Pfizer Foundation
- Richard Grand Foundation

Workplace Giving:

- Environmental Fund for Arizona
- LexisNexis Cares Matching Gift Program
- Pima County Employee Combined Appeal Program
- IBM Employee Charitable Contribution Campaign

Thank You to Our Frequent Flyers

- Ardeth Barnhart, Myrna Beards, Brooke Bedrick, Melanie Builder, Andrea Cohen, Janet Cohn, Mich Coker, Christine Curtis, Sandy Elers, Margaret Ford, Mike Judd, John & Sarah Kennedy, Susan Kozacek, Erin Olmstead, Nancy Young Wright, Claire Zucker

Monthly giving through automatic credit card or bank withdrawals is convenient, secure, and simply one of the best ways you can support Tucson Audubon's programs. For more information, visit tucsonaudubon.org.

Vermilion Society

Create a legacy that will benefit others for generations by including Tucson Audubon Society in your estate planning. Your gift will express, in a lasting way, your commitment to preserving the diversity of southern Arizona's rich avifauna and the habitats they call home. If you have already included Tucson Audubon in your estate plans we hope that you will share this information with us. We would like to express our gratitude and welcome you to the **Vermilion Society**. As always, your wishes for anonymity will be respected. If you would like to know more about how to designate Tucson Audubon as a recipient in your will, please contact Executive Director Paul Green at pgreen@tucsonaudubon.org.

VERMILION FLYCATCHER, S. ISOE; GREATER ROADRUNNER, DORIS EVANS



Attention Online Shoppers

Announcing another easy way to chip in for birds! **AmazonSmile** is a simple and automatic way for you to support Tucson Audubon, at no cost to you. When you shop at smile.amazon.com, Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to TAS! To get started, go to smile.amazon.com and select Tucson Audubon Society as your preferred charitable organization. Visit tucsonaudubon.org for more details.



Support Tucson Audubon, Your Advocate for Arizona's Special Birds and Places

Arizona Gives Day is a day for Arizonans to come together to show support for the state's nonprofits during a 24-hour period, from 12:00 AM to 11:59 PM, on April 9, 2014. Simply visit azgives.razoo.com, search for Tucson Audubon, and make your tax-deductible donation.

Volunteers Spring into Action

Kara Kaczmarzyk, Volunteer & Development Coordinator

Welcome new volunteers

Mabel Alsina, Liz Biss, Brett Blum, Gayle Brown, Jacobo Carasco, Charles Hedgcock, Betty Jones, Logan Kline, Joe LaTourrette, Bryon Lichtenhan, Linda Matson, Howard Milwich, Larry Morgan, Doug Noble, Ben Olimpio, Linda Paul, Maria Schuchardt, Bill Sievers, Kaitlin Snarski, Nancy Sopwith, Jim Wachowski, Jan Warnke, Jessica Windes

Your Volunteer Season April–June, 2014

Will you be in southeast Arizona this summer? Tucson Audubon volunteer opportunities are heating up with the weather and we hope you will take this opportunity to join the volunteer team!

Gardening, construction, bird ID, community connections, membership—these and many more skills and interests come into play for new volunteer opportunities at the **Paton Property**. See pages 8–9 for more details on this new endeavor.

If you are a field trip leader, or might like to lead a **field trip**, consider choosing a higher-elevation destination. It's still good weather at many locations and this is a seasonally low time of the year for trip offerings.

As seasonal volunteers at the downtown **Nature Shop** leave for the summer, they leave openings for weekly three-hour shop volunteer shifts.

The next Tucson Audubon **Gala** is still many months away, but now is the perfect time to start soliciting silent auction donations and doing other planning tasks.

Over the summer is when all the details come into place for the fourth annual **Tucson Bird & Wildlife Festival**, and volunteers play an integral part in tying it all together.

Although the weather gets too hot to do too many outdoor **community outreach** events, we cannot pass up a chance to be part of EARTHfest Patagonia or International Migratory Bird Day.

As the school year concludes, there are a few more opportunities to volunteer for the **River Pathways** high school field survey education program, at Sweetwater Wetlands and Las Cienegas.

This spring, volunteer nest box hosts will be monitoring how American Kestrels, Western Screech-Owls, Ash-throated and Brown-crested Flycatchers, and Bewick's Wrens and Lucy's Warblers take to newly-installed **nest boxes**. See page 12 for more details on this citizen-science effort.

Have you had an extraordinary experience with a volunteer?

From hitting the trails to ringing up sales, Tucson Audubon volunteers connect with so many of us throughout the year. Shine a spotlight on a deserving volunteer today: visit www.tucsonaudubon.org/volunteer to share your story.

Did you get the email?

Volunteers now record their hours online! Congratulations to the amazing volunteers who have taken on this new online system with an open mind, enthusiasm, (a couple of kinks), and gusto.

Contact Kara about volunteering!

volunteer@tucsonaudubon.org
520-209-1811

tucsonaudubon.org/volunteer

Brian Nicholas

Field trip leader, Important Bird Area surveyor, Tucson and Christmas Bird Counter, and *Vermilion Flycatcher* contributing author are just some of the roles taken on by our current Volunteer Spotlight, Brian Nicholas.

Brian first got involved with Tucson Audubon more years ago than he can remember, attending field trips led by John Higgins, who later got Brian leading trips himself. Camaraderie and community underlie much of Brian's birding experiences and he is eager to list John, Mark Stevenson, Bob Bates, Paul Suchanek, and Kendall Kroesen among influences and mentors. Nearly 10 years ago, Kendall and Scott Wilbor got Brian into Birdathon, which he regards as a fun adventure. Brian and Kendall will be teaming up as the Valiant Verdins for Birdathon this April.

In the Important Bird Area program, Brian surveys four transects and partners on a fifth, all in Tanque Verde Wash. These surveys encourage him to get out and enjoy nature. Jennie MacFarland, Tucson Audubon's IBA Conservation Biologist, says Brian is one of her most prolific bird surveyors and is great at getting folks excited about birds.

Does Brian have a favorite bird species? Like a true avian admirer, he exclaims that "everything is a favorite," but admits the Long-eared Owl holds a special place in his heart. The semi-annual sightings of Long-eared Owl in his area are always unpredictable and breathtaking. He has been a birder for about 25 years, but modestly



Brian Nicholas on Mt. Bigelow

regards his knowledge as just the tip of the iceberg. There is so much to learn, but that makes it exciting. His biggest challenge is getting out early to bird. The popularity of Brian's recent "Sleep-in Special" Tucson Audubon field trip shows he is not the only birder-snoozer!

Brian thinks that Tucson Audubon is a great avenue for people to get involved with helping the environment and contributing to their community. Aside from Tucson Audubon activities, Brian also contributes to sustainability by biking/bus commuting to work and through his diet choices (last year he became a vegetarian and is working on going vegan). His other interests include planting for wildlife, photography, and blogging.

To read more about Brian, including his favorite birding spot, best birds in the neighborhood, neighborhood wish list, and funniest birding experience, visit tucsonaudubon.blogspot.com



L to R: Christine Schirmer helps with the silent auction at last month's *Our Changing Climate* gala;



Joe DeRouen constructs a nest box for an American Kestrel;



Sue Kozacek surveys the San Rafael Grasslands Important Bird Area.

Highlight Reel: Tucson Audubon's Sixth Annual Gala



A grand time was had by all at Tucson Audubon's Sixth Annual Gala on February 20 at the Hilton El Conquistador (ALL PHOTOS BY ANGELA PRITCHARD). *Top row, L to R:* Keynoter Kathy Jacobs gave a lively presentation about the *National Climate Assessment*, sharing her experiences working as a White House adviser; Chris McVie was presented with Tucson Audubon's David Yetman Conservation Award (inset) by President Cynthia Pruett and Carolyn Campbell of Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection; Tucson Mayor Jonathan Rothschild and his wife Karen Spiegel, all smiles during cocktail hour. *Middle row, L to R:* Restoration team members Jonathan Horst and Keith Ashley preside over the silent auction; Guests enjoyed a raptor free-flight over the dining room, starring a beautiful Harris's Hawk and her capable handlers from the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum. *Bottom row, L to R:* Gala Emcee and Board Member Matt Bailey and Executive Director Paul Green addressed the crowd; 150 conservation supporters enjoyed an elegant celebration of wildlife featuring live music by Charles King, good conversation, silent auction, raptor free-flight, and keynote talk. We hope you will join this fun tradition next year! More pics online at tucsonaudubon.org/gala.

A Champion for Sonoran Desert Conservation

At the 2014 Tucson Audubon Gala, Tucson Audubon Conservation Chair Christina McVie was the well-deserved recipient of the *Tucson Audubon David Yetman Award for Exhibiting or Promoting Conservation in Southern Arizona* (see photos above).

Chris, who had an earlier career as a nurse, has for decades been an activist on behalf of social justice and public health issues.

For the last 15 years or so, she has had a profound impact on the conservation of our Sonoran Desert habitat as a campaigner for environmental justice.

Her impact stems from her work on many fronts, starting with siting a new Amphitheater high school and relocating public facilities out of Arthur Pack Park. She labored to designate science-based critical habitat and recovery areas and produced the Cortaro Environmental Assessment Mitigation Report, which resulted in Pima County's Environmentally Sensitive Roadway Design Guidelines.

Chris created the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection and currently serves as its chair. From 1999 to 2003, she led the steering committee that guided Pima County in the creation of the award-winning Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan.

Chris played a key role in the designation of the Ironwood Forest National Monument, and today she is bringing that same tenacity to work toward a San Pedro National Wildlife Preserve. Chris also served as Board Member of Tucson Audubon.

The depth and breadth of what Chris has accomplished, and continues to accomplish, for habitat preservation in the Sonoran Desert defies description. She richly deserves the 2014 David Yetman award.

Carolyn Campbell, Executive Director, Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection

Sandy Elers Gala Superheroine!

When I first met Sandy Elers in 2007, she broached the possibility of drawing on her Houston Audubon experience to initiate a Tucson Audubon Gala. So in 2009 we did! Since then, Sandy has been the driving force behind each Gala, even coming out of retirement for the 2014 event. She deals with all things strategic and detailed, from overall theme to who sits where, and everything between. Thank you, Sandy!

Paul Green, Executive Director



ANGELA PRITCHARD

ANGELA PRITCHARD



Pilot Project: Nest Boxes for Urban Birds

KEITH ASHLEY, RESTORATION SPECIALIST

Ecosystem engineers come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Until recently, the spike-billed Gilded Flicker was the Sonoran Desert's largest architect of bird apartments, working alongside the slightly smaller Gila Woodpecker to create homes for itself and about 12 other species of cavity-nesters. Enter on the scene the Tucson Audubon volunteer—much larger than a flicker, without that handy built-for-business beak—but extremely talented nonetheless.

In the few short months since Tucson Audubon initiated its *Nest Boxes for Urban Birds* pilot project, more than 125 volunteers have answered the call to help build better urban habitat for birds. Common knowledge has held that the Sonoran Desert is just too hot for the nest boxes used worldwide to augment habitat for cavity-nesters. Nevertheless, several local citizen conservationists have been successfully providing human-constructed nest sites for Western Screech-Owls, Lucy's Warblers, and Ash-throated Flycatchers.

Carl Boswell of Oro Valley has observed owlets fledge from the box at his house for three years running and has been reporting his findings to Cornell Lab of Ornithology's NestWatch program. We wondered if we could build on this and create a nest box program for species in decline. This question is at the heart of our citizen conservation pilot project. Many Tucsonans are devoting time, muscle, expertise, and knowledge to find an answer.

In December and January a core group of five volunteer carpenters cut the wood for American Kestrel, Western Screech-Owl, and Ash-throated Flycatcher boxes. In January and February another 30+ volunteers worked at our assembly gatherings to put the boxes together, completing 37 boxes in total. Others have pledged to build their own boxes at home. Meanwhile, a growing list of Tucsonans has signed up to host and monitor boxes in their yards. We are helping NestWatch beta-test a new "community" function that will give us and the Cornell Lab access to participants' nest monitoring data.

In addition to project participants cutting, building, and mounting boxes, science-minded volunteers have been brainstorming methods for best adapting boxes to the local heat and aridity. Others are researching sensors for monitoring conditions inside the boxes. The convergence of citizen support for this effort has been fantastic!

The American Kestrel is a target species for this project as populations have declined nationwide and in Arizona. Local populations have decreased steadily over the last decade according to the Tucson Bird Count. While Ash-throated Flycatchers maintain steady populations in rural areas, they are noticeably absent in urban centers. Are available cavities the primary limiting factor? Western Screech-Owls maintain healthy breeding populations rurally and in the cities—but given the fast pace of today's environmental change, what will their situation look like in the future? For Lucy's Warblers, the project is providing gourds with small holes designed to exclude House Sparrows.

Nest Boxes for Urban Birds will remain a pilot project with a strong research goal until we determine which species can successfully nest in human-crafted boxes. One certain discovery has been made already however: many Tucsonans are conservationists at heart, eager to enact solutions to environmental challenges. Even if we discover that nest boxes are not a fix for urban birds, we can remain confident that this group of citizens will continue to support our local biodiversity.



ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER, JOHN HOFFMAN



MOSES THOMPSON



KENDALL KROESEN



KENDALL KROESEN

Clockwise from top: Ash-throated Flycatcher at a nest box in John Hoffman's yard. Tucson Audubon's Restoration Ecologist Jonathan Horst installing a nest box at Manzo Elementary School. Keith Ashley assembles a nest box with the help of volunteer Tim Wernette. Three sizes of nest boxes.

Interesting stories about birds with interesting names

Burrowing Owl

LARRY LIESE

Cute. It's not a word male birders like to use when describing birds, but when you see one of these neat animals looking at you from a spot near their burrow entrance, it just makes you smile. Even the rough-necked cowboys of yesteryear called them the 'Howdy-birds,' because they seemed to nod in greeting when seen near prairie dog towns.

Burrowing Owls have a strong association with burrowing mammals such as prairie dogs, since most populations prefer to modify unused burrows to fit their needs instead of digging their own from scratch. Unique in the owl world for nesting in underground burrows, these owls have adapted to their lifestyle in some interesting ways. The burrows have no back doors resulting in CO₂ inside rising to levels that would be quite toxic to humans, but the owls have adapted. Their wings do not have the fine adaptations of

other owls for silent flight, but Burrowing Owls do well locating prey, typically gliding in with a low, level flight to take hold of prey. Unlike all other owls, Burrowing Owls perch conspicuously on posts and mounds near burrow entrances. They do not prey on their burrow-building hosts nor prey on bird nestlings, so mobbing of them does not occur and the owls can survey their territory in peace.

Burrowing Owls are a New World owl found in open, treeless habitat from southern Canada (where they are migratory) all the way to Tierra del Fuego at the southern tip of South America. They hunt mostly at dawn and dusk but can hunt during the day. They lack some adaptations of typical owls that aren't key to their lifestyle. For example, their eyes are not as proportionately large as in other owls and do not have the reflective layer behind the retina that aids other night-birds' vision and produces the bright "eyeshine."

Burrowing Owls' diet consists mostly of insects and rodents, but can widen to include a wide variety of both vertebrate and invertebrate prey items, from insects through small reptiles, birds and small mammals—basically, anything that they can physically handle.

The scientific name is currently *Athene cunicularia*, derived from Athena, the Greek god of wisdom, and the Latin word *cunicularius*, "a miner or burrower" from *cuniculus*, "a rabbit." It was named by Molina in 1782 with the genus name *Speotyto*, from the Greek *speos*, "a cave," and *tyto*, "a night owl," but revised on the 1983 AOU checklist to the current name. Skeletal and genetic evidence

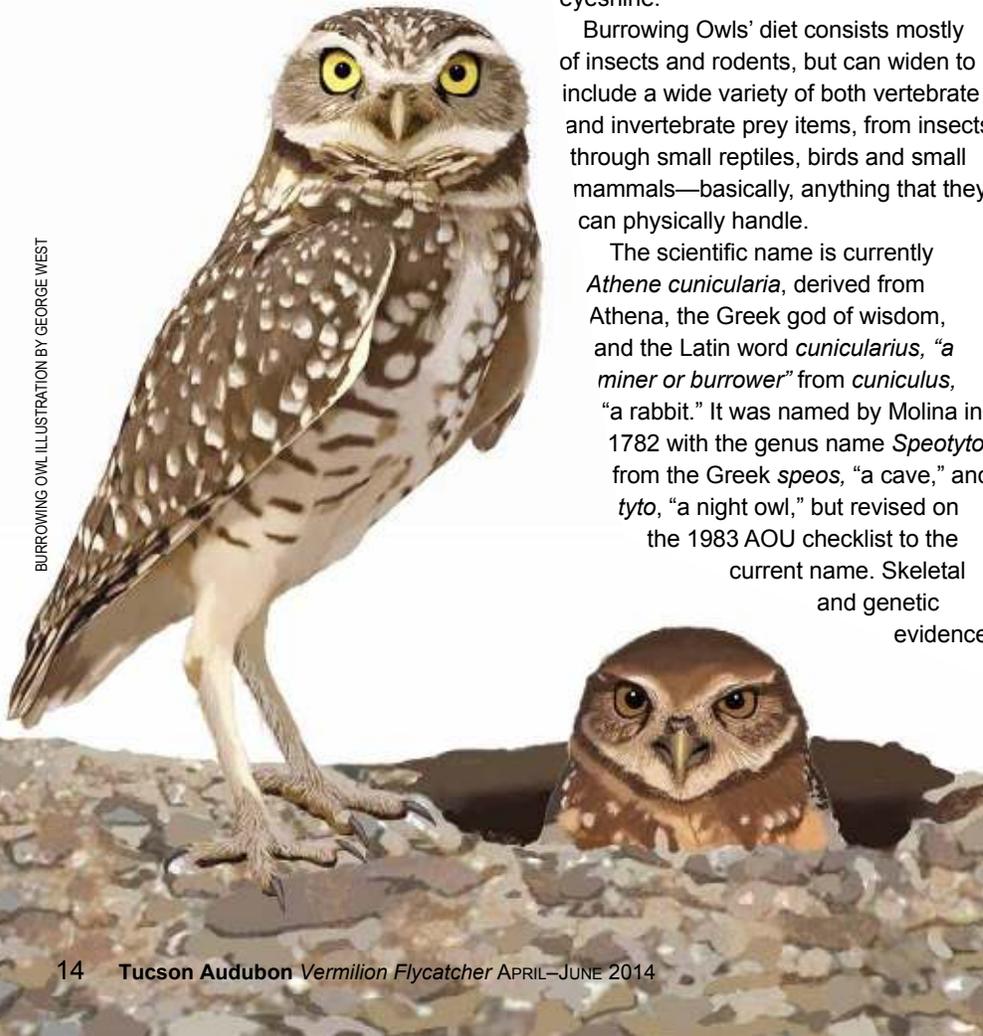
gathered recently may warrant it being placed back in *Speotyto*. The word "Owl" has roots in antiquity with Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and even Sanskrit origins. Our word derives from the Anglo Saxon word for an owl—*ule*. Many related roots derive from words for sounds or outcries related to local owl vocalizations. Naturally, "Burrowing" was chosen for this owl's unique choice of nesting habitat.

Burrowing Owl populations have declined in much of their range, following decline of prairie dog populations due to human activity. Badgers are the main predators to worry about though interestingly less predation occurs when the owls are associated with prairie dogs. Snakes are not mentioned as predators of the owls. Young Burrowing Owls have an interesting defense mechanism when strongly disturbed or agitated inside the burrow—they can make a loud rasping call similar to rattlesnake rattling that might deter a digging coyote or badger.

The owls have a curious habit of littering the area around the nest entrance with dung. Thought by some researchers to attract dung beetles, perhaps a more likely reason is to signify burrow occupancy to other owls. It makes one wonder—what are humans with junky front yards trying to tell us?

In Arizona, land development has had a strong negative effect on some owl populations, though relocation efforts using man-made burrows have had some success. A further conservation effort being tried is passive relocation, where colonies located in planned development areas are "lured" to manmade burrows in nearby, suitable habitat by closing off burrow entrances after the occupants have left for the evening—hoping the colony will relocate to the "safe" area.

Some former sites where these owls made for easy sightings have passed on, but if you'd like to go looking for one of these birds, try scanning the old agricultural areas along the west side of Trico Road, north and south of the Santa Cruz River crossing in Avra Valley west of Tucson. You might get lucky and have one say "Howdy." Good luck!



BURROWING OWL ILLUSTRATION BY GEORGE WEST

Where To Find Wood-Warblers

RICH HOYER

The return of the wood-warblers is one of my favorite things about spring. As you read this, Lucy's Warblers are already defending territories, while Red-faced, Black-throated Gray, Virginia's, and Grace's Warblers are arriving in numbers from their winter grounds in Mexico. Painted Redstarts and Olive Warblers that spent the winter here are sorting out their breeding territories from new arrivals of these partially migratory species.

None of these pose an identification problem (one feature that makes them so attractive), but efficient use of your time finding them takes a sharp eye with regard to plant species and habitat characteristics. Our sky islands are not capped in an unvaried cloak of Madrean pine-oak woodlands, just as the lower deserts are not a monotonous blanket of spiny desert, and the tremendous plant diversity and variations in elevation, soil, exposure, water, and fire history create nearly a nearly endless variety of microhabitats.

You will have passed by many Lucy's Warblers if you headed directly to the forested mountains. This species seems to be a specialist in finding food in native Velvet Mesquite, found close to ground water near rivers and washes, though having access to a mix of other deciduous shrubs and trees such as willow and acacias helps. There must also be old wood present where the Lucy's Warblers can build their nests in a rotten branch crevice or woodpecker hole.

Black-throated Gray seems to be our least-picky warbler, singing from almost any type of woodland at any elevation as long as oaks are present. Also requiring oaks is the much scarcer Virginia's Warbler, but they seem to need their trees to be short, dense, and nearly continuous, and it seems that having at least one conifer nearby is a must—look for a pinyon or juniper mixed in with scrubby Emory and Turbinella oaks at lower elevations or a Douglas-fir mixed with Gambel's and Net-leafed oaks higher in the mountains.

For more color, head directly to Madera Canyon, park when you find yourself in



RICH HOYER

Black-throated Gray is the least choosy of our warblers when it comes to habitat—any oak woodland will do.

the woods, and you will probably find Painted Redstart with ease. This species seems to require almost any Madrean woodland type with older conifers or broad-leafed trees, deciduous or evergreen. This is because they mostly forage on the larger branches and trunks rather than in foliage—but they do need some slope to the ground where they can place their nest, often rather casually under a boulder, amongst roots in a bank, or under a clump of grass. But after you have seen your fill of this jewel, you might still be struggling to find the others.

For Grace's and Olive Warblers, head for the pines—but beware: we have several species of pines here. You can bury yourself in a forest of short-needled Mexican Pinyon, but that will do you no good. And once you have found your Grace's Warbler by searching out a small stand of a taller species such as Chihuahuan Pine, you might still be searching for the choosier Olive Warbler. For that you must find a larger stand of the even longer-leaved pines, which may

be Ponderosa or Apache pine, both found in the higher elevations.

The incomparable Red-faced Warbler can be the hardest among the bunch to find, as only a few roads traverse the right mix of tree species they seem to require. Their specialty is a moist draw of conifers such as Douglas-fir or White Fir (rather than pine), and the trick is having at least one Gambel's Oak present, though ideally there will be other deciduous trees such as walnut and ash. Since Red-faced Warblers also nest on the ground (though rather secretively), plenty of bunch grass on a slope is also needed.

The key is to recognize the species of trees each warbler prefers to forage in as well as understand other characteristics they require for nesting. Learn the plants, and you'll find your warblers.

Rich Hoyer is a Senior Leader for WINGS Birding Tours Worldwide, wingsbirds.com/leaders/rich-hoyer.

Migration in Your Backyard

The Role of Habitat Patches and Plant Phenology on Bird Stop-over Habitat within Tucson and Other Areas of Southwestern North America

CHARLES VAN RIPER III



Migrant birds such as Wilson's Warbler *Wilsonia pusilla* (above left), Orange-crowned Warbler *Vermivora celata* (above right), and Yellow-rumped Warbler "Audubon's form" *Dendroica coronata auduboni* (facing page, bottom) time their arrival times to maximize food resources. Almost every warbler species were found to preferentially choose honey mesquite as a foraging substrate and to time their arrivals to coincide with the flowering of this tree on the lower Colorado River.

On 13 January 2014, I presented a summary of my research on neotropical migratory birds to the Tucson Audubon Society. In that presentation, I summarized research that my graduate students and I have been doing in the Southwest over the past 30 years. This short article is a summary of the main points that I made during my presentation. Starting with a brief background on migrating birds, I will cover movement and feeding patterns that we have observed, arrival timing of the migrants, visual cues that birds use in finding stopover habitat, how plant phenology patterns influence the suitability of stopover habitat, and will end with the role that introduced plants play in aiding bird migration in the Tucson area.

In Southwestern North America, riparian habitats have declined precipitously in the last century outside protected areas such as National Parks, Fish and Wildlife Service Refuges, and Biosphere Reserve lands. In the Tucson area, other regions of the Southwestern United States, and northwestern Mexico, the decline of riparian habitat

and loss of native cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*)-willow (*Salix gooddingii*) gallery forests, as well as adjacent mesquite (*Prosopis sp.*) bosques, has often been accompanied by the addition of planted urban vegetation and the invasion of non-native tamarisk (*Tamarisk sp.*), or salt cedar. In Arizona, studies of introduced tamarisk have focused on comparing pure stands of tamarisk to native-dominated stands, and showed that tamarisk monocultures contained less diversity and absolute numbers of birds.

When we correlated bird migration patterns with plant phenology data, we found a strong relationship with plant flowering. One significant correlation was that Wilson's Warbler (WIWA), Audubon's Warbler (AUWA), and other warbler arrivals coincided with honey mesquite flowering on the lower Colorado River. In fact, we found that almost every warbler species preferentially chose honey mesquite as a foraging substrate and utilized this tree significantly more often than would have occurred by chance.

Migrant birds like the Orange-crowned Warbler (OCWA) and Yellow Warbler (YEWA) partition their arrival times to maximize food resources and allow for prey recovery (see Figure 1). Although birds generally arrive at more southern latitudes first during spring migration, we should be aware that a 'leap-frog' migration pattern occurs in spring and fall for many neotropical bird species migrating through Tucson. Thus, the longer-distance migrants, such as WIWA breeding in Alaska, come through most stop-over areas in Tucson at a later date than do those birds wintering just south of the area in northern Mexico.

Both large and small protected areas are important for neotropical migrant bird stop-over sites. Birds appear to assess migrant routes and stop-over habitats at multiple scales, with larger protected areas providing the initial target for stopping. Once a location is chosen, phenological phases of major plant species at the smaller, local scale strongly influence when and where birds stop. Smaller protected areas,

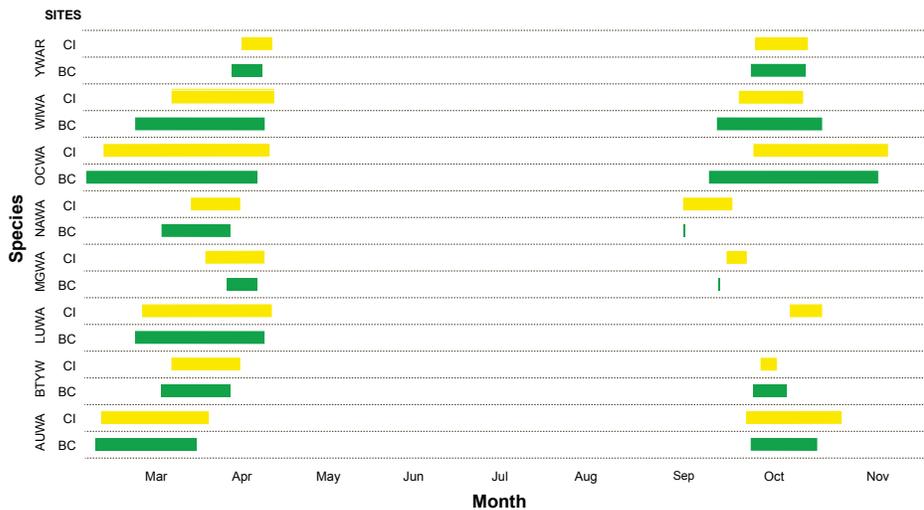


Figure 1. Stopover timing

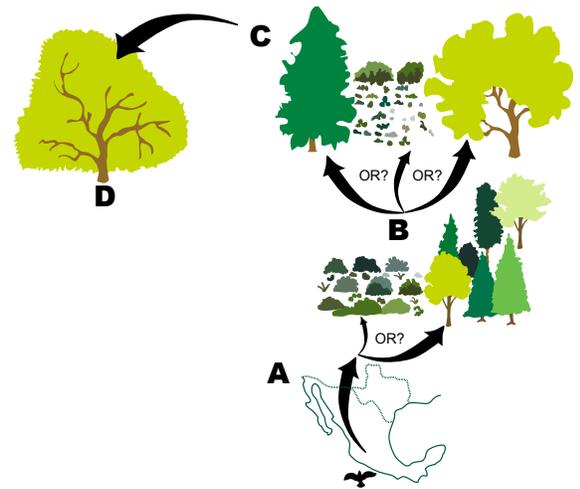


Figure 3. Habitat selection



Figure 2. Migration routes



Figure 1. STOPOVER TIMING—This figure shows differences in warbler arrival time at two sites in Arizona during the spring and fall migration periods. The 4-letter bird acronyms on the vertical axis are AUWA = Audubon’s Warbler (yellow-rump); BTYW = Black-throated Gray Warbler; LUWA = Lucy’s Warbler; MGWA = MacGillivray’s Warbler; NAWA = Nashville Warbler; OCWA = Orange-crowned Warbler; WIWA = Wilson’s Warbler; YWAR = Yellow Warbler. **Figure 2. MIGRATION ROUTES**—Arrows show migration pathways of birds migrating through the Baja area of Mexico to North America. The birds going to California and northern Arizona arrive first, then birds heading further north “leap frog” over the earlier arrivals. **Figure 3. HABITAT SELECTION**—The migration route (A) appears to be a genetically influenced corridor selection, coupled with weather frontal patterns. When following a migration route, a bird then selects specific stop-over habitat next on the basis of large-scale landscape features (B). Once the large-scale feature has been selected, the bird then decides on the type of vegetation patch (C). Finally, the bird makes microhabitat selection about specific foraging and roosting locations within the vegetation patch (D), selecting between native and introduced vegetation. Over time, this selection process ultimately maximizes resources for each bird species during migration stop-over.

these areas must include areas with mixes of native vegetation. We found the greatest abundances of birds, like WIWA, in habitats composed of 40–60% native vegetation with a tamarisk understory and the lowest bird abundances in homogenous introduced plant species stands.

We found that western migrant land bird species arrived at different times within areas around Tucson and along the Colorado River. The birds appear to assess migrant routes and stop-over habitats at multiple scales based on a genetically influenced corridor selection, followed by: 1) large-scale weather patterns; 2) large-scale landscape features; 3) vegetation patches; and then, 4) microhabitat selection within a vegetation patch. Weather, vegetative species, structure (see Figure 3), plant phenology patterns, and food resources variously influence migrating birds that pass through Tucson and all other areas along riparian corridors throughout southwestern North America. For example, each year we found that species arrival dates and numbers of neotropical migrant warblers were variable, being largely influenced by large-scale weather patterns and plant phenology cycles. Protected urban and rural areas are

important stop-over sites because once selected, there was minimal movement by individual birds over the landscape during the stop-over period. Therefore, stop-over and bird foraging patterns were greatly influenced by plant species and phenological patterns of the selected microhabitat.

Neotropical migrant bird species rely on urban and other protected areas in the Southwest, as these habitats provide suitable stop-over and foraging habitat. It thus appears that urban areas, in addition to state and federally managed reserves, provide appropriate landscape features that attract migrating birds, while other protected areas may play a more important role as micro-habitats for stop-over sites. People interested in preserving wildlife must recognize that within their backyards, vegetation, structure, plant species, phenology, abundance, and food availability all play a role in structuring bird migration patterns throughout the Southwest.

Charles van Riper III, Ph.D., is currently one of seven ST Biologists in the Department of the Interior. He is Station Leader for the US Geological Survey SBSC Sonoran Desert Research Station.

such as older housing developments in Tucson, golf courses, cemeteries, and wildlife refuges and state parks, provide important vegetation patches and suitable microhabitats for bird refueling during spring migration. Importantly, however,

Visit tucsonaudubon.org for updates and more.

Not Just Passing Through

A Wilson's Warbler's Journey Through Southern Arizona

JENNIE MACFARLAND, IBA CONSERVATION BIOLOGIST



JOAN GELLATLY



MICHAEL SKINNER



DESERT BOTANICAL GARDEN

L to R: A male Wilson's Warbler pauses during his long trip from southern Mexico to Alaska. Stretches of running water in the Upper Santa Cruz River IBA support lush riparian vegetation that provide food and shelter during a Wilson's Warbler's long spring journey. This single flowering mesquite tree can support a Wilson's Warbler for days while he waits for the perfect weather conditions for his next long-distance flight.

As a birder in southern Arizona, it is always a treat to see a Wilson's Warbler. The appearance of this species in our region is brief, and when we see Wilson's Warblers they are on the move. These colorful and charismatic warblers do not winter or nest here, so to us they seem to be merely passing through. They will spend a small amount of time here before picking up and traveling again.

It is tempting to think of such periods as being the most brief and transitory in a bird's yearly cycle, but an individual Wilson's Warbler probably doesn't think of it in this way. Migration is the most dangerous period in a bird's life and more individuals perish during their bi-annual journeys than during any other part of their lives. That beautiful Wilson's Warbler you glimpse through your binoculars this spring isn't "merely passing through," it is undertaking a perilous journey to reach a patch of habitat as far north as Alaska where he will find abundant food resources for he and his mate to successfully raise their family. To understand fully what this tiny, energetic bird is undertaking, we must see his journey through southern Arizona on a number of scales. This requires "big picture" thinking all the way down to focusing on an individual mesquite tree.

Of the many Wilson's Warblers that travel through Arizona during spring

migration, let's follow one on his journey: a bright yellow male with a black crown. As environmental cues such as day length fall into place, this bird prepares to head north from his winter home in central Mexico towards the promise of a seasonal food abundance that will fuel the growth of his future young. With his fat reserves topped off, he begins his long trip and crosses the international border into Arizona east of Nogales.

Our Wilson's Warbler needs to follow routes where he can find food to maintain his energy levels during the exhausting ordeal of migration. The Santa Cruz River creates a good route to travel as it heads north. It is lined with riparian vegetation in stretches that provide the insect prey that a migrating bird needs. The Upper Santa Cruz River Important Bird Area (IBA) encompasses one such stretch of riparian habitat near Tubac that will help him to safely navigate this leg of the journey north. This area's designation as an IBA draws attention to the habitat vital for native birds and ensures the travel route is available and productive for this bird when he needs it the most. Once our bird has navigated this distance, he finds himself in Tucson where there are many great opportunities for him to rest and refuel before a big push in his journey.

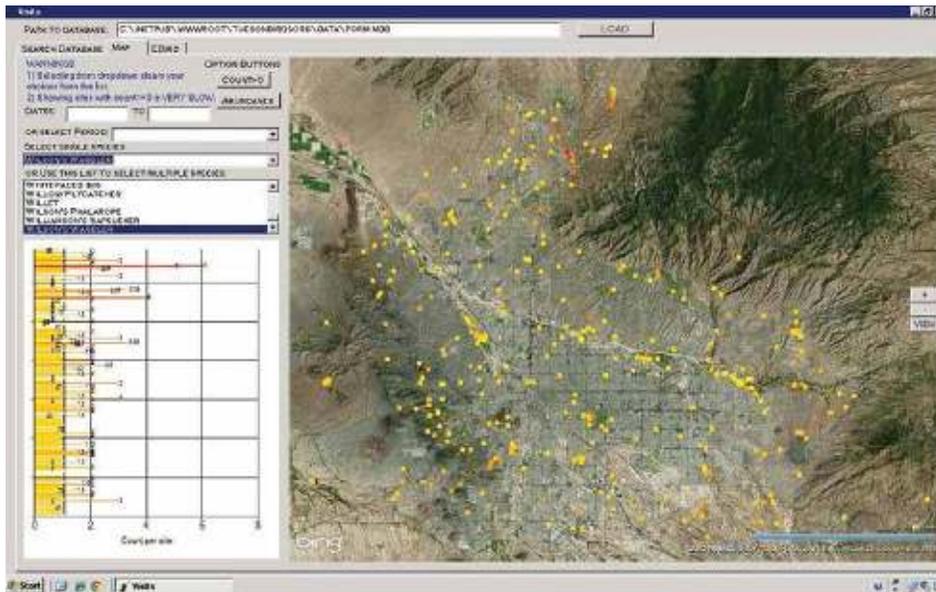
Migration is a big picture concept where we humans look at continental

Restoration Projects

Surveys each spring and fall document Wilson's Warblers refueling at Tucson Audubon's habitat restoration projects along the lower Santa Cruz River on the western side of Marana. This is about the furthest west of the southern patches of green before the long-haul to Yuma and an obvious jumping-off-point. We've installed thousands of trees and shrubs along the effluent flow of the river there including hundreds of mesquites and palo verde. By widening the band of mesquites along the river corridor we've increased and diversified the age stand of trees enhancing the long-term prospects for warblers to find large healthy trees in bloom during their migration, as well as increasing their total number.

Jonathan Horst, Restoration Manager

and even hemispherical maps and track the routes birds take on unimaginably long trips in search of endless summer. But we also have to zoom in on each day of this bird's migration, as he could perish at any time if he cannot find the suitable microhabitat. Once he reaches Tucson, he will find many resources in our landscaped human habitat. It is fortunate for him that many people choose to plant native mesquite trees and palo verde trees, as one of these flowering trees can support him for several days to weeks. Research conducted over



The map program developed by Tucson Audubon volunteer Jessie Bhangoo shows every location in the Tucson area where Wilson's Warblers were detected in the Tucson Bird Count over the past 13 years. This map shows that they are using patches of urban green space in the city.

years by University of Arizona's Charles van Riper III has shown that this one Wilson's Warbler will likely find a flowering mesquite tree and spend several days feasting on insects and resting. This is a stage in our bird's journey where the impact of one person's actions directly helps a migrating bird. Perhaps it will be a native tree in your yard or neighborhood that is flowering right when our bird arrives in Tucson, and the tree serves as his oasis of food and shelter in this critical stage of migration. Our Wilson's Warbler will stay in his flowering mesquite tree for several days or more and fill up his energy reserves.

When he is feeling up to long-distance flight, he will rise out of his tree each evening to test conditions: if the breeze isn't exactly right, he will settle back into his tree and check again the next night. When all the conditions line up perfectly he will take off in a dramatic way. Field research has shown that at this stage, he will not fly north as one might expect, but due west over a vast stretch of arid desert.

This is where we need to change the scale of our thinking once more: this bird isn't planning on hopping from small oasis to oasis all the way north—he clearly knows the lay of the land and is bee-lining it to the Colorado River. He will likely make the trip from Tucson to Yuma in one night and burn much of the energy he built up in Tucson to make this

Tucson Bird Count

Every spring, Wilson's Warblers move through Tucson and the citizen science-driven Tucson Bird Count documents their stay in our city. This map shows every location where Wilson's Warblers have been recorded by volunteer surveyors over the past 13 years. The data shows that these tiny birds find habitat that suites them within patches of urban native vegetation. Perhaps a paloverde or mesquite tree that gives you shade in your yard will also provide food and refuge for a Wilson's Warbler this spring. Sharing our urban space with native birds is what the Tucson Bird Count is all about!

Jennie MacFarland

stage of the journey. This bird is betting that the lush riparian habitat that lined the Colorado River last year is still there, and with a string of Global IBAs along the Colorado, we are helping his bet be a winning one.

Once our Wilson's Warbler reaches the mighty Colorado River, he will find ample food and shelter on this next stage of his journey north, and safely make it through Arizona to continue on even further north. If we were to undertake such a trip using nothing but our own power to get there, it would be daunting. This warbler weighs between 6 and 7 grams and is less than 5 inches long but still makes this journey twice a year. His determination and resilience help him to achieve this staggering accomplishment and serve as inspiration for the humans who fight for and advocate conservation projects that ensure this one Wilson's Warbler and his descendants can continue to make this epic journey year after year.



KENDALL KROESEN

Wilson's Warbler Visits Tucson

Sometimes, heading north in spring, a Wilson's Warbler stops right in the city. He ignores things that are important to us: houses, cars, streets. He zeroes in on what look familiar to him, like mesquite trees.

Planting a patch of native vegetation that includes a native velvet mesquite helps assure that when the warbler is coming in for a landing, he sees a welcoming sight. He not only sees the mesquite, he's looking for the juicy bugs that are attracted by the mesquite flowers. They are fuel for his continuing migration—he has a long way to go.

In her Ph.D. research a few years ago, University of Arizona grad student Rachel McCaffrey found that how you landscape your yard really does make a difference for many of our resident desert birds. Having chollas really does bring in Cactus Wrens by giving them a place to nest. Thorny desert trees (mesquite, acacias, ironwoods, palo verdes) attract Verdins, Curve-billed Thrashers, Northern Cardinals, Pyrrhuloxias, and more. Leaving desert mistletoe in trees really does help Phainopeplas.

Now Charles van Riper's research suggests that those patches of native vegetation are important for many migratory species too, like Wilson's Warblers.

I'll be looking for Wilson's Warbler and many other species as I catalogue the birds that come through my neighborhood this spring. Lucy's Warbler was one of the first, showing up in mid-March. There is no natural open space in the neighborhood, just residential landscaping. Instead of just watching and counting, I'll be asking myself: which yards are attracting the migratory warblers, vireos, and flycatchers? What are the characteristics of those yards?

Kendall Kroesen, Urban Program Manager

CACTUS WREN IN CHOLLA CACTUS, LONQUETA



CONSERVATION AND EDUCATION NEWS

CHRIS MCVIE, PAUL GREEN, KENDALL KROESEN, BÉTÉ JONES, AND JENNIE MACFARLAND

Mason Center's Lower 60 Acres



Above left: The 55-acre section below Tucson Audubon's Mason Center (within yellow box) will be largely preserved as open space, with 8 acres developed on the corner of Cortaro and Thornydale. Above right: The Mason Center, which is on 20 acres of old-growth Desert Ironwood and saguaro forest habitat (pictured below), completed the next phase of sustainability upgrades in 2013. The Google image captures the trench work to connect the new solar-generated electricity to the grid.

Tucson Audubon has long worked to achieve the conservation of two parcels owned by the development company Red Point, totaling approximately 55 acres, adjacent to and just south of Tucson Audubon's Mason Center.

Recently, the Pima County Board of Supervisors (BOS) approved four Comprehensive Plan Amendments submitted by Red Point, including an eight-acre commercial development on the northwest corner of Thornydale and Cortaro Farms Road. As conditions of approval, the remainder of the two parcels south of the Mason Center, including the wash that diagonally bisects them, will be conserved in perpetuity, as well as at least 120 acres in the Tortolita Fan.

We anticipate that the acres in the Tortolita Fan will contribute to the regional wildlife Critical Landscape Linkage between the Tucson and Tortolita Mountains. On-site mitigation will also occur in the form of natural open space set asides on the other three parcels.

Tucson Audubon is excited because at the BOS meeting, Red Point indicated willingness to consider having Tucson Audubon manage the conserved lands south of the Mason Center. The approval of the combination of on- and off-site mitigation, in accordance with Pima County's Conservation Lands System guidelines, fulfills the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan's ideals of mitigating for development as close to

impacts as possible and in like-for-like habitat.

Tucson Audubon's Mason Center is located just south of the natural open space portion of Pima County's Arthur Pack Park, encompassing a portion of the regionally significant Hardy Wash. Tucson Audubon has partnered with the County to establish a system of trails connecting the Park with the Mason Center.

This assemblage of old growth Desert Ironwood (*Tesota olneya*) and saguaro forest habitat is the largest conserved area of its kind in northwest Tucson.

Chris McVie
Conservation Chair

EarthFest Patagonia

April 26, 2014

Tucson Audubon will be at the fifth annual EarthFest in Patagonia on April 26, and we invite you to stop by our booth. This is the height of migration and would be a great time to visit nearby Paton's Birder Haven, recently saved for birders with your help and now managed by Tucson Audubon (see page 10). Mines threaten important bird habitat in the Patagonia Mountains near Patagonia. Supporting the ecotourism economy of Patagonia by visiting often, including for events like EarthFest, is an important way to counter such threats.

The festival celebrates the biological diversity, cultural heritage, and local resiliency of the area. This year's theme is water.



Arizona Field Ornithologists (AZFO) Annual Meeting: Call for Presentations and New Youth Scholarships



Arizona's *Changing Avifauna* is the theme of the AZFO Eighth Annual Meeting this 3–5 October in Globe-Miami. AZFO would like to encourage anyone interested in giving a 15-minute oral or poster presentation on original avian research, surveys, or other pertinent Arizona endeavors to submit an abstract by September 15.

If you are a young person or know of one interested in field ornithology and Arizona's birdlife, you or they might be eligible for one of a limited number of AZFO youth scholarships. This brand-new program will provide financial assistance for middle school to undergrad students to attend AZFO's annual meeting. Included in the AZFO youth scholarships are:

- Up to \$250 reimbursement for annual meeting transportation and a two-night hotel stay
- Meeting banquet meal
- One-year membership to AZFO

Find out more about the AZFO Annual Meeting call for presentations and youth scholarships at azfo.org.

SunZia Process Undermines Our Landmark Environmental Policy Law

In the last issue of the *Vermilion Flycatcher*, we reported on the arbitrary use of studies that support the interests of the SunZia Southwest Transmission Project during its federal environmental review process. We referenced a study that was recently commissioned to determine the potential effects of the transmission proposal on the mission of the White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico. That study has now been completed, but its actual results are not yet known due to concerns over classified military information. Here's one newspaper account regarding the completion of this study: www.abqjournal.com/366804/news/pearce-sunzia-clash-over-mit-study-findings.html

All the news coverage to date has structured this story as if it were a horse race between military interests and the project proponent. Despite the fact that only SunZia and a few select members of the government have been briefed on the study, both sides are claiming victory. The real story here concerns how the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has strayed far

from its legal responsibility to act as a neutral oversight agency and to use the best available science to assess the project's effects.

Regarding the White Sands Missile Range, the military claims that their concerns about the project negatively impacting their mission were ignored prior to the recently commissioned study. Many conservationists have repeatedly echoed this theme, as have some state and federal agencies that cooperated in developing the Environmental Impact Statement. It is very telling that the only intervening group that has been able to capture the BLM's attention to address an ignored or dismissed issue is the most powerful military in the world.

Conservationists have long objected to the fact that the BLM has not seriously considered alternative routes or project proposals that would avoid constructing a massive new utility corridor through previously undisturbed and ecologically sensitive lands in Arizona and New Mexico. The BLM responded that no other routes could accommodate the enormous

transmission of renewable energy that SunZia claims the project would facilitate. When conservationists provided third-party evidence that SunZia had exaggerated this claim by two to three times, this was ignored and finally dismissed by the BLM without even attempting to address the specific submissions.

Conservationists have also objected to the lack of a plan which would mitigate the environmental effects of the proposed project, at one time suggesting that the lines be buried to prevent impacts on birds in the Rio Grande and San Pedro flyways. The BLM responded with a SunZia-commissioned study that definitively concluded that burying the lines would be economically unfeasible. The above-referenced news article notes that SunZia is now attempting to reach a compromise with the military that might involve burying portions of the lines.

The BLM's handling of the SunZia proposal has seriously undermined our federal environmental review process. The BLM's public meetings

were conducted as indoctrination sessions, where only the agency and its contracted environmental firm, a company that has a long business relationship with SunZia, were allowed to publicly speak. Many written comments that contradicted the interests of the project proponents were ignored or dismissed, no matter whether an individual, a cooperating agency, or the U.S. Department of Defense submitted them. This very controlled and arbitrary consideration of relevant information perverts the National Environmental Policy Act and must be corrected if the law is to retain its purpose.

SunZia is a glaring example of the need to restore integrity to the federal environmental review process. We would appreciate your help and support in doing so.

Peter Else
Friends of the Aravaipa Region
bigbackyardfar@gmail.com

Mick Meader
Cascabel Working Group
nmeader@cox.net

Christmas Bird Count 2013

This past December 15, 103 participants representing every level of experience took to the field for the Tucson Valley Christmas Bird Count and counted any and all birds seen and heard in the same 15 mile-diameter circle covered annually since 1971.

Put that many birders in the field and tell them to bird in places one wouldn't normally spend a day, and you get some fun surprises—but you also get data, including some trends more reliable than our mere hunches. Sadly, only 11 Inca Doves were tallied; compare this to the many hundreds we were counting just 20 years ago. Declines were also noted for Harris's Hawk, Gilded Flicker, Loggerhead Shrike, Cactus Wren, Canyon Towhee, and Black-throated Sparrow; we'll be certain to pay special

attention to these species' numbers in future years.

Increases were noted for several others, perhaps most notably Vermilion Flycatcher. In our first three decades we averaged fewer than ten each year; in 2012 we set an all-time national high with an astounding 190. So what should we be thinking of the 267 counted this year? Will we be inhaling them by December 2014, or will their numbers finally plateau as Cooper's Hawks may have done? (We were again number one in the nation with 99, down only slightly from the previous year's all-time record 104.) The Broad-billed Hummingbird has shown a more modest but welcome increase: twenty years ago, a lucky feeder might host one, while this year we tallied a record 35.

In practice, the CBC is not about the data. It's about a wholesome day in the field, birding with the excitement of not knowing what you'll find and looking forward to the potluck at the end of the day. There, you share your finds, hear what other teams found (like this year's surprise Palm Warbler or the stakeout Black Scoter, to mention only a couple of many notable finds), and learn what the species total was. This year we ended the tally with a record 159, only to have a few more species reports trickle in over the next 24 hours to tie the all-time Arizona record of 164.

We look forward to having even more participants (and maybe more species?) next time. So mark your calendar for Sunday, December 14 and stay tuned here or watch the



Photo courtesy WINGS

The CBC has helped document a local increase in the Broad-billed Hummingbird population.

Tucson Audubon website or the CBC blog (aztvcbc.blogspot.com) for more information.

Rich Hoyer
Senior Leader for WINGS
Birding Tours Worldwide

BYOBag Tucson

HERRING GULL, CALEB PUTNAM / CCL



Most of us are aware of the devastation that discarded plastics can cause to birds and other wildlife. If you haven't seen the movie *Trashed* with Jeremy Irons, it's a recommended watch.

There's a movement in Tucson to begin to address this issue. In 2009, the City of Tucson passed an ordinance that required retail establishments of 10,000 sq ft. or more to offer plastic bag recycling.

In 2012, Bisbee became the first municipality in Arizona to institute a fee on single-use plastic/paper bags. Bisbee joined more than 300 towns and cities across the U.S. to impose a fee upon, or ban the use of, disposable bags. Los Angeles, California, is the most recent city to ban single-use plastic bags.

In 2012, Tucson's City Council convened the BYOBag Tucson working group to bring recommendations on how the City of Tucson could best reduce consumption of single-use plastic bags. The Mayor and Council-appointed group had diverse representation, from the Sierra Club to the Arizona Retailers Association.

Although the majority of the working group supported a ban or fee, in the spirit of consensus, the group supported an education campaign working with the retailers that were currently covered in the 2009 Ordinance.

Tucson Audubon supports this initiative since it aligns with our mission to reduce resource use through increasing reuse and recycling of materials, and because

discarded plastics, including plastic bags, represent a hazard to birds and other wildlife in our region and beyond. Tucson Audubon is acting as a fiscal sponsor to the group. Through this arrangement, BYOB operates under Tucson Audubon's 501 (c) (3) status, and BYOB becomes a program of Tucson Audubon.

The current BYOBag Tucson working group includes the following representatives:

- City of Tucson (Cristina Polsgrove from Environmental Services)
- Council Office of Paul Cunningham (Katie Bolger)
- Tucson Clean and Beautiful (Deron Beal, Bekki Quintero)
- Green Chamber of Commerce (Katherine Kent)
- Golden Eagle Distributors (Matt Herrington)
- Wal-Mart (Buzz Romero, Mike Acevedo)
- Four Star Advertising (Mary Pat Dodds)
- Environmental Services Advisory committee (ESAC) (Yvonne Merrill)
- Imagine Greater Tucson (Mike Holmes)
- Sierra Club (Gabe Wigtil/ Maddy Bynes)
- Environmental Education Exchange (Debbie Gevirtzman)
- Arizona Food Marketing Alliance (Tim McCabe, Tom Maloney)

Fairfax Industry, a locally-owned landfill company which also deals in green waste and compost, is another



MACK MALE / CCL

supporter. BYOB is actively working to grow a list of sponsors/supporters as we move forward.

BYOB is undertaking a one-year education campaign to encourage people to REDUCE, RE-USE and RECYCLE their single-use plastic bags. Tucson's BYOBag campaign, encouraging us all to "bring our own bag," is modeled on the one run by the City of Palo Alto, California (archive.cityofpaloalto.org/depts/pwd/zero_waste/resources/byobag.asp). The campaign's target audiences include consumers who patronize the stores covered in the City of Tucson ordinance and school children in grades K through 5 in Tucson.

Paul Green, Executive Director

"Don't forget me!"



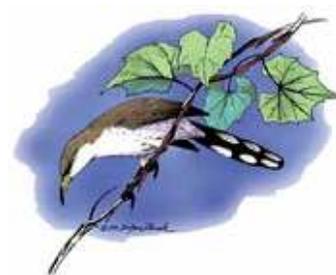
Make It a Habit and Grab It.

www.cityofpaloalto.org/BYOBag



A downloadable sign from the City of Palo Alto's Zero Waste Program website.

San Pedro River Festival May 3, 2014



Come celebrate and enjoy the beautiful San Pedro River at the San Pedro River Festival, Saturday May 3, from 9 AM to 3 PM. This celebration of the last free-flowing river in the Southwest will be held at Winkelman Flats Public Park north of Tucson between Winkelman and Globe. This one-day festival will feature bird watching, nature and history exhibits, and information on sustainable farming and ranching. There will also be special tours of private conservation areas that you can sign up for from 7 AM on. Most of the ecologically richest portions of the San Pedro River are on private land and this is a rare opportunity to visit these habitats and see why this area has been designated "one of the last great places!" For more info visit sanpedrofestival.com.



SAN PEDRO RIVER, PAUL & ENGLI GREEN

Wildlife Garden Plant Profile

Marcia Becker, Garden Volunteer, and Lynn Hassler, Garden Volunteer Captain

This series profiles the plants that grow in the Tucson Audubon Wildlife Garden at University Boulevard and 5th Avenue. Stop by to see this plant and others up close and personal.

Chain-Fruit or Jumping Cholla

Scientific Name: *Cylindropuntia fulgida*

Family: Cactaceae (Cactus)

Native range: Southern Arizona and Northwest Mexico to Sinaloa, Mexico, 1,000–3,000 feet

Wildlife value: Spiny plants provide nesting sites for birds. Flowers attract insect pollinators; fruits and seeds are eaten by birds and animals.

Chain-fruit cholla is an arborescent cactus with green branches and drooping chains of green fruits. Plants average 7–8 feet in height, but may exceed 12 feet. Attractive purplish-pink flowers bloom spring through summer. Cylindrical joints, 2–3 inches

long, are covered in dense barbed spines and detach easily, hooking onto unknowing passersby (hence the name “jumping”). New plants form from fruits or from fallen stems that root readily, sometimes forming dense thickets.

Excellent barrier plants, chollas do require a wide berth in the garden, and are best used well away from foot traffic. Once attached to the skin, spines can be difficult and painful to remove.

Most tall species of cholla provide fine nest sites. The prickly branches deter snakes and other predators from seizing eggs and nestlings. One species in particular—Curve-billed Thrasher—is a cholla specialist, almost always selecting the cactus for its bulky nest of twigs. The thrasher breaks off interfering spines by holding them in its bill and vigorously twisting its head until they are severed.



CURVE-BILLED THRASHER IN CHolla. KEITH GRAVES. HOUSE FINCHES ON JUMPING CHOLLA. LON&QUETA / COL



Other birds use cholla for nesting as well—Cactus Wren, Verdin, House Finch, Mourning and Inca Doves, to name a few.

Chain-fruit cholla shines at certain times of day, particularly in the early morning and evening when light reflects off the straw-colored sheaths that cover the spines. One of the Spanish names is *velas de coyote*, or

“coyote’s candles”—the luminescent joints look like little candles in the glow of a bright desert moon.

Conservation Corner!

As I write this mid-March, the Arizona state senate has passed SB1478 and referred it to the house rules committee. This bill is one of the most petty and egregiously anti-wildlife bills we have ever seen. The bill prohibits grant money from the Arizona Water Protection Fund (AWPF) from being spent to plant mesquites, tamarisks, or other high water usage trees, but allows grant money to be used to remove those trees. They intend this as a water conservation measure, since trees use water. (The tamarisk prohibition is a distraction; nobody plants non-native, invasive tamarisks with money from the AWPF.)

The AWPF gives grants to restore riparian habitat, address floodplain function, and reach out to the public about the importance of rivers, streams and washes. Tucson

Audubon has had several of these grants and currently uses AWPF funds to work at Atturbury Wash.

This bill essentially says that now that we have taken huge amounts of water away from wildlife, it is wildlife that needs to conserve! No trees for wildlife habitat that would use water? This bill says that planting trees is anti-conservation!

In reality, people are the cause of the water shortage, not wildlife. People need to conserve water, not wildlife. And we need to continue to restore habitat by planting trees in riparian areas. Mesquites are not even one of the trees that use the most water!

In this issue you have read several times about how important a single mesquite can be for migrating warblers. React to this legislation by planting a mesquite! And ask your



MESQUITE. KENDALL KROESEN

ACTION ALERT

Please write to your legislator and encourage them to amend this bill—see tucsonaudubon.org/act-now/advocate for contact details.

representatives in the state house to oppose this bill. ■

Kendall Kroesen
Urban Program Manager

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Papua New Guinea: Birds in Paradise III

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Madagascar Comprehensive V 2014:

Tour dates: 9–30 Nov. Tour Price: (per person) USD\$7,500. Our 3-week Comprehensive Madagascar birding tour offers an overview of this remarkable island. We visit all the key habitats, with highlights including the spectacular Schlegel's Asity, Scaly Ground Roller, Subdesert Mesite and Sickie-billed Vanga. We also hope to find up to 27 lemur species, including the Indri, as well as tenrecs and the bizarre Giraffe-necked Weevil. www.rockjumperbirding.com/tourinfo/madagascar-comprehensive-v-2014?crumb=birding-tours-africa-and-madagascar



Spotted Wrens

DOMINIC SHERONY / CCL

SOLIPASO TOURS

www.solipaso.com

Northwest Mexico: August 23–30, 2014.

\$2100. Leader: David MacKay. Summertime in the Sierra Madre de Chihuahua and Sonora is beautiful: green meadows, blue skies, lakes and waterfalls! In Madera, we see the endangered Thick-billed Parrot and Eared Quetzal. We visit the ruins of Cuarenta Casas and see the magnificent Basaseachic waterfall in full summer flow—the second highest in Mexico. Around Yecora, we see more montane species including Mountain Trogon and Aztec Thrush.

Copper Canyon: September 12–20, 2014.

\$2600. Leader: David MacKay. This world famous destination is rich in culture, scenery, crafts and birds at the end of the summer monsoon season. In Los Mochis, we bird the botanical garden and take a trip out into the Sea of Cortez. From the colonial town of El Fuerte, we board the train and travel through a myriad of habitats and life zones. Bird highlights include Eared Quetzal, White-striped Woodcreeper, Mountain Trogon, Rufous-capped Warbler, Striped and Rusty Sparrows, White-throated Robin and Spotted Wren. Home to the Tarahumara Indians, we'll have the opportunity to see some of their villages and purchase their crafts.

TROPICAL BIRDING

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Southern Ecuador: Highland Rarities and Tumbesian Endemics July 9–25, 2014.

\$4690, Single Supplement \$480. Expect a spectacular variety of habitat, scenery, and birds on this tour led by Tucson's Scott Olmstead. The trip takes in both sides of the Andes, visiting desert scrub and deciduous forests, montane cloudforests, high altitude elfin forests, and páramo. We target outrageous bucket-list megas like Jocotoco Antpitta, Orange-throated Tanager, Long-wattled Umbrellabird, and Rainbow Starfrontlet, while staying in comfortable lodges. Plan to see a large percentage of the birds endemic to the Tumbesian Region of SW Ecuador & NW Peru. ■

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MATT GRIFFITHS | INTERIM FIELD TRIP COORDINATOR

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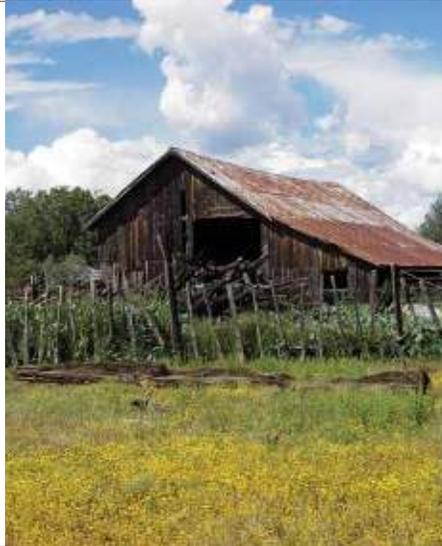
For a full listing of trips and details, visit tucsonaudubon.org/fieldtrips, call the trip hotline at 520-629-0510 x4, or pick up a printout at our Nature Shops.

FEATURED FIELD TRIP

May 9–11

North American Migration Count at Q Ranch

The "Q" is a private ranch nestled in a Ponderosa pine and oak valley in northeast Gila County, below the Mogollon Rim. Enjoy a weekend of great birding (155 bird species documented) and gourmet food. Cost of the trip is \$270 per person, double occupancy, which includes two nights lodging and meals. For single occupancy, add \$130. Reservations require a \$135 deposit, with the remainder due on arrival. See details and a full itinerary at tucsonaudubon.org/fieldtrips. Go to qranch.com to sign up or email leader Ken Furtado with questions: ken@qranch.com.



Q RANCH

Weekly bird walks are listed at tucsonaudubon.org/fieldtrips

General Information Tucson Audubon field trips are offered at no charge and are led by expert volunteers. Bring money to cover your share of the carpooling and any required entry fees (e.g. for state parks). For specific information about a trip, contact the leader of that trip. Please dress appropriately for your field trip. Always wear sturdy shoes, a hat, and use sun protection. Bring plenty of snacks and water for yourself. Always bring binoculars and a field guide. For most trips a scope can be useful.

Arrival Times Arrive *before* listed departure times. Trips will leave promptly at the time given.

Carpooling Sites Tucson Audubon strongly encourages carpooling and for some trips it may be required. Check our website for frequently used carpooling sites. You are expected to reimburse the driver for the actual cost of fuel. Drivers and trip leaders are not expected to contribute.

Rare Bird Alert Listen to the latest rare bird alert at 520-629-0510 x3. Report rare birds at 520-629-0510 or rarebirdalert@tucsonaudubon.org.

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*Please call to confirm hours. The shop opens earlier and closes later during certain months.

From Tanque Verde Rd and Houghton, continue east on Tanque Verde 2 miles. Turn left (north) onto Soldier Trail, continue north for 2 miles. Turn right (east) onto Roger Rd, continue ¼ mile to the park entrance on the left (north).

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BIRDS & BEER. Third Thursdays at Sky Bar: April 17, May 15, June 19, 5–7 PM. Free slice of pizza from Brooklyn Pizza, beer at happy hour prices. Share your bird photos on the big screen.

WANTED! Tucson Audubon's Mason Center requires sets of plates and silverware for our special events. Please contact pgreen@tucsonaudubon.org if you can help with a donation of your unwanted plates, knives, forks, spoons.

Visit tucsonaudubon.org for updates and more.

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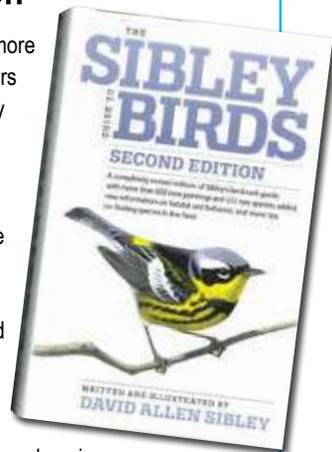
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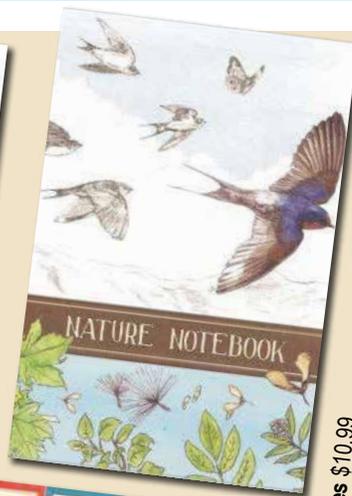
The Sibley Guide to Birds, 2nd Edition

A best seller for more than a dozen years is now completely designed and updated—the wait is over! The publication of *The Sibley Guide to Birds* in 2000 established David Allen Sibley as the author and illustrator of the nation's most comprehensive guide to birds. The Sibley Guide became the standard by which natural history guides are measured. The highly anticipated second edition builds on this foundation of excellence, offering profoundly expanded and updated information, new paintings, new and rare species, and a new, elegant design. Cost \$40.00.



AVAILABLE IN OUR NATURE SHOPS

Checklist of Birds of SE AZ 2014. Just in time for Birdathon! Now in the shop is an updated 2014 *Checklist to the Birds of Southeastern Arizona*. Thanks to Mark Stevenson and Chris Benesh for making this update possible. The checklists are \$0.75 and hot off the press.



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The New Big Sibley

The Sibley Guide to Birds. Second Edition.

David Allen Sibley.

New York: Knopf. Pp. 598. ISBN 978-0-307-95790-0. \$40.00

Remember when we didn't really have a choice?

Birders early in this twenty-first century are afloat in a sea of field guides, with new ones appearing at a startling rate. Some are good, many are bad, but over the past fifteen years, two titles have established themselves as the standard references for most birders in most of the ABA Area. The *National Geographic Guide*, now in its sixth edition under the skilled tutelage of Jon Dunn and Jonathan Alderfer, remains one of the best identification resources available for any avifauna. And the *Sibley Guide*, fresh out in a second edition this spring, combines eloquent images and deceptively compact texts with a design that can only be called ingenious.

I can't imagine not having both on my desk—and yet people ask me all the time which of these inspired volumes is the better. They forget, I suppose, that that was the question that laid waste to Troy, and it caused some heartache for Snow White, too. The answer I eventually came up with was marvelously tactful: Make the big Sibley your first choice away from the edges of the ABA Area, but always opt for NatGeo in Alaska, on the coasts, and along the Mexican border, areas where a significant number of expected—or at least

dreamed-of—rarities were not covered at all in the first edition of Sibley.

Now, though, David Sibley has added more than a hundred of those “marginal” birds to his new edition, and the choice for birders in the deserts and canyons of southeast Arizona is no longer so obvious.

Consider, for example, the Brown-backed Solitaire, an “accidental” in the Arizona Sky Islands not mentioned in the first edition of the *Sibley Guide*. Now, in the second edition, that delightful Sierra Madrean thrush is given full treatment, with three annotated images, a brief summary of field marks, a description of the song and call, and a range map accompanied by the proviso that “some could represent escaped cage birds.”

The *National Geographic Guide*, which has included this species since 2011, relegates it to an appendix, where it is illustrated with one painting. The single sentence of plumage description is supplemented with a detailed statement of the bird's range and a wonderfully evocative account of its otherworldly song—but there is no mention of the species' equally distinctive whistled call note.

The Sibley advantage is even clearer in the case of another “Mexican” vagrant, the Sinaloa Wren. The *National Geographic's* description—“streaked face and barred undertail”—is really not helpful to the inexperienced birder confronted with a “possible” in the field, while Sibley's text, though lacking the detailed account of Arizona records, concisely and impressively points out exactly the plumage characters that will confirm the identification.

Sibley's paintings (600 of which are new in this edition!) remain the most informative ever published for the identification of North American birds. They are not beautiful, they are not realistic, they are not “accurate” in the same ways that the best of the paintings in the *National Geographic Guide* are. Sibley's Brown-backed Solitaire is cartoonish, his Sinaloa Wren oddly spotted beneath. I would hang neither on my wall for the sheer visual pleasure of it, and I would offer neither to an alien on her first visit to Planet Earth. But these and all the other images in the book are prepared with the needs of the field observer exquisitely in mind, showing us exactly what we need to look for in each species.

Unfortunately, the reproduction of the paintings is not consistently good, with reds running to a bizarre purple, some yellows aquarium green, and blacks so deep as to obscure detail. New birders may be misled or confused by this, but more experienced observers are likely to be able to compensate with little difficulty. A graver concern, at least for birders of my book-at-arm's-length generation, is the very small, very low-contrast type used for the text, the cost, apparently, of greatly increasing the size of the images in this new edition.

Is the new Sibley (even) better than the first edition? Yes. Is it better than the *National Geographic Guide*? Let me be diplomatic: Arizona birders have a choice. And at long last, it's a tough one.

Rick Wright, *birdingnewjersey.com*

Rick Wright is the author of the ABA Field Guide to Arizona Birds, scheduled for publication in 2016.

Looking for the Goshawk.

Conor Mark Jameson.

London: Bloomsbury. Pp. 368. ISBN 978-1-40816-487-7. \$28.95.

The Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) is found in much of North America, including here in Southern Arizona. However, it was regionally extirpated in the British Isles for the better part of a century or more. From the last sightings—including specimens that were shot—in the late 19th Century, it would not be until the 1960s that they would be seen again. This book is Conor Mark Jameson's personal exploration of the Goshawk's natural history in the British Isles, from beginning to end—and into its new beginning since reintroduction of the species.

There we have the good news. Jameson's narrative of his years-long fascination and quest for these magnificent hawks in the UK is not without hope. He reports that there are now approximately 500 breeding pairs of Goshawks in the UK.

Jameson crosses and recrosses the UK, America and Europe looking for the birds themselves and their traces—not only feathers and such, but also in museums, reports of sightings, and in popular consciousness. They are often described as ‘phantoms’ with an uncanny habit of disappearing.

What makes this book so remarkable is how Jameson's well-written tale has the feel of a British forest, with dappled lanes of dark and light—much like Goshawks themselves. Their interactions with humans are always half-wild, half-tame. They were celebrated in literature, persecuted as vermin, and employed in falconry. Jameson illustrates how humans have helped them move across seas, and at the same time how easy it is to disrupt their numbers in a single local area.

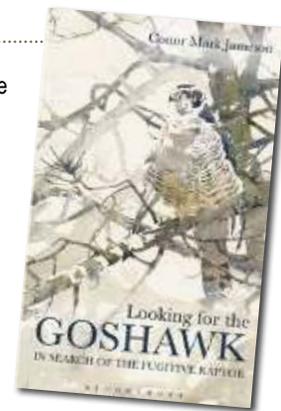
The story of these birds is a fascinating enigma, from their complicated relationship with their habitat and with humans to the ‘lack of detail’ available about their reintroduction to Britain. In the wider story of ecology, Jameson's quest for the Goshawk also clearly illustrates what is lost when a species

vanishes, and the challenge of reviving an endangered population.

Jameson believes that the regional extinction made the British ‘blind to Goshawks.’ In chapter 3, tourists are readily able to identify Goshawks and their prey remains, while local birders have lost the search image and are no longer, in Jameson's words, ‘Gos literate.’ Thus the consequences are still being felt, even after reintroduction.

Looking for the Goshawk is a case study in ecology that has something to offer to any lover of birds and the environment, with a wealth of detail. It concludes with a historical digest of the disappearance—and reappearance—of Goshawks in the British Isles and a wonderful list of recommended reading.

Reviewed by Eric L M Shuman





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Vermilion Flycatcher

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